

Experiential Consumption Material Purchases and Consumer Happiness

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Main Purpose Of The Article

The premise of the article revolves around the impact a purchase might have on a person's life. Now, for the sake of the argument, the purchase has been divided into two categories: experiential purchase and material purchase. The researchers claim that experiential purchase has a deeper, more meaningful impact on a person's life than a material possession does, the reason being that when recalling the purchase, a person tends to have a nostalgic association with an experience as opposed to an item. That being said, there are material purchases that provide enriching experiences as well. At the end of the day, it's about how a single person interprets his purchase. The primary purpose of this study is to inspect the psychological process that is induced by these purchases or what leads a mere purchase to result in a wholesome experience for an individual. What makes this study so intriguing is the idea that every item we purchase, though it may be a birthday card for a friend, a visit to a restaurant with a loved one or even just a new phone that we have been meaning to buy, has a deep-rooted explanation associated with it that ends up leaving an impression on to our lives (Kumar et al., 2024).

The Major Arguments

The main theory behind this article is that individuals cherish their experiential purchases more than their material purchases. This theory was further divided into three variables: the impact of experiential purchases on

1) Social relationships: Human beings value building and sustaining relationships. They tend to relate to people who have been through the same experiences as they have far more than just owning the same item as they do. Experiential purchases not only give individuals an opportunity to relate to or converse with other people, but they also open doors to creating more experiences with an individual's loved ones. The bond made with a person based on an experience is stronger and more sustaining than the connection made with someone who buys the same brand of toothpaste as you do. An important concept is that an experiential purchase has a "story value" that allows you to open up and have conversations with other people about your experience. Talking about experiences is also more socially acceptable than talking about an item. People will be more prompted to listen to your trip to L. I then to hear about your stamp collection. Recent evidence supports the conclusion that experiential purchases facilitate broader feelings of social connection (Kumar et al., 2024).

2) PA person's identity and sense of self: An individual's purchases translate their identity and transcribe what they are to the world. Material possessions are not as reflective of a person's identity as experiences are. After all at the end of the day material items don't make us who we are, our experiences do. "If called upon to write our memoirs, it is our experiences we would write about, not our possessions." Proving that experiential purchases are more closely tied to the self (Kumar et al., 2024).

3) Social comparison of purchases: As collectivistic as people are, they tend to compare themselves to other people. Individuals either feel superior or inferior based on the stuff they purchase and own. Per say, if a person dislikes someone and finds out that they got an item same as them in either a cheaper price or better value, the person will get frustrated, but in the case of an experiential purchase, the frustration will not be as intense. Proving that experiential purchases are experienced more on their own terms, not with respect to how they compare with other experiential purchases (Kumar et al., 2024).

Major Findings

The major finding of the study is that experiential purchases are more gratifying than material purchases. Some of the other empirical conclusions of the study are

- The three main variables described above were analyzed separately for research purposes. In fact, these variables are merged when it comes to everyday life. A purchase that reflects one's individuality will be mentioned more by the person in order to connect with other people. If a purchase is highly regarded by the person, he will tend to be protective of it. Finally, while comparing one's purchases to others, a person tends to feel gratified.
- The researchers emphasize the value of experiential purchases by advising consumers to spend their incomes on creating experiences rather than hoarding items of insignificant value.
- The researchers stress that policy policymakers to focus on investing in and creating the required infrastructure, like theme parks and museums, that encourage the consumers to experience.

However, newer research also shows that the experiential advantage is conditional. Social crowding can reduce happiness from experiences, and the hedonic or utilitarian nature of a purchase may matter more than whether it is classified as an experience or an object (Liu et al., 2025; Kousi et al., 2023).

What I Learnt

My takeaway from this article is exactly what the researchers wanted me to learn: that I should invest more in experiential purchases rather than material possessions. Critically analyzing this article has made me more aware of what to spend my money on, to stop for a second and think, "Is the item I'm

about to buy going to spark joy in my life? Or am I just purchasing it to fulfill a short-term want?”. We millennials, as a whole, are so individualistic that we have forgotten what it’s like to experience the mere joy of just sitting down with a group of people and cherishing the time we have together. This article has truly impacted me to think beyond material possessions that provide short term satisfaction and invest in creating memories (Kumar et al., 2024).

Weaknesses And Limitations

A few of the limitations I noticed are;

- The article did not take into account the introvert-extrovert dichotomy. Extroverts tend to associate enjoyment with spending time with other people and creating relationships, whereas introverts find joy in either being alone or spending limited time with specific people. An extrovert will appreciate an experiential purchase because it gives them a chance to spend time with other people. An introvert might savor a material possession, for them reading a good book or spending time in solitude with their videogames might be more valuable.
- This article only takes into account the positive experiential purchases rather than highlighting the negative experiential purchases. A person might regret spending money on a terrible vacation cruise.
- The premise of the article was only limited to wealthy, well-established societies. In third-world countries, however, material substance is far more valuable than experiential experience. Research on social class similarly finds that the experiential advantage is stronger among people with abundant resources and may disappear or reverse among lower-resource consumers (Lee et al., 2018).
- Finally, this article also revolved around the idea that money, in fact, does buy happiness. This provokes further questions: does a person really need to purchase an experience in order to lead a happy life?

Marketing Application

Practically speaking, there are some firms that are using the idea behind experiential purchases to market their tangible products. One of the top-tier brands implementing this idea is “Apple,” using Simon Sinek’s “golden circle” concept. Here’s how Apple does it; “Everything we do, we believe in challenging the status quo, we believe in thinking differently. The way we challenge the status quo is by making our product beautifully designed, simple to use and user-friendly. We just happen to make great computers, want to buy one?” now, even though Apple’s competitors are equally qualified in making what they make, Apple leads the market. It’s because Apple doesn’t market its products as mere tangibles. They market them as creating a user-friendly experience that facilitates their customers.

Here are some recommendations that can be applied by a local company or industry based on the conclusions of the study;

- Now that we're familiar with the term experiential purchasing and how consumers tend to prefer their experiential purchases over item purchases it gives businesses like the restaurant industry an edge over firms and businesses whose sole revenue streams are their tangible products. How can these firms also reap the benefits that the firms offering experiential purchases can?
- Here's how, by following the scope of the study, the firms selling tangible products should market their products in a way that shows the consumer that by buying this particular product, they can experience what their competitors cannot offer.
- According to one of the recommendations of the researchers, firms can also invest in projects that will provide consumers with actual experiences. That can be done by investing in infrastructure and providing the locals with a place that might not be within their geographical proximity.
- Firms can also invest in research and development projects that focus on the three variables in the study, i.e., how experiential purchases can build social relationships and identify one's self and social comparisons. By focusing on the consumer behavior of the target market, firms can track down exactly what their consumers want and provide them with it.
- By applying the experiential marketing approach, not only big firms but also small startups can distinguish themselves from their competitors, create a mark and lead the market. The strongest applications should account for crowding, consumer resources, and whether the offering is genuinely enjoyable rather than assuming all experiences automatically produce greater happiness (Liu et al., 2025; Kousi et al., 2023).

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