

# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY: APPLIED BUSINESS AND EDUCATION RESEARCH

2025, Vol. 6, No. 10, 4883 – 4897

<http://dx.doi.org/10.11594/ijmaber.06.10.02>

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## Research Article

### Social Media Strategies for Luxury Brands: Navigating Brand Equity, Consumer Engagement, and Digital Challenges

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#### Article history:

Submission 15 May 2025

Revised 30 September 2025

Accepted 23 October 2025

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#### ABSTRACT

The intersection of social media and luxury branding presents a paradox: luxury thrives on exclusivity, while digital platforms are designed for visibility and participation. This narrative literature review synthesises studies published between 2010 and 2025 to examine how luxury brands navigate this paradox. Three key domains are explored: the role of social media in shaping brand equity, the evolving mechanisms of consumer engagement, and the digital challenges unique to the luxury sector. The review finds that while social media strengthens brand image through symbolic storytelling and aesthetic immersion, it has a more limited role in building brand awareness. Personalisation and co-creation strengthen emotional bonds and loyalty, though overuse risks prestige dilution. Technological innovations such as AR, VR, and AI offer new experiential frontiers but require alignment with the brand's symbolic capital. This study contributes a multidimensional framework for understanding digital luxury branding and highlights managerial imperatives for balancing visibility with exclusivity. Future research is urged to explore generational and cultural variances, integrate stronger theoretical foundations, and address the tension between consumer empowerment and brand control in increasingly participatory environments.

**Keywords:** *Luxury brand management, Social media strategy, Consumer engagement, Symbolic capital, Digital transformation*

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#### Introduction

##### **Background of Social Media in the Luxury Sector**

The emergence of social media has caused a substantial shift in the way brands approach consumers. The large variety of social media platforms have surpassed being just a

communication tool, to becoming an arena in which brand identity is continuously crafted and maintained, through the meticulous creation of content from both brands and users (Lee, 2025). Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) describe social media as a group of applications on the Internet that allows the creation and

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#### How to cite:

Lee, G. K. S. (2025). Social Media Strategies for Luxury Brands: Navigating Brand Equity, Consumer Engagement, and Digital Challenges. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary: Applied Business and Education Research*. 6(10), 4883 – 4897. doi: 10.11594/ijmaber.06.10.02

exchange of user-generated content. This has disruptively changed the way consumers and brands interact, as traditional one-way communication has now become two-way engagement.

This disruption is especially challenging for luxury brands, whose positioning relies on exclusivity, heritage, and carefully curated imagery. Kapferer and Bastien (2012) describe this as the 'Internet dilemma': while social media thrives on openness, luxury depends on mystique and symbolic distance. Several studies including Hennings et al. (2012) and Liu et al. (2019) have found that the openness of content in the digital world is at stark contrast with the exclusiveness of luxury brands.

However, the sector has developed. As noted by Kapferer (2014), "The digital revolution has impacted luxury in numerous ways, enabling companies to share brand narratives by highlighting their heritage and values." Instead of viewing digital as a challenge, several luxury brands have started to perceive it as a strategic chance to strengthen their identity while thoughtfully managing consumer interaction. Phan et al. (2011) acknowledged Burberry's leading digital footprint, mentioning that the brand was one of the initial luxury firms to create a cohesive strategy for digital media.

Changes in the population also sparked this trend. Millennials and Generation Z are emerging as the new luxury consumers, with different expectations of the brand relationship (D'Arpizio et al., 2020). Instead of pursuing lineage and craftsmanship, these younger consumers are digital natives who yearn for instant gratification, personalisation, and social validation (Aeberhard, 2020). As a result, luxury companies have had to adjust their stories to satisfy changing demands without sacrificing their symbolic worth.

Several studies in consumer behaviour backs this shift in expectations. Muntinga et al. (2011) found that users now consume content from brands as a source of entertainment and enjoyment, while Ko et al. (2019) finds that digital luxury branding is expected to trigger a deep emotional engagement and aesthetic appreciation among consumers. Athwal et al. (2019) further found that the social media

activities of luxury brands not only satiate affective needs, but also cognitive needs, as some users rely on them as a source of information.

### ***Problem Statement & Rationale for the Study***

Although there has been increasing literature in this space, the research on luxury branding and social media remains fragmented from a conceptual point-of-view. Much existing research focuses on superficial metrics like follower counts or purchase intention, overlooking deeper symbolic contradictions at the heart of luxury's digital transformation. The ultimate paradox which determines the success of luxury digital transformation: luxury depends on mystique while social media thrives on visibility.

