

The Influence of Social Media on Luxury Brand Communication Strategies: A Case Study of Gucci, Prada, Dior, and Chanel

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Abstract. The advancement of social media platforms has greatly impacted the manner in which luxury fashion brands interact with consumers. Social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube are a unique way for brands to reach out to the audience, especially the younger generation. Thus, this paper aims to explore the effects of social media on luxury brand communication, with a focus on Gucci, Prada, Dior, and Chanel. In the paper, the author examines the use of social media in increasing brand recognition, customer loyalty, and purchase intentions using case studies. The study also shows that social media has helped luxury brands to expand their reach, build brand experiences, and overcome the constraints of conventional advertising. The study also stresses on the need to strike a balance in the use of social media, where brands should keep their identity intact while at the same time reaching out to a larger and more engaged audience.

Keywords: Luxury Brand Communication; Social Media Marketing; Brand Identity and Exclusivity; Influencer Marketing in Luxury Brands; Consumer Engagement on Instagram.

1. Introduction

The advancement in technology has greatly impacted the manner in which brands, particularly luxury brands, interact with their consumers. Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have become indispensable in the fashion luxury brands' marketing strategies which offer an opportunity for brands to engage with the audience in a way that is different from the conventional advertising techniques that were mostly one way. Unlike conventional marketing communication, which is often one-way and detached, social media is a live and interactive platform that provides a rich, two-way communication between the brand and the consumer.

The social media has also brought new opportunities and threats to the luxury brands like Gucci, Prada, Dior and Chanel which have always targeted the high end market through exclusivity and aspirational appeal. These brands are now in a very sensitive position of wanting to maintain their exclusivity while at the same time expanding their reach to the new age, diverse and more active users especially the young ones in these platforms.

The strength of social media is in the fact that it allows for the telling of stories, the ability to share brand values in a more personal manner, and the creation of an emotional bond with the consumer. Also, social media such as Instagram enables brands to post beautiful images that support their luxury image while TikTok allows brands to be more lighthearted and easily relatable and YouTube provides a more in-depth look into the brand's story.

This paper aims to discuss the effects of social media on luxury brand communication and examine the changes in the communication strategies of Gucci, Prada, Dior, and Chanel. Through the identification of research questions like how these brands have adopted social media in their communication strategies and the role of KOLs in influencing brand perception, this paper offers a comprehensive insight into how social media has become an essential tool in luxury marketing in the contemporary world.

2. Literature Review

The use of social media has greatly influenced the way luxury brands communicate since many researches indicate that social media is not only a new platform for brand messaging but also a way

to build a stronger relationship between brands and consumers [1]. For example, Kapferer in *The Luxury Strategy* notes that luxury brands should remain exclusive while interacting with the consumers through social media, which is a direct interaction with the large number of people [2]. However, Kapferer's research fails to explain how brands can achieve the two aspects of exclusivity and the need to engage with the masses, especially on social media platforms. Therefore, this study will address this gap by examining how luxury brands maintain their uniqueness and high-end image while engaging with a broader consumer base.

In the specific research on social media marketing, Kim & Ko, analyzed the impact of social media activities on customer equity, finding that social media significantly enhances consumer loyalty toward luxury brands [3]. However, their research mainly focused on Instagram and did not explore the differences in impact across various social media platforms (e.g., TikTok, YouTube) on luxury brand communication. Thus, this paper will expand on their work by investigating the specific effects of different social media platforms, particularly TikTok, on younger consumers' interactions with luxury brands.

Moreover, Godey et al., explored the effects of social media marketing on brand equity and consumer behavior, noting that social media helps increase brand awareness and strengthens consumer-brand relationships [4]. However, their research does not address the adaptation of luxury brands' social media strategies across different cultural contexts, especially in markets like China. This study will fill this gap by focusing on how luxury brands localize their social media marketing strategies in China, particularly on platforms like WeChat, Weibo, and Douyin.

Raymond, also discussed how storytelling was incorporated with the Secret Garden campaign of Dior to engage the consumers on an emotional level however, Raymond's research is more concerned with how Dior employs digital storytelling but does not consider the involvement of KOLs in the process [5]. Since KOLs have become a significant factor in luxury brand marketing, this paper will fill this gap by discussing how luxury brands can involve KOLs to increase their reach and stay connected with their consumers.

Liu & Li examined the use of social media by luxury brands in China and pointed out that it is important for luxury brands to have a distinct brand image in the social media context [6,7]. However, their study failed to explain the dangers of overexposure and the effects that it has on the image of the brand thus, this paper will also discuss how luxury brands can minimize these risks while still retaining their luxury status.

Phan et al. also highlighted the role of social media for luxury brands, especially for the younger generation of consumers who are more familiar with the digital environment [8]. However, the research was mainly concerned with brand exposure through social media and did not address how luxury brands manage consumer interactions to maintain control of brand image. The paper will explore how luxury brands can successfully control consumer engagement on social media without diluting their brand image.

