Luxury fashion brands on social media: a study of young consumers’ perception

Masters Thesis Fashion Brand Management

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Abstract

Purpose: The implementation of this research increases the awareness of the value for luxury fashion brands in utilizing social media as a communication channel to reach young consumers globally. It provides a general understanding of young consumers’ perception of luxury fashion brands on social media in regards to geographic cultural background, attitude towards new luxury, and preferred way of contacts.

Design/Methods/Approach: This quantitative research is conducted through an online survey distributed mainly through two main social media channels: Facebook and Twitter. The survey was designed with an online questionnaire tool provided by Google docs, a free online application that enables users to create and share an URL link to social networks. Both multiple choice questions and open questions appeared in the survey intending to explore young consumers’ opinions on luxury brands in the context of social media. The survey was accessible for a week, during which 31 valid responses in both English and French were obtained and analyzed in terms of their relevance to the theoretical background.

Findings: The survey shows that young consumers from BRIC countries seem to have a more traditional view of luxury fashion, meaning that luxury is often associated with a more apparent way of showing status and wealth and that luxury brands ‘presence on social media does not contribute to the exclusive image. As for young consumers in all their diversity, the presence on social media helps to gather fast, reliable, and most up-to-date brand information.

Young consumers demonstrate an increasing demand for trustworthy information with regards to luxury fashion brands, therefore, social media can be a useful way for finding information, due to its capacity to instantly generate an interaction between users and brands.

Lastly, we observed that the tendency for young consumers to utilize social media for creating and sharing their own luxury brand experience. Social media could be considered as an effective way of communication for luxury fashion brands as it helps to establish emotional attachment between consumers and brands.

Originality/Value: The results facilitate luxury fashion brands in developing marketing and communication strategies in an online context. In addition, the research also helps to better understand the impact of new consumer behavior, with regards to luxury consumption and online brand experience, particularly linked to using social media. Since these phenomena are becoming increasingly popular, this research contributes to expanding the existing knowledge in the given area of studies and can help luxury fashion retailers to perceive future young consumers’ attitudes in a more productive way.

Key words: social media, young consumer behavior, luxury brand, Facebook, Louis Vuitton, social networking sites
1 Introduction

The continuously growing use of the Internet has caused a significant change in the way consumers interact and communicate with brands. When the Internet first became popular among consumers, luxury fashion brands did not have confidence in its potential, and even though this attitude would soon change they were relatively slow to embrace it (Okonkwo, 2010), and entered the world of social media, already quite well established, with a few years delay.

Luxury goods having previously been reserved for the privileged classes have become increasingly accessible (Danziger, 2004). What used to be a privilege for the wealthier, is now becoming more accessible for young consumers and for a wider audience in general, which is partly due to social media and the opportunity they provide to “like”, instead of having to “buy” a small part of the dream.

Luxury is about pleasure and satisfaction of the senses (Okonkwo, 2010). Unlike non-luxury, luxury experience is created by a variety of intangible factors and has emotional value. According to Okonkwo (2010), luxury goods should be original and creative, and the luxury brand presentation should offer an emotional appeal and an enriched brand image. Luxury fashion brands’ customers should be able to consult those brands for indicators of codes regarding their social status. Bastien & Kapferer (2012) mentioned the blend between luxury, individuals and the society. First and foremost, luxury is about social stratification, it has been created for this purpose and as response to a specific social need. However, individuals choose accordingly to their taste and the way they want to be perceived externally. Luxury is about oneself - hedonism taking precedence over functionality and price; the logic of premium brand or premium product is different. Atwal & Williams (2009) also mention the need for luxury fashion brand to attempt to sell an experience, not just a product. According to Miller & Mills (2012), the research conducted on luxury fashion brands is not that extensive and the majority of the authors aim to simply give a definition of luxury, acknowledging that luxury is a puzzling concept.

The definition of luxury varies depending on economic and cultural differences: in western countries, luxury relates to individual experience and the indulgence in a high living standard; however, in developing countries such as BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India and China), luxury is still a way for consumers to demonstrate their higher social status and exclusivity. The issue arising here is how the presence of luxury fashion brands on social media is perceived by young global consumers, as the consumption of luxury is changing along with the change in the way young consumers obtain information and products. Therefore, luxury fashion brands are facing several challenges. The more complete definition of luxury will be presented in the theoretical framework section.

According to Cailleux, et al. (2009), the competition for traditional luxury brands has grown stronger as new premium brands have surfaced on the western market. Premium brands and high-street fashion brands started to borrow luxury brands’ product design and sales techniques for marketing their products. However, their strategy is not the same as luxury brands, premium brands follow a price logic. High-street fashion brand Zara (Inditex) is
known for copying luxury fashion brands’ design and selling its products using luxury code. As a result, luxury brands have started to pursue new markets in developing countries such as Brazil, Russia, India and China and have tried to adapt according to the local cultural background and make significant investments in order to make their codes (brand’s history, contract, design…) known in those customers.

Another challenge is the new tendency of purchasing habit exhibited by young luxury consumers, who started to mix traditional luxury fashion brands such as Louis Vuitton, Gucci, or Channel with high-street fashion brands like Zara, Mango or H&M. Luxury fashion brands have to prove that they are still the trendsetters and leaders in the fashion industry. Luxury fashion brands also have to change their one-sided communication platform via traditional media channels, like magazines, to a more democratic platform, such as social media.

Furthermore Radön pointed out that “the abundance of information accessible on the Internet could pose a challenge to luxury brands in particular, primarily because their image has relied heavily on perception of scarcity and a certain level of secrecy” (2010, p. 25). Luxury brands need to consider the dilemma of over-exposure when it comes to interacting with young consumers on social media.

Social media are interacting platforms that users use to create, share, and exchange content information via communities and Web 2.0 technologies (Ahlqvist, et al., 2008). Agichtein, et al. (2008) stressed the point that social media have the advantage in providing a platform for public opinion to be freely and openly expressed, and thus making information online more transparent. The use of social media is slowly changing the world of communication: information online reaches a wider audience and everyone can contribute to the global dialogue. The popularity of social media is increased by the growing use of smartphones and the constant connection among Generation Y population, age between 20 to 30 years old. This age group of consumers is mostly experience-oriented and is likely to become the main buying force in future luxury fashion markets. It is then important for us to study the perceptions of consumers in this age group so as to discover the role social media play for luxury fashion brands.

It is also worth mentioning that the Internet is a fast growing environment and, consequently, that authors of this study often had the impression that the information given in journal articles and books was somewhat outdated. The Internet offers new opportunities to its users every day and its influence on consumers is immense, especially considering the way they consume information (Carr, 2010). The most recent reports conducted by L2 Think Tank and the Boston Consulting Group were the best sources providing information on current trends of digital media and/or luxury consumers’ behavior we encountered. It is important to note that most of the journal articles and books we have consulted are very recent.

1.1 Aim of the study
The purpose of this research is to gain a better understanding of the perceptions and expectations young consumers have of luxury fashion industry in a context of social media. The survey for this study aims to establish how a particular luxury brand’s presence on social
media is perceived by potential consumers, aged between 20 and 30, attempting to assess the value of social media for luxury fashion brands.

### 1.2 Research questions
For the purpose of assessing social media’s value for luxury fashion brands among young consumers, the following research question were considered.

**How do young consumers perceive luxury fashion brands on social media?**

The following questions were formulated to give us a direction to better analyze the research question:

- Does the use of social media help to seize the attention of young consumers?
- Do potential consumers see social media as the right channel for promoting luxury brands?
- Did we observe a difference in the perception of luxury in our study?
2 Theoretical framework

This section aims to build a theoretical background to help us understand the relationship between luxury fashion brands and social media. Definitions of luxury, social media, and an overview of luxury brands online will be presented in this chapter.

2.1 Definitions of luxury

Traditional definitions of luxury will be presented and then a new definition of luxury will be introduced. According to Bastien & Kapferer (2012), luxury is defined by society, meaning that luxury is not socially neutral and has evolved within our civilization. Consequently, the definition of luxury and its consumption are altered according to culture and civilization.

2.1.1 Traditional definition of luxury

Luxury is a puzzling term. Some disagreement is evident in the existing literature as to what its meaning is in general and, more specifically, what constitutes a luxury brand in comparison with a non-luxury one. However, in the advertising world, we find that “luxury (…) is related to pleasure, and indulgence of the senses through objects or experiences that are more ostentatious than necessary” (Okonkwo, 2010, p. 13).

We started our investigation of meaning of the word luxury by looking at the definition and origin of the words “luxe” and “luxury”, provided by the online Oxford dictionary1. Accordingly, luxe derives from the Latin word “luxus” that means “abundance” and luxury is:

A state of great comfort or elegance, especially when involving great expense: he lived a life of luxury

- [count noun] an inessential, desirable item which is expensive or difficult to obtain : luxuries like chocolate, scent, and fizzy wine

- [in singular] a pleasure obtained only rarely : they actually had the luxury of a whole day together

In the words of Nueno and Quelch, “luxury brands are those whose ration of functional utility to price is low while the ratio of intangible and situational utility to price is high” (Nueno & Quelch, 1998, p. 62). Luxury products are more than just premium-priced products with an elaborate design. These products satisfy more that functional needs - a brand can have a good product that serves its purpose and not be a luxury brand - they also satisfy psychological needs. For instance, would a woman feel the same way if she wore a Cartier necklace and an H&M necklace?

If we go back to the origin, Kapferer and Bastien (2009) wrote that historically luxury products were worn and used by aristocrats to showcase their status to society, “luxury was the visible result – deliberately conspicuous and ostentatious – of hereditary social stratification …” (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009, p. 313). The French Revolution changed the vision of social hierarchy so that the moral and civil deeds of the citizen became more important than his birth. This idea slowly spread over western societies but people’s need for

“social stratification” still existed. Luxury brands then became a way to recognize people that were of a higher social rank – due to their merit not their blood. Luxury fashion brands were also commonly recognised as the trend-setters in fashion, they had the ultimate authority to ascertain what was right or wrong in fashion. According do Bastien & Kapferer (2012), luxury brands are both a sign of achievement for the customer and a sign of promotion, so to keep their prestige, luxury brands have to tower over their customer, but with respect. This distance with the client is a way to protect the myth luxury brands create.

As we mentioned, luxury is defined by the society in which it thrives. According to Bastien & Kapferer (2012), luxury brands are mostly influenced by women emancipation and the world’s pacification. In their opinion, the four driving forces for luxury brands are: democracy, rise of the purchase power, globalization and communication. Democracy is beneficial for luxury brands because it means that everyone can access the universe of luxury brands, however, it is important to note that democratization does not mean popularization. The rise in purchase power helps consumers to get time and money to obtain and enjoy luxury products. Globalization is favorable for luxury brand for two reasons: the first being the rise of the purchasing power, and the second - globalization contributes to the destruction of social stratification. In other words, globalization aims to transcend culture and national difference, however, this is something that people struggle to accept and, consequently, get more attached to their cultural and geographical roots. Regarding luxury, customers are more likely to buy luxury products that show social rank but are also a manifestation of his/her culture. By buying an Italian luxury product, the customers will gain access to a small part of the Italian luxury myth and history. Contrarily to premium products, luxury products cannot be offshored. The last driving force is communication. Media’s development has facilitated the individual’s virtual encounter with new cultures and different ways of living. Also, people can have the illusion of sharing the life of celebrities and famous people, and consumers can imagine the way they want to be perceived and construct their own social stratification. Because of media, luxury brands became individuals’ purchasing advisor, influencing their social choice, and sometimes, even their behavior.

