



Brand Engagement on Purchase of Luxury Products

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Abstract

With respect to the importance and increasing role of brands in marketing, brand engagement can be regarded as one of the novel debate subjects of the field, and today it has widely attracted marketing intellectuals' attention. Many institutions have forgotten why they created brands. Therefore, the process of branding is significantly considered to make graphic designers and advertising institutes participate. This practice itself has turned into a goal and have attracted lots of attention. In the present article, firstly brand engagement is explored and it is explained how the perceptions and mental impressions of customers affect luxury purchase intention. As a result, the present study aims at examining brand engagement as customers' mental state with regard to the way it influences consumers' perception of luxury brands.

Keywords: Brand engagement, Luxury, Luxury products, New era economy.

Introduction

Considering that almost all firms and companies need to sell their products and services to reach their goals (profit, well-being, shares value etc.), it is no surprise that the effect of brand engagement be widely investigated in the most recent marketing studies throughout the world. Consumers relate to brands in various ways and researchers use various terms to describe such relationships. In fact, pre-purchase context is a fundamental field of study because in this stage customers try offered goods and decide whether to buy or not. Therefore, it is necessary to identify those features of a product that stimulate feelings and determine how they influence decisions¹.

Branding is regarded as the legal and exclusive right of marketing and communications practitioners and little importance and attention is paid to other actions taken by a company that lead to the prosperity of a brand. Although branding is a vital practice, it is merely the last stage of the process that includes all resources and functions of the firm and concentrates them toward a strategic goal. Further, branding is something more than simply naming or creating an external sign through which a product or service may receive an organizational sign or logo².

The importance of branding is absolutely obvious for corporations and companies. They all know that creating a brand leads to the creation of all organizational values. In mass markets, brands focus their investment on several marketing attempts and the reason is their desire to attract a wide spectrum of customers. Luxury brands, nevertheless, try to create a fully concentrated experience among their real customers. Mass business brands define their customers and then compel them to buy their products. For luxury brands, however, roles are in

reverse direction; it is the customers who move toward luxury brands. In other words, the increase in the number of luxury brand leads to the decrease in the value of that brand. To avoid such a consequence, a luxury brand has to put unreal obstacles when attracting customers. Such a behaviors creates a feeling of belonging to a unique circle of loyal customers².

Following this discussion, the present study tries to examine brand engagement as the mental state of consumers toward a brand with respect to their perceptions of luxury purchase.

Luxury Products and the New Era Economy

In the past, luxury brands were a privilege taken by a wealthy minority. However, today luxury companies have launched new production lines or have extended their existing lines so that they could attract a wider range of consumers. Thus, luxury goods are affordable for a bigger population of middle-class consumers that has led to the growth of this market since 20 years ago. Such democratization of luxury goods indicates the relevance and consistency of this phenomenon with mass marketing³.

Despite the ubiquity of brands in our everyday lives, defining "luxury brand" is not undemanding as the concept of luxury is a highly abstract and relative one.

Sekora defines luxury as everything that is not needed. Oxford Dictionary of English defines it as "A state of great comfort or elegance, especially when involving great expense" or "An inessential, desirable item which is expensive or difficult to obtain"⁴.

Marketers consider the label of *luxury* as a chance to differentiate a group of products through which they can make them more desirable to for customers^{5,6}. This is a state of being in fewest numbers with the highest price in the market⁷. In a similar vein, Nueno and Quelch define luxury brands as those with a low utility-to-price ratio but with a high intangible functionality-to-price⁸.

Researchers believe that the real meaning of a luxury product lies in its uniqueness, scarcity, and the inability of the masses in having it⁶.

Everything which is desirable one the one hand and beyond need or ordinariness one the other can be luxury. What makes a luxury product be different from others is the inevitability of the maximum price without any clear utility advantage compared with familiar products. However, certain customers are willing to pay such a considerable price difference because luxury products possess an assortment of extremely distinctive features such as premium quality, craftsmanship, differentiation, uniqueness, and reputation.

