



Luxury Brand Consumption and Self-Presentation Through Social Media: Directions for Future Research

Jariya Hamilton^{1*}, Jantima Kheakao²

¹ *D.Com.Arts in Marketing Communication (candidate) in the School of Communication Arts,
University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce, Thailand*

² *Associate Professor and Director of the Doctoral Program in Marketing Communication, School of Communication Arts,
University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce, Thailand*

**Corresponding author*

ABSTRACT

The current study is a research synthesis on the literature of luxury brand consumption, self-presentation, and social media. The purpose of this study is to examine trends over time, conceptual framework that has been employed in the previous studies and suggest direction for future research. The data for this study comes from a collection of 3,349 articles published on International Journal databases between 2012 – 2019. Articles were coded based on research methods, objectives, samples and sampling, research instrument, conceptual framework, theories, variables, data analysis approach, results, marketing elements examined, and suggestions. There were 13 research articles that matched the criteria. Findings from this study pinpointed trends and factors that could influence luxury brand consumption leading to self-presentation through social media. For conceptual framework, concepts and theories that could be adopted to examine luxury brand consumption and self-presentation through social media were presented. Directions for future research are discussed.

Keywords: consumption; interaction; luxury brand; self-presentation; social media



1. Introduction

The study on luxury brands has received much attention from marketers and academic people for decades (Sara, 2017). The luxury industry that produces highly expensive fashion items, such as clothes, bags, watches, and leathers has experienced a healthy growth since their inceptions (Atwal & William, 2009). Moreover, tremendous changes in and movements of luxury brands can be seen around the globe. Not for too long, small luxury brand businesses like Louis Vuitton, Cartier, Chanel, Gucci, and Prada turn into global luxury brands that consumers in almost societies and cultures demonstrate their preferences. Luxury brand refers to a famous brand that creates the feelings of exclusivity and uniqueness. It can convey exclusive feelings and establish perceived quality of a brand at a high level, which could retain customers' loyalty. Brand loyalty allows businesses to forecast sales volume and profitability (Kokotsaki, 2017). The higher brand loyalty the customers have, the easier that the brands can set a high selling price. Besides, retaining existing customers requires lower costs than attracting new customers to make a product purchase from a brand. Brand loyalty is a factor that helps reduce marketing expenses and refrain the customers from switching to the other brands (Visser, 2015). This is because brand loyalty influences the customers to keep purchasing the existing products and be willing to pay higher prices for the brand even if there would be some other brands that offer similar benefits. Brand loyalty can prevent price competition.

Creating interaction through social media plays an important role in driving the relationship between brands and customers. Social media is an online tool that allows people to exchange their opinions, including brands and customers (Yamawaki & Sarfati, 2018). Interactions that occur on online world can categorize customers with behavior like the brands. Moreover, social media can reach more target markets, creating thoughts and response on a product and a brand (Duffett, 2017). It is obvious that luxury brand consumers tend to express themselves through social media, which is considered an interaction between a brand and a customer, including followers on social media.

Therefore, this current research is interested in the studies on luxury brand consumption and self-presentation through social media to gain new knowledge from such consumer behavior as well as the its trends, conceptual framework, and directions for future research.

2. Literature review

2.1 Luxury brand consumption



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Atwal & Williams (2009) stated that it was difficult to define the word luxury. Customers also referred to it as luxury goods and services. However, Cornell (2002) suggested that luxury could be just roughly defined. Different people interpreted luxury differently, depending on the situations. Sometimes, the word luxury was characterized the mood of an individual (Wiedmann et al., 2009).

To express social status through luxury consumption was also known as conspicuous consumption. It was concerned with to the “ostentatious display of wealth for the purpose of acquiring or maintaining status or prestige” (Page, 1992). In addition, there had been several researchers who tried to describe what triggered conspicuous consumption to emerge in the society.

