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MASTER'S THESIS

CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOR OF PREMIUM CLASS CARS IN SLOVENIA

Ljubljana, December 2021   NUŠA ERJAVEC

AUTHORSHIP STATEMENT

The undersigned Nuša Erjavec, a student at the University of Ljubljana, School of Economics and Business, (hereafter: SEB LU), author of this written final work of studies with the title Consumer Buying Behavior of Premium Class Cars in Slovenia, prepared under the supervision of Barbara Čater, PhD.

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INTRODUCTION

In the European Union, the automotive industry provides an important part of GDP and has a major effect of employment, income and economic growth in the country of origin. The sector provides jobs for 13.8 million Europeans and represents over 7% of the EU's GDP (European Commission, 2021). In 2019, premium class cars accounted for 20% of the global passenger car market (Statista, 2021) and are the subject of this thesis based not only on the economic importance but also on the relative neglect of this subject in the academic literature. In this thesis, three premium class cars brands (BMW, Mercedes-Benz, and Audi) are chosen to be considered, due to the fact that they are the most representative to the E (executive cars), F (luxury cars) and S (sport coupés) car segments according to the European Commission (European Commission, 2021). Premium class car brands have earned that reputation by consistently producing reliable cars that have compelling features and can rely on the link many customers around the globe make between "Germany" and high-quality engineering.

The premium class market overall is currently undertaking a social change concerning brand loyalty. According to the latest research, there is less and less emotional connection between consumers and brands, due to the Internet explosion of information and discounts (Dimitriadis, 2019). As a consequence, increased competition is especially in terms of the importance of developing brand identity concerning the consumer's perception of it. To maintain the position on the market, premium brands must develop attributes and strong values that reflect changing social values that influence buyers emotionally (Anurit, Newman & Chansarkar, 2015). But in today's market, the companies need more than a world-class product to compete, therefore, the focus is on the creation of outstanding consumer experience by following a consumer-obsessed strategy (Michelli, 2016).

The study of consumer buying behavior includes a focus on relationships between what people think, feel and consequently buy (Arnould, Price & Zinkhan, 2004). To implement the consumer-focused strategy, organizations need to understand what products mean to consumers and what influences their purchase. The more they know about how these interactions influence an individual consumer, the better they can satisfy consumer's needs and wants and create value for them. The premium class cars are great examples of brands with the commitment to developing quality products and selling them at a price that gives consumers high value, which consequently creates strong emotional consumer-product relationship. Emotions lead to the creation of a strong brand attitude, which reduces consumer's incentives or motivations to switch to a competitive premium brand (Olson & Peter, 2010). Only through understanding the consumer behavior, competitive advantages can be developed, successful sales be made and profits earned (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

The purpose of this master thesis is to add to the body of knowledge on consumer behavior in the premium class car market in Slovenia. The research objective is to effectively evaluate consumer motivation towards premium class car brands and based on it, define the process of buying behavior of the premium class cars in Slovenia (BMW, Mercedes-Benz, and Audi). For the main purpose, the process addressed by the premium class car brands will be limited to the buying behavior of the Slovenian buyers.

The thesis is focused on the following research questions:

1. What are the basic needs and motivation for the purchase of a premium class car?
2. What are the most important factors influencing the buying decision of premium class cars?
3. What is the general perception about premium class car brands in Slovenia?
4. What is the importance of a brand image and brand personality of premium class cars?
5. What effect do emotions have on the purchase of a premium class car in Slovenia?

An appropriate research method for the study of consumer behavior of a premium class car requires comprehensive, reliable knowledge about consumer decision-making behavior, taking not only economic factors into account but also other complex motivations that may arise from psychological and social influences. Therefore, the proposed model will be tested on data collected through an online survey (with a structured questionnaire) on car brand communities (BMW, Mercedes-Benz, and Audi). I will aim to gain insights into the respondent's motivation, needs and attitudes and, consequently create an in-depth understanding of their buying decisions and resulting behavior.

This master thesis is divided into chapters that look at the buying process from 3 different perspectives. The very first part of this thesis is covered by analyzing the global and domestic markets. The second part describes the buying behavior process from a consumer's perspective. The purpose of this part is to analyze internal motives to understand the consumer decision process. These issues are going to be the main focus of the consumer perspective part, which aims to find answers to research questions. In the third part, the buying process is approached from a premium class car brand's perspective and describes how premium class cars brands influence the consumer decision-making process and how they deliver consumer's experience on a higher level, in order to reach sales.

1 MARKET OF PREMIUM CLASS CARS

For a complete understanding of this thesis, an appropriate definition of a premium class car needs to be presented. The intention of a premium class car is to provide increased comfort, a higher level of equipment, which lead to advantages beyond strict functional "bare necessities" and increased perception of quality than regular cars (Daimler, 2018). Premium class cars offer the most advanced safety options and best entertainment technology on the current market with endless options for customization (Elliott, 2009). In this chapter, I am going to present an overview of the most presentable companies of premium class cars on the market.

1.1 Companies Overview

Bavarian Motor Works, commonly referred to as BMW, is a German multinational company and one of the ten largest car manufacturers in the world, producing premium vehicles and motorcycles. The company was founded in 1916, headquartered in Munich, Germany, as an aircraft manufacturing company to build aircraft engines for Austria in anticipation of World War I. Later, in 1928, BMW started the production of cars and a year later, Dixi, BMW's first luxury car, was produced. Dixi, with a 6-cylinder engine won the 1929 International Alpine Rally and proved to be the most effective competitor in the Daimler-Benz market. After 1930, BMW expanded into sports and larger luxury cars and became the leading producer of racing car engines in the classification known as Formula 2. Since then, technological innovation has become a major source of competitive advantage for BMW. Its market capitalization was valued at $55 billion in November 2018. The first mass-produced turbocharged petrol engine was introduced in 2006. BMW invests a lot in research and development to bring safer and better performing cars to the market, which consists of the slogan for the brand 'The Ultimate Driving Experience" (Reference for Business, 2020).

The brand Mercedes-Benz is a division of the German company Daimler AG and was founded in 1926 by Karl Benz in Stuttgart, Germany. Mercedes-Benz roots come from Daimler-Motoren-Gesellschaft's (engine company) and Karl Benz's (Benz Patent-Motorwagen) which is widely regarded as the first gasoline-powered automobile. The headquarters is nowadays still in Stuttgart, Germany. The fact that Mercedes-Benz car was considered as the first "modern automobile" is still in engineers' minds nowadays. In 2015, the Mercedes-Benz brand was named the most innovative premium brand of the last decade after a comprehensive review by the Center of Automotive Management and PricewaterhouseCoopers. Mercedes-Benz is on the 13th place worldwide, in terms of brand value with $35 billion of market value. The company is always adapting its strategies to follow its main values: tradition, innovation, quality, and safety. One of the most important innovations of Mercedes-Benz in the automotive industry was in terms of safety. In 1939, they developed brakes on all four wheels. In 1951, "safety cage" construction, which is considered by many as the most important innovation in automobile construction. In 1961, pre-tensioners seat belts, in 1968, first experiments were

conducted with an airbag system and 10 years later the first anti-braking system ABS. The slogan for the brand is ''The best or nothing '' (Daimler, 2019).

Audi AG is also a Germany-based developer and producer of premium class cars with a total market value of $35 billion in 2019 (Statista, 2020). Audi AG is a subsidiary of Volkswagen AG, headquartered in Ingolstadt, Germany. The company was founded by August Horch in 1909, therefore, representing one of Germany's oldest-established automobile manufacturers. The company name is based on the Latin translation of the surname of the founder, August Horch. "Horch", meaning "listen" in German, becomes "Audi" in Latin. The origins of the company are complex and present one of the most multi-faceted stories ever told in the history of the automobile. In 1932, it symbolized the result of combining four previously independent motor-vehicle manufacturers: Audi Werke and Horch (founded by engineer August Horch) and two other manufacturers, DKW and Wanderer into Audi Union AG. In 1980, at the Geneva Motor show, a four-wheel-drive sports coupe caused a sensation, and the competitive advantage of the brand was born. The Audi Quattro was the first high-performance vehicle with a permanent four-wheel drive system and since then has enjoyed worldwide success (Audi Official Website, 2020). It has gradually found its way into the entire Audi models range, therefore, it is responsible for Audi's sales of 1,845,550 cars worldwide in 2019 (Statista, 2020).

1.2 Market Characteristics

Premium class car brands such as BMW, Mercedes-Benz, and Audi, are among the three most powerful brands in the premium class car market and are often referred to as the" German Big Three" (Holloway, 2013). These three German premium brands lead the global luxury vehicle sales and account for approximately 80% share of the global premium class car market, based on a Study of the Global Luxury Car Market 2018 (Research and Markets, 2018). According to the latest sales reports, Mercedes-Benz successfully defended its crown as the world's bestselling premium car brand in 2019 with 2.34 million vehicles sold, beating BMW with 2.17 million vehicles sold and Audi with 1.85 million vehicles sold for the fourth year in a row. At the same time, those three brands are each other's main competitors and compete intensely not only for sales but also for the consumers' recognition as the best premium brand (BMW blog, 2020).

The global premium class car market has three major geographic areas of sales, Western Europe, the U.S.A., and East Asia, China in particular. While U.S.A and Western Europe decreased for 15 percentage points of the overall new car market sales due to COVID-19 pandemic, all three German brands had record sales in China, which, consequently presented the most important market to German premium car brands. China accounts for 37% (690,000 vehicles) of global sales for Audi, 31% (723,000 vehicles) of BMW and 30% (693,000 vehicles sold) of Mercedes-Benz global sales in 2020 (Car Sales Statistics, 2021).

According to the manufacturer's retail price, premium cars fall into three segments, namely entry-level, mid-range and premium. While an entry-level luxury car price starts at €21,900, the price of a vehicle from the premium segment might go up to €250,000. Classification of a model varies according to its size, price and technical features, such as the type of engine. BMW, Mercedes-Benz, and Audi compete mainly in the first two segments with several models, only Mercedes-Benz AMG version competes with BMW's M sport version on the premium price level. In 2019, BMW M Sport version outsold Mercedes-Benz AMG (132,130 vehicles sold), with sales growth of 32.2% (135,826 vehicles sold), making 2019 the most successful year in the almost fifty-year history of BMW M GmbH (BMW blog, 2020).

1.3 Premium Class Car Brands on the Slovenian Market

Slovenia with 2,094,000 of population, 4% of unemployment, 2% of inflation and 1.7 percentage points of GDP growth has a developed economy. The GDP per capita of Slovenia is €22,083 and accounts for 85% of the EU28 average in 2019. According to private financial assets per capita, Slovenia is among medium-wealthy countries with an average monthly net salary of €1,172. In terms of employment, 69% of people aged 15 to 64 in Slovenia have a paid job, slightly above the 68% OECD employment average (SURS, 2019). This is supposed to be the class of the population between the working class and the wealthy. There is 46% out of 60%, who are defined as the active working population in the middle class, the people who have attained at least a higher level of education and those whose earnings are sufficient to cover basic living expenses, family and an average car. An individual with a median salary in Slovenia saves 2.7 years or 32 months to buy an average car. 14% out of 60% is upper-middle-class population (doctors, professors, entrepreneurs…), which could be identified as potential premium class car buyers (Lipnik, 2018).

In 2019, there were 73,193 passenger cars sold on the Slovenian market. It should be highlighted here that this is the number of all new cars registered in Slovenia and that a third of the number is export. Out of approximately 55,000 new passenger cars, there were 1,558 BMW vehicles registered, which is currently the leading premium class passenger car segment on the Slovenian market. Mercedes-Benz follows with 1,350 registered vehicles and Audi with 1,310 vehicles registered in 2019, on the Slovenian market. All three German premium class car brands account for 8% of total market share in passenger's car segment in Slovenia (Section of Automobile Importers at the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia, 2020).

2 CONSUMER PERSPECTIVE TOWARDS PREMIUM CLASS CARS

For many years a consumer has been recognized as a key economic and social force in the market place. Consumers are constantly surrounded by advertising messages that affect how they perceive the world and of course what they choose to buy, but the central role of marketers is to understand the consumer's motivation behind the purchase towards the specific premium brand. However, the triggers of consumer purchases happen much before the actual purchase itself (Olson & Peter, 2010).

The field of psychology provides the greatest insights into consumer behavior because it involves important areas such as learning and remembering, perception, thinking, attitudes, beliefs, motivation, and emotions, which are crucial to consumer buying decisions. Each chapter in this section looks at some areas that may be invisible to others, but it is important to understand how consumers make choices internally. This part of the thesis seeks to develop theories and methods to explain consumer decision making, which leads to specific types of behavior for buying premium class car brands in Slovenia.

2.1 Consumer Behavior for Buying Premium Goods

Most marketers nowadays define consumer behavior as an ongoing process, which consists of all the activities people undertake when obtaining, consuming and purchasing products and services. The American Marketing Association defines consumer behavior as "the dynamic interaction between the thoughts and feelings people experience and the actions they perform in the consumption process" (Olson & Peter, 2010, p.73). Furthermore, it is a dynamic process because the thinking, feelings, and actions of individual consumers are constantly changing, what makes defining marketing strategies an even more difficult task. Solomon (2018) defined consumer behavior as the process when individuals purchase and use products or services to satisfy their needs and desires.

The market of premium goods seeks the highest-quality and higher-prices products available. These products represent brands of limited supply (exclusive distribution), high price, excellent quality, aesthetic beauty and exclusivity in connection with strong emotional and symbolic associations, which often have very important meanings for consumers (Choo, Moon, Kim, & Yoon, 2012). Therefore, premium brands' products are related to objects of desire and provide extra pleasure, enabling the satisfaction of both psychological, social and functional needs of their owners, who want to express their good taste, expertise and status (Roper, Caruana, Medway, & Murphy, 2013). Brands such as BMW, Mercedes-Benz and Audi are a target to these consumers. For consumers in the premium class market, affect and cognition (meaning of the product), behavior as a purchase activity, and environments (information seeking and store contact) differ from those of consumers in the mass market. Thus, the initial analysis of consumer-product relationships represents a crucial role in the strategy development of market segmentation and success of a premium brand (Olson & Peter, 2010).

2.1.1 Conspicuous Consumption and Status Symbols

Status has its roots in ancient society, at the beginning of the 18th century when a person's worth started to be judged according to their achievements, which consequently brought wealth. Well-paid jobs were primarily secured only for intelligent, better ones, so they merited their success, and as such, wealth increasingly became a marker of social status. However, wealth and social status have been inextricably linked ever since (Dreze & Han & Nunes, 2010).

Economics and sociologist Thorstein Veblen, in his The Theory of the Leisure Class, argues that the accumulation of wealth is not really what presents status in society. He proposed that individuals crave status, and the status is enhanced by material display of wealth, in other words, what confers status is the evidence of wealth (Veblen, 1899). Conspicuous consumption refers to consumer purchase and use of high-priced products as a method of communicating social status to others (Belk, Bahn & Mayer, 1982). Consumer motives for conspicuous consumption are primarily psychological, therefore, consumers buy products to create invidious distinction, meaning they use certain products, which represent their wealth or power (Solomon, 2018). Premium class cars purchases are, therefore, associated with conspicuous consumption to present material wealth (Fionda-Douglas & Moore, 2009).

Brand choice may send meaningful social signals to other consumers about the type of the consumer using the brand, therefore, many luxury products have a symbolic or psychosocial meaning (Wernerfelt, 1990). Major motivation for purchase of these products is not to satisfy basic needs but rather indicate the owner's social and economic position in the community (Solomon, 2018). These objects that symbolize success tend to be high-priced and are also well known as transformational goods, which add value to consumer's life. In this century, premium class cars have been among the most idolized status symbols and, therefore, not only generate prestige but have become a symbol of prestige themselves. A Mercedes-Benz car is not only a symbol of success but is the proof of it (Antonides & Fred van Raaij, 1998). Status-seeking is a significant source of motivation to procure appropriate products that consumers hope will let others know that" I made it" (Solomon, 2018). Based on that kind of source of motivation, we can consider premium class cars also as status goods, because of the status they provide. With premium class cars, you "wear" your status on the road (Antonides & Fred van Raaij, 1998).

2.1.2 Consumer Behavior towards Premium Class Cars

In general, the process of consumer behavior towards premium class cars shows a structural relationship of five main constructs: (1) evaluation of car models' attributes, (2) attitude towards the car models, (3) behavioral intention, (4) brand image, and (5) cultural/social influences. The first three are directly connected with visual characteristics of the car, which benefits it offers and to what extent its features accommodate the specific needs of the buyer. Significance of a brand image on the consumer buying process has come to attention especially in the consumer behavior of premium class cars, where a strong perceived image of the specific brand becomes crucial. Social intangible influences are made by social pressure, personal

opinions and perceptions, which consequently form the emotional responses the potential buyers have towards the premium class car brand (Anurit, 2002).

However, a majority of researchers (Festinger, 1964, Rosecky and King, 1996) have studied consumer behavior of buyers of premium class cars focusing on perceptual differences amongst them. An important finding was that not only technical but also non-technical attributes of the cars are considered to be very important to owners of premium class car brands. As could be observed, each set of car owners has a favorable attitude towards their selected attributes of a specific brand. Owners of BMW have strong attitudes towards BMW's technical attributes such as driving performance. Owners of Mercedes-Benz hold a strong attitude towards, both, technical (safety) and non-technical attitudes (luxury brand image and social status). BMW purchase stands at the functional and experiential end, whereas Mercedes purchase stands at a combination composed of both functional and symbolic end of the premium brand (Anurit, Chansarkar & Newman, 2015).

2.2 Motivation

Motivation determines the direction and intensity of behavior. It can be a mental push factor to fulfill a certain need, which creates a state of tension that drives consumer to attempt to eliminate it. The process firstly occurs at an unconscious level and ends in the minds of consumers. The desired end state is the consumer's purchase of a product, which will provide the desired benefits and help the consumer to satisfy those needs. Premium class cars' features in that sense have become a need for most consumers today (Solomon, 2018).

In a basic theory of human motivation for purchases, psychologist Abraham Maslow was the first who originally developed a hierarchy of needs to understand human behavior in the decision-making process on a conscious level. Maslow proposed a hierarchy of biogenic and psychogenic needs that specifies certain levels of motives. The structure is hierarchical, implying the logic that the lower, most fundamental needs have to be satisfied in order to activate a need for the higher one and reach self-actualization at the top. Marketers embraced this perspective because it indirectly specifies certain types of product benefits consumers might look for (Askegaard, Bamossy, Hogg & Solomon, 2013).

In Figure 1, we can observe that after consumer's basic physiological needs are fulfilled, the second level of human needs about safety is activated. At this point, we can combine theory and the purchase of a premium class car. In other words, a prospective consumer driven by Maslow's second level of needs, which are safety and security, might be enticed to buy a new premium class car, while premium class car brands are well known after the most advanced safety features.

Also, all higher levels of human needs present a basic motivation behind the purchase of a new premium class car. The fourth level of needs are esteem needs, which include ego needs or

status needs, where the typical human desire is to be accepted and valued by others. For example, among these are individuals with a high need for personal accomplishment (Askegaard, Bamossy, Hogg & Solomon, 2013). They place a premium on products that signify success because these consumption items provide feedback about the realization of their goals, and by receiving recognition and respect from others, they satisfy those needs (Thompson, 2015).

Figure 1: Maslow's hierarchy of human needs

Source: Thompson (2015).

Maslow's basic theory of needs combines marketing and human psychology. Considering the specific need of consumers and developing a vehicle's attributes in such a way to convince them that it will fulfill exactly that need. This is the basic logic behind how cars are developed to meet different needs of their consumers (Thompson, 2015).

In the twenty-first century, the broad spectrum of premium class cars offers consumers to make extremely wide choices in satisfying their needs, whereas the necessities have long ago been taken care of. Nowadays, consumers look after higher-level needs. Utilitarian and hedonic needs are considered to develop two basic types of motivation for the purchase of a new premium class car. Utilitarian needs are about the objective, functional aspect of life, whereas hedonic needs are more focused on self-promotion, and elevating buyers to a higher class on the social scale (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). Therefore, based on the theory of Hirschman and Holbrook, those who buy premium cars are more likely to crave social status and material wealth, as opposed to utilitarian car buyers, who buy out of necessity. At the same time, buyers of premium cars buy not only because they have a specific psychological need for a product at a given moment, but they also buy because they have social and cultural needs. The social motivation typically includes expression of a certain social status, where buyers communicate with others through the vehicle and brands that they own and use (Fred van Raaij, 1998).

Hofstede (1991) conducted one of the most complete studies of how values and internal motives of consumers are influenced by culture and, therefore, relate to their purchase behavior. He defines culture as "the collective programming of the mind distinguishing the members of one group or category of people from others" (Hofstede, 1991, p.85).

In Figure 2, we can observe that Hofstede developed six dimensions of culture. Focusing on the Slovenian market, power distance and uncertainty avoidance are extremely high, whereas individualism is lower. Power distance deals with the fact that all individuals in societies are not equal. Slovenia as a High-Power Distance society (score of 71) is a hierarchal organization structure, in which "one's social status must be clear so that others can show proper respect". In connection with a purchase, when consumers buy premium brands, it is because they want to be well recognized in society and with motivation to show their social status. Slovenia has also a very high preference for avoiding uncertainty, which means that Slovenian consumers have a high need for security and avoid risks, that is why precision and punctuality are the norm and security is an important element in individual motivation. According to de Mooij and Hofstede (2011), high uncertainty avoidance societies have a need for perfectionism when they buy something, so they prefer to inspect the product, to touch it and make sure that the product corresponds to their standards of high quality. The lower score of the Individualism dimension, determines the country as a collectivistic society, which manifests in a close long-term commitment to the member 'group'. Based on that, we can conclude that Slovenian consumers are very loyal, once they decide for a specific premium brand (de Mooij & Hofstede, 2011).