Several empirical evidence including Park et al. (2020) have found that digital engagement needs to be managed in a way that protect the aspirational value of luxury brands. Didi Alaoui et al. (2022) further found in their study that luxury brands should maintain an optimal psychological distance from their consumers, as overexposure and intimacy may erode the symbolic capital of the brand and undermine its position in the high-end market space.

Additionally, a vital component in this balancing act is the use of good content strategy. As noted in Cervellon and Galipienzo (2015), luxury hotel brands which deploy a successful content strategy on Facebook mainly rely on emotional posts instead of informative posts. It becomes evident that emotional resonance remains more relevant and relatable in the context of luxury, where brand value is deeply associated with heritage and storytelling rather than transactional messaging (Rachbini et al., 2023).

In pursuit of crafting an effective social media marketing strategy, Kim and Ko (2012) proposed their model of entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customisation, and word-of-mouth. When content is carefully curated to cover these five aspects, it is expected that the luxury brand message can be emphasised effectively. These variables were empirically validated on their impact towards brand equity and consumer behaviour such as in Masa'deh et al. (2021), and Chen and Qasim (2020). These

studies were able to prove that a holistic approach to strategizing social media marketing is crucial to luxury brand success.

Furthermore, it is posited that the motivations behind consumer engagement with luxury brands on social media remain underexplored. Oncioiu et al. (2021) found that social media can be particularly useful in building brand relationships through the right manner of engagement and interaction. This dynamic opens up the space and opportunity for co-creation and identity expression, while increasing the risk of brand misinterpretation or over-familiarity.

### ***Aim and Research Objectives***

Given the gaps and contradictions surrounding luxury brands and social media marketing, this review aims to pursue three main objectives:

- To analyse how social media strategy affects the symbolic and affective aspects of luxury brand equity, such as awareness, perception, and emotional bonding.
- To evaluate how consumer interaction - through purchase, engagement, and co-creation enhances brand loyalty and perceived value.
- To assess the strategic trade-offs that luxury brands have in terms of visibility versus exclusivity in social media contexts.

Hence, the study answers the following questions:

- How are luxury brands leveraging social media to sustain symbolic capital and connect with digitally networked publics?
- What forms of social media content – emotional, experiential, interactive, are best to create brand equity in luxury settings?
- What organisational tensions and leadership challenges arise in the integration of heritage-based branding and interactive digital culture?

### ***Significance of the Study***

On theoretical grounds, this study contributes by synthesising existing literature into a framework which addresses the contradictions and gaps surrounding luxury social media branding. Based on validated constructs

including consumer brand engagement, symbolic capital, and personalised interaction, this review provides an extension to the brand equity theory by taking into account the changing dynamics of social media platforms.

On practical grounds, this study provides strategic guidance for managers of luxury brands to navigate this increasingly complex landscape. Hollebeek et al. (2014) found that consumer brand engagement is pivotal to ascertain positive brand-related emotional and behavioural activity which captures the multi-dimensional nature of luxury brand-consumer relationships.

### ***Methodology***

#### ***Review Design***

This study adopts a narrative literature review to examine how social media strategies shape luxury brand equity, consumer engagement, and digital challenges. This method was chosen as this paper is aimed at synthesising theoretical perspectives, identify conceptual tensions and generate multi-disciplinary insights. This is largely due to the emerging and multifaceted nature of digital luxury branding which spans across marketing, psychology, and technology. Through this narrative review, constructs such as prestige, co-creation, emotional engagement, and symbolic capital can be effectively analysed.

#### ***Search Strategy and Databases***

To identify relevant studies, searches on electronic databases including Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect and EBSCOhost were conducted through search strings which included ("luxury brand" OR "luxury marketing") AND ("social media" OR "Instagram" OR "Facebook" OR "WeChat"); ("brand equity" OR "brand image" OR "brand loyalty") AND ("digital strategy" OR "online branding"); ("consumer engagement" OR "co-creation") AND ("luxury" OR "prestige brand"); and ("exclusivity" AND "accessibility") AND ("social media"). Studies which were considered were restricted to peer-reviewed journal articles written in English and published between 2010 and 2025, which coincides with the time period which luxury brands increasingly used social media platforms for marketing.

