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# ANALYSIS OF THE POST-MODERN CONSUMER IN THE FRAMEWORK OF COGNITIVE BEHAVIOURAL APPROACH: AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS AND INTERMEDIATE BELIEFS OF LUXURY CONSUMPTION

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## ABSTRACT

*This study aims to analyse post-modern consumer behaviour within the framework of the Cognitive Behavioural Approach by focusing on the automatic thoughts and intermediate beliefs underlying luxury consumption. In the post-modern era, consumption has evolved beyond the functional satisfaction of needs and has become a lifestyle shaped by symbolic meanings, social status, and identity construction. Therefore, understanding consumer behaviour requires an interdisciplinary perspective integrating psychology, sociology, and marketing. In this context, the study investigates how consumers ontologically define consumption, need, and luxury, and explores the unconscious cognitive structures guiding luxury consumption decisions. The research was conducted using in-depth, unstructured interviews with 138 individuals aged between 25 and 35 living in Konya, Türkiye. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy techniques were adapted to identify automatic thoughts and intermediate beliefs related to luxury consumption. The findings reveal that luxury consumption is primarily driven by social motives such as status, differentiation, and perceived success rather than functional benefits. Consumers tend to perceive luxury as a symbolic right and evaluate it within a competitive and zero-sum resource framework. Moreover, social contexts significantly increase emotional satisfaction and reinforce symbolic meanings in luxury consumption. This study contributes to the literature by offering an original interdisciplinary methodological perspective, expanding symbolic consumption theory through cognitive mechanisms, and providing strategic implications for luxury brand positioning and marketing communication.*

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**KEYWORDS:** Post-modern consumer, Cognitive Behavioural Approach, Consumer behaviour, Consumer psychology, Luxury consumption, Automatic thoughts, Intermediate beliefs, Symbolic consumption.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the post-modern era, consumption has not only been the activities of satisfying individual needs but has also become a set of actions that define society. In other words, consumption has become a cultural structure in society and a lifestyle of individuals in the post-modern era. Therefore, understanding consumption means understanding the post-modern structure. Since the 1960s, when society began to be defined as a "consuming society", consumption has become the research focus of social sciences (Miller, 1987; Glennie & Thrift, 1992: 423). For example, Baudrillard defines post-modern cities as places where unlimited promotion practices are used to satisfy needs (Baudrillard, 1998: 65). Veblen, on the other hand, defines consumption as the most important component that shows the living standards in the city (Veblen, 1994: 55). Similarly, Wanke (2009) examined the social psychology of consumption in the context of psychology. Kvale explains the history of social change as the transition process from religion to science from science to consumption (Kvale, 2003). In other words, in the post-modern era, consumption has become a set of individual and social actions spread over all layers of society (Morgan, 1996: 19). Especially considering the conclusions of Kvale and Morgan, consumption has become a fundamental belief for the post-modern consumer, and it is not possible to evaluate a belief independently of psychology. These changes take consumption, consumer behaviours and marketing beyond being just an economic phenomenon and add a psychological, sociological and anthropological dimension to them in addition to the economy (Szmigin, 2003: 5; Karabiyik and Elgün, 2022: 230). Therefore, studies examining consumption from a psychological point of view are of great importance in terms of understanding the post-modern structure.

As a result of the fact that consumption has become a lifestyle that goes beyond the function of satisfying needs in practice, consumption behaviour has separated from rationality and started to take shape within the framework of psychological factors. In other words, when post-modern consumers purchase products, they buy not only their functionality as the capacity to satisfy their needs, but also the brand value and the social status the brand brings (Mlodinow, 2013, 38). Since the post-modern period consumer does not have a consumption behaviour that cannot be reduced to just need, it cannot be explained with a Rational Economic Approach based on Classical Economics. Instead, they make decisions and behaviours with psychological factors in which symbolic

consumption is seen as a more intense motivator. When this situation is evaluated together with the postmodern scientific understanding, it is necessary to explain consumer behaviour with an interdisciplinary approach. For example, the fact that researchers who won the Nobel Prize in economics such as Kahneman and Tversky have interdisciplinary psychology-economics confirms this trend. As a matter of fact, when the scientific development process is examined, the interdisciplinary harmonization process in the postmodern science period also confirms the approach in this study (Vlasova, Pshinko and Vlasova, 2021: 31).

There have been significant developments in the literature as marketing has gained importance. However, when these developments are examined, it is seen that the development in marketing has focused more on marketing and purchasing-consumption tools. However, in order for consumption to become an individual and social lifestyle, the internal triggers, processes and meanings of consumption decisions and behaviours for consumers need to be discovered.

The evaluation of consumption in this context also requires the direct use of psychiatric methods in consumer behaviour research. Because marketing research tends to investigate consumers' cognitive processes from the perspective of which they are aware. However, the addition of psychiatric methods to the research process allows consumers' behaviours to be analysed more deeply and to discover their roots, which they are not aware of. In this study, automatic thoughts and intermediate beliefs of luxury and symbolic consumption were systematically investigated with the methods used in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. The cognitivist approach has dominated the past 50 years of consumer research (Janiszewski and Laran, 2024). Considering this situation, this study used a method that is current and important in the literature.

In this context, the aims of this study are (a) to understand how consumers define concepts such as consumption, need and luxury ontologically with their own worldviews and (b) to psychiatrically identify automatic thoughts and intermediate beliefs that they develop unconsciously towards luxury consumption. The purpose of preferring a psychiatric worldview and the Cognitive Behavioural Approach as a method is to understand the mental processes of luxury consumption with dimensions beyond what is visible. The reason for conducting this process within the limitations of luxury consumption is that luxury consumption is suitable for creating a value

judgment. In other words, needs were not initially considered appropriate to be examined with the Cognitive Behavioural Approach. For example, the processes of hunger as a need are more physiological. There must be a preference for conducting research in terms of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. To conduct this research, which is pioneering in terms of method, a professor of psychiatry who is an expert in the field of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy was also included in the research process and to keep the deviation in the findings at a significant level with his views, luxury consumption, which is more suitable for Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, was focused on. This process, which led us to investigate the individual and social beliefs behind luxury consumption, has also become more meaningful in terms of marketing. Because luxury and symbolic consumption would be more accurate in terms of investigating symbolic meanings.

In accordance with the theoretical and practical changes seen in the post-modern period, in this study, the automatic thoughts and intermediate beliefs of the post-modern consumer on luxury consumption were researched by interview method within the framework of the Cognitive Behavioural Approach. While applying the unstructured interview technique during the research process, the in-depth interview method was applied specifically to each participant. Findings obtained in a psychiatric framework are discussed in the context of marketing. However, to understand the study correctly, first, a literature review on post-modern consumerism, luxury consumption and Cognitive Behavioural Approach is required. After this background was provided, a discussion and conclusion of the research findings took place.

## 2. SCOPE OF STUDY

The theoretical background of this study on marketing science consists of post-modern consumer behaviour and luxury consumption. For this reason, it is necessary to review the literature on both fields.

### 2.1. *Post-Modern Consumerism*

In today's economic world, where the neoliberal economic structure is dominant, the monetization of everything also ensures that everything is exchangeable in the markets. As a result of this, marketing has become one of the elements at the centre of life for the post-modern individual living in a world where everything is purchasable. For example, in the post-modern era, discussions focused on ethical consumption, consumption-oriented structure, more consumption, green consumption

instead of production (Ransome, 2005: 159). Because in the structure where the markets grow, marketing and consumption practices will increase, and both the society and the individual will be shaped by this structure. These changes show that to understand the post-modern society and the individual, it is necessary to understand their consumer behaviour.

In the post-modern structure, where everything is consumable and consumption has become a lifestyle, consumption cannot be evaluated in a functional framework only in the context of satisfying needs. In addition, it is necessary to consider during research processes psychological and symbolic factors that are effective in consumer behaviour. Before examining luxury consumption, which is closely related to symbolic consumption, it is necessary to review the literature on the general characteristics of the post-modern consumer.

Within the context of this study, there are three main features of the post-modern consumer in the marketing literature: asocial individualism, greed and commodity adaptation (Ackerman, 1997: 652; Featherstone, 2007, 81; Gabbott, 2008: 110).

**Asocial Individualism:** Although social media and similar internet-based communication tools increase social interactions intensely, on the contrary, post-modern consumers do not like their decisions and behaviours to be exposed to an outside influence and intervention. However, this does not mean that the post-modern consumer is completely closed to external influences. They simply dislike factors that directly interfere with their decisions. However, as a natural consequence of being a part of the social structure, it tends towards a symbolic consumption related to social values.

**Greed:** As mentioned, consumption has become a lifestyle in the post-modern era. In addition, greed refers to the unlimited consumption motive of individuals. At the point reached as a result of the unlimited consumption trend today, the post-modern society is also defined as the "age of mass consumption" (Glickman, 2012: 411).

