

## Instagram Marketing for Luxury Brands on Social Media

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**ABSTRACT:** Social media gives marketers a wide range of tools for building tailored, interactive connections with target customers. Different social media platforms allow for many inventive social media presence strategies for organizations. In this setting, Instagram has grown to become a leading social media platform for high-end fashion businesses. This essay examines the topic of high-end fashion firms on Instagram by emphasizing important strategies that should be included in a social media marketing plan. The main goals of this study are to: (1) present the concept of luxury brands; (2) analyze the luxury brands' social media marketing strategies designed to increase consumer engagement; and (3) evaluate the luxury fashion brands' Instagram marketing strategies, particularly as they relate to influencers and celebrity endorsements.

### INTRODUCTION

Luxury firms need to reevaluate their digital marketing strategy as customer engagement rates tend to decline and find fresh approaches to increase their return on marketing investment. While capturing the interest of important demographics and segments, a content marketing plan needs to be customized to the proper social network for each targeted audience. It also needs to highlight appealing calls-to-action with an integrated link to checkout.

Whether customers use social media platforms for leisure activities, communication with friends, or learning about new goods and services, they offer a crucial resource. The customer journey or decision-making process is becoming more and more influenced by social media, with every stage from awareness, deliberation, and evaluation to purchase and repurchase being impacted. Because of this, marketers have put a lot of effort into creating social media strategies that will help them attract, keep, and grow their consumer base. As a result, fashion is regarded as one of the most crucial businesses because it contributes significantly to the global economy (McKinsey&Co, 2019).

Fashion of the highest caliber is important in this sector. According to a 2017 Deloitte survey on millennial consumer behavior, those who are more likely to buy luxury items claim they get their information from traditional sources like magazines, as well as from videos, websites, and blogs. More precisely, 20.5% of respondents said that social media is where they learn about the newest trends in high-end clothing or luxury goods (Deloitte, 2017). Social media marketing is described as "marketing communications via digital applications, platforms, and media that facilitate interaction, collaboration, and content sharing among users" (Kim and Ko, 2012, p. 1480). Virtually all luxury businesses engage in this approach. For luxury brands, social media presents fresh possibilities for lead qualification, brand recognition, and the growth of the company as a "aspirational brand." Tennille Kopiasz, Senior Vice President of Marketing at Parfums Christian Dior, asserts that "storytelling has always been the finest approach for premium businesses to excite consumers. The connection is obvious given that Instagram is a medium for visual storytelling. 2017 (Instagram).

According to this paradigm, this study looks at this understudied aspect of luxury brand marketing on Instagram and highlights the most important strategies expensive businesses are now using on social media. The following are the study's particular goals: (1) to investigate the idea of luxury brands, (2) to comprehend the assumptions behind luxury brands' social media marketing efforts aimed at increasing consumer engagement, and (3) to assess popular and specific marketing strategies used by high-end brands on Instagram, particularly those involving influencers and celebrity endorsements.

### LUXURY BRANDS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

#### 2.1. Definition of Luxury Brands

A luxury brand is defined as "a branded product or service that consumers view to be excellent in quality, provide authentic value via desired benefits, whether practical or emotional, have a highly regarded image within the market built on qualities such as artisanship, workmanship, or service quality, be worthy of governing a premium price, and be capable of encouraging a deep connection, or resonance, with the consumer" (Ko et al., 2017, page 2). Beyond practical considerations, premium brands are frequently chosen for other reasons. In order to achieve exclusivity (Berthon et al., 2009), status, and prestige (Amaldoss and Jain, 2005), consumers purchase luxury products. According to Jackson (2004), "...exclusivity, premium prices, image and status which combine to make them more desirable for reasons other than function" are the main features of the luxury product.