### **Screening and Inclusion Criteria**

Articles that were selected must be published in a peer-reviewed journal and available in full text. The discussion must explicitly be surrounding luxury brand strategies on social media platforms and apply established theoretical or empirical frameworks such as consumer brand engagement, symbolic capital, etc. Studies that involved mass-market or non-luxury brands, or examined the use of social media in a generic and non-symbolic manner will be excluded.

As such, a curated collection of journal articles drawing from various luxury subsectors including fashion, beauty, automobile, etc. were chosen to be reviewed.

### **Data Analysis and Thematic Synthesis**

Subsequently, the articles underwent qualitative content analysis where the key findings, theoretical arguments, and implications were extracted. Thematic coding was carried out to identify emerging topics, leading to the identification of these three domains for discussion:

- The Role of Social Media in Luxury Brand Equity
- Mechanisms and Motivations of Consumer Engagement
- Strategic Tensions in Balancing Digital Openness with Exclusivity

These domains will form the basis of discussion for Chapter 3, allowing insights to be synthesised across all the reviewed literature. Through this process, the different approaches to conceptualising brand symbolism, emotional connection and perceived prestige within luxury social media branding can be scrutinised. As a result, a rich and interpretive understanding of how luxury brands navigate digital ecosystems can be achieved, not only as a communication platform, but a stage for brand philosophy and competitive positioning.

## **Results**

### **Role of Social Media in Luxury Brand Equity Brand Awareness and Brand Image**

The foundational pillars that make up brand equity are brand awareness and brand image, particularly in the luxury sector, where these constructs are infused with symbolic

value. In Keller (1993), brand awareness is defined as the strength of the brand in memory, while brand image is defined as the perceptions about a brand in memory. In the context of luxury brands, these aspects are richly associated with heritage, prestige, aspiration and social distinction (Wang, 2022).

With the emergence of social media platforms, new mechanisms have been introduced in formulating these perceptions. While Bruhn et al. (2012) argued that traditional media drives brand awareness more effectively, Godey et al. (2016) showed that social media has a stronger effect on brand image, highlighting the need for integrated media strategies. This posits that the nature of content shared on social media platforms makes an ideal avenue for the construction of immersive narratives that enhance brand values beyond the recognising its logo.

In Godey et al. (2016), it was further demonstrated that social media marketing efforts significantly enhanced both brand awareness and brand image across a few distinct markets. Notably, it was found that social media had a more resonating impact on brand image than on brand awareness, proposing that social media not only increases the visibility of luxury brands, but also making them more prominent emotionally and symbolically.

However, it is important to note that brand image cannot be reduced to brand familiarity in the context of luxury brands. It is vital that symbolic capital, exclusivity and aesthetic refinement be emphasised, as the visual identity of a brand must maintain prestige across platforms, as suggested by Skulsuthavong and Wang (2025). This is also mentioned in Phan et al. (2011) that the quality of a luxury brand's online presence ought to reflect its products, emphasising the importance of symbolic mirroring between physical and digital realms.

Luxury brand image is also linked to storytelling and experiential richness. As argued by Koivisto and Mattila (2020), the value proposition of a luxury brand is an important driver to content creation on social media, which serves narratives that evoke aspiration and bridge an emotional connection. It is recommended that the use of storytelling elements including plot, characters, and authenticity can transform a

luxury product into a lifestyle myth deeply embedded within consumer identity, as found by Kim et al. (2016) in the context of Hermès, Chanel, Louis Vuitton and Gucci. This is in alignment with the notion of Bazi et al. (2020) which describes “brand ethereality”, the ability to bridge the symbolic gap between luxury brands and their audiences through well-crafted digital content.

The cognitive processing of online brand stimuli differs among luxury consumers. A study by Lee et al. (2018) found those unfamiliar with a luxury brand tend to respond more favourably when presented highly complex and visually rich content, while those who frequent the brand prefer cleaner, elegant content. These findings resonate the use of segmentation-based content strategy, where platform algorithms can be leveraged to provide personalised content.

Creevey et al. (2021) and Azemi et al. (2022) further found that when it comes to Millennials and Gen Z consumers, their affective and cognitive needs are fulfilled by perceived accessibility, rather than actual interaction. This suggests that luxury brands should amplify inclusivity without sacrificing elitism, which can be enabled via social media using curated visibility, without necessarily dissolving the prestige boundary. At the heart of the digital evolution of luxury brands, the paradox of “being everywhere without seeming common” warrants a balance between exposure and restraint. This was highlighted in Lee and Watkins (2016) where digital content with moderate visual complexity enhances perceptions of luxury more effectively than promotional content.

