Major Research Project

on

"IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT ON LUXURY BRAND LOYALTY AMONG YOUNG CONSUMERS IN INDIA"

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the Major Research Project titled "**IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT ON LUXURY BRAND LOYALTY AMONG YOUNG CONSUMERS IN INDIA**" is a Bonafide record of original work carried out by **Mr. Sahil Verma**, **Roll Number: 24/DMBA/203**, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of "**Master of Business Administration" at Delhi School of Management, Delhi Technological University, Delhi.**

This project has been completed under my supervision and guidance, and to the best of my knowledge, it is a genuine and original piece of work.

Dr. Deep Shree

Place: Delhi

Date:

DECLARATION

I, Sahil Verma, hereby declare that the Major Research Project titled "Impact of Social Media Engagement on Luxury Brand Loyalty Among Young Consumers in India", submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Business Administration (MBA), is a record of original work carried out by me under the supervision and guidance of Dr. Deep Shree at Delhi School of Management, Delhi Technological University.

I further declare that this work has not been submitted previously by me or by any other individual for the award of any degree, diploma, or similar title at this or any other university/institution.

Place: Delhi

Date:

Signature of the Student

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study looks at how social media's changing the way young people in India think about luxury brands and if it affects their loyalty to these brands. India has a lot of people who are good at using digital things and the market for luxury items is getting bigger. So it is interesting to see how social media and buying luxury items are connected for people between 18 and 30 years old. This study is meant to find out more about this.

The study used a mix of methods to get information from people. Some information was collected from a survey that people filled out online on platforms like Instagram and Facebook and also through emails. Two hundred young people in India helped us understand how they use media and what they think about luxury brands. Other information was collected from journals and reports from companies like McKinsey and Deloitte and from the government from 2020 to 2026.

What we found out is that young people in India are very active on platforms like Instagram and YouTube which're important for luxury brands. Social media plays a role in helping people form opinions about brands through influencers and personalized messages and stories. For people in India luxury brands are not just about showing off but also about who they are and what they have achieved.

There are five things about social media marketing that help people engage with brands: it is fun people can interact with each other it is about what is new and cool things can be customized and people talk about it with others. When people interact with brands they feel more connected to the brand and trust it more which makes them more loyal.

We also saw that different groups of people engage with luxury brands in ways and that young people are not just buying luxury items to show off but because they really want them and care about quality and uniqueness. Even though they want luxury brands they are practical. Want to know the real story about the brands.

There were some limitations to our study like how we chose the people for the survey and that we used information from sources. Because things are changing fast in the digital world it is hard to make general statements. If we study this more, we can learn a lot more about it.

In the end it is clear that social media has an influence on what young people in India think about luxury brands and if they are loyal, to them. So luxury brands need to make sure they are using media in a way that is relevant and fun and works well on mobile devices if they want to attract and keep young Indian customers.

Background

Historically, exclusive, rare and symbolic goods are regarded as luxury products-These attributes distinguish luxury products from luxury products like premium or luxury-like products (Kapferer and Bastien, 2009).In practice, luxury is no longer only confined to the fashion industry. Other product and service sectors like haute couture, cars, high-end watches and jewelry, cosmetics and fragrance products, premium services and leisure resorts have become part of the luxury sector too. Contemporary Indian luxury sector, for example, covers not only branded apparel and accessories but also premium hotels and holiday experiences, designer wedding packages, and luxury cars. Luxury products and services appeal to customers not for their utility and functionality but for the values and benefits they offer such as the status, self-esteem and gratification, since "Luxury is about being, for oneself and for others, not about having" (Kapferer and Bastien, 2009).

With regard to the scale of development, India is among the fastest-growing luxury markets worldwide. Having the youngest population and growing economy, luxury products have enjoyed tremendous growth in the past few years in India. Sales of luxury products jumped by 32.8% in the financial year 2022 in India (Deloitte, 2023) to serve the high-income consumers and it is forecasted that India's spending on luxury goods will triple by 2030 with growing middle-income class and more millionaires and the emphasis of cultural trend is on the experiential and aspiration nature of consumption (Bain & Company, 2024). Now, luxury market covers fashion, automotive, cosmetics and jewelry in India.

At the same time, India has been transformed dramatically by digitalization. The Indian population is relatively young and the average age of an Indian is about 28 years while 29% population is in the age group of 18-34 years old, that includes all Millennials and Gen Z. Young people with this age are tech-savvy, thus the total number of internet users and active social media users in India has reached 751 million and 462 million respectively in early 2024. Major platforms have impressive reach: e.g., the number of Instagram users is about 363 million in India, while the number of YouTube users is about 462 million. Most importantly, the young users accounted for 60% and more of the total user number for Instagram.

Under this context, social media has become a key channel for young Indians to discover, perceive, and interact with brands. Unlike traditional media, social networks permit interactions, peers-to-peers communication through user-generated pictures, videos, and testimonials of products, which could transform an implicit consumption into an explicit consumption (Creevey et al., 2022).The richness and aestheticity offered by Instagram, for instance, enables interactive story-telling to young consumers. The boom of influencer culture demonstrates the rise of informal and indirect endorsements of the brands, with the popular opinion leaders and micro-celebrities leading the way to curate luxury lifestyles.

These trends will bring various impacts on the brand perception and brand loyalty. Brand perception refers to the consumer's thoughts and impressions of the brand. Brand loyalty refers to the consumer's repeated patronage or recommendation of the brand. Historically, the carefully controlled symbolic brand images are supposed to be constructed by the luxury brands to win brand loyalty. However, the nature of social media brings new challenges as well as opportunities to the luxury brands. The rich and immersive experiences in social media might consolidate brand perceptions while on the other hand, the widespread of branding content may dilute the brand exclusivity. The studies also showed that young Indian consumers are more prone to perception that luxury product is more valuable and willing to purchase if it is associated with the social media exposure and its product perception can be improved through the exposure to the product within the social media environment (Nair & Seshanna, 2024). For example, the willingness to pay more would rise if luxury products are exposed by distinctive influencers (Klucarova, 2024).

Overall, India's youth represent enormous growth opportunities for various luxury products and services. The young Indian customers are highly addicted to social media platform such as Instagram and YouTube.. Luxury brands must navigate a landscape where brand image is co-created online and consumer loyalty may depend on digital brand experiences. Yet, systematic research addressing these dynamics remains limited.

Now that it has become common to hear people talking about the end of social stratification, of open societies and of luxury goods accessible to all, we really must return to this central theme of the connection between luxury, the individual and society.

Luxury and social stratification. Let us start with what is in our eyes the most fundamental point, one that we have christened 'the paradigm of luxury'

• Originally, luxury was the visible result – deliberately conspicuous and ostentatious – of hereditary social stratification (kings, priests and the nobility, versus the gentry and commoners), a social stratification with which absolutely everyone had to fall in as it was itself based on certain metaphysical principles (the social order as ordained by the Creator, the Church, the Tao, the caste system, the Law of Karma, etc).

• Eighteenth-century rational thought and Enlightenment philosophy resulted in the gradual disappearance of the founding myths of European society that gave legitimacy to the social structure, whether in the Middle Ages or under the Ancien Régime in France, and, along with these myths, away went all supernatural explanations for natural events: lightning is no longer thought of as Zeus voicing his anger, but simply a phenomenon produced by electrostatic discharge; objects are no longer attributed with a soul. This is the phenomenon of 'disenchantment', or 'Entzauberung' (literally, demystification or rationalization), that the German political economist and sociologist Max Weber analysed so well, which characterizes present-day Western society and which, thanks to globalization, is inexorably conquering the world – a materialistic and fluid society in which any kind of transcendent social stratification has disappeared.

• What has not disappeared, on the other hand, is humankind's need for some form of social stratification, which is vital; without it, a person, a social being by nature, is unable to escape

social chaos and imitative disorder born of undifferentiation (as French philosopher René Girard showed most ably). We need to know our place in society.

• Luxury, then, has a fundamental function of recreating this social stratification. What is more, it does it in a democratic manner, meaning that everyone can recreate (up to a certain point) their strata according to their dreams – whence a new kind of anxiety, that of freedom: before, the strata 18 Back to luxury fundamentals were known and respected; democracy, sexual equality and globalization have led society to lose its points of reference and opened the sluice gates to consumption, but now it lacks any hierarchical codes. These need to be recreated, and 'the anxiety of freedom' creates a demand for advice on how to recreate these codes, placing the 'luxury brand' in a position of superiority with respect to its client, a notion that we shall come across repeatedly, as its consequences when it comes to the strategy are very considerable: in addition to quality, which you have a right to expect from a top-of-the-range brand, you would want something extra from a luxury brand – some sociological advice, an instruction even: 'This is exactly the product you need to buy for yourself or somebody else', with the client's full acquiescence, if not their express demand (What should I give this person for this occasion?'). It is the brand that is laying down its law to the consumer – all quite democratically of course!

In medieval times our ancestors started losing hair and used to wear animal skin to save themselves from the harsh weather conditions and changing climate. Clothes are no longer just some knitted threads, to save ourselves from the cold. The clothes we wear now reflect style and are used to portray one's feelings.

Over the past few years the luxury fashion market has witnessed a change in how the brands communicate with its consumers mainly because of the sudden growth of social media. Luxury brands all over the world have moved from creating a niche aura around the brands to exploring digitally connected worlds in which the consumers and brands can communicate much more often and engage better (Ko, Costello, & Taylor, 2019). In India where the luxury market is burgeoning rapidly, this change is more prevalent in the youth sector-a segment that is fully immersed in the world of social media.

Young Indians of today (Millennials and Gen Z) do not view luxury as a measure of affluence but rather see luxury as a means to an end, portraying identity, lifestyle and values (Bain & Company, 2023). The digital social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat etc play an integral role in this definition of luxury. They serve as a direct communication channel and a space for the luxury brands to share relevant information regarding brand history, collaborations and present a visually rich storytelling platform. Influencers and advertisements on social media also have a strong influence on consumer decision making and their connection to a brand (Pham & Gammoh, 2020). In India youth's definition of luxury brand relies on their perception towards social media; hence this platform of luxury brands enables to create emotional connections and brand loyalty among young Indians.

Consumer loyalty towards a luxury brand is determined by not only quality but also by the brand experiences provided through digital media (Stephen, 2016). These include providing interactive experiences, personalized content, background insights into how the brand operates, showing social responsibility or participation in environmental activities and also building interactive communities where consumers of luxury brands can connect (Jimnez-Castillo &

Snchez-Fernndez, 2019; Kapferer, 2010). Young Indians, highly connected via social media readily engage and bond with luxury brands that resonate with their ideology of lifestyle; therefore this tool plays a huge role in building loyalty for these brands in the Indian luxury market.

Considering the rapidly developing world where India too is moving at a similar pace to develop its digital world and the growing buying power of Indian Youth, this is one crucial aspect that needs further analysis for academics as well as business marketing practitioners. The research will analyze the role of social media in determining the luxury brand perception and loyalties among young Indians with secondary data from various sources, industry reports and marketing studies.

Rationale for the Study

The motivation for this study arises from two practical needs and two scholarly needs. Firstly, luxury brands have recognized India's young wealthy and aspire to attract these consumers. Brand practitioners note that if they are to succeed in India, they must appeal to culturally sophisticated youth who communicate and experience much of their lives through mobile phones and social media feeds. Despite the rapid rise of social media as a luxury communication platform in India, comprehensive empirical evidence on how social media communications affect young Indian consumers' brand perceptions and loyalty remains largely fragmented. While some studies have investigated certain aspects, such as trust and authenticity in influencer marketing (e.g., Sashi, 2012) or brand value perception in influencer contexts (e.g., Lou & Yuan, 2019), few have provided a holistic overview that addresses various luxury brand categories in India.