Figure 2: Hofstede dimensions of Slovenian culture
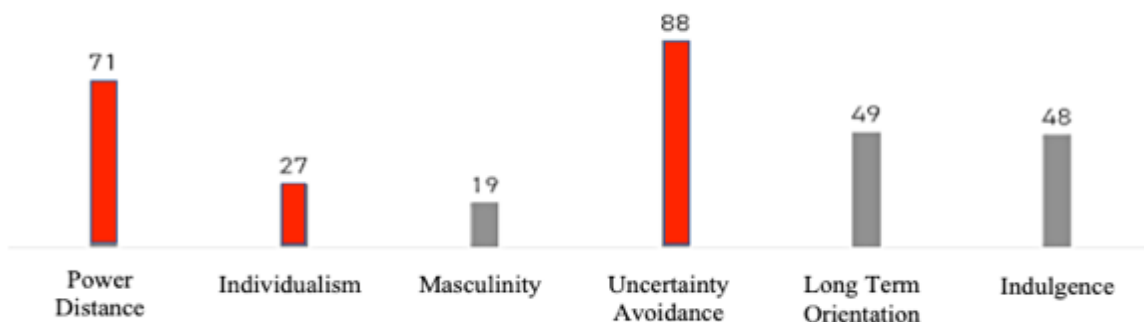
Source: de Mooij & Hofstede (2011).

2.2.1 Values

A value is a prescriptive belief, which often involves the emotional affect associated with personal goals and needs (Antonides & Fred van Raaij, 1998). Askegaard, Bamossy, Hogg and Solomon, 2013 (2013, p.123) highlight that "value can be defined as a belief about some desirable end-state that transcends specific situations and guides selection of behavior". Values are more or less permanent, which implies that the values of people hardly, if ever, change. Therefore, values have an important aspect, when they concern behavior in the long run (Antonides & Fred van Raaij, 1998).

In general, we could consider products as value satisfiers. Consumers can combine three types of product knowledge to form a simple associative network called a means-end chain, which links consumer's knowledge about product attributes with their knowledge about consequences and personal values. The means-end perspective also identifies the basic ends (values and goals) consumers seek when they buy and use certain products and premium brands, and this gives insight into consumer's deeper purchase motivation (Olson & Peter, 2010).

Figure 3: A common representation of a means-end chain
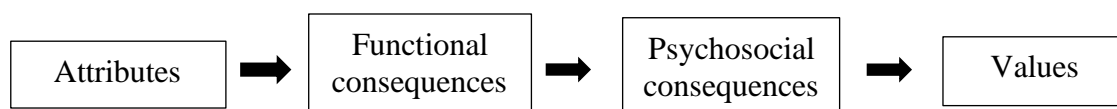
Source: Olson & Peter (2010).

In Figure 3, we can observe that the primary function of the product is the relationship between functional product characteristics and physical consequences. Functional consequences may then lead to psychosocial consequences – this is called the secondary functionality of the product. The link between tangible product attributes and functional and psychosocial consequences, therefore, represents consumer's personally relevant meanings for products and brands (Olson & Peter, 2010). In the case of a premium class car, a car that always starts is reliable. With such a car, a lot of problems are avoided. Therefore, functional consequences play a part in the realization of instrumental values. A car that functions well gives self-control. A car with good brakes provides safety and thus security. Safety is an instrumental value, whereas security is a terminal value. Psychosocial consequences also contribute to the realization of personal values. We speak of means-end chains because product characteristics lead to consequences (advantages, benefits, promises for the buyer), and these consequences lead to the realization of values. The main point to understand is that the means-end chains identify the customer-product relationships, and on the grounds of these relationships a quality judgment is made and premium class cars are selected. Each personal goal, lifestyle, and values can be realized with the specific premium class car brand (Antonides & Fred van Raaij, 1998).

The utility of products is not so much contained in product characteristics but in benefits. The benefits are effective meaning from the values. Not only products but also brands have these levels of meaning. A brand is mainly a collection of characteristics (Antonides & Fred van

Raaij, 1998). All three premium brands (BMW, Mercedes-Benz, and Audi) which are considered in this thesis evoke the schema with German, good quality, technical innovations. At the level of the functional and psychosocial benefits, the emphasis is on the consequences of the use of the brand, which are: high quality, exclusivity and a long product lifetime. The values that accompany these brands are safety, uniqueness, reliability. The brands such as BMW, Mercedes-Benz and Audi are signs of these beliefs and values.

In Figure 4, the means-end hierarchy or structure of single acts, behavioral domains, goals and values are shown. Purchase behavior is developed hierarchically.

Figure 4: Link between behavior and values
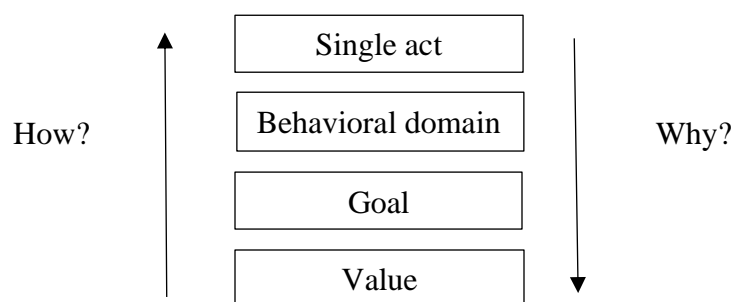
Source: Antonides & Fred Van Raaij (1998).

Acts or behaviors are a means to an end, which is often a step towards a higher goal or reaching a value. The "how-question" asks for a specific explanation of behavior. There are often several ways to reach a goal. The "why" is asked for an abstract explanation of behavior. It requires the reasons why someone does certain things. The "why "question is most often the question about the motivation of behavior to satisfy specific consumer's need (Antonides & Fred van Raaij, 1998).

Many needs and goals arise within a direct relationship with values. For most of consumers, buying their first premium class car satisfies higher needs of independence, and generates positive affective feelings of satisfaction. Therefore, in case of purchasing a new BMW, Mercedes-Benz or Audi, we talk about the realization of luxury value, which is based on conspicuous value, social value, unique value, quality value and hedonic value (Johnson & Vigneron, 1999). The effectiveness of these values in consumer's perception are measured according to the extent in which product use is perceived to successfully fulfill a consumer's need. They are classified as symbolic, functional, and experiential, based on multidimensional model that accommodates financial, functional, individual and social aspects (Hennigs, Siebels & Wiedmann, 2009).

A conspicuous value satisfies fundamental needs for social representation and refers to the ability of a consumer to signal wealth or status to society through a purchase. The second social value is among the five values, which has two aspects: the value offered to self-identity and

social identity. In other words, the use of premium brands can encourage an individual's self-image as well as signal wealth to others. This value is based on social dimension, which focuses on the perceived utility consumers obtain owning brands acknowledged within their social groups. Therefore, based on the theory premium brands are brands that offer products of a higher social value than traditional brands (Johnson & Vigneron, 1999).

The unique value of a premium brand refers to the degree to which consumers perceive the brand to be different from its competitors. Uniqueness of a brand is an important financial dimension because it can influence consumer willingness to pay higher prices. The quality value refers to consumer perceptions of a brand's overall excellence. Based on the functional dimension, the luxury value refers to the core product benefits given by the brand to the consumer. Thus, it includes usability, quality, reliability, technical superiority and greater performance in comparison to non-luxury brands (Hamelin, Khaled, & Nwanko, 2014).

Premium brands also offer hedonic value, which is important as individual dimensions to consumers, because it takes the essence of a brand and translates it into reinforcing tangible and interactive experiences. Through the experiential aspects of purchase, brand–related stimuli such as design, materials, brand identity evoke consumer sensations and provide multisensory pleasure to consumers. Thus, luxury brands are often purchased for the psychological pleasure they provide (Hamelin, Khaled, & Nwanko, 2014).

2.2.2 Involvement

The process of involvement starts with sensation, which refers to the immediate response of our sensory receptors (eyes, ears, nose and fingers) to basic stimuli such as light, color, sound and texture. The next process is perception, by which consumers select, organize, and interpret these sensations. If the brand creates a unique association with the sensation, each car's unique sensory qualities help it to stand out from the competition. Therefore, involvement refers to consumer's perception of personal relevance of a specific car. Consumers, who perceive that a premium class car has personally relevant consequences, are involved with this product and, therefore, involvement reflects their level of motivation to process information about a specific car, they believe will help to satisfy their needs (Solomon, 2018).

In Figure 5, we can observe that consumer's level of involvement depends on two features of the means-end chains that are activated. The importance or self-relevance on one hand and the strength of connections between the product knowledge and the self-knowledge on the other. Consumers, who believe car attributes are strongly linked to important personal end goals or values, will feel more involved with the product and create stronger consumer-product relationship. I can conclude that premium class car consumers experience high levels of involvements in the purchase decision and tend to find higher levels of involvement in product categories that demand a big investment of money (Olson & Peter, 2010). According to the research about emotional side of product involvement by Zaichkowsky (1987), automobiles were perceived to be the most involving product category.

Figure 5: The Means-End Basis for Involvement
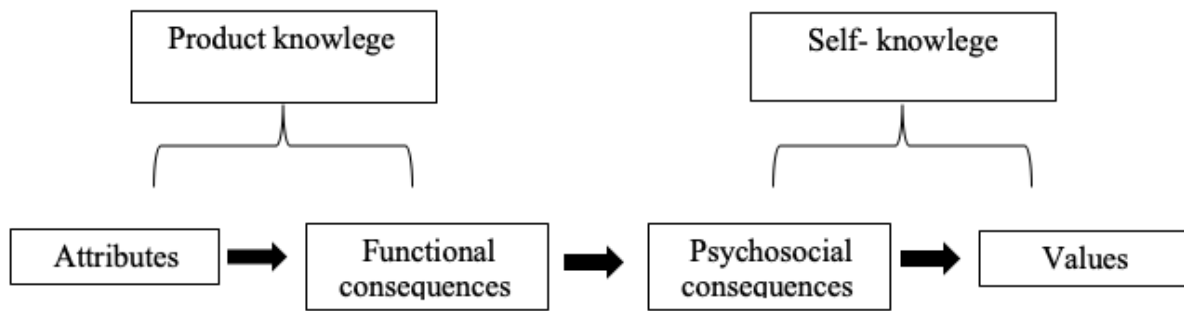
Source: Olson & Peter (2010).

Involvement with a product has two aspects. The cognitive aspect includes means-end knowledge about relevant consequences, produced by using the product (This car is safe for my family), and affective perspective, which are product evaluations (I like the auto-driving system). In the case of high involvement, consumers may experience stronger emotions and feelings (I really like my new car). Involvement is a motivational state that stimulates and directs consumer's cognitive and affective processes and behavior as they make decisions. For example, consumers who are involved with premium class cars are motivated to spend more time and effort to search for relevant information about which premium brand to choose. Based on the model, we can conclude that in the situation when consumer decision is a high-involvement decision, consumers that engage in more information search will likely make a purchase decision (Moorthy, Ratchford, & Talukdar, 1997).

2.3 Emotions and Attitudes

2.3.1 The Role of Emotions in Relationships between Consumers and Brands

An emotion is an activation of the central nervous system, perceived through an individual's basic senses, with a positive or negative experience at the end. Both, positive and negative emotions, together with moods lead to effects, which have an influence on consumer behavior (Antonides & Fred van Raaij, 1998).

Emotions have three representations: activation, experience, and expression. The first one is the physiological activation of sense organs. As a result of this sensation, a consumer starts the perception process, where one tries to interpret stimulants created by the environment and experiences them as an emotion. Experience is a mental representation of emotions (Erenkol & Merve, 2015). According to the cognitive theory, a consumer will consequently try to explain the feeling of excitement. Activation is experienced and a cause is being searched. An obvious interpretation in this example is desire, which will give direction to choose behavior (Bagozzi, Gopinath & Nyer, 1999).

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Fournier (1998) argues that brands and consumers can have strong emotional relationships. She argues that high levels of involvement, commitment and durable relationship bonds are also common across strong brand relationships. Fournier (1998) interprets all marketing activities (advertisements, store designs) as behavior enacted on the part of the brand that triggers attitudinal, cognitive and behavioral responses on the part of the consumers. When consumers come into physical contact, they activate all their basic senses, regarding how a brand and car makes them feel. Automakers have paid close attention to these five human senses (sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell) for years while trying to influence emotional associations in the process of consumers' decision-making (Erenkol & Merve, 2015).

People notice an object within 45 milliseconds, meaning the interaction between the brain and eyes is very fast. Sight is the strongest sense that triggers perception. The positions of cars in showrooms, the surroundings that address sight, light intensity and colors are considered as factors that trigger sight, which receives 80% of the surrounding information. Natural light has an impact on the quality of sensation and time spent while making a purchasing decision (Erenkol & Merve, 2015).

Colors influence our emotions directly and create feelings of excitement. To evoke such strong emotional reactions, the choice of a color pallet is a key challenge in a car design, while each color triggers a different emotion (Krishna, 2012).

Sounds, involved in perception, bring out feelings and emotions of a consumer. Loudness, rhythm, style of music played at a store appeal to the hearing sense. Sounds help to organize perception. Hearing the smoothness of a sound when closing a car door, sticks to the quality of a product (Erenkol & Merve, 2015). Some auto marketers also create brand names to pay attention to sound symbolism. BMW recently began to use an audio effect at the end of TV ads and also in M models, where the engine sounds through the car speakers, even when the audio system is turned off. The company wants to establish what the brand sounds like. BMW claims this sound signature represents "sheer driving pleasure" (BMW blog, 2018).

Almost 75% of feelings experienced on a daily basis are revealed through smell. Smelling has a direct impact on the limbic system, which controls feelings and can be stored in the long-term memory. The distinctive new-car smell is therefore considered as a very influential one (Erenkol & Merve, 2015).

Touching is an important factor of perception and is also associated with the perception of quality (Erenkol & Merve, 2015). Researchers from Ohio State University and Illinois State University made a test how touching a product affects consumers' perception about it. It seems that encouraging consumers to touch a product encourages them to imagine they own it. Researchers reported that consumers, who simply touched the car, within the first 30 seconds of contact, created a greater level of personal attachment to the product. The explanation is based on loss aversion, the longer people have an object, the stronger their attachment and their eagerness to keep it. People become attached and they are willing to pay much more to avoid

losing that object. This is also a theoretical background of car dealers' test drives, where consumers are told to drive cars home. The strength of this attachment will increase with greater physical contact and will make consumers more willing to buy their products. "When you sit behind the wheel of a new car, you know you're going to value it more and possibly be ready to pay more" (Ohio State University, 2009).

2.3.2 Attitude and Behavior

Emotional associations, through experiences with the specific brand, cause that consumers obtain main beliefs about products and brands. These beliefs then build an associative network of linked meanings stored in their memory set and develop general individual's predisposition of evaluation for a specific product in a favourable or unfavourable manner (Antonides & Fred van Raaij,1998). These beliefs, which are being activated are called salient beliefs and are the only ones creating a person's attitude toward the specific product and brand (Olson & Peter, 2010). Development process from general beliefs to attitude is presented in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Relationship between salient beliefs about products and attitude towards the brand
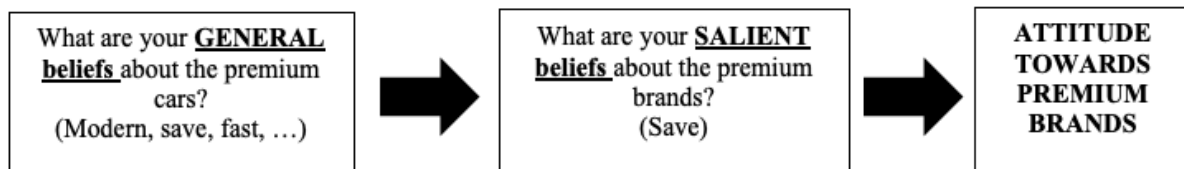
Source: Olson & Peter (2010).

The ABC model, which is presented in Figure 7, highlights the interrelationships among knowing, feeling and doing, and is determined by three components of attitude. Affect, which describes how a consumer feels about a product, then behavior, which refers to the action consumer takes toward the product and the last is cognition, which are beliefs about the attitude of the product (Solomon, 2018). According to the experiential hierarchy of effects, consumers acts are based on emotional reactions (Solomon, 2018). The behavioral perspective highlights the idea that an affect can be linked through associations to a certain characteristic or intangible product attributes, such as car design, brand name, image, and therefore, can help shape attitudes toward a specific brand. Based on the theory of consistency, we could predict attitudes toward a product to be strongly related to behaviors towards the brand (Antonides& Fred van Raaij,1998).

Figure 7: The relationships among consumer's belief, attitude, and behavior
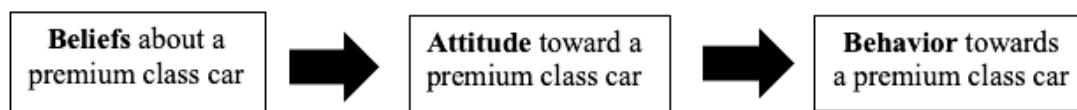
Source: Olson & Peter (2010).

Most commonly used attitude and behavior model, the "Behavioral Intentions Model" was developed by Martin Fishbein in 1967 and is presented in the paragraph below. Fishbein (1967) recognized that consumer's attitudes could be viewed as individual mental processes that influence their actual response towards a specific product. The strengths of their beliefs about the product will determine whether consumers will engage in a specific behavior or not.

The theory behind is known as the "theory of reasoned action" because it explains how consumers consciously evaluate the consequences of alternative behaviors and choose the one that leads to the most desirable consequences. A result of this process is an intention to engage in a specific behavior. Behavioral intention can be understood as a plan to engage in a specific behavior to reach a goal, created through a decision process. Behavioral intention is, therefore, a mediating variable in the explanation of behavior, which implies that the intention to purchase directly predicts the behavior and that the intention is explained by the attitude. This behavioral intention is the single best predictor of actual behavior and is known as the attitude-behavior relationship. Based on this theory, a consumer's attitude and behavior intentions could be seen in two scenarios. In the first one, some of the consumers become very loyal and based on their past experiences repeat their purchases, while potential ones with their positive attitudes help intentions, which consequently leads them to their first purchase (Fishbein, 1967).

In Figure 8, the overall attitude towards a product is defined as a combination of cognitive and evaluative components, which each have a relation to a characteristic of a product or a brand. The cognitive components help to convince consumers of the strengths of their salient beliefs, associated with the product characteristics, whereas the evaluative components of an attitude help to evaluate product characteristics for a consumer, which is often shown in a quality judgment of those characteristics (Antonides & Fred van Raaij,1998).

Figure 8: Fishbein's Behavioral Intentions Model
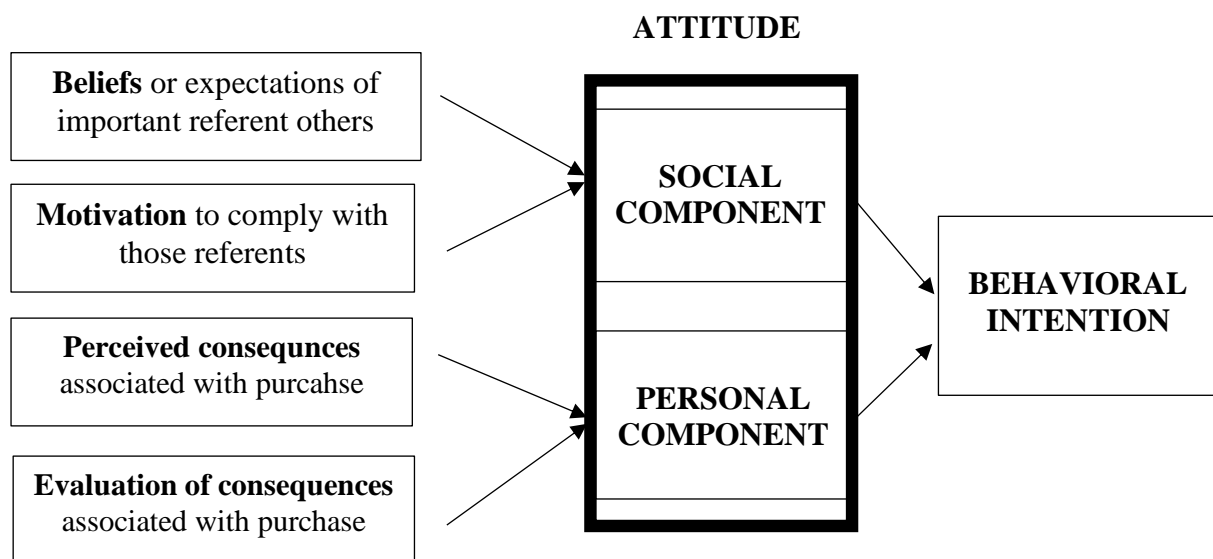
Source: Fishbein (1967).

Fishbein (1967) explains that consumer's behavioral intention is dependent on both the social and personal components as illustrated in Figure 8. Hence, consumers influenced by the personal component, it is likely that they will use brand personality to express their personal attributes. In the case of a strong brand personality, it can play an important role in the self-expression process. Consumers, who believe that premium brands accrue power, status, prestige and unique characteristics, will have a positive attitude towards buying premium class brands, such are BMW, Mercedes-Benz and Audi. The positive attitude towards those brands, tends to develop a value-expressive function attitude, that relates to consumer's self-concept, which defines that consumer, who have an incomplete self-definition, tend to complete this identity when they buy symbols they associate with that role. The assumption of the self-expression model is that premium brands can become a means of expression of self-identity for specific consumers.