Reinforced by Ko et al. (2019), the symbol of luxury whether functional or emotional is capable of inspiring a deep connection with the consumer, positing that brand image is no longer static but a dynamic co-creation as a result of consumer aspiration and effective brand storytelling. As social media continues to evolve, it is the responsibility of brand managers to protect brand equity by mirroring the essence of luxury in the digital world.

### **Brand Loyalty and Price Premiums**

Brand loyalty and price premiums are strong reflections of long-term brand equity in the luxury sector. Although brand loyalty is positioned as a consequence of satisfaction among typical brands, it provides additional layers of symbolic meaning, emotional attachment, and identity alignment. This means that luxury brand loyalty is not a transactional function but a relational one, provided that brands are able to create such a resonance through compelling storytelling and symbolic capital (Husain et al., 2022).

As found in Godey et al. (2016), social media marketing efforts, particularly those that emphasise on interaction, trendiness, and word of mouth, have a positive effect on brand loyalty and willingness to pay a premium. It was observed that these marketing efforts produce the strongest impact on luxury brand loyalty, followed by the willingness to pay a premium price, highlighting the primary role of emotional and symbolic bonding in the post-engagement stage of a consumer’s journey.

This notion is reinforced by studies which found the existence of loyalty within psychological and social dynamics, such as in Laroche et al. (2013), where social media activities were found to strengthen the relationship between the consumers, product, and brand, effectively bringing out community belonging and interaction. In the case of luxury brands where the consumption experience extends beyond the product into a reflection of social performance, this communal function is even more critical (Wang, 2022).

Further extending into digital engagement, it was found in Creevey et al. (2021) that digital engagement deepens loyalty, and resonated by Mazzucchelli et al. (2018) which found that user-generated content on social media platforms significantly enhance brand loyalty intention, proving that brand attachment has shifted from a passive to a more participatory front. With these digital interactions, consumers are empowered to involve themselves more deeply into the brand narrative. The role of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) towards strengthening purchase intention and

perceived brand prestige was also examined in Park et al. (2021), which found that it works best when luxury values are clearly and consistently communicated, showing the importance of maintaining consistency across various touchpoints to maintain symbolic credibility.

While brand loyalty can be cultivated through social media, the conversion of digital goodwill into price premium is more complicated. Particularly in Godey et al. (2016), it was found that although luxury brands can use social media to improve relationships with consumers, it ultimately depends on store image and atmospherics to convince consumers to pay more. This strongly posits that relational equity can be built from digital platforms, yet the willingness to pay a premium still relies on sensory and spatial experiences.

### ***Consumer Engagement in the Luxury Sector Personalisation and Customisation***

Personalisation and customisation play critical roles in allowing luxury brands to navigate the evolving mechanisms of consumer engagement on social media. Not only are they aimed at meeting consumer preferences, they also function to preserve symbolic capital and reinforce credibility. As discussed in Martin and Todorov (2010), customisation can enhance brand affinity by fostering emotional attachment by championing individual expression. As consumers are offered an avenue to personalise their interaction with the luxury brand, it strengthens perceived uniqueness without hampering on exclusivity. This is resonated in Kapferer and Bastien (2012) where it was found that personalisation enables more intensive consumer perceptions of being in an elite circle.

Customisation is present in many ways on social media, including personalised content streams, targeted messaging, and exclusive previews. This is extensively studied in Zhu and Chen (2015) where it was found that consumers respond more positively to personalised interactions which are aligned with their self-identity. As such, utilising customised digital communications can ensure that consumers see themselves as a valued asset to the luxury brand, rather than a member of the masses,

which aligns expectations on perceived rarity (Yoo and Park, 2016). This also reflects the broader theoretical underpinning of luxury consumption being associated to identity construction as posited in Tynan et al. (2010). The symbolic consumption of consumers can be supported by personalised engagement, effectively allowing them to integrate luxury brands into their personal narratives.

On the other end of the spectrum, over-customisation can also lead to overexposure and overfamiliarity, which will risk undermining their aspirational status (Kapferer, 2014). There is a need to offer personalisation that feels exclusive yet maintain the prestige boundaries which gives spirit to luxury.