**Commodity Adaptation:** Commodity adaptation is the consumer characteristic that emerges as a result of consumption being a lifestyle. Because the post-modern consumer creates an image and identity with the products they buy. For this reason, the products consumed do not only have a functional meaning. This explains the reasons for symbolic and luxury consumption. As a matter of fact, the definition of brands as image contractors today confirms this argument (Odabaşı, 2004: 58).

When evaluated in the context of this study, asocial individualism shows that consumption is a

social attitude for the individual. In other words, consumers interpret the intervention in consumption decisions and behaviours as a direct intervention to their own personality, and on the other hand, they want to create their own consumption structure as an image depending on the culture and psychological conditions they are in.

Greed shows the importance of understanding consumer behaviours. Because consumption is not just an economic issue in a mass consumer society; it has become a sociological, psychological, and anthropological determinant. On the other hand, commodity adaptation shows that consumers create a symbolic value, image and personality through products and brands. As a result, consumers develop a belief in brands and products. These beliefs need to be analysed. In this study, the beliefs of individuals in the consumption of luxury products and brands with high symbolic value were researched within the framework of psychology in relation to belief.

It is undoubtedly not possible to limit the characteristics of consumption in a structure where consumption forms the basis of society and lifestyles. However, this general classification in marketing literature shows that consumption has gone far beyond the concept of need and has become a lifestyle that needs to be analysed in depth. The fact that all components of this classification compiled from literature also have symbolic and unconscious meanings formed the basis of this study.

## **2.2. Symbolic and Luxury Consumption**

Symbolic and luxury consumption are the concepts in which consumption gains psychological and semiological meanings by detaching from functionality. For this reason, luxury and symbolic consumptions are important research fields for researching the beliefs developed by consumers towards products and brands. Within the context of this study, it is necessary to conduct a literature review on marketing, firstly on symbolic consumption and then on luxury consumption.

Symbol, in its most basic sense, is defined as explaining the concrete by referring to the abstract (Firth, 2011: 55). In other words, symbolism can also be defined as the relationship established between the abstract and the concrete. As understood from these definitions in the general framework developed for the concept of symbol, symbolic consumption is the purchase and consumption of products and brands according to the symbolic values they have. When the symbolic values of products and brands are approached from a psychological point of view, it is seen that there are

images that turn from the real self to the ideal self of the individual (Azizağaoğlu and Altunışık, 2012: 40). With symbolic consumption, products and brands become social communication tools and thus fulfil the function of symbolic information (Levy, 1981: 542-543). From a marketing point of view, it is not possible for post-modern consumers to create a symbolic value independent of the brand, except in exceptional cases, unless they are produced from a rare and valuable raw material. For this reason, there is a close relationship between symbolic consumption and brands. In this framework, Randall (2005: 15) defines the concept of brand as a holistic combination formed by adding different values to the product. Thus, the brand, which is formed by adding symbolic values, functions as a means of creating an identity and self-expression for the consumer, while it also functions as a means of differentiation for the brand. In addition, the consumer, who establishes a symbolic bond with the brands, will also develop loyalty to the company with which they are connected (Aaker, 2009: 224). When the relationship between consumer behaviour and symbolic consumption is examined, this branch of science, which developed as purchasing behaviours in the early periods, especially symbolic consumption and consumers add a cognitive effort to consumption, this process has gone beyond the constraint of purchasing behaviours and has become consumer behaviours examined by different disciplines (McCracken, 2007). In other words, marketing today has a symbolic nature (Rook, 1999: 197).

Luxury consumption, on the other hand, should be seen as a specific field of symbolic consumption. In this context, it is necessary to evaluate luxury consumption in the context of hedonic consumption, contrary to the rationality in traditional approaches in economics (Bilge, 2015: 35). Although there is no generally accepted definition of luxury brand, luxury product and luxury consumption in the marketing literature (Ko, Costello and Taylor, 2019: 406), there are definitions about these concepts. For example, there are studies that define the concept of luxury as high prestige brands that include physical and psychological values (Vigneron and Johnson, 1999: 2). When luxury products are evaluated together with the social structure, they are defined as products that can be purchased by 5% of society (Savitha and Sathyanarayan, 2014: 86). The explanation of luxury products with a supply amount calculated with the rate that a certain part of society can access shows that luxury products and brands are a means of social differentiation. For example, Vickers and Renand

(2003: 462) divide luxury products into three classes: inaccessible luxury that elites can consume, intermediate luxury that professionals can consume, and accessible luxury that middle classes can consume. In other words, the classification of luxury products is made depending on which of the social classes can consume.

The acceptance of symbolic consumption as one of the basic components of luxury products and brands is a dominant approach in marketing literature. This symbolic component is classified within the framework of psychological factors in marketing (Wilcox, Kim and Sen, 2009). The context of this study was designed in accordance with the literature by classifying luxury consumption with a psychological factor. However, it should not be ignored that the perception of luxury will vary according to the individual and society. Because it should not be forgotten that luxury consumption is a means of positioning oneself in the society in which the individual lives. However, in this study, classifications of the luxury goods were ignored because luxury product review was not evaluated from a product perspective. Since the aim of this study is to investigate the psychological background of consumers in luxury consumption rather than the product, how each participant defines luxury with their own worldview is examined in the ontological framework, and then the automatic thoughts and intermediate beliefs of luxury consumption are researched within the framework of the Cognitive Behavioural Approach. For this reason, the literature on the Cognitive Behavioural Approach should also be reviewed.

### **2.3. Cognitive Behavioural Approach**

When the concept of symbol is examined from a marketing perspective, it is understood that the symbol is a connection established between the abstract and the concrete. Considering that this connection created by consumers is not only an economic behaviour. It is understood that the systematic methods of psychiatry should be used to analyse this connection. Because the meanings created by individuals often do not have a cognitive awareness. Therefore, there are analysis processes in psychiatry with indirect methods such as psychoanalysis. In this study, the systematic analysis of symbols formed for luxury consumption was conducted. Since the Cognitive Behavioural Therapy process was taken as a model in the research process, a literature review on the Cognitive Behavioural Approach was conducted before the research section.

The Cognitive Behavioural Approach is based on

how people think, feel, and behave and examines the interaction of each stage. This approach was developed by Albert Ellis and Aaron T. Beck as a result of independent research processes and brought to the psychology literature (Özdel, 2015: 17). Along with this process, the Cognitive Behavioural Approach was accepted in the literature to be used in the treatment of different psychological problems and entered a scientific deepening process. However, to preserve the context of this study, a literature review was conducted in this study, including the intellectual processes of healthy individuals in the Cognitive Behavioural Approach, rather than the treatment processes.

The Cognitive Behavioural Approach has three basic assumptions (Dobson, 2010: 4):

1. Cognitive activity affects behaviour.
2. Cognitive activity may be monitored and altered.
3. Desired behaviour change may be affected through cognitive change.

These basic assumptions show that human behaviour can be explained and changed through thoughts. In this case, it is necessary to examine the basic stages that constitute human thoughts. According to the Cognitive Behavioural Approach, cognitions are examined in three groups as automatic thoughts, intermediate beliefs and core beliefs (Ak et al., 2020: 3). Individuals who encounter a situation and event primarily react with their automatic thoughts. Then, the intermediate belief process, which includes attitudes, rules/expectations, and assumptions, takes place, and finally, the core belief process is seen. Similarly, the formation process of automatic thoughts occurs as a result of a reverse flow from core belief to automatic thought (Beck, 2011: 203).

Although it is seen as a therapy method, the Cognitive Behavioural Approach is also a suitable method for explaining the mental processes and behaviours of healthy individuals. This method was also applied in this study. Detailed explanations of the method are given in the method section.

## **3. METHOD**

### **3.1. Theoretical Foundations of Research**

In this study, the cognitive and emotional background of the luxury product purchasing behaviour of healthy individuals was researched by adopting the idea that the determinant of human decisions and behaviours, which is the basic assumption of the Cognitive Behavioural Approach. In this context, automatic thoughts and intermediate beliefs of luxury consumption behaviours of healthy

individuals were examined. However, considering the possibility of automatic thoughts to be affected by situational factors, automatic thoughts were used as an interface in the process of reaching to intermediate beliefs. This shows that in terms of marketing science, the basic characteristics of luxury consumption behaviours are researched, not the situational factors that affect the luxury consumption decisions and behaviours of the post-modern consumer. In other words, after a detected automatic thought, the intermediate belief was directly reached by focusing on what this automatic thought is for.

### 3.2. Importance and Originality of the Research

In the post-modern era, with consumption becoming socialized, a lifestyle and a means of self-creation, consumption has gone beyond being a phenomenon that can only be explained by the Rational Approach. Because creating a self and positioning that self in the social structure carries consumption beyond the satisfying of needs. It is possible to make sense of consumption with such an orientation only by including psychological factors. For this reason, studies in which psychological approaches and consumer behaviours are integrated are of great importance. On the other hand, it is a necessity to understand consumers in terms of marketing, which is an important factor in economic growth. However, for marketing to understand consumers better, it also needs to strengthen its assumptions about consumer behaviour with the findings obtained directly from consumers and harmonize it with practice. In this study, systematic methods of psychiatry were used to understand how consumers define and interpret luxury consumption. For this reason, this study is especially important in terms of theory-practice harmony and methodological aspects.