Social component differs across different cultures and also the nature and definition of self-expression. Slovenian culture is considered a collectivistic society, which manifests in a close long-term commitment to the member 'group'. As a consequence, Slovenian consumers tend to use a brand and its personality to express the similarity to their preferred social group, rather than expressing the actual self. Collectivistic societies usually feel the need to portray the conformity of their social group. Brand personality traits that are consistent with the self-actualization are emphasized heavily by members of the collectivistic culture. This is where the social component of Fishbein's behavioral intention model becomes crucial (Axsom, Chaiken & Yates, 1987).

There is also the possibility that an attitude can be developed without experience. Due to insufficient purchasing power, some consumers develop preferences for or against brands based on the brands' images in the marketplace. These consumers may have a favorable attitude towards some manufacturers' premium class car brands, but are not able to buy premium class car brands (Anurit, Chansarkar & Newman, 2015). According to the research of direct experiences and attitude behavioral consistency, authors found out that experience-based attitudes are more representative than attitudes based on information or indirect forms of behavior (Fazio & Zanna 1981).

2.4 CONSUMER PERCEPTION OF PREMIUM CLASS CAR BRANDS

Traditional brand strategies have attention on the functional benefits of the products. Recently, increasing competition has led to the product's attributes, which have become functionally more similar to each other, and the differentiation of brands has become even harder (Lau, 2000). For those reasons, the symbolic aspect of brands (brand image and brand personality) become crucial in nowadays marketing strategies.

2.4.1 Brand Image

Brand image is the combination of all the possible facts and opinions that consumers have about a specific brand. In the consideration set of consumers, a brand image is a unique set of associations with symbols, product's characteristics and key advantages of the brand, which play a significant role in the creation of the brand image. The uniqueness of associations and physical projections of what a brand promises and presents, consequently create consumer's perception of it. Based on those characteristics, consumer's general belief about the specific brand is developed, which enhances reputation of the brand and consequently influences affective commitment to the brand (Loureiro & Kaufmann, 2016). Reputation is a crucial part of competitive advantage and is one of the main associations with the perceived quality of the products carrying the brand image. Consumers trust brands that they perceive as credible, what affects consumer willingness to buy a specific brand. How much the consumer is prepared to pay is, therefore, driven mainly by their perception of the brand and brand reputation (Moutinho & Veloutsou, 2009).

An image of the brand is separated into two parts, which aim to fulfill consumer's rational and emotional needs as presented in Figure 9. Functional attributes are related to product's functions in which a product attempts to meet consumer's functional needs, such as product's primary characteristics, reliability, design, and price (Keller, 2001). The second, symbolic attributes represent emotional benefits such as self-expression and are likely to be non-product related images (Dawson, Heylen & Sampson,1995).

Figure 9: Brand image model
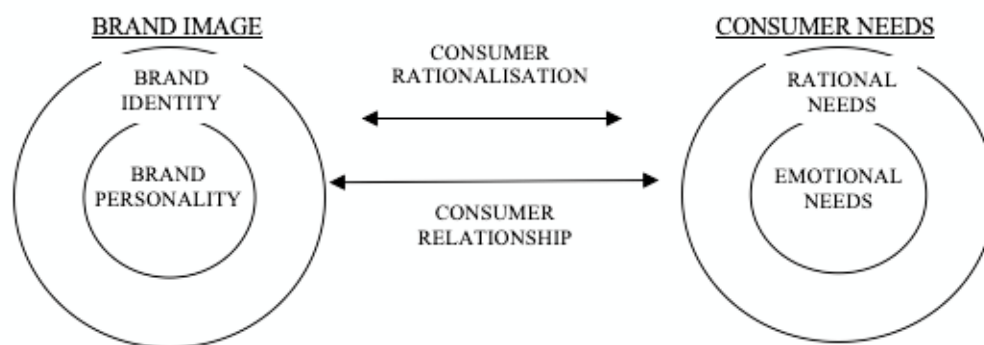
Source: Dawson, Heylen & Sampson (1995).

It is crucial to understand that the brand image is not just about the visual characteristics but consists also of all the emotional and intangible reactions of brand associations with a specific image, which evokes in the consciousness of the potential consumers (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009). It relates how the brand seeks to meet an individual's psychological needs, in other words, how people think and feel about a specific brand. Any of these different performance dimensions develop the primary points of differentiation between competitive products and, therefore, they contribute an important part to the success of sales (Keller, 2001).

The above understanding is projected in well-known examples in the automotive industry, where 3 German players, BMW, Mercedes-Benz and Audi are recognized as one of the most powerful companies in the world, when it comes to brand image and marketing (Michelli, 2016). Perception and image of BMW for dynamic and performance capabilities, Mercedes-Benz for outstanding engineering and comfort, and Audi for reliability and extraordinary interior design. However, the actual validity of these opinions can be debatable. In the last few years, the market has been facing development of the lower-priced automotive brands, which also provide some characteristics of the premium class cars and of course, for a lower price. At this point, the effect of the brand image on consumer behavior appears and where the perceived image by consumers becomes crucial. Premium class car brands represent the feeling of admiration and prestige, which contributed to that consideration prior to the purchase of a premium class car. A consumer is highly likely to be influenced by the factors that have contributed to the creation of that image. While considering attributes of lower-priced cars, the established perceptions continue to benefit the sales of premium class car brands, almost entirely due to the firmly rooted brand images (Blythe, 2013).

2.4.2 Brand Personality and Identity

Deeper meaning of a product may help it to stand out from the competition and consumers will choose the brand that has a personality, which is consistent with their underlying needs, values, and desires (Askegaard, Bamossy, Hogg & Solomon, 2013).

Brand personality is an internal feature that is experienced by the subconscious mind, based on emotional basis. It is developed on the attribution of human personality traits, in order to achieve differentiation between the brands on the marketplace (Askegaard, Bamossy, Hogg & Solomon, 2013). Inspired by Dawson, Heylen & Sampson (1995), brand personality presents the symbolic attributes of brand image. Also, as mentioned in the previous chapters, the self-image congruence model assumes *"a process of cognitive matching between product attributes and the consumer's self-image"* (Solomon, 2018, p. 125). Understanding the self-image congruence model is important, because purchasing behavior may be significantly influenced by the match relationship between products and personality of the potential consumer (Antonides & Fred van Raaij, 1998).

One of the first studies to support this theory found that car owners' ratings of themselves tended to match their perceptions of their cars. Birdwell (1964) interviewed 100 owners, who recently bought a new car and found that how consumers perceive their car matches the perception of themselves and that average perceptions differ among different models of cars and their consumers. Thus, for an individual consumer's total understanding of the product's symbolic meaning includes perceptions of the kinds of people whom they believe use that product or brand. With this research, Birdwell highlighted the fact that if the brand does not have personality, it is almost impossible to develop an emotional relationship with the consumers.

Later Aaker (1997) proposed a framework, which is being used as a standard way to categorise brand personality attributes. The Big Five model suggests that the dimensions of brands personality can be defined by extending those of human personality to those of brands. As a result, she identified five underlying dimensions of brand personality, which are presented in Figure 10. These are the following: Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication and Ruggedness.

Figure 10: Brand personality model
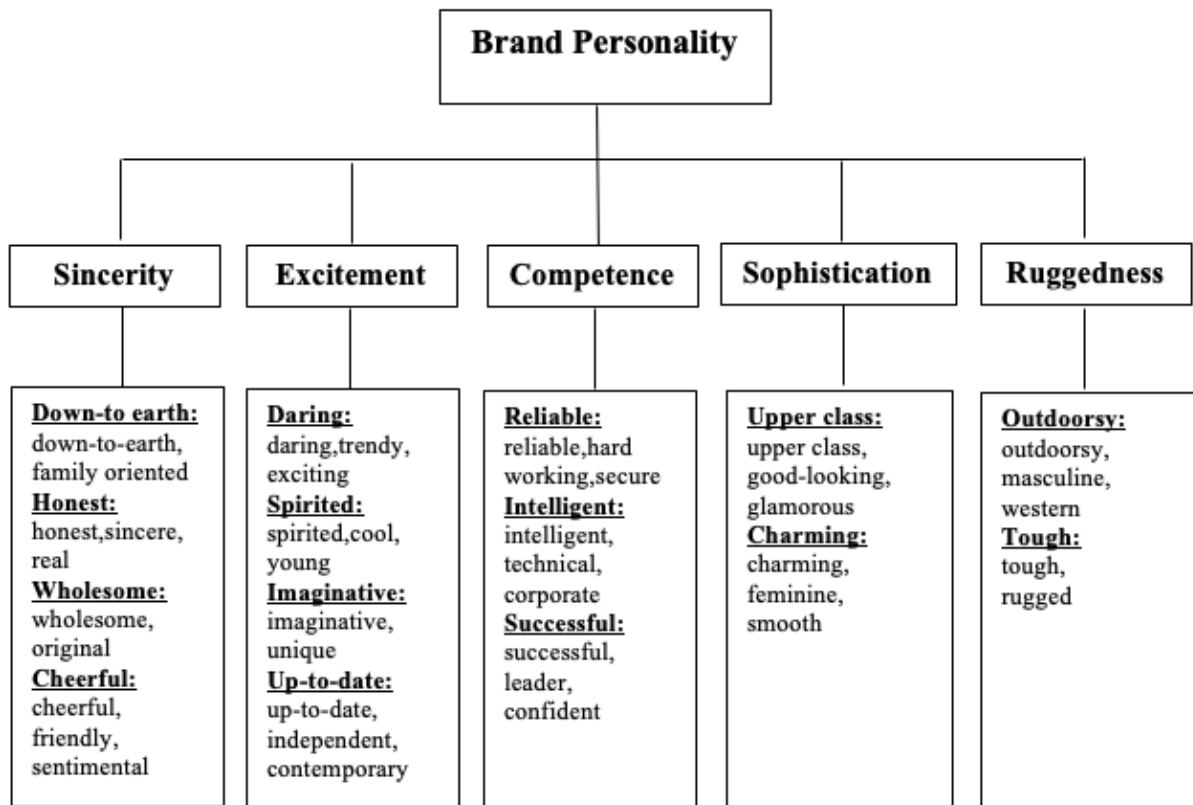
Source: Aaker (1997).

Success of the specific brand is based also on how marketers are going to create the visual characteristics of the brand, which is a brand identity. These are external features that are perceived by the rational needs of consumers. Brand personality and identity can be developed based on marketing variables such as user imagery, sponsorships and advertising. The personality of a brand can be created on the basis of typical users (consumers who use the brand) or idealized users (as portrayed in the advertisement). User imagery is defined as the set of human characteristics associated with the typical brand user and it is product specific, therefore, it can be a key source of consumer decisions (Keller, 1998). An important fact is when consumers feel they understand the brand and identify themselves with the brand personality, they are not buying the product, but the whole brand's image. With the selection of a specific premium car brand, consumers are communicating with society in the way they want to be associated with (De Mooij, 2011).

Consumers may purchase cars from different premium class car brands (BMW, Mercedes-Benz or Audi) at relatively the same level of prices to communicate the same level of wealth but represent different personalities. Personality is a useful concept because it enables marketers to categorize consumers into different groups on one or even several traits to develope their spectrum of different models. Therefore, they build the product's success on supporting different personalities of their consumers. Every car they sell, is actually based on the personality of the consumer (Daimler, 2019). The selected premium class car is thus very similar to the consumer's personality and, therefore, enables the brand to evoke deep emotional engagement with the consumer (Askegaard, Bamossy, Hogg & Solomon, 2013).

2.4.3 Brand Logo

Another component of creating a content behind the purchase of a premium car is logo, meaning and history of values of a specific brand. Logo is a visual representation of everything that brand stands for and is one of the components of entire brand's identity (Peate, 2019).

Some company's logos are changing every decade while struggling to create a credible brand identity, while other successful brands have remained consistent for a century. Automotive companies are examples of most successful deep-rooted logos. Those companies use the emblem style logo with circles, which deliver a feeling of safety and make consumers feel protected. These symbols, which represent the brand's name, can imply that kind of business can be trusted. All three German automaker's logos (BMW, Mercedes-Benz and Audi) are considered symbols of tradition, strength, and safety, which are crucial factors, when establishing a unique and strong relationship with their loyal consumers (Peate, 2019).

In Mercedes-Benz's case, the three-pointed star is presenting one of the world's most recognizable trademarks. The star represents the Daimler's strategy towards universal motorization with engines dominating the land, sea, and air and has made visible traditional Mercedes-Benz's values such as fascination, responsibility, and perfection for over 120 years. The logo, illustrated in Figure 11, therefore, represents quality, innovation, and tradition in the German automotive industry (Daimler, 2019).

Figure 11: Mercedes-Benz logo

Source: Daimler (2019).

In the second case, the company name, BMW, stands for Bavarian Motor Works, which similarly reflects the pro-independence mood. The BMW logo emblem (Figure 12) features two white and blue block sections inside a black circle, representing Bavarian flag and stands for the German quality.

Figure 12: BMW logo

Source: BMW Official website (2020).

In the case of the third manufacturer, where four rings can be observed (Figure 13), we talk about "Auto Union AG". Current shape of the Audi logo took place in the early 1932 when four independent companies (Audi, Horch, DKW and Wanderer) merged into one single unit. The logo represents unity and cooperation that the brand stands for. Logo design is colored with bright and shining silver chrome, which is one of the colors that has been long associated with the representation of high tech, industrialization, and modernization (Audi AG, 2019).

Figure 13: Audi logo

Source: Audi Official website (2020).

In connection with Maslow's theory and higher needs, the concept of brand prominence has to be presented. It is defined as the extent to which a car has visible markings that help to identify the vehicle that consumers choose to drive. The intention of brand prominence clarifies how visibility of a vehicle's markings reflects different signaling intentions of the owners. In the process of configuration of the vehicle, consumers have an option of "loud" or conspicuous branding, or "quiet" or discreet branding. In theory, wealthy consumers low in need for social status do not focus on visible markings of their premium class car and usually pay more for "quiet" goods only they can recognize. Other consumers, who are high in need of social status, use "loud" premium goods to signal wealth to attract the attention of their social group (Dreze, X., Han, Y., & Nunes, J., 2010).

Figure 14: "Loud" Branding

Source: Net Car Show (2017).

In Figure 14, "loud" branding is presented. In the case of premium class car brands, we are discussing the model designation. In other words, consumers can choose if at the back of their car symbols and words used by the manufacturer to identify the model of the vehicle would be visible or not at all (Han & Nunes, 2010). Researchers found out that vehicles with visible markings are more appropriate to present the social functions of self-presentation (Hyeong & Sankar & Wilcox, 2009).

2.4.4 Brand Equity

Consumers often have unique associations that trigger their considerations set about a specific brand. The more memory structures a brand is associated with, the more likely it is to be purchased. Brand salience represents *"a degree to which a brand is thought about when consumer is in a decision-making situation"* (Beard, 2010, p. 35). Based on the brand salience and consumer's feelings about brand personality, brand equity is developed, which refers to the *"extent to which consumer has strong and unique associations with a brand"* (Beard, 2010, p. 35), even furthermore, the level to which a consumer is prepared to pay for the branded version of a product than for a non-branded one. Concept of brand equity consists of brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations and other proprietary brand assets, which create a strong consumer-brand relationship (Aaker, 1991). Therefore, brand equity is the commercial value that derives from the consumer's perception of the brand, rather than from the car itself. Strong brands like BMW, Mercedes-Benz and Audi have high brand salience and strong brand equity (Olson & Peter, 2010).

2.5 CONSUMER DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

This chapter examines the field of the psychological processes underlying the decision-making situation while buying a new premium class car. In the situation of buying a product, which is expensive and involves higher risks, consumers will seek for more information before the actual purchase. Their decision-making process is going to be slow and due to the high level of involvement considered as complex and high-involvement purchase, which requires a great amount of cognitive and financial resources from the consumers (Kotler & Keller, 2009).

There are three perspectives of consumer decision-making: cognitive, behavioral and experiential. Experiential decision-making was presented in the previous chapter of emotions, where we described how consumer's emotional responses drive many of their choices. Behavioral decision-making proposes that consumers act in response to environmental pressures. High-involvement purchases require cognitive approach, which refers to the mental processes involved in understanding and interpreting external stimuli. Cognitive part then divides the decision into more elementary processes, including knowledge and beliefs activated from memory as illustrated in Figure 15. Outcome of this integration process is a choice, represented cognitively as a behavioral intention (Mowen, 1988).

Figure 15: A Cognitive Processing Model of Consumer Decision making
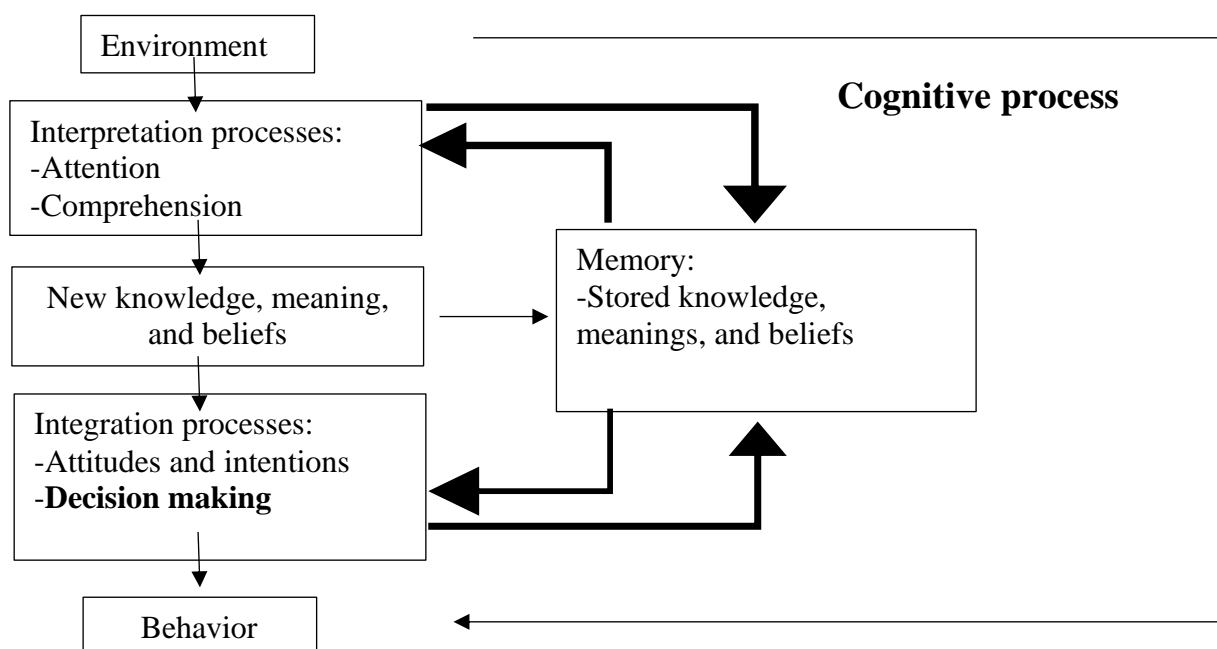
Source: Olson & Peter (2010).

In this thesis, the consumer decision-making process is defined as a problem-solving process, where the focus is on consumer's goal (desired consequences or values in a means-end chain) that they seek in order to achieve or satisfy a need. A consumer perceived a "problem" because the desired consequences have not been achieved (I need a reliable car). Through 4 basic stages of decision-making processes, problem recognition, information research, evaluation of alternatives and purchase, consumers make decisions about which behavior to perform to achieve their goal and consequently "solve the problem" (Olson & Peter, 2010).

2.5.1 Problem Recognition

The first stage involves problem or need recognition, which creates the basic motivation to start a problem-solving process. For instance, a consumer sold an old car, or their current car is not safe enough for their family. Most problem-solving processes actually involve multiple choices that lead to several behavioral intentions: Should a consumer call at the dealership? Which one? Should they drive to the car showroom? When should they go? The decision plan develops a sequence of purposive behaviors that consumers perform to achieve their desired goal (visit a car dealer's showroom, take a test drive, …) (Olson & Peter, 2010).

Figure 16: Pre-sale Experience

Source: Michelli (2016).

The components of the initial problem representation often change during the decision-making process, due to the advertisements, where consumers see how their problem could be solved. Figure 16 illustrates how the marketing department brings a consumer into the sales process or in a showroom. One of the main triggers is the Internet, which is suggesting more and more options, also the more expensive ones of higher quality, which often try to stimulate consumers into realizing they have a bigger need for a product. Therefore, consumer's relevant knowledge in memory (brand awareness) about a specific premium class car brand (choice domain) is an important element in problem solving (Olson & Peter, 2010). When faced with a choice, consumers must interpret various aspects of the decision problem. This problem representation includes: (1) an end goal, (2) a set of sub goals organized into a goal hierarchy, (3) relevant product knowledge, (4) a set of simple rules by which consumers search for, evaluate and integrate this knowledge to make a choice. The basic consequences, needs, or values that consumers want to achieve or satisfy are called end goals. In the case of purchasing a new premium class car, end goals represent instrumental and terminal values, where consumers choose a car that makes them feel save or strengthens their self-esteem (Olson & Peter, 2010).

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2.5.2 Search for Alternative Solutions

Figure 17 illustrates how consumer's consideration set of brands is affecting the process. The set of brands that the consumer is familiar with is called evoked set, which is activated directly from the memory. For highly familiar decisions, consumers are confident and, therefore, they are not going to search for alternatives and may not consider any brands beyond those in the evoked set (Olson & Peter, 2010).