With the rise of digital natives, it is posited that consumer expectations for personalised experiences have increased as they now have a greater locus of control over the marketing dialogue, and posing expectations that it be personalised, relevant and engaging (Lim et al., 2021). This implies the necessity among luxury brands to curate a nuanced strategy where personalisation serves as a channel for intimacy rather than mass availability. Furthermore, Piller et al. (2012) found that consumer co-creation could serve as a foundation for personalised luxury experiences when moderated closely. This includes allowing consumers to customise product elements or select their preferred services which can deepen their emotional attachment while maintaining the required symbolic barriers.

### ***Co-creation and Consumer Empowerment***

Social media further emphasises consumer participation beyond passive consumption in order to encourage co-creative activities that heavily build on brand imagery and identity. Co-creation among luxury brands involves reciprocal processes between consumers and brands, wherein consumers are no longer just giving feedback but actually participating in forming brand narratives, product meaning, and symbolic meaning (Chapman and Dilmperi, 2022).

This co-creative process has been most articulated by the concept of storygiving, where consumers are producing brand content which makes the brand more personalised and

continuous in their world, independent of corporate control. Hughes et al. (2016) describe this as a narrative strategy in which consumers become the co-authors in the writing of brand stories. As opposed to the traditional narrative of storytelling, storygiving enables brands to be touched by the lived narratives of their community, creating a space of participatory meaning exchange. The "What Makes Love True" campaign by Tiffany & Co. has been used as an exemplar where consumers were encouraged to contribute personal stories and media, blurring brand and consumer voice into a hybrid story (Fedorenko et al., 2017).

This is consistent with the service-dominant logic perspective in Anker et al. (2015) which shifts the emphasis of value creation to consumers instead of brands. In the luxury category, co-creation is very subtle due to the symbolic and aspirational nature of the product. As noted by Grönroos (2011), brands no longer enjoy monopolistic control over meaning creation, rather, consumers actively generate perceptions through interactions on multiple digital platforms.

Besides, co-creation raises perceived consumer empowerment since consumers feel a greater psychological ownership of brand outcomes. Consumer interaction with brand identity fosters emotional bonds and increases the perceived value of the brand experience (Quach and Thaichon, 2017). This empowerment is not just behavioural but symbolic – when consumers are invited to engage in content creation or product feedback, their engagement reaffirms their status as valuable insiders of the luxury narrative.

The luxury environment, however, demands that co-creation is curated, not open. Essamri et al. (2019) recommend that co-creative practices in luxury must be led by bridging and nurturing strategies that preserve symbolic boundaries but still invite consumer engagement. That is, while consumers contribute to building the brand, the brand must control the terms of such participation so as not to dilute exclusivity.

The tension is further aggravated by the differentiated motivations of consumers. Ramadan et al. (2018) had established various typologies of luxury social media followers, ranging

from trend-hunters to owner enthusiasts, each with different expectations and levels of desired interaction. Passive viewers can benefit from brand content vicariously, while more engaged users can provide user-generated content or voice on behalf of the brand. Such differentiated actions suggest that co-creation strategies must be stratified and segmented through audience segments.

User empowerment is also manifested as advocacy behaviours. As Leban et al. (2021) thought, committed consumers have been shown to incorporate the brand into their online personas, sometimes featuring brand names in social media profiles or defending the brand on the web. This type of behaviour is a form of symbolic co-ownership, where the consumer consumes luxury just but internalises it.

### ***Digital Challenges for Luxury Brands Balancing Exclusivity and Accessibility***

Among the central paradoxes of luxury brand management in the digital age is the tension between maintaining exclusivity and embracing accessibility through social media. Luxury brands traditionally have relied on controlled, high-symbolic environments to sustain prestige. The influence of digital media, however, has challenged this approach, warranting the need for luxury marketers tread a fine line between exposure and elitism.

Keller (2009) famously formulated three paradoxes that luxury brand managers must confront – exclusivity vs. accessibility, classic vs. contemporary, and acquisition vs. retention, with the first being particularly pertinent in the digital context. The digital environment, while offering promise of scale and scope, risks undermining the symbolic exclusivity upon which luxury branding depends. As luxury brands become visible online, the challenge is to leverage brand visibility without reducing the psychological distance that implies exclusivity.