Cognitive Behavioural Approach, on the other hand, emerges as a field with scientific depth through intensive study in the literature of psychology, which is used extensively for therapy purposes. For example, there were studies conducted in 1987 on the importance of the cognitive behavioural perspective of consumer behaviour (Aslin and Rothschild, 1987). However, since then, it has been observed that there has been no development in marketing research in which the Cognitive Behavioural Approach is used as a direct research method. In this study, an interdisciplinary research method was adopted to fill this gap in literature, and the process was managed with a research group consisting of psychiatry and marketing. On the other hand, there are also studies on the marketing of cognitive behavioural therapies

(Schofield, Ponzini and Becker, 2020). In other words, in the post-modern era, while marketing science needs to understand the consumption phenomenon and the consumer with interdisciplinary studies, it is seen that other branches of science also need marketing.

In this study, researching the post-modern consumer behaviour characteristics by using the Cognitive Behavioural Approach assumptions and methods and comparing the findings with the post-modern consumer behaviour characteristics in the marketing literature make a unique contribution to the literature in terms of both methodological and knowledge.

### 3.3. Sample

The research was conducted by simple random sampling method in Konya, Turkey, among individuals between the ages of 25-35 who have income by working, have the freedom to spend, and have graduated from at least a bachelor's degree. Since the research structure consists of a psychiatric method, individuals with a psychological or psychiatric diagnosis and ongoing treatment were ignored during the sampling process. The reason why the sample is limited to individuals who earn their own income and have the freedom to spend is to ensure that the study reaches more stable and practically meaningful findings in terms of marketing. In addition, the reason for ignoring individuals with a psychological diagnosis and ongoing treatment is to protect consumer behaviour, which is the main context of the research. Because the object of consumer behaviour research is the consumption behaviours of healthy individuals, with exceptions. In addition, applying a psychiatric method to individuals who already have a psychological or psychiatric diagnosis may affect the findings of the research in the direction of meaninglessness.

As a result, the research was conducted with the data obtained from 138 people (72 women-66 men) between the ages of 25-35 living in Konya, Turkey. The demographic distribution of the participants is shown in Table 1.

*Table 1: Demographic Distribution of the Sample.*

		n	%
Gender	Female	72	52.17
	Male	66	47.83
Marital Status	Single	78	56.52
	Married	60	43.48
Age	25-30	57	41.30
	31-35	81	58.70

### 3.4. Research Process

In the first stage of the research process, a pre-test was conducted with the participation of 21 people to test the method. In this process, fixed and variable questions and sub-dimensions of the open-ended interview were determined. Also in this process, possible configurations of each interview were determined. Then the research was applied to 138 participants. The questions explained in detail below and the findings obtained from the interview process were analysed with a simple statistical method.

During the research process, open-ended interviews were conducted with the participants using the in-depth method within the framework of Cognitive Behavioural Approach methods. First, conceptual questions were asked to understand the ontological framework in each interview process. In this context, the following questions were asked to the participants as standard:

1. What is consumption?
2. What is the need?
3. What is luxury?
4. What is luxury consumption?
5. What is emotion?
6. What is the thought?

In the first four questions in the ontological part of the research, no intervention was made on the participant. At this stage, it is aimed to correctly understand what the participant wants to express in the concepts used during the interview. In addition, it was aimed to obtain data about the definitions and understandings of the participants about the first four concepts. If a wrong definition was made in the answers given to the concepts of emotion and thought, the participant was corrected, and these concepts were explained. Because to conduct the interview process successfully, participants must know and use the concepts of emotion and thought correctly.

Following the section where ontological questions were asked, the participants' automatic thoughts and intermediate beliefs regarding luxury consumption were researched. In these sections, the open-ended, unstructured and in-depth interview method was used. First, automatic thoughts were identified and then the intermediate belief was examined by focusing on what these automatic thoughts. Attitudes, rules and assumptions were also questioned in the context of intermediate beliefs. At this stage, intermediate beliefs were examined in positive and negative pairs. However, since there was no therapeutic purpose in this process, the core

beliefs and the triggers of their emergence were ignored, and the aim was to identify the intermediate beliefs of the participants. Cognitive distortions that can reveal irrationality in the economic sense of intermediate beliefs were also examined in the research. For this reason, luxury consumption decisions and behaviours were questioned at the cognitive level with second-order questions and guided exploration methods during the interview process. Then, a specific episode of the participant's last behaviour regarding luxury consumption was questioned to determine the differentiation in behaviour moment. Thus, a deepening in the context of cognitive and behavioural differentiation is aimed.

Although there are differences between the participants in the research process due to the open-ended and unstructured interview during the research process, the questions that develop in common with all participants are as follows:

1. What emotions do you feel at the moment of luxury consumption?
2. What thoughts occur in you at the moment of luxury consumption?
3. What feelings do you have when you cannot afford luxury consumption?
4. What thoughts do you have when you cannot afford luxury consumption?
5. How does the realization of luxury consumption in social and individual environments differ emotionally and intellectually?
6. Describe your last luxury consumption moment.
7. What emotions did you experience during your last luxury consumption moment?
8. What were your thoughts during your last luxury consumption moment?
9. Score separately your feelings of satisfaction/happiness in making your last luxury consumption in a social environment and in an individual (alone and no one can see you while you are consuming) emotions, with 1 being the lowest and 10 the highest.

When the structure of the above questions is examined, it is seen that the first five questions are answered with a cognitive effort, while the last four questions are continued over a specific episode. In addition, the interviews were differentiated according to the answers given by each participant and the automatic thoughts and intermediate beliefs of each participant were examined. In addition, at each stage, questions were asked about consuming

luxury and not being able to consume it. Thus, the emotions and thoughts that occur as a result of both being able to consume and not being able to consume were investigated. Thus, feelings and thoughts formed under both positive and negative conditions were compared and confirmed. After the specific episode analysis was made, social and individual scoring related to the consumption moment was made and how the consumption emerged in practice and the social and individual motivators of that consumption were investigated. The comparison of social and individual consumption in the previous section, where the cognitive comparison was made, and the comparison made by scoring in the last question enabled the comparison of consumers' thoughts on luxury consumption and their practical behaviours.

**4. FINDINGS**

**4.1. Conceptual Findings**

The findings obtained in the research should first be started with the stage in which the ontological framework is determined. In the findings obtained in this section, both the answers given by the participants throughout the research were understood correctly (in the sense they tried to express) and it was understood how these concepts were understood by the consumers in daily life and how they were interpreted in the consumption processes.

The definitions created by compiling the words used extensively by the participants regarding the questions in which the ontological framework is determined, without deteriorating the meaning structure, are presented below:

What is Consumption?: The definitions made by the participants to the question "What is consumption?" were analysed over the words used. At the same time, the in-depth process managed through these words was used. The findings obtained as a result of these analyses are shown in Table 2:

*Table 2: What is Consumption?*

Purchasing/shopping/spending	to	Satisfy needs/sustain life
n=87 - 63.04%		n=105 - 76.08%

When the concepts used by the participants to define the concept of consumption are examined in Table 2, it is seen that the main purpose of consumption is to satisfy the needs and sustain life at a rate of 76.08%. The action taken for this purpose

was expressed as purchasing, spending and shopping at a rate of 63.04%. According to the research findings, the words used for the concept of consumption are predominantly realized within the framework of this purpose and action. The satisfying of needs and the maintenance of life are closely related to the concept of consumption. However, it is remarkable in two respects that 63.04% of purchasing, spending and shopping is expressed as a method of satisfying needs. The first noteworthy point is that although there are many methods other than purchasing to satisfy the need, the participants stated that the need is something that is satisfied as a result of the purchasing action. The second remarkable point is that the act of satisfying the need is not directly linked to the purchase. Even if the item that satisfies the need is obtained by purchasing, it is an action that occurs depending on the use in essence. However, the participants still expressed purchasing as the main action that satisfy the need. Just one of the participants (0.72%) directly mentioned the concepts of making friends, nature and happiness in the context of the concept of need.

Although they are not dominant regarding the definition of consumption destroying/using/obtaining an item by consuming (n=21 - 15.21%), everything (n=10 - 7.24%), budget (n=3 - 2,17%), have/acquire (n=1 - 0.72%), change (n=1 - 0.72%) concepts were used during the interview.

The concepts of destroying, using and obtaining, which are an alternative method to the concepts of purchasing, spending and shopping mentioned above, were used at a rate of 15.21%. This comparison shows that the participants matched the satisfying action with the purchase at a higher rate. Just a participant explained the process of obtaining commodities to satisfy needs as a process of exchange and offer.

