

Identification and Motivation of Participants for Luxury Consumer Surveys Through Viral Participant Acquisition

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Abstract: Luxury consumer behaviour is still a relatively new area of research, one that relies largely on paid surveys and especially on student samples. However, it is questionable whether moderately paid surveys really can attract wealthy heirs or busy managers or if students can imagine themselves in the role of experienced luxury consumers. In addition, many researchers hesitate to target luxury consumers. One reason is the ongoing discussion in the literature as to what constitutes a luxury consumer and as to how luxury consumers can be distinguished from non-luxury consumers and ultimately, how to identify them for empirical studies. What is more, this particular target group is notoriously hard to access and difficult to persuade to participate in any survey. Despite these problems, no article could be found in the literature, which addressed either the identification or the motivation of respondents for luxury consumer surveys (LCS). Therefore, the objective of this paper is to categorize and to discuss the means of identification and motivation of participants for LCS. Based on a literature analysis of existing LCS, the paper presents a categorization of the major research objectives, target groups, and identification methods for LCS. Subsequently, it provides an overview of common methods of participant motivation and discusses their suitability for LCS, which suggests thinking about some non-monetary incentives that could convince luxury consumers to participate in a survey in their own interest. As this idea coincides with the notion of viral marketing, it seems promising to adapt this concept for viral participant acquisition (VPA). Consequently, the paper presents a case study detailing the implementation of VPA on a recent LCS and concludes with the lessons learned.

Keywords: luxury products, luxury brands, luxury consumers, survey participant acquisition, survey response, viral marketing

1. Introduction: Catching a mysterious target group

Although there is a growing base of literature on the marketing of luxury products, it still contains only a relatively small amount of large-scale luxury consumer surveys (LCS). Many *researchers hesitate to target luxury consumers for two fundamental reasons*. First of all, there is still no recognized definition in business literature as to what constitutes a luxury consumer, leading to confusion as to how they can be distinguished from non-luxury consumers and ultimately, *how to identify them* for empirical studies.

Besides this, another challenge is to access and to *motivate luxury consumers* to participate in a survey. While there are well-funded researchers who try to attract adequate participants with monetary incentives, many researchers lack the financial resources for paid surveys or have to supervise student projects, which also suffer from limited access and funding. This explains why a big part of LCS relies on relatively easy-to-reach student samples. However, the specific characteristics of luxury consumers including their high income, their lack of time and their luxury connoisseurship suggest that samples made up of paid survey workers or students might not be representative of that particular target group. For instance, it is questionable whether moderately paid surveys really attract wealthy heirs or busy managers, or if students, who are appropriate in many other areas of research, are really able to assume the role of experienced luxury consumers.

Despite these problems, no article could be found in the literature, which addressed either the identification or the motivation of respondents for LCS. Therefore, the *objective of this paper* is to categorize and to discuss the means of identification and motivation of participants for LCS based on an analysis of existing LCS.

The resulting framework suggests thinking about some non-monetary incentives that could convince luxury consumers to participate in a survey in their own interest. As this idea coincides with the notion of viral marketing, it seems promising to adapt this concept for *viral participant acquisition (VPA)*. Consequently, another objective of this paper is to test VPA on a recent LCS and to provide some lessons learned.

The paper is organised into *another four sections*. Based on a definition of luxury products and brands and a literature analysis of existing LCS, section 2 presents a categorization of the major research objectives, target groups, and identification methods for LCS. It further introduces the luxury consumption and the luxury affection scales, which allow for the identification of any LCS target group. Section 3 presents an overview of common methods of participant motivation and discusses their suitability for LCS, which leads to the idea of adapting the concept of viral marketing for participant acquisition. Consequently, section 4 presents a case study detailing the implementation of VPA on a recent LCS. Finally, the article concludes with the lessons learned.

2. Identification of participants for luxury consumer surveys

2.1 The definition of luxury products and brands

In management literature it is accepted to distinguish necessary or ordinary products from *luxury products* by their essential characteristics. Accordingly, luxury products are characterised by their price, quality, aesthetics, rarity, extraordinariness, and symbolic meaning.

As they are highly associated with their core products, common definitions of *luxury brands* refer to specific associations with their products. The essential characteristics of luxury brands therefore correspond largely with those of luxury products. Consequently, their definition can be derived from that of luxury products as follows: Luxury brands are regarded as images in the minds of consumers that comprise associations about a high level of price, quality, aesthetics, rarity, extraordinariness and a high degree of further non-functional associations (c.f. Heine 2010).

Although luxury products and brands require a relatively high rating for all the essential characteristics, a wide range of possible ratings still exists within the luxury segment. The luxuriousness increases alongside an increasing level of at least one of these characteristics. Not surprisingly, the luxury level is one of the major means of differentiation for luxury manufacturers. Accordingly, Dubois and Duquesne (1993, p. 38) suggest distinguishing between *accessible luxury products*, which are affordable for most people at least from time-to-time and *exceptional luxury products*, which are affordable only for wealthy people.

LCS refers to any consumer survey on luxury products and brands as defined above. For the purpose of this article, the existing LCS that could be found in the international scientific literature were analysed. This analysis demonstrates that a variety of target groups need to be distinguished depending on research objectives. Therefore, the article proceeds to present the major research objectives of LCS.

2.2 Research objectives of luxury consumer surveys

As illustrated in figure 1, the *research objectives* can be placed into two main categories: studies focusing on *luxury* (brands, products or product categories) and studies focusing rather on its consumers. The first group splits again into image analyses and studies of consumer perceptions about the luxury brand identity. According to the concept of brand identity by Esch (2008, p. 91), research can concentrate either on rational or emotional perceptions. Studies about the rational component focus on essential and accessory characteristics of luxury (e.g. Christodoulides et al. 2009; Vickers and Renand 2003; Vigneron and Johnson 2004), which can lead to consumer-oriented definitions of luxury brands (e.g. Dubois et al. 2001). Studies about the emotional component concentrate on symbolic brand characteristics (e.g. Dubois and Czellar 2002) or specifically on the luxury brand personality (c.f. Heine 2009). Besides this, there are studies analysing the *image of luxury* (e.g. Matthiesen and Phau 2005 for Hugo Boss in Australia and Wong and Zaichkowsky 1999 for 40 luxury brands in Hong Kong). The studies about *luxury consumer behaviour* focus on the characteristics of luxury consumers, their consumption preferences and on environmental influences affecting luxury consumption. Studies about *luxury consumer characteristics* cover their purchasing motives (e.g. Tsai 2005), attitudes (e.g. Dubois et al. 2005), values (e.g. Dubois and Duquesne 1993; Heine and Trommsdorff 2010a; Sukhdial et al. 1995) and demographics (e.g. Dubois and Laurent 1993). Results of these studies serve as a basis for the segmentation of luxury consumers (e.g. Dubois et al. 2005). In addition, there are studies focusing on *luxury consumer preferences* (e.g. Nia and Zaichkowsky 2000 about country-of-origin preferences) and studies about *environmental influences on luxury consumption* incorporating the impact of reference groups (e.g. Wiedmann et al. 2007), culture (e.g. Casaburi 2010) and situational factors (e.g. Dubois and Laurent 1996).

