# The effect of Social Media marketing activities on Brand Experience and Brand Attitude of Luxury Personal Goods

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#### **Abstract**

A brand signals to the customer the source of the product, and protects both the customer and the producer from competitors who would attempt to provide products that appear to be identical (Aaker, 1991). A successful brand is an identifiable product, service, person or place, augmented in such a way that the buyer or user perceives relevant, unique added values which match their needs most closely (Chernatony and McDonald, 1998). Social media is an important research area, which is of interest to marketers as well as academicians. Researchers have been studying the impact of social media marketing (SMM) on dimensions such as brand equity, purchase intentions etc. Meagre literature is accessible on how social media marketing activities influences the brand experiences and which in turns leads establishment of positive brand attitude that will drive the purchase of luxury goods. In this study we have proposed a research model that depict the relationship between social media marketing parameters as well as brand experience. Therefore the main objective is to investigate the impact of SMM on three dimensions of brand experience (sensory, behavioral and social) and brand attitude. Based on the proposed model the researchers have formulated seven hypothesis related to it.

**Keywords:** social media marketing, brand experience, brand attitude

# Introduction

The brand, in a sense, acts as a credible guarantee for that product or service, allowing the consumer clearly to identify and specify products which genuinely offer added value (Murphy, 1998). As the demand for luxury goods and services increases, international luxury brands are gearing up to cater to the Indian consumer in ways that the current retail sector may not be able to.

Luxury is the new-found love of the Indian retail sector. Aspirational consumers with ever-growing disposable incomes are the target, and the sector is growing at a rapid pace thanks to international luxury brands setting up their stores across the country. Over the last decade, the Indian luxury market has been in the spotlight for global luxury brands with a growing presence. The Indian luxury market, valued at about US\$ 18.5 billion at the end of 2017, has the potential to cross the US\$ 100 billion mark over the next 7-8 years (source: CII, Kantar IMRB).

Since India was ranked as the seventh most-valued 'nation brand' in 2015, according to a report by Brand Finance, the country's economy has grown to become even stronger. All the economic indicators are favorable, and the retail sector has used this to good advantage by driving growth. Luxury brands need to strategically design their plans to tap the growing demand across the retail sector. There is typically a need for luxury brands to focus on expansion in the type of products being offered, and increasingly adopt innovative marketing plans in response to rapidly evolving consumer behavioral trends. Luxury is no longer a 'status symbol' in India, but has now become a viable lifestyle for a vast majority. And global brands need to evolve quickly and learn to adapt within the local environment—it is critical for them in order to get accustomed to the market and understand the cultural identity of Indian consumers. The shift from conspicuous consumption to more value-driven purchases is extremely evident in today's aspirational buyers of high-end brands. Experience-based luxury is the new driver of growth for many of these brands for the new discerning Indian consumer.

India as a retail market is not uniform, especially when it comes to preference for luxury in terms of need fulfilment. Few existing players have thus been able to fulfil the needs of the Indian luxury consumer. Since this segment of market remains untouched, huge potential lies in the same. To be successful in India as a retailer, it is necessary to gauge both the financial potential as well as the mindset of the Indian luxury consumer. For example, the traditional Indian custom of personal adornment has led to strong demand for luxury accessories, jewelry and timepieces, and designer clothing and footwear, thus establish international retail brands as a huge competitor to the domestic Indian brands. When it comes to 'affordable luxury', Indian retailers find it comparatively more difficult to generate revenue from Indian brands, a concern that the Indian brands are taking seriously and addressing accordingly. The market for luxury goods and services has grown rapidly in all the top metro cities, making the consumer spoilt for choice and signifying a major upheaval for the country's retail sector.

# Contribution of the study

In highly competitive markets, the brand experience is very necessary. Brand experience can help establish brand attitude, consumer satisfaction, repurchasing intent and increases degree of loyalty. Moreover, marketing manager should effectively manage and utilize the antecedent of social media marketing activities, brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand associations and quality perceptions etc. The aim of brand experience is to maintain or increase the level of competitive advantage of the firm, this study would help the company officials of the luxury personal brands cum marketing managers understand the performance of their brands with relation to their competition and provide them with the insights of areas they need to work upon to increase the customer based brand experience of the organizations.