The finding that should be noted about the concept of everything, which is 7.24% in the sample, is that all participants using the concept of "everything" also used the concept of purchasing. The ratio of these participants among those who use purchasing and similar concepts is 11.49%. In other words, the object that these participants talk about what can be bought is defined as everything.

Finally, it is necessary to examine the possible constraints mentioned by the participants regarding consumption. Three of the participants (2.17%) mentioned a constraint in satisfying the needs and this constraint is the budget.

When the findings obtained from the definitions made by the participants to the concept of

consumption are examined, it is seen that consumption is interpreted as a need satisfying process and the method of this process is interpreted as purchasing. In other words, the post-modern consumer, which emerged as a result of the union of the so-called "consumption society" and Neoliberalism in the economic process, sees the method of satisfying the need as an act of purchasing.

What is Need?: In the marketing literature, the need is defined as the physiological and emotional demands that must be satisfied and created by the human body (Yadin, 2002: 252). In other words, in terms of marketing science, deficiencies that create psychological tension are also defined as needs. However, the subject of things that create psychological tension causes the concept of need to be stretched in the philosophical need discussion. In this research, the answers of the participants were deepened in the context of psychological tension.

First, it is necessary to examine the participants' own definitions of the concept of need. These definitions are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3: What is Need?**

Necessities	for	Survival
n=60 - 43.48%		n=78 - 56.52%

As seen in Table 3, the participants define the concept of need as the necessities that ensure the continuation of life in the absence of any intervention. At this stage, they did not distinguish between physiological and psychological.

However, when a physiological and psychological distinction is made by going deep in the concepts of maintenance of life and necessity, it has been seen that all participants define demands that create psychological tension when they are not satisfied as needs. Psychological tensions, on the other hand, were discussed in a broad framework by the participants.

Regardless of the psychological and physiological distinction, the basic characteristics of the concept of need, the minimum living condition and the provision of humane physical conditions, were expressed by a total of 12 people (8.70%). In this context, it is noteworthy that the related concepts that provide the basic meaning of the concept of need are expressed by the minority.

After the introduction to the subject with the concepts of consumption and need, the concept of luxury, which is directly related to the subject of the research, was switched during the interview process.

What is Luxury?: Since luxury consumption constitutes the main context of this research, the concepts used by the participants in the question

"What is luxury" in the ontological framework section are examined in more depth. In the first stage, the analysis of the definitions that the participants brought to the concept of luxury is shown in Table 4.

**Table 4: What is Luxury?**

The consumption of	expensive n=96 - 69.57%	products that	can be consumed by the minority in society n=90 - 65.22%	for	show off n=66 - 47.83%
	high brand value n=87 - 63.04%		beyond the needs n=48 - 34.78%		prestige n=27 - 19.57%
			desire-oriented n=27 - 19.57%		pleasure n=36 - 26.09%
					feeling valuable n=54 - 39.13%

When the definition in Table 4 is examined, it is seen that the concept of luxury is basically the products consumed with the aim of showing off, prestige, pleasure and feeling valuable. In other words, the main purpose of luxury products is explained by these four concepts. In this context, the remarkable issue is the emergence of social impulses as the purpose of luxury products. In other words, the participants think that luxury products are consumed for social purposes. This determination was considered while determining the automatic thoughts and intermediate beliefs of luxury consumption in the later stages of the research and was effective in the configuration of the questions in the later stages of the research.

In the context of the features of luxury products, it was seen that the participants stated two features. These two features were examined separately and both features were mentioned in the definition. The first feature used by the participants in the definition of luxury products is that can be consumed by the minority in society, being beyond the need and desire oriented. The second feature group is that it is expensive and a product with high brand value. When these features are examined, it is noteworthy that the participants do not mention a functional feature among the things that make a product luxurious. On the other hand, in the marketing literature, luxury product is defined as the product/brand group that is at the highest level in terms of quality and is positioned at a high price and targeted to the high-income segment (Dacko, 2008:

235). However, the participants did not mention the functional features of the products and classified them in the luxury group according to the accessibility of the few, expensive and high brand value. In addition, when the phrase "beyond the needs" is examined, it is understood that 80.43% of the participants mean social benefit and status by the concept of beyond need.

After the participants were asked about the definition of luxury, they were asked the definition of luxury consumption as a complement to this question.

What is Luxury Consumption?: Table 5 shows the definition given by the participants to the question "what is luxury consumption?", which was asked to confirm the definitions brought to the concept of luxury and to determine the sub-dimensions of luxury perception more accurately.

Table 5: What is Luxury Consumption?

Buying the products that are	non-necessary n=82 - 59.42%	and	minority consumable n=116 - 84.06%	for	status and showing success n=99 - 71.74%
	beyond the need n=56 - 40.58%		expensive n=109 - 78.96%		showing off n=108 - 78.26%
					living the moment n=44 - 31.88%
					pleasure n=48 - 34.78%

As seen in Table 5, the participants explain the purpose of luxury consumption mainly as an indicator of status and success (71.74%) and ostentation (78.26%). When it comes to the status and success indicator, it also directly explains the ability to consume luxury as success. However, they do not accept being high-income as a social status. They think that after earning a high income, it should be shown to the society, and this will happen by making luxury consumption. It is also noteworthy that they express social motives as the purpose of luxury consumption. Those who describe luxury consumption as living in the moment and enjoying the moment confirm the findings obtained from the previous questions and point to the consumption society. Because the participants in this group also interpret the consumption itself as living the moment and enjoying rather than the pleasure taken from luxury consumption.

In the second stage of the definition, it is

expressed what luxury consumption is. All of the participants explained luxury consumption in non-essential consumption and consumption forms where needs are satisfied more comfortably. As seen in Table 5, 59.42% of the participants do not see luxury consumption as a way of satisfying their needs. Instead, they interpreted luxury consumption as a form of consumption that they never needed, but desired.

When focusing on the concept of need for this question, it was seen that the participants expressed a social consumption form with the phrase "out of need", independent of the functional characteristics and comfort of the products. When non-necessary or extra-needs consumption is concretized, it is seen that the consumption of products that the minority can consume (84.06%) and expensive (78.96%) are defined as luxury consumption. Although the perception of expensive products as luxury is an expected result in terms of marketing, the interpretation of luxury consumption as a form of consumption that the few can consume drew attention during the research process. At this point, the interview was deepened in the direction of the concept of minority consumption. In this context, it was understood that the participants expressed being able to consume a higher share of the world's resources when using the concept of "products that the minority can consume". In other words, when it comes to luxury consumption, the post-modern consumer sees consumption as a zero-sum game at a rate of 84.06%. As a matter of fact, the expectation that luxury products will be expensive stems from this understanding. However, at this point, the finding that is important in terms of marketing is that the participants classify the products as luxury not according to their functional features, but according to their prices. So, in a way, the link between luxury product and comfort has been broken. Instead, consumers irrationally classify products by price tags. When this situation is evaluated within the framework of psychology, it becomes understandable with the System 1 thinking method within the framework of Anchoring Theory created by Tversky and Kahneman (1974).

The last finding in this question is that the participants understood the difference between wants and needs within the framework of marketing terminology. Particularly, the participants themselves tended to the classification of non-need and beyond-need consumption. As a result of this orientation, when asked about the concepts of want and need, they made explanations within the framework of marketing terminology.

**4.2. Findings in the Framework of the Cognitive Behavioural Approach**

The questions asked to the participants in the ontological framework section show that luxury consumption is a decision and behaviour that takes place in the social form. After understanding both the ontological explanations of the consumer and how consumers explain the concepts of luxury and consumption, the section in which automatic thoughts and intermediate beliefs about the luxury consumption process are investigated. As stated in the method section, this section was also investigated with two separate processes. First, the participants were directed to explain the questions with a cognitive thought process. At this stage, the following questions were asked to the participants without going to any specific episode:

1. What emotions do you feel when you consume luxury?
2. What thoughts do you have in your mind when you consume luxury?
3. What emotions do you feel when you cannot afford luxury?
4. What thoughts arise spontaneously in your mind when you cannot afford luxury consumption?
5. How would you explain the difference between buying and consuming a luxury product in a social place and alone?

After these questions, the last moment of luxury consumption of the participants was examined as a specific episode. In this section, the following questions were asked.

1. What was the thing you consumed in your last luxury consumption moment, how did the process develop?
2. What were your feelings at the time of consumption?
3. What were the thoughts that spontaneously formed in your mind at the time of consumption?

Finally, after the specific episode reenactment, the participants were asked to rate the positive feelings of consuming a luxury consumption in a social setting and alone, from one to ten (1 lowest, 10 highest).

The above-mentioned questions consist of common questions asked to the participants during the interview process. Apart from these, individual differentiation was made in the questions to understand better automatic thoughts and intermediate beliefs.

Such questions were interpreted as supporting questions. The findings obtained during the process

of the research within the framework of the Cognitive Behavioural Approach are presented below.