Moreover, there is a general agreement that luxury brands have two aspects: a social one and a personal one. Vigneron and Johnson (2004) have identified two dimensions of the personal aspect: perceived hedonism and perceived quality. Indeed, luxury-consumers who are looking for personal rewards can find pleasures in buying and consuming a luxury product, demonstrating that a “sensory gratification and sensory pleasure expected from the consumption” (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004, p. 491) reflect a hedonistic dimension. Luxury products are perceived by consumers as products with a greater quality compared to non-luxury ones; a luxury brand should then ensure the production of a durable assurance of quality for its consumers. Also, consumers’ trust in the superior quality of luxury products accounts for their willingness to pay a considerably higher price for luxury products, compared to their non-luxury equivalent. Besides, a higher quality could also explain a higher price for consumers.

We have linked the social aspect developed by Kapferer and Bastien (2009) to Vigneron and Johnson’s (2004) article. Indeed, they have identified three modes of non-personal-oriented
perception of luxury, establishing luxury as a social symbol: perceived conspicuousness, perceived uniqueness and perceived extended self. The first mode evokes the declaration of social status through the purchase and consumption of a luxury product. The brand of the product and/or its very high price are supposed to be the indicator of the consumer “social rank”. Perceived uniqueness refers to the rarity principle of luxury, namely that “the prestige of the brand gets eroded, if too many people own it” (Dall'Olmo Riley & Lacroix, 2003, p. 97). Uniqueness improves the consumers’ image of themselves and the way others see them. This is why, as mentioned by Bastien & Kapferer (2012), luxury fashion brands have to keep communicating to keep the myth alive. Lastly, perceived extended self is linked to materialism: “materialistic consumers may regard luxury brands as a means to reach happiness, and may use these brands to evaluate personal or others’ success” (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004, p. 490), and to the consumer’s wish to conform to the rules of the society he/she wants to belong to, or he/she is part of. Even though outside the scope of this study, the recent news on Abercrombie & Fitch are to be considered as an attempt of a premium brand to reach this aspect of perceived extended self for its consumers and brand image.

According to Brioschi (2006), the traditional subjective aspects can be demonstrated in several cultural codes, such as Veblen code – the indirect display of status, country of origin code - which symbolizes national and cultural stereotypes, as well as snob code - that stands for uniqueness and prestige lifestyle.

According to a study by De Barnier, Falci and Valette-Florence referred to by Bastien & Kapferer (2012), a product can be considered as a luxury product if it covers seven criteria. However, even though compliance with these criteria is mandatory, they do not weight the same, which is why there is more than one definition of luxury brands. The criteria are:

- Most importantly, the product should evoke emotion, pleasure, and provide a hedonistic experience;
- Qualitative, made to last;
- Bought at high price-functionality ratio;
- Linked to a culture, a heritage, a know-how;
- Distributed in a few chosen places;
- Personalized customer services;
- A social indicator, giving the owner a feeling of privilege;

Luxury brands created a new social stratification based on merits rather than blood. This is the reason why the democratization of the world is positive for luxury fashion brands, as more people have access to their products. Also, as luxury fashion brands are linked to a culture or a heritage, society has a big impact on their consumption.

2.1.2 Toward a new consumption of luxury?

The luxury market is transforming alongside society and consumers are changing their attitudes towards luxury products. New markets are appearing in developing countries and social media are showing different perceptions of luxury and its principles. According to the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) report (Bellaiche, et al., 2012), the trend is going toward
“experiential-luxury”, especially in relation to developed societies, such as the United States, Japan or Europe, but this is not to say that developing countries should be completely excluded from this trend. As previously mentioned, a luxury product is often perceived as a reward and has a hedonistic dimension.

Furthermore, according to the BCG report, the notion of luxury in western countries is changing. Consumers are not only looking for ostentatious products that will show their status or wealth anymore. Gilles Lipovetsky (Watin-Augouard, 2006), a French postmodern philosopher, argues that our hyper-consumption has changed the definition of luxury so that it is no longer possible to analyze it from a social stratification perspective, or see it as a way of demonstrating consumers’ success. Western societies have entered an age of individualization of luxury that implies a change in the logic of social division. This substantial change, however, does not mean that appearance-driven luxury, motivated by status-seeking and appearance, has completely disappeared. In fact it is still very much present with the “nouveau riche” and the BRICs countries: Brazil, Russia, India and China. However, for the past few years, a democratization of luxury has been observed in western societies. Consumers have withdrawn from the quantitative logic and exchanged it for a qualitative one, more emotional than ostentatious, which is after all one of the characteristics of a luxury product: evoking emotion in its user. Consumers have entered, what Gilles Lipovetsky calls, “a new modernity”: the importance is placed on indulging in yourself, not on being compared to someone else. This change might very well be due to Generation Y. According to Luxe Avenue, this generation is characterized by peer pressure, researching information before purchasing anything, and lack of commitment. Millennials are aware of branding and marketing, having grown up with it, so they tend to connect with experience rather than the product itself (Guerrier & Maria, 2012). They also crave for the validation of their friends and want to share the luxury experience with them, rather than to simply demonstrate superiority: “It’s not ‘Keeping up with the Joneses.’ It’s now ‘Hanging with the Joneses’ family…” (Faw, 2012).

Undeniably, the notion of exclusivity has evolved to be something more personal: wearing a luxury product is a personal experience; it is supposed to make customers feel good. It is now more about the individual and the exclusive experience. According to the BCG report (Bellaiche, et al., 2012), consumers are refocusing on value, family and wellbeing: people prefer to indulge themselves and to enjoy luxury products, to experience, and to share them with their family and friends. According to Atwal and Williams, there is a “luxurification of the society” (2009, p. 339): middle-market consumers trade up for products that will meet their aspirational needs. “Contemporary consumers use consumption to make a statement about themselves, to create an identity and develop a sense of belonging” (Atwal & Williams, 2009, p. 339), luxury has become a personal experience, a way for individuals to express themselves.

According to Okonkwo (2012), as consumers are becoming more individualistic, they do not hesitate to mix products from luxury fashion brands with high street brands like Zara or Mango. This tendency is intensified by capsule-collection from mass market brands, like H&M, and their collaboration with named houses like Maison Martin Margiela that gives the
impression of owning something that not so many people have and a touch of luxury. According to Mitra (2013), generation Y luxury buyers mix fast fashion brands with luxury fashion brands because they can be fashionable and original by mixing brands, and that is more important than the product’s price: “…consumers today do not seek luxury by price but by values of style and design.” (Mitra, 2013, p. 34). Also, a luxury product is a product that is qualitative and supposed to last, meaning it is not a product that is supposed to be trendy for only one season.

Also, social media are changing the nature of communication, and luxury consumers now have wider access to new luxury fashion brands or premium fashion brands, as well as more information. According to OE Design (n.d.), 62% of Generation Y has visited a brand page on a social network, and their online spending on full price luxury products is growing (American Express, 2012). Young consumers are definitely growing on the luxury market, and in contrast to older generations, they do not hesitate to spend money immediately (Faw, 2012). Also, according to Guerrier and Maria (2012), young consumers are aware of and feel concerned with global issues, but do not act on it. On the subject of luxury fashion and sustainability, Greenpeace has just launched a campaign in November 2012 called “The Fashion Duel: let’s clean up fashion” to alert the general public regarding the impact of luxury fashion brands on the environment. This campaign also gives positive and negative points to luxury houses measuring their sustainability impact. According to Barbara Coignet, founder of 1.618 sustainable luxury cited in Le Monde magazine (Pêcheur, 2013), however, luxury fashion brands censor themselves because their communication is based on dream and desire, and notes that sustainability is not glamorous, but a very realistic issue. So, they prefer not to make the information available to the public, as it could show that they are not perfect in this matter. However in most cases, information about their progress or measures taken regarding sustainable development can be found on their corporate website. For example, in 1992 Louis Vuitton set up a specific team specialized in the “environment” but they do not advertise it. Guerrier and Maria (2012) suggest that luxury fashion brand could communicate better on social issues to attract young consumers that feel concerned about them.

2.2 Social media
The term ‘social media’ refers to the platform of interactions among Internet users who create, share, and exchange content information via user communities and Web 2.0 technologies (networks) (Ahlqvist, et al., 2008). Social media can be viewed in many different forms which include Internet forums, weblogs, social blogs, micro blogs, wikis, podcasts, pictures and video sharing, ratings and social bookmarking (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), as well as social networking platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest or Fancy that offer a combination of all the media function features mentioned above with an emphasis on the relationships among the users in the community (Agichtein, et al., 2008).

2.2.1 Growth trend of social media
Since early 2000, user-contributed content has become progressively popular on the web: more and more users participate in content creation, rather than just consumption (Agichtein, et al., 2008). “Today, there are more than 180 million Web sites and more than 1.7 billion Internet users around the world, more than half of them [are] in the 15 years to 34 years age
bracket” (Okonkwo, 2009), which indicates the popularity of Internet and the trend of using social media among Gen Y consumers.

The differentiation between social media and traditional media can be perceived in several aspects, namely: content quality, update frequency, accessibility, usability, recentness, and permanence. As explained by Okonkwo (2009), social media rely on the ‘pull marketing’ strategy where customers are drawn to information and purchases rather than the traditional ‘push medium’, where customers are driven by advertising.

In recent years, the growth of social media has caught fashion retailers’ attention. According to the research conducted by L2ThinkTank, the key indicators of effectiveness in promoting brand value lie in brand presence, community size, content, and engagement (Galloway, 2012). Internet and social media, as platforms of communication and retailing, are in direct contradiction with the niche consumer base that luxury fashion brands have always targeted. The factors for this change are rooted in a low switching cost between websites within clicks, more product variety and easy accessibility, as well as universal appeal and uniformed information (Okonkwo, 2009).

2.2.2 Luxury fashion brands in the context of social media

Nowadays, luxury fashion consumers want attention from the brands; they want the brands to take their interests and demands into account. Instead of traditional way of single-sided promotion selling strategy, luxury fashion consumers demand a more interactive marketing approach. According to Okonkwo (2009), using social media is a great way for luxury brands to gain more information about their needs from the consumers themselves, due to their interactive nature, since “successful customer communication is customer initiated rather than company initiated” (Rubinstein & Griffiths, 2001, p. 403).

Along with the popularity and the rapid development of social media, the power balance change between luxury fashion brands and consumers can be clearly observed. “… The client controls her own online universe and can literally navigate the luxury cyberspace while shutting luxury brands’ direct influence out” (Okonkwo, 2010, p. 29). As Tsai (2005) argues, “increasingly, consumers are involved in the processes of both defining and creating value, and the co-created experience of consumers through the holistic brand value structure becomes the very basis of marketing” for luxury fashion brands.

Through social media, luxury fashion brands are slowly moving from a traditional advertising strategy to social media marketing (SMM), which is more of “a slow build, generating curiosity, delivering solutions and seeking customer feedback to inform an ongoing programme of product and communication enhancement” (Rubinstein & Griffiths, 2001, p. 403).

In 2005 or thereabouts, Internet began to enter what is called the web 2.0 that is Internet with interactivity that allowed communities to surface. After all, luxury brands have their roots in society itself, so a social Internet can be included in their strategy. Social media can be a great help for the creation and the diffusion of the dream, a feature so important for luxury fashion
brands. The Internet has made it possible for luxury fashion brands to talk to a lot of potential customers but also to their fans.

Luxury brands in general cannot use the same marketing as non-luxury brands or premium brands due to their specificities. Regarding communication, luxury fashion brands cannot adapt their products to their clients’ demand. Indeed, according to Bastien & Kapferer (2012), these brands have to give a priority to their long-term strategy and their reputation; they should strictly follow their brand identity that makes them different from each other and from non-luxury brands. So unless these demands are suited for the particular brand’s vision, they should not be taken into account, as to guarantee the brand’s authenticity. A luxury product should have some flaws, they are after all what makes it appealing. Non-luxury brands have to place the clientele in the middle of their strategy, while luxury brand hold the designer and his long-term vision at the center.