Brands need to be periodically measured in terms of the impact generated on consumers, stimulating market demand and exploring opportunities for proliferation. The study would help the luxury personal goods brand managers to understand their:

- Social media marketing activities
- Brand Experiences-Behavioral Sensory & Social
- **Brand Attitude**

The main growth engine of the luxury market is a generational shift, with 85% of luxury growth in 2017 fueled by Generations Y and Z. But a broader "millennial state of mind" is permeating the luxury industry and changing the ways in which all generations make purchases. This shift also pushes luxury brands to redefine what they deliver to customers, and how they deliver it.

Shoes, jewelry and handbags ranked as the three Fastest-growing product categories, increasing by 10%, 10% and 7%, respectively, at current exchange rates. Apparel, beauty and handbags still make up the bulk of global luxury purchases, amounting to €61 billion, €54 billion and €48 billion, respectively—and collectively representing 62% of the personal luxury goods market.

This study would thus help the luxury personal goods to develop consumer insight for their company and also have a comparative analysis of their customer based brand equity parameters with those of the competitors.

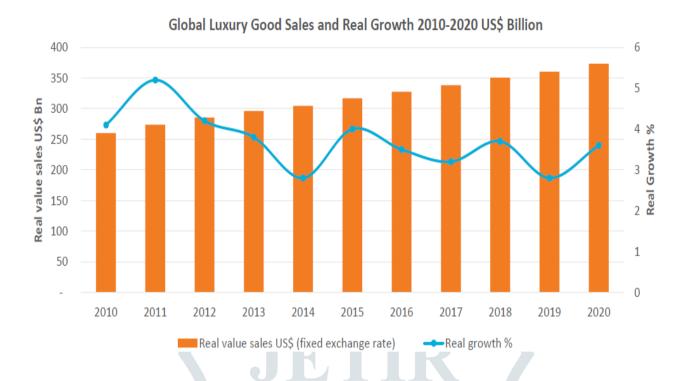


Figure 1: Global Luxury goods sale

### **Luxury Personal Goods**

The growing influx of international luxury brands will be a game-changer the likes of which the retail sector has not seen in a very long time. The personal luxury goods market posted positive growth across all key regions. More robust local consumption (up 4%) and strong tourist purchases (up 6%) contributed to the strong performance.

Chinese consumption bounced back in 2017, fueled by renewed consumer confidence and the rapid emergence of a new middle class. Sales in mainland China grew by a remarkable 15% at current exchange rates, to a total market size of €20 billion. Buying abroad also increased. Globally, the share of personal luxury goods purchased by Chinese nationals reached 32%.

A currency-driven boost in the second half of the year, along with increased Chinese spending, propelled Japan to 4% growth in personal luxury goods spending, at current exchange rates, to €22 billion.

Social media usage has grown among both individuals and organizations. Tuurosong and Faisal (2014) found that most (59 per cent) of the people sampled use social media daily, atleast once a day. Mangold and Faulds (2009) posited that the advent of social media (also referred to as consumer-generated media) has ominously transformed the means by which organizations communicate to their target audience. Numerous firms have used social media in their marketing activities. For example, Boateng (2014) found some telecommunication companies in Ghana have used social media to manage customer knowledge. This means that social media is very essential in the marketing practices of firms. Rooney (2011) noted that social media sites have helped firms to create and build relationships with their customers and expand their market share. Again, some firms have started incorporating social media into their customer relationship management systems (Trainor et al., 2014).

As indicated by Mehta (2000), customer's reaction towards social media marketing is one of the compelling variables of viability of web based life publicizing as shopper's subjective capacity towards the online notice are reflected in their contemplations and in addition sentiments and thusly will impact their attitude towards social media marketing (Mackenzie and Luts, 1989).