This sort of "Internet dilemma," as presented by Kapferer and Bastien (2012), captures the dilemma luxury brands face in managing the openness of digital media. The luxury ideal thrives on secrecy, curation, and mystique, which are qualities fundamentally at odds with social media's participatory and algorithmic nature. As such, brands must develop

digital strategies that offer curated visibility rather than full exposure.

In Park et al. (2020), it was found that over-interaction and excessive familiarity with consumers can reduce perceived value, as psychological distance is crucial to preserving brand prestige. Rather than complete engagement in dialogic exchange, luxury brands tend to adopt a broadcast-only approach, which is to publish visually enriching and inspiring content without necessarily priming for a response. By doing so, they are able to enjoy the benefits of reach without the risks of overexposure.

Athwal et al. (2019) also noted that Millennial consumers, digitally native though they may be, appreciate the understated and aspirational discourse luxury brands employ on social media. For this generation, it was found that perceived accessibility can satisfy their affective needs as opposed to actual engagement. This resonates with the imperative of symbolic control, where exclusivity is not managed through scarcity of presence but through meticulously curated digital expression.

Digital storytelling is thus an effective means of resolving this paradox. As Phan et al. (2011) have contended, digital media can be leveraged to extend the luxury narrative, emphasising on heritage, craftsmanship, and identity, without compromising symbolic distance. Furthermore, Hennings et al. (2012) point out that insofar as digital platforms facilitate unprecedented communication efficacy, total transparency contravenes luxury's intrinsic values of distinction and rarity. Brands must therefore avoid being too present or too accessible. A practical tactic is ephemeral exclusivity by offering limited-time content, back-stage access, or platform-only activations to create temporal scarcity (Wakefield, 2024).

### ***Adapting to Technological Changes***

The digital revolution in the luxury sector has been both inevitable and disruptive. While the allure of luxury was once craftsmanship, scarcity, and sensory experiences, emerging technologies such as virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and artificial intelligence (AI) have transformed the luxury brand-consumer experience (Thaichon and Quach, 2023). Here, luxury brands are compelled to pursue

innovation not only as a byproduct of technological advancement but as a strategic imperative to remain culturally and commercially relevant.

Innovations in technology have reconfigured the very structure of luxury brand communication. As with contemporary discussions of VR, AR, and AI, such technologies present new formats of digital immersion capable of simulating the multisensory experiences that comprise luxury brand experiences. The successful integration of AI, for instance, relies on the consumer's perception that the experience represents the brand's luxury, underlining that even automation must be sensitive to luxury's symbolic capital, as found in Gupta et al. (2024).

The challenge is compounded by generational shift, particularly with the emergence of Gen Z consumers. This generation expects innovation as a bare minimum rather than revolution. For them, ephemeral content such as Instagram Stories or TikTok videos are not merely entertaining but they play a key role in establishing luxury's cultural currency (Bandyopadhyay & Rishi, 2025). Such transient media create a sense of exclusivity through their transience, fulfilling luxury's need for rarity in the digital age.

However, luxury brands have tended to regard such technologies with hesitation. The industry's early scepticism towards digital was rooted in fears of diluting symbolic value and compromising consumer intimacy. As Creevey et al. (2021) observe, top management at luxury brands has been hesitant to invest in participatory digital initiatives because it is uncertain how new tools can preserve a brand's aura. This hesitation is also expressed by Arrigo (2018), who comments on the absence of social media plans in luxury houses and calls for greater integration of digital tools.

Yet, technological adaptation is now viewed as a prerequisite for competitive success. Phan et al. (2011) propose a shift in mindset, urging luxury brands to embrace digital as a platform of heritage enhancement and consumer experience enrichment, making it a channel for expanding, not compromising, exclusivity. This entails leveraging mobile apps, virtual store



visits, and digital storytelling that preserve brand identity and innovate user experience.