Another rule that is specific for luxury is that luxury fashion brands have to keep their distance with the customers. Luxury’s customers use luxury products to feel elevated; it is as much a reward as it is a sign of stature. To keep illusion intact, luxury fashion brands should not interact with its customers as if on the same level but they should tower over their customer, though respectfully, to keep their aura. Luxury fashion brands should advice and educate their customers, and to do so, they have to keep a courteous distance with them.

Also, is it important to note that advertising is not made to sell but to keep the luxury brands’ dream alive. The more a luxury fashion brand is bought, the more visible it gets. This leads to a banalisation of the product, and to counteract this, luxury fashion brands have to communicate their code and myth. Advertising does not target only the customer, but also the potential customer and the non-customers: if people do not know the luxury brands and the worth of the product, a part of the luxury product’s value is lost.

Rubinstein and Griffiths (2001, p. 400) define successful online branding in four basic aspects:

- Delivering a consistent brand experience
- Integrating all the expressions of the brand
- Establishing brand awareness
- Measuring every new initiative against the brand

Luxury fashion brands’ presence on major social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and Pinterest has clearly fulfilled these demands. Social media give brands an opportunity to get a more personal relationship with consumers through immediate response to posted questions, instant updates about new products and campaigns, as well as comments and discussion in a public forum. According to the 2012 L2ThinkTank research, Louis Vuitton ranked seventh on the Digital IQ Index based on the criteria of interactivity of its site, e-commerce, traffic on the web and the way it uses its social media (Galloway, 2012).
In order to profit from the Internet and connected consumers, “luxury fashion brands need to balance exclusivity with accessibility” (Kemp, 2009). By marketing their presence through social media, luxury fashion brands can offer consumers a sense of mutual dependence through the process of establishing brand equity. Additionally, Kemp (2009) argues the best way of understanding consumers’ needs is to have a direct line of conversation with them through the platforms created by social media. Social media also function as referral sites that divert traffic onto luxury brands’ official website and increase the chances for consumers to look into luxury brands (Corcoran, 2009).

2.2.3 Luxury online paradox

On one hand, luxury goods are bought for what they symbolize socially and individually, meaning that customer service and great shopping experience is part of what luxury fashion brands offer. On the other hand, the Internet provides a twenty-four hours access for anyone with a connection, which has ultimately changed our relationship with time; users can have access to anything at any time. The Internet and social media are designed for the masses; they are about ubiquity and having access to everything at the same time. Social media has been built as a democratic medium that adds “people” into the mix: for instance, bloggers freely express their opinions about brands via various forms of social media. Besides, the Internet is a place where information, images, videos, and other forms of media circulate freely and almost instantly. An interesting example of how social media users generate their information is illustrated by Okonkwo (2009) (2010): every morning, Suzy goes through her mail and in a few minutes reads a lot of information about fashion, she views a lot of websites, forums, chat rooms or blogs and then shares her findings with her followers online, but she avoids finding information on luxury brands official websites and instead relies on other sources she trusts.

According to Bastien & Kapferer (2012), all these differences are becoming manageable due to technological progress. Internet is a tool used to connect physical individuals.; it is also anonymous: fake identity and avatars are a result of this anonymity. This function is one of the major issues for luxury fashion brands, because they rely on one-to-one communication for their customer. This type of personal communication is difficult to achieve on the Internet in general because of the “one-fit all” strategy of the Internet. When luxury fashion brands’ interlocutor is known, Internet can be used to “push” this person in the brick and mortar shop and offer personalized customer service. Yet, the Internet cannot be used by luxury fashion
brands to offer sensual experience that includes not only sight and hearing – which is already largely used nowadays and with good results - but also touch, smell and even taste.

However, luxury fashion brands have to be on the Internet to communicate because, otherwise, others will do it for them. Besides, online interaction can strengthen the brand notoriety.
3 Methods
Methods applied in this study highlight the technique of inductive coding approach. Respondents’ answers were analyzed and categorized by key words and lexical field.

3.1 Reflection on the online world
A brief discussion of the notions of the online world will be presented in this section in order to better explain the purpose of choosing the applied research method.

3.1.1 Definition of an online friend
Online friends are mostly people that one meets online and rarely have contact outside the online world. Facebook, as the most popular social network with billions of users, is often cited as an example for this type of friendship. Also, as most of the questionnaire’s respondents were Facebook users, the authors thought it should be important to attempt to define the notion. There is not yet an official definition of “a Facebook friend” or of an “online friend” in dictionaries: even though the verb “unfriend” was added in the Oxford dictionary in 2009. Simply put, a Facebook friend is a Facebook user that has been added by another Facebook user. A Facebook friend may be a person that the profile owner has never met or interacted with, apart from accepting the friend request. Some Facebook friends can be people that one sees everyday or someone one knew a long time ago, for example in preschool, or met at a camp ten years ago, or just someone one met on the bus or at a party. In real life these friends can be close friends, work colleagues, casual acquaintance, and sometimes strangers.

3.1.2 Why use the Internet to study the Internet?
We choose to use an online survey distributed via social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn for the purpose of acquiring knowledge of social media users’ view of a luxury fashion brand’s Facebook presence, in this case we choose Louis Vuitton as an example. Indeed, Louis Vuitton is the world’s leading luxury fashion brand, part of the LVMH group. Moreover, we thought individuals act differently online and offline, some may just be more truthful due to the lack of social restriction, whereas others may have a complete different identity.

The Oxford online dictionary\(^2\) definition of avatar or online identity is: “an icon or figure representing a particular person in a computer game, Internet forum, etc.”. Contrary to face-to-face or real life interactions, online interaction offers “…the relative anonymity aspect [that] encourages self-expression…” (Bargh & McKenna, 2004, p. 586), meaning that individuals express themselves more truthfully when they are not influenced by a physical group. Besides, according to Amichai-Hamburger, et al. (2008), on a personal level, the Internet is an empowering tool, because it offers opportunities to reframe individual identity and to enhance individual skills so that individuals may feel more confident in giving their real personal opinions, rather than their expected opinions in a group environment.

3.2 Research method
Several research methods exist to study online communities but the one chosen for this study is to use an online self-completion questionnaire to understand young consumers’ attitudes towards luxury fashion brands’ social media presence. Data collected by the means of questionnaires is quantitative or quantifiable, and social survey research is a type of cross-sectional design.

3.2.1 Choice of study design: online survey
The study design is a self-completion questionnaire created using Google Docs, an online office suite offered by Google. This free online survey application enables users to design their own forms and generate an URL link for the survey. This link allows users to send out surveys to an infinite number of people online. Online survey, also called web survey, is different from email questionnaire because the respondent is directed to a web site to respond to the questionnaire. According to Bryman (2012) online survey has the advantage of design compared to email survey and the researcher can add a filtered question - participants will be directed to the appropriate question according to the answer. Also, “the electronic-only survey is advisable when resources are limited and the target population suits an electronic survey” (Yun & Trumbo, 2000).

Focus groups were not chosen as a research design because, according to Bryman (2012), they are used to study the way individuals discuss topics within a group rather than their own individual reasoning. However, individuals function and act as avatars on the Internet.

Moreover, a wide range of people from different cultural backgrounds is required in order to constitute a focus group that would be efficient for our research, so we were presented with difficulties in doing so in our current geographic location. In order to successfully investigate the opinions of young social media users on Louis Vuitton’s Facebook page, the study has to include participants from around the world, living in different countries and continents, and therefore, online survey was the most obvious and suitable choice. Another advantage of online survey is that the respondents’ answers are directly computed in a database, eliminating the time-consuming process of re-transcription and errors in re-transcription that could occur in processing focus group data.

3.2.2 Sampling
Our aim is to gather opinions from Gen Y social media users about luxury and luxury brands in the context of social media. To do so, it is most effectively to make our survey available to social media users and particular among Facebook users. In consequence, we took advantage of our personal social networks: Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn; invited our social media contacts to participate and to share the survey to their social media friends. By using our social media contacts, we raised the probability to have user fitting our target population, which is users between 20 to 30 years old. Often, social media are most actively used by young adults; further, our online acquaintances are predominantly between 20 to 30 years old as well as the acquaintance of most of our online friends. The sample design, that is the

3 Cf. Notion above on Online friends (3.1.1)
method used to choose a subset of the population, chosen is random sampling. Random sampling is used to lower selection bias (IARC, 1999). This random sample should characterize a representative part of social network population as it was distributed to friends in our network; when further shared by these friends, the survey would appear to their extended social network circle. The researchers were looking for 20 to 30 years old respondents that had a high usage level of social networking and had an opinion on the brands’ presence on social networks. Also, it is important to note that the survey was distributed to an equal amount of people from both genders.

With random sample, all the respondents might not fit the target population. In the case of this study, one answer was not taken into account, as the respondent was too old, that is 51 years old.

3.2.3 Constructing the questionnaire

After our choice of research design, it was decided that in order to address the possibility of the respondents feeling tired or not fully participating survey, the survey should be kept short. We choose questions, the answers of which, we though, would be important or useful to know. Also, time was taken to make the question understandable to respondents. The survey began with an introduction message to inform participants of the aim and goal of the study, so to encourage them to answer. Also, we choose to use open questions instead of closed ones in order to place more importance on the respondents’ answers and to have a larger variety of answers.

The online survey was separated into three parts: information about the respondent, general questions and perception about media and luxury fashion brands, and perceptions after viewing Louis Vuitton’s Facebook page. The first part contained questions about birth country and residence country, which were asked in order to find out whether there was a difference in perception among consumers due to their geographic location and cultural background. The question about country of birth was asked, but not marked as mandatory to answer by participants, for the purpose of being anonymous and non-intrusive. The last question of this part was about their access to social media, if they accessed it several times daily, daily, weekly or less. If someone did not use social media, he/she would have been directed to the end of the study, however we did not encounter this case here.

The second part of the questionnaire aimed to gather participants’ opinion on media, personal definition of luxury fashion brands and their opinion of luxury brands on social media. We asked our respondents to define fashion luxury in order to identify whether they could see relevance between social media and luxury brands, based on their view of the fashion industry. We also wanted to know if participants followed brands on Facebook in order to gain a better understanding of their use of the social media. We decided to ask them about the preferred way of contacting brands to find out if users were considering contacting luxury fashion brands like they would for non-luxury brands. Comparisons between preferences of traditional media and current social media were made to distinguish the pros and cons of social media. A question about their confidence in luxury fashion brands on social media was asked to give us an indication of their opinion on brands and social media.
The last part of the survey was about participants’ viewing of Louis Vuitton’s homepage on Facebook in order to observe the usefulness of social media for consumers in the context of promoting luxury fashion brands. Respondents were asked to view Louis Vuitton’s official Facebook page in order to have the opportunity of viewing a luxury fashion brand’s Facebook page, which gave us a chance to observe whether their perceptions have changed or not. Participants were given the link https://www.facebook.com/LouisVuitton in order to access the page; also at the time of the survey anyone could access the brand’s page, even if this person is not a fan of the page. Louis Vuitton was chosen as an example because of its leading role in fashion trends worldwide, indeed it is a brand that we thought was known in most countries. Questions regarding the buying motivation and confidence in brands were set out in order to assess the value of presented brand image and the variation of consumers’ opinion. Further questions regarding future suggestion and expectations were designed to identify possible additional needs of the consumer base.

