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**Luxury Perception of Low and Middle Income Generation Z and Their Luxury
Consumption Motivations**

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Abstract:

Purpose: This study examined Generation Z with low and moderate income levels in terms of their perception of luxury, knowledge of luxurious products and motivation of consuming luxurious products.

Design/methodology/approach: The research was conducted in two stages: in-depth interviews and structured observations. Structured observations were carried out on 37 teenage participants at the ages of 17-21 (25 female and 12 male consumers). The data were collected between July and August 2020 in Turkey.

Findings: According to the results of the study, this generation's perception of luxury is divided into three categories based on concept, service and product. Females perceive luxury as flamboyance, wealth and ability to get whatever is desired, while males consider the same concept as comfort, brand quality and products that are hard to get. The participants' knowledge of luxurious brands generally covers inaccessible brands such as Rolex, Ferrari and Christian Dior and new luxurious brands Nike, Puma and Polo. Among the participants, 54.1% planned to buy luxurious products in the future. The main factors that drive them to buy luxurious products in the future were as follows: quality of product, comfort of product, durability of product, beauty of product, elegance of product, conspicuous consumption, self fulfilment, feeling good, power of desire, having social status and improvement in economic situation. The products they consider as luxurious and plan to buy included luxurious cars, houses, clothes, jewelry and travels.

Research limitations/implications: The limitation of the study is that it was a convenient sample. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized.

Practical implications: Luxury product/service providers can market new luxury products/services that are more affordable to low and middle-income Generation Z.

Originality/value: Studies conducted in regard to the concept of luxury consumption and consumer perceptions have been mostly performed with participants with high income levels. This study tries to fill the gap in the literature by investigating the low and middle-income Generation Z. The main objective of this study was to examine the luxury-related attitudes and perceptions of Generation Z members who have been raised in families that have low and moderate income level, and their intentions of purchasing luxurious products/services.

Keywords: Luxury consumption, Luxury Perception of Generation Z, Middle income Generation Z

1. Introduction

Development of the capitalist ideology and the process of consumption that has grown since the 18th century are significantly affected by the demand regarding consumption of luxurious products. In his work entitled Principles of Political Economy (1767), James Steuart developed a consumption-based ideology and claimed that people could be directed to consumption more by

creating objects of desire in the process of developing the notion of employment and economy. He also stated that the productivity and wealth of a country may be increased this way (Ramos, 2011). Sombart noted in the previous century that the increased interest toward luxurious products was based on the need of upper classes in hierarchical societies to express or prove themselves through flamboyance. According to Sombart, who had thoughts on luxurious consumption and capitalism, increasing the rate of luxurious consumption is important to develop capitalism (Franchetti, 2013, p. 139).

As a result of the changes experienced in economic systems and the increase in the number of moderate-level consumers with increased income levels, certain changes have occurred in the concept of luxury, resulting in the emergence of new concepts such as “new luxury”, “traditional luxury”, “moderate luxury”, as well as “accessible and inaccessible luxury” (Ciornea, 2012a). The category defined as new luxury includes the easily accessible brands and services that are generated by the designers of selected brands. These products distributed in a controlled manner in the market reflect an accessible price policy. The category of new luxury appeals to a new group that aims to differentiate itself from the middle class and reward itself. This group includes Generation Z that consists of potential consumers who will gain financial independence in a couple of years.

“The characteristics of generations indicate that people born in certain periods bear the values, beliefs and attitudes of these periods. The common point noted by researchers and experts as a result of extensive studies indicates four main generations that are reflected under the titles of Baby Boomers and generations X, Y and Z” (Mercan, 2016, p. 59). Generation Z differs from generations millennium and X in terms of consumption-based habits. Generation Z that covers the people born in or after 1990 according to a certain study (Juodžbalis and Radzevičius, 2016) or 1995 as reported by another study (Özkan and Solmaz, 2017) spends more time using technology in comparison to other generations. The members of Generation Z who are mostly dependent on their families in terms of financial matters will undertake the role of active consumers in the future in relevant markets. Therefore, measuring the consumption motivations and already-present attitudes of this generation is critical in terms of marketing strategies to be developed. Although Generation Y constitutes a significant part of luxurious market consumers, a relevant study reported that Generation Z may cover 40% of luxury product consumers in the next ten years and display attitudes that will separate them from other generations (Bain & Company, 2019). Therefore, studies to be conducted in this field are believed to yield significant results for this sector.

