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The Democratization of Intangible Luxury

Structured Abstract

Purpose

The notion of luxury has changed due to the democratization and the fast adoption pace of intangible luxury service providers embedding voice-controlled assistants. In particular, Amazon's Echo Look is expected to further democratize luxury services and consumer experience; indeed, this camera-based device acts as a personal consultant as it provides fashion advices based on the pictures of its users. Nonetheless, as the Echo Look proliferates the market, concerns around its potential disruption to the marketplace alongside usage related issues, such as privacy, will arise.

Approach

The research adopted an exploratory approach using elite-interviewing. The sample included 17 experts in the fields of digital marketing, fashion consulting, information technology security, and retailing.

Findings

The study pioneers the discussion on how interactive voice-activated assistant (IVA) devices can potentially outweigh concerns around safety and privacy through providing luxury-like personalized services. To that end, the Echo Look device was taken as the key example based on the unique features and benefits it provides to its users, namely in being perceived as a personal fashion consultant.

Originality

The literature on intangible luxury based on IVA devices is still nascent. This study fills a considerable gap in the literature related to retailers' technological innovations aimed at democratizing luxury-like personalized experiences.

Keywords: Luxury; Amazon; Echo Look; Technology

Introduction

For so long, luxury was considered to be grounded on the pleasurable goods that individuals with exceptionally high incomes enjoyed (Berry, 1994). It was a way for people to show off their prestige and status by mainly indulging their wants with physical goods (Han et al., 2010; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014). Luxury was not only based on products but was also made exclusive to elites due to the difficulty of obtaining such products that required as well appropriate knowledge and awareness of their quality (Appadurai, 1986). Accordingly, the exclusivity of luxury brands was considered to be for wealthy and upper-class consumers (Truong et al., 2008). Nonetheless, this understanding has been recently reinterpreted and modeled to suit the mass market. Indeed, with time the concept of luxury continued to evolve while the depth of its meaning broadened (Mortelmans, 2005). Luxury is no longer tied to the aspect of physicality but is rather based on an entire experience aimed to appeal to anyone who can afford it (Atwal and Williams, 2009; Cristini et al., 2017). As societies and cultures evolve, so does the notion of luxury itself. Luxury is now subjective to each person's own view of value and preference due to globalization and the continued rise of technology (Belk, 2014).

Luxury will always be linked to elegance and quality; however, the idea of luxury began to shift towards a different meaning (Wilson et al., 2015). Nowadays, consumers are aware of the economic power that they hold through consumption and how that impacts their society as a whole. Consumers no longer want to purchase products that exude elegance, but rather are leaning towards wanting to experience that style and comforting quality themselves (Cristini et al. 2017). Indeed, the understanding of modern luxury today is based on the premise of being a premium medium of self-expression (Chandon et al., 2016). Luxury is accordingly seen as an external symbol of a person's internal desires, such as identity affirmation, status aspiration, and group belongingness (Hung et al., 2011; Ramadan et al., 2018b). Part of the shift in how luxury is perceived is due to the rise of people belonging to the middle class throughout the world and their heavy use of digital platforms and technological tools (Tesseras et al., 2015). Accordingly, younger generations that are tech-savvy with stable incomes are more aware today of luxury products and services than ever before.

One of the technological tools that is expected to further democratize luxury services and consumer experience is the Amazon Echo Look device. Amazon, the largest e-commerce retailer,

has recently launched the Echo Look device which is powered by its interactive voice assistant "Alexa". The Echo Look was made available to the general public in June 2018 after it was tested for around a year on an invitation-only basis for select customers. The Echo Look features a camera that enables it to take pictures and videos of the user to accordingly give her/him feedback on the adopted style. Accordingly, the device acts as a personal fashion consultant that recommends ideal outfits based on the latest trends in fashion. Priced at $199, this affordable device is likely to transform the landscape in relation to intangibles luxuries.