Additionally, luxury businesses have unique brand identities and meanings defined by specific associations," according to Tynan et al. (2010). According to Petina et al. (2018), Beverland (2004), and Okonkwo (2009), the associations used by luxury companies to create their brand identities "typically include (a) genuineness, heritage, or pedigree; (b) stylistic consistency; (c) quality loyalty; (d) distinctive aesthetic symbolism; and (e) the hedonic and emotional promotional appeals." Fionda and Moore (2009) assert that buying a luxury brand is "a highly engaged experience of consumption that is strongly congruent to a person's self-concept," which supports the notion of how luxury is a status symbol with substantial psychological relevance for consumers.

The luxury goods product category serves as a cornerstone of the marketing strategy. More specifically, "fashion, jewelry, cosmetics, wine, automobile, hotel, tourism, and private banking" are the eight different categories of luxury goods that Chevalier and Mazzalovo (2008) and Lee and Watkins (2016) identify. Due to its social worth and hedonic connotations, luxury fashion tends to spread widely online, which is relevant to the topic of this research (Lee and Watkins, 2016). Therefore, because these brands have a prestige price, fine craftsmanship, exclusivity, and in certain cases, heritage, they have the capacity to instill psychological and emotional values in customers and aspirational consumers.

## **2.2 How Luxury Brands Use Social Media for Marketing**

Social media gives businesses a variety of chances to interact with customers and create deeper connections. Social media also offers options to produce and distribute marketing content for specific target markets, as well as to reuse user-generated content to emphasize the relationship between consumers and a given brand. According to research (Lee and Watkins, 2016; Chu et al., 2013), luxury brand marketing on social media has a favorable effect on customers' positive luxury views, desire for luxury, and purchase intentions.

Existing research on the use of social media marketing by high-end businesses reveals that despite the apparent contradiction between social media's accessibility and the exclusive traits associated with luxury, brands' presence on these platforms increase their exposure and awareness. According to Kim and Ko (2010) and Dhaoui (2014), social media fosters the growth of brand evangelism for luxury brands. As new social media trends lead to shorter lifecycles, social media can significantly affect the performance of a brand in the luxury sector (Godey et al., 2016). Additionally, to remain relevant in this turbulent business and take advantage of the growing number of youthful consumers of high-end items, brands must constantly develop their marketing plans and methods (Kim and Ko, 2010).

From a broad viewpoint, it is widely believed that social media poses a threat that can detract from the reputation and status of luxury businesses. Exclusiveness is the primary distinguishing factor of luxury companies, and social media, which aids in the development of public appeal, might lessen this key selling point of high-end goods. However, to interact with specific customers, high-end fashion businesses like Chanel, Gucci, Prada, Valentino, Elie Saab, Dior, and many more have created social media marketing strategies (Lee and Watkins, 2016). As one of the first luxury fashion brands to use social media, Burberry's social media presence was examined by Phan et al. (2011). As a result, the company's earnings increased by 39.8%.

It is crucial to understand how high-end brands can build meaningful and lasting relationships with their customers by participating in online conversations and leveraging the brand's influence among targeted audiences since the majority of luxury brands use social media to connect with their customers (Chu et al., 2019). It is crucial to understand how luxury brands influence consumer interaction on social media as more high-end brands turn to social media to build lasting relationships with their customers.

## **2.3. Social media user engagement and luxury brand marketing**

Consumer engagement has garnered a lot of research attention recently in the literature on marketing and advertising (Hollebeek et al., 2014). According to Vinerean (2016), "relationship outcomes such as satisfaction, trust, affective commitment, and loyalty" (Brodie et al., 2011) are all directly and favorably correlated with customer involvement. Multiple authors have stated that "customer involvement has an important chance to influence consumer choices and is an effective retention and acquisition approach for establishing and maintaining the competitive edge for brand in digital marketing" (Brodie et al., 2013; Hollebeek et al., 2014).

In recent years, researchers (Hollebeek et al., 2014) and marketers have become interested in the research topic of consumer involvement. However, not enough research has been done on how consumers interact with premium brands online. One such study was conducted by Dhaoui (2014), who looked at "key attributes of luxury brands to consumer engagement on social media platforms" and discovered that a solid social media strategy can have a positive impact on word-of-mouth marketing and the spread of the message, ultimately increasing brand visibility in online settings.

