

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF HOW WOMEN EXPERIENCE AND UNDERSTAND LUXURY IN SPORT SHOES AND THEIR PURCHASE INTENTION TOWARDS IT

By:

Bunga Annisa Lenanta

Supervisor:

Taufiq Ismail, SE., SS., MM

Abstract

The purposes of this research are to define the meaning of luxury sport shoes and to construct concept of women purchase intention towards luxury sport shoes. The background of this research is based on the phenomena found in the field of fitness lifestyle, where women show unique buying behavior of sport shoes, in which mostly preferably by men. This research done using phenomenological method through five steps of analysis: epoche, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, textural and structural description, and synthesis of meaning. Further, finding of the research also tied up with theories. Data collection method was done through in-depth interview and observation. The result revealed the meaning of luxury in sport shoes, which is because of its expensiveness that constructed by the price, exclusivity, brand, and appearance. It also found that women purchase intention towards luxury sport shoes are defined in three steps. First is the utilitarian intention with the most participants, second is the hedonic intention, and the third with the lowest number of participants is the conspicuous intention. In which drawn in triangle shape. Further findings also revealed that reference group has major influence to women purchase intention toward luxury sport shoes.

Key Words: *Phenomenology, purchase intention, women, luxury, reference group*

I. Introduction

Fitness as a lifestyle has become trend worldwide, proved by the increasing number fitness clubs worldwide according to statista.com (2016). As it shows 133.560 fitness clubs in 2010, in 2016 the number of fitness clubs worldwide has jumped to 201.070. In Malang based on article on Radar Malang, 9 January 2016, fitness has become current

trend in the society. The large number of fitness center in Malang including gym, aerobic studio, zumba studio, yoga studio, and belly dance studio proves it, it reaches approximately 30 fitness centers.

This growing lifestyle trend is an important opportunity for sportswear marketers. As the active lifestyle increase, the consumption of

sportswear apparels also increase. The global sportswear market was worth US\$263 billion in 2013 with a growth rate of 7 per cent and was expected to grow at a rate of 7.5 per cent through 2017 (Euromonitor International, 2013; Harrison, 2014 in Xu, 2015). Therefore several famous brands that sell sportswear apparel arise, namely, Nike, Adidas, Reebok, Puma, and Under Armour. As almost none of previous research is talking about luxury in sportswear, therefore this research aim to find the understanding whether there is a luxury in sportswear, which is expected, will beneficial for both researchers and marketers.

In order to understand the meaning of luxury, it is important to start the research in a fitness center which members have the ability to consume prestige and costly goods. One of fitness center in Malang that rewarded as the most favorite fitness center is Atlas Fitness Center. The reason of people chose Atlas Fitness Center are 59.50% based on facilities, 40.00% based on price, and 56.40% based on service. The cost of membership in Atlas Fitness Center is ranged from Rp 150.000 to Rp 250.000 per month, the cost that member has to pay is expensive compare to other fitness centers in Malang. Therefore, Atlas Fitness Center is chosen as the object of the research.

However, based on the observation in the field, women have large number of sport shoes. Another

interesting fact found by researcher shows that most of women have more sport shoes than men. Most of them owned 3-4 sport shoes in average. Therefore, the value of sports shoes for it 'functionality' has shifted into another meaning. It means that women buy sportswear products not only for its function but also for another reason as they enjoy, excited, and like to buy certain products by collecting it.

An interesting thing that need to be explored of phenomena happened in Atlas Fitness Center Malang is women purchase intention towards sport shoes. However, since this research want to understand luxury in sport sportswear and sport shoes is the object in this research, therefore, this research is focusing on understanding the luxury in sport shoes. Thus, Based on these research backgrounds, by exploring the understanding of luxury sport shoes brand among women in Atlas fitness Center members, it will be a starting point to conduct a research entitled **“A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF HOW WOMEN EXPERIENCE AND UNDERSTAND LUXURY IN SPORT SHOES AND THEIR PURCHASE INTENTION TOWARDS IT.”**

II. Literature Review

2.1 The Nature of Consumer Behavior

Hawkins and Mothersbaugh (2013) stated, “Individuals develop

self-concepts (their view of themselves) and subsequent lifestyle (how they live) based on variety of internal (mainly psychological and physical) and external (mainly sociological and demographic) influences". Therefore, these self-concepts and lifestyles produce needs and desires that motivate consumption that leads to satisfaction.