Figure 17: Forming a consideration set of brand choice alternatives
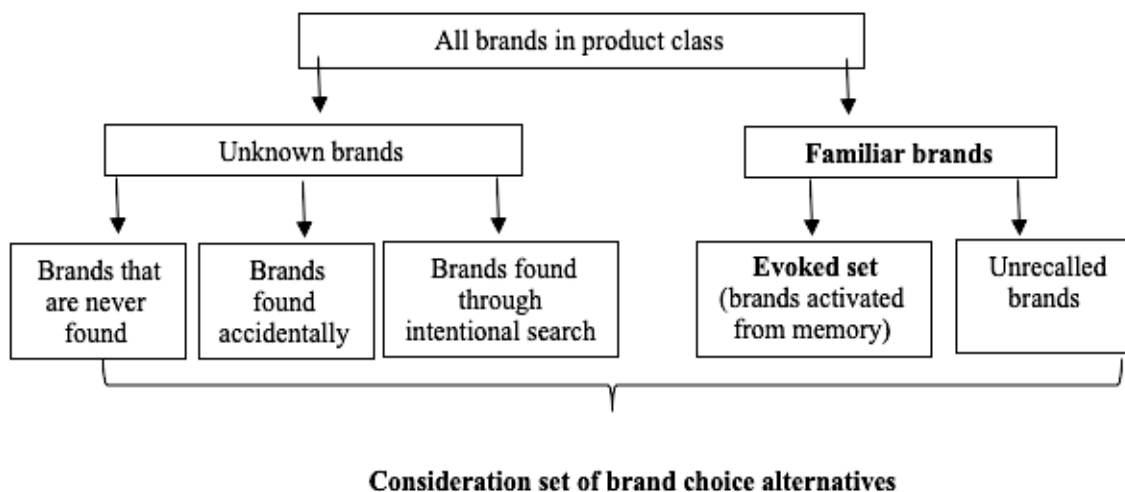
Source: Olson & Peter (2010).

To increase the possibility that a brand will be activated from consumer's memory and included in their evoked sets of choice alternatives, companies have to create experiences that consumers will associate with the specific brand. Consumers are much more likely to purchase brands that they have used or seen before (Olson & Peter, 2010).

2.5.3 Evaluation of Alternatives and Purchase

In this stage, consumers move from awareness to consideration, where evaluation of the choice alternatives in the consideration set is based on their beliefs about the consequences of buying those brands. The specific consequences used to evaluate and choose among choice alternatives are called choice criteria. Any type of product-related consequences can become a choice criterion in a brand-choice decision. The probability that product knowledge is activated and used in the evaluation process is influenced strongly by the means-end relevance of that knowledge to the goal being considered. For instance, if the dominant end goal is the safety of the family, beliefs about product consequences that are perceived as helping to achieve safety are most likely to be used as choice criteria in purchasing a premium class car. Advertisements that capture consumer's attention and communicate favourable beliefs about salient attributes and consequences of the brand may be able to develop that knowledge (Olson & Peter, 2010).

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The integration processes involved in problem-solving perform two essential tasks: the choice alternatives must be evaluated in terms of the choice criteria, and then one of the alternatives must be selected. For that purpose, we have two combined processes. The first one, compensatory integration process combines all salient beliefs about the consequences of the choice alternatives to form an overall evaluation or attitude towards each behavioral alternative. The process is so called because a negative consequence (expensive) can be compensated for or balanced by a positive consequence (high social status). The second one, no compensatory integration process, where salient beliefs of the choice alternatives do not balance for each other. Thus, some consumers would reject the selected model because it is too expensive. Instead, consumers make multiple decisions in most purchase situations (choices of information search to examine, stores to visit) and likely use a combination of processes in problem-solving decisions (Olson & Peter, 2010).

The last stage is the purchasing decision. After making a comparison with other products, the consumer chooses a premium class car, which has an economic price and high rankings of safety and driving performance. Consequently, this car will completely meet the consumer's satisfaction, showing that the product meets consumer's needs (Olson & Peter, 2010).

3 PREMIUM CLASS CAR BRANDS INVOLVEMENT IN THE CONSUMER DECISION MAKING PROCESS

In the late 1990's, from the perspective of BMW, Mercedes-Benz and Audi, engineering excellence, safety, and innovations were the foundation that had led to very product-focused companies' strategies. All premium brands relied heavily on product qualities to build consumer's loyalty and hadn't addressed overall experience in their buying process. But in today's market, premium brands need more than a world-class product to overcome the competition. Therefore, they started adding value to their products by delivering emotionally engaging consumer experience in the buying process to keep their consumers and maintain market shares. As a consequence, all premium class car brands shifted their strategy from a product-dominant to a consumer-obsessed strategy (Michelli, 2016).

3.1 Consumer Experience

When creating an emotional buying experience, designing a map of consumer's journey through the showroom has an important role. Once marketers fully understand typical wants, needs, and desires of their consumers during the walk-through showroom, they can identify the so-called consumer's touchpoints, which help consumers to develope those emotional interactions with the brand. A map of the consumer's experience (journey), typically include (Michelli, 2016):

- a systematic view of the actions that consumers take as they move through a showroom,
- needs, emotions, and goals that consumers experience throughout their journey,

- the identification of the high-value touchpoints (often referred to as moments of truth) on which consumers place great importance,
- the identification of opportunities to enhance the current consumer journey.

When consumers do enter a dealership/showroom to engage that part of the sales journey, a detailed consumer experience map identified four phases, which can be observed in Figure 18. Each of those four phases include two or three important touchpoints. First one is the importance of creating a memorable first impression, where consumers have to be greeted upon arrival and initial contact has to be developed in order to make consumers feel they are very welcomed in the showroom. In the second phase, the salesperson has a crucial role to identify main needs and wants of potential consumers and help them to find a premium class car, which will be a solution for their current situation. In the third phase, all the solutions have to be negotiated in the business office, where consumers have to feel that this is a personalized experience with a special deal, under special conditions, worth their money and make them feel special about the whole buying experience with creation of lasting memories at the end of the buying process (Michelli, 2016).

Figure 18: Consumer Experience

Source: Michelli (2016).

3.2 Employee Engagement

Shifting from a product to a consumer-focused strategy depends largely on employees and salespersons in showrooms, who attempt to influence buying behavior of the potential consumers (Askegaard, Bamossy, Hogg & Solomon, 2013). The quality of salespersons interaction with potential consumers is a strong factor of influence on consumer choice because the interaction between consumer's motivational mind-set and a salesperson's behavior affects consumer's cognitions, emotions, knowledge, and consequently, the choice of final purchase (Kapoor & Kulshrestha, 2009).

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With a goal of creating a world-class consumer buying experience that would be consistent with the needs of their consumers, premium class car brands developed "The Standards" of the buying process in their showrooms. Salespersons of premium class car brands, BMW, Mercedes-Benz and Audi must be familiar with the structure, products and brand philosophies to represent the company to consumers and be able to develop and add value to the relationship between company and potential consumers. They also have to work on behalf of the brand slogan, which is a promise and a commitment to creating sustainable and positive relationships with potential consumers (Michelli, 2016).

In order to successfully complete the buying process, a salesperson has to be able to identify the consumer's requirements and present effective feature benefits that are important in the individual conversation with a potential consumer with the aim of closing a sale. The logic behind the presentation of the main features of the vehicle is based on the model of means-end chains (presented in Chapter 2.2.1). A salesperson always starts the presentation of the main features with the basic description and ends with the presented benefits or satisfaction of specific need of the potential consumer, based on which a consumer-product relationship is developed (Autocommerce,2012).

It is also crucial to present the vehicle's characteristics according to consumer's orientation. According to NLP (neurolinguistics programming), a consumer perceives his/her environment with his/her five senses: visual (by seeing), auditory (by hearing), kinesthetics (by feeling, touching, physical sensitivity), olfactory (by smelling) and gustatory (by tasting). Generally, a consumer prefers to use one or two of the sensory channels, which define his/her perception type. The most frequent variants are visual-auditory or visual-kinesthetics. The perception type has an important effect on how much information is taken in or lost, accepted or rejected when a customer is personally addressed. The investigations have shown that consumers demonstrate typical eye movement when their thoughts move within a certain sensory system. There are links related to the senses between eye movement patterns and processes in the brain. The strongest sensory channel is revealed when a consumer speaks, therefore, a salesperson must take the sensory channel of a specific consumer into account and to be able to identify it, in order to achieve an effective, consumer-oriented vehicle presentation. The interaction of the salesperson is to present the product's characteristics to consumers, and based on that, help them to decide which product or model is the best to meet their needs, wants and expectations. As a result, the more intensive the experience of the vehicle (recorded by all the preferred sensory channels) the greater sales success is achieved (Autocommerce, 2012).

3.3 Experiential Retailing

Some marketers have suggested that the contemporary economy should be characterized as an experience economy. An experience occurs when a company intentionally uses services as the stage, and goods as props, to engage individual consumers in a way that creates a memorable event (Gilmore & Pine, 1998). Therefore, premium class car brands organize special driving

events for the selected target groups of potential consumers with the focus on delivering emotionally engaging experiences with their premium class cars.

In the last 10 years, experiential retailing has an important role in changing the buying process of the premium class cars in Slovenia. From traditional in-store purchase to the retail location outside, on the roads. This offers the potential consumers a place to not only buy, but also touch, feel, drive the product, get familiar with the characteristics of the product, eat amazing food, hang out with their friends and families and, consequently, develop a relationship with a product and brand.

Adrenaline, safety and enjoyable moments are the highlights of traditional Mercedes-Benz Star Experience Road Show, which is hosted every year at the AMZS Safe Driving Center at Vransko. Active safety is always the focus of Mercedes-Benz, therefore, vehicles are richly equipped with all the latest safety equipment, where potential consumers can try it and understand the benefits of it (Autocommerce, 2018).

Figure 19: Mercedes-Benz Star Experience Road Show

Source: Autommerce (2018).

BMW xDrive Winter arena is an exclusive experience of cutting-edge technology, hosted every year at the sport center Triglav Pokljuka. The driving pleasure is the focus of BMW technology, where potential consumers are able to experience the unlimited freedom of BMW xDrive technology and test all the capabilities of the BMW xDrive system in the snow (BMW blog Slovenia, 2020).

Figure 20: BMW xDrive Winter arena

Source: BMW Blog Slovenia (2020).

4 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH OF CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOR OF PREMIUM CLASS CARS IN SLOVENIA

4.1 Research Questions and Hypotheses

The thesis is focused on the following research questions:

1. What are the basic needs and motivation for the purchase of a premium class car?
2. What are the most important factors influencing the buying decision of premium class cars?
3. What is the general perception about premium class car brands in Slovenia?
4. What is the importance of a brand image and brand personality of premium class cars?
5. What effect do emotions have on the purchase of a premium class car in Slovenia?

In this master's thesis, I wanted to test the following hypotheses that were formulated on the basis of the literature and attempt to answer some of the abovementioned questions.

Motivation for the purchase determines the direction and intensity of behavior. Abraham Maslow (1943) was the first, who developed a basic theory of human motivation, claiming that behind every purchase is a specific need that has to be satisfied or achieved. Nowadays, we are facing extremely wide choices in satisfying our needs, whereas the necessities have long ago been taken care of. As a consequence, consumers look for higher-level needs. Utilitarian and hedonic needs are considered to develop two basic types of motivation for the purchase of a new premium class car in Slovenia. Utilitarian needs are about the objective, functional aspect of life, whereas, hedonic needs, are more focused on self-promotion, and elevating buyers to a higher class on the social scale (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). Therefore, those who buy premium class cars are more likely to crave social status and material wealth, as opposed to utilitarian car buyers, who buy out of necessity. On the basis of Hirschman and Holbrook, theory (1982), the first hypothesis was developed.

H1: Community affiliation is the least important motive behind the purchase of a premium class car in Slovenia.

Most commonly used attitude and behavior model, the "Behavioral Intentions Model" was developed by Martin Fishbein in 1967. Behavioral intention can be understood as a plan to engage in a specific behavior to reach a goal and is the single best predictor of actual behavior (Fishbein, 1967). Fishbein (1967) explains that consumer's behavioral intention is dependent on both the social and personal components. Hence, consumers, influenced by the personal component, will likely use the brand personality to express their personal attributes. Social component differs across different cultures. Slovenian culture is considered a collectivistic society, which manifests in a close long-term commitment to the member 'group'. As a consequence, Slovenian consumers tend to use a brand and its personality to express the similarity to their preferred social group, rather than expressing the actual self (de Mooij &

Hofstede, 2011). On the basis of the "Behavioral Intentions model" by Fishbein (1967), the following hypotheses were developed.

H2: Perceived social component influences consumers' behavioral intention to purchase.

H3: Perceived personal component influences consumers' behavioral intention to purchase.

In the consideration set of customers, a brand image is a unique set of associations with symbols, product's characteristics and key advantages of the brand, which play a significant role in the creation of the brand image. It is crucial to understand that the brand image is not just about the visual characteristics but consist also of all the emotional and intangible reactions of brand associations with a specific image, which evokes in the consciousness of the potential consumers (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009). In other words, how people think and feel about a specific brand is crucial for success. This was the reason for developing the fourth hypothesis.

H4: To more than 50% of respondents a brand image is important in the purchase decision process of a new premium class car.

On a daily basis, consumers make a purchase decision for brands that they are familiar with. They purchase brands to which they feel connected. On an unconsciousness level, consumers choose brands that have a personality, which is consistent with their underlying needs, values, and desires (Askegaard, Bamossy, Hogg & Solomon, 2013). My fifth hypothesis is based on the self-image congruence model, which assumes *"a process of cognitive matching between product attributes and the consumer's self-image"* (Solomon, 2018, page 125).

H5: There is a strong correlation between human personality dimension "Openness to Experience" and brand personality dimension of "Competence".

H6: There is a strong correlation between human personality dimension "Agreeableness" and brand personality dimension of "Sincerity".

4.2. Methodology and Process of the Research

In order to answer the research questions, a quantitative study via an online survey was performed. Online surveys are the most common tools to gather data from a large number of individuals and are more accessible than other methods. It can be created online on a predefined template and send to the interviewee easily as a link via email or social media. It is also less expensive because no paper is being used and posted to different addresses, which reduces printing or postage costs. It is less time-intensive, because answers are saved immediately, which ensures faster administration and collections of data. Online surveys are a great tool to collect meaningful and powerful feedback because human interviewer is not present, which ensures respondents' anonymity. Because of the assured confidentiality, people feel more comfortable being honest when answering the questions, which creates objectivity to the feedback (Goodwin, 2020).

To appropriately analyze the collected data and test the hypothesis, the IBM SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 23.0 software was used. To ensure more accurate results, the data set have been cleaned and adjusted from incomplete respondents' questions which were not relevant for further analysis. Afterwards, in the data preparation process, the type and measure of variables were also defined and by averaging the item values of the measuring scales that were definite before, new variables were computed.

4.3 Data Collection and Measurement Operationalization

The primary data was collected through an online questionnaire, created on the online platform 1ka.si. The online survey was active from 19 April to 25 April 2020, where 364 owners of premium class cars agreed to complete the online questionnaire. Responses were gathered by convenience sampling. Link to the survey was primary sent via email to 100 owners of premium class cars. I received these contacts from Slovenian dealers of premium class cars. In order to reach a bigger sample of Slovenian owners of premium class cars, I posted a link in social groups, created on Facebook. These are BMW Slovenia, Mercedes-Benz Slovenia and Audi Slovenia. The response was surprisingly good; therefore, I received the majority of my results from those social groups, who were very interested to complete my questionnaire.

An online questionnaire consists of twenty-one topic-related questions, which focus on 3 main factors (attitude towards a selected premium class car, brand relationship quality and emotions, which respondents create towards a selected premium class car brand) that have an effect on the purchase of a premium class car in Slovenia. The format of the online questionnaire being used in this thesis consists of multiple-choice and Likert scale questions. I used the five-point Likert scales ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5).

The first part of the questionnaire deals with measuring the attitude that consumers have towards the selected premium class car. One of the most widely used attitude and behavior models, "Behavioral Intentions Model" recognizes that people's attitudes could be viewed as individual mental processes that influence a person's actual response towards an object. Behavioral intention is the single best predictor of actual behavior and is known as the attitude-behavior relationship (Fishbein, 1967). Items for attitude were measured with items for social component (seen in Table 2) taken from the study of Truong et al. (2010) and items for personal component (seen in Table 2) derived from the study of Babin, Darden & Griffin (1994) and Dawson and Richins (1992). Brand attitude was measured with Soutar's and Sweeney's (2001) study and behavioral intention with Summers's et.al (2006) study as it is presented in Table 1.

The second part of the questionnaire focuses on measuring personality of the brands and the consumers. Previous studies in marketing and consumer behavior field have found out that the higher congruence between brand and consumer personality, the higher is consumer's tendency to choose the specific brand (Dikcius, Seimiene & Zaliene, 2013).

Table 1: Measurement Items for Attitude

Constructs and Measurement Items	Source
Social Value Perception	
Owning a luxury good indicates a symbol of achievement.	Truong et. al. (2010)
Owning a luxury good indicates a symbol of wealth.	
Owning a luxury good indicates a symbol of prestige.	
Owning a luxury good attracts attention.	
I buy a luxury good because it has a status.	
A luxury good is important to me because it makes me feel accepted in my circle.	
Personal Value Perception	
Purchasing luxury goods increases my happiness.	Babin, Darden, & Griffin (1994) and Dawson and Richins (1992)
It is important to me to own a really nice luxury good.	
It sometimes bothers me quite a bit if I can't afford to buy a luxury good that I want.	
While shopping for a luxury good, I feel the excitement of the hunt for a new vehicle.	
While shopping for a luxury good, I am able to forget my problems.	
Brand Attitude	
A luxury brand would give me pleasure.	Soutar and Sweeney (2001)
A luxury brand would make me feel good.	
Luxury products that I buy, reveal a little bit of who I am.	
Behavioral Intention	
I would decide to buy the selected premium class car brand once again.	Summers *et.al* (2006)
There is a very high probability I would return to this premium class car brand to buy a new one.	
I would recommend this premium class car brand.	

Source: Own work.

Aaker (1997) proposed the framework as a standard, universal method to measure brand personality and personality of consumers, therefore, Aaker's Brand Personality 5-point Likert-type scale will be used to measure brands' and consumers' personality in this research. However, the present study adopts the 10 facets of brand personality, which strongly represent the five dimensions of brand personality. On the other hand, Malinauskienė and Žukauskienė (2010) examine human personality dimensions of the "Big Five" Model into five latent dimensions (agreeableness, extraversion, openness to experience, conscientiousness and

neuroticism) and inspired by this, Aaker (1997) extended human dimensions and found the congruence between some dimensions of human and brand personality, which are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Measurement Items for Brand Personality Model

Brand Personality		
Dimensions of Brand Personality	**Measurement Items**	**Source**
Sincerity	A premium class car brand is family oriented.	Aaker et.al. (1997).
Excitement	A premium class car brand is daring, young and unique.	
Competence	A premium class car brand is reliable, intelligent, successful and confident.	
Sophistication	A premium class car brand is glamorous.	
Ruggedness	A premium class car brand is mature.	
Customer Personality		
Dimensions of Human Personality	**Measurement Items**	**Source**
Agreeableness	I am family oriented.	Malinauskienė and Žukauskienė (2010)
Extraversion	I am daring, young and unique.	
Openness to experience	I am reliable, intelligent, successful and confident.	
Neuroticism	I am glamorous.	
Conscientiousness	I am mature.	

Source: Own work.

The third part of the questionnaire is designed to measure consumer's emotional relationship with their selected premium class car brand. Fournier (1998) addressed the strong relationship between consumers and brands that are likely to generate strong emotional ties, which are much greater than the simple notion of brand preference. She developed six dimensions of brand relationship quality (presented in Table 3), which are associated with a strong relationship between people and suggest how brand and consumers relations should be conceived, measured and managed.

Table 3: Dimensions of Brand Relationship Quality by Fournier (1998)

Dimensions of Brand Relationship Quality by Fournier (1998)	**Measurement Items**
1.Love and Passion (this quality is the core of all strong relationships)	No other brand can quite take the place of this brand.

|	
2. Self-connection (this relationship reflects the degree to which the brand expresses a significant aspect of self)	The brand's and my self-image are similar.
3. Interdependence (strong brand relationship is determined by a degree of interdependence enjoining consumer and brand)	This brand plays an important role in my life.
4. Commitment (high levels of commitment are common across strong brand relationships)	I feel very loyal to this brand.
5. Intimacy (a deep understanding and belief about a brand)	I know a lot about this brand.
6. Brand partner quality (this dimension reflects the evaluation by the customer of the brand's attitude towards him/her)	This brand treats me like a valued customer.

Source: Own work.

4.4 Analysis of Results

For the exploratory nature of this study, several quantitative analysis techniques were employed, which ranged from simple descriptive statistics to more complex techniques of linear regression and correlation coefficients. In this part, I used the SPSS program package to conduct various statistical analysis and to present the category also in more quantitative terms. I statistically processed the questionnaire by first presenting the results by individual questions and finish it with an analysis of statistical relationships between individual questions.

4.4.1 Sample Profile

To present the sample, descriptive statistics were used. This part of the thesis analyzes and provides the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents that were obtained from the survey. The majority of respondents were male, not surprisingly, 91% of total respondents.

Figure 21 is a graphic representation of respondent's ownership regarding three premium class car brands that the thesis is focused on. In my sample of 364 owners of the premium class cars, there are 185 owners of BMW, representing 50% of the sample. 127 owners of Mercedes-Benz, representing 35% of the sample, and 52 owners of Audi, representing 14% of total respondents.

*Figure 21: Ownerships of Premium Class Car Brands of the Respondents*
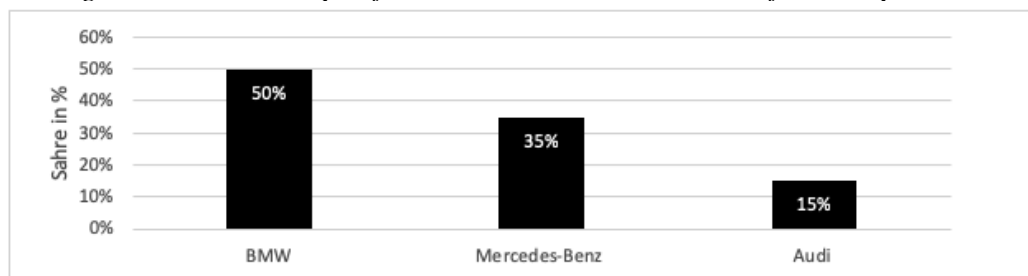
Source: Own work.

