

T.C.
BAHCESEHIR UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL
DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

**THE IMPACT OF DIGITALIZATION (SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEBSITE
STIMULI) ON LUXURY BRAND MANAGEMENT AFTER THE
PANDEMIC COVID 19**



MASTER'S THESIS
SOUNDOUS CHEMS E KEBBACHE

ISTANBUL 2024

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ABSTRACT

THE IMPACT OF DIGITALIZATION (SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEBSITE STIMULI) ON LUXURY BRAND MANAGEMENT AFTER THE PANDEMIC COVID 19

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Master's Program in MBA

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This thesis looks at how social media and website strategies, in particular, have affected luxury brand management in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Luxury brands have historically shied away from digital marketing in order to maintain the exclusivity of their offerings. But in a market that was changing quickly, the pandemic forced them to adopt digital strategies in order to preserve their unique brand and customer relationships. The study examines the minimal online presence of luxury brands prior to COVID-19 and the ensuing digital disruption. It demonstrates how well-known companies like Gucci, Chanel, and Louis Vuitton adjusted by making investments in augmented reality and virtual fitting to improve consumer experiences. The study investigates how digital platforms affect consumer attitudes, brand recognition, customer loyalty, and purchase decisions through a thorough review of the literature. A qualitative research approach, involving interviews and focus groups, was used to gather insights into evolving consumer perceptions and brand strategies. The results show that spending money on digital touchpoints has made up for the loss of in-person engagement and opened up new avenues for connecting with customers and cultivating loyalty. The research delves into the fine balance that luxury brands need to uphold when augmenting accessibility via digital channels. It suggests a consistent evolution and efficient management of digital platforms without sacrificing the principles of luxury. In closing, it offers recommendations on how luxury brands

can better match changing consumer expectations and market trends with their digital strategies.

Keywords: Digitalization, COVID 19, Social-Media, Website Stimuli, Luxury Brand Management, Gucci, Chanel, Louis Vuitton.



ÖZ

DIJİTALLEŞMENİN (SOSYAL MEDYA VE WEB SİTESİ UYARANLARI) PANDEMİK KOVID 19 SONRASINDA LÜKS MARKA YÖNETİMİNE ETKİSİ

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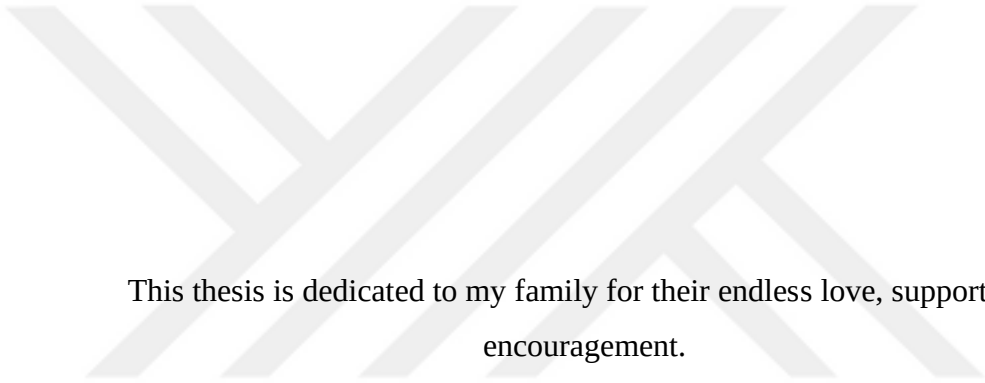
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Bu tez, COVID-19 salgını sonrasında özellikle sosyal medya ve web sitesi stratejilerinin lüks marka yönetimini nasıl etkilediğini incelemektedir. Lüks markalar, sundukları ürünlerin ayrıcalığını korumak için tarihsel olarak dijital pazarlamadan uzak durmuşlardır. Ancak pandemi, hızla değişen bir pazarda markaları, benzersiz marka ve müşteri ilişkilerini korumak için dijital stratejiler benimsemeye zorladı. Bu çalışma, lüks markaların COVID-19 ve ardından gelen dijital bozulma öncesindeki asgari çevrimiçi varlığını inceliyor. Gucci, Chanel ve Louis Vuitton gibi tanınmış şirketlerin, tüketici deneyimlerini iyileştirmek için artırılmış gerçeklik ve sanal giydirmeye yatırım yaparak nasıl uyum sağladıklarını göstermektedir. Çalışma, dijital platformların tüketici tutumlarını, marka bilinirliğini, müşteri sadakatini ve satın alma kararlarını nasıl etkilediğini kapsamlı bir literatür taramasıyla araştırmaktadır. Gelişen tüketici algıları ve marka stratejileri hakkında bilgi toplamak için mülakat ve odak gruplarını içeren nitel bir araştırma yaklaşımı kullanılmıştır. Sonuçlar, dijital temas noktalarına para harcamanın yüz yüze etkileşim kaybını telafi ettiğini ve müşterilerle bağlantı kurmak ve sadakati geliştirmek için yeni yollar açtığını göstermektedir. Araştırma, lüks markaların dijital kanallar aracılığıyla erişilebilirliği artırırken korumaları gereken ince dengeyi inceliyor. Lüks ilkelerinden ödün vermeden dijital platformların tutarlı bir şekilde geliştirilmesini ve verimli bir şekilde yönetilmesini öneriyor. Son olarak, lüks markaların değişen tüketici beklentilerini ve pazar

trendlerini dijital stratejileriyle nasıl daha iyi eşleştirebileceklerine dair öneriler sunuyor.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dijitalleşme, COVID 19, Sosyal Medya, Web Sitesi Uyartıları, Lüks Marka Yönetimi, Gucci, Chanel, Louis Vuitton.





This thesis is dedicated to my family for their endless love, support and encouragement.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AR	Augmented Reality
AI	Artificial Intelligence
VR	Virtual Reality
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
E-shop	Electronic Shop (Online Shop)
IRB	Institutional Review Board
DMH	Dual Mediation Hypothesis
TPB	Theory of Planned Behaviour



Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background Information

Earlier, luxury brands did not go all out for digitalization as they offered exclusivity and luxury face-to-face services the digital world appeared to be diametrically opposite (Botnari, 2021). Even before the virus outbreak, luxury brands' digital strategies comprised brand awareness and advertising, rather than selling online. A study by Bain & Company revealed that in 2019, e-commerce sales of luxury products were much lower at about 12% of total luxury sales, showing that this sector is much slower in its shift to e-commerce than most other luxury segments (Adhamiri, 2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic can be reasoned as the main driver of the processes that accelerated the digitalization of the luxury industry. The COVID-19 pandemic and consequently the lockdowns and social distancing norms have had a severe impact on the traditional luxury consumer touchpoints such as physical stores. This change was not just about using web selling platforms but also integrating social media selling, virtual reality experiences, and other forms of online interactions to mirror the physical shopping experiences (Cabigiosu, 2020).

The pandemic disruption has witnessed luxury firms using AR applications for virtual fitting and AI for better client segmentation and predictive modelling. For instance, Gucci and Balenciaga adapted to the new reality by producing virtual showrooms and AR fittings for customers (Mahmoud et al., 2022). These were not mere defensive actions of trying to find solutions for the declining foot traffic, but the right moves to attract and engage the global consumer base steadily shifting to e-commerce (Cho et al., 2024).

The effectiveness of these digital strategies can be critically assessed through several lenses: Concerning customer touchpoints, the objectives are customer

acquisition and sales, evaluation of the brand image, and flexibility (Müller-Pérez et al., 2023). Regarding future trends, the data unveiled that the percentage of total luxury sales from the online sphere is expected to rise to 30% in 2025, following the pandemic. However, the urge to include digitisation has also brought out certain issues specifically concerning sustaining the exclusivity and the luxury appeal of the brands as the internet has been reduced to a commoner affair (Dallabona, 2024).

As evident from the discussion, luxury brands have had the challenge of creating and maintaining the luxury experience as they adapt to the digital space while at the same time ensuring that they do not compromise the luxury image of their products. Chanel, Louis Vuitton, Gucci, Prada, Dior, Hermès, Saint Laurent, and Cartier are well-known fashion brands, and they embrace digital transformation post-COVID-19 differently because of their customized identity (Loureiro, 2023).

E-commerce has been a taboo for Chanel, but now the brand also concentrates on cosmetics and perfumes as well as its fashionable clothing line and has kept up its glamour. Before the coronavirus, Chanel had a limited social media presence which is still followed to the present-day having revenues of over \$11 billion in 2019. It forced them to improve the online clientele options but most of the apparel and accessories are still not online (Kim, 2021). Digital integration is another area where LV has proved to show strong signs of implementation while following the luxury brand image. In 2020, its revenue reached €44.7 billion, and in all its markets, it developed new e-commerce skills, such as fully personalized online shopping to match encompassing physical stores (Akter & Sultana, 2020).

As aforementioned, Gucci led with digitisation since it targeted younger audiences through the popular social media apps such as Snapchat and TikTok which helped it from losing slightly in 2020 to registering significant growth in the digital platform in 2021 (Kuusela, 2021). The main observations developed by the two designer fashion brands are that: Prada has more interior digitalization while Dior has adopted more exterior digitalization. In recent years, Prada has also initiated a series of digital campaigns and enhanced their E-shop, where their internet luxury sales soared to nearly 5 % contribution to its €2.42 billion revenue in 2020 (Liu et al., 2021).

Virtual space was effectively applied by the company throughout the COVID-19 moments and online showrooms and the use of virtual reality ensured high customer interaction rates with the company. Hermès and Saint Laurent were careful with digital, but the statement came as quite a surprise. Hermès expanded its top line to €6.39 billion in 2020 due to points rise in online sales and digital advertising that targeted the younger audience during the pandemic. On the other hand, Saint Laurent employed technology in its fashion presentation with virtual shows and online sell-outs which expanded its market base. Cartier, a luxury jeweller, used AR to let customers visually preview pieces of jewellery they wanted to buy and improve online engagement which helped the company sustain a steady sales performance despite the pandemic. Both adaptation strategies of the brands show that there is a fine line between innovation and preserving the luxury feel (Meli, 2020).

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The objective of the study is to present a critical evaluation of how digital platforms such as social media and e-commerce have impacted the operational management strategies of established luxury brands in the post-COVID-19 pandemic period. The brands of interest in this analysis are Chanel, Louis Vuitton, Gucci, Prada, Dior Hermès, Saint Laurent, and Cartier each of which instantly brings to mind the characteristics of luxury and customer personalization. The new media environment poses a radical threat to these values, requiring a sobering that this study aims to undertake systematically.

1.3 Problem Statements

The sudden transition to digital platforms due to the pandemic has highlighted how many luxury brands' have inadequacies in their digital planning hindering brand sustainability in the digital era. This research will examine these overshadowing gaps, paying special attention to how brands have evolved in their execution or have not evolved in their execution to retain uniqueness in the online sphere. For example, Chanel was more sparing with online narratives than Prada has been with digital sales, which might have implications for luxury survival in the future (Roberts et al., 2020).

It has also been evident that customer reactions to such tactics of digital marketing have not been uniform across the different luxury brands. This study will seek to establish how these responses differ, depending on aspects including the feedback response strategy of the brand in its digital operations, the level of perceived reality of the brand's digital persona and whether the social media and online marketing campaigns employed are limited to certain select few (Anguix Vilches, 2022).

1.4 Research Question

- What are the critical impacts of social media and e-commerce stimuli on the management of luxury brands in the post-COVID-19 market?
- Which digital marketing strategies yield the highest engagement and conversion rates for luxury brands on social media?
- How do specific e-commerce features (like discount codes and coupons) influence the frequency and volume of impulse purchases among luxury brand consumers?

1.5 Objectives of the Study

- To evaluate and critique the effectiveness of various digital marketing strategies employed by the listed luxury brands.
- To assess the direct and indirect effects of e-commerce features on impulse buying behaviours, delineating between planned and spontaneous purchase decisions.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

Both the Dual Mediation Hypothesis and Theory of Planned Behaviour are used for this research endeavour and were applied in consumer interactions with luxury brands on digital platforms. The proposed theory serves to explain how the existing

consumer behaviour paradigms can fit or differ from the modern everyday consumption practices among luxury brand consumers while providing critical analytical insight into the shifts in the luxury consumption landscape.

1.6.1 Integration of the dual mediation hypothesis. The Dual Mediation Hypothesis (DMH), which has been previously employed to analyse the mediatory function between exposure to advertising and consumer response via brand attitude and brand cognition, is especially suitable for the digital environment of luxury brands (Zhu, 2023). This hypothesis postulates that online advertising persuasiveness is a function of consumers' effect on the ad and their cognitive evaluations of the brand, both of which shape purchase intentions. In the luxury sector, where the digital advertising format and social media promotions are not simply the means of getting noticed, but the means that are designed to complement the images of exclusivity and eminence. For example, when Gucci sets up a campaign on the digital platform, both the style and the story of the content will impact the consumers' perception towards the brand which in turn determines their behaviour when making a purchase. This study provides a critical evaluation of these affective and cognitive responses via digital content to understand whether or not the perceived luxury is boosted or hampered by digital media usage by these brands (Amatulli et al., 2021).

1.6.2 Application of the theory of planned behaviour. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) is of importance concerning the attitude towards the purchase of luxury goods, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. Of these components, those involved in the digital sphere integrating interactions and the digital presence of luxury brands are most affected. For example, the use of social media to discuss various products like a luxurious handbag from Saint Laurent, word of mouth from friends and family, and the flexibility of buying products online influence the final decision to purchase from the e-commerce site. This study uses the TPB to analyse the compatibility of the digital strategies displayed by luxury brands relative to the behavioural intentions of consumers. It seeks to question whether the aspect of luxury shopping which was highly selective and even more personal is effectively communicated in the digital platforms where consumers are more independent and

also where there has been a shift to online shopping (ASLANYAN & PESIGAN, 2021).