**4.2.1. Emotions and Thoughts in Luxury Consumption**

In this section, the participants were asked “What emotions do you feel when you consume luxury?”, “What thoughts do you have in your mind when you consume luxury?”, “What emotions do you feel when you cannot afford luxury?”, “What thoughts arise spontaneously in your mind when you cannot afford luxury consumption?” and “How would you explain the difference between buying and consuming a luxury product in a social place and alone?” are presented.

The findings obtained from the two questions examined in this section are primarily shown in Table 6 and Table 7. Then, evaluations were made regarding the findings.

**Table 6: Emotions at the Time of Luxury Consumption.**

Positive Emotions		Negative Emotions	
Pride	n= 86 - 62.32%	Guilt	n=73 - 52.90%
Happiness	n= 78 - 56.52%	Ambition	n=56 - 40.58%
Satisfaction	n=74 - 53.62%		
Excitement	n=68 - 49.28%		
Social Satisfaction	n=67 - 48.55%		

**Table 7: Thoughts During the Consumption.**

Positive Thoughts		Negative Thoughts	
I am successful	n=104 - 75.36%	Will I be able to have it in the future?	n=27 - 19.57%
I have status	n=101 - 73.19%	Am I doing wrong?	n=16 - 11.59%
I'm different from other people	n=99 - 71.74%	Comfort is good but variety is uncomfortable	n=1 - 0.72%
I have what the few have	n=97 - 70.29%		
I am living the life I deserve	n=93 - 67.39%		
I am strong and safe	n=88 - 63.76%		
I have a good life	n=53 - 38.41%		
I focus on the moment, and it feels good	n=48 - 34.78%		

Before evaluating the findings presented in the table, the meanings obtained should be explained when the emotions and thoughts expressed by the participants are examined in depth.

**Satisfaction and social satisfaction:** Participants define satisfaction as "being aware of their existence". In this context, they define the concept of satisfaction as an individual feeling, although it consists of different components. However, they still felt the need to specify the form of satisfaction on the social base. This expression, on the other hand, was included in the research as a different form of emotion.

**Happiness:** The participants who expressed the emotion that occurs as a result of luxury consumption as happiness expressed happiness as the emotional state that emerges as a result of a mixture of individual and social emotions. In this context, according to the conceptual framework of the participants, the concept of happiness is used to express the general emotional state independently of other emotions. For this reason, feelings of pride, excitement, satisfaction and social satisfaction are accepted as components of the emotion expressed as happiness.

**Success:** With the idea of success, participants express not only having purchasing power but also a concept of success that spreads throughout life.

**Focusing on the moment:** It is used to be aware of being full of life and excitement.

**Owning what the minority can have:** In this idea, the participants refer only to the people in their own social circle, not the world-wide or country-wide environment. In fact, this finding explains the behaviour of consumers who tend to show their consumption on social media. Because, according to the findings, the post-modern consumers compare themselves with their own social environment, not with the world average or standards, and the posts made on the social media help consumers reach their goal within the framework of this understanding.

As seen in Table 6, while the participants expressed their positive emotions in more diverse forms, they expressed their negative emotions in two forms as guilt and ambition. Similarly, negative thoughts were expressed in two forms in Table 7, except for the idea of "comfort is good but showing off is disturbing (n=1)". Additionally, during the interview process, participants were not limited in expressing their feelings and thoughts. Thus, in the findings obtained, it was determined that more than one emotion and thought occurred at the same time. In fact, as can be seen from the ratio of positive and negative emotions and thoughts, there is a conflict of

emotions and thoughts among the participants during luxury consumption. However, the feelings of ambition and guilt shown in negative emotions are two substitutes for each other. In other words, the participants do not feel these two emotions at the same time. These data show that 93.48% (n=129) of the participants have negative emotions in the emotion component they feel at the time of luxury consumption, and this emotion is guilt or ambition. On the other hand, the thoughts that occur together with these feelings are "Will I be able to have it in the future?" and "Am I doing it wrong?" thoughts. In this case, the feeling of guilt develops with the thought of "Am I doing it wrong?" and the feeling of greed develops together with the thought "Will I be able to have it in the future?". In other words, while the feeling of ambition has a root of anxiety about the future, the feeling of guilt is a direct evaluation of the present moment. Similarly, individuals who do not feel guilty and do not have the thought of "Am I doing it wrong?" represent consumers who have more luxury consumption loyalty. When negative emotions and thoughts are compared, it is seen that although negative emotions are more dominant, these negative emotions are less reflected in the thought dimension. In other words, when the thought dimension is passed, negative emotions are suppressed.

The expression of owning "what the minority can have" was also detailed during the interview process. In this process, it was understood that as post-modern consumers, the participants manipulated their cognitive processes to feel themselves in a more special minority. For example, consumers who prefer the first of two different luxury holiday regions with the same price differentiates themselves from the person who prefers the second region. Up to this point, consumers who have determined the process of differentiation from other people through the price they pay for the product, begin to consider the functional differences of the products in cases that exceed a purchasing power that will enable price differentiation. However, when this situation was examined in depth during the interview process, the participants had to accept that this situation was only due to preferences, regardless of purchasing power. When the feelings and thoughts formed with this awareness were examined, it was seen that they were disturbed by this awareness.

In the pre-test process of the research, it was determined that the participants clearly separated their feelings and thoughts from social and individual. For this reason, whether each emotion and thought expressed by the participants during the

research had an individual or social background was taken into consideration during the in-depth process. As a result, the findings regarding the individual and social positions of the emotions and thoughts realized at the time of luxury consumption are shown in Table 8.

**Table 8: Social and Individual Separation of Feelings and Thoughts.**

Social Emotions & Thoughts		Individual Emotions & Thoughts		N
Pride	n= 86 - 29.15%	Satisfaction	n= 74 - 25.08%	
Social Satisfaction	n= 67 - 22.71%	Excitement	n= 68 - 23.06%	
<b>Social Emotions</b>	<b>n= 153 - 51.86%</b>	<b>Individual Emotions</b>	<b>n= 142 - 48.14%</b>	<b>N= 295</b>
I am successful	n= 104 - 15.69%	I am living the life I deserve	n= 93 - 14.03%	
I have status	n= 101 - 15.23%	I am strong and safe	n= 88 - 13.27%	
I'm different from other people	n= 99 - 14.93%	I have a good life	n= 53 - 7.99%	
I have what the few have	n= 97 - 14.63%	I focus on the moment and it feels good	n= 28 - 4.22%	
<b>Social Thoughts</b>	<b>n= 401 - 60.48%</b>	<b>Individual Thoughts</b>	<b>n= 262 - 39.52%</b>	<b>N=663</b>

In this section, which includes the feelings and thoughts that occur in luxury consumption independent of any specific episode, the comparative presentation of the findings in social and individual context is given in Table 8. Table 8 shows that luxury consumption takes place on a social basis in terms of both emotion and thought. However, it is seen that sociality is less emotionally intense. Emotions are in a more balanced structure from a social-individual point of view (51.86% social - 48.14% individual), while when it comes to thought, social judgments become dominant (60.48% social - 39.52% individual). This finding is confirmed by the definition of luxury consumption, which was determined in the ontological stage of the research, as an indicator of vanity, prestige, status and success by the participants.

Although individual thoughts are less effective than social thoughts (39.52%), there are judgments closer to the functionality of products in individual thoughts. For example, the fact that luxury products make the participants think that they are strong and

safe and have a good life partially points to the functional characteristics of the products. However, there is a break in the functional properties of the products in which more dominant social thoughts (60.48%). According to the dominant social thoughts, the participants' thoughts of success, status, differentiation from other people, and having what the minority can have, emerge through luxury consumption.

To take into consideration, the feelings and thoughts of consumers in the opposite situation during the research process, the participants were asked the questions "What emotions do you feel when you cannot consume luxury?" and "What thoughts spontaneously come to your mind when you cannot consume luxury?". The findings regarding these questions are shown in Table 9 and Table 10.

**Table 9: Emotions When Luxury Cannot be Consumed.**

Anger	n= 71 - 51.45%
Jealousy	n= 68 - 49.28%
Sadness	n= 63 - 45.65%
Anxiety	n= 61 - 44.20%
Neutral	n=4 - 2.90%

The emotions that occur when the participants cannot afford luxury consumption are shown in Table 9. It has been observed that the emotions that occur when the participants cannot consume luxury were divided into three groups. In the first two groups with the dominant majority, the dominant emotions are anger and sadness. It was observed that anger and jealousy were felt together in the first group. Individuals in the group where anger and jealousy are seen evaluate the situation they are in with a more active approach and, as a result, feel anger and jealousy. It was determined that one of the participants (n=1 - 0.72%) who felt anger felt this anger towards himself. Other people (n= 70 - 50.73%) directed this anger towards other factors rather than themselves. Another common feature of the participants who feel anger and jealousy is that they see luxury consumption as a right in themselves. In other words, when they are deprived of luxury consumption, they interpret this situation as being deprived of their rights at the same time.