There are 38% of respondents (141 respondents), who bought only 1 premium class car in their lifetime. 27% (101 respondents) of the sample bought 2 premium class cars. The important

number here is 35% (122 respondents) of the sample, who had bought more than 3 premium class cars in their lifetime. This results clearly shows that respondents are very loyal consumers on the Slovenian market. 60% of all respondents earn between €1,000 and €1,999 per month. Representing 25% of the sample have a monthly income between €2,000 and €2,999, whereas 17% of respondents earn above €3,000 on a monthly basis.

Figure 22 shows the age groups of the respondents. The majority of the respondents are between 25 and 35 years old, representing 74% of the sample. There are 17% of respondents between 36 and 45 years old and 9% are in the age group from 46 to 55 years. Only 2% of the sample represents customers above the age of 56.

*Figure 22: Age Groups of the Respondents*
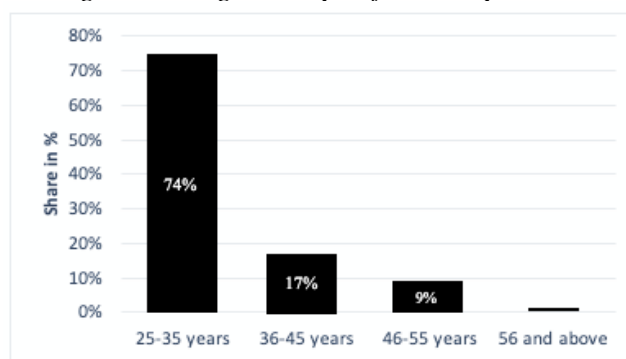
Source: Own work.

45% of the sample has secondary education, meaning they finished secondary technical, vocational high school or gymnasium. 40% has a bachelor's degree from   a university or college. There are 11% of respondents with a master's degree or PhD degree. The remaining 4% of the sample has only primary education.

65% of the respondents work in the private sector, whereas 32% of the sample are entrepreneurs. Only 11% of the respondents work in the public sector as it is presented in Figure 23.

*Figure 23: Sectors, where respondents work*
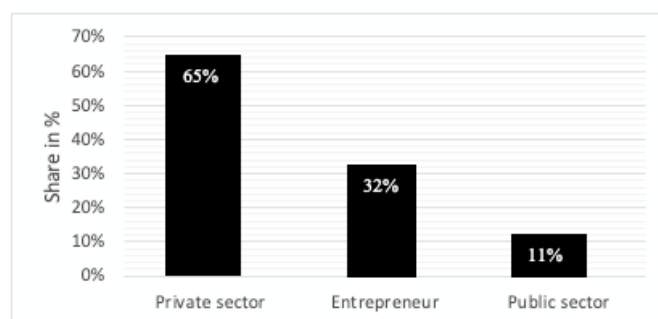
Source: Own work.

34% of the respondents work as employees. Quite the same number of respondents, 22% represents Heads of Departments and 21% Independent workers. Linking to the previous figure, out of 23% who work as entrepreneurs, 18% are those who own a company.

4.4.2 Interpretation of Findings

At the beginning of the survey, respondents were asked to select their main motivation behind the purchase of their premium class car. As shown in Figure 24, fulfilling basic transport needs seems to be the most important reason for buying a premium class car in Slovenia. As the analysis shows, 30% of the respondents bought a premium class car to fulfill their life goal. 24% of the respondents bought their premium class car for freedom and independence. Only 7% of the respondents bought a premium class car as a method to communicate their social status with others.

Figure 24: Main motivation behind the purchase of the premium class car
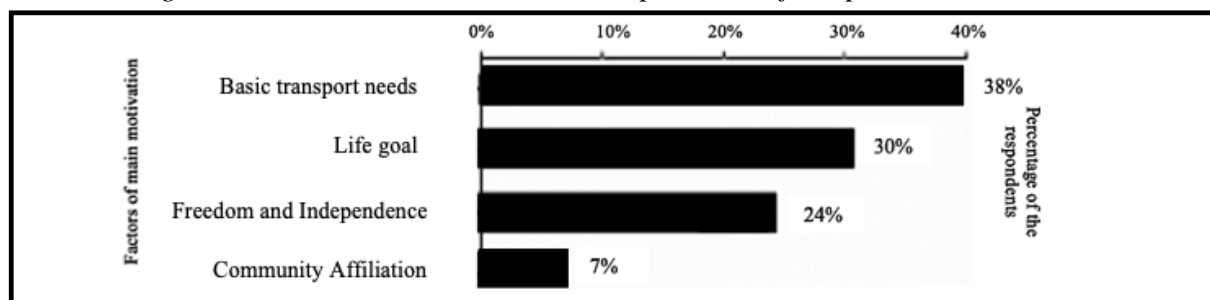
Source: Own work.

In the second question, respondents were asked to identify the following factors (Technical Efficiency, Engine Power, Price, Maintenance cost, Recognition of the brand, Loyalty and Average Fuel Consumption) in terms of importance when deciding to purchase a new premium class car. There were 61% of total respondents, who rate technical efficiency as a very important factor (mean 4.5, standard deviation 0.7), when deciding to purchase a premium class car, and 42% of the respondents, who rate the engine power as a very important factor (mean 4.3, standard deviation 0.7). On the third place of the importance is the price of the vehicle, which 51% of the respondents rate as an important factor (mean 3.7, standard deviation 0.8). Recognition of the brand and loyalty was something that respondents considered as a less important factor, both received mean 3.4 and standard deviation 1.1. Graphical representation of the importance of factors influencing the purchase decision is presented in Figure 25.

Figure 25: Factors influencing the purchasing decision of a new premium class car

Source: Own work.

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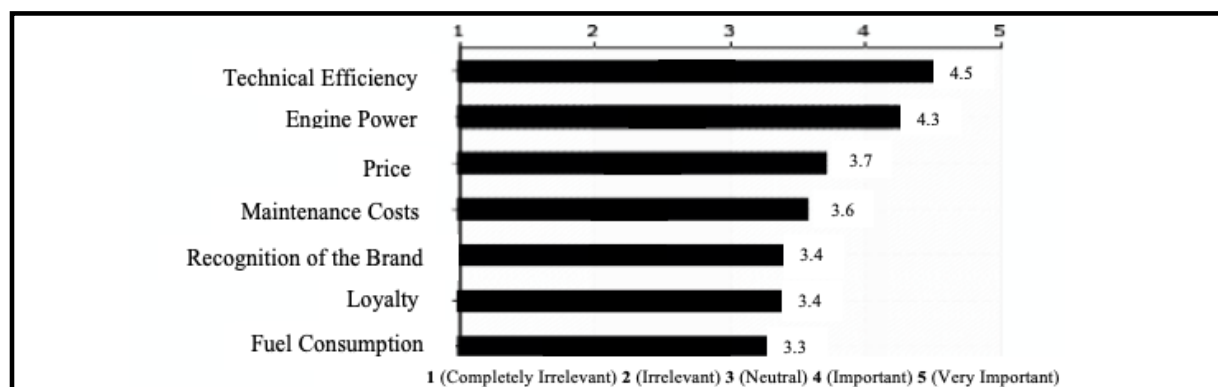
Next question deals with measuring two components of brand attitude, social value perception and personal value perception of the respondents. Respondents were asked to respond what suited their thinking the most, from 1 (I do not agree at all) to 5 (I totally agree). The first 6 sentences in Figure 26 are measuring social value perception. 49% of all respondents agreed that owning a luxury good attracts attention, which received the highest average score 3.5 and standard deviation 1.1. Surprisingly, 36% did not agree that owning a luxury good indicates a symbol of wealth. Social value perception received average score 2.5 and standard deviation 1.0, meaning social value is not important to Slovenian buyers when purchasing premium class cars. The last 5 statements measured personal value perception in the process of purchasing a new premium class car. 66% of the respondents agreed or totally agreed that they feel excitement in the process of purchasing, and 43% agreed or totally agreed that purchasing a luxury good increase their happiness. The personal value perception measures received average score 2.9 and standard deviation 1.1, resulting in greater effect in the process of the purchase than social component.

Figure 26: Social and Personal Value Perception

1 (I do not agree at all) 2 (I do not agree) 3 (Neutral) 4 (I do agree) 5 (I totally agree)
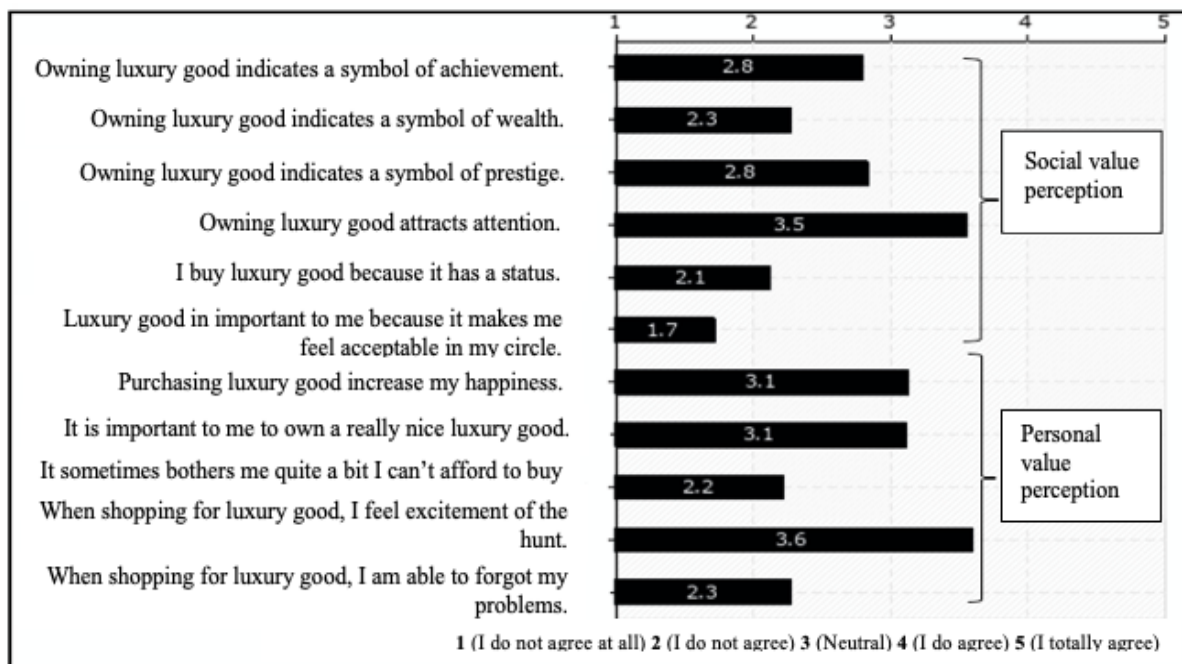
Source: Own work.

Next question deals with measuring brand attitude that respondents have towards the selected premium class car and consequently behavioral intention of the respondents. 98% of the respondents agreed or totally agreed that a premium class car brand gives them pleasure, 71% agreed or totally agreed a premium class car brand makes them feel good as presented in Figure 27. Based on these results, I can conclude that respondents have a positive attitude towards selected premium class car brands. Based on the positive attitude, there is a very high probability they will purchase the same brand again. Behavioral intention received an average score 3.7 and standard deviation 1.2. Cronbach's Alpha for reliability of behavioral intention is very good, α is 0.77.

Figure 27: Brand Attitude and Behavioral Intention
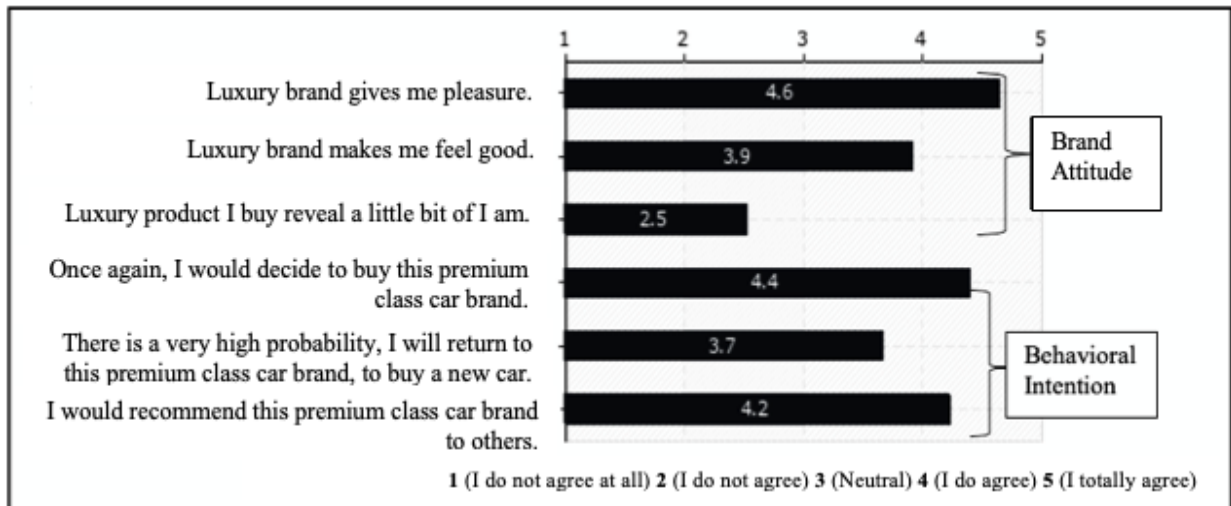
Source: Own work.

Next question deals with measuring the importance of the brand image of the selected premium class car brand in the eyes of respondents. The results show that to 49% of the respondents the image of the selected brand is very important or important. 31% feel neutral about it, and to 21% the brand image is irrelevant or completely irrelevant as seen in Figure 28.

Figure 28: The Importance of Brand Image of the Selected Premium Class Car
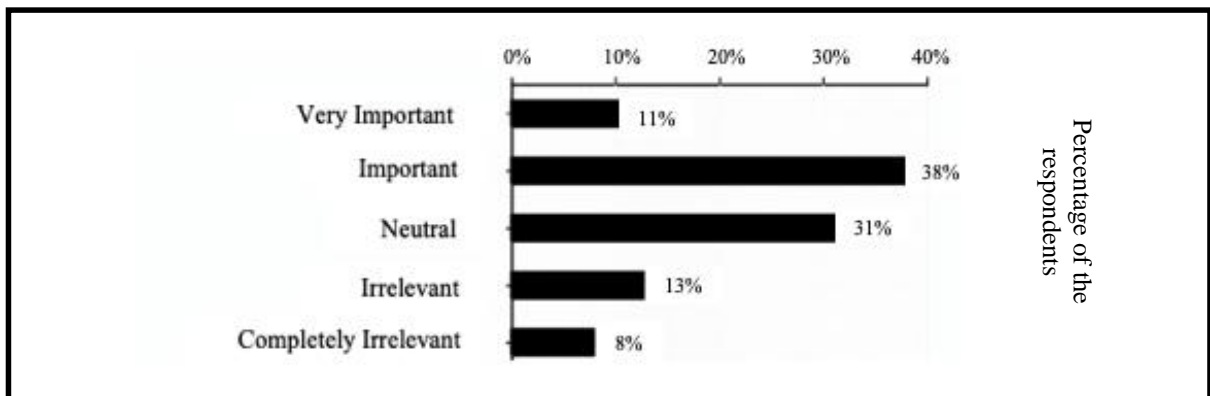
Source: Own work.

The importance of the brand image of the selected premium class car brand in Slovenia is also supported with Figure 29, where respondents were asked if they would buy a premium class car brand with a negative image, although the selected car would fulfil all their requests and needs. 13% of the respondents reacted confidently that they would engage in the purchase, although the selected premium class car brand would have a negative brand image. Together 44% of the respondents were considering the choice of the purchase and felt neutral about it. The important results here are, combining the last two answers, 43% of the total sample, would not engage in the purchase, because of the negative brand image of the selected premium class car brand.

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Figure 29: Brand with Negative Image and its Effect on the Purchase Decision
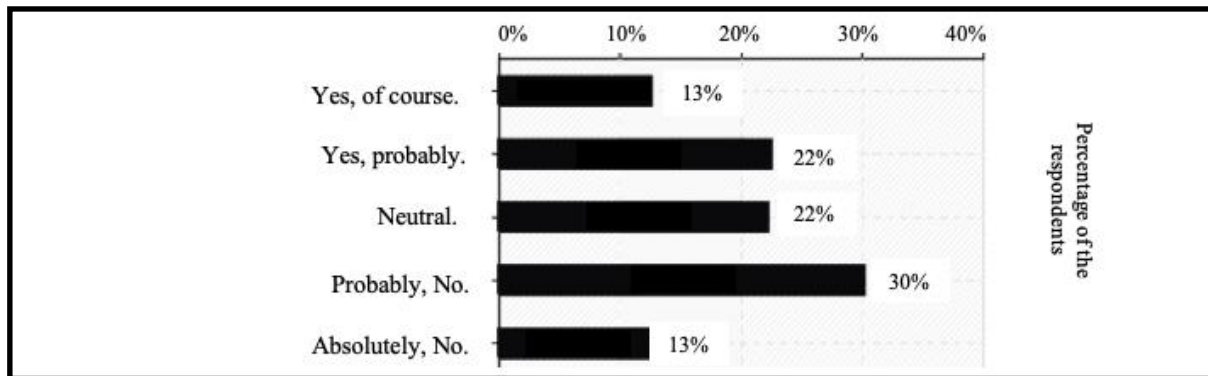
Source: Own work.

An image of the brand is divided into two different parts, which aim to fulfill customer's rational and emotional need. In the next two questions, respondents were asked to rate how important the following functional and symbolic attributes were to them when purchasing a new premium class car. In the first question, they were asked to rate the importance of attributes that are related to product's functions, in which the product attempts to meet their functional needs. The two that were rated as very important to more than 50% of the respondents, were driving dynamics and transmission, as presented in Figure 30. For almost half of the respondents, 46% of them, the drive rated as a very important attribute as well. Also, the security system seems to be very important to 44% of the sample, or important attribute to 34% of the respondents. Telecommunication systems, advanced technology and driving assistants were rated as important or very important attributes as well.

Figure 30: Importance of Functional Attributes
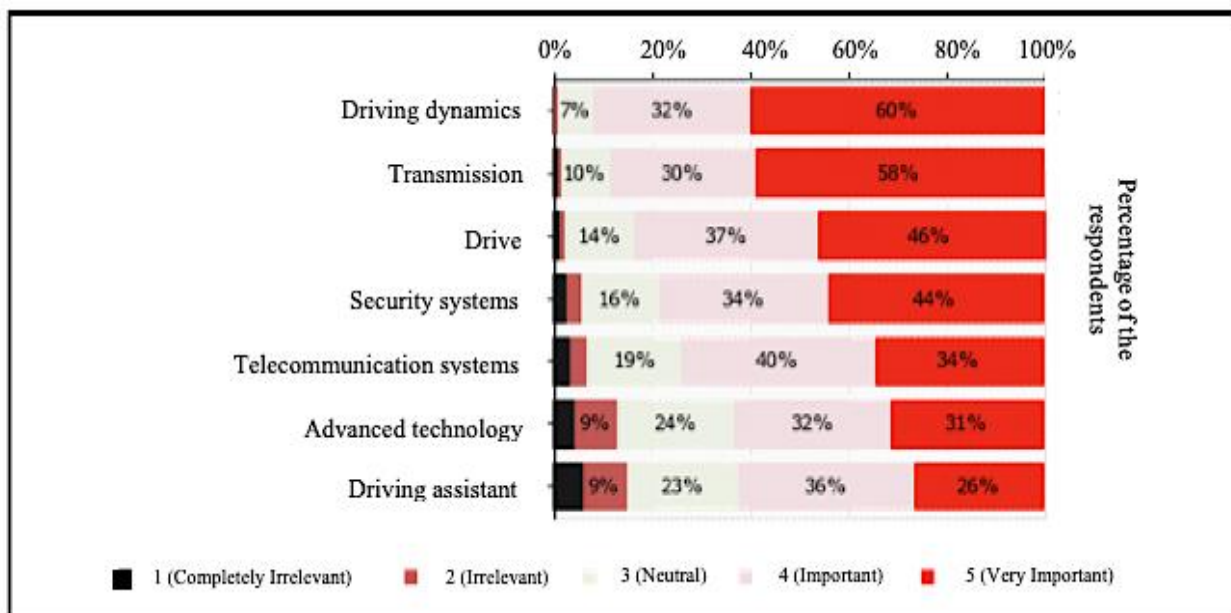
Source: Own work.

The second, symbolic attributes represent emotional benefits such as exclusivity, self-expression and status symbol and are likely to be non-product related images. In connection to the functional attributes, symbolic attributes were rated as less important attributes, while respondents were purchasing a new premium class car. All three attributes together received an average score 3.0 and standard deviation 1.1, which implies that respondents feel neutral about it. Results are presented in Figure 31.