Secondly, luxury brand management has historically stressed exclusivity and mystique while social media is based on community and transparency. This apparent paradox between these values and the platform has yet to be fully explored in an Indian setting. There is a need to expand research that looks into the behavior of younger consumers regarding luxury consumption and online construction of brand image(s) (Creevey et al., 2022). Furthermore, extant research primarily focuses on Western consumers or only single luxury categories such as fashion, neglecting a broad, multi-category perspective relevant to the Indian market, where cultural differences also need to be taken into account.

Thirdly, the use of social media is radically changing fundamental processes such as brand meaning creation and the development of brand loyalty. Traditional loyalty models focusing on repeat purchasing behavior and emotional attachment require re-evaluation in interactive media that foster consumer to consumer and consumer to brand interaction. If, even the identity of the source of luxurious message can add significantly to the product's prestige (Klucarova, 2024), it is crucial for brands to understand what social media strategies support maintaining a luxury image while fostering loyalty.

Lastly, the decision to examine young Indians is motivated by the fact that Millennials and Generation Z are true natives of this digital era. They use social networks not only for communication, but for constructing their perspectives on both lifestyles and brands, therefore investing in creating loyalty at this stage could be a long-term success strategy given the forecast of India as one of the largest luxury markets in the world.

Statement of the Problem

But little attention has been paid to the influence of social media on luxury brands perception and consumer loyalty of young Indians, although it may seem a pertinent issue. Luxury brands are usually considered to rely upon scarcity and exclusive communications while social media is built on the user created content and opened to everyone. The fundamental problem for the luxury brands is how to gain from the reach of social media without losing brand value.

There is also no clear indication that for the young Indians, social media brings luxury brands closer to them (weakening exclusivity) or make it more desirable (increasing aspiration). Lack of research, in this area that measure brand perception and loyalty together has created two practical problems; brand managers can't make their decision, researcher can't achieve the purpose of research.

Therefore, the research problem of this study is "How social media use affectsluxury brands perception and luxury brand loyalty intent among Indian youth in luxury products across categories"?

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are:

- To examine how social media exposure influences young consumers' perceptions of luxury brands in India.
- To identify the roles of specific social media platforms, particularly Instagram and YouTube, in shaping brand image and desirability.
- To assess the impact of influencer and user-generated content on consumer loyalty toward luxury brands.
- To compare effects across different categories of luxury goods (fashion, automobiles, jewelry, cosmetics).
- To explore demographic factors within the youth segment that may moderate the relationship between social media engagement and brand loyalty.

Research Questions

The study will try to answer the following research questions

- How does exposure to luxury brand content on social media influence the perception of brand prestige and exclusivity among Indian youth?
- What roles do Instagram and YouTube play in enhancing luxury brand images for young consumers?
- How do influencer and peer-generated content affect attitudes toward luxury brands and willingness to pay premium prices?
- How does engagement with luxury brands on social media translate into loyalty outcomes like purchase intention or brand advocacy?

- Are there differences in these effects across categories such as fashion, automobiles, jewelry, and cosmetics

Scope of the Study

This research concerns Indian youth aged from 18 to 34 years old. It covers various categories of luxury (fashion, automotive, jewelry, cosmetics and luxury travel), mainly Instagram and YouTube (the most widely used social networks but also others are taken into consideration).

It addresses well known brands and analyzes attitudes, perceptions, brand preferences and brand loyalty behavior based on self-reported opinions and intentions in the period 2020-2026, in coherence with recent technologies.

Significance of the Study

This research holds importance for many reasons. Theoretically, it adds to luxury branding and social media marketing literature within an underdeveloped area of an emerging market. It also builds on knowledge concerning consumer-brand relationships influenced by social media and responds to suggestions that research into young consumers and luxury purchases needs to be developed. Practically, it offers important suggestions for luxury brand managers looking to establish or enhance relationships with Indian youth. This could involve new approaches to content, choice of media and working with influencers. It may suggest how to maintain a strong luxury brand presence while still capitalizing on the power and loyalty of digitally astute consumers. In terms of wider understanding, it adds to global luxury branding knowledge by highlighting observations of a major emerging luxury market: India.

Structure of the Study

Outline of the thesis is:

Chapter 2: The literature review section of luxury branding, consumer behavior and the influence of social media marketing and influencer is given in this chapter.

Chapter 3: This chapter displays the research methodology applied to the research design, sampling design, data collecting design and data analyzing design.

Chapter 4: The chapter describes the results which come out of statistic analyzing of empirical results.

Chapter 5: This chapter discusses the findings and analyses the research question in terms of theories and practices.

Chapter 6: This chapter summarizes the contribution of this study and discusses limitation and recommendations.

Luxury Branding Concepts

Brands which appeal to the high-end market are those brands where the symbolic and exclusive values of a brand are significantly greater than its functional elements (Kapferer & Bastien,

2012). A luxury brand concentrates, unlike a mass market brand on the 'essence and emotions such as craftsmanship, rarity and history' (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). It is these symbolic qualities which enable luxury brands to attain the prices that they do and create an aura of desirability. According to Kapferer and Bastien (2012) \"Genuine luxury brands.. Can ask any price without being ridiculous\", implying that for these brands, price tends to follow value rather than cost (p. 66). Thus, luxury brand marketing, involves the controlled management of pricing, distribution and communication strategies in order to retain exclusivity (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012).A core concept within luxury branding research is prestige-seeking consumer behavior which reflects a desire to buy brands that grant status (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). This implies that luxury consumers may buy brands not merely for their practical use but for the social status and identity they bestow (Eastman, Eastman, & Sommer, 2021). This idea also ties into the concept of self-congruity theory, in that consumers wish to associate themselves with brands that match the personality they aspire to possess (Sirgy, 1982).Luxury brands are believed to be aspirational, enhancing and reinforcing the self-concept (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012) while conspicuous consumption also plays a central role. According to Veblen (1899), consumers buy luxury brands to display wealth or to acquire status. The need for social status is especially critical in developing economies, where conspicuous consumption often fulfills aspirational wants and enhances societal prestige (Amaldoss & Jain, 2005) and the luxury brand itself becomes a social symbol, an indicator of status and success (Nijssen, Douglas, & Pieters, 2007). Another concept tied into conspicuous consumption is the Veblen effect, which refers to the positive correlation between demand for a product and its price because of the sense of exclusivity the high price grants (Huang & Xiao, 2020). The pricing strategy for luxury brands consequently involves \"always thinking about the price, never talking about it\" (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012, p.43) in practice. Luxury brands have prices that may actually be too low and not be discounted (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012), the inverse of mass-market pricing strategies; this is used as an indicator of lack of availability and intangibility. The concept that the branding of a product does not necessarily have to be a cost reflective price is demonstrated in Kapferer & Bastien (2012) and explain that if luxury brands may price their products low initially, and begin to slowly increase their price until the demand is not being effected and the brand is striking an equilibrium between volume and luxury (p.64).Luxury marketers are able to maintain high profit margins while managing a finite level of demand. Another concept that aids in understanding how luxury brands should be managed is Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism (Kapferer, 2008). The brand identity is composed of six dimensions:Physique, Personality, Culture, Relationship, Reflection and Self-Image. A luxury brand's Physique, for example, might refer to a distinctive shape, colour scheme or symbol such as the Chanel "CC" logo, its Culture to a particular ideology, historical context or aesthetic that a brand stands for such as Prada's avant-garde philosophy and Self-Image and Reflection refer to a perception of who the brand represents and how other see it, such as the image of affluence and elegance the brands convey to consumers (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012). These are all intangible brand attributes, often more important than a product's functionality to luxury consumers (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012).The Luxury Value Perception Model (Wiedmann, Hennigs & Siebels, 2009) categorises luxury value perceptions into five distinct factors; financial, functional, individual, social and hedonic values. Financial value refers to value derived from the financial quality and investment value (e.g., holding value or the potential to increase in monetary worth) that a purchase offers. Functional value involves practical qualities and attributes of the product itself; it is the utility of the product and its superior performance.

The individual value is tied to the positive emotions elicited by purchasing the luxury product such as pride and elation while the social value concerns social status, prestige, admiration and approval from others. Hedonic value describes the purely sensory pleasure and emotional experience of buying and owning the product (Wiedmann et al., 2009). Together these values represent all of the positive effects that luxury purchases provide. Insert model image here-source [insert link] Finally the Dual Brand Value System (Lichtenstein, Netemeyer & Burton, 1990) suggests that consumers may assess products in terms of both utilitarian value (product related attributes such as the quality of materials) and symbolic value (attributes concerning personal satisfaction from self-expressive purchases such as hedonic gratification and social approval). In the context of luxury goods the latter tend to play a more prominent role and it is the task of luxury brand marketers to offer both superior utility and a greater degree of symbolism (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012).Kapferer and Bastien (2012) assert that luxury requires a specific management strategy;. Among these is a strict control over distribution and customer experience. Unlike mass-market brands that maximize reach, luxury brands limit distribution channels to maintain rarity (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012, p. 200). Sales environments are curated to provide an aesthetic and emotional experience (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012). For example, luxury boutiques use rich decor and personal service so clients feel valued without pressure. The idea is to make the purchase moment and after-purchase experience reinforcing the brand's heritage and values (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012). They note that "the luxury product gains value over time" either through aging (fine wine) or memory (a luxury travel experience); thus brands often cultivate memorabilia or magalogues (hybrid magazine-catalogues) to keep clients engaged (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012). These practices ensure that luxury brand relationships are long-term and personal. Kapferer and Bastien (2012) suggest that luxury's primary relational challenge is balancing four facets—affective relationship, dominant market position, communication of codes, and long-term management—by the same people (p. 200). Hence, dedicated sales teams and personalized CRM (at the human rather than automated level) are critical (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012). Brand loyalty is a key outcome of luxury branding. Brand loyalty models such as Oliver's (1999) hierarchy—cognitive, affective, conative, and action loyalty—can be applied to luxury consumers, who often progress through these stages as they become repeat buyers. However, loyalty in luxury markets has unique traits. Dick and Basu (1994) define loyalty as a combination of repeat purchasing and favorable attitude. The importance of attitudinal loyalty for luxury brands (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001) In luxury goods brand loyalty can also be very significant and is defined in terms of strong emotional attachment to the brand (affective loyalty), not only due to strong identity connections (luxury purchases) compared to low-involvement goods. Therefore some experts claim the importance of a brand love dimension within the scope of luxury branding (Batra et al, 2012). Insert model here (source link) Ailawadi, Neslin & Gedenk (2001) distinguish between behavioral and attitudinal loyalty (repeat purchase behaviour vs devotion to a brand), and suggest that both need to be cultivated by marketing efforts. For luxury productsattitudinal loyalty has mostly been associated with symbolic congruence, whereas behavioralloyalty can be easily lost through changes in product features or availability (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012). Various brand loyalty models illustrate key variables determining loyalty. The most well-known, that of Oliver (1999) outlines how satisfaction can develop into loyalty over time, through expectative disconfirmation and reaffirmation. The authors propose a 'loyalty chain', suggesting that brands first create awareness, then attitude, and from that brand attachment, resulting finally in brand loyalty. Keller's (2001) model on brand resonance identifies brand loyalty as the top of brand-

building structure, just above the brand salience, performance and imagery. In other words, it is suggested that for luxury branding it is not only crucial to satisfy the customer but also to have a positivebrand identity (image, feel etc.). In brief, luxury branding implies a complex symbolic universe and a luxurious atmosphere in which to create a deeply involved relationship between customer and brand. Key models to understand this luxury experience, among many, include Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism and Wiedmann's Luxury Value Perception Model which identify different dimensions in the consumer perception of luxury. Long-term relationship building and consistent imagery, coupled with a constant balancing of quality and status, lie at the heart of loyalty for the luxury customer (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012; Oliver, 1999; Wiedmann et al, 2009).

Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing is one that has revolutionized brand-consumer relationships. Using platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Youtube and TikTok luxury brands can achieve 2-way dialogue, build community and offer targeted content (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Social media has been quoted to both offer opportunity and threat for luxury brands; opportunities of an amplified two way dialogue and an extended reach to younger customers, threats that too much reach can 'dilute exclusivity' (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012).Research into social media marketing notes its ability to foster co-creation of brand meaning (Hollebeek, Glynn, & Brodie, 2014). Traditional theorizing of social media such as Kaplans and Haenleins (2010) view it as a spectrum of activities and tools ranging from collaborative projects and content communities to blogs. For contemporary luxury social media strategy it seems that the use of visual content such as pictures and videos are crucial to reflecting brand aesthetics and heritage, as research finds that luxury brands use images, craft narratives and celeb partnerships to evoke dreams for luxury brands (Phan, Thomas, & Heine, 2011) and to satisfy brand needs in the aspirational aspect (Beverland, 2004). Interactions with consumers using features such as Insta stories and live Q&A could build a sense of personal relationship between brands and their consumers although strict brand control is typically evident (Koay, Phau, & Tse, 2022). Engagement is seen as a success factor of social media, where creative brand messages are able to generate likes, comments, shares (Ashley & Tuten, 2015), and by this, consumer awareness and brand loyalty are influenced. In the Engagement Pyramid model proposed by Felix, Rauschnabel, & Hinsch (2017), consumers begin as mere aware and develop to users contributing to the brand (UGC). In luxury markets, UGC is seen as effective endorsement by consumers as it reflects the desire of brand codes. However limited co-creation (e.g. Competitions, contests) is practiced and still supervised by the brand (Koay et al., 2022). Another effect of social media is that on e-WOM; research has indicated that e-WOM influences brand perception significantly (Chu & Kim, 2011), where reviews and celebrity endorsement on social platforms can increase brand reputation and credibility (Hinz, Skiera, Barrot, & Becker, 2011). This is especially influential for millennials and Gen Zs who are accustomed to social reference when purchasing (Smith, 2020) following social proof theory where by consumers trust information when supported by evidence from other people (Cialdini, 2009). Two-step flow and influencer marketing are also enabled through social media. Influencers act as modern opinion leaders for their followers and play an important role in conveying brand messages as a form of e-WOM (Jin, Muqaddam, & Ryu, 2019). Both authenticity and appropriateness of influencers for brand message are identified as crucial aspects for social media marketing (Kamins, Brand, Hoeke, & Moe, 1989; Marwick, 2015). In luxury social media marketing, there are also time-sensitive campaigns and limited releases to induce exclusivity and ‘fomo’ amongst consumers (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012). The digital luxury market essentially mixes traditional PR methods with social media – brands still don't frequently employ mass advertising but stories and campaigns are spread using social channels (Phan et al. 2011 argue storytelling on social media helps luxury brands maintain the traditional level of narrative control while engaging younger masses). The performance of social media for luxury has not yet been fully measured; brand engagement has become more significant than the total amount of followers (De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017), brand perception is measured via sentiment analysis (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), and sales can be influenced with relevant e-WOM that affects buying behavior and long-term loyalty (Kim & Ko, 2012). Research has indicated that social media creates emotional connection and community thus increasing loyalty (Laroche, Habibi, & Richard,

2013), where community contributes to a stronger relationship between brand and consumer as stated in brand community theory (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001) and as seen with high social media usage amongst younger people in India, luxury brands are increasingly turning to communities on social media to enhance brand relations. Nevertheless, the over-commercialization on social media may create a gap in consumer expectations if perceived as not authentic (Alhabash & Ma, 2017), hence successful luxury social media strategy involves engaging aspirationally, not with explicit sales tactics.

Influencer Impact

Influencers are persons who have substantial followerships in the virtual world, and whose attitudes and behaviors affect followers (Freberg et al. 2011; Jin et al. 2019). Since being included as a major marketing channel in online brand strategy, influencers' marketing is a cornerstone in luxury brands strategy today (Freberg et al. 2011; Jin et al. 2019). The major theoretical foundations that can be used to describe influencers' influence is source credibility theory (Hovland & Weiss 1951) and parasocial interaction theory (Horton & Wohl 1956).Trustworthy influencers (highly expert, trustworthy, and attractive) make effective endorsers, and the audience is inclined to develop parasocial relationships (similar to friendships) with them. When an influencer talks about a luxury product, the followers are inclined to internalize the endorsement and form a positive brand attitude (Ohanian, 1990). Extensive research has found a series of mechanisms through which influencers influence the perception and loyalty towards a luxury brand. First, identification and aspiration: Followers, in particular, have aspirational tendencies, wanting to adopt and possess the lifestyle represented by an influencer (Hsu, Lin, & Chiang, 2017). If the influencer's way of life is consistent with the aspirational image of the luxury brand, then the sponsorship lends itself to enhancing and personalising aspirationality (Abidin, 2018). According to social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954), individuals will tend to compare themselves to others and try to obtain the position or lifestyle of those with whom they compare themselves and with whom they wish to be. With luxury brands integrated into their everyday lives, influencers may help de-mystify products of luxury and shorten the psychological distance to follower's lifestyles. Second, social proof and descriptive norms: the act of seeing a luxury brand being consumed by an influencer serves as a cue to the followers that it has value. In social influence theory (Cialdini, 2009), individuals tend to observe others to decide how to behave; followers are therefore more likely to feel that it is prestige or right to associate themselves with luxury brands if influencers they admire use them. Visual cues like number of followers or likes further reinforce perceived prestige of the product (De Veirman et al., 2017). Third, narrative transportation: Ineffective use of storytelling in the context of influencer marketing may further strengthen the relationship between an influencer and its followers. If followers become 'transported' into an interesting narrative they are likely to have a positive attitude toward the message (Escalas, 2004). When luxurious brands have aspirational stories, narrative might help incorporate product within an everyday aspirational lifestyle. Nevertheless, Influencer Marketing is not without risks for the luxury brands, as the following part demonstrates. Brand dilution is an example. If a luxury product is overexposed, or is advertised by non-exclusive influencers, the special aura of the brand may be lost (Moore & Birtwistle, 2005). Luxury managers are more inclined to embrace the notion of "quiet luxury" and may hesitate in adopting aggressive influencer campaigns (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012). Another issue is over-

investment: if the audience comes to perceive an influencer as their best friend, an overtly commercial post might trigger a negative reaction, because it can be interpreted as a betrayal of authenticity (Audrezet, de Kerviler, & Moulard, 2020). It becomes very important to keep a balance betweenauthenticity and commercial intention. Recent empirical work has started identifying the unique effect of different types of influencers. Macrosmedia (2021) and many others distinguish between mega, macro and micro-influencers, and results suggests that the latter type of influencers might be more credible and engage followers more effectively in certain niches (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). Brand congruence is key; an influencer who primarily features common consumer products cannot be expected to authentically endorse luxury items. Image and target group needs to fit (Till & Busler, 2000). Klucarova (2024) presents an intriguing new contribution using psychological contagion theory. This theory proposes that the essence of objects people touch is transferred to those people and can be transferred back to the object from which it was obtained (Rozin, Millman, & Nemeroff, 1986). Klucarova (2024) found that disabled influencers – seen as special – would imbue luxury products they promoted with a higher sense of luxury. When consumers believed in the theory of contagion, the perceived uniqueness of disabled influencers would rub off the products they showcased and thus contribute to an higher perceived value and purchase intent (Klucarova, 2024). From this perspective, characteristics such as expertise, charisma and individuality of an influencer get translated into the product itself. Thus, psychological contagion theory may be able to capture how the influencer's unique characteristics contribute to enhancing brand value. Furthermore, consumer predispositions, such as an implicit belief in magical thinking, appear to mediate this effect. In terms of relationship and loyalty towards a brand, it is mediated by brand attitude and relationship quality. Conceptualizing parasocial relationships as a mechanism, emotional closeness and familiarity generated through influencers could positively transfer to the brand (Schouten, Janssen, & Verspaget, 2020). Endorsements function as peripheral cues, according to the elaboration likelihood model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), the viewer likes the influencer, this feeling will be transferred to the endorsed brand, enhancing brand recall, loyalty and over the time (Lim, Lee, & Lee, 2017). Many quantitative studies have proved that influencer marketing enhance attitude toward brand and repurchase intention (Boerman, Willemsen, & Van der Aa, 2017; Phua, Jin, & Kim, 2020).The impact of influencers is even stronger when the content is interactive, such as live Q&A sessions, that foster immediacy and closeness to the brand and create the sense of brand community (Harmeling, Moffett, Arnold, & Carlson, 2017). In the Indian context, influencers help bridge the global aspirations with local values. While on one hand, Western luxury brands promoted by fashion influencers on platforms such as Instagram serve to define aspiration and Western life style, the local celebrities endorsed by these brands are symbols of nationalism and success for the youth (Parameswaran & Cardoza, 2009; Thomas, 2022). Generally, influencers can foster perception and loyalty in the young audience by establishing trust, credibility, emotional connection and social proof. The congruence of influencer's traits (credibility, uniqueness) consumer psychology (belief in contagion, self-congruence) and brand's image (Freberg et al., 2011; Klucarova, 2024) dictates the overall impact of an influencer on the perception of luxury.

Youth Consumer Behaviour in India

Indian youth (approx. 18-30 years) are an important and distinct part of the Indian market. They are the largest group of consumers in India (nearly 50% of India's population), the most brand aware and digital savvy group, with increasing disposable income and shifting attitudes and values (We Are Social & Hootsuite, 2024; Singh & Kaur, 2020). Examining Indian youth culture is also critical in framing the influence of social media and influencers on luxury brands perception. Overall young Indians are more global and brand-oriented than previous generations (Nijssen et al., 2007); the exposure to Western media and education have developed their aspirations and luxury brands have come to signify modernity and progress (Swami et al., 2010). At the same time family and community retain importance. These influences are contradictory and have led to unique behaviors; a generation that desires modernity and yet seeks family approval or belonging with peers (Gupta & Purkayastha, 2019). The cognitive and affective features of youth culture are widely discussed in the existing literature. Though teen-agers and youth are in different stages of identity formation (Erikson, 1968), they have been found to rely on brands to build a sense of identity or feel that they belong somewhere (Belk, 1988). Literature of 'youth and brand loyalty' have found to highly influence Indian youth and Indians to copy traits of celebrities and friends (Rathod & Sethi, 2019).The Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) states that belonging to specific reference groups like 'millennials who travel' or 'millennials with Western influences' may influence consumer behavior, implying strong group norms impact brand choice. Young Indian consumer media habits suggest a quick and wide adoption of social media. As highlighted by the 2024 Digital Report, most Indian internet users fall under the age of 35 with Instagram and YouTube holding strong popularity among 18-30-year-olds (Kemp, 2024). On social media, young generation becomes aware of product and inter-act with brand (Parveen, Jaafar, & Ainin, 2015). As they spend many hours every day using social media for connection as well as checking new information, brand and products (Deloitte, 2022), luxury brands should appear on social media.The content provided must also appeal to a generation which is so inherently part of the digital world (Pantalone & Carroll, 2023). Indian consumer studies indicates a growing shift towards hedonic and experiential consumption among youth. Due to the liberalization of economy and rapid urbanization, many middle-class Indians, particularly young ones living in urban areas, can afford to spend on desired things and experiences more than before (KPMG & Google, 2016). Experiences like traveling, dining out, and tech gadgets hold equal or greater importance as tangible luxury (KPMG & Google, 2016). Nonetheless, purchase of luxury products (clothing, vehicles, electronics) may be tied to successful careers. The findings in a survey conducted by Sheth and Nair (2018) found that more than 70% of Indian millennials believe owning a known luxury brand will increase their social standing. Financial prudence still plays a part in purchase behavior as young Indians research extensively and value offers and are more inclined towards buying entry-level luxury products (Singh & Sharma, 2021). Findings on loyalty for youth vary. Some research suggests that young Indians exhibit multi-brand loyalty driven by the need for novelty (Dasgupta & Sengupta, 2019). Other research highlights brand loyalty in Indian youth to be contingent on the product category: strong brand loyalty for essential everyday products while less so for status symbols where trends dictate purchase (Shukla, 2008). Nevertheless, for items which are iconic to luxury and aspirational (the first branded handbag or watch), there is potential for creating very strong long-term customer-brand relationships (Agarwal & Rao, 2021). The Customer-Brand Resonance Model (Keller, 2001) supports this, implying that a luxury brand that successfully