1.7 Definitions of Key Terms

Here are the definitions of key terms related to the research paper:

- **Digitalization:** The transformation of information into a form in which it is grouped in the form of individual units of data called bits, which can be separately located, often in groups of several bits termed bytes. In the business and marketing context, digitalization is defined as the process of applying specific digital technologies to transform a business model and offer new revenue and value-generation possibilities in terms of digital business transition.
- **Social media:** Sites and programs that allow people to contribute content and/or join with a specific community. Marketing and promotions, direct consumer interaction, and as a media tool for business advertisement and sharing of business and general news and information are common uses of social media for business.
- **Brand Image:** The image that a brand has in the eyes of persons. Brand image is therefore the sum of all the communication an individual has with a brand and may include the promotional messages communicated, the company and its products' image and the direct communication with the brand.
- **Brand Awareness:** The level of awareness, in terms of consumers' awareness of the differentiated attributes or image, of a certain brand of the existing products and services. This does not necessarily mean that consumers need to recall every element of the brand, but they should be able to recall the brand under different circumstances.
- **Impulse Buying:** A purchase that is not planned and/or is not a result of an impulse that was anticipated in advanced. Impulse buying refers to a purchase decision that is made by a consumer immediately before

making purchasing this or that product or service. A person who engages in such a purchase is known as an impulse purchaser or impulse buyer.

- **Intention Buying:** A business decision on what products or services should be bought at a given time in future. Intention buying is when the consumers are willing to purchase a product or avail a particular service with prior and deliberate intent hence when they feel it's something they need or want.



Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Digitalization in the Luxury Sector

Cabigiosu (2020) argued that digitalisation in luxury sector covers a broad spectrum of technological adoption appropriate for improving various business processes as well as boosting communication with customers. It adopts the view that this process requires not only the implementation of e-commerce solutions but also the constructive application of social networks, big data, and other tools such as augmented and virtual reality. The aim of digitalization in this context has to go beyond conventional selling interfaces allowing luxurious brands to provide a unique and smooth experience of purchase consistent with their services' quality and individuality (Yaacob et al., 2021).

Conventionally, Rios (2016) claimed that luxury brands have been conservative about their integration of the digital domain. Their caution was due to their understanding that the simplicity and mass availability of digital environments could compromise the exclusivity and prestige that are characteristic of the luxury market. For instance, before the COVID-19 outbreak, luxury brands like Chanel and Hermès used the internet for advertising and corporate image, but not for direct selling. This was a strategic decision since WOS thought that true luxury could not be felt online, but customers have to identify with the product physically (Ursu, 2021).

However, the digital environment before the pandemic was not stagnant; it was changing gradually with the customers' changing trends (Kapferer, 2014). Digital generations, Millennials & Gen Z influence luxury consumption more so because they are the digital nations which began to change consumer demand in the 2000s (Tzavella, 2021). These consumers preferred the interaction with the Internet and advertised the advantages and promptness of Internet purchasing. Achille and Zipser (2020) argued that luxury brands started adapting to this change in direction by incorporating digital technologies in their different processes at a slower pace than the

other luxury sectors. De Boissieu et al. (2021) claimed that Burberry was identified to be one of the leaders of luxury brands' shift towards digital platforms as tools for social media and digital marketing to improve customer interaction and accessibility. Interactive digital campaigns and live-streaming fashion shows were part of their strategies that marked them as the pioneers of luxury sector digital transformation (Teixeira, 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic started in early 2020 which developed and advanced the digital change in every aspect of a business and the luxury sector was not exempt. COVID-19 unleashed unpredictable changes to the luxury sector, namely through lockdowns and other measures that limited in-store shopping drastically. It made luxury brands which have always relied on selling through physical stores over the internet realize the necessity of developing their online presence. This was not just a cyclical shift in practice but an initiative-taking restructuring that aimed to permanently align digital business with the model of the organization (Thaichon & Quach, 2023).

The advancement of digital strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed the key lessons. First, Schultz and Seele (2024) argued that the set need for such an adoption came into existence and was no longer a matter of choice. Traditional brands which used not to sell products through the Internet like Chanel or Celine started providing a range of their products on the Internet (Chatterjee et al., 2022). This shift also involved the clients' digital services like virtual appointments and online client services to meet the exacting standards of customer-facing luxury buyers (Bao, 2023).

Furthermore, social media continued to be used for direct sales activities, the most popular of which is Instagram Shopping (Aiolfi & Sabbadin, 2019). The positive consequences of applying this method are the possibility of involving consumers and presenting goods with the help of videos and other materials (Castillan et al., 2017). For instance, Gucci utilizing Instagram to sell limited-edition products attracted the One-Click buying behaviour of consumers (Rovai, 2018). The digitalization process of luxury brands also meant a reconsideration of the online consumer experience (Targon, 2022). Tactile features that are upcoming via AR and VR were applied to

replicate luxury shopping (Rovai, 2018). For instance, Gucci introduced a virtual try-on activity through which buyers could remotely see how a pair of sneakers would look on them through their phones (Steinbacher, 2023).

Finally, moving towards real digitalisation, various problems were revealed critically. The major issue here was to maintain the brand uniqueness and the aura of luxury that the readers are used to experiencing when reading printed books. While luxury brands derive their value from exclusivity that the internet undermines, the internet contributes to a democratization of access to information (Matic & Bajs, 2022). Besides, luxury brands faced the challenges of digitalization of the process and the need to preserve the personal approach that has always been the focus of such brands (Solomon & Mrad, 2022).

The digital parameter is crucial in the modern luxury segment, where e-commerce plays a massive role. There has been a change in the function of e-commerce, which has transcended an outright sales tool to become a storytelling and engagement platform for luxury brands' client (Chatterjee et al., 2024). Such change is dictated by the demand of the contemporary buyer who expects to buy what he or she wants from wherever he or she is, at any time at a very individualized manner. Also, it is worth noticing that today's luxury brands leverage sophisticated digital technologies like AI, VR, and AR to enhance the customer experience. Gupta et al. (2024) argued that they enable brands to make appeals to the senses, create a possibility of virtual trials, build unique images and tell a brand story depending on the targeted consumers (Hati et al., 2024).

However, the already mentioned digital transformation raises new challenges in the luxury segment. The idea of luxury is directly opposed to the idea of mass availability and usage, which are inherent virtues of digital environments (Das et al., 2024). Internet marketing is a key challenge for luxury brands, which need to retain their selective image while expanding their audiences online. However, the quality of the digital interactions has to be up to the expected standard that is synonymous with luxury brands which is a technicality and also a coherence danger (Ponnamma Divakaran, 2024).

Mekonnen (2024) claimed that confining the study to the luxury sector is justified because digital strategies impact luxury brands in a way that it does not impact other brands. The risks are even greater; customers' requirements are much more demanding, and brand experience and image matter here. Sun (2024) stated that the use of social media requires significant consideration on how it will complement rather than undermine the branding and prestige of the luxury brand and how to make the overall online experience consistent with the in-store experience.

2.2 Impact of Social Media Stimuli on Luxury Brands

Prandelli et al. (2024) argued that engagement, visibility, and sales are some of the benefits that have made social media transform luxury brand marketing through strategic marketing deployment. Cook (2024) claimed that most luxury fashion brands dealt with this issue in the right way through Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and recently, TikTok accounts. Such sites present a chance of telling the story of brands in a modern smart way to an interested audience without compromising on the appeal associated with luxury (Bettle, 2023).

Being an image-sharing platform, Instagram is now at the heart of luxury brands' social media presence. It adopts the view that ACT Fashion timely uses Instagram to promote its current collection by posting rich images and high-quality videos that tell a rich narrative of the company's products. This approach not only strengthens the brand image but also encourages interaction since users want to share and engage with content that mimics brand ideals (Silvestri, 2022).

Although still unremarkable in terms of visuals, Facebook and Twitter are used for customer service and brand narratives. Mosca et al. (2024) claimed that enables luxury brands to interact with consumers, something that is expected from luxury brands when selling their products. Villamil Castro (2024) stated that it also helps the brands to air their pedigree, quality, and principles as they cement themselves in the luxury market Segmentation. For instance, Hermes posts on their Twitter account highlighting the journey of their craftsmen and the intricate procedure of creating the

brand's signature products; showing loyalty to sophistication and artisanry (Biagiola, 2022).

TikTok has become a phenomenon in social media marketing, especially for the younger generation. Whereas luxury brands are mostly slow and shy in their advertising strategies, they have looked towards TikTok as a way of reaching out to this younger demographic (Silveira, 2020). For example, Gucci was able to expand its presence on TikTok by engaging with trends and challenges while presenting a less serious image of the brand (Dutta & Chelliah, 2024). In addition, this strategy effectively diversifies their audience and has a positive impact on the brand's affective factors as more people are drawn to buy products from brands that are creative and genuine (Shah & Ali, 2023).

However, the use of these strategies comes with certain difficulties in terms of efficiency. The major issue for luxury brands engaging in social media is the issue of luxury versus accessibility (Liu, 2024). It has been claimed that social media has many advantages like it gives an unlimited reach to the brands, but it also provides equal opportunity to the brand. It can also be stated that consumers are consequently presented with the challenge of interacting with luxury brands in a way that adds to the image of luxury without in any way detracting from the elements that contribute to the branding of those luxury brands. It adopts the view that this balance is important as it affects consumer attitude and brand equity directly (Botnari, 2021).

Luxury brands in particular often leverage influencer partnerships as an integral part of their social media strategies (Srivastava et al., 2024). Cooperating with the right influencers that match the luxury brands' values and design paradigms the luxury brands can address their audience in a less obtrusive natural manner compared to using advertising techniques (Veg Sala & Geerts, 2024). It is evident that Dior used influencer Chiara Ferragni for several noteworthy events and product launches which have been beneficial. Ferragni has a broad number of followers, and she represents a stylish and elegant woman, which backs up the luxurious image of Dior making the partnership mutual and profitable (Sánchez Zaragoza, 2022).

This is why exclusive content that is posted on social media platforms is also important in the process of building loyalty and interactivity (Sergeevna, 2020). The use of special codes for a limited number of items, behind-the-scenes content, and future collections that are only available to the target audience on social media boosts the consumers' sense of belonging. Besides improving the engagement rates, it creates the anticipation and eagerness of the new products which in turn aids the overall sales promotion strategy (Saldanha, 2021).

An evaluation of consumer participation and interaction with luxury brands is fundamental in measuring the efficiency of social media communication tactics. It adopts the view that such measurements including engagement rates, conversion rates and the overall shift in the consumers' attitude towards the brands are important indications of how brands are effectively using social media platforms to reach out to their target consumers and generate the intended value propositions (Roberts et al., 2020).

Likes, comments, shares and views are some of the most rudimentary yet relevant means of evaluating the primary response of consumers towards the posts shared on social media platforms. It has been stated that these metrics are not just numbers for luxury brands, but the degree of identification with the brand's story. It can be interpreted that high engagement rates on posts which feature the latest collection or sneak peek of the factory production can be viewed as high consumer interest and acceptance and hence brand commitment and brand equity. On the other hand, lower engagement rates may indicate poor customer identification of the brand's messages with their needs or wants, and hence require adjustments to developed content norms (Carlotto, 2024).

Conversion rates – measured as the proportion of target users clicking through or making a purchase after engaging with social media content – are related to the economic value of social media activities (Rahman et al., 2023). Thus, when it comes to luxury brands, the metrics of conversion rates can be especially effective, as they indicate not only interest in a particular product but also the readiness of the consumer to spend money on it. It can be claimed that such rates make it easier for brands to

determine which genres of content are most sale-inducing. For instance, by having specific bonuses or short-term promotions on social media, it is possible to discover high conversion rates, which would mean high marketing effectiveness (Rant, 2021).

However, the total causality of social media on the opinion of brands is the largest measure for luxury brands. Social networks are not only the means of advertising and promotion but also the carriers of brand values (Surucu, 2024). There is an upsurge in positive comments and shares about the brand, increased brand followership, and improved social branding of the brand on social media platforms. On the other hand, the negative shift can be detected in terms of the higher percentage of complaints or criticism in the comments, the decreasing number of followers' interactions or comparisons with the competitors may also point to this shift (Ozuem & Ranfagni, 2021).

Data in such metrics can then be subsequently enriched by additional analytics of their empirical components. The new sophisticated social media monitoring and sentiment analysis tools can break consumer interactions and feedback into pieces and potentially provide a better understanding of the consumers. Also, an analysis of comment threads and posts may provide insights into consumer reactions to new product launches or the introduction of specific campaigns/initiatives by the luxury brand to fine-tune their approach (Ornati & Kalbaska, 2020).

In practice, companies such as Gucci that are active on social media constantly track these measurements to assess the effectiveness of the promoted brands such as Louis Vuitton and register necessary alterations (Surucu, 2024). So, it can be claimed that specific brands like Gucci, which has attracted attention for its creative social media advertising campaigns, frequently receive impressive engagement rates that are reflected in the firm's sales outcomes, especially among youth consumers. Another factor that plays a key role in the brand's high and powerful identity as both exclusive and current is the continuous supply of timely social media images (Cabigiosu, 2020).