In the context of the survey, the majority of the survey questions were presented as open answer questions in order to generate a broader view of the participants and permit different opinion to be taken into consideration. Also, as mentioned before, it is a way to gain insight of the data collected and give it more credibility in case of low response rate. The link of the survey, generated by Google docs, was copied and pasted with another introduction message onto the authors’ social networking pages – and further shared by some of the respondents.

### 3.2.4 Data analysis

The online survey allowed us to collect a valid sample population of 31 participants. One respondent was put aside as he was not included in the right sample. The survey was then closed after one week to give the authors time to analyze the collected data. As the respondents’ answers were directly computed in an online database, we transferred the database on to a Microsoft Excel document. The response were collected in French and in English, answers in French were then translated by one of the authors. The data was then divided into the different parts mentioned above and some questions were linked during the analysis. To analyze the received data, the authors used a coding method: an analysis of lexical field that requires reviewing the participants’ answers and labeling component parts that seemed to be important, numbers are sometimes used to help us with further analysis. The same method was used for every open question. Other questions were ordered quantifiably, like the share of male and female respondents, country of origin or “Yes/No” questions.

### 3.2.5 Validity

For the conducted research following validities are present: in terms of measurement validity, the research presents substantial portion of content validity as it covers a notable area of the theoretical definition of luxury and social media, as seen in the literature review. Those concepts were used as a base for the chosen variables in the study and the established research questions. Concurrent validity is given by the establishment of a criterion of preferred way of contacting brands that is relevant to the concept of perceptions young consumers have towards luxury fashion brands on social media. Face validity is established through the process of conducting this online survey.
In terms of experimental validity, external validity is given to a certain degree as the case of studying Louis Vuitton on Facebook does allow drawing conclusions regarding other luxury brands on social media that target the same consumer base. As Louis Vuitton reaches out to customers all over the world, both men and women, with different demographic indicators and cultural backgrounds, results can be generalized to a wider spread of population. Internal validity is weakly established due to the small sample size of 31 valid respondents as well as the limited amount of time given for the collection of all necessary data.

3.3 Methods limitations

Limitations of online survey include the loss of face-to-face rapport between interviewers and interviewees. Risk of survey fraud is usually part of online surveys; however the authors did not offer anything for the completion of the survey, so the risk was avoided.

The number of participants is a weakness: it is relatively smaller compared to what was expected from us. This small number of respondents prevents the researcher from making a generalization of the results, as it is too small to make a concrete conclusion. However, according to Phellas, et al. (2011, p. 187), data still has some value due to the use of open questions that gives researchers sufficient insight.

Another limitation of online questionnaire is that the researcher cannot be certain that the instructions were followed. Indeed, we cannot be certain that respondents clicked on the Louis Vuitton’s Facebook page link and viewed it, but this is a common flaw of online surveys in general. To make it anonymous, email addresses were not required so that no follow-up could be made. Additionally, since the surveys were sent out as a link through the channels of our Facebook pages, Facebook groups, Twitter and LinkedIn in a relatively small group, results from the participants can be somewhat biased but nonetheless can contribute to seeing a general trend.

To increase the reliability of the survey, a pre-test has been carried out among two individuals – their results were not taken into account, in order to test the terms used in this survey; however, re-tests and follow-ups could not be performed. Further exploration of participants’ responses is recommended for further research. Also, concerning the reliability of the survey, the results of this research might contain an unknown amount of errors, due to a lack of onsite observations, and measurement errors. As already mentioned, an online-based survey is chosen because it allows reaching a high number of people in a broader geographical area, the selection frame will most likely cover the population well geographically speaking, but the chance for misinterpretation with online-based surveys is quite high. It is also important to note that the respondents are anonymous and to underline the fact that it is voluntarily for them to participate.

Due to the time limitation, the survey was carried out online for only one week, thus, a relatively small portion of participants had time to fill out the survey properly and to provide a larger number of valid answers. For further research, a larger frame time for conducting online surveys is recommended in order to generate a larger number of respondents.
4 Findings

In this section, results from the conducted survey will be examined, based on previously mentioned theoretical background. Methods including word analysis and coding were applied during the process. Out of the 32 answers collected, only 31 of them were analyzed here, as one of the respondents did not fit the survey sample’s criteria.

4.1 Demographics and the use of social media

Demographics, such as age, sex, country of origin, or country of residence, are used specifically to identify our respondents. This section focuses on primary factors such as age, gender, cultural type, and cultural influence in the broad concept of demographics among potential consumers. Among the 31 respondents, 22 were female and 9 were male. We chose not analyze whether the answers were given by males or females. The final sample included 31 respondents, all part of the Generation Y age group, with 21 respondents being between 20 and 25 years old and 10 respondents between 26 and 30 years old. Only one male respondent was 51 years old and therefore was excluded from the sample because he did not fit the right age group.

The most valuable findings in terms of demographics are shown in the results of participants’ country of origin and country of residence, giving information about the respondents’ backgrounds. In the sample, 28 respondents out of 31 choose to inform us of their country of origin, representing a wide range of 14 countries, 3 participants having chosen not to answer this particular question. 13 respondents are born in 8 non-western countries: Taiwan (2 male and 2 female), China (2 female), Pakistan (2 male), Brazil (1 female), Romania (1 female), Mexico (1 female), Russia (1 female) and Thailand (1 male). The remaining 15 respondents were born in 6 different European countries: France (2 male and 3 female), Sweden (1 male and 2 female), Finland (2 female), Greece (1 male and 1 female), Germany (1 female), Netherland (1 female).

In this survey, geographic locations represent the general view of participants originating from all continents except Africa. The majority of our respondents lived in Sweden (21 respondents: 5 male and 16 female) or France (5 respondents: 2 male and 3 female) at the time of the study. The other respondents lived in Taiwan (1 male and 1 female), 1 female respondent in The United States, 1 female respondent in Australia and 1 male respondent in China.

Furthermore, our results showed that the big majority of our participants check their social media accounts more than once daily: 25 respondents access their social accounts more than once daily, 3 respondents check their accounts daily and 3 respondents access it less than daily. Those 3 respondents were 3 males from France, Taiwan and China.

4.2 General perception about media and luxury fashion brands

This section is designed to analyze and to categorize respondents’ users habits on social media in regards with luxury fashion brands, as well as their attitudes towards luxury fashion brands communication.
4.2.1 The meaning of luxury fashion to our respondents

Our first question was about the perception of luxury fashion brands. We thought that their definition of fashion luxury and view of the industry could be useful later in order to understand their opinion on other questions. The analysis of all the answers of the respondents revealed that “high quality” is the main factor mentioned by 16 participants, followed by uniqueness and exclusivity noted by 10 respondents. Most of the respondents also cited “high price” (8 respondents), then “design” (8 respondents), and “status” (6 respondents).

“For me it’s about precious design, exceptional quality and also a means to show status and a certain level of income.” (Respondent 3 - Russia)

A minority of the respondents from western countries mentioned the status factor of luxury products: two females, one from Greece and the other from Sweden. Respondent 2 (Greece) mentioned that brands target a “special category of people” and Respondent 15 (Sweden) evoked status as an example of what luxury fashion brands mean to her. The term “brand” or “branded” appears in the answers of three respondents. Three respondents also mention the “desire” factor of luxury brands. One or two respondents also mentioned high customer service, haute couture, self-satisfaction, originality, time and self-expression. Four respondents saw luxury fashion brands as an art form:

“Something [like] art just made to be look[-ed at] because it’s beautiful and well design[-ed], or to be photographed but especially not to be wear in daily life.” (Respondent 24 – France)

4.2.2 Preferred way of contacting brands

The majority of respondents do not follow any luxury fashion brand or brands on Facebook: 20 respondents do not follow any luxury fashion brands on Facebook and 11 respondent follow luxury fashion brands; the ones who follow brands’ Facebook pages are paying specific attention to 5 to 10 brands on average. The ways of contacting a brand whether the respondent followed or not luxury fashion brands on Facebook were studied together. The questionnaire offered a multiple-choice answers: in store, contact from official website, customer service online, Facebook page, other social media and other. The data analysis shows that whether respondents follow or do not follow brands on Facebook, their preferred method for contacting luxury brands is direct contact at brand stores. Indeed, 14 respondents, who that did not follow brands online, chose to contact these brands directly in store and 9 respondents out of 11 followers of luxury bands choose the same option. For those following brands on social media, the second most popular trend, with 7 persons answering “Facebook” and 6 also choosing “other social media”, is to contact them via Facebook, Twitter and even Pinterest for one person. Contact forms on official websites and customer service hotlines are the second preferred way of contacting a luxury fashion brand for non-followers, customer service online not being mentioned at all by followers of luxury fashion brands.

4.2.3 Opinions on traditional media in relationship with luxury fashion brands

Different opinions about luxury fashion brands communication via traditional media channels were then studied in order to seek the social media users’ opinion of luxury fashion brands
communication on traditional and new media. In the process of compiling the answers regarding the features of traditional media, such as magazines, in relationship with luxury brands participants like most, the fascination with the beautiful and creative visual material in magazines became evident:

“They are the oldest form of mass media, so I feel more related to advertisements brought to me on this way. Also, a nice ad printed in a magazine can almost have artistic value.” (Respondent 22 – Germany)

Indeed, 16 respondents like “nice and creative visual” that traditional media offer. Respondents seemed to think that traditional media has an advantage in terms of its capability to convey a vivid influential message to consumers. Through the process of providing attractive visuals TV and magazines invoke a sense of desire in consumers, something that 4 respondents seemed highly aware of. Further, two respondents said they liked traditional media because they still gave the feeling of luxury through all five senses or 2 others thought traditional media were more “artistic”. A female participant explained her preference for getting information through traditional media channels as follows:

“What I like about traditional media is that they can still pass the sense of luxury through their visual image.” (Respondent 2 – Greece)

Traditional media, such as magazines, are also trusted by 3 respondents because they are one of the oldest and the best established media. Also, 2 respondents felt that the consumer is given a luxurious feeling just by flicking through the pages of a high-quality fashion magazine. A male participant states that:

“Magazines have their charm and there is nothing that can replace a real, paper fashion magazine.” (Respondent 12 – Thailand)

The most discouraging reason for the use of traditional media such as TV and/or magazines in relationship with luxury brands, however, is the excessive amount of commercials and ads mentioned by 5 respondents. A female participant put it as:

“I don’t like that in magazines sometimes it’s too much of ads concerning luxury. It’s just endless number of pages of ads. And my attention becomes distracted. I can’t remember which ad was belonged to which brand.” (Respondent 3 – Russia)

Lack of interaction, mentioned by 5 persons, and buying costs, also by 5 respondents, are the second most significant factor that contributes to the failure of traditional media to meet modern buyers’ expectations. Consumers find it impossible to build a bond or establish a relationship with luxury fashion brands when there is a lack of communication:

“…I don’t think we can properly talk about relationship because there’s no dialogue, just a picture of what we’re supposed to dream about and an insane price tagged on this thing...” (Respondent 23 – France)
Another issue for three of the respondents is untrustworthy information and three persons also mentioned “useless information”. A French respondent mentions that magazines are full of lies, and other respondents observe that information in magazines is often not what they are looking for or is simply useless:

“Sometimes we can't receive the information [of] what we exactly want to know about.” (Respondent 21 – Taiwan)

4.2.4 Opinions about Facebook and luxury fashion brands
Regarding the opinion participants in the survey expressed about luxury fashion brands on Facebook, 8 respondents thought that Facebook is the wrong channel for luxury fashion brands because it is too ‘mainstream’:

“They don't match. Facebook does not feel luxurious.” (Respondent 15 – Sweden)

However, some of the participants thought that even though it is the wrong channel, luxury fashion brands Facebook pages needed to be on the network:

“I believe the two things doesn’t really match. Facebook is cheap and luxury brands should definitely be on Facebook but be careful with too much advertising” (Respondent 11 - Sweden)

After coding the responses, we discovered that 11 respondents used in the responses terms like “up to date” and “real-time” information about a brand that a Facebook page could provide. Participants seemed to like the fact that Facebook could be generating knowledge about luxury brands since Facebook is essentially an information channel. Besides, 7 respondents thought that Facebook could offer an interaction between consumers and luxury fashion brands; since most of our respondents are young and constantly connected to their social media accounts, chances of knowing everything about a certain brand and react immediately on their Facebook page are much higher:

“Keeps you connected with the brands. Luxury brands define the creativity and fashion. So if you are connected with them day and night through Facebook - you know the world of fashion, arts and creativity. You get the recent and latest updates that are just a click away, updating real time.” (Respondent 7 - Pakistan)

Some participants mentioned that luxury fashion brands’ online presence gives the impression that the brand is closer to consumers and fans. Facebook is used by a large number of people, so it provides users with easy access to luxury brands’ official webpage and information about the brands. Three respondents also mentioned that Facebook could give them the opportunity to know the brand contract, and so by definition know more about brands.

