

Brand fatigue in Japan spreads to luxury

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- 1 - Luxury markets in many Western countries tend to be driven mainly by older, wealthier consumers, but that of Japan depends more on younger working women. Because they are marrying later in life and continuing to live with their parents in the meantime, many young
5 - women here can afford to shop - carefully - for luxuries.

"It's much better to buy one good thing and use it carefully than spend money on many cheap things," said Sayaka Sasaki, a 31-year-old office worker. "As I've become busier, I don't have as much time to shop, so I only go to places where I can get good things."

- 10 - But a growing number of Japanese consumers, young and old, are suffering from brand fatigue. One can still find many people sporting Hermès scarves, Prada handbags and Rolex watches. But many others are starting to turn away from the excess that these and other luxury goods have come to represent.

- 15 - For some, the economic uncertainty and political inertia of the past decade have discredited their parents' lifestyles, turning a preference for mainstream brands like Gap and its Japanese equivalent, Uniqlo, into something of a rebellious gesture.

- 20 - "Brand goods are not for me," said Yoshiko Nihei, 36, as she waited for her daughter in the busy Ikebukuro district of Tokyo. "I can find good-quality things made in Japan at reasonable prices. Some of my friends have brand goods, but I want to know where they get the money."