These research objectives of LCS correspond with different requirements for their target group. Therefore, the next paragraph outlines the major LCS target groups with reference to these research objectives.

2.3 The target groups of luxury consumer surveys

Figure 1 illustrates the major target groups of LCS. They can be differentiated by consumer characteristics including their brand/product knowledge, attitudes towards luxury and level of luxury product consumption and by the brand/product category (general or specific).

First of all, the analysis of existing LCS demonstrates that their target groups extend even to the *general population* of a particular cultural group or region. In addition, the analysis suggests that it is actually enough for a large part of LCS to target *luxury insiders*, who can be defined as respondents with some knowledge about luxury brands, products or product categories.

Luxury insiders consist of luxury and non-luxury consumers. Despite confusions over the definition and identification of *luxury consumers*, most researchers agree that a basic definition of luxury consumers must rely at least on their luxury consumption. Accordingly, a luxury consumer can be characterised as any person who has acquired several luxury products as defined above within the last few years, which implies that this person also has some knowledge of the luxury segment or at least about specific luxury brands, products or product categories. However, because "access to luxury is no longer a dichotomous state, but a matter of degree" (Dubois and Laurent 1995, p. 69), it is not enough to differentiate only between *non-luxury consumers* (the excluded), who consume none or very few luxury products and luxury consumers, who comprise a hard to compare spectrum from once-in-a-while to day-to-day luxury consumers. Therefore, they are differentiated by their level of luxury consumption into three major segments including the excursionists, (regular) luxury consumers, and heavy luxury consumers. *Excursionists* can be defined as consumers who purchase mainly accessible luxury products from time to time, a term which applies to a large proportion of consumers in developed countries. The term luxury consumer generally refers to the medium segment of consumers who belong mainly to the upper middle class and frequently acquire accessible and sometimes also exceptional luxury products. The highest end of luxury consumers is represented by the segment of *heavy luxury consumers*, who dispose of an outstanding amount of income and a net worth of at least one million Euros. They consume both accessible and exceptional luxury products extensively (c.f. Dubois and Laurent 1996, p. 470; Heine 2009, p. 4).

The target groups of luxury insiders, luxury and non-luxury consumers usually refer generally to the luxury segment, but can be differentiated by the brand/product category from *brand, product or product category-specific segments*.

In addition, these target groups can also be further differentiated by their *attitudes towards luxury* into genuine and sceptical segments. This allows the general segment of luxury consumers to be complemented with the sub segment of *genuine luxury consumers*, which corresponds with the typical notion of a luxury consumer as a person who has some knowledge about the luxury segment, positive attitudes towards luxury brands and products and likes consuming them at present and in the future. In contrast to this, *sceptical insiders or consumers* have rather negative attitudes towards luxury brands and products. Sceptical consumers might receive luxury products as gifts, buy them out of habit or for reasons other than the common motives of luxury consumption. Accordingly, non-luxury consumers split into the *distant non-luxury consumers* (named according to Dubois, Czellar, and Laurent 2005, p. 120), who are skeptical towards luxury products and also do not aspire to consume them, and *potential luxury consumers* (or *aspirers*), who have positive attitudes and aspire to consume luxury products when they can afford them later in life.

For many studies it is *essential to also differentiate the target groups according to their attitudes*, which is demonstrated by the study of Dubois and Duquesne (1993, p. 38). They investigated the specific value preferences of luxury consumers by comparing general luxury and non-luxury consumers, who were identified only by their level of consumption. Hence, they ignored on the one hand that luxury consumption does not necessarily rely on values and that values on the other hand may also explain future luxury consumption as they refer to future goals in life. Therefore, their sample of luxury consumers was contaminated by sceptical luxury consumers who actually do not want or even dislike luxury products and their comparison group of non-luxury consumers was

contaminated with potential luxury consumers such as students who aspire to consume luxury products when they can afford them later in life. The resulting bias of the results could have been prevented with a comparison between distant non-luxury consumers and genuine luxury consumers (c.f. Heine and Trommsdorff 2010a, p. 11).