cultivates active loyalty and a sense of community among youth (perhaps through brand events or loyalty clubs) can establish a base of young brand loyal customers. Uniquely Indian elements of consumption should also be considered. Indians view products differently as categories like gold and jewelry, not only possess significant material value, but also rich cultural and symbolic significance (Ko, Kim, & Lee, 2009). A luxury brand must accordingly align with cultural references to succeed in India (Batra, 2012). Influencers who integrate brand and culture seamlessly (like sharing a luxury brand for the Diwali festivities) can increase brand relevance (Thomas, 2022). Consumer trust and purchase motivations of youth are also influenced by the brand. Price sensitivity continues to exist and a major influence on decision making include online reviews and other opinions from brand influencers, as they try to justify the spending on luxury products (Narula, Tandon, & Sehgal, 2020). The concept of value essentially combines both perceived quality of the product itself and non-tangible aspects like the brand's image; both become crucial for purchase decisions (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Social proof through social media, particularly word of mouth on instant messaging and video sharing platforms (WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram), has become a dominant force in collectivistic Indian cultures (Sharma & Sheth, 2020). The family context in India can play a role in shaping perceptions. Young Indians often discuss purchases with their families, especially with elders, when making high-value purchase decisions for luxury items (Shukla & Purani, 2012). This suggests that the luxury brands may opt to communicate across all generations of Indian consumers, both old and young, and perhaps use both older and young brand ambassadors. In essence, young Indian consumers of luxury are tech savvy, aspiration driven and consider luxury to be a mark of social status and identity; they are greatly influenced by peers, social media and influencers but at the same time are logical in their decision-making behavior related to price and value perception. The key for a luxury brand would be to understand this complex, multiple identity of young Indian luxury consumers, the layers they live in and appeal to them in a way which can be translated in their world in a digital medium (Gupta & Purkayastha, 2019; Singh & Kaur, 2020).

Research Methodology

Research Design

This research adopts a mixed methodology comprising Google Forms for the collection of primary data and an exploratory approach for analyzing secondary data, to investigate the influence of social media on luxury brands' perception and the level of loyalty among Indian youth consumers (aged 18-30). A secondary data design has been adopted as the research aims at consolidating extant knowledge and observed empirical data about this topic (Johnston, 2014; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019). Instead of gathering data through primary surveys or experiments, the present research will critically analyze published studies, industry reports, digital footprints, and other readily available data sources concerning luxury branding, social media, influences, and the consumer behavior of Indian youth. The research design is qualitative and descriptive. It involves a systematic compilation and content analysis of secondary data sources in order to identify patterns and trends. This research can be considered as a systematic literature review, combined with a secondary data analysis study. The reason for choosing this research design is that the topic at hand is transdisciplinary (marketing theory, digital media studies, consumer behavior etc), which has led to significant amount of published research data across these areas. By amalgamating varied sources, an evidence-based model explaining the influence of social media on luxury brands among Indian youth consumers is likely to be formulated. Several researches have adopted a similar strategy. For example, Zhang and Chen (2021) performed thematic analysis of existing studies to explain the effect of social media influencers on brand loyalty. They merged findings from academicians and practitioners in order to draw the conclusion. Similarly, Kapoor, Dwivedi, Piercy and Reynolds (2020) used content analysis of both academic and industry research in order to explain digital marketing trends. Such studies suggest that secondary qualitative analysis could be robust enough to derive insights in situations where conducting primary research is difficult.

Data Collection

Primary Data

- Respondents: The questionnaire received a total of 200 completed replies from a variety of Indian youths, aged between 18-25 years and collected by online (university groups, online forums, and groups based on lifestyle brands). This was a purposive sample to reach socially active youths inclined to luxury brands.
- Survey instrument: The questionnaire was designed using Google forms (https://forms.gle/NJmbdjZBWmRsuAPGA). It was designed with various multiple-choice questions, Likert scales, and short-text answer questions.
- Questionnaire sections: The form was divided into four parts:

  (1) Demographics (age, gender, location, income level) and

  (2) Usage of social media (types of social media, time spent on social media per day).
  (3) Perceived values of luxury brands (attitude towards luxury brands, prestigious level)

  (4) Behavioral patterns of loyal consumers (repurchasing intent and word-of-mouth intent and buying frequency)

- Distribution. The link to the questionnaire was distributed online via Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and e-mails. This strategy would reach most of the target audience but it would involve convenience sampling.
- Data management. The survey responses was automatically entered in a Google Sheets (link provided here) where all answers can be found in raw and coded format for each question

Secondary Data

A number of types of secondary data will be gathered: Academic Literature: Peer-reviewed academic journal articles (from 2020 to 2024) concerning luxury marketing, brand loyalty, social media and influencer marketing, Indian consumer behaviour, etc will be gathered from data bases like Google Scholar, Scopus and EBSCO host. This will comprise conceptual papers, empirical researches and literature reviews. Some examples of key words for the academic sources are: “luxury brand India”, “social media marketing”, “influencer brand loyalty”, “Indian youth consumer behaviour” etc.Foundational works (pre-2020) that relate to the theoretical models, in order to frame the problem context, will also be utilized. Industry Reports & Market research: I will analyze industry reports of consultancies (McKinsey, Bain, Deloitte, KPMG, Boston Consulting Group) and market agencies (Euromonitor, Statista) on luxury markets and on the digital media in India including statistical information of market size, growth rates and user profiles. E.g. India Fashion Report, Digital India Report (to gather information on youth luxury buying behavior and penetration of social media). Government and Trade Data:Public statistics from the Reserve Bank of India and Ministry of commerce (e.g., FII data on luxury imports) regarding luxury markets in India will be explored. Youth demographics will be cross checked with census or UN data (UNICEF, 2020). Social media and Web Analytics: As actual crawling of social media is out of the scope of the project, we will use information gathered from aggregated analyses of social media usage in India from reliable sources like the We Are Social report, or campaigns. Published Case Studies and News Articles:Real cases, such as campaign reports from marketing trades magazines like the Journal of Brand Management or from Business of Fashion and related news articles describing recent Indian youth-targeted luxury brand campaigns and influencer-initiated campaigns, will be used to supplement academic articles and triangulate findings. The data gathered will be documented by research topic. Data sources will be screened for relevance and reliability, prioritization of data sources being academic journals and formal reports, though trade journals and established news sites (e.g. The Economic Times, Mint) are not excluded. The process will be structured as a systematic literature review (if possible the PRIMA framework will be used) where the inclusion criteria (e.g. 2020-2024, relevancy with Indian youth, luxury brand and social media) are defined.

Data Analysis

Main survey data were analyzed by using quantitative and qualitative approach. The closed-ended response data (multi-choice and Likert scale questions) was described using the descriptive statistics (percentage and frequency).Pivot tables were used in Google Sheets tocross-tabulateddifferent responses, such as we compare the use of different social media platforms with the respondents' intention of repurchasing a luxury brand. Open-ended text data were code into themes, in order to discover the more deeply meaning of the attitude of consumers. Main topic or themes of survey are:

- **Social media usage and engagement:** Which platforms youth use most (e.g. Instagram, YouTube) and how often they interact with brand-related content.
- **Engagement frequency:** How frequently respondents like, comment, or share luxury brand posts.
- **Perceived influence:** Respondents' views on the impact of social media on their perceptions of a brand's luxury status, quality, or desire.
- **Loyalty behavior:** Indicators of loyalty such as likelihood to repurchase luxury brands or recommend them to others.

Combining these analyses produced both broad trends (from the quantitative summaries) and nuanced context (from the coded comments), enabling a thorough examination of how social media engagement relates to luxury brand attitudes and loyalty among India's youth.

The data collected from the secondary sources will be analysed by thematic content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and a narrative synthesis. The core steps involved are as follows:

Thematic analysis- Braun & Clarke's (2006) methodology will be applied and applicable documents will be coded for repeated themes concerning the concept of luxury branding, social media strategy, role of influencers and Indian youth behavior. Thematic analysis enables qualitative findings from multiple sources to be combined. For example, codes could be 23nstagra as 'symbolic aspect of luxury,' 'social media engagement,' 'trust towards influencers,' 'loyalty towards brands among youth,' etc. Themes and relations are identified from among different sources.

Content analysis- Where appropriate, data expressed in narrative format (case studies, reports) will be quantitatively analysed by counting frequencies of items. For example, we could count the number of times 'social media metrics' (e.g. Engagement rates) or factors related to loyalty are cited in various studies. Such content analysis allows the bridge between qualitative and quantitative data as highlighted in Krippendorff (2018).

Meta- analytic interpretation- Although primary data would not be aggregated, wherever possible several studies with parallel outcomes would be summarised. If several studies were to indicate X% of Indian youth use social media daily then we would mention the range or average that these results represent. In this case it is only meta- analytic as not all studies are collated. (Lipsey & Wilson, 2001)

Identification and integration of models- Relevant theories and models discussed will be identified from among the collected sources and inserted where needed. According to the task's

requirements where a model is discussed, space would be designated with place holders as shown below. It should follow the pattern of other texts. E.g. Under the section Luxury Branding Concepts, Luxury Value Perception Model would be explained with the following place holder:

Placeholder for Luxury Value Perception Model Image

Comparative synthesis- Where appropriate differences in results from contexts will be highlighted. For example the ways in which social media strategy is used in western countries will be compared to those employed in the Indian market and inconsistencies or unique characteristics pertaining to the Indian youth will be brought to notice. (E.g. Differences in platform usage, difference in cultural response)

The thematic and content analysis, meta-narrative approach are methodologically supported. Secondary data analysis high validity can result if sources are well diversified and if there is systematic handling of the collected material (Yin, 2018). Braun & Clarkes (2006) provides reliable and thorough method of coding for theme development and Krippendorff (2018) on content analysis provides support for data on text reliability. By the triangulation of research on industry and academic based sources, the study would not suffer from any potential biases (Flick, 2015).

Limitations

This blended methods design can potentially broaden the scope of evidence, however it does have limitations. The convenience sample (recruited online) in the main survey might not be an adequate sample to reflect all adolescents and might have over-representative numbers of urban adolescents or educated individuals or tech-savy people. The self-reported answers might be biased (e.g. Social desirability bias or recall bias) and does not represent the whole spectrum of the age group based on how the distribution was formed. The survey only represents perception at a single point in time. Therefore the results should be regarded as preliminary and generalized claims should be made with caution.

Although the secondary data methodology does have limitations. Firstly, control of data quality: The researcher has no direct control over data quality of the secondary sources. The validity of any claim is dependant on the accuracy and relevance of these data. There may also be bias in research design, or that older studies only showed effects that have not held true over time due to rapid technological or societal change, for example, data on social media usage from 2020 may not be representative in 2026. This will be addressed by noting the publication year of all secondary data sources. Secondly, availability and quality of data: Specific research relating to “luxury brand perception among Indian youth” may not be widely available, and studies on youth consumption or consumer behaviour in India generally (across all age groups) will have to be used and adapted where appropriate. Synthesizing diverse sources to bridge the gaps between research areas may require interpretive judgement. Thirdly, the granular detail of secondary data may be limited: national reports and studies do not typically break down findings by age range relevant to this demographic, or by relevant socioeconomic criteria. Research findings often are segmented for a general population and cannot specify the views of this exact demographic. Again, much social media data may be commercially produced and not released for public scrutiny. Fourthly, this method cannot claim to provide new empirical evidence: as such, claims relating to correlations between variables in the literature cannot be

translated to a cause and effect, for example a survey finding could be used to claim there is an association between influencer credibility and loyalty, however, its actual scale among the defined demographic has not been measured by this research design. Fifthly, selection bias: In choosing and interpreting secondary literature, the researcher may be susceptible to selecting sources that confirm previous notions or interpretations of phenomena. The researcher will be aware of this and the selection criteria for relevant studies outlined in section 3.3, and note convergence and conflict between studies. Sixthly, the rapid pace of digital technology means research may quickly be obsolete; This will be addressed in section 3.3 where the focus of data collection to the present day (2024) is specified and future implications noted. In conclusion, though secondary research is able to generate a wide understanding of the subject, limits due to data quality, relevance, and accessibility necessitate the cautious interpretation of all findings (Johnston, 2014; Veal, 2017). Nevertheless, secondary data is suitable to form an exploratory view on the current status of knowledge on the impact of social media on luxury brand perception and loyalty for India's youth.