Luxurious products have started to catch the attention of people who do not have a good financial status as a result of democratization of luxury and mass luxurious products. These consumers prefer accessible luxurious products and reward themselves by consuming mass luxurious products. Studies conducted in regard to the concept of luxury consumption and consumer perceptions have been mostly performed with participants with high income levels. These include studies about the Indian elite class Generation Z (Jain & Patel, 2013; Mohanram, 2012; Yu et al., 2002). This study tries to fill the gap in the literature by investigating the middle-income Generation Z. The main objective of this study was to examine the luxury-related attitudes and perceptions of Generation Z members who have been raised in families that have low and moderate income level, and their intentions of purchasing luxurious products/services. This study reviewed the luxury-related perceptions of Generation Z members, their motivations of consuming luxurious products and services, place of luxurious products in their lives and their perceptions toward luxurious brands. The results are believed to guide future efforts to determine the relevant attitudes and perceptions of low and middle income Generation Z members who will not depend on their families and achieve their own financial statuses.

2. Literature Review

2.1. What is Luxury?

‘Luxury is particularly slippery to define. A strong element of human involvement, very limited supply and the recognition of value by others’ (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004, p. 485). Luxury is the desire of people to use physical goods to show their prestige and status (Han et al., 2010). Luxury brands arouse desire in people, but the number of those who can reach them is very few. The dynamics of luxury lies here. Brands that everyone knows but a limited audience can buy are luxury brands (Aksoy, 2017). While a product may be a luxury for someone, it may be a requirement for another. For this reason, it may be stated that the definition of luxury changes based on the person, situation and time.

Sombart defined luxury in two ways, qualitatively and quantitatively. It is a waste of luxury goods in a quantitative sense and a better use of goods in a qualitative sense (Sombart, 1988 p. 88). Luxury, which is difficult to define, has a special structure and is built on consumer perceptions. For this reason, the meaning of luxury varies according to personal and interpersonal motivations (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004).

As a definition, the concept of luxury is defined in six ways: Excellent quality, very high price, scarcity and uniqueness, aesthetic and extreme emotionality, ancestor heritage and personal history and unnecessary (Dubois et al., 2001, s. 8-15).

Heine (2012) tried to bring a classification of luxury products in six ways:

- *Regional relativity*: It is the fact that some goods have a wide transportation in one region, while in other regions, they may gain a luxury feature due to their rarity.
- *Temporary relativity*: It means that luxury is not a fixed concept, it may change over time. Developing technology and globalization are effective at this point.
- *Economic relativity*: The economic situation shapes people's perception of luxury.
- *Cultural relativity*: Culture affects people's perception of luxury. Culture may be decisive in the perception of a good as a luxury.
- *Individual items*: It may not be perceived as luxury for another person, which is luxury for one person.
- *Situational relativity*: The perception of luxury may be shaped based on the situation. An ordinary meal may be perceived as a luxury by someone who has not eaten for days (Heine, 2012: 41-43).

The meaning of luxury may change over time. For example, lobster, which was eaten only by prisoners and poor people in the 19th century England, has become an expensive and luxurious food today (Winter, 2011).

Luxury is defined as "the refined arbitrariness, elegance of what is desired but not necessary". This definition describes luxury as representing recognition of financial success and wealth. However, with the changing paradigm of luxury, a question arises regarding what motivates modern consumers to buy luxury brands (Kuo and Nagasawa, 2020, p.2). In his Leisure Class book, Veblen stated that showing off is an important activity in expressing wealth. Demonstration is important for those who want to create high personal status, prestige, respect and jealousy in the society (Veblen, 1899). Luxury brands are consumed as a symbol of conspicuous consumption and status (O'Cass and McEwen, 2006). According to Amaldoss and Jain, luxury brands are consumed as an indicator of wealth and prosperity (Amaldoss & Jain, 2005).

2.1.1. Democratization of Luxury

Over the past two decades, brands have launched new products or product extensions to market their middle-class consumers (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004, p.488). The rise of the new

middle class in emerging markets creates new potentials for luxury brands. This is because this growing middle class is turning towards luxury brands (Okonkwo, 2007). This concept, which is described as democratization of luxury, is also known as new luxury.

With democratization of luxury, luxury goods are much more accessible today than traditional retail sales in the past. This is also valid for luxury products on the internet (Reyneke, 2011, p.5). With the new concept of luxury and democratization of luxury, luxury brands are increasingly shifting their target audience from elite groups to the middle socio-economic class. Luxurious brands develop new practices that combine the concepts of being luxurious and possessing mass characteristics with standardized luxurious goods and services (Ciornea et al., 2012b).