#### **Social Media and Luxury Brands**

Today, luxury brands construct connections through social media and utilize it to upgrade brand encounters and deals (Corcoran and Feugere, 2009; Kim and Ko, 2010; Phan, Thomas, and Heine, 2011). For instance, Burberry has been marked an online networking early adopter, with more than 800,000 devotees on Twitter and more than 11.6 million "fans" on Facebook (Messieh, 2012). Brands, for example, Louis Vuitton, Gucci, and Chanel are likewise dynamic social media marketers. Brand profile pages via social media furnish consumers with knowledge into the historical backdrop of the brand and strengthen the selectiveness of the brand. Not quite the same as company websites, mark profile pages enable luxury brand marketers to draw in with their consumers on an individual level and give constant data about brands. The social idea of brand profile pages likewise empowers informal discussions among customers (Thomas and Peters, 2011), which gives luxurious marketers chances to use mark advocates. As of late, Kim and Ko (2011) found the constructive outcomes of luxury brand's social media marketing showcasing on client connections and purchase intention. At that point, how do these brand pages, a prevalent configuration of media marketing decipher for consumers purchase goal toward luxurious items.

# **Literature Review**

#### 1. Social Media Marketing Activities

Social Media serves as a pertinent podium with remarkable prospects to reach out consumers in their social communities and groups and build with them personalized relationship (more precise- one on one). Social media have changed the way brand management is done and brand content is created and circulated among the masses (Tsai & Men, 2013). In luxury niche, social media is playing a key role in brand success as well as brand health (phan et al., 2011). For example- A more personalized example would be- In many fests, events organized by various institutes there are many brands that put up their stall and also it does live streaming of it. Apple also does online quiz for promotional activity and giveaways especially via Amazon app. Luxury brands like Louis Vuitton also have special chat system which is 24\*7 available. Ko and Kim (2012) described luxury brand's social media marketing endeavor as comprising of five dimensions: entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization, and e-word of mouth (e-WOM). This study examines the social media marketing efforts of luxury personal goods from Ko and Kim (2012) model, we have employed three of the five parameters that is interaction, trendiness and e-word of mouth (e-WOM).

# (a) Interactions:

Gallaugher & Ransbotham (2010) mentioned that interaction is profoundly fluctuating the two way communication between brands as well as customers. Daugherty et al., (2008) also finds that it is an imperative stimulus for creating user generated content online. Social media platforms, e-communities, e-groups etc can serves as a platform for exchanging ideas, thoughts from the peoples who are sitting even miles away from us. Social interaction also describes users who contribute to their loved brand related social media contents and pages in order to meet likeminded others, interact with them, talk with them.

Chen and Zhu (2015) divided the social media into two groups- profile based and content based. A profile based social media focus on individual members and the main purpose is to interact to connect with specific information and topics. It encourages connection because here they are interested in the user behind the profile (Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter). While content based social media focuses on the content of the discussion and comments on the posts.

# (b) Trendiness:

Social media serves as the fastest medium for exchange of latest news and hot discussion topics and also about the product driven discussions. Muntinga et al. (2011), mentioned that trendy information on social media covers four sub-motivations: investigation, acquaintance, pre- purchase information, and stimulation. Investigation illustrates witnessing, and remaining rationalized throughout about one's social atmosphere as well as brands we love. Acquaintance refers to brand-related indication that users acquire to profit from other patron's consciousness and proficiency in order to learn more about a product or brand. Pre-purchase information describes reading product criticisms or threads on brand communities in order to make well-

considered buying judgements. Finally, stimulation relates to consumers subsequent brand-related evidence gaining new ideas – the brand-related evidence therefore serves as a source of encouragement. This research paper tries to define trendiness in terms of the latest information about luxury brands the researcher has shortlisted.

# (c) E-Word of mouth:

Social media associates e-Wom with online interactions of various parties, communities, consumers about brands, products, technology etc and their post purchase dissonance (Mutinga et al., 2011). Various research and recent trends also showed that it has great and far reaching impact, higher credibility, empathy as well as relevance for the customers. It is also considered as one of the best tool online, to spread information about brands. It plays a crucial role at the time of launching a fresh product or when a product is in its introductory stage of life cycle. This study tries to examine the role of e-Wom on social media. A study by Kim and Chu (2011) concluded that use of e-Wom online can be seen from three different perspective and they are-opinion seeking, opinion giving and opinion passing.