The literature on the democratization of intangible luxury services using such artificial intelligence powered devices is practically non-existent. As the Echo Look proliferates into consumers' homes, concerns around its potential disruption to the marketplace alongside usage related issues, such as privacy, will arise. Accordingly, this paper discusses the expected adoption model of the Echo Look and highlights early-on its potential democratization of intangible luxury services.

Amazon's approach to luxury services

Amazon has one of the biggest influences in the online market. Known for selling mainly convenience products for so many years, a shift to luxury products and services is the logical move to the massive online retailer (Achille et al., 2018). Amazon's success comes from the fact that it provides such a wide range of products and services and yet still manages to make everything transparent, tangible, trustworthy and helpful (Farah and Ramadan, 2017; Ramadan et al., 2019).

When Amazon introduced its own interactive voice-activated assistant (IVA) called Alexa, it started a brand-new era of technology and interconnections throughout people's daily lives. IVAs themselves started with the introduction of chatbots developed to speak to humans through either voice or text (Haack et. al., 2017). Apple's Siri, Microsoft's Cortana, Google's Assistant and finally Amazon's Alexa, are all examples of software agents that are run on speaker devices or smartphones. The activation of all of those devices starts with a wake-up key word which is followed by a command. The latter is sent on the spot to a specialized server that interprets the command, supplies the voice assistant with the appropriate information that is transmitted then to the end user (Hoy, 2018).

Alexa is based on the Echo smart speaker which provides answers and information, acts as a personal reminder as well as a medium for purchasing products online through voice command (Kelly, 2014). The reason the Echo became one of the most desired products to be bought is due to the fact that it continuously provides a high-quality service. With so many services provided by the virtual assistant Alexa, numerous companies are reaching out to integrate their products in it so that to provide personalized services to their customers (Gordon and Wroclawski, 2018). With Amazon's Echo, luxury is making its way into the homes and lives of millions of people to provide services that will not only help but also influence the way buyers choose their items and purchase through voice command. Households that do own the Amazon Echo can no longer see themselves without one. This is a clear sign of the shift in perception in the need of such an affordable luxury (Petro, 2018). With the Amazon Echo, every individual can get his/her own personal assistant. While technology was once considered a luxury, today it is becoming a necessity in each household. Indeed, consumers nowadays need to feel an own sense of luxury with the services and experiences they receive which is made available through such technologies (Karabell, 2017).

Amazon has further deepened its innovation leadership in that domain with the recent launch of the Echo Look. The Echo Look is a device that is essentially based upon a camera that captures photos and videos while also embedding a speaker and microphone to interact with Alexa. Users of the Echo Look can use the camera to take 360-degree photos or videos of themselves to see their outfit from all angles. Consumers can also use Alexa's built-in style check that gives the user a recommendation on which outfits are trending through experts' fashion advices. The photos can easily be shared with friends and can be used to keep track of what consumers wore daily with what Amazon calls the "lookbook" (Ong, 2018). Early industry specialists' reviews are favorable as they expect this device to have great potential in making it easy for the user to get instant fashion advice. The potential for Amazon is high in that its customers will be able to buy the clothes that seem fashionable and that suit them from the e-retailer directly. Furthermore, the user-based pictures and data will enrich Amazon's algorithms in such to help them improve their fashion recommendations (Lomas, 2017). Accordingly, the possibilities for Amazon are sizeable; fashion and luxury brands will be interested to become featured and integrated with the Echo Look device which would generate revenue for Amazon.

Personalized customers' experience

Personalization has become a necessary part of the customer experience as each customer feels as if the brand is aware of his/her individual needs. In the luxury industry, the survival of companies is dependent on whether they are able to create these personalized relationships through the use of big data and other technologies (Kearins, 2018). Technology has had the biggest impact on shopping since businesses are now capable of reaching customers anywhere they are. Through the use of digital devices, companies have now established their presence through apps that would provide personalized services as well as track interactions (Smith, 2017). Consumers are now capable of researching products, learning about different brands, and purchasing items – all while staying in their own homes. Therefore, it is no surprise that the biggest impact the digital transformation has had was on customer experiences (Pace, 2018). Artificial Intelligence has changed entire industries throughout the world by providing AI technological assistances to consumers who do not wish to communicate with actual people (Morgan, 2018).