The second emotion group that occurs when luxury consumption cannot be made is sadness and anxiety. Participants in this group interpret their inability to consume luxury with a more passive approach than the first group. The dominant emotion in this group is sadness. When the sadness felt was

examined in depth, it was understood that the factor that fed this feeling of sadness was anxiety. This anxiety stems from the participants' interpretation of not being able to consume luxury as a future concern. In other words, participants who feel anxiety consider not being able to consume a luxury product today as a situation that they should worry about their future.

Finally, 2.90% of the participants stated that their emotional state was neutral when they could not buy a luxury product.

**Table 10: Thoughts When Luxury Consumption Cannot be Made.**

I cannot get what is rightfully mine	n= 128 - 92.75%
I should be more successful	n= 36 - 26.09%
I have to work harder	n= 28 - 20.29%
I should make more money	n= 16 - 11.59%
I am unsuccessful	n= 20 - 14.49%
I wish I could buy	n= 4 - 2.90%
My economic situation is bad	n= 24 - 17.39%
It is not problem	n= 6 - 4.35%
You did your best, do not be sad	n= 4 - 2.90%
I am missing life	n=2 - 1.45%

The thoughts that occur when luxury consumption cannot be made are shown in Table 10. When Table 10 was examined, it was seen that thoughts were formed in certain groups, similar to the findings in Table 9. However, when both tables are examined together, the rate of seeing luxury consumption as a right (n=71 - 51.45%), which is observed less frequently in the formation of emotions, has increased significantly in the dimension of thought (n=128 - 92.75%). When the sub-dimensions of the participants' automatic thought "I can't get what I deserve" were examined, it was determined that there were three factors: success, work and earnings. These three factors are divided into two groups depending on whether they respond to the current situation actively or passively. Sub-dimensions that develop depending on the automatic thought "I cannot get what I deserve" were also examined. However, first the findings regarding other groups need to be explained.

As seen in Table 10, the second group in the dimension of not being able to consume luxury is the group that interprets the situation they are in with the thoughts of "It's okay" and "You did your best,

don't worry". This group has a value of 7.25% (n=10) in the sample. When the sub-dimensions of this group were examined, the participants stated that there was a very low level of sadness, but they consoled themselves with these thoughts.

Finally, the participants who thought that they missed out on life as soon as they could not consume luxury (n=2 - 1.45%) drew attention, regardless of other groups. While this group is in the group in which sadness and anxiety are seen in terms of emotion, it is included in the sub-dimension of the thought "I wish I could", which has the thought of "I can't get what I deserve" in the dimension of thought, but passively responds to the situation they are in due to their mentality. In addition, the participants in this group stated that they lost their emotional stabilization in the ordinary course of life during the day by entering a depressive mood as soon as they could not consume luxury. In other words, this group finds the inability to consume luxury with the most intense negative emotion. In addition, in the cognitive dimension, they interpret the situation they are in passively and by associating them with the work. Finally, to better understand the data obtained at this stage of the research, it is necessary to examine the findings in the cognitive dimension in terms of active and passive interpretation.

When luxury cannot be consumed, the most common automatic thought in the sample, "I can't get what I deserve (n=128 - 92.75%)" was investigated in depth. As a result, it was understood that the thought of "I cannot get what I deserve" is fed by a mindset divided into two groups, three of which are active and three are passive. This structure is shown in Table 11.

**Table 11: Sub-Dimensions of "I Cannot Get What is Rightfully Mine" Thought.**

I cannot get what is rightfully mine N=128			
Active Thoughts		Passive Thoughts	
I should be more successful	n= 36 - 28.13%	I am unsuccessful	n= 20 - 15.61%
I have to work harder	n= 28 - 21.88%	I wish I could buy	n= 4 - 3.13%
I should make more money	n= 16 - 12.50%	My economic situation is bad	n= 24 - 18.75%
n= 80 - 62.51		n= 48 - 37.49%	

In Table 11, the sub-dimensions of the thought "I cannot get what is rightfully mine" are shown with a simple statistical method in a sample of N=128. As seen in Table 11, the majority, who define luxury consumption as a right in themselves, also evaluates

luxury consumption, which is their right, in three dimensions. These dimensions are success, work and profit. The ratio of those who associate luxury consumption with success is 43.74% (n=56), the ratio of those who associate it with work is 25.01% (n=32), and the ratio of those who associate it with earnings is 31.25% (n=40). These findings show that the post-modern consumer associates luxury consumption with working the least. On the other hand, the rate of those who associate it with success and earnings is 74.99% (n=96). This finding was investigated in depth during the interview process. As a result of this research, it was understood that the participants evaluated luxury consumption in the context of cause and effect. Those who evaluate luxury consumption in the context of earnings think that they have to earn more in order to consume luxury. However, the group that associates luxury consumption with success directly associates success with luxury consumption, regardless of their working life. In other words, they believe that they will be more successful by obtaining the right to consume luxury. The 25.01% group, who associate luxury consumption with working, think that they will earn more by working harder, and thus they can consume luxury. This minority group explains the cause-effect relationship more clearly and rationally when compared to other groups, thinking that they will earn more by working harder and thus be more successful by consuming luxury.

Another finding seen in Table 11 is the interpretation of the three sub-dimensions mentioned above in the group who believes that they cannot obtain the luxury consumption they deserve. 62.51% of the group interpreted the context of success, work and earnings to be more successful, working and winning in a motivating way under the circumstances. The 37.49% group used this situation as a detection tool and interpreted it as "I am unsuccessful", "I wish I could buy it" and "My economic situation is bad". In other words, this group has adopted a general negative attitude towards life by passively interpreting and accepting the situation they are in.

In particular, the individual and social planning of the images to be created in the positioning of products and brands is of great importance in terms of marketing. For this reason, by focusing on the differentiation of social and individual feelings and thoughts of consumers, the question "How do you explain the difference between buying and consuming a luxury product when you are in a social environment and alone?" was asked to deepen in this direction in the interview. The findings obtained in

this process are shown in Table 12.

**Table 12: Comparison of Social and Individual Luxury Consumption.**

A non-social luxury consumption is unthinkable	N=20 - 14.49%
Happiness in individual; pride, status, success, satisfaction and self-confidence in luxury consumption	N=66 - 47.83%
I feel the same emotions. However, these feelings are more intense in social consumption	N=31 - 22.46%
No difference	N=19 - 13.77%
I feel happier in individual consumption	N=2 - 1.45%

The statements in Table 12 are presented in order of the participants' luxury consumption, from the most social to the most individual. As seen in Table 12, 14.49% of the participants think that luxury consumption is a social consumption due to its ontology and that luxury consumption cannot be separated from sociality. In other words, according to this group, luxury consumption is already a social consumption in terms of its existence. This group is remarkable in that it has a higher proportion of those who think that there is no difference between social and individual consumption. Because, although it represents a marginal group in terms of the fact that consumption is social, it has a high rate and thinks that luxury consumption cannot exist outside of sociality. In other words, this group actually points to social consumption by making an ontological evaluation of luxury consumption.

The opinion expressed by 47.83% of the participants and having the highest rate among the expressions is the group that thinks that individual luxury consumption provides only happiness, but provides pride, status, success, satisfaction and self-confidence in social consumption. This finding is consistent with the study that found that luxury consumption is a self-monitoring and self-construal model (Zhang et al., 2024). During the research process, it was deepened how the participants who gave this answer interpreted the relationship between the values they associate with social consumption, and it was understood that the participants consciously matched social feelings, values and thoughts such as pride and status against social consumption while giving this answer. When their evaluations of the price paid for luxury consumption were questioned within the framework of this understanding, it was understood that the

extra prices paid for luxury consumption were social benefits such as pride and status. In other words, what makes the extra prices necessary for luxury consumption “worth paying” is the social benefits provided by that product.

The third group, which constitutes 22.46% of the participants, made a comparison in terms of the intensity of positive emotions and thoughts instead of making the differentiation of emotions and thoughts. This group, on the other hand, reached the conclusion that a social consumption makes people experience positive emotions and thoughts more intensely. The statements in the first three groups include the idea that luxury consumption is a social act and has a rate of 84.78% in the sample (n=117). This situation shows that consumers tend to perform luxury consumption in a social structure. 13.77% (n=19) of the participants think that there is no difference in individual and social consumption. It has been understood that this group consumes where and how it should be consumed in terms of the quality of the product.

Finally, there is a group of 1.45% (n=2) who prefer to consume a luxury product individually. It was observed that a person in this group is the only person who considers things such as making friends and nature within the scope of need while answering the question "What is the need?". In other words, this group does not define the concept of need as a process that is solved only by purchasing. The process of satisfying needs means a social and show-based consumption as it is interpreted by other groups as a purchasing, price, ability to pay and social indicator. For this reason, pricing a product is a necessity for those who think so. As consumption takes place with an individual understanding, consumers realize that consumption and pricing or branding are two different things.

Up to this point, the research was conducted in the context of the participants' general approach to the researched concepts, their feelings and thoughts. However, after this stage, specific episode research was also conducted to better understand automatic thoughts and intermediate beliefs of luxury consumption. The findings related to this research are examined under the title of “Emotions and Thoughts in the Last Luxury Consumption Episode”.