Brand Engagement

Definition of Brand Engagement: The study of the concept of interaction in organizational psychology has gathered significant interest from long times ago. This concept has increasingly been studied throughout the previous years in the field of consumer behavior. From an academic standpoint, brand engagement has been defined in various ways such as the motivational level of a consumer’s mental state which is connection with a brand and dependent on the context and is characterized by specific levels of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral activities in direct interactions with the brand⁹, or the extent of an individual’s participation and their connection with offers from an organization or organizational activities initiated by the individual or the organization¹⁰, or the behavioral representations of the customer focused on a certain brand or organization which are beyond mere purchase and derive from motivational stimuli¹¹.

Table-1
Definitions of brand engagement

Vigor	Vigor denotes high levels of energy and mental resilience when interacting with a brand, and the consumer willingness and the ability to invest effort in such interactions ¹² .
Dedication	Dedication refers to a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride and challenge ¹² .
Absorption	Absorption refers to the sense of being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in brand interactions and in which time passes quickly ¹² .

Practitioners of the field have defined the concept in numerous ways, for example: i. A psychological state that appears from an important thing (e.g. a brand) due to interactional experiences and creative participation of customers⁹. ii. Creating an attitude toward a brand which is reinforced by the surrounding environment¹³. iii. A kind of emotional attachment that the customer may have to a certain brand¹⁴. iv. A focus on an attitude toward an idea related to a certain brand which is reinforced by the surrounding environment¹⁵

Concerning this study, the considered setting would be consumer behavior, and the definition that organizational psychology provides is a holistic approach that includes multiple aspects of consumer engagement in only one framework – cognitive (absorption), emotional (dedication), and behavioral (vigor). This holistic view of engagement has undergone evaluation by organizational psychology studies throughout time. The emerging engagement studies in marketing are still at the beginning of clarifying the holistic nature of brand engagement, and it is too soon to achieve consistency among different dimensions of this construct. Therefore, a well-assessed engagement scale would be more capable of engendering a better understanding of brand engagement¹⁶.

Brand Engagement Models: This study draws on several models with different dimensions. For example: i. Brand engagement model created by institutions and organizations. ii. Dwivedi’s model of consumer brand engagement.

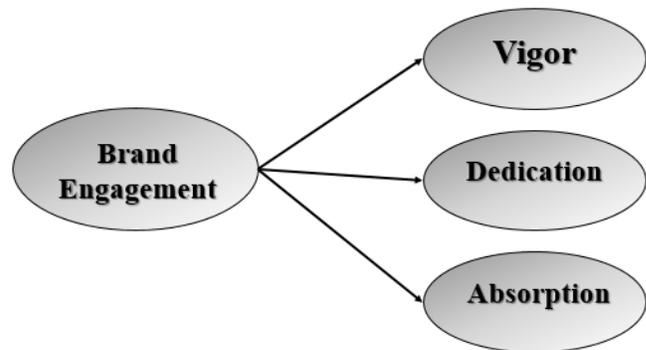


Figure-1
Dimensions of brand engagement¹⁶

Factors Affecting Brand Engagement in Luxury Products

Marketing studies have clearly shown that consumers tend to buy those products that can be used as a tool for self-expression^{17,18}. Customers benefit from not only the functional benefits of products but also the symbolic meaning that lies behind them and which is embodied through the product image¹⁹. Brands with distinct images or personalities enable consumers to demonstrate, confirm and enhance their feelings^{17,20}. In the field of fashion-oriented luxury brands,

studies have indicated that user visualizations can be powerful antecedents of brand attitude and loyalty²¹.

Luxury has long been defined as those products that create prestige with not consideration of application. Such brands are characterized by qualities such as unique, extremely expensive, luxury, precious, superior, high-quality, excellent, pleasing, scarce, valuable, hand-made, fascinating, powerful, and charming³.

For a great number of consumers, the popularity of a luxury product indicates that it is prestigious, so it has to be possessed. The reason, as Leibenstein²² believes, would be the value the consumer can gain from interacting with other consumers. Particularly, consumers would watch others' behaviors and when they decide that it is necessary to have some luxury products to be "in the game" or to be "one of them", they certainly purchase those products²³.