Figure 31: Importance of Symbolic Attributes
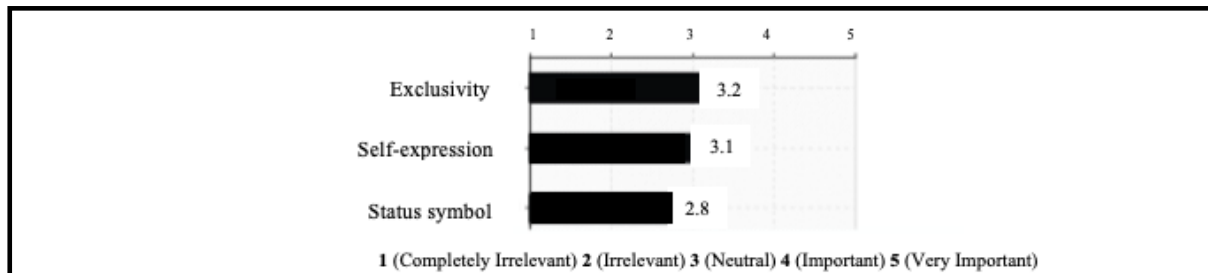
Source: Own work.

In the next question, the focus was to examine the general customers' perception about three premium class car brands that this thesis is focused on. So, the respondents were asked to indicate which premium class car brand (Mercedes-Benz, BMW or Audi) they associate with the following features the most. They were asked to choose only one premium brand for each feature. 75% of the respondents perceived the Mercedes-Benz brand as a symbol of prestige and elegance. 52% of all the respondents rated Mercedes-Benz the highest in the perceived brand quality and reliability. Mercedes-Benz also won the first place as the perceived brand with the most advanced technology and design in the minds of Slovenian customers. On the other hand, 67% of the respondents associate the driving performance feature with the BMW brand. Audi was not rated particularly high on any of the features and respondents do not associate Audi with anything in particular. Results are presented in Figure 32.

Figure 32: General Perceptions about premium class car brands in Slovenia
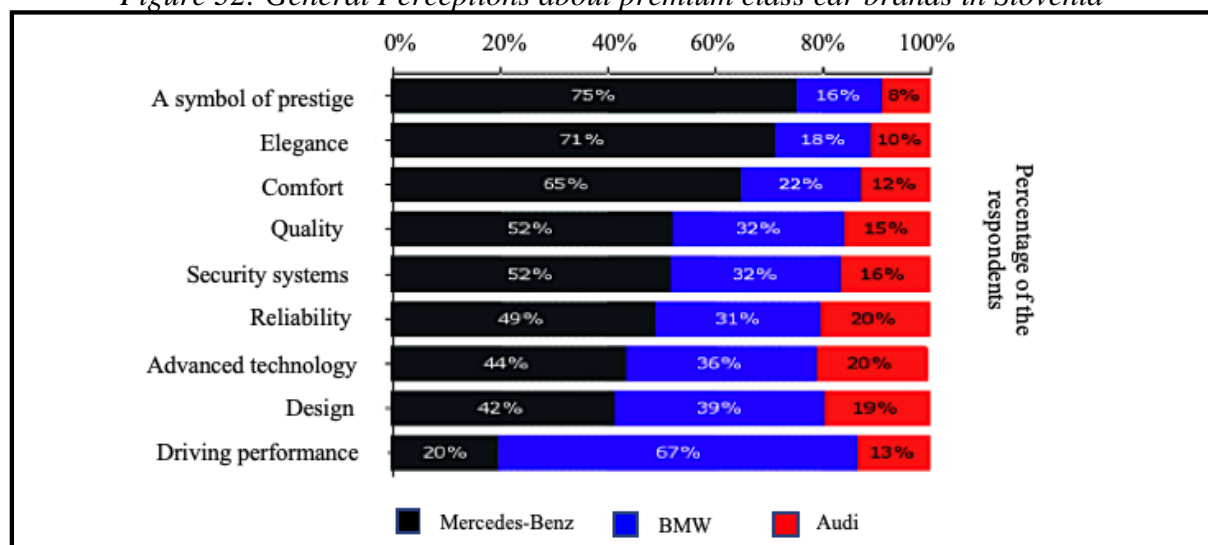
Source: Own work.

Respondents were asked about the emotional relationship that they have with the selected premium class car brand, in order to find out the brand relationship quality. 80% of all the respondents totally agreed or agreed that they know a lot about their selected premium class car. More than a half, 53% in particular, felt loyal to the selected premium class car brand. Respondents were asked to evaluate the brand's attitude towards them as a consumer, 42% of them felt as valued consumers, while 36% felt neutral about it. Regarding interdependence, 38% of customers totally agreed or agreed that their selected premium class car plays an important role in their life. On the other hand, 22% of the respondents did not agree, or felt neutral about this. As presented in Figure 33, results show a weak match relationship between the selected premium class car brand's personality and personality of the consumers again. More than a half, 55 % in total, did not agree that a brand's and their self-image are similar. The results also show a quite low percent of the core values of the emotional relationship between the premium class car brands and Slovenian consumers. More than 54% of the respondents think that other premium class car brand can take the place of their current selected premium class car brand.

Figure 33: Agreement with the statements about emotional connections with the brand
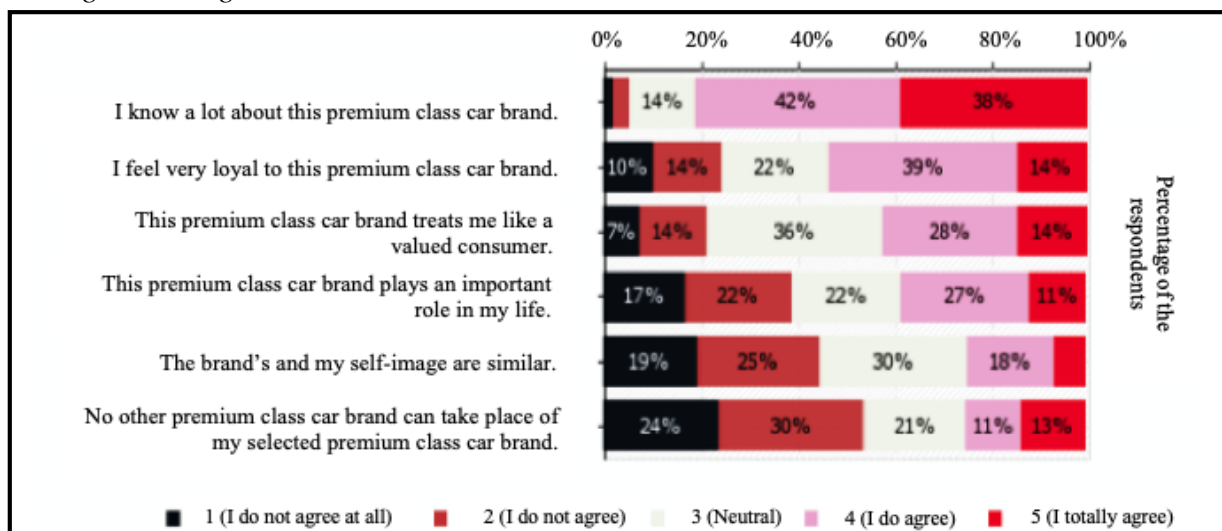
Source: Own work.

Last part of the questionnaire is focused on brand personality. The self-image congruence model already explained that purchasing behavior may be significantly influenced by the match relationship between products and personality of the potential consumers (Antonides & Fred van Raaij, 1998). In the following question, the respondents were asked whether they consider that the image of the selected premium class car can be adequate representation of themselves and their character. 9% of the respondents agree for sure that their selected premium class car brand represents them. 30% of total respondents probably never thought about that, but they agreed with that theory. The majority of the respondents, 34%, felt neutral about it, which was surprising and together 27% did not agree with the theory, which implies again that Slovenian consumers do not feel the relationship between them as the owners and the image of the selected premium class car brand. Results are presented in Figure 34.
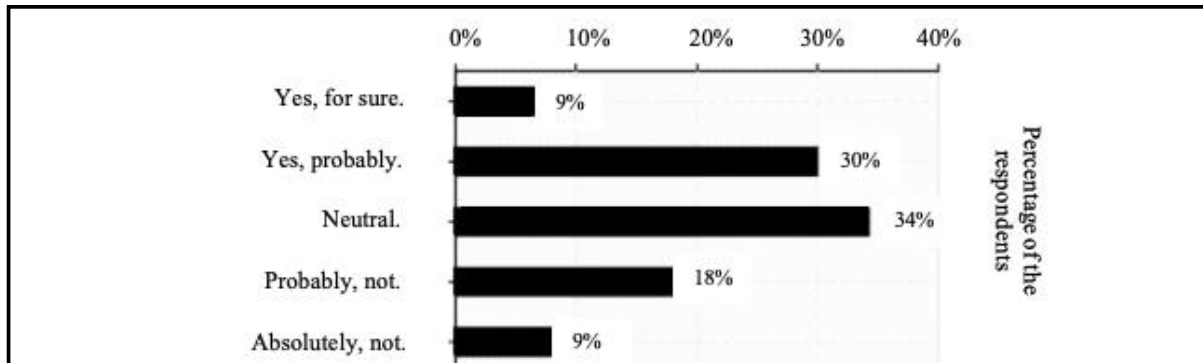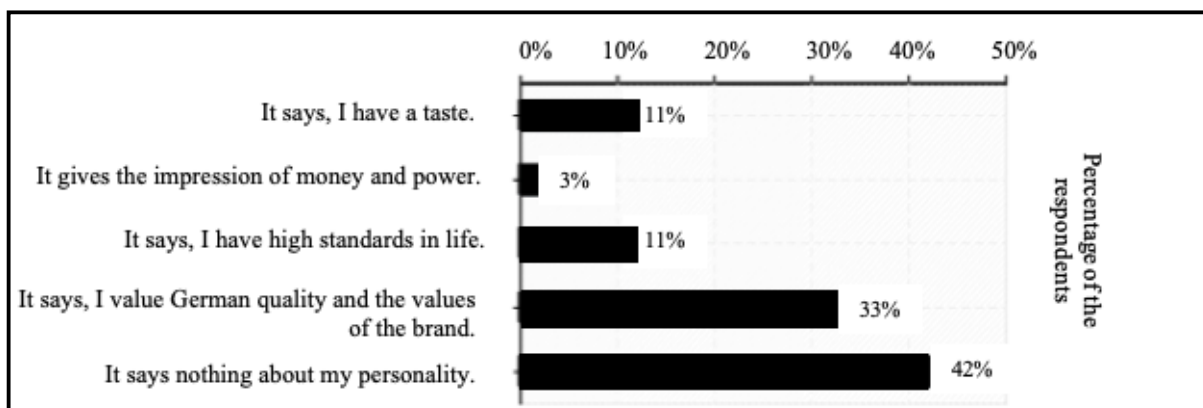
Source: Own work.

Then the respondents were asked in more details, what do they think that the selected premium class car brand says about them as the owners. Results, presented in Figure 35, show again that Slovenian consumers do not have any match relationship with the selected premium class car brand. 42% of all the respondents said that the selected premium class car brand does not say anything about their personality. 33% of the respondents said that the selected premium class car brand says that he or she as the owner, valued German quality and the values of the selected German premium class car brand. 11% agreed that the selected premium class car brand says they have high standards in life, and 11% that they have a good taste. Only 3% of the sample agreed that the selected premium class car brand gives an image of their personal wealth, which implies week social component in the consumer behavior of premium class cars on the Slovenian market again.

Figure 35: What Brand personality says about the personality of the owner
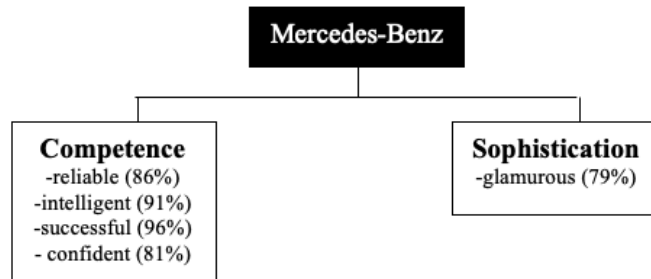

Source: Own work.

In other words, brand personalities are intangible characteristics consumers attribute to a product as if it were a person, in order to achieve differentiation between brands on the marketplace. Therefore, respondents were asked to choose the characteristics, which they agreed the most with and that describe their selected premium class car brand.

Results show that key personality dimensions of Mercedes-Benz were "competence" and "sophistication". The main characteristics, which Mercedes-Benz's owners chose to describe Mercedes-Benz with as a brand were: reliable, intelligent, successful, confident and glamorous, as can be seen in Figure 36.

Figure 36: The personality of the Mercedes-Benz brand

Source: Own work.

Key personality dimensions of BMW were "excitement" and "competence". The main characteristics, which BMW' owners choose to describe their selected premium class car brand were: daring, young, reliable, intelligent and successful as can be seen in Figure 37.

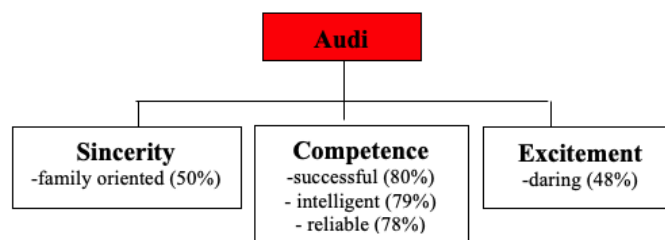*Figure 37: The personality of the BMW brand*
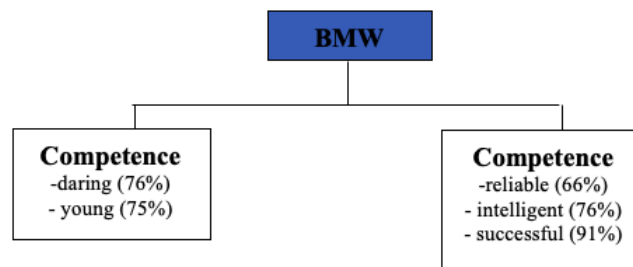
Source: Own work.

Key personality dimensions of Audi were "sincerity", "excitement" and "competence". The main characteristics, which Audi' owners chose to describe their selected premium class car brand were: family oriented, daring and successful (presented in Figure 38).

Figure 38: The personality of the Audi brand

Source: Own work.

As already explained, the 3 main characteristics that owners of BMW, Mercedes-Benz and Audi chose to describe the personality of their selected premium class car brand were successful, intelligent and reliable. Figure 39 shows chosen characteristics of human personality and, therefore, the evidence that consumer's personality could match with the brand personality. 83% of the respondents totally agreed or agreed that there are reliable. 82% of respondents totally agreed or agreed that they are intelligent. 74% totally agreed or agreed that they are successful and 76% totally agreed or agreed that they are confident. The results show that respondents would use the three main characteristics, such as reliable, intelligent and successful, for a description of their brand personality and the personality of themselves.

Figure 39: Personality of the owners of premium class car brands
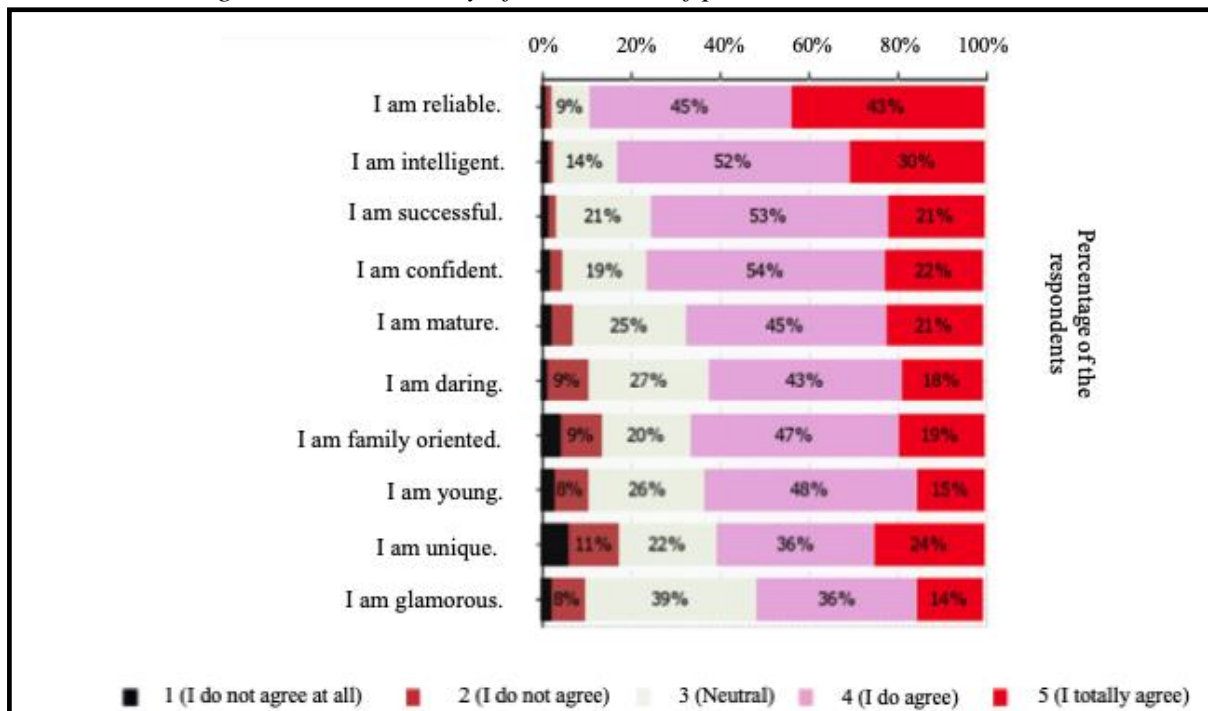
Source: Own work.

4.4.3 Hypotheses Testing

In this master thesis, six hypotheses were developed on a base of the existing research. Results of hypotheses testing are presented in the following chapter.

H1: *Community affiliation is the least important motive behind the purchase of a premium class car in Slovenia.*

To test the first hypothesis, I used the chi-square test for distribution. First part of the output of the SPSS program shows that 25 respondents reported community affiliation as a basic motivation for a purchase, 90.5 respondents were expected to be primarily motivated with

community affiliation if the proportions across the categories were equal, and the difference between the observed (25) and expected (90.5) is -65.5.

The value of the test statistic is 79.503. P-value in this example is 0.000, which is less than 0.05, meaning we can reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. We can confirm the first research hypothesis that community affiliation is the least important motive behind the purchase of a premium class car in Slovenia.

H2: Perceived social component influences consumers' behavioral intention to purchase.

To test the second hypothesis, I made a regression analysis in the SPSS program, which is widely used to check how one or more independent variables, in other words predictors (social and personal component) affect the dependent variable (behavioral intention to purchase) and determine what % of the variation of the dependent variable is explained by the predictors.

The P-value is below 0.05 (p=0.000), which means that we can confirm the statistically significant influence of the independent variable (social component) on the dependent (behavioral intention to purchase). The independent variable can be used to explain 4.5% of the dependent variable.

The influence of the independent variable on the dependent is positive and not so strong, as the value of the standardized beta is not high (Standardized beta: 0.218). I confirm the second research hypothesis.

H3: Perceived personal component influences consumers' behavioral intention to purchase.

The P-value is below 0.05 (p=0.000), which means that we can confirm the statistically significant influence of the independent variable (personal value perception) on the dependent (behavioral intention to purchase). The independent variable can be used to explain 11.1% of the dependent variable.

The influence of the independent variable on the dependent is positive and not so strong, as the value of the standardized beta is not high (Standardized beta: 0.337). I confirm the third research hypothesis.

H4: To more than 50% of respondents, a brand image is important in the purchase decision process of a new premium class car.

In the previous chapter, Figure 30 has shown that to 49% of the respondents the image of the selected brand is very important or important. 31% feel neutral about it, and to 21% the brand image is irrelevant or completely irrelevant as seen in Figure 30. Based on this result, I reject the fourth research hypothesis.

H5: *There is a strong correlation between human personality characteristic "Intelligence" and brand personality characteristic "Intelligence".*

I used the Spearman correlation, a non-parametric test, which is a bivariate analysis that measures the strength of association between two variables for testing both, the fifth and sixth hypothesis. The Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient is used to discover the strength of a link between two sets of data, in my example between human personality measurement item "intelligence" and brand personality measurement item "Intelligence." In other words, I wanted to determine, whether there is a statistically significant correlation between respondents, who choose the same measurement item for describing their own human personality characteristics, and at the same time, their brand personality characteristics.

The P-value is below 0.05 (p=0.000), which means that the correlation between the assessment of customer's own intelligence and the car brand is statistically significantly related. The correlation is positive and weak (r=0.353). Based on the results, I confirm the fifth research hypothesis.

H6: *There is a strong correlation between human personality characteristic "Family oriented" and brand personality characteristics " Family oriented".*

To test the sixth hypothesis, the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient is used to discover the strength of a link between human personality measurement item "Family oriented" and brand personality measurement item "Family oriented". In other words, I would like to determine, whether there is a statistically significant correlation between respondents, who choose the same measurement item for describing their own human personality characteristics, and at the same time, their brand personality characteristics.

The P-value is below 0.05, which means that the correlation between the assessment of customer's own intelligence and the car brand is statistically significantly related. The correlation is positive and moderate (r=0.508). Based on the results, I confirm the sixth research hypothesis.

Table 4: Summary of hypothesis's results

Nr.	Hypothesis	Result
H1	Community affiliation is the least important motive behind the purchase of a premium class car in Slovenia.	confirmed
H2	Perceived social component influences consumers' behavioral intention to purchase.	confirmed
H3	Perceived personal component influences consumers' behavioral intention to purchase.	confirmed

H4	To more than 50% of respondents, a brand image is important in the purchase decision process of a new premium class car.	rejected
H5	There is a strong correlation between human personality characteristic "Intelligence" and brand personality characteristic "Intelligence".	confirmed
H6	There is a strong correlation between human personality characteristic "Family oriented" and brand personality characteristics " Family oriented".	confirmed

Source: Own work.

4.4.4 Segmentation of the Buyers of Premium Class Car Brands in Slovenia

To form clusters and perform the buyers' segmentation, I have used the data collected from the survey. The segmentation was done mainly on attitudinal variables, variables describing importance of some factors influencing the buying decision. I decided to choose such variables because I wanted to see the psychographic profile of consumers.