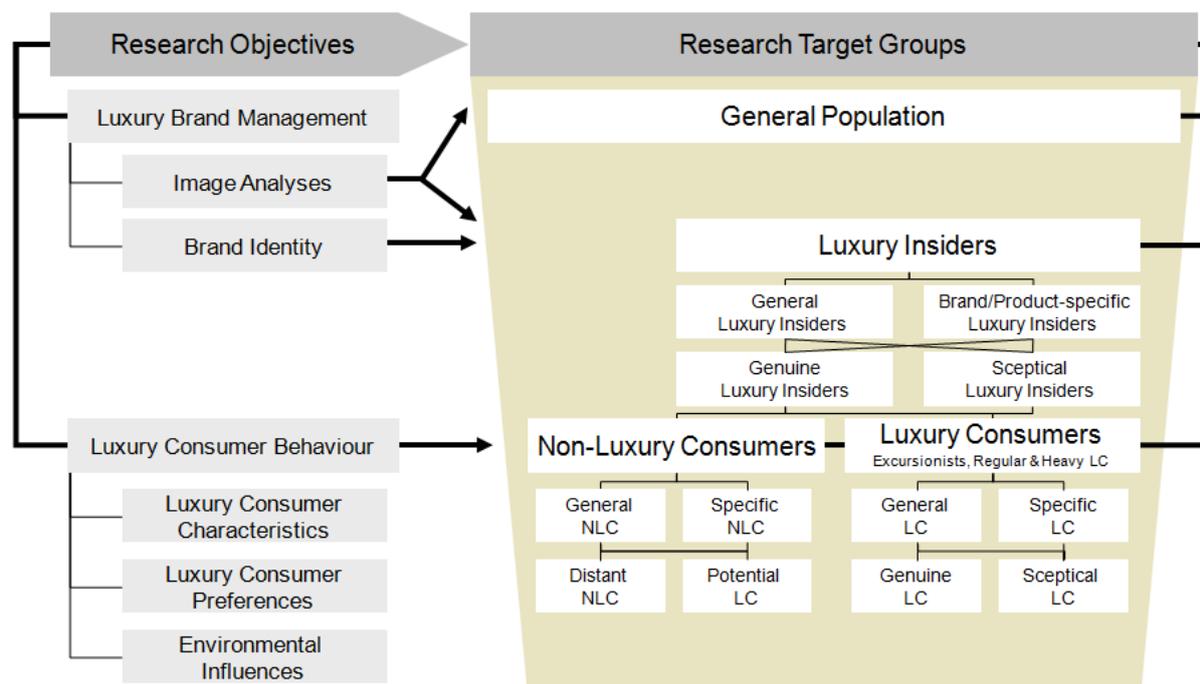


Figure 1: Relationships between research objectives and target groups of luxury consumer surveys

Figure 1 illustrates *adequate target groups for the major research objectives*. For instance, image analyses cover the widest scope of target groups ranging from the general population (e.g. the population of Germany) to niche segments (e.g. luxury consumers in Berlin). Studies about luxury brand identity require at least luxury insiders, who have some knowledge about the object of investigation. Not surprisingly, studies on luxury consumer behaviour usually require actual luxury consumers or even genuine luxury consumers and sometimes also (distant) non-luxury consumers as a comparison group. Studies on future luxury consumer preferences usually also cover potential luxury consumers. Based on this, the subsequent paragraph describes the methods for the identification of these LCS target groups.

2.4 Identification of target groups for luxury consumer surveys

2.4.1 Overview about the identification methods

Based on the analysis of existing LCS, *three major methods of participant identification* can be differentiated, which include the following:

- *Approximation:* According to this method, LCS target groups are identified by variables correlated with luxury consumption such as income or wealth, membership of certain organizations, education or profession (e.g. students as potential luxury consumers; c.f. Neese and Hult 1996, p. 49).
- *Luxury Consumption Scale:* The basic definition of luxury consumers suggests identifying them by their actual luxury consumption. For this purpose, respondents can be asked to select items from a catalogue of luxury brands or products that they have consumed within a given time period (e.g. with brands by Dubois and Laurent 1993, p. 59; Prendergast and Wong 2003, p. 160; Nia and Zaichkowsky 2000, p. 488 and with products by Dubois and Duquesne 1993, p. 39). Such catalogues of luxury brands or products can be referred to as luxury consumption scales. They vary in their scope of product categories ranging from even just a single product or product category (e.g. Neese and Hult 1996, p. 49) or a small set of products (Sukhdial et al 1995, p. 12; Tsai 440; Vickers and Renand 2003, p. 468) to a comprehensive selection representing the whole luxury segment.

- *Luxury Affection Scale*: Participants of LCS can also be identified by a Likert Scale covering cognitive (knowledge-related), affective (attitudes-related) and connotative (consumption-related) statements. As the affective statements constitute the major enhancement when compared to the consumption scale, it can be referred to as luxury affection scale.

Because of their relevance, the luxury product consumption and affection scales will be discussed in detail in the subsequent paragraphs.

2.4.2 The luxury consumption scale

The most recognised approach for the identification of general luxury consumers originates from Dubois and Duquesne (1993, p. 38 et seq.), who compiled a catalogue of the *major luxury product categories*. As it is far more revealing if someone buys an expensive car than a bottle of champagne, it is differentiated between accessible and exceptional luxury products. However, this product catalogue *does not fit today's market conditions anymore* in terms of price levels and product categories. Therefore, it was up-dated for the purpose of a recent LCS (c.f. Heine and Trommsdorff 2010a, p. 10).

As a prerequisite, an adequate *categorization of luxury product categories* was developed based on an analysis of existing categorizations in business and scientific literature (e.g. Allèrès 2003, p. 86; Britt 2006, p. 2; Catarède 2003, p. 60; Giraud et al. 1995, p.6; McKinsey 1990, p. 15). Figure 2 presents the resulting categorization.

Products		Services
Fashion Products	Delicacies	35. Retailing
1. Clothing	18. Foods	Experiences
2. Shoes	Beverages	
3. Bags & Luggage	19. Champagne	36. Restaurants
4. Fashion Accessories (e.g. belts)	20. Wine	37. Hotels
5. Cosmetics & Perfume	21. Spirits	38. Traveling
Body Decoration	22. Publications	39. Entertainment
6. Jewelry	Interior Decoration	40. Clubs & Communities
7. Watches		23. Furniture
8. Stationary (e.g. pens)	24. Kitchen Equipment	42. Education
9. Personal Accessories (e.g. pipes)	Table Decoration	43. Financial Services
Mobile Electronics	25. Porcelain & Stoneware	44. Consultancy (e.g. architects, interior designers)
10. Communication Devices	26. Silverware	
11. Laptops	27. Crystal & Glassware	45. Personal Services
12. Cameras	28. Bathroom Equipment	
Means of Transportation	29. Lamps	B2B Products & Services
13. Bikes	30. Interior Electronics / Audio / Video	
14. Automobiles & Motorcycles	31. Musical Instruments	
15. Boats / Yachts	32. Household Fabrics & Carpets	
16. Aircraft	33. Interior Accessories	
17. Sport & Leisure Equipment	34. Garden Furnishing	

Figure 2: Categorization of luxury product categories

Based on the categorization of luxury product categories, the original luxury consumption scale was adapted and extended. As shown in figure 3, the basic consumption scale concentrates on products, but could be easily complemented with services as well. According to Dubois and Duquesne (1993, p. 39) a non-luxury consumer is defined as a person who has neither consumed an accessible nor an exceptional luxury product. A luxury consumer is defined as any person who has bought or received at least three accessible luxury products within the last two years and two exceptional luxury products within the last three years.

