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**Exploring The Motivations Of Consumers' Engagement With Luxury Brands In
Social Media Sites.**

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Exploring the motivations of consumers' engagement with luxury brands in social media site

Abstract

The emerging concept of eOnline consumer engagement with brands attracts increasing attention from both practitioners and academics. ~~Consumer brand engagement provides a theoretical foundation for understanding how luxury brands' consumers think, feel, and behave with brands they follow on social media sites.~~ However, ~~There~~ there is a lack of in-depth studies on the factors that affect consumers' engagement with luxury brands on social media sites. To fill this gap, 12 in-depth interviews, were conducted and a new theoretical framework was developed to understand the factors that influence luxury brand engagement on social media. The four emerging factors are: brand news acquisition, actual purchase behaviour, visual art aesthetic, and ideal social self-image. The study introduces a framework for explaining consumer engagement with luxury brands on social media.

Keywords: luxury brands engagement, luxury brands, luxury brands on social media.

Track of paper: Digital Marketing.

Commented [L1]: You have changed everything...how is it?

1. Introduction

Luxury brands managers and marketers have recently focused their attention to engaging with their consumers on social media sites dedicated to their brands. Social media sites are ubiquitous, according to We Are Social (2017) statistics, there are 2.789 billion active social media users in the world, of whom approximately 90% are active mobile social media users, Facebook is the largest social media platform in the world. Social media marketing spending is estimated to increase from 7.52 billion U.S dollars in 2014 to 17.43 billion U.S dollars in 2019 (Statista, 2016). The proliferation of social networking sites created a new era for organizations and brands, forcing them to establish new interactive venues for reaching their customers and engaging with them (Kozinets, De Valck, Wojnicki, & Wilner, 2010). Members of social networking sites are able now to connect and share their fervency about their favourite brands with their friends, peers, and other acquaintances. However, existing [studies](#) have not analysed in-depth the factors underpinning consumers' engagement with luxury brands on social media.

2. Literature review

2.1 Consumer brand engagement in social media sites

During the first decade of the twenty-first century, firms recognised that customer satisfaction was insufficient to drive loyalty and profitability. Rather, creating a competitive advantage and a superior brand value require outstanding levels of differentiation and core competences. Thus, due to the increasing importance social media in the life of consumer, the goal of firms transformed from relationship marketing to engagement marketing. A recent Gallup study found that "fully engaged" customers counted for 23% increase in revenue, profitability, [revenue](#), share of wallet and relationship growth (Gallup, 2013). This transformation empowers the rise of consumer brand engagement which enhances the marketing performance and business value (Kumar et al., 2010).

Hollebeek, Glynn, and Brodie (2014) define consumer-brand engagement in social media context as "a consumer's positively valenced brand-related cognitive, emotional and behavioral activity during or related to focal consumer/brand interaction" (p. 154). Interaction consists thus of three dimensions. The cognitive [elements-dimension](#) refers to "consumer's level of brand-related thought processing and elaboration". The emotional element relates to the "consumer's degree of positive brand-related affect" while the behavioural dimension concerns activation of "the energy, effort and time devoted in a particular consumer/brand interaction" (p. 154).

2.2 Luxury brands on social media

Luxury brand is defined as Luxury brand is defined as "a branded product or service that consumers perceive to be high quality, offer authentic value via desired benefits, whether functional or emotional, have a prestigious image within the market built on qualities such as artisanship, craftsmanship, or service quality, be worthy of commanding a premium price, and be capable of inspiring a deep connection, or resonance, with the consumer" (Ko, Costello, & Taylor, 2017, p. 2). Consumers buy luxury brands for more than their functionality, they [are](#) also motivated by perceived-symbolic features like status and prestige (Amaldoss & Jain, 2005), as well as, rarity and exclusivity (Berthon, Pitt, Parent, & Berthon, 2009). The marketing of luxury brands requires the communication of clear brand identities, product integrity, brand signature, prestige prices, exclusivity, history and brand narratives (Fionda & Moore, 2009). Increasingly, this is achieved via social media communities (Annie Jin, 2012).

