

Many people never tire of following the latest revelations from luxury brands and the new products they continually launch, sparking passion and curiosity.



But this fascination can sometimes turn into an obsession with acquiring things. We rush to buy every luxury product that catches our eye, only for its allure to quickly fade – prompting us to begin searching for another piece that can recreate the same feeling.

Saturday, 8 August 2026

But before this obsession takes hold, we may unconsciously begin to associate the acquisition of luxury goods with our self-identity and social status, while social media constantly places irresistible luxury products in front of us. The brain responds to all of this by releasing dopamine, encouraging us to buy. So, when does luxury become an obsession? And how can we overcome it?

What is Opulomania?

Opulomania is not a psychological disorder, but a psychological defence mechanism, according to Jan Gerber, founder of Paracelsus Recovery.

He describes it as a compulsive need to acquire luxury goods in order to manage painful emotions, with one's sense of identity being constructed through luxury brands.

Gerber adds that this can create a cycle of pursuit and disappointment that is not unlike addiction. He also points out that this obsession is often intertwined with other psychological difficulties, such as loneliness, trauma, anxiety and other issues.

Opulomania does not simply mean being materialistic or preferring luxury goods over other products. Rather, it refers to an uncontrollable desire to acquire luxury goods.

The Psychology of Luxury: When Luxury Expresses Who We Are

Purchasing products from luxury brands is often driven by perceptions of self-identity, the ideal self and other internal motivations. And each person's sense of self is constantly evolving.

Because luxury products have a unique ability to alter our perception of who we are by changing our sense of self, they can provide certain desirable emotional benefits, such as self-esteem and feelings of pleasure, satisfaction and power, according to Psychology Today.

Studies using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) have also shown that the brands being studied may activate the medial prefrontal cortex, a region of the brain involved in self-reflection and identity.

This means that when we consider buying a luxury product, we are not simply evaluating the product itself. We are also evaluating how it relates to our sense of self.

Another important thing luxury brands do is create a sense of exclusivity. This is one reason why their products are priced so differently from those of conventional brands. Being able to afford a luxury product necessarily means acquiring something relatively rare, while a high price is often associated with greater value and quality.

How Does Social Status Influence Purchasing Decisions?

For centuries, luxury was largely restricted to the aristocracy. In the past, it was available only to the nobility and those at the highest levels of society.

But as the world has changed, luxury fashion has evolved too. Luxury clothing, for example, now serves a much broader audience. Its high price and uniqueness make it attractive to people seeking to distinguish themselves from others.

Choosing luxury products – whether clothing, cars or other goods – particularly when they carry a visible luxury brand logo, can send a clear signal of high social status. Maintaining that status may therefore become another factor driving the desire to acquire luxury products.

The Age of the Image: How Social Media Fuels the Obsession with Luxury

It is only natural that, in the age of the image, demand for luxury goods should increase. Social media platforms such as Instagram and X have made luxury brands far more accessible.

Traditionally, these brands were the preserve of the elite, with marketing strategies targeting exclusive clients. Advertising was largely limited to...