2.3 Influence of Website Stimuli on Consumer Behavior

In the face of the sector of luxury, e-commerce platforms are not only mediators of sales but key components of a comprehensive strategy that affects the interaction with clients and the preservation of uniqueness (Cabigiosu, 2020). Luxury brands have carefully constructed their website atmospheres in such a way that they resemble the elegant, exclusive, individualized buying experiences for which such brands are effectively known, guaranteeing that all customer encounters, including those online, epitomize the luxury brand identity (Ornati & Kalbaska, 2022).

Modern luxury sector practice indicates that the convergence of luxury brands into the virtual space is only manageable if it retains elegance and the mystery characteristic of luxury shopping. For example, the Chanel and Louis Vuitton companies have effectively organized their posts to continue the story of luxury beyond the object. It has been established that most of these sites host high-quality detailed information on the crafts, history, and culture associated with the brand, aspects that create a stronger bond between the consumers and the brand, thus improving the overall shopping experience (Ong et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the servicing of the customer in luxury e-commerce sites must always be particular. It is evident that by applying data and analytical intelligence in the shopping process where one can be recommended what to buy next depending on his past purchase and even browsing history (Syed et al., 2024). For instance, Burberry's e-commerce site will suggest certain products for a consumer because of their past purchase behaviour and style thus increasing the chance of a consumer making a purchase decision due to the order (Nobile & Cantoni, 2021).

It cannot be overemphasized that digital features, like product visualization, the use of digital garment fitting rooms in the form of VR, and chatbots that can assist clients in their quest for individualized attention are important. It adopts the view that technological advancements are used to close the gap between the haptic sense of in-store shopping and e-commerce. Interactive merchandising enables the customer to have a clear and detailed vision of the item in different orientations besides having the ability to see the item under different circumstances or in different light settings. This

not only compensates for the lack of physical touch in the product but also enriches the overall experience of the user online (Caboni & Pizzichini, 2022).

Another major advancement is the virtual fitting rooms that enable customers to try out clothes from the comfort of their homes. Companies like Gucci and Ralph Lauren have implemented VR features into their websites so that customers can input their measurements and see how such-and-such dresses would fit and look on them. Not only does this aspect enhance the notion of a simple interaction element and entertainment feature to the shopping process but also brings down the rate of returns which subsequently enhance productivity and serve customer satisfaction (Netek & Carbone, 2020).

Similarly, virtual voice assistants and natural language proactively enhance personalized customer service interfaces through the use of chatbots and artificial intelligence engines. These digital assistants are always available for consultation 24/7, for responding to queries, offering customers fashionable advice, and for handling various sales. They are designed to solve delivery problems, investigate the status of products, or make appointments for in-store meetings while maintaining the luxury experience (Meli, 2020).

Such bonuses and limited-time offers are also used by luxurious brands strategically on the internet by using tools such as limited-period sales and offers. It is commonly aimed at a specific part of the customers, for example, subscribers to this or that program or simply users of certain products that are already in the loyalty program, which not only increases sales figures but also strengthens the buyers' feeling of being part of the club (Mekonnen, 2024).

However, those integrated features have problems, particularly with how to keep the essence of luxury on the screen of a computer or other digital devices. One of the issues identified is a paradigm shift as far as the exclusivity of brands is concerned because the products are easily accessible online. Furthermore, the focus on technology neglects traditional issues like the protection of customers' data, which accompany advanced developments and remain a critical factor in building and

sustaining customers' confidence, as well as in such a sensitive segment as luxury sector (Cho et al., 2023).

Promotion strategies such as offers, special promotions or time-bound promotions, and rewards in e-commerce help influence the buying decision of the potential customer which more often leads to impulse buying, is one of the major strategies employed in luxury brand e-commerce. These digital strategies are not about just sales promotion; they are used purposely to foster extended consumer interaction, and brand identification, and to modify certain behaviours regarding consumption habits.

Discounts and other incentives are especially effective on luxury goods brand's websites because they uncommitted see their customers as impulse buyers. The psychology behind this is based on the concept of scarcity and exclusivity, which are two operations that underlie the luxury business (Müller-Pérez et al., 2023). For instance, when Gucci an exclusive brand presents products at a certain low price with a threat that they will be out of stock soon, the people will be compelled to buy the items to avoid missing out on the next similar experience and this retains the high-class status of the products. However, there is controversy that such strategies can be a problem for the classic model of luxury marketing, which does not imply regular changes in the price and a limited number of targets. Some critics opine that regular promotions may negatively affect the brand image as consumers may begin to associate it with less value and therefore less prestigious (McTiernan, 2021).

Another digital touch point is the use of loyalty rewards programs to aid purchase decisions. Such programs are aimed to build customer loyalty and boost customers' lifetime value by rewarding the customers. For luxury brands, such programs can be frequently more complex than simple point-based ones to offer an extra experience or product which testifies to the luxury quality of the brand and strengthens the customer's emotional bond (Matyusz & Pistrui, 2023). For example, reward programs such as invitations to special fashion events, and prompt access to the company's new collections will not only show customer appreciation but will also guarantee their continued patronage. The critical perspective here analyzes if the

offering of loyalty programs in luxury sector undermined the brands' elitist positioning by making it 'democratic' or if it subtly improves the image by creating a bond between the brand and the clients (Cooke et al., 2021).

In addition, the introduction of these features should be done very carefully. Specifically, sales techniques that include promoting limited offers like flash sales or offering many discounts will be counter-productive to the luxury brand image. While designing incentives, organizations face a dilemma of whether it is possible not to disappoint the customers and at the same time does not make the brand cheap. Luxury brands have to manage these strategies and their overall brand communication strategy which has to focus on quality, authenticity, and remarkable and limited availability (Matić & Bajs, 2022).

This critique also applies to the real efficacy of these digital features in transforming consumer behaviour. In this regard, data analytics are useful in the determination of the extent to which consumers are likely to react to diverse incentives. In the case of luxury brands, digital transformation can lead to discovering patterns that show the actual effects of promotions and loyalty programs on the consumer's decision-making process. This approach thus enables the brand to make informed adjustments to their strategies as influenced by consumers' behaviour and feedback thus improving the level of shopper engagement and the targeted marketing endeavours (Dallabona, 2024).

2.4 Digitalization and Luxury Brand Management

The modernization of luxury brand management required a new paradigm of luxury brand management that enabled the proper use of digital tools while preserving exclusivity, brand value, and customer data secrecy. Thus, such a shift is a strategic change in the luxury industry, which is driven by new consumer behaviour and by the increase of digital components blending into companies' processes (Mariachiara & Pedroni, 2021).

Luxury branding has for many years been established on the conception of selectiveness and individualism in attending customers. Thus, the conversion of brand management strategies to incorporate digital channels has been undertaken with enthusiasm, as well as apprehension. For instance, Burberry and Louis Vuitton have followed the digital path aiming to incorporate augmented reality in their marketing strategies and also have developed complex e-commerce structures. All these innovations are meant to increase the consumer's interaction with the brand and to mimic the physical luxury store experience. Burberry picked a beneficial use of augmented reality where customers can virtually see how the purchased product will look in their environment, and this is an asset in improving the purchasing experiences while at the same time keeping a product's exclusivity (Mahmoud et al., 2022).

Nevertheless, this digital transition process is accompanied by several problems. One crucial issue is that of merchandising, or the loss of exclusivity which this entails. This is because the growth of luxury brands' presence via online store businesses and digital doors might be a way of diminishing the exclusivity that the latter encourages. For instance, when a luxury brand is easily accessible online, it may compromise on its 'luxury' label and thus potential to inconvenience regular customer who appreciates holograms and actual room experience. Also, excessive advertising of products on social networks and other platforms may lead to brand democratisation and decrease the exclusivity factor of purchasing a luxury brand (Huang & Zhou, 2024).

Another crucial issue is the protection of customer data and their privacy; this is especially vital in the luxury segment as clients expect flawless and discreet services. Unfortunately, the move to digital means making oneself more exposed to the theft of customer data (Loureiro, 2023). Situations of data breaches are culpable for extreme negligence of brand association hence, tarnishing what forms the essence of luxury brand equity. For instance, a leakage of customer details at a luxury store will not only incur a cash cost but a consequent loss of consumer confidence which is expensive in the luxury sector where consumer loyalty is based on privacy and confidentiality (Liu et al., 2021).

Nonetheless, the overall strategic implications of digitalization have been mostly positive, opening new opportunities for brand growth and customer relations. As consumers interact online, we can see valuable information that can help in the creation of better marketing campaigns. Moreover, websites and social networks have become an opportunity to expand the client base for luxurious goods among the global population. This expansion is particularly relevant as the market of luxury goods witnesses the rise of emerging economies where digital interaction is the first interaction with luxury brands (Linfante & Pompa, 2021).

2.5 Post-COVID-19 Shifts in Luxury Sector

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a change that has made luxury sector more digital and progressed at a faster pace. This shift has radically changed the operations and strategies of luxury brands and their customer base as well as influencing consumer habits. In light of this new landscape, luxury brands have witnessed the centrality of digital strategies, not merely as a means of surviving but for success in a significantly altered market context (Hemzo, 2023).

Before the COVID-19 outbreak, most luxury brands had been quite reserved in their digital growth strategies as the key reasoning has been that adopting online platforms might compromise the luxurious atmosphere and the personalized touch that is inherent to the luxury shopping experience. Still, the emergence of COVID-19 and subsequent quarantines and social distancing mandates forced brands to move further with their digital initiatives (Joy, 2022). Suddenly, it was not just about becoming an online luxury brand, which would have been challenging enough on its own, but the digitization of every aspect of its business model for the benefits of the luxury brand customer experience to be upheld (Hemzo, 2023).

Companies that have participated in the use of digital tools in the process of marketing and sales, such as Gucci, Louis Vuitton, Chanel, and others were ready for such changes. These brands developed more efficient e-commerce platforms, improved the online helpdesk, and used very sophisticated technologies to advertise their products, including virtual reality showrooms and augmented reality product

demos. For example, the Gucci company introduced a virtual treatment that allowed clients to visit its store remotely and purchase items through a video call involving assistants (Lee & Youn, 2021).

Furthermore, the COVID-19 situation has made people familiar with and comfortably inclined to luxurious online shopping. This luxury consumer segment primarily associates online shopping with convenience and safety compromising the desire for personal interactions and the ability to touch the product (Dallabona, 2024). This shift is backed by facts that reveal that there has been an increase in the sales of luxury products through online platforms during the pandemic. In another Bain & Company report, it was established that E-commerce luxury goods penetration rose to almost double in 2020 and this growth continued to thrive in 2021 (Le et al., 2023).

There is also a shift in customer behaviour, and this is due to changed expectations. Modern customers are highly demanding, especially when it comes to the choice of luxury items, which is why the contemporary client wants an effective omnichannel shopping experience, which embraces both online and offline modes of purchasing (Hemzo, 2023). They expect anything that is done online to be as effective as the face-to-face interaction experienced in stores. This includes high-definition product photography, virtual content, and one-on-one advisory services delivered through digital devices. Consumers also value speed and convenience more than before — fast shipping, ease of return, and efficient customer service, which goes against the ethos of luxury brands that revel in their slowness and meticulousness (Jiang & Stylos, 2023).

The digital influence on markets has also left the aspect of data privacy and security as key to luxury sector. Due to this revelation, luxury consumers are using their social networks, giving out their personal and financial information and they expect it will be protected to the highest level. Therefore, luxury brands require the implementation of a sound cybersecurity system to ensure that the customers' data is safeguarded (Laguna, 2020).

Thus, the further evolution of luxury sector is also the persistent trend of its digitalization. The problem that arises therefore for the luxury brands will be to keep looking for ways and means to create new novelties in the field to preserve the VIP look and feel of luxury shopping without losing the ‘human touch’ factor that is quite important to the consumers. For example, using artificial intelligence for fitting, and styling, and using blockchain for the origins and genuineness of products could be future trending applications (Joy, 2022).

2.6 Brand Image in Luxury Sector

Brand image, which is a very important factor in the marketing mix of any business, is even more so in the luxury sector. It is defined as the evaluation that the consumer has formed concerning the belie and worth of a particular brand based on past experiences as well as outlay info. In the context of luxury brands, the brand image has a direct connection with quality, exclusivity, and prestige. It is the bit that makes consumers distinguish the luxury brand from the rest and gives the brand a place in the consumer’s mind as not just an object, but as part of a glamorous lifestyle (Bettle, 2023).

It is existential to say that the management of brand image has drastically transformed due to the emergence of digitalization. Digital platforms give luxury brands new opportunities to build and communicate their brand image exclusively through other means. Other platforms that allow one to build a better, more personal experience for luxury brands online include websites, social media and even augmented/virtual reality (Cooke et al., 2021). These brands can continue and build their brand narrative in a perfectly controlled manner across all of the touchpoints they have with the customers, which is critical when building a luxury brand in the digital landscape. In addition, efforts can be made to secure more detailed consumer information through digital tools, thus making it possible to enhance the brand image management and adjust it to satisfy the customers’ elevated standards more suitably (Bao, 2023).

2.7 Brand Awareness

Brand awareness refers to the level of familiarity consumers have on the qualities or image of the brand. More so, luxury brands are those that people spend a lot of emotions as well as money on when deciding to purchase the particular item. It makes certain that brand stands on the foreground of consumer consideration sets while making decisions (Hemzo, 2023).

Social networks are one of the most significant and powerful tools to develop brand recognition. Since the audience is connected to their devices, it is now possible for luxury brands to reach the masses more frequently and at a considerably lower cost compared to the more conventional mediums (Cabigiosu, 2020). The luxury brands can leverage social media to not only market their products but also share their story, history and process of making these luxury items, thus maintaining the enchantment of luxury (Javornik et al., 2021).