One of the leading companies in that domain is Amazon (Mellahi and Johnson, 2000). Several researchers have discussed the strategy that Amazon is adopting to win over the consumer in countless product categories in the marketplace (Dudovskiy, 2017). A key strategy that Amazon has been reported to be using effectively is the "Dynamo" approach. The Dynamo is an Amazon technique used to provide an "always-on" consumer experience. This method helps keep all the core services functioning reliably and stably while managing all the data entering Amazon's systems. Amazon also implements adaptive and multi-segment positioning through offering a wide array of products in order to better fit the changes in the external market (Ritala et al., 2014). Moreover, Amazon uses a diversification strategy whereby today it is considered to be a current market leader in AI through its Alexa voice assistant that provides a luxury-like service and experience to its users (Purington et al., 2017).

The concept of luxury is evolving whereby it is moving from a pure physical goods focus to being based on an intangible and subjective personal experience (Tynan et al., 2010). While people may resort to online luxury products, they still want to have personalized luxury-like experiences that give off the feeling of a one of a kind environment (Goldston, 2017). Indeed, people want to enjoy the usual services in more extravagant ways; while it is important to recognize that want, it is also essential to ensure that luxurious services are provided at the right amount of expectancy (Karabell, 2017). Building a strong customer relationship is extremely vital. Therefore, connecting to users and potential consumers online would help determine where they are located

and what it is that they expect when purchasing a brand or a service (Madaj, 2017). Luxury brands and services as well as retailers are using digital means to collect the data necessary to become closer to their customers, understand their preferences, and provide new products more efficiently.

Most of the luxury sales that occur are digitally influenced (Achille et al., 2018). This shift to digital means is the cause of a generational shift as well. The rise of the younger generation which is more likely to purchase online is encouraging the proliferation of luxury-like services that promise an exceptional tailor-made consumer experience (Woodworth, 2018).

Functional and relational value

The functional benefits and value of self-service technologies, such as voice-controlled devices, are widely discussed in the extant literature. For example, the technology acceptance model (TAM), the technology readiness index (TRI), and the service quality model (SERVQUAL) can be considered in discussing the functional benefits of an AI voice-controlled device. The technology acceptance model for instance, holds that the perceived usefulness and ease of use of a technological innovation's adoption may influence its user's attitude toward the innovation and subsequently its usage (Porter and Dontu, 2006). Likewise, the TRI indicates that consumers are motivated to adopt an innovation because of its functionality and usefulness which would help them achieve personal goals (Meuter et al., 2000; Parasuraman, 2000). Furthermore, and as per the SERVQUAL literature, the technology has to be reliable when providing the related needed service (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

When it comes to relational value, companies are expected to provide more than their core products in order to ensure the long-term satisfaction of their customers. Relational value is established when customers become loyal to a brand that will provide them with the benefits they seek, whether social or personal (Hashi and Yasin, 2017). Any additional source of value that is contributed to the business by customers that does not involve a financial aspect can be considered as a relational value. Establishing this value is very beneficial to businesses, especially with the evolution of products and the dynamic changes in the market that might dissuade customers to purchase different brands (Ramadan et al., 2018a; Ryals, 2015). More importantly, in this digital age, a shift towards co-creation is well on its way to increase and improve customer experiences.

Now more than ever, personalized products can be developed through self-service technologies that engage customers (Åkesson et al., 2014). Hyper-personalization is one of the

growing trends, whereby customers expect today to be given products and services that would make their lives run more efficiently. Furthermore, consumers want to feel more connected to their products as well as to be able to enjoy the full sensations that would take their experiences to new heights (Åkesson et al., 2014). Amazon has been raising the bar when it comes to customer brand relationships with their consistency, trustworthiness, and innovations. By entering the homes of its customers through the Echo devices, Amazon has established a relationship that cannot easily be competed with (Lagrange, 2017).