2.4.3 The luxury affection scale

The development of a luxury affection scale was based on the conceptual groundwork, existing literature (e.g. Dubois and Laurent 2005, p. 117; Heine and Trommsdorff 2010a, p. 11) and a recent LCS (Heine and Trommsdorff 2010b), which also serves as a basis for the case study on VPA in section 3.

The scale consists of eight items covering cognitive, affective and connotative statements. Figure 4 displays these statements including their German originals in cursive characters. All together, 3,037 respondents rated these statements on a Seven-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to

“strongly agree“. The elimination of inconsistent data sets led to a net sample of n=2,681. Compared to the general public, this convenient sample includes a larger proportion of young people (65% are below 30), women (56%) and people with a high level of education (about 85% passed at least their A-levels). A factor analysis of all statements using principal components analysis and varimax rotation led to a single-factor solution with an explained variance of 73%. The scale has a decent reliability with a Cronbachs Alpha of .948 and item-scale-correlations for each statement of at least .762 (negative statements were reverse-scored).

Accessible Luxury Products	Exceptional Luxury Products
(1) Please indicate which of the following products from a luxury brand you bought or received over the course of the last two years.	(2) Please indicate which of the following products from a luxury brand you bought or received over the course of the last three years.
<input type="checkbox"/> A scarf or tie worth more than 50€	<input type="checkbox"/> A piece of clothing worth more than 500€
<input type="checkbox"/> Another piece of clothing of a luxury brand for 100€-500€	<input type="checkbox"/> At least one more piece of clothing of a luxury brand worth more than 500€
<input type="checkbox"/> At least one more piece of clothing of a luxury brand for 100€-500€	<input type="checkbox"/> An article of jewellery worth more than 500€
<input type="checkbox"/> A leather good worth more than 200€	<input type="checkbox"/> A watch worth more than 5,000€
<input type="checkbox"/> Cosmetics or perfume worth more than 40€	<input type="checkbox"/> A mobile phone worth more than 2,000€
<input type="checkbox"/> An article of jewellery for 150€-500€	<input type="checkbox"/> Hi-fi stereo or video equipment worth more than 2,500€
<input type="checkbox"/> A watch for 400€-5000€	<input type="checkbox"/> A piece of furniture worth more than 5,000€
<input type="checkbox"/> A pen or lighter worth more than 100€	<input type="checkbox"/> Silverware worth more than 500€
<input type="checkbox"/> A bottle of champagne or wine worth more than 30€	<input type="checkbox"/> Porcelain worth more than 1,500€
<input type="checkbox"/> None of the above products	<input type="checkbox"/> An Automobile worth more than 60,000€
	<input type="checkbox"/> A sailing or motor yacht worth more than 300,000€
	<input type="checkbox"/> None of the above products

Figure 3: The luxury consumption scale source: based on Dubois and Duquesne 1993, p. 39

Category	Statements	Factor loadings	Item-Scale-Correlations
Cognitive	I know many luxury brands. <i>Ich kenne eine Vielzahl von Luxusmarken.</i>	.816	.762
	I DON'T know much about luxury brands and their products. <i>Ich weiß NICHT viel über Luxusmarken und -produkte.</i>	.833	.782
Affective	I am interested in products from luxury brands. <i>Ich interessiere mich für Luxusmarken und -produkte.</i>	.895	.856
	I feel attracted by luxury brands and products. <i>Ich fühle mich zu Luxusmarken und -produkten hingezogen.</i>	.897	.858
	I DON'T like luxury brands and products. <i>Ich mag Luxusmarken und -produkte NICHT.</i>	.855	.806
	It is important to me to consume products from luxury brands (in future). <i>Es ist mir wichtig, Produkte von Luxusmarken (in Zukunft) zu besitzen.</i>	.841	.788
Connotative	I regularly consume products from luxury brands. <i>Ich kaufe regelmäßig Produkte von Luxusmarken.</i>	.826	.772
	I want to consume products from luxury brands (also) in the future. <i>Ich beabsichtige (auch) in Zukunft Produkte von Luxusmarken zu konsumieren.</i>	.883	.842

Figure 4: The luxury consumption scale

2.4.4 Applicability of the identification methods

The *selection and adaptation* of an identification method depends on the LCS target group, which is illustrated in figure 5. Approximation is common for the identification of (potential) luxury and non-luxury consumers, but could also be used for the identification of luxury insiders. The luxury consumption scale is usually employed for the identification of luxury and non-luxury consumers, but could be adapted for potential luxury consumers by asking for purchase intentions and for brand/product-specific luxury consumers by changing the scope of the product catalogue. The luxury

affection scale is the only method for the identification of genuine and sceptical luxury consumers and can be adapted for the identification of any of the other LCS target groups. For instance, general luxury insiders could be identified by using only the cognitive statements and potential luxury consumers could be identified by adapting or deleting the connotative statement about present luxury consumption. In addition, the scale could also be easily adapted to specific categories such as luxury fashion or cars.

Compared to the luxury scales, *approximation* requires less effort and is therefore a popular, but still inaccurate method. Many studies rely on big earners or students to represent (potential) luxury consumers. Dubois and Duquesne (1993) found out that luxury consumption is explained to a large extent by value preferences, which implies that many big earners do not belong to the segment of luxury consumers. Vigneron and Johnson (2004, p. 492) try to justify the *suitability of student samples* for LCS by their popularity. However, there is evidence that “students are not typical consumers and [should not] be used as surrogates for real consumers” (Christodoulides et al. 2009, p. 399; c.f. James and Sonner 2001), which seems even more evident for the specific target group of luxury consumers. As many students have neither interest nor experience in luxury consumption and might never become luxury consumers, it is obviously inappropriate to target them by the approximation method to represent (potential) luxury consumers. However, the differentiation of research objectives and target groups of LCS provides *several opportunities to employ students* for these surveys. Indeed, many LCS require only luxury insiders, who can also be identified by the luxury affection scale within the student segment. In addition, the scales can even be used to identify actual luxury consumers within that group.

Target Groups	Identification Methods					
	Approximation by correlated variables	Luxury Consumption Scale		Luxury Affection Scale		
		Purchase	Purchase Intention	Cognitive	Affective	Conno-tative
Luxury Insiders	Yes			Yes		
Genuine				Yes	Yes	
Sceptical				Yes	Yes	
Luxury Consumers	Yes	Yes				Yes
Genuine				Yes		
Sceptical				Yes		
Non-Luxury Consumers	Yes	Yes				
Distant NLC					Yes	
Potential LC	Yes		Yes		Yes	

Figure 5: Relationships between target groups and identification methods (source: literature analysis)

After the identification of respondents, the next challenge is to motivate them to participate in a LCS. This will be discussed in the next paragraph with a focus on its core target group of luxury consumers.