# 2. Brand Experience

Pine and Gilmore (1999) and Schmitt (1999) posited that companies need to offer consumer experiences in addition to products and services in order to remain competitive in an increasingly commoditized world. Literature provides examples of companies that provide differentiated consumer experiences such as Starbucks Coffee for their rich multi-sensory store environments and Walt Disney for the world amusement parks which offers wide-range of theatrically and physically rich environments.

The shift from consuming things to consuming experiences is a direct result of the time-starved, fastpaced lifestyle that evolved during and after the 1980s. Consumers looked to experiential offerings as a way of getting more enjoyment out of their time and, importantly, as a means of feeling connected, important and understood (Norton, 2003).

From the literature review we can conclude that brand experience is a multidimensional construct having multiple underlying dimensions. The review of literature indicates five main dimensions, Sensory, Affective, Intellectual, Behavioral and Social, based on the most significant contributions by Schmitt (1999) and Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello (2009). We have incorporated only three of the elements of the brand experience that is Sensory, Behavioral and social experiences only to suit the preferences of the study.

# (a) Sensory Experiences:

Sensory experiences appeal to the five senses of sight, sound, scent, taste and touch (Schmitt, 1999). The overall purpose of sensory experiences is to provide aesthetic pleasure, excitement, beauty, and satisfaction through sensory simulation. Schmitt and Simonson (1997) in their book Marketing Aesthetics' refers to the marketing of sensory experiences by corporates and brands contribute to organization's or brand's identity. According to them, a brand's visual identity is often the most important component for invoking attitudes, associations and customer responses. Hence, we can say that visual identities offer the sensory experiences that attract a consumer to a brand.

According to Schmitt and Simonson (1997) the corporate identity, primary elements, styles and themes of brands result in customer impressions. At the corporate level, the identity elements include properties, products, presentations and publications which manifest the brand/corporate expressions in a visual/sensory manner. Similarly at the brand level, primary elements, (color, shape, typeface, loudness, pitch, material, texture etc.) styles and themes form an expression of the brand. These primary elements relate to the five senses of sight, sound, touch, scent and taste.

#### (b)Behavioral Experiences:

Behavioral experiences refer to consumer experiences related to the physical body and the patterns of behavior and lifestyle (Schmitt, 1999). These experiences move beyond the realm of sensation, affect and cognition. Schmitt (1999) explains that these experiences may occur privately or through public interactions and customers may use their actions to display their self-conceptions and values. These actions are the responses to the behavioral experiences of consumers with the brand.

Most luxury brands embody a distinct set of values communicated through their marketing efforts, which may appeal to a particular consumer segment. This may stimulate behavioral experiences and actions on the part of the consumers such as purchase, repurchase, advocating the brand or recommending the brand. Hence behavioral experiences are important from the perspective of evoking the right responses amongst the target consumers.

# (c) Social Experiences:

Social experiences expand beyond the individual's private sensations, feelings, cognitions and actions by relating the individual self to the broader social and cultural context reflected in a brand (Schmitt, 1999).

Research on social groups in the brand context by Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) described brand communities as a structured set of social relationships among brand users. Furthermore, McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig (2002) suggested that competitive advantage can be gained by marketers if they concentrate on the consumer's experience of owning the product. They expanded the brand community model to entities beyond peer to peer relationships, considering communities as consumer centric.

Solomon (2004) examines how our world is influenced by the action of marketers, and considers how products, services and consumption contribute to the broader social world we experience.

The essence of social experience is to get people to relate to other individuals as well as entire groups and cultures via brands. The purpose of relating to others seems to be motivated by a need for categorization and a search for meaning. The Social Identity Theory states that the in- group will discriminate against the out-group to enhance their self-image, which is a visible trait amongst luxury consumers. On similar lines, Schmitt (1999) posited social experiences as ranging from straightforward reference group identification to formation of brand communities in which consumers view a brand as a center of the social organization and take on a marketing role themselves.