Amazon has recently raised the bar even further with the Echo Look device. Firstly, the Amazon Echo Look is equipped with the Alexa assistant which allows for a better customer experience. Furthermore, the device is integrated with the Alexa skills store which allows users to access more functionalities as well as to develop more Alexa skills (Isbitski, 2017). At first glance, the Echo Look does seem like a device for the fashion-oriented users; however as stated previously, Alexa-integrated devices have a huge variety of services that would make it appeal to the general public (Hempel, 2017). According to businesswire.com (2018) and Amazon (2018), the Echo Look has a vast array of features and benefits; (1) the device can capture pictures or short videos in a chronological manner that provides a convenient way for users to keep track what they wore day by day, (2) users can maintain a "lookbook" to collect these images and tag them as favorites, (3) users can check the style between two pictures to see what outfits work better with the current fashion trends, and accordingly, (4) Amazon can suggest clothes that work with the ones users already own. This fashion advice is beneficial and trusted since it comes from fashion experts from Amazon, Vogue and GQ. Also, Amazon is creating a community centered around fashion by submitting users' pictures to the community's voting polls for additional feedback (Ong, 2018). Lastly, the Amazon Echo Look will inspire a sense of personal style and reduce the hassle of looking in front of the mirror and choosing the needed wardrobe (Fumo, 2017).

As the Amazon Echo Look is integrated with the Alexa assistant, this adds a level of familiarity when using the device for fashion advice. To develop its skills and make it more human-like, Amazon lets developers use an Alexa's skills kit to design new skills and improve the voice-based assistant. Furthermore, Alexa and other virtual assistants use machine learning to improve and become more human-like when answering questions (Hutson, 2017). The Echo Look and other Amazon Alexa-integrated devices have the ability to use voice identification to recognize a person. This allows Alexa to then personalize music and shopping while adding a human personal feel as

if it is a family member (Ebling, 2016). Amazon hopes in the near future to improve Alexa in such a way that it will be able to pick up on human emotions and shift its answers accordingly (Rubin, 2017).

Customers are loyal to Amazon and have developed a relationship with the company but more specifically with its Echo devices and Alexa (Danzinger, 2018). Recent studies by Google show that 41% of users talk to their Google home as a friend while 72% use their voice assistants for daily routines (Kleinberg, 2018).

Privacy risks

The introduction of the Amazon Echo Look into people's homes will entail privacy and security risks since it is essentially an internet connected camera that is used to capture images of the shopper in return for a fashion advice. The first risk pertaining to the Echo Look is the social factor whereby the user would be sacrificing privacy for societal acceptance which can be harmful to people self-confidence (Applin, 2017). Nonetheless, the real direct risk is related to hacking. Indeed, if a potential hacking occurs, one could control this camera and take unauthorized pictures through it. Furthermore, the photos are stored on the Amazon cloud which can also be vulnerable to hacking which puts the users at risk of exposing their personal photos to the public. While Amazon states that the Echo Look would be turned off unless a wake word is used, cameras can still be hacked and used in numerous ways (Hartmans, 2017).

From a data sharing concern, while Amazon affirmed that they would not offer the data from the Echo Look to third party sites, yet the e-retailer can still target the user with advertisements to buy products from its platform. In fact, as Alexa's skills continue to develop amidst more interconnectivity and integration with other smart connected devices, a greater concern regarding the privacy of users will arise (Alepis and Patsakis, 2017). Currently, the Echo Look has ads from Vogue and GQ, thus they are mostly centered around fashion (Kinsella, 2018). Accordingly, Amazon's current practice seems like a breach of privacy from the e-retailer to the user (Vincent, 2017). Furthermore, the Echo Look also poses some security concerns. When someone for example places an order through the Echo device, all the confidential information of that person, such as credit card data, are instantly used from the cloud. Accordingly, unauthorized purchases can happen which would affect trust towards the IVA (Chung et al., 2017).