**4.2.2. Feelings and Thoughts in the Last Luxury Episode**

The main purpose of the research in this section is to understand whether the findings up to this point are also valid when it comes to active luxury consumption. For this reason, the current feelings

and thoughts of each participant were investigated by focusing on the luxury consumption episode. Finally, they were asked to rate their pleasure in individual and social consumption. The reason why this question was asked right after the last luxury episode was to allow participants to anchor their thoughts in practice by asking them after they had explained a practical situation. Thus, the scoring made by the participants will give results closer to what is realized in practice.

The findings regarding the last luxury consumption episode of the participants are shown in Table 13.

*Table 13: Product, Feelings, and Thoughts in the Last Luxury Episode.*

Product		Emotion		Thought	
Car	n=73 - 52.90%	Pride	n=66 - 47.83%	Success	n=46 - 33.33%
Holiday	n=58 - 42.03%	Happiness	n=34 - 24.63%	I can have what I deserve	n=29 - 21.02%
Clothes	n=7 - 5.07%	Satisfaction	n=31 - 22.46%	Status	n=23 - 16.67%
		Excitement	n=7 - 5.08%	Will I be able to purchase in the future?	n=11 - 7.97%
				I deserve better	n=11 - 7.97%
				I will feel good and work harder	n=9 - 6.52%
				I spent a lot but I use it for a long time	n=9 - 6.52%

As seen in Table 13, the items purchased by the participants in the last luxury episode were cars, vacations, and clothes. However, according to the participants' own consumption view, the product is not important for a consumption to be a luxury. Instead, paying more for the same product than the people around them is used as a means of classifying that product as a luxury. In the emotion section, pride ranks first with 47.83% (n=66). About half of the participants feel pride, which is a social emotion, when they think that they are making luxury consumption by purchasing a product by paying a higher price than their social environment. However, in the dimension of thought, as in the previous findings, more diverse and detailed expressions are seen compared to emotion. The predominant idea in

the last episode of luxury consumption has been success. This supports previous findings. In addition, the status shows that they have a social approach in the consumption in question. The ratio of ideas of success and status, which is a direct social expression is 50.00% (n=69). In other words, social thoughts are formed in parallel with the feeling of pride. However, unlike the previous findings in the episode examination, feelings of guilt and anxiety were never seen. Although these feelings are not seen, thoughts about guilt and anxiety continue in the thought part. The thought of "Will I be able to buy it in the future?" shows the continuity of the anxiety in the cognitive dimension with 7.97% (n=11). Thoughts such as "I will feel good and work harder" and "I spent a lot, but I use it for a long time" (n=18 - 13,04%) suppress the feeling of guilt. Apart from this, the idea of seeing luxury consumption as a right, seen in Table 10 and Table 11, was also seen in the episode findings. The thoughts "I can get my rights" and "I deserve better" take the second place after the idea of success with a rate of 28.99% (n=40). In addition, 18 participants stated that they deserve luxury consumption with thoughts such as "I am successful and I can get what I deserve", in addition to other thoughts. In other words, in total, 42.03% (n=58) of the participants stated that they see luxury consumption as a right. Similarly, 7.97% (n=11) of the participants classified the product they bought in the episode they mentioned as luxury but stated that they deserved more luxurious products (higher priced and less people around them can buy) than that product.

The episode analysis part of the study shows that the participants' thoughts on luxury consumption remain more stable when compared to their general thoughts, while their emotions differ. This differentiation, on the other hand, is that the feelings of guilt and anxiety felt when there is no specific purchase moment are not seen in the luxury consumption act. However, this anxiety and guilt continues in the thinking part.

Finally, after questions about the episode, participants were asked to rate the difference in satisfaction between individual and social realization of luxury consumption between zero and ten (0 being the lowest and 10 the highest). The pleasure scores of the participants in individual and social luxury consumption are shown in Table 14.

**Table 14: Individual and Social Consumption Scores.**

	Individual Consumption	Total Consumption
Total	957	1326

Average	6.93	9.61
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The findings in Table 14 shows score an average of 9.61 (out of ten) participants' pleasure when they consume luxury in a social environment, and an average of 6.93 when they do it in an individual environment. Although the expression "individual and social" was used in the question asked to the participants in this process, the expression "individual" was used primarily, but all participants made the scoring first from social consumption. This shows that the participants primarily and ontologically interpret luxury consumption as a social act. The main purpose in this question is to understand the difference in satisfaction comparatively, not the intensity of satisfaction provided by social or individual consumption alone. Since the participants first scored social consumption, considering that luxury consumption had a social structure, and the scoring was related to satisfaction, all participants with a desire for luxury consumption scored close to ten, which is the highest value. However, when the participants start to score individual consumption, they will anchor the score they give to social consumption and determine the score they give to individual consumption by adjusting. It should not be ruled out that the findings in Table 14 should be interpreted under these conditions.

The findings in Table 14 show that the participants rated luxury consumption in social environment 2.68 points and 38.67% higher than the satisfaction of consuming individually. These findings confirm the findings that luxury consumption has a social structure throughout the research. The purpose of this question is to quantify the satisfaction levels by the participants; thus, it was determined that the social consumption satisfaction was 38.67% high. Asking this question after the last luxury consumption episode ensures that the numerical findings obtained are closer to the luxury consumption practice.

Up to this point, the findings obtained as a result of the open-ended interview conducted within the framework of the Cognitive Behavioural Approach and applied with the in-depth method are presented. The ultimate aim of this research is to determine the automatic thoughts and intermediate beliefs of luxury consumption. In the framework of the findings presented in this section, the automatic thought and intermediate beliefs of luxury consumption are examined in the discussion section.



## 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

From the point of view of the marketing literature, it was confirmed that products move away from functionality in the post-modern consumer period compared to modern consumer behaviours. However, when examined in terms of luxury consumption, it was determined that the post-modern consumer completely ignores functionality in luxury products consumption decisions and behaviours. For this reason, it is necessary to focus on the intangible and social benefits such as the status provided by the products in the process of creating the marketing strategies and brand images of luxury products.

When examining how consumers define luxury products, it was determined that the most important feature expected should be products that the minority can consume. It shows that luxury products should be priced high. In addition, consumers are aware of this situation at a cognitive level. In other words, luxury consumers focus on products at a price that few people can afford, regardless of their functional characteristics. When these thoughts are investigated in depth, it is understood that when it comes to luxury consumption, consumers demand to get a larger share of limited world resources and to use this share as a social status tool. The concept of limited world resources is interpreted by consumers as a zero-sum game. This leads consumption to a competitive approach.

When the finding that consumption is realized with a competitive approach within the framework of a zero-sum resource was investigated in depth during the open-ended interview process, the desire of consumers to feel special emerged. In other words, when it comes to luxury consumption, consumers interpret their situations according to the reference points that will make them feel the most special. However, the most important and unchangeable criterion of this process is the price of the products. Consumers feel more special thanks to the products they buy are more expensive than the people around them. However, they make comments that will make them feel more special when they cannot buy products with higher prices from other people due to budget limitations. For example, a consumer who prefers one of two different holiday destinations with the same price uses the differentiating functional features of the product and service he/she prefers to feel more special than her friend who prefers the other. This also explains why the prices of limited-edition products have increased. This finding shows that offering functional additional features in their products will provide a competitive advantage when

differentiating between brands competing in the same price segment. However, offering more functional features between two luxury brands with price segment differences is not taken into consideration by consumers. This finding differs from studies in the literature that found functionality is the first feature to be considered in luxury consumption (Aggarwal, Singh and Misra, 2024). According to our findings, consumers only take functionality into consideration when comparing products that are in the same price segment, accessible to the same number of consumers in society and perceived as luxurious. Apart from this situation, consumers accept without thinking that luxury products are also functional and do not see functionality as a comparison element.

The issue of who the post-modern consumer compares himself/herself with while consuming luxury was examined in terms of direct marketing. One of the most important findings of the research in terms of marketing is that consumers compare themselves in the limited social environment they have. In other words, a low-income consumer does not compare himself/herself to a person belonging to the highest-income group he/she has never met in his/her social environment. When evaluated in this context, it is seen that although the classification of luxury products in the marketing literature as inaccessible luxury, intermediate luxury and accessible luxury has been confirmed, it is not sufficient. Because, considering the conditions under which a product is perceived as luxury by consumers, it is found that it is possible to create luxury brands and products for every income group. For example, since consumers from the lowest-income segment of the society will define products as luxury according to their environment, it seems possible to position a low-priced product as luxury in the target market by differentiating it from other products in that segment in terms of price. Like this finding, there are studies that found that cultural phenomena influence the factors that create the perception of luxury (Soni and Kumar, 2024). However, in this study, it was determined that consumers determine the price level that creates the perception of luxury according to their own social environment and make choices based on cultural factors after this determination. In other words, consumers first consider the price level and then cultural factors.