Tsai (2005) also notes that social oriented consumers are motivated to possess luxury brands in order to display their status and success to their targeted social groups.

# 3. Behavioral responses and purchase intention toward luxury products

Mehta (2000) gives proof that attitude towards social media marketing are decidedly connected with brand review and purchasing expectation. On account of Web-based mediums, Stevenson, Bruner, and Kumar (2000) found that respondents with a more negative attitude toward social media marketing scored bring down as far as purchase intention is concerned than those respondents with positive attitude toward social media marketing.

As per Wolin, Korgaonkar, and Lund's (2002) conceptualization, behavioral responses to social media marketing allude to consumers behavioral conduct (e.g., tap the connection and look for more data), reactions (e.g., disregard or focus), and offense level toward social media marketing. Further, it is recommended that advertisers should discover methods for upgrading their believability as to social media marketing endeavors. Particular methodologies that would accomplish more prominent saw validity incorporate refreshing social media marketing substance to guarantee it is current and precise and creating affiliations with believable associations.

Hence, luxury brand advertisers can profit by social media marketing as a way to advance and teach potential consumers about their brands. Furthermore, past research proposes that brand conscious people have a tendency to be worried about how others see them and have a tendency to be required with mold (Bush, Bloch, and Dawson, 1989). Subsequently in light of the writing, by communicating with social media marketing, consumers can present to their "envisioned group of onlookers" (Litt, 2012) the brands they devour by turning into a fan or potentially imparting publicizing substance to their companions – these are brand conscious consumers, and these brand conscious consumers to take part in self-introduction and find more data about the brands.

A brief summary of some important reviewed literature is given below in the table:

AUTHOR (S)	TITLE	VARIABLES	METHODOLOGY	KEY FINDINGS
Bruno Godey, Aikaterini Manthiou (2016)	Social media marketing efforts of LB: Influence on Brand equity & consumer behavior	Social media marketing activities, Brand equity, Consumer response	Primary data + SPSS	SMM has direct effect on brand equity and consumer response
Salah Raed Algharabat, Chiang, C storey (2018)	Linking social media marketing activities with brand love	SMM activities, self- expressive brands, brand love	Primary data + SPSS	Self-expressive brands mediates between SMM and brand love
Seung A Annie Jin, (2017)	The potential of social media for luxury brand management	Social media, Luxury brand	Primary data + SEM	Social media enhances luxury brand purchase
Angella J Kim, Eunju Ko (2011)	Do social media marketing activities enhances customer equity?	Social media, Value equity, Brand equity, Relationship equity	Primary data + SEM	Social media enhances all three types of equity and purchase intention also
Perera & Perera (2016)	Influence of Social Media Marketing on the Brand Image of Org. in the Hospitality Industry	Consistency, Positivity, Differentiation, personality	Survey, Interview + secondary data supported	Brand Image is heavily influenced by the social media presence
Kavisekera & Abeysekera (2016)	Effect of social media marketing on brand equity of online companies	Exposure Consumer- engagement Fan loyalty Influence	Survey, SPSS Secondary data supported	Brand equity is heavily influence by SMM activities

Table 1: Literature Review summary

# **Research Gaps**

Brand experience is one of the new paradigm in marketing which is gaining popularity amongst researchers and marketing practitioners. Recent studies focusing on experience management signify the importance of building positive, unique and favorable experiences by brands to engage with consumers. Most studies have looked at the dimensions and components of brand experience and have not focused on the effect of brand experience. Moreover in the luxury context, past research establishes the importance of experiences in luxury selling but there is scant empirical testing for this argument.

Hence it is worth exploring the conceptual model of brand experience and empirically testing it with luxury buyers. It is recognized that creating brand experiences are an important trend and the importance of brand equity in brand building also has been posited in past research, however there is no empirical study that establishes a relationship between brand experience and Social media marketing. Identifying this gap in past research, this study makes the initial attempt to propose the model for testing their relationship.