2.2 Gender

From evolutionary psychology perspective, males and females different problems in prehistory create the gender differences (Tifferet and Herstein, 2012). According to Croson and Gneezy (2009) gender differences have been observed in different of domains, including consumption.

Research done by Croson and Gneezy (2009) revealed that gender differences in risk taking are based on emotions and confident. As women and men has different emotional reaction, their reaction over certain situations are also differ related to the risk taking. Previous research indicates that women are more emotionally than men (Harshman and Oaivio, 1987 in Croson and Gneezy 2009). Therefore, it affects their perceptions of probability, women tend to feel fear and men tend to feel anger (Grossman and Wood, 1993 in Croson and Gneezy 2009). Not only emotion, the confident level of both women and men are different, men

are more confident than women, which leads to increased risk tolerance. In other hand, women have the sense of afraid of losing, thus women are more risk-averse.

According to Solomon *et al.*, (2006) gender influences products bought. Study shown that men tend to buy instrumental and leisure items impulsively, projecting independence and activity, while women tend to buy symbolic and self-expressive goods concerned with appearance and emotional aspects of self. Other research also found that men take more self oriented approach to buying clothing, stressing its use as expressive symbols of personality and functional benefits, whilst women have 'other-oriented' concerns, choosing to use clothes as symbols of their social and personal interrelatedness with others (Solomon *et al.*, 2006).

2.3 Purchase Intention

According to Howard (1991, p. 41), purchase intention is closely related to consumers' plans in making actual purchase in certain period of time. Purchase intention also can be described as the urge or motivation arising from consumers' minds to purchase a certain brand after they evaluate it before deciding to make any purchase based on their needs, attitudes, and perceptions towards the brands (McCarthy, 2002, p.298; Durianto& Liana, 2004, p. 44; Madahi&Sukati, 2012).

Purchase intention is the probability that customers in a certain purchasing situation choose a certain brand of a product category (Crosno *et al.*, 2009). Purchase intention refers to the subjective judgment by the consumers that is reflected after the general evaluation to buy a product or services (Dodds *et al.*, 1991; Chi *et al.*, 2009). For marketers, purchase intention is generally defined as forecasted consumer behavior, which is highly dependent on this purchase intention of the customers (Rizwan *et al.*, 2014). Purchase intention occurs when consumer forms a positive intention to buy and it becomes a commitment that the brand is positive and good. This may encourage consumer to make actual buying decision (Schiffman, Kanuk 2007:238)

2.4 Luxury

The name “luxury” comes from Latin origin found in more than 2000 years ago, which means “excess” (Kapferer and Laurent, 2015). Many researchers defined what makes goods as “luxury” goods. The definition stated that luxury goods are simply goods that consumed to get impression by others which show wealth and conspicuous consumption despite on its original value (Veblen 1899 in Brun and Castelli 2013). Twitchell (2003) in Brun and Castelli (2013) defined luxury in more simple definition as “things you have that I think you shouldn’t have”.

Hagtvedt and Patrick (2009) on their research conceptualized luxury brand as “one that has premium products, provides pleasure as central benefit, and connects with consumers on an emotional level”. Luxury brands also defined as higher price products compared to the functions (Mckinsey, 1990 in Roper, 2013). Reddy and Terblanche (2005) in Brun and Castelli (2013) divided luxury in two: first, luxury brand which have valued more for how the brand perceived rather than its functionality (e.g. Louis Vuitton), and second, those that valued equally due to its technical features (e.g. Porsche vehicles).