Literature review revealed that brand familiarity has a positive influence on consumers' attitude and brand image especially in case of luxury brands. Customers' consumption habit is also an area that is impacted by the use of digital media in the communication process. Frequent and high-quality content shared to digital platforms helps increase brand awareness and also helps maintain the brand in current competitive markets (Cho et al., 2023).

Social networks have become an inalienable part of the marketer's toolkit when promoting luxury brands; therefore, the role they play in the communication strategy of luxury brands is revolutionary. Such social networks as Instagram, Facebook and Twitter enable luxury brands to run highly managerial marketing strategies that demonstrate their elitism and tradition to the world (Kim, 2021).

The aspect of social media platforms is even more helpful for brands that deal in luxury products due to its heavily visual appeal. Engaging, high-definition images and videos make the product seem more tangible and tangible high-quality means more in line with the luxury-branding message. In addition, through the use of social media,

luxury brands are able to engage in storytelling, which should be an effective way of appealing to the emotions of the consumers. Such stories may discuss the background of a particular brand, design of products, and the life that the brand reflects (Kuusela, 2021).

Moreover, social media enables the direct communication of brands with consumers, which can be used for creating identity and consumers' brand loyalty. Consumers can express themselves and their views immediately which can contain useful feedback and also boost the recognition of more brands. Social networks are also characterized by their immediacy and interactivity and thus enable Luxury Brands to fine-tune their actions in response to feedback or trends transmitted through the platforms in question (Le et al., 2023).

2.8 Impulse Buying

The concept of impulse buying refers to purchase made in an unplanned way and with less thought given to the prospective purchases, it has gained more popularity with the use of technology especially within the luxury goods market (Le et al., 2023). One of the attributes intensively influenced by the digital change is shopping behavior, where the constantly available e-stores, social media and mobile shopping app have made it convenient for the consumer to purchase without prior planning. These digital channels decrease the interval between the lust-for and possession, which in past has been occupied by reflection (Mahmoud et al., 2022).

Flipping to the online platforms has increased the volume of several psychological stimuli to impulse buying. Another drawback of e-commerce is that the temptation that it provides coupled with easy payment systems makes people make hasty decisions of buying the products. One strategy commonly used by web stores, including those that sell luxury brands, is the use of time-sensitive promotions like one-day specials and 'flash sales,' which attempt to force people into an immediate decision. However, through online shopping, consumers do not experience buyer's remorse since they are not influenced by peers, and this makes the consumer make hasty and impulsive decisions (McTiernan, 2021).

Other related practices include the ability of social media platforms to enhance impulse buying by incorporating a shopping function into their frame. Currently, Instagram, and Facebook have the ‘shop now’ buttons that direct users to the product page for easy buying. In turn, luxury brands, whose products are advertised in rich, looking beautiful post, can have a viewer turn into a buyer within a few seconds. This incorporation of commerce within social and entertainment realms provides the impulse buying opportunities placing luxury products in the purview of possibility (Müller-Pérez et al., 2023).

2.9 Intention Buying

Intention buying is categorized in specialty markets which takes a longer period of time before a consumer decides to purchase a certain product. This behaviour is more eminent in the luxury segment where, because of the higher price and relevance of products, there is usually more contemplation. Customers from this segment act not just as consumers but as statement-makers, using purchased goods as a symbol of status, thus implying a more detailed assessment of the product’s characteristics, brand history, and opportunities for the use of additional options (Rant, 2021).

Intention buying has been upgraded by the digital age where it’s easier for the consumer to find detailed information and other useful information on products as well as reviews from users and even interactive content (Rahman et al., 2023). Leading luxury brands have also followed this trend by enriching their websites with clear descriptions of the actual products, high-quality materials, photorealistic images as well as videos that would demonstrate the subtleties of the production process of the respective items. In addition, there is increased use of storytelling as a marketing tool by many luxury brands as they seek to tell compelling stories to the consumers that appeal to their heart and mind to change their buying behavior (Sergeevna, 2020).

Recommendations from other consumers are a key factor in intention buying since actual physical inspection of the products is not feasible. Recommendations and ratings can greatly affect the tendency towards purchasing a particular merchandise to

confirm their quality and status of being luxurious goods. Other forms of interaction including live chats and virtual consultations also ensure that intended original buying experiences similar to those offered by luxury retail stores are achieved as they include personalized consultation and affirmation of the decision to buy (Silvestri, 2022).

2.10 Comparative Analysis in the Digital Age

Analysing the role of impulse and intention buying shows that they are interrelated and influenced by the presence of the digital touchpoints. Even though impulse buying relies heavily of the convenience of the online transactions, the intention buying is equally fueled by the availability of information, as well as the interactive experiences online. Although, then again, both behaviors cannot bypass being affected by digital marketing practiced by leaders in the luxury brands niche (Targon, 2022).

Another crucial factor is that the digitally delivered touchpoints nowadays include an individualized email marketing, retargeting ads, and social media interactions which make particular contributions towards the decision making for both scenarios of the buying pattern (Steinbacher, 2023). In the case of impulse purchases, such touchpoints rely on exploiting feelings and easy access, which leads to justifications. In the case of intention purchases, these areas are meant to deliver more comprehensive interactions and information, which enable a consumer to engage in a more mindful purchasing decision. Furthermore, the digital media environment provides opportunities to change consumers' behavior from impulse to intention and vice versa. For instance, a luxury brand can lure in an impulse buyer with advertizing but later sell them using carefully woven stories and highly personalized digital service encouraging the buyer's subsequent intentional choices (Ursu, 2021).

2.11 Case Study: Digital Strategies of Specific Luxury Brands

The actions taken by Gucci, Louis Vuitton, and Chanel after COVID-19 are typical examples of the essential shifts that luxury brands should undertake to succeed well in the new luxury market environment. All the brands have tactfully utilized social

media and the improved features of the websites particularly during and post-pandemic to not only sustain but to grow in terms of markets and consumer base. These strategies focus on the fact that on the one hand, luxury brands need to remain exclusive while, at the same time, reaching out to the new generation of consumers who are actively using social media (Kuusela, 2021).

Gucci has been one of the leading luxury brands when it comes to digital transformation especially when it comes to the use of social media. This is an example of how during the pandemic, Gucci produced the hashtag #GucciCommunity on Instagram for people to share positive messages. It was a part of the larger long-term effort to improve brand recognition and its relations with the consumers as physical contact across the stores was minimalized due to the pandemic. Furthermore, a new application that was released by Gucci known as the Gucci App came with an augmented reality that enabled users to try the sneakers virtually. Thus, this usage of AR technology not only met the growing demands of consumers for a better online experience but also put Gucci in the right space of being seen as a trendsetter by integrating technology with fashion. The case of the app illustrates the effects that it has made regarding the consumer's behaviour towards a certain product as well as interventions to it, which proves that implementation of immersive technologies will be profitable as it boosts the conversion ratio and an overall number of customers (Javornik et al., 2021).

Louis Vuitton has also shifted its considerable extent in its digital approach, elaborating on how it ensures that the brand's online and offline platforms complement one another in an omnichannel approach. To adapt to the change of the customer's shopping behaviour, Louis Vuitton improved functions on their website, such as live chat and video appointments that can deliver a similar in-store experience for customers. Additionally, Louis Vuitton's dedication to establishing a strong social media presence has been highlighted, such as the innovative LV Volt jewellery campaign on the Instagram site, which incorporated excellent pictures and sharable material to engage the audience. This single strategy not only generated more direct consumer contacts but also ensured that they visited their e-commerce site, proving

the effectiveness of multiple touchpoint advertising campaigns across various digital mediums (Zhu, 2023).

Chanel, usually less active in attempting new digital strategies, has realized that being present online is crucial in the post-pandemic world. Chanel has given attention to constructing an online identity that maintains traditional luxury while simultaneously communicating the brand's identity online. Due to the pandemic, Chanel released its first fashion show, which was a radical invention from the annual massive fashion show (Kim, 2021). The virtual format benefited from the maximal audience visibility to ensure Chanel continued its brand interaction while keeping it as selective as its shows. Also, because of the ever-evolving digital landscape, Chanel has used its social media platforms to share stories on artisanship and history, therefore, creating awareness of the brand's value and origin to the consumers. Such actions have helped sustain the consumers' attention and demand, especially in situations where face-to-face with products is impossible (Khan, 2021).

These brands all show that through the digital transformation process the most important values of luxury, which are exclusivity, customization, and a strong relationship with the brand's history, can be enhanced through change and innovation. The actions taken by Gucci, Louis Vuitton, and Chanel not only show how these brands adapted to the COVID-19 crisis but also demonstrate other trends in the luxury goods sector, including digital flexibility and technology potential for consumer relations transformation (Khwaja et al., 2022).

2.12 Summary And Research Gap

While reviewing existing literature, it can be concluded that while the trends towards the shift towards digital platforms are covered comprehensively, there is a literature gap regarding the extent of consumer engagement and the response to digital strategies. The rapid shift to digital areas by luxury brands has been well documented, though the specifics of how such online interactions affect consumer impressions, brand allegiance, and buying behaviours deserve closer analysis.

While the shift of luxury brands to digital platforms has been thoroughly covered, research focusing on adaptation tends to address the issue as a homogeneous concept rather than examining how consumers respond differently across different digital contexts. Studies often tend to average the results when it comes to digital adoption failing to disentangle between the influences of various approaches including the utilization of social media platforms and direct e-commerce improvements. Additionally, the growth of online interactions and consumption is equally acknowledged, but there is a lack of comprehensiveness regarding the elements of such digital interactions that would determine which aspects are more effective in strengthening consumers' engagement and loyalty over time.

Furthermore, the research issues related to the nature of the conspicuous consumption process and the ways consumers evaluate the digital appearances of luxury brands stay implicit. The majority of existing works built their results on quantitative data and the use of key performance indicators such as click-through rates, conversion rates, and total sales. However, these metrics are not always effective in portraying the consumer's emotional and psychological perceptions of the advertised products, nor do they explain why certain digital marketing initiatives are successful or not.

It is also not evident enough in terms of critical analysis regarding their consequences on brand equity and exclusivity overall concerning the cloud digital strategies being employed. The position of luxury brands depends on their exclusivity and how the latter is preserved or violated in the digital environment – this is a weakly researched area. The idea of expanding access through digital and overcoming barriers yet keeping the brand selective and exclusive is a paradox that needs qualitative analysis.

To address these gaps, this study proposes the use of a qualitative method, and more importantly, consumer insight into digital engagement. In this respect, through methodologies like focus groups, the study seeks to reveal multiple dimensions of consumer practices and perceptions of digital initiatives by luxury brands.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The decision to employ a qualitative mode of data collection in this study is a result of a conscious effort to capture the dimensions of consumers' perception and their overall attitude towards the digital strategies as adopted by luxury brands. This approach is especially effective in cases when detailed contextual analyses are required to find out the complex processes inherent in luxury consumption in the context of digital environments. The justification for the utilisation of qualitative information sources is based on the flexibility and exploration of shifting perceptions and actions, which is particularly applicable in the uncertain environment caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Such an approach enables a discussion of processes that are equally central and phenomenological, which are crucial to understanding the dynamic of luxury brands in digitally enabled environments.

The focus of qualitative research is to provide depth data rather than breadth, making it suitable to capture and analyse the dynamics and psychological effects of marketing strategies that might be missed by quantitative methods. It gives the way how luxury brands retain and sustain their luxury when the haptic, individualistic luxury purchase experiences are shifted into virtual formats. However, this approach is not without its critics who may say that the findings might be generalised, and a possibility of researcher biases—a point that requires considerable methodological control.

3.2 Sample

The study aims to recruit twelve participants from purposive sampling to capture detailed elaboration of experiences from consumers who have engaged with luxury brands online pre- and post-pandemic. This sampling technique is selected since it is capable of targeting respondents from a certain population who have prior experience

or understanding of the phenomenon under investigation in a way that increases the likelihood of acquiring the most appropriate and diverse information possible.

3.3 Sampling Technique

The sampling approach used in this research is purposive to ensure that participants have engaged with luxury brands online before and during the COVID-19 period. Thus, this method makes sure that the participants have the right experiences and knowledge of how new strategies work in the computer world relative to consumer actions within the luxury industry. Due to the focus on generating in-depth qualitative data directly relevant to the aims and objectives of the study, purposive sampling is chosen. It enables a focused investigation of the richness of consumer attitudes and digital behaviours with luxury brands. However, it opens the possibility of biases as the sample does not represent the wider market of luxury consumers. To avoid this, the selection criteria are clearly outlined and adhered to, which makes the sample as accurate as possible. It is beneficial for the overall qualitative approach of the study, as it provides dense information while admitting the weaknesses of the sample-based approach and potential selection bias. The population of the participants comprised of eight participants out of twelve because all the selected participants had the relevant profile for the study. They included 3 males and 5 females; therefore, the sample was not heavily biased in terms of their gender. Participants were 26-31 years old, which means that it is focused on the younger generation, which is essential for understanding the importance of the study in the context of modern digital trends. As for the marital status, the three participants were married while five of them being single. It is this mixture that gives an overall or perhaps a general view of functionality throughout the life cycle with regard to digital interaction. Four participants were screened out since their profiles did not meet the research requirement, thus maintaining the homogeneity and relevance of participants for the study.