New luxury brands are brands that can be bought at more affordable prices than traditional luxury brands and can be found in many shopping malls or stores (Truong et al., 2008: 191). Thanks to new luxury, the products that used to be only accessible to the rich class have come to be accessible to anyone who wants to reward himself (Truong et al., 2008: 190).

Today, we see that the definition of luxury has changed. In 1970s and 80s, companies aimed to deliver luxury products to wider audiences in order to earn more money. The modern luxury market was a niche industry, consisting of aristocrats, celebrities and royal families around the world from the beginning of the nineteenth century when fashion began (Okonkwo, 2007).

According to Okonkwo, this situation changed completely in the 21st century. One of the most important reasons for this has emerged from a group of rich consumers worldwide. In the last thirty years, a large amount of wealth has been collected by individuals due to various economic, social and technological breakthroughs. Second, the high entry barrier that the luxury sector has been protecting for centuries has declined due to globalization and advancements in business and management practices driven by the internet.

Third, the rapid growth of digital, information and communication technology has provided a completely different operating platform for both luxury brands and luxury consumers. The internet offered luxury brands the opportunity to reach a global brand awareness in a short time. Fourth, the luxury sector has been undergoing a change since 1990s, as a result of changes in the investment and ownership structure of various luxury brands. As a result of all these developments, luxury brands are divided into "true luxury" and "common luxury" or "trendy luxury" groups. Before this period, the branding and retail strategies of luxury brands were clearly different from mass fashion brands, but the line that differentiates the strategies currently applied in the two sectors is quite blurred (Okonkwo, 2007, p.225.226).

2.2.Luxury Brands and Products

Practitioners view luxury as a main factor to differentiate a brand in a product category (Kapferer, 1997). Kapferer said there are four types of luxury brands. Each of them has important attributes perceived by the consumer. In the first segment, "the beauty of the object", "perfection of the product", "magic" and "uniqueness" are the most important components. This section includes brands such as Rolls-Royce, Cartier and Hermès. In the second segment, "creativity" and "product sensuality" are the most important components, while "uniqueness" and "product perfection" are underlined. Examples include T. Mugler, Gucci and Boss. In the third group, "beauty" and "magic" are at the forefront, and these products are classic and never outdated. An example of this is the Louis Vuitton and Dunhill brands. Finally, in the fourth segment, "exclusivity" is the most important component. Consumers who use the product should be a privileged minority. Mercedes and Chivas are examples of these brands (Kapferer, 1998: 9-44).

Before Kapferer (1998) and Dubois et al. (2001), there was no study describing the difference between luxury brands and non-luxury brands. Kapferer (1998) and Dubois et al. (2001) went a part of the way in developing such a measurement scale. Vigneron and Johnson (2004) aimed to develop a scale that shows the concepts of luxury brands and measures the differences between luxury brands. Their work (Johnson and Vigneron, 2004) indicated two perceptions about consumers' perceptions of luxury. These were personal-oriented (hedonism and extended self) and non-personal oriented (conspicuousness, uniqueness and quality) perceptions.

Luxury brands are brands with strong brand personality. This is why they differ from other brands. Luxury brands may be defined as over-priced brands according to the norm that consumers consume because of their psychological values (symbolic and hedonic), not because of their economic and functional values (Nueno and Quelch, 1998).

Luxury products are categorized among themselves, and their marketing strategies are different from each other. To make a classification, luxury products are divided into three categories: inaccessible, intermediate and accessible luxury products.

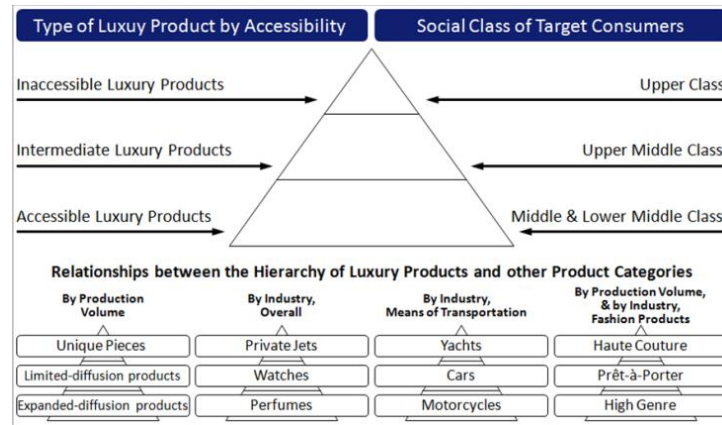


Figure 1: Type of Luxury Products

Reference: <https://upmarkit.com/concept-of-luxury-brands/luxury-product-types>

Vigneron and Johnson (2004, p.489) stated that there are five dimensions that distinguish luxury brands from non-luxury brands. They distinguish these dimensions as personal oriented and non-personal oriented.