Clustering was made by using hierarchical clustering with the Ward method based on the Euclidian Squared distance. After the procedure, five clusters were extracted, defined and described. The statistics and details about the cluster formation can be seen in Appendix 5.

Variables chosen for cluster formation:

- Main motivation behind the purchase
- Importance of Technical/Functional attributes
- Importance of Symbol attributes
- Importance of Brand image

SEGMENT 1: YOUNG PROFFESSIONALS (24% of all respondents)

The first cluster consists of young consumers aged between 25-35 years. In general, they finished secondary technical or vocational high school and have already a regular job with a salary between €1,000 and €1,999 per month. Their main motivation behind the purchase was basic transport needs. Because of their educational background, technical attributes of their premium class car are the most important factors, influencing their purchase decision. The decisions that they make are logical rather than emotional, therefore, symbolic attributes do not play the main role, neither does the brand image. This cluster consists mainly of BMW's owners.

SEGMENT 2: HARD WORKING INDIVIDUALS (41% of all respondents)

The consumers in this segment are the largest of the five groups and they are older, up to 45 years old and wealthier. They have a higher education, meaning they acquire knowledge from

the university and have bachelor's degrees. They earn between €1,000 and €3,000 per person per month. They bought a premium class car to make their dreams come true, meaning their basic motivation behind the purchase was to fulfill their life goals. For this segment of consumers, symbolic attributes and brand image are important factors while making the purchase decision, but technical attributes are important to them as well. The majority of this cluster, 85%, consists of Mercedes-Benz's owners and 15% of BMW's owners.

SEGMENT 3: WEALTHY POSERS (5% of all respondents)

In this segment are consumers from 25 to 55 years old. They have different educational backgrounds, from secondary education to master' degrees. They also have different monthly incomes, from €1,000 up to €3,000. They all purchased a premium class car brand to belong to society and they all place a high importance on symbolic attributes, especially to recognition of the selected premium class car brand. The brand image is important to them, as well as technical attributes. They buy premium for the way it makes them seem in front of others, so rationality in the decision-making is not present so much. In this segment are Mercedes-Benz's and BMW's owners.

SEGMENT 4: ELDERLY GENTLEMEN (8% of all respondents)

These consumers are older than the rest of the segments. They represent the age group between 45 years old and up to 60 years old and more. They are more traditional consumers with secondary education and represent the wealthiest segment as well, with income more than €3,000 per month in some cases. The main motivation behind the purchase are the basic transport needs. Technical attributes are very important for these consumers, but also symbolic ones play an important role, especially when it comes to status symbols. The purchase decision is more of emotional rather than logical for them. The majority of these consumers drive a Mercedes-Benz.

SEGMENT 5: PREMIUM CUSTOMERS (27% of all respondents)

This segment also consists of younger consumers up to 35 years old. They have different types of education, secondary, higher education or bachelor's degrees, some of them also master's degree. They are consumers with a monthly income up to €2,000. After fulfilling their basic transport needs, their main motivation behind the purchase of a premium class car is freedom and independence. They place a high level of importance on technical attributes. On the other hand, they feel neutral about symbolic attributes and the brand image is totally unimportant for them. They are ready to pay premium for the fact that the luxury item will give them a sense of individuality and are not concerned with the problem of quality or enduring value. This segment consists equally of Mercedes-Benz's, BMW's and Audi's owners.

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Summary of Main Findings and Suggestions to the Companies

The following chapter summarizes research results that have been made and introduces practical suggestions to the automotive companies in Slovenia.

Utilitarian needs, which are about the objective and functional aspect of life, seem to be the most important reason for buying a premium class car in Slovenia. For the majority of respondents, technical efficiency and engine power were the most important factors, when deciding to purchase a premium class car. On the other hand, 30% of total respondents bought a premium class car to fulfill their life goal. This result shows an important connection to the Wernerfelt (1990), who argued that a premium class car as a luxury product has a symbolic meaning to their owners and Fournier (1998), who argues that brands and consumers can have strong emotional relationships. Based on the Hirschman and Holbrook theory (1982), which claims that those who buy premium class cars are more likely to crave social status and material wealth, the first hypothesis was developed. With the first hypothesis, the goal was to determine the proportion of respondents, whose basic motivation for the purchase of a new premium class car is community affiliation and if, therefore, it differs and is less than the number of respondents with other basic motives. In other words, social motivation is not an important factor when purchasing a new premium class car in Slovenia. I confirmed the first research hypothesis.

Fishbein (1967) explains whether consumers are going to engage in the purchase decision is dependent on both, social and personal component of their attitude. Slovenian culture is considered as a collectivistic society, which manifests in a close long-term commitment to the member 'group'. As a consequence, Slovenian consumers tend to use a brand and its personality to express the similarity to their preferred social group, rather than expressing the actual self. Results show that social value perception does not affect much the purchase of the Slovenian buyers of premium class cars. Also, from a statistical point of view, social component can be used to explain only 4.5% of behavioral intention to purchase, therefore, the influence of the independent variable on the dependent is positive, but not so strong. The second hypothesis that perceived the social component influences consumers' behavioral intention to purchase was supported.

Hence, consumers influenced by the personal component of their attitude, focused more on perceived consequences associated with the purchase and evaluation of those consequences. It is more likely that they will use the brand personality to express their personal attributes. In the case of a strong brand personality, it can play an important role in the self-expression process of the consumer. Results show that personal value perception results in greater effect in the process of the purchase than the social component. Also, from a statistical point of view, the personal value perception can be used to explain 11.1% of behavioral intention to purchase, therefore, the influence of the independent variable on the dependent is positive and not so

strong. I can therefore confirm the third research hypothesis that the personal component influences consumers' behavioral intention to purchase.

Based on the theory of consistency from Antonides & Fred van Raaij (1998), we can predict attitudes toward a product to be strongly related to behaviors towards the brand. In other words, if consumers develop a positive attitude towards a specific product or brand, it is more likely that they will engage in the purchase decision process. Therefore, based on these results, I can conclude Slovenian buyers have a positive attitude towards their selected premium class car brands and because of the positive attitude they will engage in the purchase of the premium class car repeatedly.

Traditional brand strategies have attention on the functional benefits of the products. Recently, the increasing competition has led to the product's attributes, which have become functionally more similar to each other, and the differentiation of brands has become even harder (Lau, 2000). For these reasons, the symbolic aspect of brands (brand image and brand personality) is becoming crucial in nowadays marketing strategies. The results show, to almost half of the respondents the image of the selected brand is very important or important in the process of purchase of a premium class car. In addition, the importance of the brand image of the selected premium class car brand in Slovenia was also supported with another question, where respondents were asked if they would buy a premium class car brand with a negative image, although the selected car would fulfil all their requests and needs. 13% of the respondents reacted confidently that they would engage in the purchase, although the selected premium class car brand would have a negative brand image. Together 44% of the respondents were considering the choice of the purchase and felt neutral about it. In connection to the social component, which did not show quite an important effect on the purchase decision, also the brand image was not very important.

An image of the brand is separated into two parts, which aim to fulfill consumer's rational and emotional needs. Functional attributes are related to product's functions in which the product attempts to meet consumer's functional needs, such as product's primary characteristics, reliability, design, and price (Keller, 2001). In my questionnaire, the respondents were asked to rate how important the following functional attributes were to them while purchasing a new premium class car. The two that were rated as very important to more than 50% of the respondents were driving dynamics and transmission. For almost half of the respondents, 46% of them, the drive was rated as a very important attribute as well. Also, the security system seems to be very important to 44% of the sample, or an important attribute to the 34% of total respondents. The second, symbolic attributes represent emotional benefits such as exclusivity and self-expression and are likely to be non-product related images (Dawson, Heylen & Sampson, 1995). In connection to the functional attributes, symbolic attributes were rated as less important attributes, while respondents were purchasing a new premium class car. Based on the results, I can conclude that functional attributes are much more important to Slovenian consumers than symbolic ones.

One of my main research questions was also to examine the general perception about three premium class car brands that this thesis is focused on. Respondents were asked to indicate which premium class car brand (Mercedes-Benz, BMW or Audi) they associate with the following features the most. They were asked to choose only one premium brand for each feature. Although half of the respondents of the questionnaire consists of BMW consumers, Mercedes-Benz received the highest ratings among the premium class car brands on the Slovenian market in almost all features. 75% of the respondents perceived Mercedes-Benz brand as a symbol of prestige and elegance. 52% of all the respondents rated Mercedes-Benz the highest in the perceived brand quality and reliability. Mercedes-Benz also won the first place as the perceived brand with the most advanced technology and design. These results support Daimler's strategy of perfection and combination of technical and symbolic attributes for over 120 years. On the other hand, 67% of the respondents associate the driving performance feature with the BMW brand. This could be clearly seen in BMW's consumers with strong attitude towards BMW's technical attributes. This results also support their slogan "The ultimate driving experience" and implicate that BMW has a strong brand image on the Slovenian market. Audi was not rated particularly high on any of the features and respondents do not associate Audi with anything in particular. This means that Audi does not really have any unique and strong associations that are important to Slovenian consumers.

Fournier (1998) argues that brands and consumers can have strong emotional relationships, which develop primary points of differentiation between competitive products and, therefore, contribute an important part to the success of sales (Keller, 2001). Based on Fournier's theory, my goal was to find out whether emotions influence the purchase of a premium class car in Slovenia. Respondents were asked about an emotional relationship that they have with the selected premium class car brand, in order to find out the brand relationship quality. 80% of all the respondents totally agreed or agreed that they know a lot about their selected premium class car, which implies that majority of Slovenian consumers have a deep understanding about their selected premium class car brand. More than a half, 53%, feel loyal to the selected premium class car brand, which implies high level of commitment to the selected premium class car brand. When respondents were asked to evaluate the brand's attitude towards them as a consumer, 42% of them felt as valued consumers, while 36% felt neutral about it. This is important information for the retailers to consider about the treatment of their loyal consumers. Regarding interdependence, 38% of respondents totally agreed or agreed that their selected premium class car plays an important role in their life. On the other hand, 22% of the respondents did not agree, or felt neutral about this, which implies that Slovenian consumers have a weak emotional relationship with the selected premium class, regarding interdependence between a brand and consumer. The results also show a quite low percent of the core values of the emotional relationship between the premium class car brands and Slovenian consumers. More than 54% of the respondents think that other premium class car brand can take the place of their current selected premium class car brand.

Consumers will choose a brand that has a personality, which is consistent with their underlying needs, values, and desires (Askegaard, Bamossy, Hogg & Solomon, 2013). The self-image congruence model explains that the purchasing behavior may be significantly influenced by the match relationship between products and personality of the potential consumers (Antonides & Fred van Raaij, 1998). In order to test the self-image congruence model, respondents were asked whether they consider that the image of the selected premium class car can be an adequate representation of themselves and their character. Only 9% of the respondents agreed for sure that their selected premium class car brand represents them and 30% of respondents agreed with that statement. The majority of the respondents, 34%, felt neutral about it, which was surprising and together 27% did not agree with the statement, which implies again that respondents do not feel the relationship between them as the owners and the image of the selected premium class car brand.

In addition, respondents were asked in more details, what they think that the selected premium class car brand says about them as the owners. 42% of all the respondents said that the selected premium class car brand does not say anything about their personality. 33% of the respondents said that the selected premium class car brand says that he or she as the owner valued German quality and the values of the selected German premium class car brand, which shows an important connection to utilitarian needs as basic motivation for the purchase. Only 3% of the sample agrees that the selected premium class car brand gives an image of their personal wealth, which implies again a weak social component in the consumer behavior of premium class cars on the Slovenian market.

The Big Five model suggests that dimensions of brands personality can be defined by extending those of human personality to that of brands (Aaker,1997). As a result, five underlying dimensions of brand personality can be identified: Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication and Ruggedness. Results show, that key personality dimensions of Mercedes-Benz were ''competence" and "sophistication". Personality dimensions of BMW were ''excitement'' and ''competence'' and Audi's ''sincerity'', "excitement'' and ''competence''.

As already explained, the 3 main characteristics that owners of Mercedes-Benz, BMW and Audi chose to describe the personality of their selected premium class car brand were successful, intelligent and reliable. The results show that respondents would also use three main characteristic such as reliable, intelligent and successful for a description of their brand personality and the personality of themselves. Based on these results, I can conclude that consumer's personality could match with the brand personality. While a majority of the respondents did not agree with this matching in the previous questions, I can assume that the matching process with the consumer personality and the personality of the brand, works on an unconscious level of thinking in the process of the purchase. 83% of the respondents totally agreed or agreed that there are reliable. 82% of respondents totally agreed or agreed that they are intelligent. 74% totally agreed or agreed that they are successful and 76% totally agreed or agreed that they are confident. The fifth hypothesis was testing if there is a strong correlation

between selected human personality characteristic "Intelligence" and Brand Personality characteristic "Intelligence". The sixth hypothesis was testing if there is a strong correlation between human personality characteristic "Family oriented" and Brand Personality characteristics "Family oriented". I confirmed both hypotheses.

This research makes a significant contribution to understanding Slovenian consumers in the decision-making process of premium class car brands. Marketers of premium class car brands in Slovenia can use these insights to understand why consumers purchase their vehicles. This is a very important aspect because as results have shown, motivation for buying a premium class car in Slovenia is based on consumer's technical values. Marketing strategies should depend on analyzing the consumer – product relationships because product characteristics lead to the consequences and these lead to the realization of consumer's values. Values and desires of individuals lead to values of the society, and, therefore, represent the core values behind the basic motivation for each purchase. In this sense, marketers must understand that the entire sales of premium class car brands in Slovenia may be driven not only by the customer's needs for symbolic attributes, but also the desire of technical attributes, based on values of quality and technical performance.

5.2 Limitations and Further Research

The research has some limitations that could help other researchers with the structure of further research and better performance of results. The analysis has shown that the majority of the respondents are between 25 and 45 years old, which represents 74% of the sample. This is the consequence of posting a link of my online questionnaire in social groups of premium class car brands, created on Facebook. It is true that I have reached a bigger sample for analyzing the results but, on the other hand, I did not cover all age groups of consumers of premium class car brands. Traditional consumers of premium class car brands are successful and older individuals, which are not present on social media and, therefore, not even familiar with online surveys. This result could benefit for the interpretation of how different age groups have different motives for a purchase of a new premium class car. Even though I tried to reach this type of consumers via their salesperson, I have not collected enough data to make a representative sample.

It has to be taken into consideration, that at the beginning of the survey, it was not clearly stated that it is only for consumers who bought a very new premium class car. As a consequence, my data sample consists of consumers, who bought new and used premium class cars, therefore, my analysis covers consumer behavior of a premium class car brand in general. In addition, my sample consists of male respondents, in total 91%, which is not surprising. It is true that in majority of cases men are the ones who purchase cars, but on the other hand, men are more technical in general. This could lead my results in the direction that technical efficiency and engine power were the most important factors, while emotions and symbolic attributes were considered as less important factors during the purchase decision, although there are many

theories how emotions influence purchase decisions. For further research, I would definitely put more focus to have a balanced sample in terms of gender, in order to discover also the emotional side of a purchase of a new premium class car.

Another limitation that may lead to some biased answers is that people usually read very fast through the online questionnaire, which could lead to some misunderstandings. Also, respondents may just decide for a selected answer, even though that is not exactly their opinion, but there is no provided answer that could perfectly fit their thinking. For further research, it would be better to include focus groups and in-depth interviews. These would allow respondents to use more words to describe their motivation and importance of factors affecting their purchase decision of a new premium class car and also bring multiple perspectives of respondents. In-depth interviews would enable detailed explanation of questions in the questionnaire. Both techniques could lead to more detailed conclusions and suggestions.

The survey and the questionnaire definitively offered many useful information and answers that allowed to confirm many important findings. All the downsides and obstacles that were discovered during the analysis could be resolved or reduced with further research.

CONCLUSION

This master thesis has examined the factors in the consumer behavior of premium class vehicles such as BMW, Mercedes-Benz and Audi on the Slovenian market. The data was collected through an online survey, which was completed by 364 Slovenian owners of premium class cars.

The analysis has shown that the majority of the respondents are between 25 and 45 years old, which represents 74% of the sample. This indicates an emerging new trend, the so-called ''new luxury'' trend, which is different from the traditional one. A ''new luxury'' trend by targeting new younger generations of consumers is being more affordable and more accessible, which could be also seen in the wide range of vehicles offered to the customers. This has also an effect on the Slovenian market, which is becoming more dynamic and profitable.

The analysis identified three factors that influenced the purchase decision, including the personal factor (fulfillment of the life goals) and technical efficiency of the German premium class car brands, although maintenance costs (fuel consumption) and symbolic attributes were not significant factors. These findings show that the purchase of a premium class car in Slovenia does not have implications for the perceived social status of the purchaser, and that the main reason behind the purchase is in the product quality and personal component. More than a half of the respondents feel loyal to the selected premium class car brand, which implies high level of commitment to the brand and is, therefore, identifying the importance of consumer's internal psychological perceptions about the premium brand. Image of the selected premium class car brand is important, but only 43% of the sample, would not engage in the

purchase if the image of the premium class car brand would be negative. 75% of respondents, perceived Mercedes-Benz as a symbol of prestige and elegance and the brand with the most advanced technology and design. On the other hand, 67% of the respondents associate the driving performance feature with the BMW brand, while Audi does not really have any unique and strong associations that are important to Slovenian consumers. Results also show that respondents do not have any match relationship with the selected premium class car brand. 42% of all the respondents said that the selected premium class car brand does not say anything about their personality. While respondents did not agree with this matching but chose the same characteristic to describe the personality of their selected premium class car and their own, I can conclude that the matching process between consumer's personality and the personality of the brand works on an unconscious level in the process of the purchase.

To conclude, consumers have values, based on which the basic motivation for a purchase is developed. In order to reach and satisfy more consumers, leading premium class car brands, such as BMW, Mercedes-Benz and Audi, provide a wide range of vehicles, from limousines, SUVs to caravans. The strategy behind this approach is to build a success of premium class car brands while supporting different personalities of their consumers and helping them achieve their goals and vision in their personal lives.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Povzetek

Platon (428-348 pr. n. št) je nekoč dejal: »Človeško vedenje izvira iz treh glavnih virov: želj, čustev in znanja«. Vse od takrat naprej, je to osnova vseh teorij o preučevanju vedenja porabnikov, pri katerih pa vedenje porabnikov premijskega razreda vozil ni nikakršna izjema. Posebej pri teh specifičnih porabnikih, finančna sposobnost ravno vzpodbuja ta model nakupnega vedenje na podlagi želj in čustev do premijskih znamk vozil kot so BMW, Mercedes-Benz in Audi na slovenskem trgu. S pojavom modernega življenjskega sloga so tradicionalne strategije prodaje, ki so se fokusirale le na izdelek izgubile svoj pravi pomen. Danes je pomembna porabnikova celostna izkušnja z določeno premijsko znamko, katere uspešnost pa temelji na odnosu in procesu prepoznave potreb in želj potencialne stranke.

Namen magistrske naloge je raziskati glavne motive za nakup premijskega razreda vozil in na podlagi tega opredeliti pomembnost dejavnikov pri procesu odločanja za nakup vozil premijskega razreda v Sloveniji. Naloga podrobneje raziskuje vpliv simboličnih in tehničnih dejavnikov pri procesu odločanja, posledično pa vključuje v analizo tudi pomen čustev pri samem procesu odločanja. Končni cilj magistrskega dela je analiza procesa nakupnega vedenja, od porabnikove ideje do zadnjega koraka - nakupa vozila premijskega razreda znamk, Mercedes -Benz, BMW in Audi na slovenskem trgu.

Prvi del naloge temelji na pregledu teoretičnih izhodišč. Ta del opisuje proces vedenja pri nakupu premijskega vozila z vidika porabnika. V njem so opisani porabnikovi motivi za nakup, kateri so osnova za raziskovalni del naloge ter posledično za razumevanje celostnega procesa odločanja porabnikov pri nakupu vozila premijskega razreda. Teoretičen del se zaključi z analizo nakupovalnega procesa z vidika podjetja. Ta del opisuje, kako trgovci vozil premijskega razreda vplivajo na proces odločanja porabnikov in kako na višji ravni ustvarjajo doživetja porabnikov, z namenom uspešne prodaje na slovenskem trgu.

V drugem delu magistrske naloge je predstavljena empirična raziskava, ki je bila izdelana na podlagi spletne ankete ter analize rezultatov s statističnim program SPSS. Rezultati ankete so opredelili dva osnovna motiva za nakup premijskega vozila, izpolnitev porabnikovih življenjskih ciljev in tehnična dovršenost nemških znamk vozil premijskega razreda. Presenetljivo, stroški vzdrževanja in simbolični atributi niso bili pomemben dejavnik pri procesu odločanja za nakup. Te ugotovitve kažejo, da nakup vozila premijskega razreda v Sloveniji ni posledica družbenega statusa kupca in da je glavni razlog za nakup kakovost izdelka in zadovoljitev osebnih vrednot. Več kot polovica anketirancev se počuti zveste izbrani premijski znamki vozila, kar pomeni visoko stopnjo zvestobe slovenskih kupcev. Rezultati so tudi pokazali, da anketiranci nimajo nobenega ujemajočega se odnosa z izbrano znamko vozila premijskega razreda. Skoraj polovica anketirancev je dejala, da izbrana znamka vozila premijskega razreda ne pove nič o njihovi osebnosti. Čeprav se anketiranci s tem ujemanjem niso strinjali, so pri naslednjem vprašanju izbrali isto lastnost za opis svoje osebnosti, na

podlagi česa bi lahko zaključila, da postopek ujemanja med osebnostjo porabnika in osebnostjo znamke deluje na nezavedni ravni razmišljanja v procesu nakupa.