3.4 Research Philosophy

This study adopts an interpretivist epistemology, which assumes that knowledge of the world is socially constructed. This philosophical stance is particularly ideal in a

qualitative research scenario, whereby the objective is to gain depth about the individual's experience. Based on the objectives of this study, the interpretivist approach enables an understanding of how consumers perceive and engage with the digital strategies of luxury brands. Interpretivism is not like positivist frameworks this aims at discovering the true and generalizable facts based on numbers and figures. This is especially important when analysing consumers' responses to luxury brands' digitization efforts since such responses depend on values, expectations, and semantic connotations associated with brands.

However, such an approach provides a profound insight into the consumers' behaviour and perceptions, however, it can be criticized for the lack of external validity. Interpretivism tends to gather data intensively at a small level which can be problematic about the generalization of the data in large populations. However, the strength of this approach is that it gives a comprehensive account of what constitutes such a phenomenon, say, consumer-brand relationships in the digital environment that would otherwise go unnoticed by more quantitative-oriented approaches.

3.5 Data Collection Technique

Focus groups has been used to collect data in which participants can communicate their experiences and views comprehensively. The reason for choosing the primary data collection approach is that it provides a wide variety of ideas while at the same time ensuring that each participant gets a chance to express him/herself. Conducting focus groups is especially useful in studies aimed at identifying emergent patterns of perceptions and experiences in certain consuming publics, for instance, users of luxury brands. It enables the observations of social interactions as the participating individuals, this fosters the identification of emergent social realities or presuppositions dear to the approaches of ethnomethodologists.

However, the use of focus groups can be also accompanied by certain biases which affect the respondent answers such as monotony to the opinions of other members or agitation by the talkative respondents. While there may be certain limitations to using the interactive discussion approach, the richness of the data that

can be produced usually offsets those minor drawbacks, giving insights into consumer's impressions and decision-making processes.

3.6 Data Analysis Technique

Interpretation of the data that will be collected from the focus group will involve thematic analysis. This technique is useful in qualitative research in finding, analysing, and even narrating patterns (themes) in data samples. It provides versatility because it enables the researcher to code the data in both an a priori approach based on themes or concepts which have been developed from the objectives of the research study and the emergent approach. The dual approach in thematic analysis is helpful in this study as it directs the data analysis process straight towards the research objectives; however, it also respects the possibility of new discourses from participants.

When adopting thematic analysis in a particular study, it entails the procedure of coding data, developing, and revising themes that have strength in genuinely established data. This technique helps the research to obtain the richness of the consumers' reactions to the digital initiatives and at the time offers a framework for categorizing and analysing the findings. However, the thematic analysis does need considerable attention concerning which bias might influence the data interpretations; therefore, coding and thematic development should include reflexivity.

3.7 Assessment Measures

To make the results of the focus groups as valid and dependable as possible, the questions for the interview will be designed in advance. These are specific questions that are systematically constructed to gather participants elaborate information on their encounter with luxury brand's digital endeavours. The interview questions will cover areas of social media engagement and campaign, functionality/ ease of use of e-commerce platforms, as well as the general impression created by these digital strategies on the consumers. Appendix A has attached the questionnaire.

The application of structured interview questions in focus groups plays several essential functions. Firstly, it gives a comparison way between several sessions of the research and the comparison of the responses. This is useful, especially in linking similar aspects across the different participants and sub-groups. Secondly, structured questions allow for better control of the ensuing conversation and guarantee the collection of all requisite data pertinent to the goals of the research. However, to keep the qualitative nature which is one of the important benefits of the method, the specific interviewer will have the possibility to expand the questioning in some areas depending on the flow of the conversation and answers given by the participants. This two-step procedure guarantees the layers of investigation and opens up opportunities for discoveries that may enrich the data based on the different perspectives offered.

3.8 Procedure

It is meant to be a rigorous and comprehensive process that occurs in stages to guarantee the credibility of the data gathered. The first procedure is the identification of participants to part take in the study. This will be done by inviting to respond to the survey contacts that have been identified purposively and other contacts that will be gotten from snowball sampling. Besides, this method guarantees that the participants can be chosen according to the exposition of experienced luxury brand consumers, which also increases the variety of the sample.

If participants are recruited, the focus groups will be conducted through the safety of secured online platforms. This approach has been chosen to allow for participation irrespective of the geographical location of the participants to have a wider variety of participant views. A skilled researcher will have the task of moderating the focus group to lead the discussion to address all the relevant issues fully.

In the end, all the focus group discussions will be transcribed verbatim. The transcription procedure is vital since it involves translating the spoken word into written form that can be scrutinized. This process must be accurate so that the analysis reflects only what has been said during the discussions, preserving the data's purity.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Firstly, ethical issues are of paramount concern in the study and are strictly followed at all stages of research. Mentioning and explaining the purpose of the study to all participants and their specific roles within the study. They will be informed about their rights such as their right to withdraw from the study at any time with no reason required. These rights will be explained verbally and in written form to the participants so that they have adequate information on the research being conducted on them. Another important principle is certainly the principles of confidentiality and privacy. All measurements and observations to be made will be assured since personal identifiers will not be included in the physical research data. The participant's anonymity is preserved in this measure, and it meets the legal requirement for data protection. Moreover, all the proposed research activities, interview questions, and protocols for handling data will be scrutinized and endorsed by the IRB.

Chapter 4

Findings

This chapter focuses more on the interviews that shed light on consumers' interactions with luxury fashion brands online regarding the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The evaluation of the research questions results in the following major sections of the related analysis. The first part focuses on the social media consumers use, revealing why these platforms are chosen and how they affect people's attitudes toward luxury brands. The second examines the reception and effectiveness of DMCom and advertisements originating from luxury fashion brands on such platforms, emphasizing the extent of people's awareness of them. Continuing with the next section, the study analyses consumer perception regarding buying disposition of luxury fashion brands due to social media presence, with a focus on visual identity, brand image, and reputation from a consumer trust model viewpoint. The study also aims to determine the aspects that enhance the aesthetic appeal of an online website and how these aspects affect online buying behaviour. The last section evaluates the impact of the pandemic breakout on online consumers' buying behaviour, mainly using the lens of the digital transformation of luxury fashion. This section also looks at how the effects of the pandemic have amplified consumer expectations of information on product descriptions, reviews, and returns policies since they provide no physical sense of the goods. Using thematic analysis through Nvivo, this chapter gives the reader a clear picture of the consumer fashion luxury brand relationship in the digital age, including the factors that attract consumers, foster engagement and loyalty, and dictate buying decisions.

4.1 Consumer Preferences for Online Platforms

Table 3

Consumer Preferences for Online Platforms

Theme	Area of Focus	Quotes
Ease of Use	User Experience	"I prefer websites that are easy to navigate. If I can't find what I'm looking for quickly, I usually just leave."
Variety of Products	Product Range	"The wide selection of products is a huge draw. I like having many options in one place."
Trust and Security	Data Privacy and Security	"I only shop on platforms that I trust with my personal and payment information."
Customer Service	Post-Purchase Experience	"Good customer service is a must. If there's an issue, I need to know that it will be resolved quickly."
Delivery Speed	Logistics and Supply Chain	"Fast delivery is crucial. I don't want to wait too long for my purchases."

Ease of use, product variety, and trust are some of the primary factors that affect an individual's rationale for choosing an online store over another. These factors are crucial for user satisfaction and decision-making, as they directly impact the overall shopping experience as those quotes show: These factors are crucial for user satisfaction and decision-making, as they directly impact the overall shopping experience as those quotes show:

" Sometimes, I do not hesitate to seek an alternative if a site is confusing and stuffed." (3)

'Some platforms help me filter specific options according to my previous searches, which I like.' (5)

"For the website, it should be even possible to display the availability of products in real-time." (8)

Participant 3's point on the site being 'cluttered' is a good reminder of the cardinal rule that there should not be too much going on on the page. This supports the overarching idea that the user interface should be as natural as possible and that the more complicated the interface is, the more frustrated the users will be. Complicated websites may cause users to look for other sites; hence, usability is a major determinant of the use of websites (Chen & Lee, 2020).

Participant 5's justification of preference for special offers that consider the customers' interests is a testament to the ever-rising trend of shopping, which shifted

online environments. These are relevant factors in the work to ensure that users' experience is the best and participation on the platforms is improved.

4.2 Impact of Digital Marketing Communications on Consumer Perceptions

Table 2

Impact of Digital Marketing Communications on Consumer Perceptions (Dreifaldt & Drennan, 2019)

Theme	Area of Focus	Quotes
Advertising Reach	Brand Awareness	"I've discovered a lot of brands through ads on social media and search engines."
Content Personalization	Consumer Engagement	"I love when ads are personalized to my interests—it makes shopping easier and more enjoyable."
Brand Transparency	Consumer Trust	"I trust brands that are upfront about their values and practices in their marketing materials."
Social Proof	Influence on Purchase Decisions	"Seeing positive reviews and testimonials on social media often influences my decision to buy."
Interactive Campaigns	User Participation and Interaction	"I engage more with brands that have interactive content, like polls or quizzes in their ads."

The following are a few reasons digital marketing communications are evident in advertising reach and content personalization to the consumer. The given quotes can provide this evidence since they explain how more visibility of ads, using consumers' feedback, and including interactive content all improve consumers' engagement.

"I saw that many brands went into digital ads, so I became more cognizant of new products and offers." (2)

"Those brands that engaged in the act of seeking consumers' response and incorporating them on their digital campaigns felt more authentic." (5)

Some of the fantastic features I found interesting include; "Polls and quizzes were additional exciting techniques of creating the shopping experience more engaging to me." (6)

Participant 2 was correct, saying there is so much push towards digital advertising since I have observed that reach is central to enhancing brand image. This

is in line with what is presented in the table, now focusing on how broad advertising presence helps to improve brand familiarity and to bring across new products (Chen and Lee (2020)). Frequently, the increase in ad visibility plays a vital role in enhancing brand awareness and creating consumer interest.

Participant 5 gave feedback on the role of feedback-driven campaigns where consumer demand for realistic digital marketing is apparent. Product-related advertising campaigns developed by considering the consumers' input are honest and credible. This provides a rationale for the notion that interacting with consumer feedback ultimately fosters the design of a genuine relationship as found within the literature (Smith et al., 2019). Participant 6 also pointed out polls and quizzes, which also suggest that more effective commercials are those that engage the target audience. Well-incorporated strips appeal more and kindle better interest with the users, making the shopping experience more enjoyable and effective. This supports the content of Nguyen and Su (2020), which pointed to the importance of having effective and qualitative content that creates an avenue for active user engagement. Consequently, these observations disclose that broad-based advertising push, combined with an advertisement-pull approach that incorporates consumer feedback and constant provision of rich content, help digital marketing achieve its objective of consumer attention.



Figure 2. Key drivers of consumer engagement in digital marketing.

The five significant words, Engagement, Visibility, Personalization, Feedback, and Interaction, further demonstrate the way in which digital marketing targets consumer attention and relationship-building. Together, they ensure the marketing effort is effective and genuine, creating higher consumer commitment.

4.3 Influence of Social-Media on Brand Awareness and Image

Table 3

Influence of Social-Media on Brand Awareness and Image (Dreifaldt & Drennan, 2019)

Theme	Area of Focus	Quotes
Visual Identity	Brand Image	"I get a sense of a brand's style and identity through their <u>Instagram</u> posts."
User-Generated Content	Consumer Perception	"Seeing real people use the products on social media helps me trust the brand more."
Influencer Partnerships	Brand Endorsement	"If an influencer I follow endorses a product, I'm more likely to check it out."
Brand Storytelling	Brand Loyalty	"Brands that share their story on social media feel more relatable and genuine."
Social Responsibility	Brand Reputation	"I prefer brands that showcase their social responsibility efforts on social media."

Both visual identity and user-generated content are crucial in how social media impact brand image and awareness. The given quotes do it in the way that effective and consistent branding, realistic consumer experiences, and influential recommendations all play their part in developing and strengthening the trust in brands.

"What I observe is that those brands which maintain a particular design of social media accounts develop a better picture in my mind." (1)

" They also make me more inclined to buy from a brand because the words of other buyers holding value, specifically review or testimonials, do." (3)

" When other influencers that I follow are promoting a particular product, it does influence me considerably to consider or even buy the product." (7)

Based on Participant 1's response, it is evident that it is effective to maintain a unique and familiar visual presentation across multiple social media platforms to create a good identity for people to associate with (Williams & Khan, 2019). Coordinated communication also implies the profuse usage of visual cues in branding. Keeping brand identity consistent makes that particular brand recognizable and easily identifiable to the generality of the consuming public. Participant 3 understood that having genuine reviews or testimonials is important as they create brand credibility. Some of the advantages of user-generated content, such as customer reviews and

image and recognition. They highlight the need for maintaining a coherent design approach, strong content, and endorsements from influential people.

4.4 Website Design and Its Influence on Online Purchasing Decisions

Table 4

Website Design and Its Influence on Online Purchasing Decisions (Nilsson et al., 2017)

Theme	Area of Focus	Quotes
Visual Appeal	User Experience	"If a website looks outdated, I usually assume the products are too."
Ease of Navigation	Purchase Journey	"I like websites where I can easily find what I'm looking for—clear categories and search functions are a must."
Loading Speed	User Satisfaction	"If a site takes too long to load, I just move on to another one."
Mobile Optimization	Accessibility	"I do most of my shopping on my phone, so I need sites that work well on mobile."
Clear Call to Action	Conversion Rates	"I appreciate clear 'buy now' buttons and an easy checkout process—it makes the purchase decision straightforward."

Some of the design features that are vital in determining a website include attractiveness, site organization, and website speed. The quoted examples above show how these factors enhance the user experience, thus making consumers satisfied.

