

Negative Word of Mouth about Luxury Goods: An Empirical Investigation of the Role of Guilt Feelings

Cesare Amatulli

University of Bari

Matteo De Angelis

Luiss University

Giovanni Pino

University of Portsmouth

Gianluigi Guido

University of Salento

Cite as:

Amatulli Cesare, De Angelis Matteo, Pino Giovanni, Guido Gianluigi (2019), Negative Word of Mouth about Luxury Goods: An Empirical Investigation of the Role of Guilt Feelings. *Proceedings of the European Marketing Academy*, 48th, (5252)

Paper presented at the 48th Annual EMAC Conference, Hamburg, May 24-27, 2019.



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Abstract

This research investigates whether and why communication regarding unsustainable luxury may lead to negative word of mouth about the manufacturing company. We propose that messages revealing that a luxury product consumers have bought has been produced in an unsustainable manner may elicit a higher sense of guilt than messages revealing the unsustainable nature of a mass-market product consumers have bought. Guilt, in turn, drives consumers' intentions to generate negative word-of-mouth about the producer. We also propose that the positive effect of guilt on negative word of mouth is moderated by consumers' individualistic orientation, whereby we expect that effect to be more pronounced among consumers with a higher versus lower individualistic orientation. Across three experiments, we find confirmation about our predictions. Overall, this research makes important contributions to advancing literatures on sustainable luxury, emotions associated with luxury and word of mouth behavior.

Keywords: *Luxury; Sustainability; Negative Word-of-Mouth*

Track: Advertising & Marketing Communications