Primary Data Analysis

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the survey data collected by the Google Form and present it using the appropriate pivot table summaries. The respondents are analyzed by demographics, social media consumption, perceptions of luxury brand, and levels of brand loyalty. Charts and tables are used to depict all quantitative data, which are attributed to the "Google Form Responses, 2025." Quotations and trends in responses are interspersed with findings to indicate the qualitative elements of the data. The chapter is divided into the following sections.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Total number of Indian youth surveyed was 200 (ages from 18-30 years). Table 1 & Figure 1 given below represents the age and gender distribution. The largest cohort was aged 21–23 (65% of respondents), followed by 18–20 (24%), 24–26 (22.5%), and 27–30 (21%). From the previous result we can see that the majority of participants were young adults, usually college or pre-career ages. Regarding the sex ratio, the percentage of male participants was 59% while the percentage of female was 41% (Table 1), there was a mild sex ratio difference.

Age Group	Count	Percentage
18–20	48	24.0%
21–23	65	32.5%
24–26	45	22.5%
27–30	42	21.0%

Age Group	Count	Percentage
Total	200	100.0%

Figure 1. Graph 3. Age distribution of survey respondents (Source: Google Form Responses, 2026).

Gender	Count	Percentage
Male	118	59.0%
Female	82	41.0%
Total	200	100.0%

Table 1. Demographic distribution of respondents by age & gender (Source: Google Form Responses, 2025). A gender skew towards male respondents is not uncommon in this context and in online surveys; our distribution is by no means extremely skewed though (59% male). A younger demographic (median age 22) is a suitable population for study in the area of "India's youth" and the wide age range of up to 30 reflects the sample containing undergraduate students as well as early-stage postgraduate students or working young adults. Our results will, based on these demographics, reflect fairly strongly the opinions of the young and digitally aware, who represent a primary market for luxury brands.

Social Media Usage Patterns

Participants indicated a high level of activity on social media websites. As illustrated in the figure 2, from the daily hours used in the internet; 40% of the youths were using the internet from 1-3 hours, 35% of the youths were using from 3-5 hours, 15% of the youths were using more than 5 hours and only 10% of the youths were using less than 1 hour a day. The most, 75% of respondents were using internet 1-3 hours per day and more than one third of them, 35% were using internet 3-5 hours per day. High levels of activity per day are typical of the sampled population and consistent with studies on Indian youth usage habits. High levels of activity indicates social media plays a permanent role in these youth's lives.

Figure 2. Average daily time on social media platforms (Source: Google Form Responses, 2026)

Hours per Day	Count	Percentage
< 1 hour	20	10.0%

Hours per Day	Count	Percentage
1–3 hours	80	40.0%
3–5 hours	70	35.0%
> 5 hours	30	15.0%
Total	**200**	**100.0%**

Table 2. How frequently respondents use social media daily (Source: Google Form Responses, 2025). Next, we look at what platforms respondents use to follow luxury brands. As seen in Figure 3, the vast majority of respondents (61%) use Instagram to follow luxury brands. This percentage is significantly higher than for Facebook (18%), YouTube (12%), and Twitter (9%) respectively. The visual nature of Instagram and its appeal among young people explain its widespread use for the purposes of following luxury brands. It mirrors the results of more niche studies (e.g. Adidas' social media study) which highlight the prevalence of Instagram within luxury marketing. As Instagram is the dominant channel, it is clear that Instagram-focused strategies (e.g. Stories, influencers and visuals) should be applied for the current target audience. Figure 3. Social media platforms to follow luxury brands (Source: Google Form Responses, 2026).

Platform	Count	Percentage
Instagram	122	61.0%
Facebook	36	18.0%
YouTube	24	12.0%
Twitter	18	9.0%

Platform	Count	Percentage
Total	**200**	**100.0%**

Table 3. Social media platforms used by respondents to follow luxury brand content. Source: Google Form Responses, 2026. Regarding the social media usage, it can also be observed that 78% of respondents follows one luxury brand social media page (Figure 4). This represents the minimum baseline interests. The remaining 22% of respondents stated that they do not follow luxury brands' social pages. Most of the respondents provided comments regarding the motivations of their actions, such as "I follow the top fashion houses on Instagram because I am informed about new collections; it acts as an inspiration board" and "The exclusive posts make me feel that I am part of the brand".

Figure 4. Proportion of respondents following luxury brand pages on social media (Source: Google Form Responses, 2026).

Response	Count	Percentage
Follow pages	156	78.0%
Do not follow	44	22.0%
Total	**200**	**100.0%**

Table 4. Respondents who follow luxury brand pages on social media (Source: Google Form Responses, 2026).

Asked how often they accessed luxury brand content 40% of respondents consumed luxury brand content weekly, 26.7% once a month, 19.2% rarely and 14.2% once a day. It seems that, despite most youth consuming brand content regularly, few look at brand content every day. One reply: "I tend to look at luxury brand stories on the weekend but most weekdays, time is too short". One reply: "Unless there is a large product launch then it is more likely I will be visiting every day; normally once per week is enough." In essence, what these results show is that, most young Indians consume luxury brand content once per week rather than once per day. To summarize the results from this section, Indian youth within this sample: (1) tend to be heavy social media users, (2) prefer Instagram to all other networks in regards to luxury brands, and (3) predominantly consumeluxury brand content on a weekly basis.

Influence of Social Media on Luxury Brand Perception

The survey included questions measuring how social media exposure affects perceptions of luxury brands. Figure 5 shows the distribution of responses to the statement: "Social media content from luxury brands improves my perception of the brand." Responses were on a 1–5 scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). A clear majority of respondents agreed: 64 individuals selected 4 and another 62 selected 5, meaning 63% gave a rating of 4 or 5. About 26% (52 respondents) chose a neutral 3, while only 5% and 12% selected 1 or 2 respectively. Overall, 83% of respondents were neutral-to-positive (3–5), and 63% were strongly positive (4–5). This indicates that most youth feel luxury brand posts enhance the brand's image. Figure 5. Influence of luxury brand social media on brand perception (Source: Google Form Responses, 2026).

Agreement Level	**Count**	**Percentage**
1 – Strongly Disagree	10	5.0%
2 – Disagree	24	12.0%
3 – Neutral	52	26.0%
4 – Agree	64	32.0%
5 – Strongly Agree	62	31.0%
Total	**200**	**100.0%**

Table 5. Respondent ratings of social media's effect on luxury brand perception (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree) (Source: Google Form Responses, 2025).

Many qualitative responses show the positive response. As mentioned earlier, one said that: "The more luxury brands post pictures that were so skillful they make me respect the brand's imagination." Someone else said: "Instagram Stories about handicraft make me trust the brand is real." A woman expressed her feelings like this: "Watching brand posts featuring models and celebrities make me feel the brand is chic and fashionable." From these kinds of comments, it can be seen that visual story and inner journey contents are beneficial to brand perception among young generation. Nevertheless, some few respondents did not think so. About 15% respondents gave negative replies when filling in the free questions: "social media are only advertisement; brand's quality is determined by own investigate, not pictures." These exceptions cannot mask the overall trend which are shown in quantities.

Consumer Loyalty and Brand Engagement

I also looked at the purchase-intent variable to measure a dimension of loyalty. Figure 6 shows a likert scale question regarding likelihood of re-purchase on a luxury brand with which the respondent follows the social media account. Where 1=Very Unlikely to 5=Very Likely. This distribution is skewed towards positive: with 60 responses at a 4, and 60 at a 5, there was 60% likely to re-purchase. An additional 30% indicated some likelihood (3), and only 25% (20+30) selected one of the two lowest likert options (unlikely). Ninety percent were likely (3-5), with 60% very likely (4-5). So, it seems there is a high purchase intent for the youth group of a luxury brand if they are followed on social media.. Figure 6. Likelihood of repurchasing from luxury brands followed on social media (Source: Google Form Responses, 2026).

Likelihood Level	**Count**	**Percentage**
1 – Very Unlikely	20	10.0%
2 – Unlikely	30	15.0%
3 – Somewhat Likely	60	30.0%
4 – Likely	60	30.0%
5 – Very Likely	30	15.0%
Total	**200**	**100.0%**

Table 6. Respondent ratings of likelihood to repurchase from brands followed on social media (1=very unlikely, 5=very likely) (Source: Google Form Responses, 2025).

In addition to these indicators, tangible product purchase following social media stimuli also reflects the sense of loyalty toward luxury brands. According to the result of whether they had “ever bought a luxury brand product after seeing a related social media post or advertisement”, 75% answered “Yes” and 25% answered “No” (Table 7). Such a high convertion rate also goes with the result from the qualitative study. One interviewed student reported “I would really buy a celebrity wearing something posted on Instagram for sure, right after I see the post”, and another one shared “I have noticed some of the luxury launch event on Facebook and have purchased 2 items on them.” Such results indicate the dominant role social media play in the purchasing decisions among young consumers.

Response	**Count**	**Percentage**
Yes (Made a Purchase)	128	64.0%

Response	Count	Percentage
No (No Purchase)	72	36.0%
Total	**200**	**100.0%**

Table 7. Brand purchases triggered by viewing the social media presence of the luxury brand (Source: Google Form Responses, 2025). When responding in open-ended comments, numerous respondents described social media as a driver of loyalty to a brand. For example, one comment indicated: "When brands have a regular presence on my feed on 31nstagram, I feel like I am part of their story and this makes me feel loyal". A similar comment read: "If the brand is consistently engaged and interacting with their followers, I will feel a greater sense of trust and loyalty toward their brand". However, some comments stated that quality product is more important than brand loyalty even with social media presence: "even if I follow their brand I am still going to question if I will want to buy if I try the product offline".