Jansen et al. emphasized the significant role of social media platforms, such as Twitter, in amplifying electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) whereby their research showed that social media not only enables quick information dissemination but also has a significant effect on brand perception [9]. Twitter offers luxury brands a unique opportunity to go beyond the conventional marketing strategies by creating interaction and engagement with consumers. Luxury brands such as Gucci and Dior can increase their brand awareness and loyalty while still maintaining their exclusive image by utilizing user-generated content and consumer discussion which is consistent with the findings of Jansen et al. Jansen et al argue that social media platforms are an essential tool for building brand identity through organic, consumer-driven engagement and through use of Twitter's real-time conversation capabilities, luxury brands can develop more dynamic and authentic relationships with their target audiences.

Mangold & Faulds also discuss about the emergence of social media as a "new hybrid element" in the promotion mix and their research shows that social media narrows the gap between traditional advertising and consumer engagement, allowing brands to maintain exclusivity while interacting with

consumers directly [10]. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok and YouTube provide a place for rich storytelling and two way communication for luxury brands where Mangold and Faulds highlight how luxury brands can use these platforms to remain exclusive while creating a closer emotional connection with their audience. Social media as they define is not just a tool for advertising but an integral part of the brand's overall marketing strategy that creates brand loyalty and brand awareness among younger digitally savvy consumers.

Song & Kim examined the effectiveness of social media marketing for luxury brands by looking at how brand page satisfaction and brand love affect word-of-mouth and attitudinal loyalty [11]. Their study provides valuable insights on how luxury brands can build stronger emotional ties with consumers through social media. Focusing on brand satisfaction and emotional attachment, Song and Kim found that these are key determinants of consumer loyalty intentions and for luxury brands, it is vital to create a strong, satisfying brand presence on such platforms as Instagram and TikTok in order to build long term relationships with consumers. Their research highlights the fact that luxury brands, while working to preserve their exclusivity, also need to work on creating a brand love by producing content that is engaging and relatable to the values and interests of their audience. This finding aligns with the strategies employed by brands like Gucci and Dior, who use social media to not only promote their products but also connect with their audience on a deeper emotional level.

3. Marketing Research Design

Luxury brands cannot afford to ignore social media as it has become more than just a tool for communication but has transformed the traditional consumer-brand relationship. In the past, luxury brands relied on print media advertising, limited edition events, and word of mouth to maintain the luxury image however, through the use of social media, the companies like Gucci, Prada, and Dior are using the digital media to expand their market share without compromising the luxury aspect. As consumers are spending more time online, especially on social media like Instagram and TikTok, brands cannot afford to overlook the aspect of digital engagement.

The social media platform is unique in that it is highly engaging and enables luxury brands to directly engage with their consumers where one of the key elements of this interaction is the possibility of brands' digital storytelling. In this way, luxury brands can tell their stories and communicate their values and vision in a way that is engaging to the consumer. It is crucial to continue telling stories that reflect craftsmanship, artistry, and exclusivity to maintain the brand's image. Also, consumers are more likely to interact and share content that is in line with their beliefs and interests thus, luxury brands should create a brand story that will appeal to the target market and help them build a better connection with the brand.

For instance, Gucci's "Gucci Garden" is a perfect example of how storytelling can be used to engage consumers in a different way. Fashion, art, and culture allowed Gucci to open the door to its world and let the followers step inside and engage with the brand and its products, from the past to the present which makes the consumer feel included while at the same time maintaining the exclusivity of the luxury brand, which is a good example of how luxury brands can use social media to engage the consumer beyond the conventional advertisement. In addition, the change in the communication style through social media makes the brand more relatable to the consumers, making them feel like they are directly associated with the luxury products they are buying.

This combination of digital storytelling and personalization is essential for luxury brands to remain relevant in the current digital environment which enables them to retain their niche market while at the same time expanding their market to a more diverse market segment. Also, social media provides a way to get immediate feedback from customers, which can be useful in adjusting brand management strategies and making sure that brands remain relevant to the target consumers.

4. Case Analysis Structure

4.1. Gucci and Instagram: Engaging with Consumers

Gucci's case is a perfect example of how luxury brands can effectively communicate in the digital age through the use of Instagram. The brand has continued to remain a symbol of luxury while at the same time becoming more accessible and engaging. The official Gucci Instagram page is full of high-quality and aesthetically pleasing images and videos, but the most important aspect is the interaction with the audience. By using comments, likes, and shared posts, Gucci ensures that it has a two-way interaction with the consumers, which enhances the bond with the brand.

Gucci also shows how social media can be used to tell a story in the digital space. The brand also shares some of its history and its impact on the culture in its social media posts and also shares the behind the scenes of its designs which not only creates a perception of elitism by revealing the creative process of Gucci but also strengthens the bond with the consumers who are interested in the artistry of the brand. The case of Gucci has shown that luxury brands can leverage social media platforms to retain the exclusivity of their brands while at the same time making the experience more engaging for the consumers.