Previous research by Husic and Cicic (2008) examining factor of luxury consumptions resulted in 1) brand image and quality; 2) fashion; 3) store atmosphere’ and 4) patron status.

The role of gender has been neglected and only little known about the role of gender for luxury brand consumption. Park (2014) stated that as the main consumers the fashion purchases, women have weakness in luxury. It is in line with the research conducted by Stokburger-and Sauer and Teichmann (2011) which resulted in woman attitude towards luxury brand is more positive than men’s, in addition women are more responsive to the uniqueness, hedonic, and status value of luxury brands.

2.5 The personality of Sportswear

Sportswear is unique as it is positioned between the fashion and sports industry (Tong and Su, 2015). Sportswear has become a popular clothing category among young people (Lau *et al.*, 2006 in Tong and Su, 2015). The demanded sportswear is sportswear which gives them comfort yet pleased them with smart look and fashionable when they do the exercise (Tong and Su (2015). In the consumption of sportswear based on Tong and Su (2015), the personality dimensions of sportswear are: 1) *Competence* in which the product is determined, confident, successful, and reliable. This personality fits to the top sportswear brands (Nike, Adidas, Reebok). 2) *Attractive* including up to date, popular, young and cool, and reflect the attractiveness of sportswear and celebrity-athletes that represents them. 3) *Sincerity* reflecting consumers' perception of high quality, high performance, and family oriented image such as honest, friendly, practical, and flexible. 4) *Innovation* dimension on Tong and Su (2015) refers to the being unique, modern, and innovative. 5) *Activity* dimensions explain the characteristic such as fast, active, discipline, and organize. 6) *Excitement* dimension give the sense of enthusiastic, fun, and cheerful in line to the capability of sportswear to generate interest. 7) *Ruggedness* dimension, including

tough, technical and sophisticated, suggests that sportswear brands are seen as outdoorsy and tough. This result comes as no surprise because sportswear products powered by cutting-edge technology and performance can protect people during their outdoor sports and activities.

The appearance of luxury sportswear into luxury fashion market done by conventional sport brand is occurring by co-branding with a well-known designer, for example Adidas teamed up with Stella McCartney and created Adidas Stella McCartney (Hoon *et al.*, 2016). Whereas luxury brand's attempt in entering sportswear markets is through the launching of new line of sportswear of their existing luxury brand (Hoon *et al.*, 2016).

III. RESEARCH METHOD

3.1 Phenomenology

This research used phenomenological approach. Phenomenology focuses on concept or phenomenon and people's experience toward a phenomenon (Creswell, 1998). Phenomenology is a phenomenon happens based on act done in consciously with individual perception as primary resource of knowledge (Moustakas, 1994). Kant (1966) in Moustakas (1994, p. 44) articulated three sources of knowledge: sense (phenomena empirically given in perception),

imagination (necessary to arrive at a synthesis of knowledge), and apperception (consciousness of the identity things).

3.2 Research Location

This research was conducted in Atlas Fitness Center Malang. The consideration of choosing the location is based on the observation of the researcher, Atlas Fitness Center members fits the criteria needed in the research in expectation to get worth information from proper informants.

3.3 Data collection Method

Data collection method used in this research were by conducting in-depth interview and observation. Observation is needed in the in-depth interview to understand some clues hidden, such as tone of voice, manner, or body language. Observation gives the researcher opportunity to explore further. For example, if the interviewee sounds doubtful, the interviewer could ask the reason of their doubtfulness. With observation, it can avoid the bias and can truly explore what's in participants' mind.

3.4 Informant Selection Method

This research is using purposive sampling to select the participants and by conducted criterion sample. Thus, to select proper participants, several criteria that must be fulfilled are: 1) Should be a woman member

of Atlas Fitness Center. 2) Having the most sport shoes among others, more than 5. 3) Having sport shoes from certain brand that consider as a luxury sportswear brand. 4) The chosen participants are those who are able to reflect their experience. 5) The chosen participate willingly to participate in this research and agreed to engage in the process until it finished.