For consumers to have a favorable attitude towards a self-service technological device, the perceived performance and reliability of a used technology is a determining factor (Dabholkar, 1994). Users that may particularly be concerned about the reliability of the device may expect some risks related to the usage of its services as these perceived risks would significantly affect consumers' attitude towards the technology (Dabholkar and Bagozzi, 2002; Weijters et al., 2007).

Methodology

In order to investigate consumers' attitude towards the adoption and effective usage of intangible luxury services, 17 experts in the field of digital marketing, brand management, IT security, fashion consulting and sales and retailing were interviewed. The sample size was deemed to be acceptable following Creswell's (1998) recommendation to carry out between 5 and 25 interviews, especially that the sample was based on elite interviewing. The case of the Echo Look device was utilized to solicit the experts' opinions on the matter. Accordingly, an exploratory qualitative research design was adopted. The interviews were conducted using Skype calls and lasted an average of 40 minutes each. Table 1 summarizes the sample's characteristics by area of expertise.

INSERT HERE: Table 1: Respondents' characteristics

The interviews were recorded with the interviewees' consent for subsequent transcription, thematic coding and analysis based on the extracted themes. Accordingly, and in line with Spiggle's (1994) guidelines, the data was first categorized during the coding process following different labels/themes. For this, passages of texts were classified as to being representing, or belonging to a phenomenon. The first iterations of the categorization process were then integrated under higher-order conceptual constructs. This abstraction process incorporated more concrete categories into consolidated themes, leading to the emergence of the suggested model (see figure 1). As the data was being gathered and coded, comparisons between the different inferences from the data were made to evaluate whether additional interviews/data were still needed. While data saturation was reached at the 12th interview, 5 additional interviews were conducted to ensure that no key implication was missed and that the inferences made were being consolidated by those additional data. Accordingly, the research process was based on an iteration approach as it involved

moving through data collection and analysis, whereby key points that were raised in one interview were integrated in subsequent ones in order to develop further the findings (Spiggle, 1994). Finally, the integration step of the data was conducted through the mapping of the relationships between the different conceptual elements.

The open-ended questions tackled the following key areas: (a) the proliferation and use of luxury service devices powered by virtual assistants, (b) the relationship and experiential components of such devices with consumers, (c) the potentials and risks of these devices taking the Echo Look's example, and finally (d) the marketing implications for brands and retailers.

Findings

The interviewed experts confirmed by large the discussion put henceforth in this study in regard to the democratization of luxury services. As per the followed coding and analysis process stated in the methodology section, the emerging themes that led to the ensuing intangible luxury service adoption model were based on the two key balancing components of (1) users' derived benefits and (2) the perceived risks.

Users' derived benefits

   (a) Functional & relational value

The Echo Look itself was deemed to be an interesting pioneering device that democratizes luxury services in a tangible way. Indeed, users are able to use and reflect the actual fashion recommendations on their daily look, making them the first ever generation to be 'AI fashioned':

- *"Can you imagine that we're witnessing the first ever generation to be actually wearing based on an AI recommendation? These devices are going to revolutionize the way consumers behave and buy."* [5]

- *"The effect of using this service now shows on us! Consumers following the recommendations of Alexa will be called AI fashioned! I think Amazon has outsmarted leading tech and brand companies through providing consumers with affordable luxury-like services."* [4]

In relation to the derived benefits of such intangible luxury services, the respondents pondered on a clear winning strategic combination: the pairing of functional personalized benefits with a

human-like conversation that personifies the virtual assistant. On that basis, and according to the experts, Alexa is being perceived today as a 'friend' that instills users' trust through a very good understanding of their needs:

- *"As an image consultant I think Alexa will be a friend for women on the go. Women like to take pictures in good lighting. We are talking about a hands-free product that will calm down busy mornings."* [4]

- *"The relationship consumers have with Alexa can actually increase the chances of having them try the Echo Look, since they already trust Amazon's Alexa; they see in 'her' a friend that they can talk to."* [2]

- *"I favor innovations through personal virtual assistants. As Amazon collects more data from users, they will be able to customize/adapt their product to users' preference. In addition, Amazon can streamline the relationship/integration between its products in order to enhance users' experience."* [1]

(b) Personalized experience

The democratization of such highly personalized services presents as well a large potential to marketers and brand owners.