"Clutter and general lack of usability of a website pushes me from the website in search of much simpler website." (4)

"Actual platforms that allow me to search for something and then recommend what I want based on my previous searches improve my shopping experience." (5)

"I think that the information on product availability on the website should be updated in real-time." (8)

Participant 4 reminds us of the importance of a website's cleanliness so that users keep coming back, which correlates with the importance of efficiently providing ease of navigation (Van Veldhoven & Vanthienen, 2022). A complex website design

can also put off the user, thereby requiring a simple design that enables the users to find what they need and keeps them interested.

Participant 5's input on targeted product suggestions explains that tailored shopping is the way to go. Customizations help increase users' interest and time spent on the site since they provide them with a more tailored and entertaining shopping experience (Vaska et al., 2021). This corresponds to the other theme laid down: a good website must be considerate of the user and must allow for an interaction to occur. Participant 8 elucidated the significance of having proper and timely information when shopping, hence the need to have real-time products. Updates reduce the user's frustration by offering correct and current information to keep the user satisfied and trusting the system (Van Veldhoven & Vanthienen, 2022). This need for accurate information is essential given that website performance is crucial in providing an efficient and pleasant e-shopping experience.

In conclusion, these facts paint a picture that a website's design should focus on aesthetics, easy-to-follow navigation, and real-time information that influences consumers to make a purchase. A website that pays attention to these elements can dramatically increase user satisfaction and reuse rate, which points to the fact that web optimization is a perpetually hot topic in the sphere of e-commerce.



Figure 4. Critical factors for optimizing online purchase decisions.

These five key terms—Navigation, Personalization, Visual Appeal, Real-Time, and Satisfaction—highlight the critical aspects of website design that influence online purchasing decisions. They emphasize the need for a user-friendly, visually appealing, and personalized shopping experience supported by real-time information to drive consumer satisfaction and retention.

4.5 The Effect of COVID-19 on Online Shopping Habits

Table 5

The Effect of COVID-19 on Online Shopping Habits

Theme	Area of Focus	Quotes
Increased Online Shopping	Consumer Behavior	"Since the pandemic started, I've been doing almost all my shopping online."
Shift Towards Essentials	Product Prioritization	"During the pandemic, I mostly bought essentials like groceries and health products online."
Preference for Contactless Delivery	Safety and Convenience	"Contactless delivery options became really important to me during the pandemic."
Rise of Local Brands	Community Support	"I started buying more from local brands online to support small businesses during the pandemic."
Reliance on Online Reviews	Consumer Decision-Making	"With the inability to see products in person, I relied heavily on online reviews before making purchases."

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly altered online shopping habits, increasing online purchases and a heightened focus on essentials. The quotes underscore how consumer behaviour has shifted in response to the pandemic.

"Since the pandemic started, I have been doing almost all my shopping online."

(Participant 1)

"During the pandemic, I mostly bought essentials like groceries and health products online." (Participant 2)

"Contactless delivery options became important to me during the pandemic."

(Participant 3)

Participant 1's comment about shifting to almost exclusively online shopping aligns with the broader trend of increased digital purchasing during the pandemic. This shift underscores how the pandemic accelerated the adoption of online shopping as a primary method for purchasing goods (Yuniarto, 2023). The transition reflects a significant change in consumer habits, driven by restrictions on physical store visits and the need for convenience.

Participant 2's emphasis on buying essentials like groceries and health products mirrors the changing consumer priorities during the pandemic. The focus on essential items highlights how the pandemic shifted consumer spending from discretionary to necessary purchases, aligning with trends observed in broader research on pandemic-related purchasing behaviour (Zaki, 2019). This shift underscores the impact of external events on consumer priorities and purchasing patterns.

Participant 3's remark about the importance of contactless delivery further illustrates the increased demand for safety and convenience. The preference for contactless delivery options reflects heightened health concerns and the desire to minimize physical contact during transactions. This change emphasizes the need for businesses to adapt to new consumer expectations around safety and convenience, demonstrating how the pandemic has reshaped online shopping preferences.

In summary, these insights reveal how the COVID-19 pandemic has driven significant changes in online shopping behaviours. They highlight the increased reliance on digital purchases, a focus on essentials, and a heightened demand for safety features like contactless delivery. Understanding these shifts is crucial for businesses to adapt their strategies to evolving consumer needs in a post-pandemic world.



Figure 5. Pandemic-driven shifts in online shopping behaviour.

These terms capture the pandemic-driven shifts in consumer behaviour, emphasizing the rise in Online Shopping and the focus on Essentials. The increased demand for contactless options highlights the importance of safety and convenience, which are vital factors businesses must consider to meet evolving consumer needs.

4.6 The Role of Digital Marketing and Advertising During the Pandemic

Table 6

The Role of Digital Marketing and Advertising During the Pandemic (Munsch, 2021)

Theme	Area of Focus	Quotes
Increased Digital Ad Spend	Marketing Strategies	"During the pandemic, I saw more digital ads from brands I follow; it felt like everyone was increasing their online presence."
Virtual Events and Webinars	Engagement Opportunities	"I participated in several virtual events and webinars hosted by brands, which kept me engaged during the lockdown."
Adjusted Messaging	Brand Relevance	"Brands adjusted their messaging to address the pandemic's impact, which made their communications feel more relevant."
Emphasis on E-commerce	Sales Channels	"There was a noticeable shift towards promoting online shopping options, which aligned with my increased online buying."

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted many aspects of online shopping, causing an increase in online shopping and other necessities. The quotes show how consumer behaviour adapted when the pandemic broke out.

"I have been using online shopping since the outbreak of the pandemic." (1)

"Pandemic more so I mainly ordered things such as food and drugs from online stores only." (2)

"During the pandemic, contactless delivery options became important to me." (3)

Participant 1's observation of stocking up on groceries is similar to the general observation of having moved to almost entirely online shopping during the pandemic. Such a shift demonstrates how COVID-19 intensified the use of online buying as the chief mode of purchasing products (Yuniarto, 2023). The shift solely relates to the change of consumer behaviour due to limitations on visits to physical stores and the emergence of convenience.

Participant 2 brought the same notion of buying hygiene and other essential products, such as groceries, as observed when consumers shifted their preferences during the pandemic. The concentration on essentials accords with an overall shift to the core needs during the pandemic, consistent with the findings of other studies discussing pandemic buying (Zaki, 2019). This shift also emphasizes the direction of the external environment and influences and consumption patterns.

Participant 3's contribution towards this included highlighting the need for contactless delivery due to the new emerging preferences for safety and convenience. Particular emphasis is placed on contactless delivery options rooted in increased health consciousness and the focus on physical contact during transactions. This change reminds us that companies should shift towards the new megatrends in safety and convenience of consumption through an online platform, which illustrates the impact of the pandemic on consumer preferences in the e-commerce marketplace.

These findings show how the COVID-19 pandemic has influenced orientations toward online shopping throughout the following threads: As a result of COVID-19, new life orientations have emerged in the domain of online shopping, and these include the following: Knowledge of such changes is imperative because consumers' behaviour is rapidly changing in a post-pandemic environment.



Figure 6. Adapting digital marketing strategies during covid-19.

These words describe the key areas organizations had to adapt to during the pandemic: Digital Marketing and engagement, website enhancements for handling higher traffic density, and scaling up Customer Support to cater to the influx of queries while emphasizing the user experience.

4.7 Addressing Challenges in Digital Engagement Through Strategic Approach

Table 7

Addressing Challenges in Digital Engagement Through Strategic Approach

Theme	Area of Focus	Quotes
Adapting to Changing Trends	Strategy Evolution	"Our approach had to evolve rapidly to keep up with the changing digital landscape."
Enhanced Data Analytics	Customer Insights	"We invested heavily in data analytics to understand and predict customer behavior better."
Cross-Channel Integration	Unified Customer Experience	"Integrating our digital channels allowed for a more cohesive and seamless customer experience."
Personalized Communication	Targeted Marketing	"Personalized emails and targeted ads became essential for engaging with our audience effectively."
Leveraging Automation	Efficiency Improvement	"Implementing automation tools helped streamline our processes and improve response times."

Managing digital engagement issues requires incorporating new trends into strategic frameworks, including changing dynamics in the fields and improvement in data analysis. The examples provided by participants are as follows, showing how organisations are applying these strategies to respond to the changing digital environment and the growing calls for customer-centricity.

"As with the case with most value propositions, our approach had to be dynamic as the broader digital environment transitioned quickly." (4)

"One area that received our attention was data analytics as a way of anticipating and managing the customer's behaviour." (5)

Another benefit that emerged from linking up our digital stations was the fact that the experience given to the client was much more consistent. (6)

Participant 4's statement regarding the change of tactics is about flexibility due to the high dynamics of changes in the digital space. The fact is that customers' behaviours are changing with the help of digital trends, which brings the necessity of frequent changes in the strategy of organizations. It, therefore, resonates with the current reality where organizations need to shift their mode of operation and embrace flexibility to suit the emerging digital environment (Sestino et al., 2020).

4.8 Summary

The work focused on the interaction between consumers and luxury fashion brands with particular reference to the COVID-19 pandemic. Similar analysis indicates that motivation factors like ease of use, product variety, and trust positively impact the kind of platform a user will prefer. Modern techniques of digital marketing communication, such as personalization of content and customer interaction, promote the brand significantly. Likewise, social media branding that is coherent and user-generated positive content helps create a positive brand image. Specifically, the pandemic changed consumer preferences for daily goods, which tend to be preferred to be bought online as safely as possible, contactless delivery. The key factors of consumer engagement, attraction, and loyalty are revealed through thematic analysis in digital business environments.

Chapter 5

Discussions and Conclusions

5.1 Discussion of Findings for Research Questions

5.1.1 Overview of key findings. This section reconnoitres the main conclusions of the thesis, regarding the crucial concerns of digitalization, namely through social media and e-commerce, for luxury brand management in the post COVID-19 world (Anjorin et al., 2024).

This thesis has explored the significant changes that have happened in the area of luxury brand management with a special emphasis on the efforts to adapt and evolve digital strategies in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak. The results underscore several critical trends: an increased integration of digital technologies, the creative representation of retail environments, and the effective use of social media outlets for marketing purposes. The results of the study are consistent with previous research in the field of digital marketing and consumer psychology to explain how luxury brands have responded to the recent changes (Almestarihi et al., 2024).

This research reveals a major shift towards digital channels by luxury brands as another of its findings. This shift was mainly prompted by the stagnation in holding various customer interaction and sales satisfaction opportunities occasioned by the pandemic constraints on physical retail. It is noteworthy, this observation has been noticed in the empirical literature, pointing the fact that luxury brands had begun to use digital technologies not only as a result of pandemic but also as they gradually involve omnichannel within their strategic marketing undertakings. The above literature indicates that social media platforms present an opportunity for brand to cover a large market while at the same time providing that close customer service that is expected by luxury consumers.

Moreover, this thesis reveals how luxury brands have employed other developed technologies including augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) to improve the

online shopping experience. These technologies have been used to address some of the drawbacks of online shopping of luxury products that customers are known to experience when making purchases online since this sector extensively depends on touch and related feelings that are offered by physical shops. Theoretical and empirical studies suggest that AR and VR applications in the retail context have great potential to increase consumer value by providing consumers with a better experience and understanding of the product. Some of these technologies have been especially helpful in responding to the need to communicate the texture and richness of the items being sold in luxury markets (Beichert et al., 2024).

In addition, Chowdhury et al. (2024) argued that the utilization of social media in strategic manner has been another emerging theme noticed in this study. It has become a tendency that more and more luxury brands start using Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok to communicate with their customers. When it comes to this strategic focus, the concept is well supported in the empirical literature on the changed role of social media in the construction of brand narratives and direct interaction with the consumers. The literature by Chen-Leino (2024) points out key advantages of social media strategies that state that customers prefer brands that are closer to them and are willing to spend more on such brands.

DaSouza and Church (2024) claimed that the managerial implications are far-reaching, indicating that digital efforts have to be at the heart of any luxury-brand communication campaign. The findings by Dindar (2024) suggest that effective digital strategy can help a firm to improve brand value and customer loyalty in the case of market turmoil. Gaurav (2024) also points out that even though the pandemic has sped up the ‘digital adoption’, the ‘digitalisation’ is likely to take even further, and it will be an important area in the ‘post COVID world’.

In addition, Guidoum and Saadi (2024) underlines the need for more constant changes in the application of digital strategies. Today and in the future, luxury brands must be ever flexible because the consumers’ behaviour is constantly changing and so is the technology. Gupta & Bansal (2024) claimed that consumer behaviour and use of data analytics for target marketing are also discussed in the literature. Consumers also

expect luxury brands with better ability to capture and analyze customer data, which would help to provide tailored, entertaining, and fulfilling consumption experiences (Hasibuan & Najmudin, 2024).

Last but not the least of the trends is the moving to the digital era that opens great opportunities for luxurious brands but has several threats that involve proper handling. Hossain (2024) presented the threats which may be related to digital approaches and tactics, such as blurring of brand differentiation and difficulty in preserving confidentiality and protection of information during various digital communications. Smith and Zook (2024) argued that these are some of the factors that make luxury brands to be very cautious and precise when operating online, so as to maintain the luxury image of the brands as they communicate with the consumers online.

Ilieva et al. (2024) identifies that the brands like Chanel, Louis Vuitton, Gucci, Prada, Dior, Hermès, Saint Laurent, Cartier have increased the level of their activity in the digital sphere. This change was primarily prompted by the regulation of COVID-19 that necessitated the clients to shift to online shopping. Like any other company, Khanh and Huong (2024) claimed that luxury brands have positioned itself suitably to ensure high visibility on social media to capture a wider market especially targeting the younger generations who are found mainly online.