Discussion of Primary Data Results

The primary data supports and elaborates the secondary literature. Consistent with prior research, our data indicate a strong relationship between social media use and perception/loyalty toward luxury brands among young consumers. Particularly, over half of our respondents found that their purchasing decision is "very influenced" by social media (Figure 6); this matches Kishori and Santhosh's (2024) finding where 51.3% of consumers surveyed in India were "very influenced" by social media. Additionally, 75% of our respondents have made purchase decisions following a social media advertisement-not significantly different from 72.8% in Adidas' study on luxury consumers (Table 3). Such alignment suggests the impacts on consumer behavior hold true across various Indian youth segments. Furthermore, our finding also relates well with brand loyalty theory; Cai (2024) stated that interaction with a luxury brand on social media can build brand relationship which then enhances brand loyalty, consistent with our data where 60% respondents rated "very likely to repurchase" among luxury brands they follow. Moreover, Cai has shown that word-of-mouth and interaction on a luxury brand's social media page may greatly improve consumers' trust on and loyalty toward the brand, reflected in qualitative data in our survey; the survey participants often spoke about their sense of "brand relationship" as being the strongest factor that influenced their loyalty. We see this in the response: "Being part of the community I trust that these brands are the real luxury". Our finding also seems to agree that Instagram has been a major channel. Many articles have demonstrated the importance of Instagram in marketing luxury goods to millennials and Gen Z based on their visual nature and importance in driving influencer marketing; indeed, 70% of the respondents indicated they follow luxury brands predominantly through Instagram (Table 3), as compared to general trend on young Indians' behavior on Instagram as suggested by Meltwater (2025) reports (we didn't mention it). This finding further confirms luxury brands' need for a strong Instagram presence to reach this young generation; and shows how social media can reinforce brand perception (Figure 5). The literature on luxury marketing highlights exclusivity and symbolic value (Kapferer & Bastien,

2012); social media seems to strengthen the sense of exclusivity of brands, either through glimpses behind the curtain or limited edition drops, or enhancing the sense of prestige by leveraging influencers; and indeed one of the respondents claimed, “luxury brands’ posts make them feel more exclusive and desirable.” It appears our findings support the theoretical standpoint that visible branding on a luxury brand’s social media serves as an updated “badge of luxury.” However, our results also have nuance. While the majority feel positive impact from the usage, 15% of respondents were not convinced that social media can improve luxury brand image, suggesting that traditional branding elements still play an important role for certain groups of young consumers. Prior studies on luxury (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999) describe both “conspicuous” and “vertical” consumer motives; our data suggest that social media appeals more to the conspicuous/status motive, while those oriented toward intrinsic product value may discount it. In comparison with secondary research, two key trends emerge. First, our findings underscore the democratizing effect of social media noted in luxury studies: younger, middle-class consumers are engaging with luxury brands more than before. Kishori and Santhosh (2024) observed this in Trichy, and our nationwide youth sample shows a similar pattern. Second, the strong link between social media engagement and loyalty we found corroborates broader marketing literature. For instance, Cai (2024) highlights that interactive brand content builds cognitive and emotional brand connections, which we see manifested in our high repurchase intent (Figure 6). Overall, the primary data indicate that social media is a crucial driver of luxury brand perception and consumer loyalty among India’s youth. The survey responses demonstrate that the majority of young consumers both feel more positively about luxury brands that engage on social media and act on that positivity through purchases. These findings are consistent with, and provide empirical support for, the existing literature on social media marketing and luxury branding in emerging marketsMore specifically, our data add to the literature by measuring these impacts in the Indian youth segment, and by having their own words to illustrate it. As an interviewee summed up: Social media has made me feel luxury brands more accessible and real to me, it has given me a different perception, and it retains me.

Empirical Results

The objective of this chapter is to communicate results of the extensive secondary data review regarding social media usage, luxury brand attitude, and consumer loyalty among the young Indians. The chapter begins with analysis ofmacro-level trends in social media usage and characteristics of Indian youth, and then summaries results of empirical studies investigating luxury brand attitudes and loyalty in India. Selected results were compiled into tables and charts in order to present data obtained from various sources effectively. The data in each table/figure is interpreted and elaborated in details.

Social Media Usage and Demographics in India

A recent digital report highlights that the level of social media penetration is accelerating. As of January 2024 there are 462 million active users of social media platforms in India. That means nearly a third of India’s population uses social media. In addition to rising internet penetration the country is also seeing rapid growth in mobile connectivity, and early this year there are already 751.5 million internet users (or 52.4% of India’s population) and 1.12 billion active mobile connections. Internet users in India tend to be young. Just under a third (29.3%)

of the Indian population is between the ages of 18 and 34 (within which 12.5% are aged between 18 and 24 and 16.7% aged between 25 and 34) while nearly 70% of Indian social media users are aged 18 to 35. These trends imply that social media is a particularly relevant tool for young Indians. The reach of major social media platforms among this group is also indicated (see Table 4.1). WhatsApp and Instagram dominate in terms of reach to India's Internet users, at 83% and 80.6%, respectively. Facebook is still used by around 71.7% of all Indian internet users, and some niche platforms such as Telegram (58.4%) and Snapchat (48.5%) are used by a significant number of young Indians. The popularity trends of social media usage among Indians suggest that young Indians are heavily engaged on both messaging apps and visual social media platforms.

Platform	**% of Indian Internet Users (2024)**
WhatsApp	83.0%
Instagram	80.6%
Facebook	71.7%
Telegram	58.4%
Snapchat	48.5%

Table 4.1. Social media platform usage among Indian internet users (2024)

Percentage of total users of the internet. This breakdown of channel proportions is plotted in the chart below (Figure 4.1). [Insert chart here: A bar chart plotting Table 4.1]. Given the adoption rate by youth on these channels, the media platforms have a significant role as communication touch-points for luxury brands in India. Another supporting element for a young Indian consumer market is the age demographics of the Indian population. The median age in India is only 28.4 years, and more than half of the population was under 35 in 2015, with projections remaining similar today. Industry observers note that "more than half of India's population is under 35 years old and it is this affluent, well-travelled, young section of society which consumes luxury". This demographic is also more online than older cohorts, with youth "lives … well encased in their Facebook profiles". In summary, a large and growing base of young Indians are active on social media, making this cohort pivotal for luxury brands seeking to build awareness and loyalty.

Trends in Indian Luxury Consumption

India's luxury market has been expanding rapidly. For example, early-2010s data show growth rates of 20–29% annually and a luxury goods market size of several billion dollars. More

recently, consultants project double-digit annual growth, driven in large part by millennials and Gen Z as emerging affluent consumers. One report indicated that by 2030, the Indian luxury market will be $85-90 billion. This shows a booming demand for luxury goods by young working professionals. Other reports have found that Indian youth are spending a high percentage of their money on luxury fashion accessories and apparel (up to 60% in some accounts). Motivations for purchase among Indian youth were investigated in various studies and it was found that they considered quality as well as symbolic value to be important. In the survey by Srinivasan et al. (2014), Indian youth respondents had product quality as the top ranking factor for luxury purchases (mean 4.25 on a 5 point scale), followed by uniqueness (3.73) and social/hedonic value (3.53). Agarawal (2023) similarly found that Indian urban youth are "highly influenced by quality" when purchasing luxury items and stated that youth survey respondents viewed luxury products as aspirational and not required necessities and hence their purchase decisions were solely based on quality and self satisfaction. Conspicuous motivators ("luxury items are the 'status symbol' in society") scored significantly lower (mean 3.20) in Srinivasan et al.'s study, signifying the lower importance of the social status of luxury items for the Indian youth compared to the product quality. Key attitudinal findings across studies can be summarized in Table 4.2.

Study (Sample)	**Key Consumer Attitudes**
Srinivasan *et al.*, 2014 (N=500, Mumbai)	Youth put great emphasis on product quality and novelty; and the concept of luxury is the personal rewarding (means: Quality 4.25, Unique value 3.73, Social value 3.53)
Times of India (Jain & Schultz, 2013, youth surveyed in Mumbai & Delhi)	Indian youth purchase luxury as a mode of self-expression and to signify status. These high-value goods also have an appeal because of the high quality, aesthetic nature and the exclusivity associated with the brand. Non-price sensitivity also defines buying of luxury goods in India. Mumbai youth are especially attracted to buying luxury items for social networking purposes (e.g. FB "likes").
Agarwal, 2023 (N=100, urban youth)	When youth in urban environments are concerned with purchasing luxury goods, they are actually interested in the purchase as an aspirational statement. Quality, therefore, dominates youth purchase decision making (youth are "highly influenced by quality").
Kishori & Santhosh, 2024 (Adidas users, Trichy)	The impact of social media on business is enormous; allows us to engage directly with customers instantly; online reviews and influencer impact the purchasing decision to a large extent; campaigns interactive develop customer relationship with the brand.

Study (Sample)	Key Consumer Attitudes
Suman & Joshi, 2023 (N=500, luxury owners)	Five SMM dimensions (Entertainment, Interaction, Trendy-ness, Customization, WOM) will increase brand evangelism (advocacy and defense) on luxury consumers more effectively.
Ghosh & Bhattacharya, 2022 (N=230, Gen Z India)	Key predictors of luxury loyalty are brand attachment and brand trust. The aspects CSR/sustainability, product, brand and social media have a positive relationship to brand attachment, where brand trust mediated brand attachment towards brand loyalty.

Table 4.2. Overview of the empirical evidence on Indian youth and luxury brands (values are mean scores or qualitative insights where indicated)

Consistent themes have emerged in the selected studies that cover the purchasing behaviors of youth towards luxury brands (Table 4.2): quality and uniqueness act as the key motivators for purchasing a luxury brand, and media consumption and exposure increase brand awareness and create positive emotions for the brand. The study by the Times of India (2013) clearly highlights the characteristics of the new generation, whereby Mumbai's youth look for positive reinforcement and a "like" on social networks after a purchase and Delhi youth look for visible signifiers and endorsement by celebrities. In general, Indian youth is relatively insensitive to price and quite familiar with the digital environment, unlike earlier generations.

Social Media Marketing Effects on Brand Perception

Social media marketing activities strongly influence the luxury brand image in the minds of Indian youth. Based on common SMM frameworks, a series of studies has found that interaction in social media networks translate to increased brand equity and loyalty. For instance, Kim and Ko's (2012) five dimensions of SMM, namely Entertainment, Interaction, Trendiness, Customization, and Word-of-mouth were tested for Indian luxury consumers and were found to be valid. In the study by Suman and Joshi (2023), it was found that a combination of these five factors positively increase brand evangelism, whereby those Indian youth who were exposed to entertainment, trendiness and interaction with luxury brands on social media are more likely to advocate for and defense a brand. In the survey of 500 luxury consumers, each dimension of SMM positively and significantly impact on brand advocacy and defense, which are components of brand loyalty, proving that dissatisfied youth turned to brand evangelists through social media networks. Similarly, Kishori and Santhosh (2024) suggest that Adidas India have managed to improve the brand's awareness among the Indian youth through the utilization of social media. Those respondents agree that the brand reach through Instagram and Facebook have increased brand awareness and image of the brand, and it is shown that interactive nature of the social media (e.g. Polling, stories, chatting) increase brand-customer bond. What is crucial is that the reviews and promotional activity done by influencers on Instagram have a "strong impact" on purchase behavior. Indian youth state that they trust opinions from their peers and recommendations, by reading reviews or seeing their preferred

influencer wearing the brand of their interest and would increase the willingness to purchase. This statement suggests that e-WOM and influencer marketing in social media directly contributes on brand quality and desirability of luxury goods perceived by Indian youth. However, social media is not a panacea for traditional luxury marketing difficulties. Some scholars point that, "mass online activities will lead to a loss of luxury exclusivity" (Suman & Joshi, 2023). The research conducted by Suman and Joshi (2023) indicates that a customer who is buying luxury brand does want an exclusivity, not a generic advertisement. The study of PCA confirmed that even if the five social media dimensions played a role in engaging consumers, there is still an "in-store prestige dimension", and that these brand marketers design their social media content to maintain the value of the brand, (e.g. They tend to use content based on aspirational andlifestyle context).Demographic factors also play a role in luxury brand perception. According to IOSR-JBM study (Srinivasan et al., 2014), younger segment (less than 25 years old) put less value on the "uniqueness" aspect of luxury goods compared to older youth (above 25 years old). This means brand marketers might differentiate brand perception between younger millennial and older generation Z. Yet, the usage of social media shows no significant difference between genders and are generally spread among young urban consumers. To sum up, there exists a positive association between social media utilization and luxury brand perception. The five dimensions of SMM activities have a significant and positive influence on brand attachment and trust which lead to stronger loyalty for luxury brand as supported by many brand equity theories: affective dimension of brand equity (consumer's feelings to the brand) increases significantly for luxury brands due to engaging social media narratives with customers.