In their 2018 study, Pentina et al. identified 11 distinct social media engagement behaviors: "1. Following or liking the brand; 2. EB2: Commenting on the brand's posts and advertisements; 3. Liking, tagging, and sharing the brand's posts on one's personal newsfeed (which represents the most frequently reported SM behavior); EB4: Mentioning friends in comments; 5. Tagging brand names and using fashion-related hashtags in posted photos; 6. Publish photos of the brand's Products; 7. Publish photos of oneself with the brand; 8. requesting feedback explicitly on brand selfies; 9. starting and maintaining brand-related dialogues in personal social networks; 10. publishing multimedia shopping stories; and 11. changing the branded item or proposing a different interpretation.

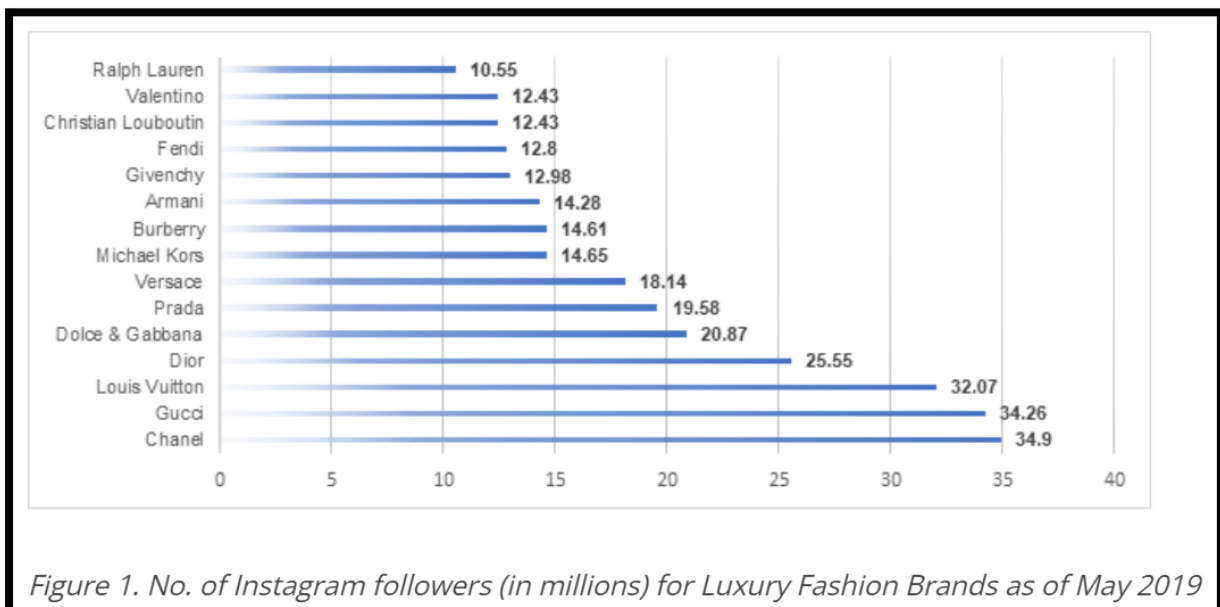
## HOW HIGH-END BRANDS USE INSTAGRAM

### 3.1. Instagram Luxury Brands

Instagram, the fastest-growing social media site, has more than 1 billion users and allows users to explore, share, tag, use hashtags, comment, and "love" visual material in the form of photos, videos, and gifs. According to Bonilla et al. (2019), Instagram also offers a visual component that is useful for fashion businesses: "Brands and users share photos of their outfits that are subsequently assessed and voted on by other users, acting as a source of motivation for the brands themselves." The visual media that are available include pictures, videos, boomerangs, layouts, stories, and live events, to name just a few.