During the research process, it was determined that when a product is positioned in the luxury segment, consumers begin to see that product as a right. It was determined that individuals who cannot

consume that product interpret this situation as being deprived of their rights. This leads consumers to two emotional groups: anger-jealousy and anxiety-sadness. These emotional states, on the other hand, determine the attitudes of consumers towards the situations they are in. In this context, targeting potential customers who are angry or have similar reactions because they cannot buy their products will be a more efficient marketing method for luxury segment brands that want to gain new customers.

Finally, it is necessary to mention about the findings related to the group of thought that occurs when consumers who see luxury products as a right cannot access those products. The research found that consumers evaluate luxury products in three dimensions: success, work and earnings. In other words, consumers see luxury products as a reward of success, hard work, or high income. Consumers who

cannot consume luxury interpret their situation with an active set of thoughts at a rate of 62.51% and interpret it as “I should be more successful, work harder or earn more”. So, most of the consumers interpret the inability to buy luxury products as a motivating thought within the framework of anger and jealousy. 37.49% of consumers, on the other hand, consider this situation as a failure, I wish to be able to buy, and passively with bad thoughts about their economic situation.

At this stage, where the psychological and intellectual states of consumers towards luxury consumption are examined in depth, it is necessary to switch to the results reached within the framework of Cognitive Behavioural Approach methods. In this context, the automatic thoughts and intermediate beliefs of luxury consumption are shown in Table 15.

**Table 15: Automatic Thoughts and Intermediate Beliefs of Luxury Consumption.**

Automatic Thought		I am successful 46.92%
		I can have what I deserve 29.60%
		I have status 23.48%
Intermediate Belief	Attitude	I am successful 25.94%
		I have 25.18%
		I am different from other people 24.69%
	Rule/Expectation	I own the minority can have 24.19%
		I should be more successful 45.00%
		I have to work harder 35.00%
	Assumption	I should earn more money 20.00%
		If I consume more luxury, I will be more successful 45.00%
		If I work harder, I can consume more luxury 35.00%
		If I earn more, I can consume more luxury 20.00%

As can be seen in Table 15, the automatic thoughts of the participants are formed within the scope of the concepts of success, gaining rights and status. The majority of the participants (46.92%) associate the action they take in automatic thought (in the scope of System 1) with being successful at the time of purchase. These findings are derived from specific episode analysis. After these findings, the attitude developed by the participants was obtained by investigating their general thoughts on luxury consumption.

As the first step of intermediate belief, the idea of success and status continues to exist in the same way. However, in addition to automatic thought, thoughts

of “being different from other people” and “having what the minority can have” are added in the attitude stage.

In the rule/expectation, which is the second stage of intermediate belief, the components of the attitude are associated with success, work and earn. Like the previous stages, the concept of success is also in the first place in this rule/expectation. Finally, assumptions that show how attitudes and rules/expectations are interpreted by the participants are examined.

Assumptions consist of statements associated with success, work and earnings, respectively. However, there is a shift in the cause-effect

relationship of the concept of success in the first-place assumption of success. The most obvious cognitive distortion within the framework of the Cognitive Behavioural Approach was identified in this assumption. Because the participants deny that to consume luxury, they must first be successful in their income-generating business and assume that they will be successful when they consume luxury. This causes them to evaluate success as a result rather than a reason. The irrational assumption that the cause-effect relationship is replaced ranks first with 45.00%. The opposite of this, the statement "I can consume more luxury if I work harder" ranks second with 35.00%. This assumption was identified as a rational dimension of the success assumption, which is in the first place, by associating the ability to consume luxury with the reason for working. Finally, with 20.00%, the assumption is "If I earn more, I can consume more luxury". In this assumption, a cause-

effect relationship is established in which more earnings will create more luxury consumption power, and it refers to the group in which what needs to be done for more earnings is ruled out. In other words, while the participants in this group are aware of the need to earn more, they ignore the necessity of working more, investing more or saving by reducing the consumption they do not care about, by cutting the cause-effect relationship here.

Finally, in this research, the equivalence of the irrationalities within the framework of the economic literature obtained in the findings regarding automatic thoughts and intermediate beliefs to the types of cognitive distortions within the framework of the Cognitive Behavioural Approach was examined. Cognitive distortions seen in assumptions regarding the process of consuming or not consuming luxury are shown in Table 16.

Table 16: Cognitive Distortions.

Assumption	Cognitive Distortions
I cannot get what's rightfully mine 92.75%	Jumping in conclusions
	Mental filtering
	Overgeneralization
I am successful 14.49%	Mental filtering
	Black and white thinking
	Labelling
	Overgeneralization
My economic situation is bad 17.39%	Jumping the conclusions
	Mental filtering
	Labelling
	Discounting the positive
	Overgeneralization
I am missing the life 1.45%	Mental filtering
	Emotional reasoning
	Magnification
	Overgeneralization
I have to earn more 12.50%	"Should" and "must" statements
Will I be able to purchase it in the future?	Predictive thinking

As seen in Table 16, the most common types of cognitive distortions were mental filtering and overgeneralization, which supported each other in a way. Participants with these two cognitive distortions first produce an assumption in the focus of this negativity by mental filtering in the negative situation they are in, and then, by overgeneralizing this assumption throughout their lives, they interpret

their entire lives as unsuccessful and poor. In the groups in which jumping the conclusions and mental filtering distortions are seen together, it is seen that the demanded luxury product is already priced with the strategy of being owned by the few, and the distortion is that these products are produced for everyone. After mental filtering, participants reduce their whole lives to luxury consumption with

jumping the conclusions. After this reduction, they overgeneralize and create the general scheme. Thus, the labelling process of cognitive distortion is constituted. Thus, this label creates a consumer behaviour model that is detached from rationality and reality, by interpreting the positive, magnification, "should" and "must" statements and predictive thinking distortions.

## **5.1. Contributions**

### **5.1.1. Theoretical Contributions**

Studies in the literature show that social factors support and increase luxury consumption (Ma and Coelho, 2024). In addition to this, this study examined in depth how social factors affect it. The findings of this research have been found to use consumers' social environment to determine which price level is a luxury product group for them. The functional features of luxury products are frequently studied in the literature. However, when it comes to luxury products, it has been found that functionality ranks low among the preference factors for consumers. In addition, like the studies of Brandao and Barbedo (2023), it has been determined that the uniqueness feature of the products has gained importance. In this context, it has been determined that the marketing mix and brand positioning in which uniqueness and price elements are evaluated as a whole are more effective.

In terms of consumer behaviour theory, in the post-modern consumerism culture, which consumers evaluate luxury brands as a right for themselves, the emotions that consumers feel when they cannot access a luxury product affect their future behaviours to obtain that product. In this context, when consumers' emotions are separated into active and passive when it comes to an inaccessible luxury product, a significant difference is observed in their future behaviours.

### **5.1.2. Practical Implications**

From a practical perspective, brands in the luxury segment should use functionality as a competitive element only among rival brands at the same price, uniqueness and luxury level. Apart from this, it has been found that brands that focus on price, uniqueness and greater use of resources will support their luxury image more.

One of the important issues for brands in terms of marketing is gaining new customers. In this context, focusing on potential customers who feel an active emotional state such as anger when they cannot

reach that brand will be a more effective policy for gaining new customers.

Although brands decide whether their brands will be in the luxury segment when developing a positioning strategy, consumers are also effective in this decision. Because when it comes to low-income consumers, brands that do not position themselves in the luxury segment are also perceived as luxury by consumers. In these consumer groups, purchasing decisions and behaviours towards these brands develop like luxury product consumption decisions and behaviours. This situation should be taken into consideration when developing strategies for brands.

### **5.1.3. Limitations And Future Studies**

The first limitation of this study is that the core beliefs in the Cognitive Behavioural Approach are ignored. There are two reasons for this. The first reason is that the sample size was large since this study is a pioneering study examining consumer behaviour using Cognitive Behavioural Approach methods. It bypasses the persuasion process of all participants in the multiple sessions required to reach the core belief. On the other hand, since the subject of this research is not a pathological case study seen in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy processes, it is not possible to reach a specific episode that forms the core belief. Because the findings obtained in this research express the patterns formed in individuals through psychological, sociological and cultural backgrounds. For this reason, studies aiming to identify core beliefs should be planned in a different way from this research. However, the findings obtained in this study support research on the core beliefs of luxury consumption.

Another ruled out point in this study is the case formulations. Again, examining the case formulations in the consumption behaviours of healthy individuals, which should determine the breaking point of a pathological condition, will be meaningless in terms of the Cognitive Behavioural Approach. Because, like the first limitation, instead of the break required for case formulation, there will be a wide cultural and sociological development process in the consumption behaviours of healthy participants, as well as the environment in which the individual is affected. In this context, investigating the effects of specific factors such as the use of social media as an environmental effect in a fragmented way, rather than the general framework of the case formulation, is another suggestion of this study.

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