3. Motivation of participants for luxury consumer surveys

3.1 Methods of participant motivation

The primary objective of these methods is to *increase the survey response rate*. According to the *hierarchy-of-effects model* by Helgeson, Voss, and Terpening (2002, p. 309) this requires researchers to motivate potential respondents to pass five essential phases including the (1) *attention* for the survey, (2) *intention* of survey participation, (3) *completion* of the survey, (4) *return* of the completed questionnaire (which is not critical for online surveys) and (5) *interest in the results*, which can influence future survey-response behaviour. Another objective of participant motivation is to increase the *data quality* by reducing the selection, measurement and non-response errors that can cause

biased samples and results. The selection error occurs if some members of the target population are less likely to be included in the sample than others and can lead to differences in the characteristics (and answers) between the respondents and the target population. The measurement error (inaccurate answers) and the non-response error (missing answers from possibly dissenting non-respondents) can be caused by the measurement instrument (e.g. unclear questions) and its impact on the respondents (e.g. on their understanding of the questions and their motivation; c.f. Dillman 2007, p. 11).

As a basis for the discussion of motivation strategies for luxury consumers, the *common practice of participant motivation* was explored with an analysis of A-level marketing journals, which covered all articles (255 in total) that were published in the Journal of Marketing, the Journal of Consumer Research and the Journal of Marketing Research between June 2008 and September 2009. All together, 91% of the articles include empirical studies (2.6 on average and 602 in total), which rely to a greater extent (61%) on student samples. About one in ten studies (12%) relies on non-reactive methods so that participant motivation is of no consideration. Only a small proportion of the studies (8%) contains explicit information about the participant acquisition and motivation, which suggests that this is still not seen as an essential aspect of research methodology. However, this analysis allows for the development of a *categorization of common methods of participant motivation*, which is illustrated in figure 6. First of all, they can be distinguished into intrinsic and extrinsic motivating methods. *Intrinsic motivating methods* include *awakening curiosity and interest* of potential respondents in the subject, creating questionnaires that allow them *to have fun or be entertained* or give them the opportunity to be heard and *to express their opinion*.

Extrinsic motivating methods can be further differentiated into promising incentives (i.e. positive consequence) and *threatening with negative consequences*. The latter includes for instance threatening students with negative consequences for their studies. The use of any form of monetary or non-monetary *incentive* was mentioned in more than half of the surveys (54%). About one third of the surveys (35%) rely on *monetary incentives*, which comprise *product samples or gifts* (used by 7% of all surveys and often include sweets or small utility products), *money and vouchers* (used by 21% of the surveys) and the chance to win a prize in a *lottery* (used by 7% of the surveys). The level of monetary rewards depends on the university and ranges mainly from 2 to 10 US\$. *Non-monetary incentives* cover an *appraisal for help*, *additional university credits*, *information about the study results* and *possibilities to increase the respondents' prestige*, which includes mentioning them as experts in any publication about the study. A large part of student-based surveys (41%) rely on additional credits. Even if it might actually be more common in practice, providing study results was mentioned in only 5% of the surveys. In very few cases respondents receive personalized study results or even an invitation to a seminar about the study results.

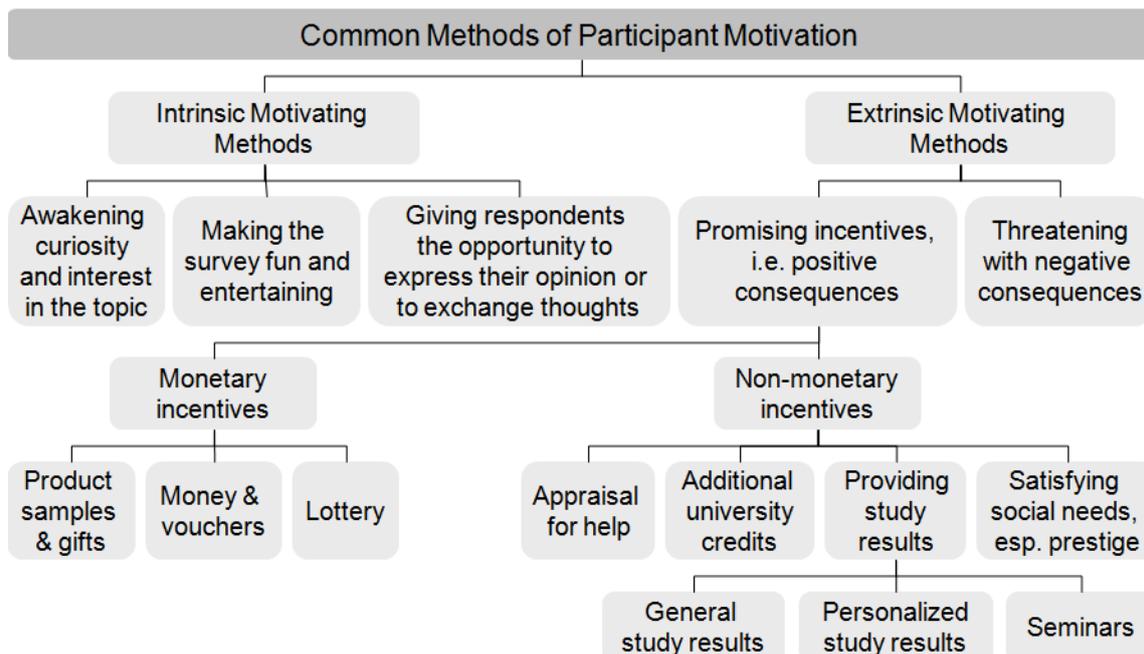


Figure 6: Common methods of participant motivation

3.2 Motivation strategies for luxury consumers

Even if not mentioned explicitly, the analysis suggests that most LCS rely at least implicitly on the respondents' *willingness to help* the researcher, which makes it the reference for the evaluation of all other methods. This strategy builds on the theory of cognitive dissonance, which constitutes that people participate in a survey in order to avoid the state of discomfort that would be caused by their non-compliance with the social norm of supporting someone who asked for help (c.f. Furse and Stewart 1984, p. 81 et seqq.). This implies that the response rate can be increased with an explicit appeal for help in the survey invitation. The data quality benefits from cooperative respondents who are likely to answer the questionnaire accurately. Therefore, Sukhdial et al. (1995, p. 12) use this strategy as a quality criterion for their study: "beyond an appeal to help the researchers, respondents were not offered any other incentive to complete the surveys." An effective way to inspire respondents' willingness to help is any form of *personal contact*, which includes survey invitations by phone or possibly even in person (c.f. Nia and Zaichkowsky 2000, p.488; Prendergast and Wong 2003, p. 160; Matthiesen and Phau 2005, p. 320; Vickers and Renand 2003, p. 468; Wong and Zaichkowsky 1999, p. 313).