4.2.5 Confidence in luxury fashion brands on Facebook
Regarding the level of confidence in luxury fashion brands available on Facebook, just over half of the respondents, that is 17 respondents, did not feel more confident in luxury brands
available on Facebook, while remaining 14 respondents, felt more confident. It was made clear by 6 of the former, however, that their confidence was due to the fact that they expected every brand (luxury or non-luxury) to be on Facebook. Five respondents, out of the 14 who had more confidence in brands available on Facebook, also considered that Facebook presence demonstrated the brands’ care for their customers, while three respondents thought that it demonstrated the brands’ willingness to listen and interact with their customers to some extent. For two respondents, online presence was seen as a sing of innovativeness because social media and the Internet as a whole constitute a constantly shifting environment:

“…if the activities and campaigns are in tune with customer/consumer preference then it’s a big hit. Social media is too fast to manage and chase and if a company can keep up with it, this means they are fast enough in their creations and bringing in new fashion.” (Respondent 7 - Pakistan)

Those 17 respondents who did not feel more confident predominantly perceive Facebook as the wrong communication channel for luxury brands (7 respondents) or simply do not see why fashion luxury brands should be on Facebook (2 respondents). Out of the 17 respondents that did not feel more confident in luxury fashion brands with a manifestation on social media, 5 respondents did not state this reasoning. One respondent felt that luxury brands should be discreet with their communication, one felt that luxury fashion brands did not know how to use social media.

4.2.6 Expectations from a luxury fashion brands on social media

At the end of this section, a question about general expectations from a luxury brand on Facebook was asked in order to discover what is demanded by young consumers. Six respondents choose to answer that they “didn’t know”. Nevertheless, the ability of luxury fashion brands to provide up-to-date product information giving a way to a closer consumer relationship is on the top of the list with 13 respondents mentioning it.

“Constant information flow and updates, "insider" information, direct communication in case questions arise but also the interaction with other consumers of said fashion luxury brand. It creates a community.” (Respondent 30 – Sweden)

Information about new product collections, product material, and design origin are instances of different types of information that could be successfully conveyed through Facebook due to its ‘instant’ and ‘available’ characteristics. Additionally, some participants showed their appreciation when it comes to direct communication and relationship with consumers. A sense of belonging to a community was also mentioned by 5 participants:

“…it definitely helps you (to) be part of a group in a way that if you see that one of your Facebook friends likes a brand that you like, you automatically feel that you’ve something in common with that person…” (Respondent 31 – Romania)
Also, 7 participants thought that Facebook could be used by luxury brands to advertise commercial offers and promotions. Style suggestions were mentioned by 4 respondents, entertainment by 2, and informing on brand contract (meaning the brand history, style, etc.) were also mentioned once in the responses.

4.3 Perception after viewing Louis Vuitton Facebook page
In order to observe young consumers’ view on the role Facebook plays in the changing concept of luxury fashion brands, the participants were asked to look at Louis Vuitton’s Facebook page (link: https://www.facebook.com/LouisVuitton), and then continue to answer the survey.

4.3.1 Confidence and doubt in Louis Vuitton thanks to its Facebook page
The participants were divided into two major groups regarding the question whether their perception of the brand changed after viewing the Facebook page: 13 respondents developed a positive feeling for the brand and 12 had doubts about it. The rest of the respondents were either torn (3 of the respondents), or chose to not answer the question because they did not want to be dishonest as they disliked the brands (2 respondents). One person was not cooperative. Most of the participants who expressed a positive attitude, felt that Louis Vuitton could convey its message and information through its Facebook page successfully. Seven respondents liked the information posted on the page, 5 respondents felt that they succeeded in the ability of building better relationship with the consumer. Two of the participants put it as follows:

“I can see that they update their information on a daily bases so that means they give effort to reach customer. In that way yes, they made me improve my opinion about their brand.” (Respondent 9 – Greece)

“Thanks to Facebook, the brand is getting closer to its customer but also to consumers that would like to follow their news without buying the product. This media presence makes the brand more accessible and universal, thanks to interaction between fans and the several news shared.” (Respondent 18 – France – translated from French)

Some participants expressed that they felt closer to the brand due to its accessibility via Facebook and 3 respondents felt that they had a better perception of the brand.

Twelve respondents expressed their dislike of a Louis Vuitton Facebook page. The major complaints and doubts about Louis Vuitton’s Facebook presence were due to two factors: dislike of this particular brand and the expected presence of any brand on Facebook. Two answers showed that the respondent did not like the presence on Facebook because of their dislike of the brand Louis Vuitton, and two other persons choose not to answer this question because of their original dislike of the brand. This very small portion of participants held a negative and hostile attitude throughout the survey due to the fact that they are not fond of this particular brand. Three respondents expressed their doubt regarding Louis Vuitton’s Facebook page, even though they expected its presence online.
Three participants do not think luxury fashion brands had to be on Facebook and sometimes their presence was even considered disappointing:

“No, because I have established a strong confidence in Louis Vuitton before they started on Facebook. However, their presence on Facebook made me feel they have become more down-to-earth.” (Respondent 12 - Thailand)

Most respondents’ opinion of Louis Vuitton did not change after viewing the Facebook page. Two respondents declared that their confidence decreased after viewing Louis Vuitton’s Facebook page. Respondent 32 from China had a lessened confidence due to the opinion that luxury brands should be classic and traditional. By moving towards social media channels, luxury fashion brands are becoming too easily available and consequently have lost their appeal. However, three respondents stated that their confidence had increased. One respondent expressed the reasoning behind it:

“Yes, … It makes me feel that the value of the purchase is there and that I have more of a connection with the brand. So much more is extracted from being going on Facebook to follow a brand versus a marketing tactic in a magazine.” (Respondent 27 – USA)

4.3.2 Content’s expectation for the future use of social media by luxury fashion brands

In terms of page content, entertainment contents, such as new pictures (28 respondents), videos (9 respondents), and information (10 answers for information updates and 11 for relevant news) attracted most respondents. 19 respondents would be interested in receiving more information about luxury brands’ investments especially in social awareness, ethics, and arts in the future. Style suggestions and recommendations have been selected by 17 respondents as features they would like to see more on luxury fashion brands’ pages, which indicates that luxury fashion brands are still trend-setters.
To conclude, research showed that participants influenced by BRIC countries have a definition of luxury closer to the notion that luxury is a means of demonstrating one’s wealth and status instead of hedonism. Two Asiatic respondents even thought that the presence of luxury fashion brands on Facebook made the brands less luxurious, more down to earth. Young consumers in this survey are constantly looking for information about brands and, as the research showed, this was one of their main issues with traditional media. Overall answers showed that respondents were worried about the truthfulness of the information online and offline. Most of the young consumers of the sample think that Facebook is not the right channel for luxury fashion brands even though some would be less confident in brands if their presence on social media were non-existent.
5 Discussion

The aim of this study is to explore young consumers’ opinion of luxury fashion brands on social media. The survey conducted intends to demonstrate how a luxury fashion brand, Louis Vuitton’s, presence on Facebook is perceived by potential consumers aged around 20 to 30 years old. The age group sample reflects the popularity of social media among younger consumers, who are more socially connected and active on Facebook. Assumptions can be made that luxury fashion brands should consider social media as a good channel to communicate with young consumers.

Did we observe whether or not the use of social media helped to seize the attention of young consumers?

Luxury fashion brands represent different things, depending on cultural background. According to a study conducted by Bauer, et al. (2011), consumers from countries with a strongly established tradition in luxury, such as Italy or France, perceive luxury tradition and nation pride as the predominant factors. Our participants living in developed western countries such as France, USA, and Australia, where luxury fashion brands have a well-established image and commercial presence, have confirmed this theory: terms such as “…a feeling of extreme self-satisfaction, indulgence and pride”, “timeless expertise”, and “originality” have been used.

On the other hand, participants from China and Taiwan viewed luxury products as a way of showing their higher social status. For instance, a 30-year-old respondent from Taiwan, currently living in Sweden, stated that his interest in luxury brands decreased a little knowing that they had a Facebook page, because in his opinion the brand is more “down to earth”. Even though, due to the number of our survey’s participant, we cannot generalize, luxury appears to be centered on tradition, taste, and craftsmanship in western societies, while in countries with newly emerging wealthy consumers, luxury is being perceived as a way to
demonstrate social status. However, according to Bastien & Kapferer (2012), Asian consumers buy according to the popularity of the brand and do not have, yet, all the code to understand the brand. Their consumption of luxury is linked to status, so it is important for brands to be known outside the circle of customers, so that non-consumers can recognize it as a symbol of higher status. Such opinion, however, could be interpreted as an evolution in the consumption of luxury due to the knowledge of the code, if we had more participants.

Is there a difference in the perceptions young consumers have regarding luxury’s consumption?

We interpreted this phenomenon as the “new luxury opinion” versus the “old luxury opinion”. The old luxury opinion represents the traditional definition, as described earlier in the theoretical chapter, which has been utilised by both western and Asian consumers throughout this survey; however, terms such as “democratic” and “self-satisfaction” have been mentioned by western participants, indicating that young western consumers have a more relaxed attitude towards luxury. They do not hesitate to mix high street brands and premium brands with luxury brands. We also observed that in Louis Vuitton’s new campaign, that we chose as an example in our survey, the brand employed different strategies in China, Europe and America respectively (see Illustration 4 and Illustration 5): in China bags with the logo were more obvious in their campaign, whereas bags without the logo were presented in the western campaign.

Is social media the right channel to promote luxury brands?

Results showed that young consumers nowadays still hold a positive opinion of traditional media, which could be explained by the reputation the world’s leading fashion magazines such as Elle, Vogue, and Bazaar have established. We think that luxury brands use traditional media such as fashion magazine because they can communicate with the consumers’ five senses, something that cannot be done via a computer: fashion magazines are the best way to faithfully represent luxury brands’ dream, and by extension, their message. Fashion
magazines have a long history of being the most influential way for luxury fashion brands to communicate with consumers and this might be the reason why participants feel a sense of certainty when viewing the ads through traditional channels. On the contrary, too much advertisement can be a negative and we think it could confuse consumers when differentiating brands. Irrelevant advertisement made participants feel a sense of distance, as Kemp (2009, p. 7) mentions, “brands must talk not only to themselves but about what interest their consumers”.