3.5 Data Analysis Method

In phenomenological studies, researcher avoid from making suppositions, focuses on a specific topic freshly and naively, construct a question or problem to guide the study, and derives findings that will provide the basis for further research and reflection (Moustakas, 1994 p.47). Thus, several steps in phenomenological study reduction according to Moustakas (1994 p.84-101) are:

1. Epoche

Epoche is a Greek meaning to stay away from abstains (Husserl, 1931 in Moustakas, 1994 p.87). Epoche is the process of data analysis in which the researcher sets aside, as far as in humanly possible, all preconceived experiences to best understand the experiences of participants in the study (Moustakas, 1994). As a researcher who conducts phenomenological research, we let the experience and phenomena flow naturally as what it is (Moustakas, 1994).

2. Phenomenological reduction.

In phenomenological reduction, the task is that describing in textual language just what one sees, not only in terms of external object but also the internal act of consciousness, the experience as such, the rhythm and relationship between phenomenon and self (Moustakas, 1994).

3. Imaginative Variation

Imaginative variation is the action in which the researcher writes description of an experience, addressing how the phenomenon was experienced. It involves seeking all possible meanings, seeking divergent perspectives, and varying the frames of reference about the phenomenon or using imaginative variation (Moustakas, 1994).

4. Textural Description and Structural Description

The function of this step is to explain the findings of research, which begin with the textural description and followed by structural description. Textural description has purpose to explain initial findings of general ideas about object. Whereas structural description reveals structure from textural that connected with the context of the research so that could make the object more obvious and to give the meaning. This step occurs to present data into discussion of research findings. The method used by researcher to provide feasibility of research data is through Trustworthiness. Trustworthiness is a data presentation by quoting interview, observation, and

researcher's experience during the data collection process into text that combine with the analysis.

5. Synthesis of Meaning

The final step in phenomenological research process is the intuitive integration of the fundamental textural and structural descriptions into unified statement of the essences of the experience of the phenomenon as whole (Moustakas, 1994).

After the phenomenological study reduction, thus the steps of phenomenology organization and analysis of data based on Moustakas (1994, p. 118) are:

1. Researcher place the transcribed interviews before study the material through methods and procedures of phenomenal analysis.
2. Horizontalization. Listing every significant statement by participants that relevant to the topic and gives it equals value.
3. Cluster of meanings. In which researcher clusters the statements into themes or meaning units, removing overlapping and repetitive statements.
4. Textural description. The researcher writes about "what" was experienced, a description of the meaning experienced by individuals.

5. Structural descriptions. The researcher writes a description of “how” the phenomenon was experienced by individuals in the study.

Following these steps of data organization and analysis constructed meanings and essences of phenomenon.

3.6 Data Validity Method

In order to deliver believable, accurate, and right qualitative data, standards of qualitative research and verification are important. Several practical standards that could help to obtain standard in good qualitative research and in order to assess the trustworthiness and authentication of naturalistic research as stated in Lincoln and Guba, (1985) in Miles and Huberman, (2014) are: 1) Credibility, 2) Dependability, 3) transferability, 4) Confrimability.

IV. RESULT

Focusing on women's experience and understanding of luxury sport shoes, therefore, this research revealed that luxury in sport shoes is simply because it is expensive. The expensiveness itself is constructed by the price, exclusivity, brand, and appearance.