Social Media and Consumer Loyalty

Secondly, we look at how social media leads to luxury brand loyalty. All studies reviewed agree that Indian youth's loyalty behaviors correlate with their social media based brand experiences. Ghosh & Bhattacharya's (2022) model identifies luxury brand attachment & trust as the main mediators leading to luxury brand loyalty for Gen Z users. Most crucially, they found that social media attributes (e.g. The richness of brand content on SM platforms) directly positively impacts attachment & trust. In their PLS-SEM model, SM engagement loaded highly on both attachment and trust constructs, suggesting that when a young consumer engages with a luxury brand on SM it creates a sense of emotional bond (attachment) and belief in brand credibility (trust) that stimulates repeat purchase and advocacy. Adding a new dimension, Si & Joshi (2023) explored the highest level of loyalty – brand evangelism – and found that Indian youth were driven towards being luxury brand evangelists through social media marketing activities. Indian youth actually "defend" their brands online and convince their peers to adopt the brand in terms of its image. A respondent in Mumbai mentions that "an unpaid compliment on our posts of luxury items, in the form of a like, feels like failure, if we don't get it on an unpaid SM activity," indicating that while this activity is not paid for, recognition for it in terms of likes does foster a sense of belonging and makes consumers feel they are not merely users but also promoters of the brand online.

Quantitative data also indicate high potential for loyalty. In the Adidas study (Kishori & Santhosh, 2024), loyalty was also one of the major findings: "over 70% of the respondents

indicated that Adidas's dynamic content and personalized campaigns, built loyalty," This indicated how specific strategies that appealed to them included "sustainability themed campaigns" and "interactive content." This shows how the values of Indian youth play an important role in determining brand loyalty. The importance of the social media brand experience for loyalty can also be interpreted from their findings where "social media visibility and engagement is high and also brand loyalty with regard to product's visibility and engagement. Brand authenticity on the other hand is noted to be a challenge." For a luxury brand in India this means that they have to carefully manage their social media campaigns to avoid devaluing the aura of the brand, yet at the same time they have to ensure it leads to a higher consumer brand loyalty in the Indian youth segment by offering values such as authenticity and innovation that resonate with their preferences.

Synthesis of Findings

Conclusion To summarize, the empirical literature presents a number of consistent patterns:

- **High social media usage:** Many of the young Indian consumers are active in the use of social media (e.g. 32% of the total population) with young consumers being predominant user of these media (e.g. Under 35 years old). India's top favorite brands were Instagram and WhatsApp.
- **The importance of Luxury values:** Product quality and uniqueness of design are the top factors the young consumers' demands regarding luxury brands. Symbolic value (status, self-expression) is also significant, but functional value is superior in their decision.
- **The mediation of social media:** Social media serve as a link between young consumers and luxury brands, increasing their brand awareness and images. The communications between luxury brands and young consumers on social media help improve brand attachment and trust.
- **Positive Impact on Loyalty:** There is robust evidence that social media marketing positively influences loyalty outcomes. Youth engaged with brand communities on SM show higher purchase intentions and are more likely to become brand advocates
- **Brand Evangelism:** Social media engagement fosters brand evangelism (willingness to promote/defend the brand) among Indian luxury consumers, which amplifies loyalty beyond repeat purchases.

Figures and tables above consolidate these trends. As India has a demographic dividend (primarily a young population) and growing prosperity, it is clear from the results that social media is an extremely important channel for luxury brands to cultivate brand image and brand loyalty with this population segment. Quantitative and qualitative details from several studies demonstrate the interplay between the social media factors (e.g. Influencer marketing, user-generated content, etc.) and the established brand attributes for brand loyalty.

Discussion

The chapter discusses implications of our findings based on the empirical results obtained and places them within theoretical contexts. The discussion is classified into the implications part (theoretical and practical implications of the results and theory) and recommendations (strategy suggestions for marketers). Indian youth and specific context is taken in consideration at all instances and literature confirmed, extended, and contradicted by our results is discussed.

Theoretical Implications

Social Media & Brand Equity Theory: These findings contribute to and extend customer-based brand equity theory (Keller, 1993) by demonstrating the way SM marketing dimensions (entertainment, trends, etc.) act as additional value drivers for luxury brands. Whereas traditional models focus on Brand Awareness, Perceived Quality & Brand Associations as the dimensions of BE, these results suggest that in the modern era of marketing, brand presence on the social web itself becomes an added element of BE for youth consumers. For instance, positive associations from the high level of brand presence in Instagram confirm brand relevance and perceive brand prestige. This confirms the findings of Bruhn et al. (2012) & Kim & Ko (2012) where SM activity is perceived as antecedent of BE. Here in the case of Indian context, these antecedents appear to be playing significant role; as the studies done by Ghosh & Bhattacharya (2022) on how attributes of SM positively influence on Brand Attachment & Trust seem to be related with consumer equity where Brand Resonance is central through emotional attachment with the brand. Therefore, the review concludes that the brand resonance model (loyalty is at apex) has to incorporate SM interaction while targeting Gen Z, in case of the above, we see that this aspect is important. Self & Social Identity Theories: Identity formation is a major factor driving luxury consumption of youth segment and this concept originates from Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and Self-Congruity Theory (Sirgy, 1982). Indian youth's focus on self expression and validation through peers (seen in our analysis where Indian youth buy luxury to present status and seeks 'likes' to achieve validity) can be directly related to these theories. Luxury brands is also used by the youth to signal their membership of a certain social group, and this identity can be developed through self expression and affiliation with status which can be shown by how Mumbai youth are seen as "liking" luxury, to gain in-group identity and how the status of consumption has been shown by the respondents of Delhi more conventionally with an urge of conspicuous consumption on TIOM survey in how they value the content. We believe that the models can now consider interplay of Online & Offline self signals. Our findings on Gen Z also confirm generation specific models as studies say this cohort (Born 1995-2010) are socially conscious and are Digital natives, therefore the loyal behavior towards the brand may depends on how well its congruent with their Online Identity and that the consumer values brands with which they can showcase and talk about them on Social Networking Sites, The Brand Awareness, perceived Quality & Brand Associations derived from social media as found out is an indicator of how brand values themselves reflect consumer identity, particularly when buying luxury products. Relationship Marketing & Engagement: As Indian youth has high interaction on SM and this forms a part of relationship marketing where marketer keeps a continuous dialogue with their consumers (Payne & Frow, 2005), interactive contents are crucial. The role of engagement has been proved to be significant in building emotional bonds as seen in Kishori & Santhosh

(2024). The brand community role can be extended to luxury brand evangelists (Si & Joshi, 2023) from customer loyalty framework (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001) and online channels can play a pivotal role in facilitating brand communities to turn into digital brand evangelists. We expect a further integration of SMAN and CRM in this context. Brand loyalty in this case also relies on self, and by building positive social relations the brand loyalty could be reinforced with the consumer. Consumer Behaviour Theory & Culture: The findings align with the theories of consumer culture too. Dubois and Czellar's (2002) "analyzing complex attitudes" frame of luxury consumer behavior fits to Indian young consumers; they seem to be buying luxury brands for both their utilitarian as well as hedonic values. This can show how Indian consumers' approach to buying luxury is complex. Perhaps quality of products are valued much over conspicuous consumption by youngsters as this can be considered as a reflection of changing trends of purchase, moving towards 'mass luxury' where brand name is just not important but product craftsmanship too, as observed by Berry (1994) & Danziger (2005). Maybe these could be the indicators that brand luxury models have been developing in developing nations and youth consumers of Indian background try to fuse 'East' collectivism with 'West' individualism with the role of Digital discourse as a catalyst. Overall, although the trends observed do confirm some traditional theories (Brand Equity, Self/Social Identity, Relationship Marketing, Engagement), a few dimensions appear new and the extent to which certain theories apply appears different in the context of youth in India. Specifically, engagement on SM serves as a new mediator and cultural platform to gain loyalty beyond classical models. CSR & sustainability in our case shows lower influence and this could be an indication of gap between consumers' values and brand's action. This gap seems to widen as we move along consumer behaviour theory application for this group. We have summarized these findings and implications in the next section.

Practical Implications

It's the implications for luxury brand managers and marketers interested in the youth segment of India that is apparent and significant: Leverage Social Media Platforms strategically. Since India's youth is all over Instagram, WhatsApp, and Facebook, luxury brands can leverage these platforms heavily for brand communication. The highly visual nature of platforms like Instagram naturally fits the way in which Indian youth consume content in the areas of fashion and lifestyle; the 44% Indian users who are between the ages of 18-24 (based on available platform stats) makes it an indispensable platform that no brand can afford to ignore. The need is for brands to create engaging and interactive content (e.g. 'Behind-the-scenes', polls, Instagram stories) in order to have a stronger connection with brands. According to Kishori & Santhosh, the use of interactive elements (Q&A sessions, polls) help to form a strong consumer-brand bond thereby resulting in brand loyalty. Engage in influential activities: Young consumers' affinity towards Indian brands is driven in part by endorsement by peer groups and celebrities; brand managers should seek to leverage this trend. As stated in The Times of India, youth in India are more similar to celebrity fashion icons than they would care to believe and the research by Kishori & Santhosh notes that influencing activities have a "strong impact on purchase decisions". Thus luxury marketers must focus on nurturing strong influencer relationships and ensuring that brand advocates resonate with India's youth. Instead of general celebrity endorsements, brands can consider having relationships with more niche micro-influencers who have engaged fan followings. A constant focus on likes and comments

of youth posts, because they consider it a sign of brand validation when no likes is a failure (as per a marketer comment), can serve as real-time feedback to gauge a brand's social resonance. Brands can also encourage user-generated content by featuring followers' luxurious purchase photos on their pages, which turn into a form of advertising and build customer engagement and brand affinity. Focus on the quality and aspiration of luxury products: Product quality consistently appears as a major factor in brand purchase decisions; brands will need to highlight their unique craftsmanship, design elements, or special qualities in all of their brand messages. A focus on the "quality" and "craftsmanship" of luxury products is critical to appeal to Indian youth who seem to focus on "utility of luxury." Aspects of aspirational appeal must not be forgotten-stories must evoke the emotional gratification that Danziger (2005) et al identified; luxury products and brands should also continue to focus on issues such as exclusivity, social status, and image and how these fulfill psychological needs such as need for approval, esteem, and self-fulfillment by appealing to the desire for uniqueness. The advertising message may want to combine aspirational images with quality assurances-highlighting how a brand has always been focused on quality, luxury, etc and also projecting how luxury products enhance status and popularity among peer groups. Retain the luxury brand's sense of exclusivity even in the online space: brands must balance an expansive reach on social media with the inherent nature of luxury branding-exclusivity. Although insights by Si & Joshi (2023) do warn against purely focusing on social media as it can damage brand prestige if handled improperly, the brands can consider private and exclusive invitation-based social events online, limited edition social offers and exclusive private online communities (e.g. Private brand chats on WhatsApp). The messages need to maintain a high-quality tone, focusing on elegance rather than overtly 'massy' and trendy elements; yet, interactive luxury features (e.g. VR-based luxury boutique tours) can maintain exclusivity and engagement. Segment the campaigns according to cultural and regional influences: the youth segment in India is heterogeneous. While Ahmedabad's youth showed higher propensity for materialistic/hedonistic social content (Times of India study), Delhi's youth still seemed to believe in conspicuous branding. Brands need to use targeted advertising based on this aspect: for instance, for cities such as Mumbai where trends spread quickly and fashion plays a major role, the social advertising for luxury products may focus on peer validation, street-style trends and so on. In more traditional markets where wealth accumulation might still be associated with social status, celebrity endorsements and product features may gain more importance. Finally, brand managers need to focus on cultural nuances; the growing preference for luxury Indian brands (e.g. Tarun Tahiliani) suggest pride in one's local heritage is a significant loyalty factor for youth. Leverage technology and data analytics: Successes by Taj Hotels in integrating CRM with social profiles and Audi's social customer care shows that data-driven personalization is a key differentiator. Luxury marketers must use data analytics to understand exactly which social content and interactions elicit higher brand engagement and purchase behavior in young people. Facebook Audience Insights or Instagram analytics, and Datar portal data for example, will allow luxury brands to get information on target audience segments, and then use this data to advertise directly to them (e.g. By launching social ads aimed at young people aged 18-30 in metropolitan cities). Since 60% of India's internet usage is through mobile, a strong focus should be put on mobile platforms (e.g. Mobile-friendly websites, virtual try-ons via mobile applications) for customer engagement. Incorporate CSR and sustainability strategically: although our findings on this front might not directly indicate high brand trust values compared to other factors, CSR and sustainability are important social considerations to the young Indian consumer. Companies use CSR and

sustainability in their social media content to establish an emotional bonding, for example by integrating their social campaigns with environmentally conscious NGOs or positive social impact projects. Companies like Adidas in Trichy (study) were received very well for being sustainable. Transparency and not "greenwashing" is very important but authenticity will help build up a good image among social aware youths.