The Survey indicates that young consumers feel a sense of irrelevance when traditional mass media can only offer a one-way communication and even thought, at times, that they could not trust the information provided. Luxury fashion brands must offer reciprocity to engage consumers along with verified and new information in order to gain their trust. Similar concerns occur when it comes to the use of the Internet. Some respondents felt the need to do research outside the information available in magazines to formulate their own ideas about a certain product. Users often find themselves perusing an endless string of websites in search of information. The research showed that respondents were concerned about the over-exposure to ads in traditional media, but none of our respondents mentioned the excessive amount of pop-up commercials and randomly suggested advertisement on the Internet, which if overabundant, might also have a negative effect on consumers’ purchase intention. Social media are slowly becoming a new place to be informed on the latest new.

Luxury fashion brands provide a whole experience in itself: from the moment a customer enters the shop, to the use of the products and experience of the whole world of the brand. The survey showed that the majority of respondents still preferred to contact the brand directly in store, whether they followed brand on social media or not. It is expected for a luxury customer to assume a high standard of customer service in store and an assistance that is more customized in person than online. Those who did not “like” any brands preferred more traditional ways of contacting brands, such as directly to the store, using customer service online and filling the contact form on the official website. Whereas those who “liked” brands on Facebook are more likely to use Facebook or other social media channels like Pinterest or Twitter to make an inquiry, however the majority expressed the opinion that they still prefer to go to the brand store. Our interpretation is that young consumers see luxury brands as superior to other brands, so they expect a higher level of service in store than in non-luxury stores. Indeed, non-luxury brands are very active on social media and customers do not hesitate to complain online, whereas our observation of luxury brands’ page showed that it was used mostly for inspiration and giving information to fans. Also, we reflected on the facts that social media are becoming less anonymous, it is even more accurate with Facebook or Google +, so that it will be easier for a luxury fashion brand to personalize its online customer service.

Our research showed our participants were slightly skeptical about the presence of luxury fashion brands on non-exclusive social media like Facebook. Luxury fashion brands’ presence on Facebook gives the impression that they are closer to their audience. We think that this impression is derived from the interaction between consumers and brands that social media provide. Our opinion is that contrary to traditional media, where consumers have a third party
opinion that they don’t know if they can trust and are only fed information by the brand, social media gave consumers a chance to be influenced by other consumers’ shared opinions, people that they might trust more because of their online influence. For instance, a lot of bloggers share their views and personal preferences that are followed by thousands or millions of people. These bloggers are opinion leaders that are often used by brands. Luxury fashion brands could take advantage of this phenomenon and make use of social media to exert more influence on the formation of young consumers’ opinion.

Luxury fashion brands face the dilemma of keeping their exclusiveness in globally accessible platforms of social media. Regarding Facebook, 7 participants in the survey have stated that it is not the best channel for luxury brands; however, 7 other respondents stated that they already expected the presence of luxury fashion brands in social networks. As all 64 of the world’s most renowned luxury fashion brands have established their presence in all types of social media platforms (Galloway, 2012), the presence of Louis Vuitton was expected so it did not cause any significant change in consumers’ perception. It would have been interesting to see the opinions of participants regarding the luxury fashion brands that do not have an online presence.

Due to the nature of the uniformed format of Facebook, as well as other forms of social media platforms, individual brands do not have the opportunity to change much in terms of its basic layout. What brands could do, is to improve their visual presence using eye-catching pictures, videos, and to offer exclusive behind-the-scene stories with luxurious style. Our results highlighted the need of young consumers to search for trustworthy information; further, in our opinion, young consumers are fully aware of brands’ marketing and communication methods. Young consumers might be more confident in brands if those brands offer them verified information about the brand history, craftsmanship, or any information that will attest to the quality of the brands. We think that young consumers expect the given information to be trustworthy because of the reputed transparency of the Internet, but it does not seem that this trust is extended to brand communication. As we observed, luxury fashion brands may need to have opinion leaders that young consumers can trust to stimulate a luxury feeling and a sense of worthiness of information to help their communication, or information that can be easily checked online.

The last question of the survey addressed the expectation of social media users in terms of the information given by luxury brands on social media. The majority of the participants expected more information about corporate social responsibility (CSR). In the future, one could hope that the Internet, because it is a media of transparency, will help to bring CSR and sustainability forward, utilizing content that could provide useful information and motivate the consumer to indulge in a better consumption of luxury.
6 Conclusion

The aim of our study was to explore the perceptions young consumers have towards luxury fashion brands on social media and the findings can be summarized as follows:

Does the use of social media help to seize the attention of young consumers?

Luxury fashion brands represent different things, depending on cultural background. Definitions of luxury appear to be centered on tradition, taste, and craftsmanship in western societies, while in countries with newly emerging wealthy consumers luxury is being perceived as a way to demonstrate social status. The research shows that young consumers coming from BRIC countries have a traditional definition of luxury, meaning that luxury is often associated with “snob code”, that is a more apparent way of showing status and wealth. For consumers in these regions, the presence of luxury fashion brands on Facebook decreases the luxurious feelings of the products and brands. As for young consumers from every regions, research showed that most respondents are constantly connected to their social media accounts, thus, social media seem to be their primary source of information about fashion, retail buys, and luxury products. Western respondents have a tendency to obtain updated information on luxury product quality and price through social media.

Do potential consumers see social media as the right channel for promoting luxury brands?

Young consumers are in an increasing demand for trustworthy information regarding luxury fashion brands, therefore, social media can be a useful tool for finding information due to its capability of instant interaction between users and brands.

Also, our research showed that young consumers are slightly skeptical about the presence of luxury fashion brands on non-exclusive social media like Facebook. Luxury fashion brands’ presence on Facebook gives the impression that they are closer to their audience. This impression is derived from the interaction between consumers and brands that social media provide. Contrary to traditional media where consumers have a third party opinion that they do not know if they can trust and are only fed information by the brand, social media gave consumers a chance to be influenced by other consumers’ shared opinions, people that they might trust more because of their online influence. For instance, a lot of bloggers share their views and personal preferences that are followed by thousands or millions of people. These bloggers are opinion leaders that are often used by brands. Luxury fashion brands could take advantage of this phenomenon and make use of social media to exert more influence on the formation young consumers’ opinion.

Moreover, social media offer luxury fashion brands the possibility to outline the brand’s basic contract as well as to make it known to a wider audience. Our result highlighted the need of young consumers to search for trustworthy information; further, an emphasis has to be put on the idea that young consumers are fully aware of brands’ marketing and communication methods. Young consumers might be more confident in brands if those brands offer them verified information about the brand history, craftsmanship, or any information that will attest to the quality of the brands. Young consumers expect the given information to be trustworthy
because of the reputed transparency of the Internet, but it does not seem that this trust is extended to brand communication. As we observed, luxury fashion brands may need to attract opinion leaders that young consumers can trust in order to stimulate a luxury feeling and a sense of worthiness of information to help their communication, or information that can be easily checked online.

Luxury retailers create an illusion of popularity and desirability of the brands through social media by getting a large number of ‘likes’ and ‘shares’. But in reality, not all people have the financial ability or the actual desire to purchase the luxury items. In other words, not every social media user who likes or follows a brand can be perceived as an actual customer. To stay exclusive luxury fashion brands should keep their distance from the majority of the consumers by differentiating a regular customer who spends a lot of money from an occasional customer. As mentioned earlier, Okonkwo (2010) explains that the difficulty then for luxury brands is to understand the media and its users, and to develop a strategy accordingly. A luxury brand should not communicate the same way on Facebook or Twitter, seen as mass social media, as on more exclusive social media like “A Small World” – a closed social network reserved for wealthy people. Ultimately, we think that the accessibility of social media does not have to be transferred to the brand in itself: Louis Vuitton is available almost in every country but products are not accessible for everyone because of the cost barrier. It should be the same with Louis Vuitton’s online presence, anyone can like its Facebook page, but the understanding of the brand or the actual brand experience is not available to all. Social media then provide a very good opportunity, because luxury brands should be desired by the majority, including those who cannot afford to purchase their products.

Did we observe a difference in the perception of luxury in our study?

Social media should be an extension of luxurious experience for young consumers. We hold the belief that with regards to the definition of “new luxury”, young consumers seemed to like to share their experience of luxury and to be strongly influenced by their peers. Social media, where the majority of young consumers have accounts, can be a way for them to share their experience online, even if the sharing is simply aimed at satisfying their needs of group acceptation. Social media, as we have mentioned, can be used by luxury fashion brands as a tool for communication with their future consumers. Being part of a social group helps to strengthen the feeling and emotional attachment consumers have with brands, thus, increases the chances of future buying and helps maintain a strong relationship between consumers and brands.
7 Future research

Future research should provide detailed follow-ups or focus groups in the analysis of participants’ responses. Also, further research should be conducted on current luxury fashion consumers for the purpose of getting a more insightful understanding of the topic.

The future direction of the research on luxury brands’ presence in the context of social media lies within the ground of technology-based development. Further discussion and implementations of using social media include:

- Direct purchase from social media sites.

- Galloway’s term “social media optimization” implicates that social media have the ability to direct traffic and sales to a company’s website (Corcoran, 2009). However, due to social media's rapid development, combining all individual channels into one might prove to be a successful step, enabling consumers to make direct purchase from social media sites. One survey participant in this particular study commented:

  “Social media in some ways they will replace the official pages of every company in my opinion. I think they all gonna focus on the social media more or less (Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram).”

- Mobile applications for smartphones.

  Applications featuring both the functionality of social media and the nature of luxury fashion brands’ website could be further integrated via mobile devices. Currently, 20% of luxury fashion retailers choose to promote sales via mobile sites due to its compatibility, functionality, and transaction capability; and as for iOS Applications (iPhone, iPad) and Android, it is due to their availability, popularity and functionality (Galloway, 2012). Integrated mobile apps will have the advantage of providing instant updates and speed sales of products just off the runway.

- 3D online gallery featuring live dressing room, fashion shows, photography gallery that offer social media users popular designer pieces and most up-to-date product information. There is also existing technologies that will allow customers to have a 3D avatar, corresponding to their measurements, that they could use to try apparel online, so one would not have to go in a boutique to make a purchase.

- Also, in an environment increasingly dominated by social media, companies have to keep with the demand to inform their consumers about their activities around the world, their responsibilities to the environment, the treatment of their employees or the employees of the partner firms they use (like the recent case in Bangladesh proved, even though it concerned more high street brands than luxury brands). The impact of social media in the diffusion of information and the interest of consumers in these matters could be further discussed.
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Appendixes

Appendix 1 - Survey
Role of Facebook in the concept of luxury and brand equity

For the purpose of completing a research in the area of fashion management, we are looking to understand the role of social media in the development of the brand value of fashion luxury brands.

In the context of this survey, we define "fashion luxury brands" as brands that offer exclusive products that feature a premium quality with globally recognized status; and by “brand equity”, we mean the consumers' brand image.

During the process, the survey requires you to be linked to Facebook to help us to understand how Facebook contribute to the development of the brand equity.

I. Personal Information

Are you male or female? *
Which country were you born? You are not required to answer this question
Which country are you currently living in? *
How old are you? *
How often do you access social media accounts? *Social media include: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, Pinterest, Fancy, Instagram....
What does Fashion Luxury mean to you? *
Do you follow any luxury fashion brands on Facebook? *
Approximately how many luxury fashion brands do you follow? *Give us an approximate number.

II. General Questions and Perception of a Luxury Fashion Brand

What are your preferred ways of contacting luxury brands? *
• In store
Tell us what you like about traditional media such as TV and/or Magazines in relationship with luxury brands? Why? *Easy access, nice visual, better value...

Tell us what you dislike about traditional media such as TV and/or Magazines in relationship with luxury brands? Why? *Expensive to buy, lack of interaction between the brand and the consumer....

Tell us what you like about Facebook in relationship with luxury brands? Why? *

Do you feel more confident in luxury fashion brands if they have a presence on social media? *Could you explain why?

Imagine what a luxury brand could bring to you through Facebook? *Interaction, information, better communication....