On a first glance, *monetary incentives* seem promising for the acquisition of luxury consumers for empirical studies. Indeed, they are common for LCS (e.g. Neese and Hult 1996, p. 50) and especially for commercial surveys. This strategy builds on the *social exchange theory*, which constitutes that potential respondents choose whether to participate in a survey based on a comparison of its expected costs and benefits (c.f. Dillman 1978, p. 12 et seqq.). Accordingly, the motivation for survey participation should be stimulated by decreasing its costs such as the required time and by increasing its benefits for instance with monetary incentives. While they generally have a positive impact on the response rate (c.f. Groves, Presser, and Dipko 2004, p. 4), there is much evidence to suggest that they can also decrease people's motivation. For instance, most people would help their neighbours to carry a sofa up the stairs if they were asked for a favour, but not if they were offered a little lump sum of 50 Cent. Accordingly, the study of Deci (1971, p. 107 et seqq.) demonstrates that monetary incentives can cause the feeling of external control, divert (also originally intrinsic motivated) participants from their original motivations and make them reconsider the costs and benefits of their survey participation. As monetary incentives are usually quite moderate, the resulting cost-benefit ratio is considered as unattractive by many potential respondents and especially by wealthy luxury consumers. Therefore, monetary incentives might discourage especially luxury consumers from participating in a survey and therefore decrease the response rate. In addition, they might attract only a particular (lower) segment of the target population and even some role-playing survey work professionals, which can increase the selection and non-response errors. Even if real luxury consumers still participate, monetary incentives might motivate them to improve their cost-benefit ratio by answering not as accurately, but as quickly as possible. This is supported by Gistri and Pace (2010, p. 8) who complained that many respondents focused especially on the monetary incentives, which increased the measurement error and even made a big part of their data set unusable. However, the level of monetary incentives that would really motivate luxury consumers simply outstrips the budget of most researchers.

Another tempting approach to increase the response rate might be to enforce students to answer a questionnaire. Because of their negative impact on the intrinsic motivation and ultimately on the data quality (c.f. Deci 1971, p. 105), *threatening with negative consequences* should be reincorporated through promising positive consequences such as *additional university credits* (e.g. Neese and Hult 1996, p. 49). Kemp (1998, p. 594) complemented this approach with monetary incentives for his students not to participate in his study, but to find adequate participants (c.f. Christodoulide et al. 2009, p. 399; Tsai 2005, p. 440), which helps to prevent the negative impact of monetary incentives on actual respondents. Moreover, this demonstrates that LCS could benefit by relying not on the often non-existing purchase experience of students, but rather on their social network. According to this idea, *student-accelerated snowball sampling* integrates the acquisition of non-student respondents as practical work in student seminars. For instance, students were instructed in a seminar on luxury consumer behaviour to recruit heavy luxury consumers mainly from their circle of acquaintances (Heine 2009, p. 28). By selecting a very mixed group of students, it is likely to obtain a sample that covers a broad variety of personality types. Besides this, this approach can enhance the motivation of potential respondents as it allows them to help not just an unfamiliar researcher, but also someone they know. The resulting sample covered an arrogant and awe-inspiring football manager, who would have never spent his time on a scientific survey for any another reason than accommodating his daughter's wish, who was friends with one of the students. This shows that another benefit of this

approach is to provide access to luxury consumer segments which are difficult-to-reach or even inaccessible with a more direct approach. Although students are motivated by course credits, the acquisition of the actual respondents also relies on the appraisal for help in the end. However, studies about the value preferences of luxury consumers indicate that helping someone is usually not their maxim in life (Heine and Trommsdorff 2010a, p. 13). These insights and the disadvantages of monetary incentives suggest thinking about some intrinsic motivating strategies that focus on the attractiveness of the measurement process and on other non-monetary incentives that could convince luxury consumers to participate in a survey in the best case scenario because they simply like it and because it is in their own interest. As this idea coincides with the notion of viral marketing, it seems promising to adapt this concept for Viral Participant Acquisition (VPA). Therefore, the next section introduces the concept of viral marketing and presents a case study about the implementation of VPA.

4. Viral participant acquisition

4.1 Characteristics of viral marketing

Jurvetson (2000) first coined the term of viral marketing in 1997 and *defined* it as “network-enhanced word of mouth”. It aims to animate potential consumers to propagate a product to their acquaintances on the Internet and to employ their resources such as their personal network, time and communication equipment. Successful viral marketing campaigns spread information exponentially between people. This requires the creation of a teaser, which attracts initial attention from the target group and offers them a real benefit, which encourages them to participate in the campaign and even to tell others about it in their own interest. People participate in viral marketing campaigns for fun or because of curiosity and interest, but also because of extrinsic motivations, which include cultivating contacts, making someone a little present or enhancing their prestige and social self-image (c.f. Langner 2007, p. 27).

4.2 Overview about the survey

The objective of this study was to analyse traits and dimensions of the luxury brand personality. The online questionnaire was organized as follows: After an introduction, respondents were asked about their awareness of and affection for different luxury fashion brands and to complete the luxury affection scale. In the main section, they had to rate on a seven-point Likert scale several brands on about 50 personality traits. In addition, they were asked to rank their value priorities and to indicate some common demographic information. The target group of this study was luxury insiders.