Instagram is more appealing to users than other social media platforms because it allows them to take more activities (follow businesses, influencers, friends, etc.); access websites; and conveniently shop for various goods or brands they see on Instagram. Other studies (Locowise, 2017; Globalwebindex, 2015) demonstrate that consumers frequently shop on Instagram after engaging with brands' postings, and that this platform's degree of brand engagement is far higher than that of Facebook or Twitter.

Accordingly, an Instagram report from 2017 describes luxury customers who use this well-liked platform as "highly driven and successful individuals..., with an average age of 35, who are tech-savvy, own more devices than the average global Instagrammer, and spend more time on them than any other group." Instagram is a suitable tool for fashion luxury firms to extend their brand in social settings due to its visual extension. Customers thus get inspiration for their upcoming searches, behavioral intentions, and purchase behavior from the content they view on Instagram (Casaló et al., 2018). Consumers increasingly look to influencers for inspiration when making high-end fashion decisions. Figure 1 shows the number of luxury fashion firms' Instagram followers as of May 2019.



2019 data via Statista.com

Luxury fashion brands create many strategies as part of their Instagram marketing plan to help them connect with their audiences (current, potential, or aspirational customers), such as:

Stories. The 24-hour stories are used by high-end businesses to showcase advertisements for their goods (Tom Ford - @tomford), magazine spreads featuring their goods (Gucci - @gucci), the creation of various looks (Oscar de la Renta - @oscardelarenta), and so on.

streaming video. The majority of the time, luxury brands like Louis Vuitton (@louisvuitton) use live videos to convey their fashion presentations.

IGTV. The majority of luxury companies utilize Instagram TV to share behind-the-scenes footage of the creation of their recently released collections (Valentino - @maisonvalentino; Tom Ford - @tomford); and advertising campaigns (Balmain - @balmain; Burberry - @burberry; Saint Laurent - @ysl).

Instagram retail/Retail. With the use of this tool, high-end consumers can browse and purchase various things they come across on Instagram. Businesses can "share featured products through your organic posts and Stories, or have people discover your products in Search and Explore" with the help of Instagram Shopping, according to Instagram (2019). Luxury

companies like Tom Form (@tomford), Gucci (@gucci), Burberry (@burberry), Balmain (@balmain), Dior (@dior), and Prada (@prada) already use Instagram Shopping.

Highlights. In contrast to 24-hour stories, highlights let a brand organize previous articles into fresh subject parts that are found below the account's bio. Presently, luxury brands use narratives to highlight previous runway shows (Tom Form - @tomford), endorsements from famous people (Elie Saab - @eliesaabworld; Givenchy - @givenchyofficial; Valentino - @maisonvalentino; Tom Form - @tomford), specific lines of merchandise (Gucci - @gucci), various brand partnerships (Puma x Balmain - @balmain), or retail experiences in various locations (Louis Vuitton - @louisvuitton).

Filters. Many upscale companies, including Valentino (@maisonvalentino), Louis Vuitton (@louisvuitton), Dior (@dior), Balmain (@balmain), and Prada (@prada), have created unique augmented reality (AR) filters that allow Instagram users to interact with the company in a lighthearted way while increasing brand awareness.

Unique hashtags- In addition to their regular hashtags, luxury fashion firms use a variety of bespoke hashtags to produce more engaging postings. Balmain (@balmain) utilizes the hashtag #BalmainArmy, among others, to compile content pertaining to various collections (#BalmainRE20), or to advertise specific products (#BALMAINBBOLD). In a similar vein, Fendi encourages the use of hashtags for its goods (such as #FendiBaguette), fashion (such as #FendiCouture), and collections (such as #FendiPrintsOn).

These social media strategies have been successfully used by luxury fashion firms on Instagram, as shown in the series of graphs below.