In a study on brand engagement on social media, Hollebeek and colleagues²⁴ implemented three dimensions to examine the concept and found out that consumers' interest in a brand has a positive effect on consumer engagement with the brand.

Forbes¹⁵ conducted a study on consumers' perceptions of loyalty, engagement, and involvement on internet websites. In the study, an experimental design tested credit, engagement, and involvement and the findings showed that consumers believed that corporate websites had more credit and as a result gained more engagement and involvement.

In another study by Hollebeek et al.²⁴, consumer commitment and interest were studied. The results indicated that consumer attachment had a significant relationship with each of the three factors of consumer commitment; i.e. cognitive processing, attachment and activation.

Goldsmith and colleagues²⁵ conducted a study to examine the relationship between brand personality and engagement. Their findings pointed to the fact that brand personality had an important role in the formation of brand engagement.

Further, Goldsmith and colleagues²⁵ carried out another study to explore the relationship between materialism and brand engagement and found out that the interest in purchase had a positive relationship with self-image and materialist values.

Factors Affected by Brand Engagement in Luxury Products: In a study by Dwivedi¹⁶ who proposed a higher order model of brand engagement and examined its effect on loyalty intentions, the findings showed that brand engagement had a positive effect on loyalty intentions.

Wirtz and et al.²⁶ carried out an examination of brand management and consumer engagement in online brand societies. They tried to combine the previous studies on online brand societies in order to expand the understanding of such societies. Further, they tried to outline the future priorities. The results indicated that the created interactionism through the adoption of an online society by consumers was beneficial in two ways.

Conclusion

The findings of the analyzed studies indicated that there is a direct and significant relationship between brand engagement and luxury brand purchase. We are never able to underestimate the effects of brand engagement on individuals as the reviewed studies clearly showed that there is a significant relationship between the luxuriousness of a product and the decision to buy and interest of the consumer in a certain product through engaging with the brand.

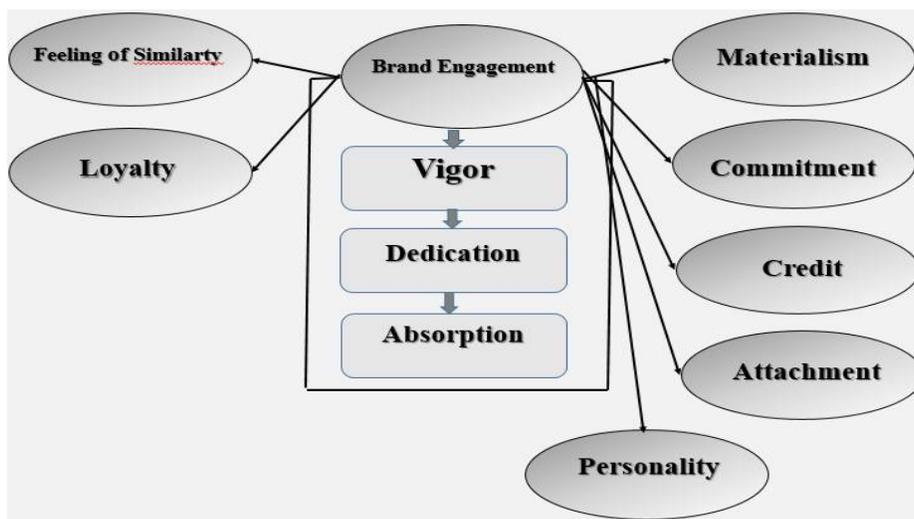


Figure-2
Model of brand engagement and associated factors

Table-2
Summary of the models and factors

Affecting factors	Engagement model	Affected factors
Consumer interest ²⁴	Model A: Consumer brand engagement ¹⁶	Engagement on loyalty intentions ¹⁶
		Engagement and online societies ²⁶
Commitment, attachment, and engagement ²⁴		
Personality and engagement ²⁵		
Materialism and engagement ²⁵		

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