Nevertheless, Bagwell & Bernheim (1960) argued by the Theory of the Leisure Class that rich people purchased highly conspicuous goods and services to demonstrate their wealth with the expectation to gain higher social status. Vigneron & Johnson (1999) supported the idea of Bagwell & Bernheim (1960) that wealthy people saw the price as a display of prestige. This was probably because they wanted to impress others. Furthermore, they were willing to pay more even if an item was cheap with similar functions. Veblen (1899) described this situation that to derive and hold the in order to gain and to hold respect from general people, wealth must be put in evidence, for esteem is awarded only in evidence.

2.2 Self-Presentation

The concept of self-presentation, known as impression management, referred to the actions that individuals took to perform a certain role when they were in public. It was the way people managed their impressions to the target audiences (Goffman, 1990). Impression was a process that determined a sort of impression that an individual had attempted to make. People also chose how they went about it. Goffman described the concept of self-presentation by using a symbol of play. An individual who managed self-presentation played a role of an actor. The actor would stage herself/himself in a scene, managing what the audience saw. In this regard, the actor would not always show up themselves on the stage. Sometimes, he/she took a break from self-presentation where their real life occurred.

Recent literature on the self-presentation concept explored impression management strategies incorporated in the process. Jones discussed impression management through the command of variables such as ingratiation, competence or self-promotion, intimidation, exemplification, and supplication.

2.3 Social Media

Khaniki and Babaie (2011) stated that social media had been designed to enable people for interaction, and, at the same time, information could be disseminated on the Internet. The



advantages of social media were that they offered high accessibility and scalable propagation technics had been used in them (Khaniki and Babaie, 2011).

Social network included a group of people or organization that connected to each other through one or more dependencies. It showed the effective function of converged networks in the context of a complex informational society. Rahmanzadeh (2010) stated the success of social network lied in having social smell. Kaplan and Haekline (2010) defined social media as a set of Internet-based tools that were steadied on the web advancement and ideological basis enabling users to create content and exchange it.

Acceptance of social media and software grounds in addition to content sharing played a significant role in encouraging customers to engage a brand in social media. Because social media consisted of complex technology, users were given their desired content from searching history and requesting certain information. Additionally, they would be offered certain related advertisement intelligently. This feature caused an evolution in social media. Individual were equipped with the tools that helped them find the information rapidly. Another advantage of social media was electronic word of mouth (WOM). Its role was to provide popular opinions and recommendations among social media users (Gordhamer, 2009).

3. Methods

A research synthesis has been employed to investigate directions for future research. It explored previous studies related to the topics on luxury brand consumption and self-presentation through social media. The purpose of this study is to examine trends over time and conceptual framework that has been employed in the previous studies and to suggest direction for future research. Search targeted articles investigating variables were related to literature in connection with luxury brand, luxury consumption, social media, and self-presentation. For article eligibility, included articles needed to have published in the databases of EBSCO Host, Routledge, Wiley, and ScienceDirect. The literature was selected from the period 2012 – 2019. It was possible that this current study may not cover all the existing literature on those topics; therefore, several interesting articles in the fields had been selected for synthesis analysis.

First, all the articles published in the databases using the following keywords in their abstracts: luxury, brand, consumption, self-presentation, or social media. The emphasis of this study is to provide a synthesis of the literature by examining the influence of social media and marketing communication literature. The current research mainly focused on studies that had examined the intersection of social media, marketing communication, luxury brand, and self-presentation. After the articles that had not investigated the focus of this research, the compilation yielded a total of 13 research articles.



4. Findings and discussion

The findings from research synthesis revealed that there were 13 research articles that could be included for analysis. The structure of this section was separated into two parts: findings and discussion.

4.1 Findings

1. Determinants that influenced luxury brand consumption resulting in self-presentation through social media were attitude, value-expressive function and social-adjustive function, social media usage satisfaction, intention to utilize social media (Facebook and twitter), status consumption, conspicuous consumption, self-esteem, power distance, electronic-word-of mouth, and brand engagement.