- Personal Oriented Dimensions: Perceived pleasure, extended self.
- Non-Personal Oriented: Being Noticeable, uniqueness, perceived quality.

According to Okonkwo (2007: 105), luxury brands have ten features to carry:

- Innovative, creative, single and attractive products,
- Distribution of top quality consistently,
- Decomposition in the production of goods,
- Strict distribution control,
- Craft heritage,
- Distinctive brand identity,
- Global reputation,
- Emotional appeal,
- High pricing,
- High brand visibility

2.3. Luxury Consumers

In a study on young female consumers, five different luxury consumers were identified. One of the striking points in the research was that these consumers 'cease to desire to consume luxury

even if their families' financial situation is unstable'. These consumers are separated according to luxury consumption practices:

- Cosmetic consumers: They only consume luxury cosmetics and perfumes.
- Consumers looking for pleasure: They attach great importance to luxury service consumption.
- Materialistic consumers: They attach great importance to visible luxury products.
- Well-dressed consumers: They care about luxury clothes, food and entertainment.
- Adventurous consumers: Those who use luxury products and services the most. They have been defined as lovers of doing adventure sports (Cicornea et al. 2012a).

Schaffert et al. (2008, p.6) concluded that there are three types of luxury consumers. These consumers are:

- Approval seekers
- Seeking inner motivation
- Quality seekers

Danzinger (2011) mentioned five distinct consumer personalities forming the luxurious market in her book: "Temperate Pragmatists", "Butterflies", "Luxury Aspirers", "Luxury Cocooners" and "X-Fluents/eXtreme Affluents".

- Temperate Pragmatists: People in this group spend as much as possible for luxurious products.
- Butterflies: People in this group look for luxurious products and concepts. They focus on experiences and consider the luxurious lifestyle as a method of expressing themselves.
- Luxury Aspirers: People in this group are ones who have yet to achieve the luxury they desire. They consume luxurious products for showing off.
- Luxury Cocooners: People in this group purchase luxurious goods for their houses. They act cautiously when they intend to purchase luxurious fashion products or jewelry.
- X-Fluents/eXtreme Affluents: People in this group spend the most for luxurious products, consuming the highest quantity of luxurious products. People of this group who have good income level like sharing luxurious experiences and displaying materialistic and brand-focused attitudes.

2.4. Luxury Market & Generation Z

Luxury consumption has been in people's lives for centuries. We know that people used jewelry and luxury materials during the ancient civilizations. However, the first luxury brand products appeared in England in the 19th century as a result of the industrial production of luxury brands in China (Nueno & Quelch, 1998). As a result of acceleration of technological developments and the growing middle class, the demand for luxury products has increased gradually. Since 1980s, the luxury market has grown at a much higher rate than the world's economy, about ten percent a year (McKinsey 2011, Truong, 2008). By the end of 2019, the luxury market has grown rapidly and reached 1.3 trillion Euros worldwide (Bain & Company, 2019).

However, according to research by Bain & Company (2020), the luxury market is expected to shrink by 20 to 35 percent in 2020 due to the COVID-19 outbreak. The results of the research, which stated that it would take some time for the luxury market to recover, predicted that there would be a gradual improvement over the next 3 years. By 2025, the market will reach an estimated 320-330 billion € (Bain & Company, 2020).

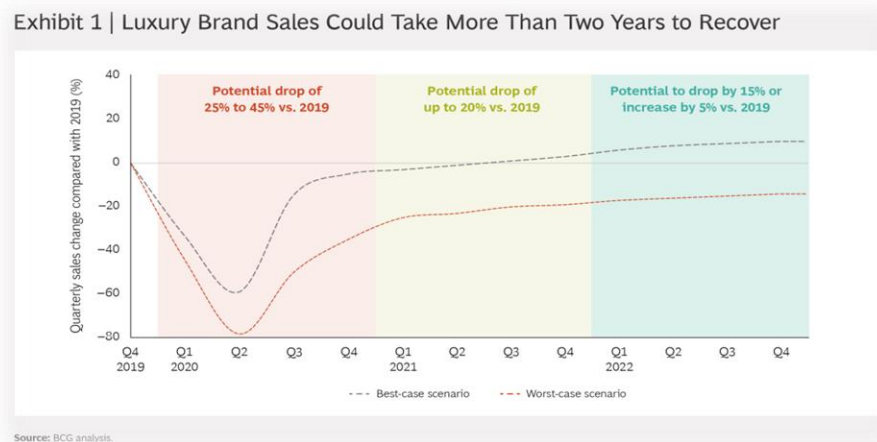


Exhibit 1: Luxury Brand Sales

Reference: <https://www.bcg.com/publications/2020/new-era-and-new-look-for-luxury>

