

I. COMPRÉHENSION 10 points

Ce texte intitulé « Even when the recession ends, value- not brand - may rule sales » est un extrait du Week-end Argus, (Afrique du Sud) publié le 15 Août 2009.

Il expose les changements de comportements des consommateurs au niveau des achats. Les produits de luxe sont un signe de richesse, que beaucoup aimaient montrer. Exposer ses biens de marques étaient à la mode jusqu'à maintenant car ils donnaient confiance, et permettaient d'appartenir à une catégorie sociale supérieure.

Mais les tendances semblent changer petit à petit car les consommateurs sont revenus aux valeurs essentielles. A cause de la crise économique, ils préfèrent acheter des choses utiles, sans se priver mais sans dépenser futillement.

Rechercher les prix les plus bas n'est plus une priorité, d'autant que l'on prend un risque pour des achats qui ne sont pas forcément intéressants à long terme. On préfère acheter des biens pour lesquels on a confiance et donc avec des sociétés que l'on connaît.

Le marché doit s'adapter à cette nouvelle tendance en proposant des produits de qualité, à des prix abordables malgré tout afin que les consommateurs aient l'impression d'investir dans des produits qui valent le coup. (180 mots)

II. EXPRESSION 10 points

A. In your opinion, has the recent economic crisis changed shopping habits?

In my opinion, the economic crisis is actually doing to change shopping habits. Indeed, today, people are being careful about how much they spend. But this doesn't mean that consumers buy cheap products.

The new trend is to go back to basics, and to traditional values. They attach more importance to the value and they want buy something worthwhile. Consumers buy only to answer to their need, avoid unnecessary purchase.

The recent economic crisis doesn't changed shopping habits for everyone, some people are still buying luxury brand for fun.

B. A lot of people buy brands. Why? What about you?

When people have a choice between a luxury products and cheap products, most people prefer branded products.

Consumers buy brands for feeling important. They want to belong to a higher social class. Many people buy brands because they think that the quality is superior and that the products will be a good investment.

Most brand products are imitated (bags, shoes, t-shirts...) and we don't see often the difference between a branded product and a cheap product. That's why I prefer buy cheap products, that's allow to me to changed often clothes.

EVEN WHEN THE RECESSION ENDS, VALUE — NOT BRAND — MAY RULE SALES

I was chatting to a client at the beginning of the year, just as the recession was beginning to bite, and he mentioned that Gucci had sent non-branded carrier bags to all its stores in New York. I realised that most of us have a rather uni-faceted and short-term view of the economic crisis. What we focus on is that people are not able to afford things as they did during the boom times.

But there is another more long-term dimension, people may no longer want to buy certain things, even if they have the money to do so. Being rich and flaunting your wealth could just go out of fashion, in much the same way that fur coats became vulgar and attracted public outrage in the 1980s.

Is it going to become vulgar once more to talk about money and show your wealth? If so, the effect on luxury brands is going to be pretty significant. The nineties saw an unashamed global trend towards flash materialism. But recently there has been a shift. Women are stashing their

LV¹ handbags at the back of their cupboards, the diamond encrusted gent's Rolex is being put into the safe for another day.

As we wean ourselves off these luxury brands, our addiction to them is slowly ebbing away. I can't afford the BMW but no matter- I now have an emotional preference not to buy one. Of course, luxury goods will always have a market, but the global trend of bling is slowly dying. So what is the best way for a brand, luxury or not, to react?

A recent study by Euro RSCG² in New York uncovered the fact that consumers are afraid. This anxiety factor has caused people to go back to basics, to lean towards traditional values. The research also proved that the financial crisis has not generated a mass search for the cheapest item, there is an increasing conviction that low prices do not automatically equate good value.

In a market flooded with sales and specials, low prices can generate scepticism. a sense the unsellable rubbish is being fobbed off on bargain-hunting consumers. The study also found that nearly 60 percent of consumers will buy only from a company they trust.

So if consumers aren't looking for the cheapest item available, what are they looking for? The answer is value. People want to feel that their hard-earned money is buying something worthwhile. Increasingly, they recognize that buying cheap is taking a risk, and society is currently very risk-averse. Getting good value is therefore about making the sensible choice.

Adapted from Weekend Argus (South Africa).
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¹ LV: Louis Vuitton

² Euro RSCG : international agency in communications