According to the textural description and structural description explained on the previous chapter, women purchase intentions toward luxury sport shoes are: 1) *Utilitarian intention*. In this context, women valued sport shoes for its original

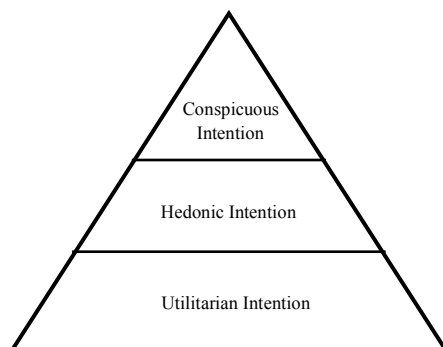
purpose, which is to support their sport activities. Therefore, comfort and function of the kshoes are important factors in choosing sport shoes they purchase. Women also positioning sport shoes in accordance of its function, for example: running shoes for running and training shoes for work out. Utilitarian intention becomes the main reason in purchasing sport shoes, as almost every woman consider it important.

2) *Hedonic intention*. Hedonic intention is a shifted intention from utilitarian intention, in which women valued others extrinsic value of sport shoes instead of its intrinsic value. This intention affected by hedonic factors such as sensation seeking, emotional arousal, and visual images. Hedonic intention gives the sense of satisfaction in their purchase if women able to consummate their purchase. One key of the hedonic intention shown by how women bought many of sport shoes, continuously, and even implied the impression of addiction in their purchase. and 3) *Conspicuous intention*. Conspicuous intention occurs when women purchase is used as tool to enhance their status. Conspicuous consumption is shaped by the motivation to enhance individual social status and to show status symbol. Luxury sport shoes used by women as signal of wealth and as a tool show their higher status in the group. As the signal must be easily seen by others; hard to fake; associated with desirable individual quality; and yield fitness benefit,

sport shoes becomes one of signal that meets the criteria.

VI. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

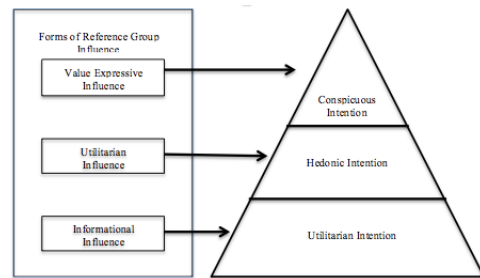
Women Purchase Intentions toward Luxury Sport Shoes



This research found that women's purchase intention towards luxury sport shoes changed and shifted through time, although it cannot be applied to all of them, but still, it happens to most informants. Therefore, it also can be called as stage of purchase intention. According to the picture above, there are 3 stage of women purchase intention towards sport shoes. First stage role as the basic process is the utilitarian intention, where women buy shoes only for the intrinsic value of the product. Secondly, the hedonic intention located in the middle of the picture and has fewer participants than the utilitarian intention. The highest one is the conspicuous consumption, which has the fewest participants and role as the highest

phase. Therefore the stage is drawn in triangle shape.

Reference Group Influence in Women Purchase Intention toward Luxury Sport Shoes



It is revealed that reference group has major influence towards women purchase intention of luxury sport shoes. There are 3 forms of reference group influence according Solomon *et al.*, (2006): 1) Informational influence, in which individual seeks information of various products or brands from professional or independent group expert. For example, a new member of fitness center asks the instructor information of sport shoes that suitable for fitness activity. This influence occurs only because individual believes the credibility of the source of the information. 2) Utilitarian influence happens when individual purchase towards particular products or brands is influenced by the preferences of people they interact with, and he or she tend to have the desire to satisfy others' expectation, which impact on their choice of product or brand. Given example, a woman buys Nike because her friends said it was good. This influence have purpose to

obtain reward (accepted in the group) or avoid punishment (not recognized in the group). 3) Lastly is the value-expressive influence. This influence makes individual feels that his or her purchase will enhance his or her image, individual mostly purchase product or brands that meet her characteristic in order to be admired or respected. For example, a woman buys Reebok because Reebok is a favorite brand in her fitness center.