Middle Eastern countries are seen as an important global market in the growth process of the luxury market. The elite class of Indians including Generation Z travel abroad broadly, and hence, they are exposed to the latest fashion and luxury brands in the international market (Jain & Patel, 2013). According to the research by Bain & Company, Chinese consumers will be the most

important buyers of luxury by 2025. China will constitute 28 percent of the luxury market, whereas this rate was 11 percent in 2019 (Bain & Company, 2020).

“15-20 years ago, the ideal customer profile for luxury brands like Louis Vuitton, Cartier, Chanel was those who have gained their own wealth and reached a certain consumption maturity, while today's perfect customers are young luxury lovers aged 20-35” (Yanik, 2011, p. 62). Luxury consumers in China are especially younger than luxury consumers in Europe and America. These consumers are those who have high income or access these products with their families' assets (McKinsey, 2011).

“Members of Gen Z, people born from 1990 to 2010 (Juodžbalis and Radzevičius, 2016, p.97) are true digital natives: they have been exposed to the internet, social networks and mobile systems. They believe profoundly in the efficacy of dialogue to solve conflicts and improve the world. Finally, they make decisions and relate to institutions in a highly analytical and pragmatic way. In contrast, the previous generation, Generation Y, sometimes called the “me generation”, got its start in an era of economic prosperity and focuses on the self. Its members are more idealistic, more confrontational and less willing to accept diverse points of view” (Francis and Hoefel, 2018, p.2).

Gen Y and Gen Z make up the majority of the luxury market. Generation Y, representing approximately 32% of the market, will constitute 50% of the market by 2025. Gen Z is on track to represent 8% of the market by 2020. Both groups have very different expectations from luxury brands than previous generations. Gen Y and Gen Z consumers often reject stereotypes of traditional wealth. They like luxury experiences, travel and seek luxury brands that can express their individuality and achievements, offering a seamless digital experience that matches their personal values. Additionally, there are fast, personalized service expectations in both physical and digital areas (Matter of Form Group, 2020). Instead of staying outside and playing, Generation Z prefers to stay inside and play online. They have virtual friends and almost hang out with friends via cell phones, social networking sites and messages. They are collaborative, creative multitaskers and thrive for instant gratification (Jain et al., 2014, p.18).

Generation Y customers accounted for 35 percent of luxury consumption in 2019, and by 2025, they will account for 45 percent of the market. However, the younger Generation Z, ready to reshape the industry, can make up 40 percent of luxury buyers by 2035 and exhibit behaviors that sets them apart from other generations (Bain & Company, 2019). Companies should be attuned to three implications for generation Z: consumption as access rather than possession, consumption as an

expression of individual identity and consumption as a matter of ethical concern (Francis and Hoefel, 2018, p.2).

The luxury market in Turkey is growing day by day. New luxury consumers in emerging markets such as Turkey, it has a great importance how they express "luxury" concept socio-economically. Heine (2012) mentioned that luxury perception is relative. He emphasized that economic and cultural relativism in particular determines the perception of luxury. Economic relativity includes the consumer's view of the perceived price level also reflects the consumer's income and access to luxury (Vickers and Renand, 2003). For example, something that is not considered a luxury for a wealthy family can be considered a luxury for a middle-income family.

It is believed that there is a strong relationship between income level and luxury perception. However, there is no consensus in literature in this area. According to Nwankwo et al. (2014) a significant relationship has been found between values for luxury and income. Dubois and Laurent (1994) found a strong relationship between consumer luxury perception and income. On the other hand, Eastman and Liu (2012) could not find a significant relationship between status consumption and demographic characteristics. The main objective of this study was to examine the luxury-related attitudes and perceptions of Generation Z members who have been raised in families that have moderate income level, and their intentions of purchasing luxurious products/services.

3. Research Methodology

In this study, qualitative and quantitative research methods were used together. The research was mainly based on the qualitative data collection method. The quantitative method was used for analysis of the demographic characteristics of the participants. For learning the attitudes and behaviors of Generation Z towards luxury and luxury consumption, structured research questions were used in this study. The research questions consisted of three questions including demographic characteristics (age, gender and income) and ten questions measuring attitudes and behaviors.