Additionally, Heine and Berghaus (2014) provide that digital touchpoints must be tackled as part of the luxury brand ecosystem comprehensively, but from social campaigns to

mobile apps, every touchpoint should provide an equivalent symbolic richness to that of a physical boutique. The challenge entails leveraging technological sophistication without destroying craftsmanship or mystique.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

### Summary of Key Findings

Table 1. Summary of Key Findings

Theme	Subtheme	Key Literature Reviewed
<b>Role of Social Media in Luxury Brand Equity</b>	<i>Brand Awareness and Brand Image</i>	Bruhn et al. (2012); Godey et al. (2016); Skulsuthavong & Wang (2025); Phan et al. (2011); Koivisto & Mattila (2020); Kim et al. (2016); Bazi et al. (2020); Lee et al. (2018); Creevey et al. (2021); Azemi et al. (2022); Lee & Watkins (2016); Ko et al. (2019)
	<i>Brand Loyalty and Price Premiums</i>	Godey et al. (2016); Husain et al. (2022); Laroche et al. (2013); Wang (2022); Creevey et al. (2021); Mazzucchelli et al. (2018); Park et al. (2021)
<b>Consumer Engagement in the Luxury Sector</b>	<i>Personalisation and Customisation</i>	Martin & Todorov (2010); Kapferer & Bastien (2012); Zhu & Chen (2015); Yoo & Park (2016); Tynan et al. (2010); Kapferer (2014); Lim et al. (2021); Piller et al. (2012)
	<i>Co-Creation and Consumer Empowerment</i>	Chapman & Dilmeri (2022); Hughes et al. (2016); Fedorenko et al. (2017); Anker et al. (2015); Grönroos (2011); Quach & Thaichon (2017); Essamri et al. (2019); Ramadan et al. (2018); Leban et al. (2021)
<b>Digital Challenges for Luxury Brands</b>	<i>Balancing Exclusivity and Accessibility</i>	Kapferer & Bastien (2012); Park et al. (2020); Athwal et al. (2019); Phan et al. (2011); Hennings et al. (2012); Wakefield (2024)
	<i>Adapting to Technological Changes</i>	Thaichon & Quach (2023); Gupta et al. (2024); Bandyopadhyay & Rishi (2025); Creevey et al. (2021); Arrigo (2018); Phan et al. (2011); Heine & Berghaus (2014)

This review synthesised perspectives on six subthemes of three main themes: the digital function of luxury brand equity, consumer engagement with luxury brands, and digital challenges to luxury brands in the digital environment. Through this analysis, what is revealed is not just how online environments redefine brand-consumer relations but how luxury firms must also skilfully navigate through the paradox created by digital reach and consumer engagement.

Social media is found to be powerful in shaping the luxury brand image, whereas the impact on the awareness of brand is comparatively less. Although conventional media continues to dominate the creation of brand awareness, social media has a critical role to play in enhancing symbolic and affective

meanings of the brand. This is also due in part to the fact that social media sites permit immersive, visually-based, and narrative-driven content. Narrative coherence, visual consistency, and edited content have been shown to reinforce feelings of prestige, heritage, and aspiration among consumers when symbolic capital is embodied in physical as well as digital spaces.

The study also verifies that social media marketing efforts, especially those that are engaging, trendy, and word-of-mouth in nature, can affect brand loyalty and, to a lesser extent, willingness to pay a premium. Luxury loyalty is symbolic and affective rather than transactional and formed through emotional bonding, community membership, and identity affirmation. However, converting digital goodwill into

price premiums remains reliant on multisensory and spatial cues typically inherent in physical store settings, suggesting that digital goodwill may not be enough for pricing power.

Luxury consumers increasingly expect personalised experiences that reflect their identities and tastes. Social media personalisation, through tailor-made content, privileged previews, or targeted messaging, enhances emotional connection while affirming experienced uniqueness. There is, however, a delicate balance: excessive personalisation erases symbolic distance and diminishes prestige. The review emphasises that symbolic capital is best preserved through personalisation that is unique in character, encouraging intimacy more than commodification.

The review confirms the growing significance of co-creative engagement in luxury branding. Consumers are not passive spectators but active co-authors of brand narratives. Through strategies like storygiving and user-generated content, luxury brands can create participative relationships that create symbolic ownership and loyalty. Nevertheless, such co-creative engagements need to be guided by strategic curation. Brands are urged to undertake bridging and nurturing strategies that facilitate consumer voice without the dilution of the brand's core identity and symbolic power.

A widespread paradox throughout the review is one of balance between exclusivity and access. While digital media broaden a brand's reach, they also run the risk of overexposure and symbolic erosion. Luxury brands tread a thin line of psychological remoteness by adopting curated visibility tactics, providing aspirational content without compromising on mystique. Tactics such as ephemeral exclusivity (time-limited content and behind-the-scenes access) and visual storytelling help maintain symbolic prestige while placating digital-native needs.