Ta naloga prikazuje tako teoretične kot praktične projekcije, primerne za nadaljnje raziskave. Poleg tega prikazuje podrobnosti vedenja kupcev in njihovih stališč, ki so lahko zelo koristne pri uspešnih in učinkovitih trženjskih strategijah. Uspešne trženjsko prodajne strategije so zato odvisne od analiziranja odnosov med porabniki in izdelki, kajti karakteristike izdelka vodijo do uresničevanja porabnikovih vrednot. Zato ne smemo zanemarjati različnega dojemanja in osebnosti kupcev, ki ustvarjajo različne odnose do modelov in znamk vozil premijskega razreda, in so vendar na podlagi teorije znane tudi kot najboljši napovedovalci dejanskega vedenja porabnikov. Premijske znamke kot so BMW, Mercedes-Benz in Audi so zato razvile širok spekter linije vozil, od limuzin, športnih terencev do karavanov in manjših vozil, s katerimi želijo doseči in zadovoljiti več kupcev. Bistvo tega pristopa pa je, da gradijo uspeh premijske znamke, medtem ko podpirajo različne osebnosti svojih strank in jim pomagajo doseči cilje in vizijo v osebnem življenju.

APPENDIX 2: Descriptive Statistics of the Survey

Table 1: Frequency table for gender

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	331	90.9	90.9
Female	33	9.1	100.0
Total	364	100.0	

Source: Own work.

Table 2: Frequency table for age groups

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
25-35 years	267	73.4	73.4
36-45 years	60	16.5	89.8
46-55 years	32	8.8	98.6
56 years and above	5	1.4	100.0
Total	364	100.0	

Source: Own work.

Table 3: Frequency table for a monthly income per person

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1.000 € - 1.999 €	213	58.5	58.7
2.000 € - 2.999€	89	24.5	83.2
3.000€ or above	61	16.8	100.0
Total	364	100.0	

Source: Own work.

Table 4: Frequency table for education

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Primary school	15	4.1	4.1
Vocational school or Gymnasium	165	45.3	49.5
Bachelor's degree	142	39.0	88.5
Master's degree or PhD	42	11.5	100.0
Total	364	100.0	

Source: Own work.

Table 5: Frequency table for sectors of employment of respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Public sector	42	11.5	11.6
Private sector	236	64.8	76.8
Entrepreneur	84	23.1	100.0
Total	364	100.0	

Source: Own work.

Table 6: Frequency table for job description

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Owner	63	17.3	17.4
Director	19	5.2	22.6
Head of Department	80	22.0	44.6
Independant worker	77	21.2	65.8
Employee	124	34.1	100.0
Total	364	100.0	

Source: Own work.

Table 7: Descriptive statistics for premium class car brand ownership

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent	
Mercedes-Benz	127	34.9	34.9	
BMW	185	50.8	85.7	
Audi	52	14.3	100.0	
Total	364	100.0		

Source: Own work.

Table 8: Descriptive statistics for number of premium class cars respondent own

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent	
1	141	38	38	
2	101	27	65	
3	132	35	100	
Total	364	100		

Source: Own work.

Table 9: Descriptive statistics for ownership of premium class car brands

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
How many vehicles of this premium brand have you already owned ?	364	1	3	1.97	.854
Valid N (listwise)	364				

Source: Own work.

APPENDIX 3: Reliability Statistics

Table 10: Cronbach's Alfa for Brand Attitude components

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.772	6

Source: Own work.

	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
6a. Luxury brand gives me pleasure.	.753
6b. Luxury brand makes me feel good.	.705
6c. Luxury products I buy reveal a little bit of I am.	.785
6d. I would decide to buy this premium class car brand once again.	.748
6e. There is a very high probability that I will return to the premium class car brand to buy a new car.	.725
6f. I would recommend this premium class car brand to others.	.709

Source: Own work.

APPENDIX 4: Hypotheses Testing

H1: *Community affiliation is the least important motive behind the purchase of a premium class car in Slovenia.*

Table 11: *Main motivation behind the purchase of the premium class car in Slovenia*

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Basic transport need	141	90.5	50.5
Freedom and Independance	87	90.5	-3.5
Community Affiliation	25	90.5	-65.5
Life goals	109	90.5	18.5
Total	362		

Source: Own work.

Table 12: Chi-square test of distribution

Test Statistics

	3. What is your main motivation for a puchase of a new premium class car ?
Chi-Square	79.503[a]
df	3
Asymp.Sig.	.000

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 90.5

Source: Own work.

H2: *Perceived social component influences consumers' behavioral intention to purchase.*

Table 13: Multiple correlation between independent and dependent variable

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
1	.218[a]	.048	.045	.74960	.048	18,036	1	360	.000	2,095

a. Predictors: (Constant), Social value perception
b. Dependent Variable: Behaviour intention

Source: Own work.

Table 14: ANOVA test

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	10,135	1	10,135	18,036	,000[b]
	Residual	202,285	360	,562		
	Total	212,420	361			

a. Dependent Variable: Behaviour intention
b. Predictors: (Constant), Social value perception

Source: Own work.

5

Table 15: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3,570	,131		27,328	,000
	Social value perception	,207	,049	,218	4,247	,000
a. Dependent Variable: Behaviour intention						

Source: Own work.

H3: *Perceived personal component influences consumers' behavioral intention to purchase.*

Table 16: Multiple correlation between an independent and dependent variable

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
1	,337ᵃ	,114	,111	,72452	,114	46,101	1	360	,000	2,089
a. Predictors: (Constant), Personal value perception										
b. Dependent Variable: Behaviour intention										

Source: Own work.

Table 17: ANOVA test

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	24,200	1	24,200	46,101	,000ᵇ
	Residual	188,975	360	,525		
	Total	213,175	361			
a. Dependent Variable: Behaviour intention						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Personal value perception						

Source: Own work.

Table 18: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3,216	,136		23,687	,000
	Personal value perception	,309	,046	,337	6,790	,000
a. Dependent Variable: Behaviour intention						

Source: Own work.

6

H5: *There is a strong correlation between human personality characteristic" Intelligence" and brand personality characteristic "Intelligence".*

Table 19: Spearman correlation

			14. Označite, v kolikšni me: Premijska znamka mojega vozila je inteligentna (tehnično dovršena).	16. Označite, v kolikšni me: Sem inteligenten/na.
Correlations				
Spearman's rho	14. Označite, v kolikšni me: Premijska znamka mojega vozila je inteligentna (tehnično	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	,353**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		,000
		N	363	362
	16. Označite, v kolikšni me: Sem inteligenten/na.	Correlation Coefficient	,353**	1,000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	
		N	362	363

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Own work.

H6: *There is a strong correlation between human personality characteristic "Family oriented" and brand personality characteristics " Family oriented".*

Table 20: Spearman correlation

			Brand personality	Human personality
Correlations				
Spearman's rho	Brand personality	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	,508**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		,000
		N	359	356
	Human personality	Correlation Coefficient	,508**	1,000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	
		N	356	361

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Own work.

APPENDIX 5: Clustering Dendrogram

Graph 1: Dendrogram of the clustering procedure and the chosen cluster number (using the Ward Linkage).
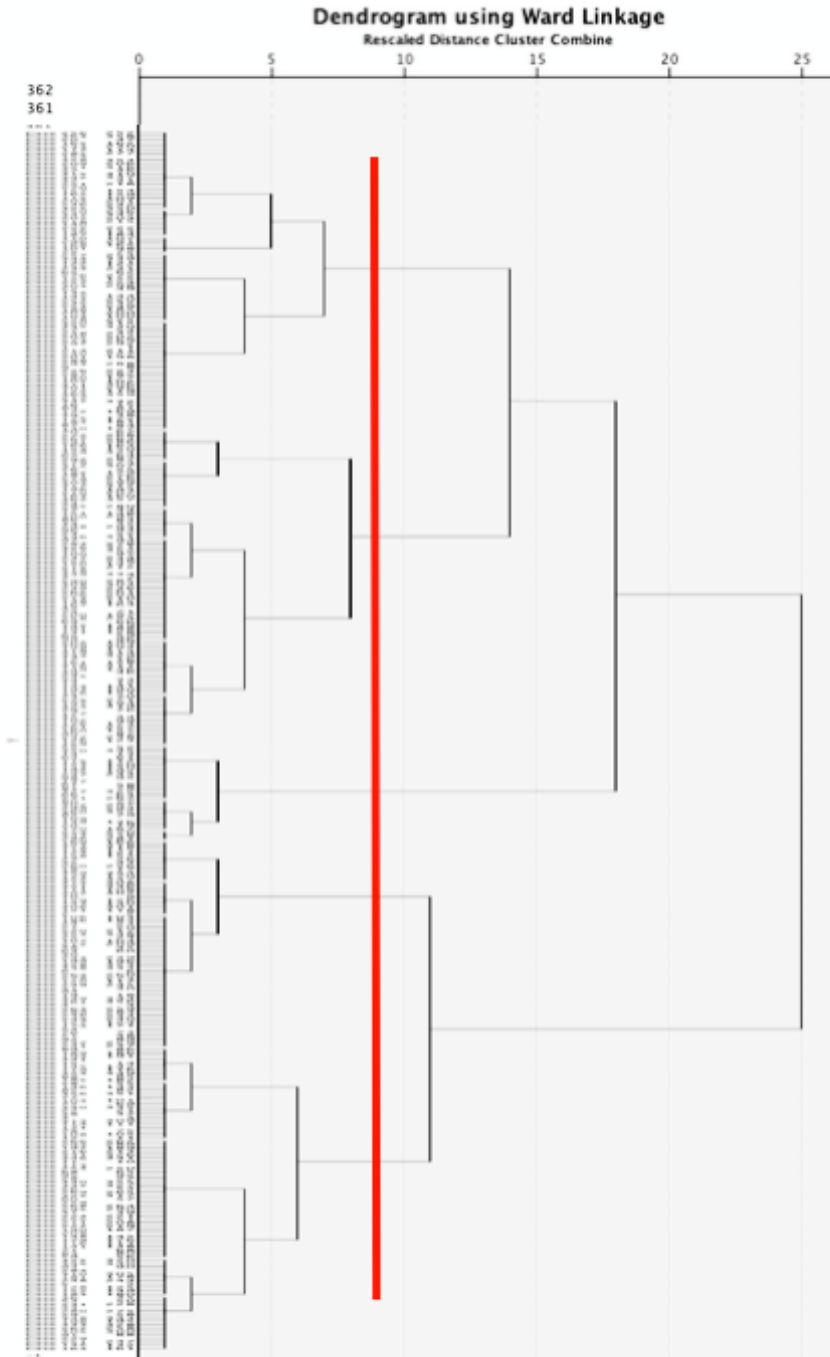
Source: Own work.

APPENDIX 6: Online Questionnaire

VEDENJE PORABNIKOV PRI NAKUPU VOZIL PREMIJSKEGA RAZREDA V SLOVENIJI

Kratko ime ankete: CONSUMER BEHAVIOR OF PREMIUM CARS IN SLO
Dolgo ime ankete: VEDENJE PORABNIKOV PRI NAKUPU VOZIL PREMIJSKEGA RAZREDA V SLOVENIJI
Število vprašanj: 22
Anketa je zaključena.
Aktivna od: 19.04.2020   Aktivna do: 19.07.2020
Avtor: Nuša   Spreminjal: Nuša
Dne: 16.04.2020   Dne: 02.05.2020

Pozdravljeni, sem študentka mednarodnega magistrskega programa IMB – poslovodenje in organizacija na Ekonomski fakulteti v Ljubljani. Vprašalnik je del mojega zaključnega magistrskega dela, v katerem raziskujem vedenje porabnikov pri nakupu premijskega razreda vozil v Sloveniji. Vprašalnik je namenjen lastnikom premijskih znamk Mercedes-Benz, BMW in Audi. Vprašalnik je anonimen, vzel pa vam bo le nekaj manj kot 5 minut. Podatki bodo uporabljeni zgolj v raziskovalne namene.

Q1 - 1. Katero znamko premijskega razreda vozila trenutno vozite?

◯ Mercedes-Benz
◯ BMW
◯ Audi

Q2 - 2. Koliko vozil te premijske znamke ste že imeli/imate v lasti?

◯ 1
◯ 2
◯ 3 ali več

Q3 - 3. Kateri je bil vaš glavni motiv za nakup vašega trenutnega premijskega vozila?

◯ Zadovoljitev osnovnih potreb prevoza
◯ Svoboda in neodvisnost
◯ Pripadnost skupnosti
◯ Izpolnitev življenjskih ciljev

Q4 - 4. Opredelite naslednje dejavnike glede na pomembnost, ko se odločate za nakup novega vozila premijskega razreda.

	1 (Povsem nepomembno)	2 (nepomembno)	3 (nevtralno)	4 (pomembno)	5 (zelo pomembno)
Prepoznavnost premijske znamke vozila	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Zvestoba premijski znamki vozila	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Tehnološka dovršenost	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Moč motorja	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Povprečna poraba goriva	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Cena vozila	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Stroški vzdrževanja	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Q5 - 5. Ocenite, v kolikšni meri se strinjate z naslednjimi trditvami.

	1 (Sploh se ne strinjam)	2 (Ne strinjam se)	3 (Niti se ne strinjam, niti se strinjam)	4 (Se strinjam)	5 (Popolnoma se strinjam
Lastništvo vozila premijskega razreda označuje simbol osebnega dosežka.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Lastništvo vozila premijskega razreda označuje simbol bogastva.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Lastništvo vozila premijskega razreda označuje simbol prestiža.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Lastništvo vozila premijskega razreda pritegne pozornost v družbi.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Kupil/a sem vozilo premijskega razreda ker ima status v družbi.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Vozilo premijskega razreda je zame pomembno, ker se zato v svojem krogu ljudi počutim sprejemljivega.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Nakup vozila premijskega razreda je prispeval k povečanju moje sreče.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Veliko mi pomeni, da sem lastnik/ca vozila premijskega razreda.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Včasih sem v skrbeh, da si nebi mogel/la privoščiti vozila premijskega razreda, ki bi ga želel/a.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Med procesom nakupa vozila premijskega razreda, čutim pozitivno vznemirjenje.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Med procesom nakupa vozila premijskega razreda, pozabim na vse moje probleme.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Q6 - 6. Ocenite, v kolikšni meri se strinjate z naslednjimi trditvami.

	1 (Sploh se ne strinjam	2 (Ne strinjam se)	3 (Niti se ne strinjam, niti se strinjam)	4 (Se strinjam)	5 (Popolnoma se strinjam)
Uživam v vožnji vozila te premijske znamke.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Počutim se dobro, da vozim in predstavljam to premijsko znamko vozila.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Z nakupom vozila premijskega razreda sem razkril/a mojo osebnost.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Še enkrat bi se odločil/a za nakup te premijske znamke vozila.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Zelo velika verjetnost je, da se bom vrnil/a v prodajni salon te premijske znamke za nakup novega vozila.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
To premijsko znamko vozila bi predlagal/a tudi drugim.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

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Q7 - 7. Kako pomembna vam je pri nakupu podoba (imidž) premijske znamke?

○ Zelo pomembna
○ Pomembna
○ Niti pomembna, niti nepomembna
○ Ni pomembna
○ Sploh ni pomembna

Q8 - 8. Ali bi se odločili za nakup vozila premijskega razreda, ki ustreza vsem vašim zahtevam, vendar vam podoba (imidž) premijske znamke vozila ne bi bila všeč?

○ Ja, zagotovo.
○ Ja, verjetno.
○ Niti ja, niti ne.
○ Po vsej verjetno, ne.
○ Absolutno ne.

Q9 - 9. Označite, na katero premijsko znamko vas najbolj asociirajo spodaj navedene lastnosti. Pri vsaki lastnosti, prosim izberite le eno premijsko znamko.

	Mercedes-Benz	BMW	Audi
Oblikovna dovršenost vozila	○	○	○
Kvaliteta izdelave vozila	○	○	○
Varnostni sistemi	○	○	○
Napredna tehnologija	○	○	○
Zanesljivost vozila	○	○	○
Vozna dinamika	○	○	○
Udobnost vožnje	○	○	○
Simbol prestiža	○	○	○
Elegantnost	○	○	○

Q10 - 10. V kolikšni meri so za vas pomembni naslednji _funkcionalni atributi_ vašega premijskega vozila?

	1 (povsem nepomembno)	2 (Nepomembno)	3 (nevtralno)	4 (pomembno)	5 (zelo pomembno)
Pogon	○	○	○	○	○
Menjalnik	○	○	○	○	○
Vozna dinamika (trdota podvozja, lega vozila na cesti,…)	○	○	○	○	○
Varnostni sistemi (zaviranje v sili, sistemi proti kraji,..)	○	○	○	○	○
Vozne asistence vozila (tempomat, asistent pri parkiranju, 360o pregled s pomočjo kamer)	○	○	○	○	○
Napredna tehnologija (samoprilagodljivi žarometi, nočna kamera…)	○	○	○	○	○
Informacijsko-telekomunikacijski sistemi (prostoročno telefoniranje, navigacija, Head-up zaslon,…)	○	○	○	○	○

Q11 - 11. V kolikšni meri so za vas pomembni naslednji <u>simbolični atributi</u> vašega premijskega vozila?

	1 (povsem nepomembno)	2 (nepomembno)	3 (nevtralno)	4 (pomembno)	5 (zelo pomembno)
Statusni simbol	○	○	○	○	○
Eksluzivnost	○	○	○	○	○
Samoizražanje	○	○	○	○	○

Q12 - 12. Ali menite, da podoba (imidž) premijske znamke označuje in predstavlja lastnika vozila?

○ Ja, zagotovo.
○ Ja, verjetno.
○ Niti da, niti ne.
○ Po vsej verjetnosti, ne.
○ Absolutno ne.

Q13 - 13. Kaj mislite, da izbrano premijsko vozilo pove o vas, kot lastniku?

○ Pove, da imam okus.
○ Daje vtis, da imam denar in moč.
○ Pove, da imam visoke standarde v življenju.
○ Pove, da cenim nemško kvaliteto in vrednote premijske znamke.
○ Vozilo ne pove ničesar o meni kot osebnosti.

Q14 - 14. Označite, v kolikšni meri spodaj navedene lastnosti opisujejo <u>osebnost vašega premijskega vozila</u>.

	1 (sploh se ne strinjam)	2 (ne strinjam se)	3 (niti se ne strinjam, niti se strinjam)	4 (se strinjam)	5 (popolnoma se strinjam)
Premijska znamka mojega vozila je družinsko orientirana.	○	○	○	○	○
Premijska znamka mojega vozila je drzna.	○	○	○	○	○
Premijska znamka mojega vozila odraža mladostnost.	○	○	○	○	○
Premijska znamka mojega vozila je edinstvena.	○	○	○	○	○
Premijska znamka mojega vozila je zanesljiva.	○	○	○	○	○
Premijska znamka mojega vozila je inteligentna (tehnično dovršena).	○	○	○	○	○
Premijska znamka mojega vozila je uspešna.	○	○	○	○	○
Premijska znamka mojega vozila je samozavestna.	○	○	○	○	○
Premijska znamka mojega vozila je glamurozna.	○	○	○	○	○
Premijska znamka mojega vozila odraža zrelost.	○	○	○	○	○

Q15 - 15. Ocenite, v kolikšni meri se strinjate z naslednjimi trditvami.

	1 (sploh se ne strinjam)	2 (ne strinjam se)	3 (niti se ne strinjam, niti se strinjam)	4 (se strinjam)	5 (popolnoma se strinjam)
Nobena druga premijska znamka ne more nadomestiti znamke vozila, ki ga imam.	○	○	○	○	○
Podoba premijske znamke in moja samopodoba sta si podobni.	○	○	○	○	○
Ta premijska znamka vozila ima pomembno vlogo v mojem življenju.	○	○	○	○	○
Počutim se zelo zvestega tej premijski znamki.	○	○	○	○	○
Veliko vem o vozilih te premijske znamke.	○	○	○	○	○
Ta premijska znamka, me obravnava kot cenjeno stranko.	○	○	○	○	○

Q16 - 16. Označite, v kolikšni meri spodaj navedene lastnosti opisujejo <u>vašo osebnost.</u>

	1 (sploh se ne strinjam)	2 (ne strinjam se)	3 (niti se ne strinjam, niti se strinjam)	4 (se strinjam)	5 (popolnoma se strinjam)
Sem družinsko orientiran/a.	○	○	○	○	○
Sem drzen/na.	○	○	○	○	○
Odražam mladostnost.	○	○	○	○	○
Sem edinstven/a.	○	○	○	○	○
Sem zanesljiv/a.	○	○	○	○	○
Sem inteligenten/na.	○	○	○	○	○
Sem uspešen/na.	○	○	○	○	○
Sem samozavesten/na.	○	○	○	○	○
Sem očarljiv/a.	○	○	○	○	○
Odražam zrelost.	○	○	○	○	○

Q17 - Prosim, označite spol.

○ Moški
○ Ženski

Q18 - V katero starostno skupino spadate?

○ 25-35 let
○ 36-45 let
○ 46-55 let
○ 56 let ali več

14

Q19 - Vaš osebni mesečni neto dohodek je:

○ 1.000 € - 1.999 €
○ 2.000 € - 2.999€
○ 3.000€ ali več

Q20 - Kakšna je vaša najvišja dosežena izobrazba?

○ Osnovna šola
○ Poklicna srednja šola, gimnazija
○ Višješolska, visokošolska, univerzitetna
○ Magisterij, doktorat

Q21 - Kje ste zaposleni:

○ V javnem sektorju
○ V privatnem sektorju
○ Samozaposlen

Q22 - Kakšen je vaša vloga v podjetju:

○ Lastnik podjetja
○ Direktor podjetja
○ Vodja oddelka
○ Samostojni delavec
○ Zaposleni