4.3 The implementation of viral participant acquisition

Principle I: Attract the Attention of the Target Group with an eye-catching Teaser

According to the hierarchy-of-effects model by Helgeson, Voss, and Terpening (2002, p. 309), the first step of VPA is to awaken the target group’s attention and interest in the topic. For a teaser to become viral, it is usually effective to use some emotional and especially humorous or even provocative content (Phelps et al. 2004, p. 338). Accordingly, a set of seven teasers was developed (see figure 7). Adequate images can be found in any online library for royalty-free pictures (such as pixelio.de). The teasers contain an introduction to the topic with a stimulating question or quote and an invite to the “The Great Luxury Study” (originally in German). However, they have a very different style in order to attract various personality types and to meet the tastes of the major luxury consumer segments, which were identified in an earlier study and cover traditional, status-oriented and non-conform consumers (c.f. Heine and Trommsdorff 2010a, p. 13). VPA builds on various online communication channels. First of all, survey invitations were emailed to potential respondents containing a motivating text, a teaser and of course a link to the questionnaire. In addition, these invitations were placed in forums, newsgroups and social networking platforms.

Principle II: Create a Benefit that makes People willing to participate in their own Interest

According to the social exchange theory, the success of a viral participant acquisition campaign relies on the target groups’ evaluation of its cost-benefit ratio. Besides decreasing their costs such as the required efforts to access the questionnaire, the focus of this step is to increase their benefits, which should be attractive enough to motivate potential respondents to pass through all further phases of the hierarchy-of-effects model. For this purpose, an entertaining questionnaire design was developed

by using brand logos and inspiring, varying and also Flash-animated questions, which should encourage the intrinsic motivation of respondents. On top of this, respondents received a detailed personalized evaluation directly at the end of the questionnaire as a non-monetary incentive, which should encourage also their extrinsic motivation. Online survey software usually offers a great choice of question types, but only a few possibilities to display survey results to the respondents (as this is still not common). However, existing functions still allows the creation of personalized evaluations, which should offer an adequate balance between scientific-based results and entertainment. The evaluation section starts with an overview about the research objectives and relevant results of previous studies. The next screen displays a personalized value profile in a radar chart according to Schwartz (2006, p. 2) and some further explanations. The subsequent screen introduces the concept of luxury brand personality followed by a personal profile of brand personality preferences, which provides respondents with some guidance for their next shopping trips. Entertaining features include a statement about their personal predisposition to suffer from a serious luxury addiction and an amusing description of their specific luxury consumer type with about 500 potential combinations.

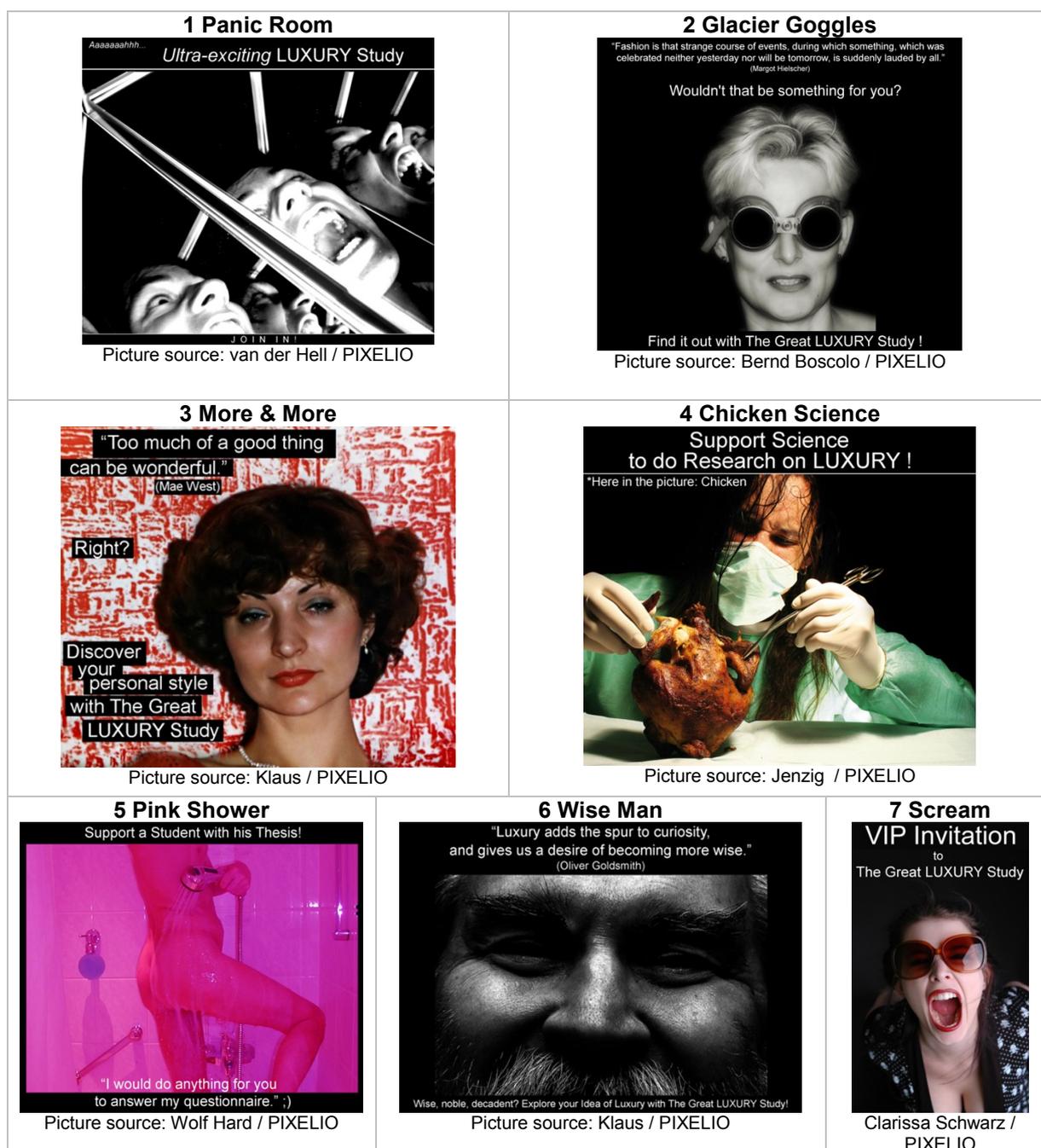


Figure 7: Teasers for viral participant acquisition

Principle III: Trigger a Network Virus by Motivating Respondents to even recruit Others

According to the idea of viral marketing, respondents should be employed to also support participant acquisition in exchange for the opportunity to satisfy any social need such as prestige. As a prerequisite, the overall benefit must meet or even exceed the expectations of the respondents. Based on this, the key task of this step is to reduce their costs such as time and effort for sharing the benefit with others. Therefore, survey invitations were promoted by email and Internet postings, which can be easily shared and discussed with other people. In addition, the questionnaire was complemented with a recommendation form, which allowed respondents to select a teaser, to add some personal greetings and to invite their friends to the study. The respondents and their email addresses appeared as the originators of these invitations. This practice also has a positive impact on the response rate because people tend to open emails from friends, but often ignore messages from unknown senders (Phelps et al. 2004, p. 338).