III. Your perception of a Luxury fashion brand : the example of Louis Vuitton
In order to observe the usefulness of Facebook for consumers in the context of promoting luxury fashion brands, we chose Louis Vuitton as our case study brand because it is the world’s leading luxury fashion brand. For this section you will have to take a look at Louis Vuitton Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/LouisVuitton

After your observation, do you feel more confident in Louis Vuitton because they have a presence on social media? *Please explain your reason

After viewing Louis Vuitton's facebook page, have your motivation of buying its product changed? *
- [ ] Increased
- [ ] Decreased
- [ ] Didn't make any difference

What type of Facebook updates that attract you the most? *
- [ ] Information updates
- [ ] New pictures
- [ ] New videos
- [ ] Relevant news
- [ ] Events/Parties/Press release
- [ ] Other:

Would you now, after viewing Louis Vuitton Facebook page, consider contacting the brand on Social Media? *Please explain your reason if possible

What do you expect from luxury brands in their future use of social media? *
- [ ] More information about their investments especially in social awareness, ethics, arts…
- [ ] Style suggestions/recommendation
- [ ] Informations about their contacts, links...
- [ ] Other:

Do you want to add something more?
Appendix 2 - Summary of response

Summary

I. Personal Information

Are you male or female?

Female 22 69%
Male 10 31%

Which country were you born?

france Sweden Taiwan Sweden PRC Pakistan the Netherlands Sweden sweden Taiwan Taiwan Germany France Pakistan China Finland FranceBrazil France FRANCE Greece USA Thaiand TW Mexico Romania Greece Finland Russia

Which country are you currently living in?


How old are you?


How often do you access social media accounts?

Constantly connected 9 28%
Almost constantly 6 19%
Many times daily 10 31%
Daily 4 13%
Many times weekly | 1 | 3%
Weekly | 1 | 3%
Less than weekly | 1 | 3%
I don't use any Social Media accounts | 0 | 0%

**What does Fashion Luxury mean to you?**

Nothing really pleasant. Sounds like a sad and cruelly superficial field in which be interested. Quality nothing Something unique and rare that less people wear. none Status defining, can be supreme quality but not necessary, fulfills highest level of need hierarchy although luxury is definitely not a need but a desirous want. And YES a should give a feeling of extreme self satisfaction, indulgence and pride. Exclusive design, good quality and surperior service Fashion luxury doesn't have any relevance in my life. quality status products It's a kind of symbol of power and fortune which people want to express themselves in a arrogant way and show their taste of fashion. name brand products in my present situation not much actually. I am well aware of luxury brands and recent fashion trends, though I'm lacking the time and the money to make it a big part of my life. Exclusivity, artistic design and most importantly exquisite materials La haute couture au sens large : les marques qui organisent des défilés Niche High end brands Quality Classic Unique Timeless Expertise Fashion luxury means expensive, high quality branded goods including clothes, accessories and the sort. Originality, quality, exclusivity Something art just made to be look because it’s beautiful and well design, or to be photographed but especially not to be wear in daily life. Status, superior design, Quality, good service, expensive, beauty No one. Mode de luxe, prix très couteux, business, accessoires, vêtements, commerce privé, stars, matières rares, peu d'exemplaires dans le monde, temps, argent. I observe it in a certain way but not totally. Beyond necessity. Brand name clothing. Expensive, nice clothing that are in the trend.: quality, rarity, exclusivity I DON'T KNOW Top of the line....couture Personally, something that few have access to because of its rarity, scarcity, high level of craftsmanship. The “luxury” that can become democratic even if it does it only through its channels (in a way that is overexposed) - and keeps a high price - is not authentic luxury to me. Luxury fashion brands are the ones that do not necessarily benefit from expanded brand awareness, don’t want to become "big", don't benefit from economies of scale - it’s just that their products cannot be produced on a large scale. When I'm hearing about luxury the first thing that comes on my mind is of course money. Something that is used to be expensive. This is the reason why most of the luxury fashion companies are targeting a special category of people, who can afford buying luxury items. However, in most of the cases it’s not always has to do with money but with the design too. Exclusivity, high quality, innovation and creativity can considered factors which can describe luxury in many cases. What is more, luxury is not representing a necessity but a desire. Expensive and beautiful things. Design, durability and craftsmanship. For me it’s about precious design, exceptional quality and also a mean to show status and level of income.

**Do you follow any luxury fashion brands on Facebook?**
Yes  11  34%
No   21  66%

**Approximately how many luxury fashion brands do you follow?**

5 5 5 8 5 2 0 4 3 3 1 0 1 5 1 0 1 0 2 0

**General Questions and Perception of a Luxury Fashion Brand**

**II. General Questions**

**What are your preferred ways of contacting luxury brands?**

- In store  24  46%
- Customer Service Hotlines  3  6%
- Contact form on official website  8  15%
- Facebook  8  15%
- Twitter  3  6%
- Other Social Media  3  6%
- Other  3  6%

**Tell us what you like about traditional media such as TV and/or Magazines in relationship with luxury brands? Why?**

Nice visual, creative advertisements, give some fashion ideas... Nice visual I'm from Taiwan....Maybe from newspaper because I'm not care about it. Magazines have their charm and there is nothing that can replace a real, paper fashion magazine. nice visual The depiction of prestige, lets say if its a TV Ad. The photographic elegance if its a magazine shoot. TV ad gives you an entire look and feel of the product as well as the brand. In magazines there are often shoots where the clothes and accessories are styled by a stylist. Also they are able to chose the most outstanding or special items. It reaches out...
to a wide array of people. More traditional Easy access its beautiful and fancy They are the oldest form of mass media, so I feel more related to advertisements brought to me on this way. Also, a nice ad printed in a magazine can almost have artistic value. Traditional media practically gives you access to luxury brands all the time whether i'd be billboards, magazines or tv. Plus, its those media that create the image which is usually very appealing visually but also inspiring! Très belles publicités, qui font rêver les consommateurs. Le plus souvent (notamment dans le cas des parfums), la publicité constitue une oeuvre d'art à part entière. Nice and better value Nice Visual They are more traditional in a sense. I guess they become more exclusive as they are presented everywhere else but via social media. In magazines you can find new luxury brands that you have not seen before. They just make us dream and show us a lot of things that we will probably never have. I like to see how they present the products, and the adversitising are subtle, sending messages trough hiden messages. Creativity, dream. TV or video in general is the best way for luxury brands to communicate because they can forward some dreams to consumers. Magazines : le papier imprimé pour mieux voir les produits. I think on way or another internet is the future. I don't watch TV to much nowadays You get what you expect. Magazines offer nice visuals. I never thought about it.. but they are the only ones that can afford such media outlets for advertisement. Luxury brands in magazines seems to give better value than on television TV thier ability to draw you to a product or service you had no interest in before. The tactics used to make you want items you don't necessarily need but yean for due thier marketing ways. You get it just when you want it - when you browse the magazine for example - with social media messages/commercials just pop up even when you don't want to see them. What I like about Traditional media is that they can still pass the sense of luxury through their visual image. The nostalgic feeling of looking at luxury adds when reading a magazine. You can touch pages of a magazine. So traditional media is more something u can fell. For me it addresses senses more.

Tell us what you dislike about traditional media such as TV and/or Magazines in relationship with luxury brands? Why?

Usually expensive to buy. I don't think we can properly talk about relationship because there's no dialogue, just a picture of what we're supposed to dream about and an insane price tagged on this thing. I don't regret the absence of dialogue, I do regret the existence of that kind of market. Too expensive to buy TV because I can't afford it but it appear in TV. Sometimes you are just sick of doing everything on the computer so then a magazine is nice. TV I don't miss. there are too many ads. High chances of missing a campaign, promo or Ad. Magazine, in terms of sustainability are hard to manage and you might end up throwing it in a bin or making planes out of its papers :P. There is NO time for TV in these busy times. Luxury clothes are nicest when you can see them and feel them, television will not do much whereas magazines can portray the goods in a nice way (nice photography etc). TV might not be the most effective way to reach out to the target group. Though magazines are probably better at this. nothing sometimes we can't receive the information what we exactly want to know about. no i like it I don't think luxury brands actually advertise on TV, maybe perfume but not fashion. If they would, it would make them seem cheap. And I don't really buy magazines. My biggest complain therefore would be inaccessibility. There's no way for me to relate to or follow any brand unless I buy a fashion magazine. They often go to far and depict something that is as far from reality as can be! Whether its the surroundings or for example having an extremely skinny model in the add suggesting this is something to aim for. Also, traditional media is only one way communication and therefore somehow cuts off the customer in the equation Trop de publicités. Expensive Less unique or creative I don't watch TV and I rarely buy fashion magazines. As a blogger I mostly follow other blogs. Too much commercials. They show us things which are far away from the truth and create an illusion of what really mankind is. Luxury is an other world and does not concern that much people, there are other things more important than this in our world. Nothing Magazines are full of lies. I give no trust in that kind of media. Pas de rapport direct ni d'échanges avec le commerçant représentant la marque, donc pas de conseils ni d'avis, donc incitation à l'achat moins élevée. No interesting improvements Lack of interaction and can get boring, because you often know what to expect. To many commercials with brand names haha luxury brands on television give feeling of being marked-down, i connect television
more with fast-moving consumer goods, rather than luxury brands. TV I dislike how pictures are airbrushed to make the models look flawless; ergo, making the general public feel that this is something they can strive and obtain....though it is not feasible to look that perfect even the models are not but it misleads women to want perfection that does not exist. The same thing happens with some products on TV or magazine as sometimes they make the product out to be bigger and better than it really is. With magazines I hate the advertorial part, and sometimes the "hidden"/stealth advertising. On social media everything is more clear. There are little things you can learn about the company since Television and magazines can provide limited information for each brand. The lack of interaction and communication also. Sometimes they make me feel bored. You never see the price tags. I don’t like that in magazines sometimes it’s too much of ads concerning luxury. It’s just endless number of pages of ads. And my attention becomes distracted. I can’t remember which ad was belonged to which brand.

Tell us what you like about Facebook in relationship with luxury brands? Why?

I don't like it. I've got nothing to learn from any luxury brand, communicate with it even less. I believe the too things doesn’t really match. Facebook is cheap and luxury brands should definitely be on facebook but be careful with too much advertising. I can’t answer it... I don’t interact or follow any luxury brands on facebook so I don’t like anything about it. I don’t like it on fb. Keeps you connected with the brands. Luxury brands define the creativity and fashion. So if you are connected with them day and night through facebook - you know the world of fashion, arts and creativity. You get the recent and latest updates that are just a click away, updating real time. I do not like Facebook in relation with any brands. I feel Facebook is a platform to keep in touch with your friends, not as a marketing channel. This is good because the brands can reach out to the people that are specifically interested in those brands. I also think Facebook has advanced advertisement options to target the right people that might be interested. nothing, they don't match. facebook does not feel luxurious It's very common to use in a easy way. i can update the latest news Social media makes luxury brands more accessible to everybody, a big plus for Facebook. It doesn't matter who I am, where I am, what I do, as long as I have Facebook I can follow my favorite brand and am always up to date. Facebook provides easy access to fashion brands and helps making fashion brands more reachable not only communication wise but also since a lot of these brands often convey an image that is so exclusive that one can easily feel excluded from that image. I don't know I dont think it will be a good option. Nothing. I am indifferent. Nothing cause i don’t use Fb for this. I like the fact that is possible to have more interaction usually with brands The way luxury brands communicate on Facebook are unapropriate, they are too snobbish. Les nouveautés, les publications récentes, les informations concernant la marques, les photos... I can read all the latest news about fashion and particular brands More interactive and up-to-date. didn't think about it... a communication mean that can spread infos to consumer faster TV. The ability to see other fans opinions and pictures about those products and services. It's no longer just the influence of the company trying to get you to buy. I find out things about brands daily even if I don't search for information (which is good and bad at the same time), which would not happen with magazines, for examples, as I very rarely browse magazines today. I can learn more things about the brand and all the new events that will take place. I can have an easily access to the official websites so i can learn more things about the new products. Facebook can also increase the interaction with the company, build stronger relationship. Also, I can learn more about the identity and values of each company. I can compare the brands directly, to see the different styles and designs and even prices. I have no experience from that. I don't know. I don’t use FB to check pages of luxury brands. But perhaps it’s more interactive comparing with traditional channels.