- *"The more Amazon and brands collect data about users' styles, the more they will customize their products to meet the needs/tastes of the majority of the people. In addition, pictures taken by the Echo Look can serve as the advertisement they are looking for, leading to an overall reduction in advertising budgets."* [1]

- *"AI powered devices are today seen as a personal concierge. It's a tailored luxury that everyone can have access to, not only the rich. This 'luxury for all' should open lots of opportunities for marketers through the AI voice as the virtual assistant will now recommend and conduct a conversation with consumers rather than just push a general ad that is irrelevant."* [2]

To sustain these benefits, the service provider will need to constantly update its algorithms and service quality to remain relevant so that it does not lose the interest of its users.

- *"I can see a change in the customer's daily decision-making process. If recommendations were not properly given or did not meet customers' expectation, then it might result in lack*

of trust from the end-users who will eventually stop believing in Alexa. One example is fashionistas and influencers; once they become so commercial, people notice that no genuine advices are given anymore, leading to a loss in the number of followers." [(5)]

- *"As much as it can boost people's confidence by recommending their best look, it can also help increase their insecurity, especially if they're convinced that a specific outfit looks great on them but Alexa says otherwise."* [(4)]

Perceived risks (privacy)

While the adoption model of such a service is based upon highly sought-after personal benefits, privacy concerns will still need to be addressed as part of an ongoing reassurance that the device is safe to use:

- *"The risk that's coming from this device is the privacy concern. Just like how Facebook was hacked recently, this device can be hacked and people can use the pictures, the background in the pictures for theft, for criminal acts or just some illegal acts."* [(3)]

- *"I believe that some customers will definitely be concerned about the Echo Look. Consumers are concerned about privacy issues. Talking about myself, I would be scared to place Alexa in my room. I am not too sure when someone can hack it. Amazon should make sure to inform customers that this is a safe product."* [(4)]

While this holds true, the respondents stated that factually in our current digital age, there is no real privacy assurance anymore:

- *"Let's not forget that in this digital age there's no privacy at all, so I don't think that an additional device would matter or stop us from using it."* [(4)]

- *"The risks this new technology has is already present in our lives, and consumers are still sharing."* [(3)]

Based on the above findings, the intangible luxury service adoption model was shown to be based on two key balancing components: (1) users' derived benefits (which include personalized experience and functional and relational value) and (2) perceived risks (which include privacy risks). Accordingly, the ensuing consumer adoption model for an intangible luxury services, hereby the Echo Look, was depicted (see figure 1).

INSERT HERE: Figure 1: Intangible luxury service adoption model

Implications

Luxury brands and services have long been perceived as a privilege reserved only for select people belonging to the ultra-rich members of society (Chandon et al., 2016). A luxury experience based on the usage of a given brand or service is perceived to be unique and exclusive (Hung et al., 2011), and is expected to offer consumers emotional and symbolic advantages, such as status, prestige, and affluence (Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2015). With a total expenditure growing from 68 billion dollars back in 2000, to one amounting to more than 245 billion dollars in 2014, luxury consumers are deemed as extremely valuable (D'Arpizio et al., 2014). These consumers are highly connected and rely on digital means to connect, interact and receive information regarding their preferred brands (Escobar, 2016).

From a scholarly perspective, this study fills a considerable gap in the literature related to retailers' technological innovations aimed at democratizing luxury-like personalized experiences. The literature on such luxury services is still nascent, although some studies started paving the way into it (e.g. Hemetsberger et al., 2012; Eckhardt et al., 2015; Llamas and Thomsen, 2016). Nonetheless, this research area is expected to develop further in the coming few years as voice-controlled technologies are growing at an increasing rate. This paper contributes in the domain of privacy and security related to unconventional services usage. Furthermore, the discussion adds a fresh perspective on the usage of personalized human-like assistants through smart devices. While the discussion shows that the usage of such devices presents potential risks on consumers, a debate would ensue on whether the luxury-like experience and perceived value of the service are enough to outweigh the negative consequences. Hence, the discussion that this paper develops provides an initial platform that future scholarly work can develop further as IVAs become smarter and more sophisticated.