According to PMX Agency (2016) report, there has been an increase by 27% in luxury brands' followers on social media sites since 2016; Instagram, Facebook and Twitter websites dominate of 50%, 33% and 17 %, respectively. Previous research has explored the motivations behind consumers' engagement with branded-contents on social media sites across different products, motivated by entertainment, remunerations, self-expression,

socializing, obtaining information and knowledge (de Vries, Peluso, Romani, Leeflang, & Marcati, 2017), or by brand influence, hedonic rewards, helping connecting, self-expression, like-minded discussion, utilitarian rewards, up-to-date information, brand passion, seeking assistance, and validation (Baldus, Voorhees, & Calantone, 2015), or engaging with specific type of products, like engagement with apparel brands, motivated by brand tactic engagement, brand exhibiting, brand patronizing and brand deal seeking (Dimitriu & Guesalaga, 2017), (Dimitriu & Guesalaga, 2017). Existing empirical studies on brand engagement consider various products product types and categories, drawing on socio-psychological theories, like, uses and gratification theory, which has been used widely in engagement studies (Calder, Malthouse, & Schaedel, 2009), self-determination theory which informs studies by de Vries et al. (2017) or a synthesis of the extant literature (Dimitriu & Guesalaga, 2017).

What is missing is a framework that explains why consumers engage with luxury brands on social media sites, no study has thoroughly explored qualitatively the factors motivating consumer engagement with luxury brands on social media sites. Therefore, our research question is: what motivates consumers to engage with luxury brands on social media sites?

3. Method

The study investigated the motivations underpinning consumers' cognitive, emotional and behavioral engagement with luxury brands on social media sites. Due to the lack of an appropriate theoretical background to inform the research objectives, an inductive was chosen to address the research question. A semi-structured interview was adopted to probe responses, reveal relevant issues and aid respondent recall.

The interview guide was pilot tested with four consumers and follower of luxury brands aged 25-35 coming from different nationalities but located in the UK. The interview guide primarily addressed the cognition, emotion and behaviour engagement and the reasons for interacting with luxury brands on social media sites. Following the pilot test, we adopted purposive sampling with all interviews following at least one luxury brand on social media and purchased that brand's goods in the previous six months. A total of twelve interviews were conducted, 8 were face-to-face and 4 were via Skype. All the interviews were conducted in English, and lasted between 45 minutes to 1 hour. Table 1 summarises the characteristics of the interviewees. Open and axial coding were adopted to analyse the transcribed data, open coding was used to identify dimensions of the concepts and axial coding applied to relate the concepts with each other and identify connections between them.

Table 1. Interviewees' profile

Code	Age group	Gender	Nationality	Education Level	Purchased and followed luxury brands names	Social media site
P2	25-35	Female	Lebanese	Postgraduate	Longchamp	Instagram
P4	25-35	Male	British	Postgraduate	Lloyd and Luminox	Facebook
P6	25-35	Female	Jordanian	Undergraduate	Dior and Chanel	Facebook
P8	25-35	Male	Chinese	Postgraduate	Hugo Boss	Facebook
P10	25-35	Female	Thai	Postgraduate	Hermes, Chanel, Dior, and Louis Vuitton	Instagram
P12	25-35	Female	Jordanian	Postgraduate	Chanel, Dior, and Gucci	Facebook

Commented [L2]: Add this reference here: (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).
Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. M. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Commented [L3]: Was coding data-driven or theory-driven?

4. Findings

The coding process identifies four factors that underpin consumers' engagement with luxury brands on social media sites, namely: news acquisitions, visual art aesthetic, post-purchase brand attachment, saving and maintaining face. The results are shown in Figure 1.

4.1 ~~News-Information (about brands)~~ acquisition

The most important factor motivating interviewees to engage with luxury brands on social media is gain up-to-date information about the brands, to know more about the brands' new offerings, designs, models, and colours. ~~New-acquisition~~Information acquisition is found to relate to the three dimensions of engagement; it refresh the interviewees cognitive processing by providing them new news about the new colours, designs and models, news acquisition stirs interviewees emotions by making them feel excited, as well as, it activates them to spend more time with luxury brands on social media sites.