Technological adaptation is both a necessity and a challenge for luxury brands. As valuable as innovations such as VR, AR, and AI are for creating immersive methods of recreating luxury experiences, their integration must be handled carefully to accommodate the brand's look and symbolic essence. Digital transformation efforts require high-level strategic

endorsement and steadfast vision, something that most luxury brands have been missing. The optimal technological adaptations are those that extend heritage, enhance experiential quality, and preserve exclusivity rather than losing it. Ultimately, luxury brands must balance visibility with exclusivity, ensuring that digital innovation enhances rather than erodes symbolic capital.

### ***Practical Implications***

The findings of this review offer several important practical implications for luxury brand managers navigating the subtleties of social media and digital transformation. These are particularly relevant to strategic decisions in marketing, branding, and digital innovation for the luxury sector.

Social media can be viewed by luxury brands as a tool to reinforce symbolic value, not to risk exclusivity. Whereas mass brand management used to get only on physical ground and scarcity, social media offers chances of extended brand narration, unmasking heritage, and creating aspirational profiles on macro scale. Managers must concentrate utmost attention on imagery-rich, emotional, and captivating material resonating to luxury's core beliefs. Social media must be utilised for mirroring and not imitating the luxury experience, allowing symbolic capital to be preserved even in digital contexts.

Social media strategies should move beyond transactional goals, fostering emotional and symbolic connections that reinforce luxury's core values. Engagement, trendiness, and word-of-mouth aren't strategies, but rather markers of brand relevance and vitality, particularly among younger consumers. Managers need to consider how digital efforts can validate identity, status, and belonging within brand communities. Features like behind-the-scenes content, limited-run drops, or luxury lifestyle narrative can build loyalty and advocacy without physical touch.

Personalisation remains a key expectation among luxury consumers, particularly Millennials and Gen Z, but must be well-curated. Luxury brands must avoid the trap of algorithmic homogeneity or over-customisation that strips away mystique. Instead, personalisation must

be presented as intimate and selective, such as offering early access to ranges, adjusted recommendations against previous behaviour, or stylised direct messages. Managers must ensure that digital personalisation reflects the symbolic refinement that is synonymous with the brand and not automated convenience.

Although co-engagement of consumers has the potential for increased brand authenticity and co-ownership, luxury brands must guard against complete decentralisation of narrative control. Managers can help deliver co-creation within shared symbolic boundaries, such as curated hashtag campaigns, competitions for storytelling, or limited reposting of user material. Such tactics give a sense of curation of brand, at the same time, invite quality participation from consumers.

Managers must recognise that perceived availability can meet consumer needs without overexposure. Digital restraint, via broadcast-only strategies, visual sophistication, or ephemeral content, can preserve prestige with engagement of the digital public. Overly frequent interaction or an egalitarian tone can damage perceptions of luxury. Luxury brands should thus use content calendars combining presence and scarcity, and select to communicate via channels best suited for their positioning.

Finally, luxury businesses must invest in leadership alignment and internal digital capabilities and learn how to transform with technological disruption. VR, AR, AI, and data analytics are powerful technologies that must be integrated in a manner that enhances brand DNA. Managers must spearhead digital innovation driven by brand-led criteria: does technology enhance storytelling? Does it enhance the consumer symbolic experience? This implies that innovation is not driven for novelty purposes but with clear brand purpose.

### Gaps and Future Research Direction

While this review has provided a structured overview of how luxury brands use social media to create brand equity and consumer engagement, several research gaps exist. Firstly, existing research is characterised by a lack of intense theoretical integration, where surface-level measurement is recognised over the

grounding of findings within richer frameworks such as symbolic interactionism or brand attachment theory. Theories would need to be integrated in future research to capture the symbolic and emotional dynamics underlying luxury consumption better.

Secondly, generational and cultural difference remains inadequately researched. While Millennials and Gen Z are frequently named, comparative study examining their differing expectations and cultural understandings of luxury in digital contexts is lacking. Thirdly, academic research about emerging technologies, including AR, VR, NFTs, and broader AI, is lagging behind industrial practice. Future research needs to consider not only the practical utility of these technologies but how they align with luxury's symbolic values.

Lastly, the tension between co-creation and brand control is under-theorised. While consumer empowerment is globally advocated, models are needed to guide how luxury brands can exert symbolic control while enabling participation. Future research that bridges these gaps will be required to develop a more advanced conceptualisation of digital luxury branding in a more dynamic social and technological environment.

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