The research was conducted in two stages: in-depth interviews and structured observations. Structured observations were carried out on 37 teenage participants at the ages of 17-21 (25 female and 12 male consumers). The data were collected between July and August 2020 in Turkey. Structured observations were recorded to understand the perception of luxury and to increase the reliability of the data obtained through interviews. This method helped the author understand the luxury perception of the low and middle-income Generation Z, their motivation to buy luxury.

Since the convenience sampling method, one of the non-probability sampling methods, was used in the study, the results cannot be generalized to the population. The convenience sampling method is a sampling method where the researcher performs the study on individuals who want to participate in the study, who are easy to reach (Yıldız, 2017, p. 430).

3.1. Research Questions

The study aims to answer the following questions:

- How does low and middle income Generation Z perceive the concept of luxury? How do they define luxury products and brands?
- What does luxury products mean for low and middle income Generation Z?
- Is there a difference in the perception of luxury between male and female in low and middle income Generation Z?
- For low and middle income Generation Z, what is the place of luxury products in their daily lives?
- What are the intentions of low and middle income Generation Z to purchase luxury products in the future?
- What are the key factors that encourage low and middle income Generation Z to buy luxury products?

4. Data Analysis and Findings

The SPSS 22 program was used to analyze the demographic data of the participants. According to the frequency analysis that was performed, the participants consisted of a total of 37 people, 25 females and 12 males, between the ages of 17 and 21

Table 1 Demographics

Characteristics		Frequency	% of Sample
Gender	Female	25	67.6
	Male	12	32.4
	Total	37	100.0
Age	17-21	37	100.0
Income	< 2.500 TL	3	8.1
	2.500 TL-4.500 TL	2	5.4
	4.500-7.500 TL	31	83.8
	7.500 TL or over	1	2.7
	Total	37	100.0

One of the first questions to be answered in the study is *“How does low and middle income Generation Z perceive the concept of luxury? How do they define luxury products and brands?”* and *What does luxury products mean for low and middle income Generation Z?*

“In line with the answers given, the following statements were reached on how Generation Z perceived the concept of luxury:

- Richness, wealth, quality, flamboyance, extremely expensive, modern, fame, comfort.
“Money. When it comes to luxury, it comes to my mind as expensive, quality and only the top layer can reach” (Male, 4)
- Things that are hard to access because of economic reasons. Things that only the upper class can reach. The interpretation of a middle-income participant was as follows.
“The first concept that comes to my mind is flamboyance. For me, luxury means to envy the upper class, to have fun, to see the individual on a higher level, different from the society, individuals” (Male, 6). *“The life of rich people”* (Female, 22).
- Luxury brand clothes, big house, luxury apartment, latest model car, expensive things, jewelry.
“To be able to go on vacation; to be able to get everything you want; having a nice house and car; brand clothes” (Female, 7).
- Getting everything you want, high quality of life.
“For me, luxury means being able to do whatever you want without any financial difficulties” (Female, 12).
- Unnecessary expenditure, unnecessary items bought for enthusiasm, wastage.
“Luxury is a cursory waste of money” (Male, 21). *“Redundant”* (Female, 19).
- Conspicuous consumption, self fulfilment or personal satisfaction.
“Too much showoff comes to my mind” (Female, 15).

Table 2. Classification of Luxury Perceptions

Conceptual Aspects	Wealth, prosperity, money, flamboyance, fashion, a quality life, goods that are hard to get due to financial reasons, ability to get whatever is desired, goods that are only accessed by the upper classes, unnecessary expense, self-satisfaction
Service-Based Aspects	Quality, modernity, comfort, higher price tag
Product-Based Aspects	Clothes of luxury brands, large houses, modern apartments, state-of-the-art cars, expensive goods, jewelry

When low and middle income Generation Z's luxury brand knowledge was examined, it was seen that they mostly had information about the inaccessible luxury brand category. This category includes private jets, expensive perfumes, watches, yachts and cars.

“Private jet, private yacht, Chanel bags, Dior perfume, Rolex, Mercedes, Ferrari, Prada, Gucci, Lamborghini etc.” (Male, 1, 3, Female, 10, 18, 33).

Another category described as luxurious by the participants consisted of premium-priced brands that are defined as new luxury and are mass-produced. As an example, they mentioned the following brands:

“Nike, Adidas, Zara, Puma, Polo, Parliament cigarette, iPhone, etc. (Male, 1 and 4),

The second research question in the study was *“Is there a difference in the perception of luxury between men and women in low and middle income Generation Z?”*

In the examination of whether there was any difference in the perceptions of luxury between men and women, it was determined that there were some differences between these two groups. When it came to luxury, the women perceived *what is expensive, flashy, high quality, modern, wealth and easily obtaining what they want.*

The men, on the other hand, perceived luxury as *brand quality, comfort, high quality of life, unnecessary expenditure, things that are hard to access because of economic reasons.*

Another question was “For low and middle income Generation Z, what is the place of luxury products in their daily lives?”