The relation between reference group influence and the process of women's purchase intention towards sport shoes shown by the arrows. Informational influence has impact to the utilitarian intention, in which has the most participants, whereas Utilitarian influence has impact to the hedonic intention, and value-expressed influence has impact to the conspicuous intention, with the fewer participants. At the bottom part of the figure is the utilitarian intention, in which role as the basic intention of women in purchasing luxury sport shoes. At this level, women intention in purchasing luxury sport shoes is because of the functional intention. As explained previously, here women seek for the original features by the sport shoes. For example, the function, uses, and comfort from the uses. This is the first step purchase intention of sport shoes consumption in which individual pushes aside other factors and care only for the function. The first step of purchase intention occurs when individual firstly engage in certain group.

Therefore, informational influence and utilitarian influence take part in this steps, as women seeks informational and reference from experts (e.g: instructors) or individual who has been engage in the group longer, which they believe as more experienced individual. For example, as stated by Ellen, "*Dulu belinya yang murah murah, dibawah satu juta. Paling 800-900.*" The word "*dulu*" refers to the time when she firstly joined in Atlas Fitness Center. By the time they engage in the group, women shifted her intention from utilitarian intention to hedonic intention. In addition, she later said that "*Terus naik jadi 1 juta lebih, terakhir beli yang item merah 2 juta 800.*" Ellen statement indicates that her preferences of sport shoes changed and it turned out into hedonic purchase as she collected 13 sport shoes. Ellen also said that Ira, her fitness partner, takes part in her sport shoes consumption, because Ira asked her to buy the same luxury sport shoes. According to Solomon *et al.*, (2006) the individual's decision to purchase is influenced by the preferences of whom they socially interact with.

In case of utilitarian influence towards hedonic intention, although it used the same word of 'utilitarian', however the practice is different. In utilitarian influence, it gives the desire to individual to satisfy the expectations of others in the group; therefore, their act is to get reward (acceptance in the group) or to avoid

punishment (not accepted in the group). The purchase in this stage role for intrinsic value, as they do it for themselves. Although they have to fulfill group's expectation towards them, still their intention is to satisfy themselves, to be able to engage in a group, to blend in the community, and to please themselves. For example Desy who wants to fit in her working environment because Atlas Fitness Center members wear nice sport shoes "*ya karena kerjaanku terus tau sendiri kan orang-orang atlas keren-keren menengah keatas semua*". Desy make efforts to fit in the group, which is influenced by the utilitarian influence. Women bought luxury sport shoes hedonically. They bought it for the color, brand, feature, and trend, and moreover, they owned many of it. Thus, found in this research, hedonic intention of purchasing luxury sport shoes by women is purposively to meet the expectation of the group and to get the acceptance from it.

Last stage in women purchase intention towards luxury sport shoes is the conspicuous intention, in which pushed by the value-expressed influence. Researcher believes that this is the higher stage of their intention, as shown by the triangle shaped graph, the higher the stage, the smaller the participants. It means that not everyone could afford nor able to reach this stage. It may be caused by several factors, such as: occupation, or income. This stage purposively to enhance individual

images, be admired and respected by others, and to show others preferable characteristic of individual (Solomon *et al.*, 2006). Given example from interview, Ellen said that her purchase intention of luxury sport shoes is because she does not want to be same as others "*biar ga ada yang ngembarin*". Explained previously that her statement refers to the status symbol in textural description. Her statement indicates the need of enhancing others' point of view of herself, as she wants to be seen differently with others, her desired in wearing particular sport shoes is to be admired by others, which meets the value-expressed influence definition. Desy is also one of informants that show the phenomenon. Reference group influence pushed her to enhance her image. Moreover, as an instructor and personal trainer, for her sport shoes is important, because as an instructor she wanted to be looked at least equally to Atlas Fitness Center members, as some but not few of them wear luxury sport shoes. Here, Sport shoes used as a tool to gain respect from her members. Lastly, Hanna who stated that Nike and Adidas considered as a prestige brand believed not everyone could afford it, her purchase conspicuously show that as she able to afford 55 sport shoes, her image in the group is the highest.

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