2. For conceptual framework, concepts and theories that were adopted to examine luxury brand consumption and self-presentation through social media included social network sites, marketing communications, attitude components, usage variables, status consumption, experience recommendation, electronic-word-of-mouth, preference consumption, brand loyalty, value-expressive function and social-adjustive function, uses and gratifications, COBRA model, Hofstede model, and grounded theory.

3. The third findings were strategic communications with luxury brand consumers.

4. The last findings from research synthesis were social impacts of self-presentation through social media from luxury brand consumption.

In terms of methodology, qualitative, quantitative, and mixed research methods were utilized. However, most of 13 articles used quantitative approach to examine their topics. As far as communication elements were concerned, it was found that few literatures had examined the sender element as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: articles eligible for research synthesis, including methods adopted and communication elements

Research titles	Methodology	S-M-C-R
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1. Influence of social media marketing communication: Young Consumers' Attitudes by Duffett (2017)	Quantitative research method	Channel and receiver
2. The Impact of social media on luxury fashion brands by Sara (2017)	Mixed research methods	Sender, message, channel, and receiver
3. The Impact of status seeking on consumers' word of mouth and product preference – A comparison between luxury hospitality services and luxury goods by Yang & Maattila (2017)	Quantitative research method	Channel and receiver
4. The Influence of perceived social media marketing activities on brand loyalty: the mediation effect of brand and value consciousness by Ismail (2017)	Quantitative research method	Channel and receiver
5. The potential of social media for luxury brand management by Jin (2012)	Quantitative research method	Channel and receiver
6. The relationship between status-and conspicuous consumption in luxury brands in the South African emerging market by Visser (2015)	Quantitative research method	Message and Receiver
7. The allure of luxury brands' social media activities: A uses and gratification perspective by Athwal, Istanbuluoglu, & McCormack (2018)	Qualitative research method	Message, channel, and receiver
8. The influence of self-esteem in the relationship of social media usage and conspicuous consumption by Wai & Osman (2019)	Quantitative research method	Channel and receiver
9. The millennials luxury brand engagement on social media: A comparative study of Brazilians and Italians by Yamawaki & Sarfati (2018)	Quantitative research method	Channel and receiver
10. Typology of social media followers: the case of luxury brands by Ramadan (2018)	Qualitative research method	Channel and receiver
11. Visual communication of luxury fashion brands on social media: effects of visual complexity and brand familiarity by Lee, Hur, & Watkins (2018)	Quantitative research method	Message, channel, and receiver
12. Brand engagement on social media platforms: A study in luxury fashion brands by Kokotsaki (2017)	Quantitative research method	Message, channel, and receiver
13. Electronic word of mouth on Instagram: customers' engagements with brands in different sectors by Erkan (2015)	Quantitative research method	Message, channel, and receiver

4.2 Discussion

Table 1 has suggested the trends toward the literature on luxury brand consumption and self-presentation through social media were varied and the directions were not clear. This could be the results that social media was a new phenomenon that had been recently emerged. Moreover, there were many aspects of social media that could be applied to numerous fields of the literature. As shown in Table 1, most of the research articles adopted quantitative research methodology to examine the issues in question. For conceptual framework, concepts and theories found from research synthesis were diverse, not focusing on one discipline. However, in the view of



communication elements, sender was an element that should be focused since not many articles had investigated it. Thus, the directions for future research were dependent on the researcher's judgement and availability of data and information.

5. Conclusion

The aim of this present study is to identify academic articles published during 2012 – 2019 on the relevant subjects of luxury brand consumption, self-presentation, and social media. In conclusion, attitude, value-expressive function and social-adjustive function, social media usage satisfaction, intention to utilize social media (Facebook and twitter), status consumption, conspicuous consumption, self-esteem, power distance, electronic-word-of mouth, and brand engagement were the factors that could affect luxury brand consumption and self-presentation through social media. Much literature has emphasized all the communication elements except the sender element. Social media was an emerging field that different disciplines could apply and the directions for future research on luxury brand consumption and self-presentation through social media were ambiguous.

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