Apart from Instagram, Gucci has also embraced the use of influencer and KOL marketing strategies, which have become popular in the marketing of luxury brands. This way, Gucci is able to spread its message through influencers whose personal brand is similar to that of the brand. These partnerships, however, are selected in a way that the influencer's persona is in line with the luxury and the selectiveness of Gucci which helps to protect the brand image of Gucci while at the same time increasing its reach through the digital platforms.

4.2. Dior and Digital Storytelling: Creating a Visual Narrative

Dior has effectively used digital storytelling as a way of telling a story that consumers can easily relate to. The brand was able to blend fashion with culture in its "Secret Garden" campaign and present its collections in an engaging manner which is very effective for Dior because it appeals to the consumer's need to tell a story rather than just selling products. Thus, using Rihanna, Dior was not only advertising its products but also reminding people about its progressive and modern values.

This makes Dior's strategy even more effective because it targets the younger generation of consumers who are more conscious about social issues while at the same time, it does not deviate from the brand's identity of luxury and elegance. In this way, Dior tells a story of its products, stressing on the tradition and at the same time, the contemporary culture. When these elements are integrated into a single story, Dior is able to enhance its connection with its traditional consumers as well as younger generations who appreciate tradition and novelty.

Another aspect of Dior's digital storytelling approach is how it incorporates social media content into its marketing mix thus, through sharing behind the scenes videos, interviews with designers and cooperation with key opinion leaders, Dior keeps the brand in the public focus and continuously discusses it. This constant stream of content helps to keep the audience engaged with Dior's products and campaigns while keeping the brand image luxurious.

4.3. Prada's Social Media Strategy in China

In China, where social media usage and social media environment is quite different from the western countries, Prada has a more localized social media strategy that is more in tune with the Chinese consumers. The most popular social media platforms in China are WeChat, Weibo, and Douyin, which are all popular platforms for luxury brands to reach out to the target audience.

In China, Prada's approach is not only to advertise its products but also to offer unique experiences to the Chinese consumers through these platforms. The brand also launches special editions that are aimed at the Chinese market since the latter is always interested in products that are different from the others and are produced in limited quantities. By using local influencers and KOLs, Prada is able to build credibility with its audience and ensure that the brand is in line with the Chinese culture

which has helped Prada to create a good market in China, which is one of the largest and growing luxury markets in the world.

The case of Prada's social media marketing in China also indicates that the content and campaigns need to be localized. As social media is highly active in China, it is crucial for luxury brands to understand the Chinese consumers and their demands and expectations. Through the use of local platforms and local influencers, Prada has been able to overcome the challenges that come with the Chinese market while at the same time upholding the luxury image of the brand.

5. Discussion

The examples of Gucci, Prada, and Dior show that social media has significantly influenced the communication management of luxury brands which afford luxury brands the opportunity to retain their elitist status while at the same time expanding their market base to the masses. However, as luxury brands go social, they face several issues, especially the issue of how to remain exclusive while reaching out to the masses.

The greatest risk is the ability to control the brand image especially in the current world where consumers are more demanding and want to engage with the brand at their own discretion. Instagram and TikTok allow consumers to interact with brands, but this also means that any mistake, be it in communication or in choosing influencers, can go viral which makes it necessary for luxury brands to be careful when choosing influencers to work with, to ensure that they are in harmony with the brand. Influencer marketing can be damaging to a brand if the wrong influencer is chosen, especially if the influencer is involved in activities that are not in line with the brand's image or if the influencer has a different set of beliefs.

However, there are several benefits that can be derived from social media especially for luxury brands, which include reaching out to new consumers since in the current highly competitive market, social media has enabled Gucci, Dior, and Prada to stay relevant. But the way forward is to strike a balance between exclusivity and accessibility so as to sustain the luxury image while at the same time appealing to the masses. Through the selection of content, the use of influencers, and the application of digital storytelling, luxury brands can effectively manage the challenges of the digital environment.

6. Conclusion

Social media has become a powerful tool in the communication between the luxury brands and their consumers, which has created new possibilities for the brands. Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have enabled luxury brands such as Gucci, Prada, Dior, and Chanel to expand their target market to include the younger generation. These are not only the platforms for advertising but also for the storytelling, the formation of values, and the direct interaction with the consumers, which all contribute to the formation of the closer and more emotional bond between the brand and the consumers.

The examples of Gucci, Prada, and Dior prove that social media is a crucial tool for luxury brands to stay relevant in the contemporary world which have been able to move away from the traditional forms of advertising and have been able to engage with the consumers instantly. However, there are some challenges that luxury brands have to consider while using social media for marketing their products: the issue of maintaining the exclusivity of the brand.

For the future, it is clear that luxury brands will have to continue to align their communication even more to the new trends and expectations. The struggle to maintain exclusivity while catering to the need for more transparency and authenticity will be the key to the survival of luxury brands in the digital world thus, luxury brands can continue to build and enhance their bonds with consumers around the world by accepting these challenges.

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