In relation to the managerial implications, the findings in this study demonstrate the risks and potentials of the Echo Look device in democratizing intangible luxury. The internet of things has introduced smart devices that are now present at home to help users spend their time more efficiently. IVAs are growing rapidly and penetrating homes at an accelerating pace. Being

inexpensive and always updated with new features, the number of people purchasing those devices is increasing drastically; since 2016, the number has been growing by more than thirty percent whereby it is expected to reach $2.1 billion by 2020 (Chung et al., 2017; Haack et al., 2017).

The demand for and usage of luxury products and services have evolved due to the proliferation of digital and technological tools. Few years back, it was uncommon to find luxury products and services that are available online, since part of the sought-after value is in the exclusivity and personalization of the luxury experience. Meanwhile, the lower to middle-ranged products could easily be found online through different retail websites. Nowadays, all luxury brands and services are taking into consideration the high number of traffic they can obtain on their websites if they are made user-friendly and accessible to all (Dauriz et al., 2014). Despite being slow to accepting the digital change, luxury brands and services have come to accept the need for digital marketing but have yet to fully immerse in online sales as well (Ramadan et al., 2018b). Such hesitancy is caused from fear of losing the authenticity of the luxurious brand (Danziger, 2018). Moreover, with the fast adoption pace of personalized services such as Alexa, consumers' need for an ongoing intangible luxury experience is growing. With the constant updates in technology and the ever-growing awareness and impatience of consumers, consumers' focus will shift from the brick-and-mortar luxurious environments to a personalized day-to-day luxury experience.

As discussed in this paper, Amazon's strategy in that particular domain is a pioneering one. Amazon not only sells products through its online retailing platform, but it also has its own products that it uses to compete with the likes of Google and Apple. It has established a wide ecosystem of devices such as the Echo products, Fire TVs and Kindle books (Loebbecke et al., 2010). Research shows that Amazon's Alexa allows for the integration with other Amazon products through voice commands as well as other third-party devices that can also be integrated using the virtual assistant (Chung et al., 2017). This allows for a massive amount of cloud-based resources and information to be used by Amazon on its users. Specifically, the Echo Look would integrate that sheer amount of consumer-related data to personalize even further the ensuing experience. As Alexa becomes smarter based on its fast-developing algorithms, consumers will be more inclined to perceive this unconventional device as a humanized personal fashion consultant. The personified assistant will become omnipresent in the lives of consumers who can now enjoy accurate and tangible recommendations based on users' live pictures. While the risks pertaining to

the usage of this camera-enabled device are considerable as discussed, the benefits are also substantial. Indeed, what makes the Echo Look unique is that it integrates a high-end personalized consumer experience. This unique experience is driven by rich consumer data that are combined with relational and functional benefits that Alexa provides. These personalized services are consequently amplified through the Echo Look's personal fashion advices. This democratization of luxury will be expected to outweigh the risks related to its usage as consumers would forego privacy concerns in return for such a personalized service.

Conclusion and future research

Due to the novelty of the Echo Look device, this paper is the first to review and discuss the adoption and effects of this device on consumers and in the marketplace. The study pioneers the discussion on how IVA devices can potentially outweigh concerns around safety and privacy through providing luxury-like personalized services. To that end, the Echo Look device was taken as the key example based on the unique features and benefits it provides to its users, namely in being perceived as a personal fashion consultant.

This study is not without limitations due to its exploratory nature and its main focus on one specific device, the Echo Look. Accordingly, future research could study potential similar devices that might be launched in the future in different marketplaces and by different retailers or brands.

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