I think Chanel's Facebook page has so far keeping me updated, introducing the new items and new edition.... I wanted to check if they are some new fragrance, or if there is a new shape, or colour.... I can know more about the brand and its product, for Dior, I think it is amusing and excitement to know the latest edition of Dior Perfumes. [P6].

4.2 Visual art aesthetic

The analysis of interview data reveals that the visual information luxury brands post on their pages is reason to engage consumers with luxury brands. Visual art aesthetic includes pictures that luxury brands use to post on their walls on Facebook and Instagram. The design of the pictures, its background, its colours, its capturing shape and the use of models and their styles are all elements interviewees perceive in the visual information factor, which encourage respondents to stimulate their thinking, feelings, and efforts with the brand on Facebook and Instagram. Additionally, the association between the visual information and up-to-date information is appeared, the more elegance visual information, the more willingness to keep up-to-date information.

Gucci Instagram page has very philosophy, because it is kind of inspiring and motivating, the pictures are very high quality and attractive, the pictures themselves are letting me to learn, see what's new in this new edition, the picture gives me a lot of information I may ignore sometimes. [P12].

4.3 Actual purchase behaviour

~~One of the themes our findings discovered is the purchasing the interviewees did.~~

According to the interviewees, purchasing luxury brands encourage them to centrally think about the brand, accounted their emotional mind and enable them to take further actions with the brand. Owning a luxury brand; a brand that is in quality, price, and image, fosters customers' willingness to engage with the brand on social media site.

I bought Armani before following it. When I purchased Armani, I remember that time it was a foundation and a scarf, after that in just minutes later, I accessed my Instagram account, searched for Armani page and followed it, it gave me a positive feeling to see Armani makeup all the time, I was super happy of it. [P3].

4.4 Ideal social self-image

Based on the interview data, interviewees tend to engage with luxury brands in order to how they would like their friends on social media to view them. Respondents show a priority to transfer their ideal social self-image from owning the luxury brands on real community to online community in Facebook.

My friends on Facebook know me very well..... I am not that kind of person who like Hugo Boss to show up. It is just about that I like Hugo Boss Fashion which it is part my lifestyle. I

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Frey, K. P., & Eagly, A. H. (1993). Vividness can undermine the persuasiveness of messages. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 65(1), 32.

Jiang, Z., & Benbasat, I. (2007).

Research note—investigating the influence of the functional mechanisms of online product presentations. *Information Systems Research*, 18(4), 454-470.

Commented [L5]: It is not purchase behaviour...this theme should be previous experience with the brand

don't want to be famous between them. But, I do not them to underestimate me and my image on their minds. I might lose my reputation if I follow lower brand, like Gap. [P8].

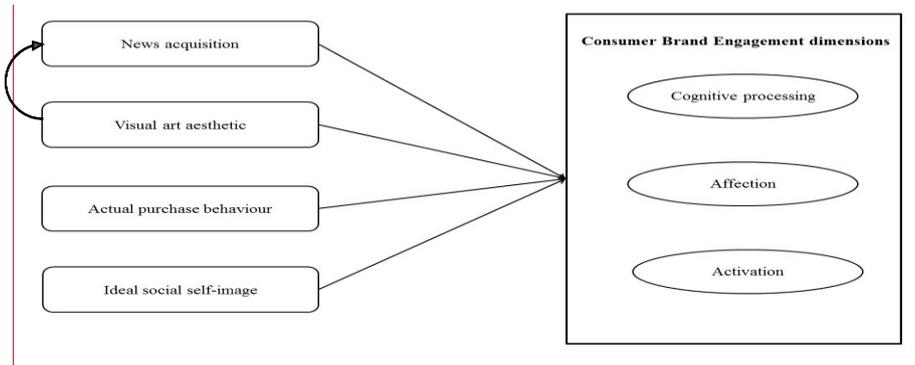


Figure 1. Theoretical framework resulted from the study.