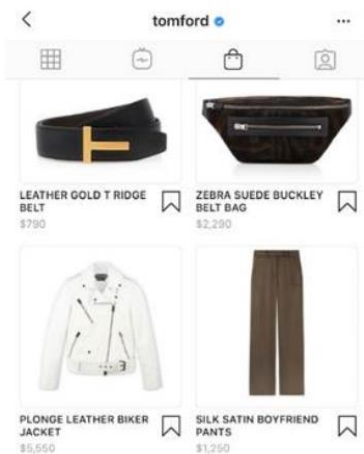


Figure 2. The use of Instagram shopping by luxury brand "Tom Ford" (@tomford)



Figure 3. The use of Instagram highlights and IGTV by "Valentino" (@maisonvalentino)

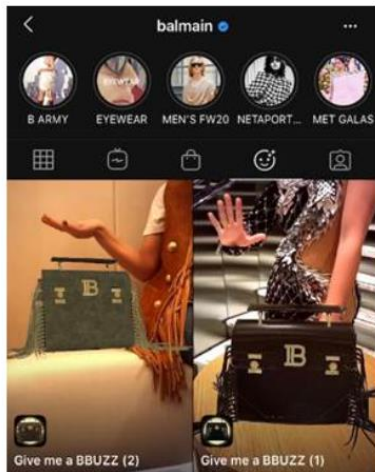


Figure 4. The use of Instagram highlights and AR filters by “Balmain” (@balmain)

### 3.2. Luxury Brands and Celebrity Marketing on Instagram

Celebrities appeal to an audience with similar references. The definition of a reference group is "a person/group of people who serve as a reference to an individual in forming values and attitudes, and by doing so provide consumers with a reference in their purchasing decisions" (Schiffman et al., 2012. "Celebrities' accounts are at the top of the ranking of the most-followed pages on Instagram, frequently employed to deliver messages of marketing to their followers," claim Djafarova and Rushworth (2017). Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) set out to use a qualitative research technique to investigate the impact of Instagram celebrity marketing on consumer behavior. According to Djafarova and Rushworth (2017), this results in a boost in "respondents' self-esteem when they buy a product or service that was advocated by a celebrity."

According to McCormick (2016), "celebrity endorsement is a widely used strategy" in social media marketing. Celebrities work with luxury firms, particularly those in the fashion industry, to expand into new countries. Whether they are models, athletes, or singers, different celebrity types appeal to various audiences. Because of this, high-end brands hire them to promote their products in exchange for money. According to Mark Glassman in a Bloomberg article from 2019, we may anticipate that the practice of using alliances between high-end brands and celebrities will continue in the years to come.

### 3.3. Luxury Brands and Influencer Marketing on Instagram

According to Watts and Dodds (2007), influencer marketing refers to a strategy where influencers are able to affect the attitudes, choices, and actions of their audience of followers. Influencers, according to Instagram (2017), are "ultra-connected people who are the first to try out new trends and have unparalleled knowledge of luxury... They are in high demand because to their ability to introduce companies to a consumer base that is frequently complementary to the brand's own Instagram following. Because they incorporate various brands into their daily life while showcasing them on Instagram, influencers serve as brand advocates for businesses on the platform.

According to De Veirman et al. (2017), luxury brands anticipate influencers to promote their products among their fan base and potential customers by co-creating value with influencers for targeted customers (for instance, by giving them the chance to test an item, planning an event, or paying them for their created and shared original content). Based on their shared experiences and glimpses into their personal lives posted on social media, influencers appear more approachable, believable, and easy to relate to than celebrities. Given the sense of immediacy it creates and the communities it creates, Casaló et al. (2018) claim that Instagram is the "platform that is most used by opinion leaders (influencers)" and anticipate that this trend will continue in the near future.

In order to develop an aspirational self-image similar to that of the influencer, consumers turn to influencers that share content on Instagram that matches their psychographic traits for assistance (Pradhan et al., 2014). According to a Business of Fashion and McKinsey & Company survey from 2019, 86% of businesses use influencer marketing. However, the engagement rate for sponsored Instagram posts created by influencers "dropped from 4 percent in Q1 2016 to 2.4 percent in Q1 2019". According to McKinsey & Company (2019), the engagement rates for sponsored posts on Facebook and Twitter are significantly lower (0.37 percent and 0.05, respectively).