This generation expressed that they encountered luxury products in their daily lives mostly by social media advertisements, TV, magazine, Fashion, Instagram, Instagram shares of social media influencers, YouTube advertising and shopping malls. This result is similar to the findings of Eastman & Shin (2020). According to the study, social media, peers and family play a critical role in affecting the luxury consumption of university student consumers.

Fashion is an important medium to learn about luxury products. The participants following fashion in their daily lives were also examined within the scope of their luxury perceptions. While there were 32 participants who followed fashion, there were 5 participants who did not. As seen in Table 3, the female followed fashion more than the male did. The participants who followed fashion stated that they encountered a lot of content on social media related to luxury brands and services.

“I follow the fashion brand shares of celebrities on social media” (Female, 8).

Table 3 Following Fashion

Do you follow fashion?					Where do you follow it?		
	Frequency	%	Frequency	Frequency		Frequency	%
			Female	Male			
Yes	32	86.5	17	4	Social Media	30	81.1
No	5	13.5	8	8	TV, Magazine	7	18.9
Total	37	100	25	12	Total	37	100

The last questions were “What are the intentions of low and middle income Generation Z to purchase luxury products in the future? And what are the key factors that encourage low and middle income Generation Z to buy luxury products?”

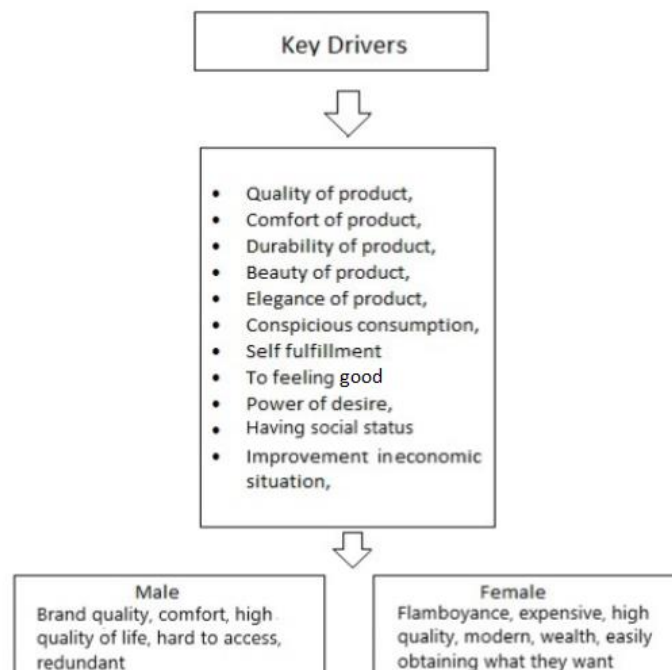


Figure 2. Key Drivers to Purchase Luxury Products in The Future

As seen in Table 4, only 8 of the participants bought luxury products in their daily lives. These people lived in low and middle-income families. When asked about whether they would like to buy luxury products in the future, 54.1% said they wanted to buy, while 45.9% said they would not buy luxury products in the future. When the female and male were compared in terms of their intentions to purchase luxury products in the future, it was seen that the females were planning to buy more.

Table 4 Future Intentions About Buying Luxury

Do you buy luxury items?			What are these items?			
	Frequency	%	Luxury car, house, apartment			
Yes	8	21.6	Luxury clothes, luxury brand clothes			
No	29	78.4	Jewelry			
Total	37	100	Luxury travel			
Are you planning to buy luxury items in the future?						
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
			Female		Male	
Yes	20	54.1	16	64	4	67
No	17	45.9	9	36	8	33
Total	37	100	25	100	12	100

5. Discussion

One of the most important features that distinguish Generation Z from Generation Y is that they were born into a digital age. Generation Z is becoming the center of attention of marketers day by day as potential future buyers. Generation Z looks for products or services that are useful for them, and they do not have a high brand loyalty. Since Generation Z spends a long time on the internet, it is important for brands to learn which platforms they are on while developing their marketing activities in order to create brand loyalty. Afterwards, it is necessary to prepare content that will attract the attention of Generation Z.