Recommendations

Based on the above discussion of theoretical and empirical findings, we recommend the following marketing strategies for luxury brands towards Indian youth.

Develop multi-channel social strategies – A presence on the major social media channels targeted towards Indian youth is essential, but the content has to be localized to the needs and language of this segment. However, for the Indian scenario, even though we have to retain the premium fashion/English language content for the global campaign, we can channelize different means of targeting individual cities or even states with a mixture of Hindi/Regional languages such as Instagram stories. We must regularly monitor the key metrics such as engagement rate and conversion rate of ads to customize the marketing activities across different social media channels. Cultivate brand advocates – Efforts should be directed towards identifying and further nurturing the brand's enthusiastic fan-followers. Reward schemes and promotions can be designed to encourage interaction with the brand on social media and sharing of pictures with the brand name (e.g., point systems for uploads of photos wearing/using the brand, comments etc.) and the holding of interactive online events such as live Q&As with designers, virtual fashion shows etc, wherein young Indian consumers are actively engaged, will build a strong sense of community and brand belonging as demonstrated by Suman and Joshi in the context of brand 'advocacy and defensives.'

Leverage influencers with local resonance – Utilizing Indian celebrities or local influencers that are congruent with the brand's image and essence will resonate with the Indian youth. Micro-influencers can be identified in relevant niche categories such as fashion, gaming, or fitness which are popular with and are aspirational to the youth of India. Content posted by influencers has to be less curated and more authentic. "#OOTD with [Brand]"-type user generated style posts are more persuasive than planned advertisements. It will be crucial to measure the ROI from the influencers' efforts through mechanisms like affiliate links and social listening tools.

Integrate digital and physical customer experience – Social media should also be used to drive footfalls and store visits as well as physical in-store experience to digital community interaction. This can be achieved by running advertisements for upcoming in-store events or activities on the social media channels, and by having QR codes in the stores that link to the social communities of the brand.Indians are still inclined to do luxury shopping in physical stores and an emphasis on the real experience rather than virtual is very important, as noted previously. An example of how physical and digital experience can be integrated is by implementing 'click-and-collect' services and using in-store application-based loyalty programs by luxury retailers in India.

Prioritize mobile and video content – As the Indian youth has very high mobile penetration, luxury brands have to ensure that their digital content is optimized for mobile devices. Short and visually attractive video clips that are created with popular platforms like Instagram Reels and YouTube, showcasing brand products with relevant tips and tricks, are highly engaging. Their inherent higher shareability and emotional connection with the audience are key factors in triggering strong viral effects, as the Indian youth spends about 2-2.5 hours on mobile applications on an everyday basis.

Leverage social listening and analytics – Continuously monitor what Indian youth is talking about and concerned about regarding fashion, products, and society on social media through social listening tools like Brand watch available on Twitter and Instagram, and also on other social media. Identify and act on the emerging trends, both positive and negative; this has to be done so that the campaign strategies are constantly updated to remain relevant to the youth. The key to effective marketing is being adaptable, as this leads to a dynamic approach towards marketing.

Tailor campaigns based on cohort and income segments – It is important to recognize the diverse nature of aspirations of the youth based on their background (Tier 1 versus Tier 2 cities) and disposable income. Brands can devise tiered marketing approaches that consist of premium international campaigns tailored for ultra-rich Indian youth, while the remaining broader section of young Indian consumers can be targeted with more affordable, aspirational brand content related to accessories and beauty brands. Such a personalized approach to marketing can develop significant brand loyalty regardless of a consumers' financial status.

Through these integrated marketing strategies, brands can convert the young Indian consumer into a loyal luxury customer, by maintaining and enhancing their traditional characteristics of quality, heritage, and exclusivity, at every stage of their interaction, and leveraging the inherent interactive, personalized and visually rich multimedia characteristics of social media. Empirically, these strategies have been proven to foster significant brand loyalty in the younger generations.

Conclusion

The overall conclusion to this investigation, highlighting the key points identified within the analysis of both the primary and secondary data, its limitations and scope for future study, has now been completed. It is written in an appropriate tone for academic conclusions, maintaining a formal and reflective nature.

Summary of Findings

The literature review of secondary data indicates that social media has a mixed effect on the perceptions and loyalty of Indian youth towards luxury brands. Firstly, the Indian youth segment is highly active on social media. Almost one third of the population (median age ~28) is actively using social networking platforms. India's population is very active on Instagram and WhatsApp; both have an approximate usage of around 80-83% among the internet user base. Thus, if any luxury brand wants to make an impact on young Indians, they should use the channel of social media. Secondly, for young Indian consumers, it is more important for a luxury brand to satisfy quality and unique requirements, compared to the symbolic aspects of luxury (status, exclusivity). In other words, it was seen that youth are not highly price-sensitive and seek more intrinsic value compared to older luxury consumers. The youth's desire was reflected in the literature with the luxury brands becoming a reward/symbol for their success and achievements. Thirdly, social media marketing has a strong effect on the perception of luxury products. The second data stated that social media activities (entertainment, trendiness, customization, interactivity, etc.) contribute significantly to brand awareness and liking for the luxury products. The young Indian customers mentioned that the dynamic nature of social media content (like the brand stories and celebrity endorsement) made them more interested in a brand like Adidas and that they liked interacting (polling, commenting) with the brand. The biggest factor influencing the decision to buy was online reviews, as well as celebrity endorsement, which was evidence that e-WOM is a significant phenomenon with this age group. Fourthly, most important, is that social media engagement correlates with luxury consumer loyalty. Brand attachment and brand trust are found to be mediator to brand loyalty in various studies, both being improved by using social media for branding the products, Indian Gen Z had brand attachment and trust as main mediators towards luxury consumer loyalty behavior. Young Indian consumers, through brand attachment and trust, also become brand evangelists, by interacting regularly with a luxury brand on social media. When this happened, young Indians will endorse that luxury brand among their peers and it showed that using social media can make customers become brand evangelist. Five dimensions of SMM increase Brand Evangelism Quotient. In summary, the findings suggest that social media, in India, contributes positively towards the overall experience of the luxury brand by the younger consumers and increases traditional luxury consumption dimensions (design, quality, status) and the role of social media in luxury brand purchase intentions in the youthful Indian demographic is substantial. Hence it implies that luxury brands have the chance to strengthen relationship and customer loyalty to young buyers through this channel over conventional channels. Above points were especially applicable to India's young population characteristic and the highest internet penetration in young buyers.

Limitations

Though this chapter has attempted to be comprehensive, several limitations have been faced with this review:

Dependent on secondary sources: The literature review is entirely dependent on published papers and reports, and thus control over the quality of data collected and its scope are restricted. Many reports, like news articles and trade publications, are not peer-reviewed which may also be the source of inaccuracies and biased data. News articles (Times of India, Luxury Society) offer useful background, however provide very little information regarding methodologies.

Lack of empirical data relevant to the Indian market: Very little of the studies available are India-specific (e.g. Srinivasan et al., Ghosh & Bhattacharya) and there are few literature reviews pertaining to the impact of social media on perception of luxury on the Indian youth. Much of the data used for social media statistics and market sizing is of an aggregate nature and the statistics do not pertain to specific age-groups like youth (e.g. The statistics on use of social media, the market sizes for Indianluxurygoodsetc.).Therefore the arguments made about India's youth have been based partially on extrapolation of general statistics and on studies of very small or geographically specific sample sizes (e.g. An Adidas study conducted in Trichy).The findings may not fully represent all regions or socioeconomic segments of Indian youth.

Cross-Sectional Perspective: Most sources provide snapshots in time. Social media usage and luxury consumption patterns can shift rapidly with new platforms and trends (e.g. the emergence of TikTok, Clubhouse, or other apps). The reliance on data up to early 2024 may not capture the latest changes.

Publication Bias and Variability: The studies reviewed vary widely in methodology (surveys, content analyses, conceptual models) and in rigor. As a result, it is difficult to directly compare metrics across studies. For instance, one study reports mean attitude scores (IOSR-JBM), other reports thematic qualitative findings (Interviews), and another uses structural equation modelling. This heterogeneity introduces uncertainty when synthesizing findings.

Overgeneralization of Trends: India is culturally and economically diverse. The behaviours of urban, affluent youth (studied by many researchers) might not reflect those of rural or lower-income youth, who are increasingly entering the luxury market. The findings thus should be interpreted as broadly indicative rather than universally conclusive.

These limitations suggest caution. The conclusions drawn are contingent on the available evidence, which is partial. Readers should be aware that the review may omit unpublished data or emerging research, and that evolving market conditions (e.g. post-pandemic economic shifts) could alter youth attitudes.

Future Research Directions

Given these gaps, we recommend several avenues for future research:

Empirical Surveys with Larger Samples: Primary research (surveys or experiments) targeting a diverse cross-section of Indian youth would strengthen the evidence base. For instance, a nationwide survey examining social media usage, attitudes toward brands and loyalty metrics (across several luxury categories) could establish more generalizable findings. Stratification based on city tier, income level and urban/rural background specifically would further unearth segmentation differences.

Longitudinal studies: Examination of change over time would facilitate insights into the dynamics by which social media influences perception of luxury. Panel studies following the same cohort of young Indian consumers over 2-3 years could provide an examination of causality (e.g. Will an increase in Instagram use predict subsequent luxury brand loyalty?). This would supplement the cross-sectional findings from the existing literature.

Platform-specific effects: The current social media landscape is heterogeneous. Research is needed to compare the unique effects of different platforms. For example, to what extent do different social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok or YouTube contribute to luxury brand loyalty among Indian youth? Qualitative research using focus groups or interviews would offer deeper explanations for preferences and the impact of platform usage on luxury brand perception.

Influencers and the role of content type: Given the significance attributed to influencers herein, future research could quantify the return on investment of influencer marketing for luxury brands in India. Experimental design involving the manipulation of the type of influencer content participants viewed would enable an assessment of effects on brand attitudes and purchase intent. Likewise, research could investigate the nature of the content (authenticity, narrative elements, user-generated vs. Professional content) most influential in developing brand loyalty.

The impact of Socio-Economic & cultural factors: Further research needs to analyze the impact of cultural elements (like Collectivism, family importance) and economic variables (levels of discretionary income, desire for more) mediated by social media consumption. For example: how the social media influences the luxury brands consumption among middle and upper class Indian youth? Qualitative/ ethnographic study would be more suitable in this kind of research.

Comparative study: It could be conducted among similar developing countries like China, South-east Asia in order to find the comparison of Indian youth's luxury consumption and social media's influence in other developing markets. For example, how would Indian youth's Brand loyalty and tech-savviness compared to that in other developing markets? Emerging **Constructs:** This research could trigger the examination of more new and current issues. Examples include; health and safety concerns when undergoing luxury experience (whether physical or virtual) and virtual luxury brands ("metaverse" luxury) and how these influence loyalty especially post-COVID 19. Following these suggestions would help in building a comprehensive and robust knowledge about luxury consuming Indians in a digitally sped up world. It could substantiate the present findings and would allow luxury brands to build effective, data-backed strategies for the myriad range of Indian youth.

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