## CONCLUSION

### 4.1. Theoretical Contributions

This essay sought to advance the body of knowledge in the following fields by addressing a number of aims, which were emphasized in the Introduction section: "Luxury brands" as a concept, "luxury brands" as they are marketed on social media to engage consumers, and "luxury brands as they are marketed on Instagram" specifically.

The luxury apparel industry used as the study's starting point since it has successfully engaged customers and attracted aspirational consumers via social media methods. There is a dearth of academic research on social media strategy for high-end fashion firms. This essay offers fresh viewpoints on the subject. Previous academic studies (Godey et al., 2016, Kim and Ko, 2012, Phan et al., 2011) looked at how high-end brands used Instagram to engage with customers more closely and raise brand awareness online.

Social media marketing initiatives are a component of the promotional mix in the new brand communication paradigm in the present corporate climate (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). Social media communication significantly affects brand image, although conventional media have a higher impact on brand awareness (Godey et al., 2016). Because of its visual extension, which enables brands to take a visual storytelling approach, Instagram is a target for luxury brands. As consumers increasingly turn to Instagram as a source of ideas and a new method of "window shopping," they are increasingly doing so during the discovery and consideration stages of the buying process.

Social media is a crucial tool both for consumers making decisions and for marketers creating and sustaining strong brand-customer relationships. Instagram has grown in popularity among consumers and advertisers alike within this context. Instagram is a social media site that places a strong emphasis on visual storytelling, making it the ideal platform for showcasing goods and experiences. In order to creatively reach new consumers, luxury businesses have also embraced this channel (Instagram, 2017).

#### **4.2. Management Consequences**

This study covered a number of Instagram marketing strategies that can be used effectively by luxury fashion firms. By following strategies that aim to increase brand awareness and forge an image for the brand that appeals to the target market, a business can use social media to affect consumers' perceptions, attitudes, and preferences relating to their brand. In the words of Godey et al. (2016), "brands should no longer just regard social media advertising as a way of reaching customers, but also as an important and affordable image-building tool."

Luxury firms need to be proactive about creating engaging, original content for Instagram to attract customers. Moreover, collaborations with well-known people and influencers might help produce original content. The produced material attempts to strengthen the brand's history, emphasize its distinctiveness to both current and potential customers, and encourage good conduct (Herrando et al., 2018). Tools like boomerangs, highlights, stories, filters, shopping, and others have established themselves as interactive strategies that provide marketers a variety of creative possibilities to create the luxury brand image, raise brand awareness, and increase engagement.

Luxury firms should concentrate on their storytelling if they use Instagram as a social media channel to connect with their target audience. Instagram offers the feed, videos, stories, and live videos as ways to accomplish these storytelling skills. Unlike Stories, where fleeting and transitory content has a high value, the feed should have an editorial feel and be timeless. For instance, Instagram reports that Burberry "led London Fashion Week with 38% of the discussion thanks to its engaging behind-the-scenes content" in its 2017 report.

Hashtags are a helpful Instagram technique that high-end fashion firms should take into account. Utilizing hashtags effectively on Instagram can help you reach the proper audiences. Additionally, hashtags are utilized by both marketers and consumers for research and inspiration. Celebrity marketing does, however, play a big part in spreading marketing messages. Similar to this, influencer marketing has the benefit of putting premium brands in an approachable and casual setting. Luxury firms must thus effectively use Instagram to reach their intended consumers.

#### **4.3 Limitations and Proposed Future Research Directions**

The absence of empirical support for these claims is a significant weakness in this study. Future studies ought to concentrate on creating a quantitative marketing study using primary data to analyze the extent to which Instagram use affects luxury fashion purchases generally and in relation to a specific high-end brand. Conducting a qualitative study using text mining and sentiment analysis to glean new information from user comments about how they use and perceive the presence of luxury fashion brands on Instagram is another possibility for expanding this study. The research might also be expanded by creating a cross-cultural study that looks at how Instagram is used by consumers and how they view luxury fashion firms' social media marketing strategies.

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