One of the key findings by Kusuma (2024) is related to the shift in consumer activities, such as a dramatic rise in communicative and buying consumer actions through the internet. Those, who historically placed their focus on in-store experiences, had to shift toward virtual showrooms, fitting AR solutions, and improved online stores to create the same atmosphere online. Kumar and Dhiman (2024) claimed that this shift is not only confined to stabilizing the sales but about building the loyal consumer base and brand affiliations in a rather digitally inclined world.

Li et al. (2024) argued that the success of these digital strategies has notably been observed in the awareness indices and sales during the time of the pandemic. Beauty and fashion luxury brands specifically observed the rise of internet sales; digital mediums for selling goods penetrated deeper, with the online segment comprising a

larger proportion of total sales. Mahoney and Tang (2024) argued that this success shows that integrated digital marketing communication strategies are central to maintaining the prestige of a brand and engaging consumers in the context of disrupted market situations.

Nevertheless, there have been some challenges in the course of implementing the change. Moedeen et al. (2024) claimed that the major issue that luxury brands have faced is to blend the use of the digital platforms with the principles of luxury branding. There has been a keen clamor for brands to make their digital strategies as subtle so as not to strip the brand of its luxury connotation. Mir and Salo (2024) stated that selective targeting, strategic and tactical digital marketing, concept of online personalised marketing and communications has emerged as strategic tools to have balance in these two areas.

The research implications are in line with the Dual Mediation Hypothesis and the Theory of Planned Behaviour in the marketing theories domain. Hypothesis has it that digital marketing through the two routes of emotional and cognitive has a positive impact on the consumer attitude and buying behaviour and this is agreed upon by the research. Moreover, based on the finding of the analysis of digital strategies with planned behaviour theory, it implies that consumers' intentions are highly informed by brands' digital presence and engagement activities. Consequently, positive future research regarding the profound effects of digitalization on luxury brand management is needed. Subsequent studies could examine the longevity of these digital promotional tactics on brand image and consumer allegiance and consequences once markets return to sold-stable and outlets reopen (Muralidhar & Lakkanna, 2024).

In conclusion, it can be stated that the move to digital has become one of the most significant strategic levers in luxury branding brought by the change in necessity but opening up tremendous potential. The implication drawn from the study is that brands need to engage the digital media strategically to unlock the full potential of digital tools without sully the luxury character that brands rely on to differentiate themselves in the marketplace.

5.1.2 Analysis of digital strategies. Myers et al. (2024) claimed that the digitalization has conveniently redefined the ways of luxury brand management especially in the post COVID-19 period. This transition is mainly reflected in the development of effective and timely social media marketing initiatives as well as efficient and elaborate e-commerce plans that have proven crucial in sustaining customer interest and sales in the face of the challenges brought about by the pandemic.

Moghddam et al. (2024) claimed that luxury brands have always been carefully approaching their digital participation and keeping the air of exclusivity by staying rather selective in terms of internet presence. However, with the outbreak of Covid 19, the physical stores closed down and people shifted more to online platforms to make purchases. Negash et al. (2024) Chanel, Louis Vuitton, and Gucci, which oriented their luxury retail experience on personal communication within the store, have shifted to digital communication to offer consumers a remote similar experience.

Thus, Rachmad (2024) claimed that social media marketing has become one of the essential approaches to building up luxury brands. Instagram, Facebook or TikTok have opened an opportunity for brands to have direct and personal communication with consumers. For instance, Sakshi et al. (2024) claimed that during the pandemic, Gucci used Instagram and TikTok not only for promotional purposes of its products but also for the younger generation's interactive channel with many restricted-time online events; this drastically enhanced brand awareness and overall consumer interaction.

Further, Sachan et al. (2024) e-commerce has been made strategically more sophisticated to adapt and address the needs of luxury consumer in terms of convenience without omitting the luxuries. The luxury brands have adapted their websites in such a manner that they give out the feel of what customers get while shopping physically. Soltaniazar (2024) claimed that these include virtual fitting, live style advice, and even limited collections that are only available online as measures to increase the chances of online sales but at the same time, retain the element of sophistication of purchasing a piece. Smith and Zook (2024) claimed that the aforementioned plan also covers data analytics, incorporated to gain a deeper insight

of the consumers' behavior and to deploy marketing strategies that will be appealing to market segments.

Tay (2024) argued that it has also been possible to introduce the use of augmented reality and virtual reality that has helped improve the digital shopping advancement for luxury brands. For instance, Burberry and Gucci have used AR technology to enable customers to try the product under controlled virtual space, or just as a fitting of accessories or the visualization of products. It not only enhances the consumer value but is a significant factor in combating the high return rates of the products that are bought online improving the overall effectiveness of online shopping (Vij et al., 2024).

Wang (2024) claimed that another area where the effects of digital strategies is profoundly seen is in the harvesting and processing of customer information. Many luxury brands have been able to officially capture and collect such massive volumes of consumers' data through digital touches, which in return has enhanced efficient marketing strategies. The manipulation of such KPIs allows for a better understanding of consumer behaviour across different interactive platforms, which helps to fine-tune product portfolios and messaging, and hence improve the digital strategy of the brands.

Still, Wang et al. (2024) argued that the tendency towards the rise of digital processes is not without its problems. The struggle to enforce the concept of luxury while making it easily accessible to consumers is one that luxury brands have to tread very lightly. Yadav and Seranmadevi (2024) argued that it is possible that establishing a brand as more active on the Internet may make it lose its airs of exclusivity and, therefore, luxury. Thus, it entails the management of such risks as customer trust to strategic actions such as offering unique products that are not physically available in the physical stores or focusing on the high level of customer service when interacting through the digital platform.

In conclusion, the post COVID-19 new normal luxury brand management has recorded progressive significant direction and focus on luxury consumers' engagement through social media platforms and e-selling. Alongside, these digital techniques have

helped not only luxury brands continue operations during global disruptions but also found new opportunities for reaching customers. The ability to incorporate these digital tools into the marketing mix effectively within the luxury brands has proven the benefits of the digital approach to luxury marketing in improving key customer relations and brands management within luxury sector hence setting a benchmark for future enhancement.

5.1.3 Impact on consumer behaviour. The COVID-19 pandemic forced profound changes in the consumers' behaviour among which it is worth mentioning the shift of the luxury brand management to the digital domain. It therefore now manifests in terms changed key performance indicators, changing purchasing behaviours among consumers and radical changes in the dynamics between users of these brands and the luxury brands themselves (Yu et al., 2024).

Yuniarti et al. (2024) claimed that historically luxury retailing was a contact heavy format that was perfectly aligned with the perceived romance of luxury and premium services. Nevertheless, due to the pandemic, such tangible contacts were less possible, therefore the brands had to mimic this personalized experience within the digital space. As a result, it is also observed that consumers are now more into online platform, visiting virtual showrooms, and interacting with the brands over the social networks. Advancements in technology have meant that brands target larger audiences with ease, as social media platforms have become integral for creating intimate communication channels as well as promoting engagement through various marketing tactics (Villamil Castro, 2024).

The changes in the patterns of purchase have equally been dramatic. The global sales of luxury products have continued to rise greatly by the improved e-commerce solutions among this class of brands (Wang, 2024). It is not a shift from offline to online, but a shift to a whole new way of customer behaviour and preferences. Customers today expect ease and security when shopping online and this has been complemented by luxury brands by better design of their websites, secure online payment options, better online customer relations. Additionally, enhancements such

as the augmented reality fittings and virtual try-ons have added value to online shopping by making it more interesting and effective (Vij et al., 2024).

Furthermore, Tay (2024) claimed that the pandemic has been a factor in a shift in varieties of product that consumers are willing to buy. Due to the alterations in the living pattern and working environments, including the rise in home office or workspace, there is a shift toward those brands, which are more appropriate for these conditions. Some of the popular product segments include home decorative and improvement items, luxury loungewear, and wellness and hygiene products. Such a shift suggests that there are global changes in consumers' attitudes and possible development of a new direction in luxury consumption (Yaacob et al., 2021).

Syed et al. (2025) argued that consumers' relations with luxury brands have also shifted in many ways. This has made brands to consider other ways of communicating with the consumers and this has led to brands to mainly use digital and social media platforms in order to communicate with the consumer. Live streaming events, virtual launches and specific online consultations have become standard ways of doing business. Silvestri (2020) argued that these platforms have not only allowed brands to keep familiar and interactive to the consumers but have also educated the consumers where it has also made them powerful.

Sánchez Zaragoza (2022) claimed that this empowerment is further made possible by use of information available on the Internet. Luxury consumers are well informed than before thus engaging in thorough research before they can buy their desired luxury item. Contrary to being mere targets of promotional communications, they are involved in the process through the provision of reviews, social media comments and sometimes even through cocreation. Sakshi et al. (2024) claimed that this has resulted in a more vibrant consumers brands relationship where feedback loops are compressed, and the consumers' input make up about 80percent of the product development and marketing initiatives.

All in all, COVID-19 drastically shifted the dynamics of what digitalization means in the context of consumer behavior in the luxury brand market. Digitalization,

change in the buying behavior and dynamic relationships not only changed the way consumers are interacting with luxury brands but also provided them new standards of how luxury brands should interact digitally. Such alterations present that there are shifts in the luxury market that are structural, which require continuing strategic adjustments and creativity on the part of luxury players to solve the market changes, meet customers' new requirements and replicate the success of prior successes (Prandelli et al., 2024).

5.1.4 Theoretical contributions. The findings of this thesis extend theoretical contributions to two fundamental frameworks within consumer behaviour: The two theories that have been postulated to explain the phenomenon under investigation are the Dual Mediation Hypothesis (DMH) and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). These frameworks have been used to make sense of digitalization for the luxury brand management especially regarding social media presence and e-commerce during the COVID-19 crisis (Ong et al., 2021).

Moghddam et al. (2024) argued that the Dual Mediation Hypothesis proving how and that brand attitude and brand cognitions mediate the relationship between advertising exposure and consumer responses are well reciprocated through the shifts in consumer behaviour towards luxury brands online. The hypothesis posits that advertising affects consumers in a dual pathway: first through brand cognition, and second through brand affect which leads to the purchase intentions (Myers et al., 2024).

Regarding the model of luxury brands, social network sites have assumed a crucial role in forming these cognitive and affective reactions (Müller-Pérez et al., 2023). For instance, whereas application of blurred images, vivid colors and versatility in media by brands such as Gucci and Prada create a feel of luxury and exclusivity to the products (cognitive aspect), it would at the same time create a feeling of desire among consumers (emotional aspect) (Laguna, 2020). This is perhaps more apparent in the digital media as the sense of sight and interactivity are prominent here; therefore, supporting the DMH in the contemporary digital marketing context (Moedeen et al., 2024).

In addition, these findings support the hypothesis inasmuch as the cognitive assessments and the affective responses to the campaigns can be improved through the use of digital strategies (Kim, 2021). This also relates to detailed online storytelling of luxury brands and their heritage, which in the cognitive appraisal phase will contribute to the consumer's perception of the brand as authentic and of high quality. At the same time, through such contacts and non-commercial interest, brand builds an emotional connection with the consumer, raising a level of affective relationship with the brand (Joy, 2022).

Theory of planned behaviour, which is used to model intentional behaviour in this study, can be useful in explaining various effects of the e-commerce characteristics on consumer behaviour. This theory outlines three primary determinants of intention leading to behavior: self-reported behaviour, behavioural intentions, perceived control over the behaviour, subjective norms and attitudes towards the behaviour. In the luxury brands' digital transformation, all of the components have been notably affected (Hemzo, 2023).

Gupta et al. (2024) claimed that e-commerce innovations in this case change consumer attitudes by making it more convenient, safe and easy to buy a luxury product and so the attitude towards buying luxury goods online is improved. The perception of the peer groups and family members or friends (subjective norm) on buying products online combined with relative advantage and control over buying on the internet (perceived behavioral control) accounts for greater consumer's shopping intentions on digital channels. These changes are profound in that luxury shopping was once solely an offline activity, but now purchasing online becomes the norm and at times favored, the TPB demonstrated in digital purchasing behavior (Gaurav, 2024).

Also, the TPB approach explains the impact of particular digital marketing strategies, for instance, time-limited offers or unique online products to influence the feelings of perceived control over the behaviour and correct perceptions of the norms related to the luxury goods (Dindar, 2024). When consumers can obtain some wares

through Internet directly and enjoy the privileged price, they feel more powerful as consumers and their purchasing behavior will be affected.

Consequently, the combination of these theoretical frameworks with research from the digital tactics of luxurious brand during the novel coronavirus pandemic is not only supportive of the theories but also extend the utilization of those frameworks in digital environments. This synthesis of theory and practice provides rich contextual perspectives for both the academic and practitioner-based readers in the ever-changing environment of luxury brand management (Dallabona, 2024).

5.2 Pedagogical Implications

5.2.1 Implications for marketing practice. The research highlights a major transition towards the online mode of communication within the chosen specialty of luxury brands that is why the present paper reveals several implications for marketers. With consumers spending more time online, marketers have to learn new ways of enacting the narrative of luxury and rarity for their targets. Sight and touch are well emphasized through good quality imagery and media, so it is imperative that the imagery must portray the luxury nature of the brand. Further, it is evident that the use of data analytical tools forms a key strategy through which marketers can be in a better position to understand the consumer preferences and trends. This could improve the marketing appeal and effectiveness of the various campaign initiatives that are made to the specific groups (Cho et al., 2024).