Do you feel more confident in luxury fashion brands if they have a presence on social media?
Could you explain why?

I feel confident when the brand itself and its products seem to be made of good quality. The advertising stuff doesn’t matter to me, not directly at least. Communicate with its clients should not be a public thing when we talk about a luxury fashion brand. I believe a presence in social media will damage the exclusiveness of the the luxury brand. Social media is cheap-luxury fashion must its uniqueness I think every brand need to be present on social media in the future so it is not something specific for luxury brands. no More detailed marketing mix of a company, stronger the presence and hence if the activities and campaigns are in tune with customer/consumer preference then its a big hit. Social media is too fast to manage and chase and if a company can keep up with it, this means they are fast enough in their creations and bringing in new fashion. Social Media is a cheap and easily accessible channel by every brand, even if you have a small store selling your own made goods. It is the supreme advertising that those small stores cannot afford, but luxury brands can. In this day and age I think it's more or less mandatory for any brand targeting individuals to be present in social media, no matter what kind of product: they feel more genuine that means I’m a fashionable person as well. Its more well known I don’t let any kind of media influence my feeling of confidence. Because it seems they care! And they want to be connected to see what's going on on the customer side. Luxury should have more physical contact... more affect on your all five senses. Not a big fun of social media in general. To be honest, I don't quite understand the question. Perhaps a “maybe” could have been in place. Like I previously said, I think luxury brands may seem slightly less exclusive via Facebook for example. Through blogs, they are more relate-able and exclusive. Social media does not always tell the truth and it is sometimes difficult to check if it is true. It’s not necessary and actually I don’t need a fashion brand in my life just sometimes I'm interested in it and want to know more about it. Then I search in internet some informations but I don't need a presence of fashion in social media. Because it seems that they care more about customers, especially the ones that interact with people. Luxury brands don't know how to interact with real people on social media. They reproduce what they already do on TV and magazine. Nothing more or different. Cela montre que la marque est active Because they can react and come more close to the customer. Especially Facebook feels like a cheap channel and can therefore dilute the brands status. Name brand recognition because I feel confident with brands in question before their presence on social media. Therefore, brands communicating through social media neither raise nor lessen my confidence toward brands. NO Once again, the ability to see others interactions with a brand and/ or service apart from the company trying to persuade me to purchase whatever it is that there selling. Having factual evidence via social media like Facebook of others wearing the product or discussing the product helps me ultimately determine if I too will be buying. Well, it's both yes and no. You might feel more confident because the brand is more exposed and you think you know it, but sometimes you realize they post just the information that they want, not the one that would disadvantage them. And you want to know the whole picture, not just the positive part. I can feel more confident only from the perspective that I have the chance to learn more about the
brands and be always updated. Luxury brands already have a presence of their own and do not need to be on social media to gain customer awareness. For me luxury is also something with history and traditions. But FB is new and all about technology. These 2 things just don’t fit together in my mind.

Imagine what a luxury brand could bring to you through Facebook?

I don't think Facebook or any other social media is the better way to communicate for a luxury brand, considering its status of luxury products seller. The only thing it could bring through would be some informations about its collection and its offers, not more. Information. Maybe more information. Information about upcoming product launches. A look behind the scenes. Exclusive deals. Some competitions info. Dreams. I do not believe in advertising via Facebook for luxury brands. For me they could not bring much, as I am not interested in the products. Possibly suggestions for gifts when appropriate (Christmas, birthday of family members, etc). Nothing information i can see it. Definitely better, faster and up to date information. Constant information flow and updates. "Insider" information. Direct communication in case questions arise but also the interaction with other consumers of said fashion luxury brand --> it creates a community :) Better communication: c'est l'occasion d'informer les clients d'événements. Mais je ne suis pas convaincu que Facebook apporte grand chose. Information in easy access. Creative events inspirations. Could bring to me? Hmmmm... in what sense bringing? It doesn't bring much to be through Facebook. Mostly news about new collections, changes in designers, etc. Absolutely nothing, and I'm sure about it. To conclude I don't want to be slave of media, when I want to know something I make my own research. Interaction, promotions, better communication, show that they really care with their customers. Being more real, forget about ads lies. Des infos de dernières minutes, des promos, des ventes privées, des événements associés, des images, des conseils, des idées... Clever ways of introduce me new products or services that they have Interaction and a lower threshold for contact. Don't know more interaction, thus better communication and more correct product info (material, where they can be found, etc.) NO. Exactly, I feel that I more likely to buy now from seeing Facebook website of others posting their pics of them wearing products I'm already interested in versus seeing it on a altered pic of a model in a magazine. Well, it definitely helps you be part of a group in a way that if you see that one of your Facebook friend likes a brand that you like, you automatically feel that you have something in common with that person. Besides from that, now that the brands try to interfere through their communication with other cultural aspects of our lifestyles (movies, music, places to visit, personalities etc.), they often provide great information and inspiration from this point of view. Knowledge for the brand (values, promises, identity) and information about new events. Entertainment, a stronger relationship and a better communication. Too many spam message on my News wall. Maybe it can bring more interaction, quizzes or social pools. All these can help with customizing brands and its products.

III. Your perception of a Luxury fashion brand : the example of Louis Vuitton

After your observation, do you feel more confident in Louis Vuitton because they have a presence on social media?

Not at all, it doesn't change anything. It has the same effect than taking a look at the Louis Vuitton's catalog. I trust brands by directly testing their products, there's no other way to convince me. No AHHHHHHHHHHHHH! Yes, I mean the FB page was well made and it contains a lot of info and pics. I don't like this brand so that I cannot answer... be honest if you mean confident in terms of new product marketing then yes. You see new marketing campaigns and new products. Luxury consumer would associate with these ads and an urge to buy would be created. No, I much rather visit their website or store. No, though it would be bad if the didn't have it. No, not through Facebook. It only feels like a fasad yes maybe. If confident means that I feel more related to it, then yes. No but that is
rather explained in my personal disfavor for the LV brand for numerous reasons but mostly for their overpricing, sell-out to mass market and diminishing quality. Un peu : Facebook permet de diffuser des publicités et d'interagir avec les clients; just ok no. it erase the brand's classic character No. Ever brand has presence on Facebook and social media. they aren't special for being among so many other brands out there. No. Louis Vuitton is not my top luxury brand and I see it as all other brands. I dislike this brand. Sorry for this simple answer but it's the truth. I don't think more confident, because I already have a formed perception about the brand, but I think the facebook page helps to strengthen my perception and maybe inform more about the brand. Nice visuals, regular content. It's well done. They understand social media. Grâce à Facebook, la marque se rapproche de la clientèle mais également des personnes qui désirent suivre les news sans pour autant être consommatrices. Cette présence médiatique rend la marque plus accessible et universelle, grâce aux échanges entre "fans" et aux nombreuses infos partagées. Bien que Louis Vuitton soit une grande marque connu et bien implantée, on peut effectivement être assuré de la qualité des produits. mais on ne peut cependant pas affirmer être confiant au sujet d'une quelconque marque par le biais d'un réseau social, cela reste virtuel avant tout. I can see that they update their information on a daily base so that means that they give effort to react with the customer. In that way yes they made me improve my opinion about their brand No, I feel the information provided on the page isn't too relevant for me to feel more confident in the brand. Yes, but I don't buy LV. no, because I have establish a strong confidence in Louis Vuitton before they started on Facebook. However, their presence on Facebook made me feel they has become more down-to-earth. NO YES, I love to see the travels involved in finding a new silk or material for the next fashion line & behind the scenes stuff. It makes me feel that the value of the purchase is there and that I have more of a connection with the brand. So much more is extracted from being going on facebook to follow a brand versus a marketing tactic in a magazine Somehow yes, it makes you feel like you experience the brand without actually being part of it/owning a LV product. But still, it feels a bit fake I could say, as I might never be able to buy a LV product and then I realize I'm not part of that universe. So then what's the use of me being able to access their facebook page? As i said before i feel that i gain more information about the brand. Through the traditional media i wouldn't have the chance to know about what is the brand doing any time. The presence of photos and videos from every editorial and campaign it makes it look more interesting and entertaining. I have an overview of the company and a better perception of the brand. No. This is just one channel to connect with the customer. It's interesting but it didn't affect my perception of LV to a large extent. Page on FB is not going deep down to the history it's just about what happening now. For me change extent of my trust more sufficient and groundbreaking information should be provided.

After viewing Louis Vuitton's facebook page, have your motivation of buying its product changed?

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What type of Facebook updates that attract you the most?

Information updates 10 15%
New pictures 28 42%
New videos 9 14%
Relevant news 11 17%
Events/Parties/Press release 8 12%
Other 0 0%

Would you now, after viewing Louis Vuitton Facebook page, consider contacting the brand on Social Media?

Tell me, why should I? Moreover nowadays Louis Vuitton surely only interests asian people convinced of buying some excellent parisian stuff without french taxes. That’s not what I’m dreaming about anyway. No maybe If I had a problem I might try but it feels like they would never reply considering the high number of likes on the brands page. won’t. Yes, social media does and should provide the quickest possible feedback on any query and also a response on the campaign/product can be judged. So it’s a win-win situation for the brand and the consumer. No No because I have no reason. maybe on Instagram… because I like pictures yes maybe No sorry, I have absolutely no interest in Louis Vuitton. I might secretly view the page again… No not really. At least not in the case of LV since I do not own any products and do not like the brand at all. It would probably be different with other brands I like though! Yes : Louis Vuitton a su s’ouvrir et communiquer au plus grand nombre. yes no no No. I see no purpose. I didn’t see the page of any brand, im not a fan. And I will never be Yes No. I’m no rich enough. Non cela ne m’intéresserait pas, je resterais une fan silencieuse. yes If I had any questions I would likely use Facebook as a channel for contact as it feels easy and convenient. no, because I’m not a LV guy. thanks anyway. right now, no. Because I have no reason to do it. If I would rather search through their website to see the products. OK Yes, why not? Yes, for lifestyle inspiration and suggestions. yeah I could follow the brand on facebook because I want to learn more about it. No. Social media websites for me are for family and friend interaction only. May be, it’s interesting information that you can’t find on official website.

What do you expect from luxury brands in their future use of social media?

More information about their investments especially in social awareness, ethics, arts… 1 45%

Style suggestions/recommendation 1 40%

Informations about their contacts, links… 3 7%
Do you want to add something more?

Do not consider my case as word of god. I don't like luxury brands and I'm not an expert. I'm sure a lot of people love it instead and would have answered with more enthusiasm. Good luck for your work. no No Best of Luck my friends!! No, sorry. I dont care about the life of the brand or anything. Their job is to sell outfit and just to communicate infos update, and even that it's already too much for me. I think facebook is a good channel for brands to receive feedback, suggestons or any aother thing that the customer want to transmit. Brands should use this channel propperly in order to really interact with customers Social media in some way they will replace the official pages of every company in my opinion .i think they all gonna focus on the social media more or less (facebook,twitter,pinterest,instagram) nothing, sorry I coudnt be more helpfull NO

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