With the growing demand for luxury products, which are one of the most profitable and fastest growing segments, there is a need for focused research endeavors, more so in the emerging economies. Literature on luxury brands has focused on buying motives of consumers and consumer behavior, however scant empirical studies are available in the area.

The study addressed the aforementioned gaps in past literature for investigation as follows, firstly, the brand experience and social media marketing constructs, secondly, the sequential nature of brand experience dimensions, thirdly, the effect of brand experience dimensions on brand social media dimensions.

In view of the above, this study is extremely relevant and contextual and no research of this nature has been observed which examines all the constructs proposed in this study.

#### **Hypothesis**

- H 1: Social media marketing activities have positive impact on consumer's behavioral experiences.
- H 2: Social media marketing positively influences consumer's sensory experiences.
- H 3: Social media marketing positively influences consumer's social experiences.
- H 4: Consumer's behavioral experiences have positive impact on their attitude towards the brand.
- H 5: Consumer's sensory experiences have positive impact on their attitude towards the brand.
- H 6: Consumer's social experiences have positive impact on their attitude towards the brand
- H 7: Brand attitude positively impacts consumer's purchase intention towards the brand.

# **Proposed model for the study**

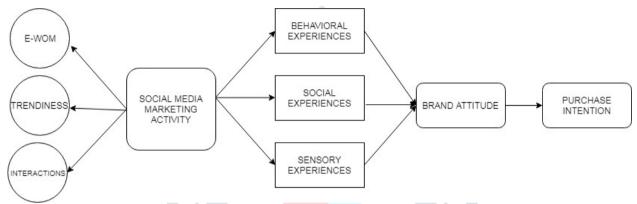


Figure 2: Proposed research model

Social media are computer-mediated technologies that facilitate the creation and sharing of information, ideas, career interests and other forms of expression via virtual communities and networks. Social media are online applications, platforms and media which aim to facilitate interactions, collaborations and the sharing of content (Richter & Koch, 2007). They take a variety of forms, including weblogs, social blogs, micro blogging, wikis, podcasts, pictures, video, rating and social bookmarking. Technology development benefits the world of fashion by attracting customers to interact with the brands.

Purchase intention is a combination of consumers' interest in and possibility of buying a product. Purchase intention is an attitudinal variable for measuring customer's future contributions to a brand, whereas customer equity is a behavioral variable accounting for actual purchasing record. As forecasting of consumer's future behavior becomes a critical issue for a firm, that future behavior should be estimated more punctually (Park, Ko & Kim, 2010).

### **Theoretical Implications**

This research can be very useful for providing fresh insights in the area of luxury personal goods marketing by identifying and classifying various determinants of SMM. Some of the variables of brand experience and SMM are used by previous studies in different context and situations. This study can redefined the SMM as an activity based approach and this is a significant contribution to this market niche of luxury brands. The proposed model can be used to depict and find the relationship between the SMM and the bran experience and how it is hampering the purchase intentions of luxury brand consumer of luxury personal goods.

#### **Managerial Implications**

This study could offer the managerial solutions for creating favorable brand experiences for luxury brand consumers by the help of SMM endeavors on luxury brand communities. This can provide the better strategy for achieving competitive advantage by enhancing the consumer experience. This study can proved to be

extremely important as well useful for today's generation marketing managers of luxury brands. The marketing and advertising managers must share and communicate interesting, informative, eye catching and media rich contents which can influence behavioral as well as sensory experiences of consumers of luxury goods. Hence this study could provide the basic insights as well as understanding that how should SMM be handled in effective as well as efficient manner to enhance brand experience which in turns affects the brand attitude and influences purchase intentions in a positive manner. Further a quantitative paper can be thought incorporating this model that will be more apt and to the point.

# **Limitations and Future Research Directions**

This is only a qualitative research paper further it can be made into quantitative work also; researchers have planned this also. Researchers have incorporated only two dimensions of brand experience but according to Brakus et al model we can employ two more variables that is intellectual and social experience.

The scope of the study can also be improved by incorporating the brand equity parameters in the research model. To get holistic picture we can include the all five variables of SMM as depicted by kim and ko model.

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