5.2.2 Implications for digital strategy development. Altogether, the insights of the present research can be useful in improving digital initiatives in the field of luxury. First, the focus can extend the usage of exhibited technologies such as AR and VR, which would allow creating an impression of a physical store experience online and the overall atmosphere of the brand. Mobile commerce is also a very crucial area for optimising, given the increase in smart phone usage in customers' buying process. Mobile shopping optimised for delivering a pleasant and easy-to-use experience can do wonders for consumer satisfaction and conversion (Chatterjee et al., 2024).

In addition, to provide close relationships with the customers, the luxury brands should attend to digital customer relationship management systems. Consumer-specific systems can provide more individualized consumer experiences recognizing consumers' preference and actual behavior for particular products to tailor the messages and recommendations. Moreover, AI could be employed to enhance consumers' segmentation and their buying pattern predictions so as to make marketing communications precise (Carlotto, 2024).

On the basis of the current research, several avenues should be investigated in subsequent studies in order to increase knowledge and utility for the luxury brand business. This is especially important because of how brands are now looking at the longer-term effects of digital strategies on exclusivity and brand equity and how they can manage these. It could also be useful to conduct longitudinal research that would allow to shed some light on effects derived from these strategies on the perceptions of consumers in the long run (Biagiola, 2022).

Other types of research that can be useful includes research that has focused on the impact of the various digital strategies across the various global markets. Cultural, economic or infrastructural differences mean that the consumer behavior differs from country to country, and therefore, such studies can be valuable for brands searching for the efficient ways of tailoring their digital strategies to the local standards (Bao, 2023).

Thus, the study of sustainability, its implementation, and incorporation into digital policies is an interesting research area. With increased consumer interest in sustainability, it may be interesting to explore how the luxury brands can leverage digital media to propagate sustainability within their value offerings and brand positioning proposals better (Bettle, 2023).

5.3 Conclusions

5.3.1 Summary of research contributions. This study has also greatly advanced the knowledge in digital marketing and luxury brands by assessing the

changes in the approach that luxury brands have taken due to the disruptions resulting from COVID-19. Thus, analysing the actions of the leading brands in the luxury sector, this paper has shed light on the changes in consumers' behaviour, the efficiency of the digital marketing practices, and the shifts affecting the luxury market in general.

The work started to set out the imperative that luxury brands were going to be forced to change their digital marketing strategies given that physical stores were closing, and consumers were moving significantly online. The emphasis was made on how these brands managed such shifts to implement changes and how Chanel, Louis Vuitton, Gucci, Prada, Dior, Hermès, Saint Laurent, and Cartier stepped up their online game using channels like social media and e-commerce.

Therefore, one of the greatest values of this research study has been to presented digital platforms as central in the management of customer relations and sales during volatile markets. Lack of interaction with the audience has been outlined as another area where social media has been proven to be very useful to luxury brands. Instagram, for instance, Facebook, and TikTok have enabled these brands not only to advertise their sales but also share the brand's stories in a unique way that is more fascinating. The tactical application of social media in this way has aided brands to strengthen emotional bonds with consumers, and that is an area of pressing importance for luxury brands where consumer brand associations exert a very strong possibility influence.

Moreover, the research sought to identify the increased extension of e-commerce capabilities within luxury brands which revealed an improvement in online shopping. AR and VR have been adopted in order to recreate in-store experiences, whereby consumers get to virtually put on products and get fully engaged with brands. It not only assisted in eradicating the problem of closed physical stores but also assisted in meeting the increased demand for contactless shopping from home.

The research also shed light on the adaptation of marketing messages in the digital domain. Luxury brands have been shown to carefully curate their online content to reflect the exclusivity and premium quality of their products while also ensuring that the digital experience aligns with the brand's identity and heritage. This careful

curation is crucial in maintaining the brand's luxury status and allure, which can be challenging to translate into the digital realm.

The other interesting observation made by the studies was the effect of the digital initiatives on behaviour of consumers. This research established that the consumers' willingness to engage and make purchases on luxury products has grown as more and more the digitally mediated touchpoints closely mimic the haptic interactions with the physical cues. This shift carries far reaching implications across the luxury brand to demand consistent investment into digital platforms as a fundamental element of the brand strategy and not just as an added platform.

Furthermore, the research contributions from this study pertain to theoretical significance, especially in supporting the existing and broader scope of the Dual Mediation Hypothesis as well as Theory of Planned Behaviour when applied to luxury brand management. The study described how cognitive and affective functionalities of digital advertisements impact consumer behaviour, thus the importance of luxury brands to ensure that their digital advertisements are polished to serve both, brand image and consumer experience objectives.

In conclusion, the research has given the following insights on marketing strategies that luxury brands need for change in their marketing strategies when operating in the digital space. Consumer behaviour theory provides a framework for both academic scholars as well as practitioners of luxury branding to comprehend the behaviour of consumers within the digital environment. It appears to be imperative when designing models and plans that capture the current and future consumer needs, as well as the challenges facing luxury industries due to advancing technologies.

5.3.2 Limitations of the study and final thoughts. This research offers a detailed investigation into how management of luxury brands has been affected by digitalisation in the context of COVID-19. Despite the suggested observations that help grasp the changes within digital marketing and consumers themselves, there are specific limitations that the study has, and they should be considered.

First of all, it is necessary to mention that only limited number of luxury brands was researched. It was carried out mainly on mature branding luxury brands that possess a lot of capital and operating in multiple countries among them were Chanel, Louis Vuitton, and Gucci. This focus may not capture the true picture of smaller brands or emerging luxury brands because these brands might be having a different set of issues or even different capabilities to deploy digital strategies. The chosen brands' large size and activity in the global market may represent strengths the smaller brands do not enjoy, which can negatively impact the generalization of results concerning the entire luxury sector.

There are also the issues of increasing change in the technological advancement in the domain of digital marketing and customer tendencies. Considering that digital marketing environments and customers' expectations change with time, the insights provided here will probably require updates to remain useful in the future. This study provides a picture that is biased by the context of the present COVID-19 period—furthering the expansion of digitization. Therefore, these findings may lose their validity as market conditions become stable and technologies progress unless the analysis is repeated periodically (Andika et al., 2024). Another limitation of the research is that the researcher eliminated 4 participants out of 12 because their background was not enough for the research.

Also, the research is mainly carried out using secondary research and case studies which in some cases contain authors' biased viewpoints. Research that involved personally interviewing brand managers or using questionnaires to administer to luxury consumers might have offered more focused insight into why there had been changes in strategy and why consumers behaved in certain ways.

In terms of geography, this study principally focuses on the luxury brands existing in the Western countries. The best practices of digital strategies and consumer tendencies in Asia or the Middle East, which can be rather different because of cultural and economic conditions and where luxury consumption is also profound but different are not discussed widely. This geographical limitation could pose a limitation in the

extent to which conclusions that are drawn could apply to the global management of luxury brands (Almestarihi et al., 2024).

Nevertheless, the study greatly enhances the knowledge of digital marketing's function in managing luxury brand in the course of the unprecedented global disruption. It highlights a need to upgrade luxury brands' operational models to allow them respond quickly to changes in market conditions and consumer habits. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the use of innovative technology and spaces, which influenced luxury businesses to shift and opt for advanced operating models and marketing communication channels.

This research describes a significant development in the luxury brand consumer relationship focusing on the integration of the physical and digital worlds as the key to preserving luxury brand characteristics and their appeal. In this ever-growing stage of digital world, it is imperative for the luxury brands to remain adaptive and redefine their strategies to fully tap into the opportunities provided by the digital technology efficiently.

5.4 Recommendations

5.4.1 For luxury brands. The propositions provided by this research are a number of strategic implications for luxury brands that endeavour to create more brand value and engage consumers through digital communication channels. These recommendations are intended to enhance the online interactions between the luxury brand and the target consumers while preserving the key brand values of elitism and customization.

First of all, the luxury brands should follow the best practice in creating a personalized and unique digital experience that recreates the company's offline services. Using augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) could enhance the senses to the products online through in-depth and interactive product experiences. For instance, AR can allow customer to see how the product fits into their space or even

on their body, and not only improves product attractiveness but also decreases the chances of a customer returning a product due to disappointment (Anjorin et al., 2024).

Secondly, data analytics need to be a leading element in digital marketing of luxury brands. Consumers are also a key source of data that brands can gather from digital touchpoints to understand their trends, preferences, and buying behaviours. It can therefore be employed to make customized marketing communication appeals, target attends individualized shopping experiences and forecast future purchasing behaviour thereby improving the relevance of marketing initiatives as well as increase customer satisfaction.

In addition, the luxury brands should aim at producing exclusive internet content that supports brand's story and principles. This could include the behind-the-scenes shots, interviews with the designers or cut-in stories about the making of the garments. They are equally advantageous for the brand that not only adds to the-content-library of the brand online but also adds value to the consumer-brand relationship by providing them a more personalized experience.

Also, using some social networks is a great opportunity to engage the customers. Such sites should not only be used for advertisement and sales but for creating a community of the chosen brand. The effect of updates, comments, expected and/or interaction with users of social networking sites can make the brand seem more friendly and approachable.

Last but not the least, the use of e-apparel and social media in the purchase processes should form part of the integrated luxury brands. This will help to remove any hindrances to purchase for example with a shoppable post or a direct checkout feature that enables customer to purchase products directly from social media feed and thereby leveraging on impulse buying behaviour without compromising the exclusivity of the experience.

5.4.2 For marketing professionals. In order for marketing professional aiming at the managing of luxury brands to be relevant in the current market digital innovation

is vital. The world of digital also provides an abundance of various tools and technologies that could be used effectively for marketing and improving operations. In order to use these innovations effectively, the professionals should use the following strategies.

First, artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning are two primary areas that hold potential for consumer information and personalization techniques. Digital interactions enable the use of AI algorithms to analyse large volumes of data, and accurately segment customers as well as generate predictive analytics. This makes it easier for marketing professionals to create markets that are very specific and as a result, very effective for marketing ends.

Second, the use of AR and VR can also act as great complements in the area of marketing communications and may greatly improve the online shopping experience. These technologies provide the client with a full vision of certain products creating a feeling as they are in a physical store. For luxury brands where appearance, texture, and even ‘touch’ of the garment is critical, AR and VR will be the god send solution to the void between online purchases and the ‘feel’ of actually touching them in a shop. Marketing executives should consider implementing these technologies in the firm’s website and or in its mobile application to improve the way customers make purchases (Adhamiri, 2022).

In addition, the professionals should not merely rely on the social media to advertise the products but to reciprocate and engage citizens for dialogue and create brand community. Entertaining and informative content, live sessions, and special contents for social media platforms help to develop customer loyalty and lead to a creation of UGC what supports social proof and brand credibility.

Moreover, it cannot be overemphasized that mobile optimization is an essential aspect. As more and more consumers are using mobile devices to view the content controlled by brands, marketing specialists must make sure that all the web sites, applications and internet banners are mobile friendly.

Lastly, marketing professionals should be very sensitive to issues of security especially on the side of the customers. Appropriate measures of security and compliance with the data protection law is critical to support the customers' trust and preserve the brand image.

Through adopting these new technological solutions, marketing experts will be in a position to continue to market their brands as leaders in the luxury sector by responding to the changing consumer preferences as well as emergent trends.

5.4.3 Policy recommendations. In order to support development of such strategies and increase their efficiency as tools for luxury branding, several policy measures and norms should be adopted by the officials. All these recommendations aim at establishing a strong and favourable online marketplace for inventions and innovation that do not compromise on the rights of the consumers as well as the reputation of the brands.

First of all, the present consumer protection laws should be strengthened and complemented with set-apart rules to regulate the luxury industry, where high-risk transactions are made, and customers submit their sensitive information. Structural enhancement of data privacies to match the rising trend in digital sells, contacts and interactions increases trust in the interactions from the consumers. These luxury brands acquire very sensitive and personal data including financial data; therefore, the proper norms of encryption, anonymization of the data, and secure places to store and protect this information ought to be set to ensure that these brands will not become victims of data breaches and consequent misuse of the clients' data.

Secondly, another key factor is the need to set specific measures on digital advertising and marketing in particular to prevent cases of unfair competition. These are such as rules on sponsorship and partnership with influencers which are common practice in luxury goods promotion. These promotions will require code standardization that will ensure honesty in digital marketing practice and shield consumers from fake adverts (Anjorin et al., 2024).

In addition, it is the time to introduce standards for such the application of new technologies as augmented reality and virtual reality. There are certain guidelines that may cover the ethical usage of such technologies that may reduce the impact of the risks such as consumer deception and privacy violation. For example, it will be possible to set industry standards for AR use in virtual try-ons to guarantee that representations made are not mere kitsch work developed to entice consumers into buying the product (Anguix Vilches, 2022).

On the same note, policies that seek to encourage digital inclusion are also a plus for luxury sector. By guaranteeing that online interfaces are friendly to all consumer groups, including disabled, the scale of the appeal of luxury brands can be widened across varying markets while at the same time affirming on the corporations' social responsibility (Biagiola, 2022).

Lastly, encouraging the formulation of international laws for conducting e-commerce across borders can aid the expansion of luxury businesses internationally. This involves bringing policies that regulate taxes and customs, and the rights of consumers in different countries into conformity to make purchasing from online shops easier for cross border customers (Amatulli et al., 2021).

Through the adoption of these policies and standards, the luxury industry would improve the security and vulnerability of digital policies and strategies, which would lead to the growth of the luxury business in the digital economy.

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