This study aimed to explain the attitudes, intentions and behaviors of Generation Z members who were raised in families with low and moderate income levels. Most of the studies on Generation Z in the literature have been conducted on the elite class. These include studies about the Indian elite class Generation Z (Jain & Patel, 2013; Mohanram, 2012; Yu et al., 2002). The difference between this study and other studies was that it aimed to learn about the luxury-related perceptions of Generation Z members raised in families that had low and moderate income levels.

This study found that the Generation Z members from the families with low and moderate income levels considered luxury as follows: “*indication of wealth, a comfortable life, more expensive products, comfort, modernity, expensive products solely accessed by a certain section, flashy consumption and unnecessary expenses.*” There were differences between the men and women in terms of their luxury-related perceptions. The women considered luxury as *flamboyance, wealth, modernity, ability to get whatever desired easily*, while the men perceived luxury as *brand quality, comfort, unnecessary expenditure and goods and services obtained by wealthy people in general*.

These results are similar to the findings in the study conducted by Jain et al. (2014, p. 21). According to Jain et al. (2014) male respondents purchase luxury apparels for “comfort, fashion, trend and style”. Female respondents also consider “shades & color, and a wider collection design that suits their physique” (p.21). According to the results of this study, men look for more comfort in luxurious products, while women value appearance and flamboyance. According to Zhang and Kim, “people consider luxury as a key component to define themselves as they wish socially” (2013, p.69). Luxury also refers to the highest level of prestige goods, having both conspicuous and social value (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999).

According to Jain et al. (2014), the key drivers of Generation Z for purchasing luxury apparels were Fabric, Quality, Fit, Exclusivity, Trendiness, Stylishness and Brand Recognition. According to the results of this study, the reasons driving members of Generation Z to consume luxurious products in the future included the following: “*quality of product, comfort of product, durability of product, beauty of product, elegance of product, conspicuous consumption, self-fulfillment, feeling good, power of desire, having social status and improvement in economic situation*”. The examination of the men and women in terms of their intentions to purchase luxurious products in the future indicated that the rate of those aiming to purchase such products was 54.1%. Moreover, the women were found to be inclined more to purchase luxurious products. Members of Generation Z who plan to purchase luxurious products in the future aim to have luxurious living spaces when they can, and they desire to purchase luxurious cars, clothes and jewelry. They also plan to take on journeys consisting of luxurious experiences.

The main actors of the modern consumption culture are young people. This young generation that consists of people who express their identities through consumption and brands display narcissistic and hedonistic characteristics. Generation Z establishes communication through social

media and does not abstain from spending money for luxurious products. “They discuss clothing and apparel with their friends and peers. They spend high amounts in buying different luxury brands” (Yu et al., 2003).

It is now quite easy to know about an event or activity in the world fast with the generalization of the internet. Social media and the virtual communities within it are organized based on various fields of interest. Almost all sectors have started to adapt to the digital world due to the global pandemic. This situation called the new normal shows its effect on all sectors. Accordingly, anything may be followed through the internet in the present days, which has caused significant changes in the luxury sector. Luxurious products are not only consumed by wealthy people, but they are also used or followed by non-wealthy people from time to time. Even someone with low purchasing power can visit the website of a luxury brand, follow luxury products closely or watch the fashion week in Milano live through the internet via the recording of a participant on social media.

“Members of Generation Z are more equipped educationally and financially compared to other generations and want to buy everything they want, consume them immediately and get interested in new consumption experiences afterward. The distinction between wealthy and poor consumers will be clearer in Generation Z in the future, but those people who are described as poor will make an impression of a consumer who does not want to miss any consumption experience. They will experience this feeling through specially-labeled cheap products. They will be satisfied at the same time with wealthy people even if they do not gain prestige for consuming the cheaper version of the same product with the same content. This phenomenon indicates that a new consumer generation will invalidate Baudrillard’s theory, which is that new products will reach low classes by getting filtered from the satisfaction of wealthy people” (Baudrillard, 2008, p. 70 cited by: Mercan, 2016, p. 67-68). For this reason, brands that aim to benefit from this market should conduct research to detect and meet consumption-based requirements related to the pleasure of this generation with people who are the new buyers of luxury.

6. Future Research

This study was designed as a qualitative study. Although quantitative methods were used to analyze the demographic data, the data collection tool was based on qualitative data. It is recommended that a similar study is conducted with a broader sample and more data to examine the intentions of Generation Z in terms of their luxury-related perceptions and future objectives of

consuming luxurious products in the future. Additionally, the difference between Generation Z members who are influencers on social media and who are interested in and indifferent to fashion in regard to luxurious products and services and their intentions to purchase luxurious products in the future should be examined.

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