5. Discussion

Although the presence of luxury brands ~~in social media engagement are is~~ growing in the literature, there exists no theoretical foundation to identify the drivers behind this engagement to guide both scholar and managers. As illustrated in ~~analysis and~~ Figure 1, consumer's engagement with luxury brands on social media sites are evidently influenced by their motivations to acquire new information ~~and news~~ about the brand, the aesthetic art of the pictures brand posts, ~~purchases transaction~~, and their ideal social self-image. Beyond the existing understanding of motivational models that have been illustrated previously (e.g. Baldus et al., 2015; de Vries et al., 2017; Saridakis, Baltas, Oghazi, & Hultman, 2016) who adopted uses and gratification theory and self-determination theory, our findings highlight that consumers' engagement with luxury brands on Facebook and Instagram are mainly affected by four factors: ~~news acquisition, visual art aesthetic, actual purchase behaviour, and ideal social self.~~

Consumers engage with luxury brands to acquire new information about the brands; they seek to know the latest models, designs, models and colours. News acquisition is appeared in the behavioral engagement literature clearly, under different titles (e.g. up-to-date information (Baldus et al., 2015), or obtaining information and knowledge (de Vries et al., 2017), while the other three factors are new to the consumer brand engagement literature. Our research identifies the aesthetic side of the pictures luxury brands post on their social media pages, where the layout, the pleasant and professional design are the main characteristics of the pictures as shown in the findings section. Visual art was found to positively influence consumers' perceived conspicuous value, perceived unique value, perceived quality value and perceived hedonic value, moreover, it was found to increase the price of luxury product 50% higher than the regular price (Lee, Chen, & Wang, 2015). Actual purchase behaviour is revealed to engage luxury buyers with the purchased brands on Facebook and Instagram. The fourth factor that appeals to effect consumers' engagement with luxury brands on Facebook and Instagram is the ideal social self-image, ideal social self-image is a component of the self-concept, and it is defined as "how the consumer would like others to view him/her" (Sirgy & Coskun Samli, 1985, p. 271), when the ideal social self-image harmonize with product/brand image, it is called then "ideal social congruity" which influence product preference (cited in Sirgy & Coskun Samli, 1985). Therefore, and based on the findings of this study, consumers'

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Commented [L8]: Are all these new?

engagement with luxury brands is motivated by ideal social self-image, where consumers would like others to see them as, for example, prestigious and unique, these traits encourage them to engage with luxury brands on social media sites.

6. Implications

In this study, we offer a theoretical rationale framework that contributes to the existing consumer engagement and in particular to the consumer brand engagement literature in plentiful ways. Our preliminary study contributes to the growing yet underexplored field in consumer brand engagement; the engagement with luxury brands on social media sites. Moreover, this research provides managerial implications, particularly important for luxury marketing managers. This research highlights that consumers' engagement with luxury brands on social media sites are driven by news acquisition, visual art aesthetic, actual purchase behaviour and ideal social self-image. The insights gained from this study can devote better social media marketing strategies for luxury brands. Luxury brands' marketing managers should allocate a greater emphasis on what, how and when to update their brands pages on social media, and they are required to professionally allocate graphic designers and artists to craft stimulated visual pictures, also they should coordinate the visual art with updating their pages. Moreover, marketing managers for luxury brands should notice that when a customer buys, s/he may engage with them via social media sites, therefore, a coordination between the offline marketing strategies and social media marketing strategies is demanded to avoid dissatisfaction or disappointment. Finally, it is essential for luxury brands' marketing managers to realize that consumers have images of themselves and would like others on social media to see them based on these images. Therefore, a careful strategies are required to avoid dissonance between the brand and the consumers.

7. Limitations and scopes for future research

The topic of consumers' engagement with luxury brands on social media is still in its infancy, while the findings and implications have accomplished the study's research objectives and answered its question, the study is subject to a few limitations that considerable attention are required to focus on. Firstly, the study is exploratory and findings can't be generalized. Future study should test the model using a quantitative methodology. Second limitation is the limited number of interviewees, the study consists only 12 interviewees. Future study should conduct more interviews that other factors may appear and rise. Finally, the consequences of consumers' engagement with luxury brands on social media stills unexplored, future research should explore the consequences of this engagement.

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