4.4 Evaluation of viral participant acquisition for luxury consumer surveys

The impact of VPA on the response rate was tested with an initial mailing to a sample of 1,011 university alumni. It was sent out in 16 different versions covering four combinations with or without personal evaluation and (seven different) teasers. The mailing software registered a delivery failure rate of about 6% (61 recipients) and a rate of opened emails of about 41% (389 people opened the email). The response rate is defined as the ratio of the number of completed questionnaires and opened emails, which amounts in total to 38% (149 completed questionnaires).

Email Version	Opened emails	Completed questionnaires			Response rates		
		Total	Non-target group	Target group	Total	Non-target group	Target group
without evaluation	192	66	37	29	34%	19%	15%
with evaluation	197	83	29	54	42%	15%	27%
without teaser	87	29	14	15	33%	16%	17%
with teaser	302	120	52	68	40%	17%	23%
no teaser and no evaluation	45	15	11	4	33%	24%	9%
teaser and no evaluation	147	51	26	25	35%	18%	17%
no teaser and evaluation	42	14	3	11	33%	7%	26%
teaser and evaluation	155	69	25	44	45%	16%	29%
 Wise Man	39	19	7	12	49%	18%	31%
 Glacier Goggles	51	24	9	15	47%	18%	29%
 Scream	51	19	5	14	37%	10%	27%
 Pink Shower	41	17	6	11	41%	14%	27%
 Chicken Science	42	14	6	8	33%	14%	19%
 More & More	37	9	4	5	25%	11%	14%
 Panic Room	41	18	13	5	44%	32%	12%

Figure 8: The Impact of VPA on the response rate

As shown in figure 8, the response rate for mailings including a teaser is 40% (120 completed questionnaires), while it is just 33% (29) for mailings without a teaser. In addition, it is 34% (66) for study invitations that did not promise an evaluation as compared to 42% (83) for mailings promising an evaluation. Since the sample has to be cleaned from non-target group respondents, the adequate net response rate refers to the ratio of completed questionnaires from the target group of luxury insiders and opened emails while delivering some surprising insights: The reference value is a net response rate of 9% for standard emails without either a teaser or an evaluation. With the help of teasers, it nearly doubles to 17%. However, for email versions including an evaluation, the teaser

makes only a relatively small difference of about 3% (from 26% to 29%). Compared to the standard version, providing an evaluation triples the response rate to 26% or even 29% if also combined with a teaser. The impact of VPA partly evens out for the general sample since teasers and evaluations have a negative impact on the response rate of non-target group recipients. While there is a response rate of 24% for the standard version, it decreases to 18% for mailings with teasers and to only 7% when combined with promising an evaluation. The social exchange theory helps to explain these seemingly paradoxical results: Offering non-luxury insiders a luxury style counselling might divert them from their original motivation of "helping someone" to "receiving an incentive", which they could perceive as an uninteresting lump sum. On the contrary, luxury insiders are much more interested in the topic and therefore might perceive personalized evaluations as a more valuable benefit. However, standard emails also led to reasonable response rates, which show that the willingness to help is also still a major reason for luxury consumers to participate in scientific surveys. Accordingly, the appeal to help should not be substituted, but complemented with VPA. Besides that, the net response rate varies depending on the teaser. For example, it ranges from only 12% for the "Panic Room" to 31% for the "Wise Man" teaser. These figures reveal that teasers can even cause a negative effect on the response rate. However, teasers with a relatively low response rate should not be necessarily eliminated as they might help to prevent narrow sampling by attracting a broader range of personality types. Moreover, there is also some evidence that VPA triggers some word-of-mouth, as about one in seven respondents recommended the study to at least one friend and almost 40% of them subsequently completed the questionnaire. All together, these results demonstrate that VPA has a positive impact on the overall response rate and an even stronger impact on the response rate of the actual target group of luxury insiders, which makes it especially suitable for LCS. VPA actually has the potential to trigger the respondents' intrinsic motivation by its creative survey design and their extrinsic motivation for instance by providing them with opportunities to help someone, to gain prestige in their social network and to receive personalized evaluations. In contrast to most other extrinsic motivating methods and especially to monetary incentives, personalized evaluations allow the objectives of researchers and respondents to be complementary. Respondents are motivated to answer the questionnaire accurately as they would like to receive meaningful evaluations. This suggests that VPA also has a positive impact on the data quality. On the contrary, VPA might still cause selection and non-response errors as it relies on the self-selection of respondents. However, these errors also occur with monetary incentives, but are reduced by incorporating a variety of motivation methods and a mixed set of teasers, which attracts a big variety of personality types.

5. Conclusions

The conceptual part of the paper contributes a categorization of research objectives, target groups and identification methods of LCS, which has led to some major implications: It clarified that it is actually acceptable for many LCS to target luxury insiders, the prerequisite being some knowledge about luxury, but no extensive consumption experience. Although it demonstrated that it's inappropriate to infer a relatively high level of (future) luxury consumption from the occupational category of students, it proposed two strategies for the use of students for LCS. Besides the possibility to improve student samples with reasonable effort by using the luxury scales to identify luxury insiders or consumers within that group, this also includes the use of their network by student-accelerated snowball sampling. In addition, the paper also contributes a discussion of the means of participant motivations for LCS, suggesting that (moderate) monetary incentives are mostly neither effective nor necessary for LCS as there are promising non-monetary incentives and intrinsic-motivating methods. This led to the idea of viral participant acquisition, which aims to create an inner desire for luxury consumers to participate in a survey and even to convince their acquaintances to participate as well. However, this requires researchers to not only think about what respondents could do for them, but also about what they could do for the respondents in exchange for their participation. The case study illustrates the implementation and benefits of VPA and provides some guidance and inspiration to exploit the varied opportunities of the Web X.0 for future LCS.

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