



Effect of digital brand experience on luxury fashion brand authenticity, attachment and loyalty

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Dates:

Received: 11 Aug. 2022

Accepted: 12 July 2023

Published: 29 Aug. 2023

How to cite this article:

Lin, F.-L., & Ku, T.-H. (2023). Effect of digital brand experience on luxury fashion brand authenticity, attachment and loyalty. *South African Journal of Business Management*, 54(1), a3583. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajbm.v54i1.3583>

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Purpose: The visual storytelling feature of Instagram provides luxury fashion brands with an appropriate platform to enhance their online presence and identity to build a greater connection with their audiences. This paper aims to examine how digital brand experiences on social media influence perceptions of brand authenticity, attachment and loyalty for luxury fashion brands.

Design/methodology/approach: This study adopts a quantitative analysis by collecting data with a survey-based approach of 112 respondents who are luxury brand Instagram followers. The empirical testing and estimation of the proposed model were carried out using the partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM).

Finding/results: Results of this study showed that digital brand experiences determine the audiences' positive attitudes towards brand authenticity, attachment and loyalty. Brand authenticity and attachment were found to partially mediate the digital brand experiences and brand loyalty.

Practical implications: Brand authenticity can be understood as an important key to a brand's social media presence, and authenticity will significantly enhance attachment in consumers' minds. Physical experience should be integrated with the digital brand experience. In conclusion, audiences equate digital brand experiences as authentic feelings, generating attachment and loyalty to a luxury fashion brand.

Originality/value: This research presents insights about digital brand experiences and related essential constructs in the context of the luxury fashion brand; moreover, this study offers valuable implications in practical terms for the operation of social media platforms.

Keywords: Instagram; digital brand experience; brand authenticity; brand attachment; brand loyalty.

Introduction

Nowadays, the Internet, social media, mobile apps and other digital communication tools are ubiquitous in people's daily lives (Kim et al., 2016). Over two billion people use social platforms. Therefore, social media is a massive opportunity for businesses and brands.

Luxury brands have unique characteristics, such as exclusivity and high status, which led them to appear later on social media platforms compared to other brands. Luxury brand companies realised that social media could have a positive impact on their brands and began exploring ways to utilise this new medium (Brandão et al., 2019). There is a research gap regarding the management of luxury brands in the context of social media, and it is imperative to investigate the impact of social media on luxury brands concerning the brand itself and its consumers (Creevey et al., 2022). Consequently, social media is an important area of research for luxury brands, and it is essential to understand the motivations for consumer engagement and the opportunities presented by social media for companies.

It used to be that luxury experiences took place mainly in physical environments (e.g. in brick-and-mortar stores, at events or through marketing campaigns) before the emergence of the digital era. In addition to the customer experience and the product experience, the brand experience is evoked by the sensational, emotional, cognitive and behavioural responses to a brand and its associated stimuli (Brakus et al., 2009). In the digital world, the brand experience can only be conveyed through the visual and auditory senses, a limited domain compared to the in-person experience. This research proposes the concept of digital brand experience. When a customer

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views a brand's online presence through social media platforms, brand websites and online campaigns, the digital brand experience is transferred to the customer through these channels. As a social platform offering extensive creative possibilities and the functionality of visual storytelling, Instagram is a perfect fit for luxury brands.

This paper aims to provide insight into how luxury fashion brand experiences in the digital environment influence perceptions of authenticity, brand attachment and loyalty among consumers who follow luxury fashion brands' official social media. In this study, Instagram was selected as an observation tool because its storytelling characteristic fits the marketing needs of the luxury industry. The results of this study can help luxury fashion companies understand how the experiences customers have while browsing the content of their official social media accounts can positively impact customers' perceptions of authenticity and attachment, thus strengthening customers' loyalty to their luxury fashion brand.

Theoretical background

Changing meaning of the luxury brand

The traditional definition of luxury meant the highest quality products, status and in-shop experiences. The definition of luxury is expanding to include new values and lifestyles. Consumers are changing, however, and the meaning of luxury is changing for many, especially younger consumers. Luxury brands now focus on experience, transparency, trust and sustainability to stay relevant and appeal to their target audiences.

Luxury consumption is not just about owning luxury goods but also about appreciating and understanding the symbolic meanings associated with luxury brands (Wang, 2022). Consumers today have a more complex understanding of luxury brands that goes beyond traditional notions of exclusivity and high prices (Hudders et al., 2013). In summary, the meaning of luxury brands is changing because of the emergence of new luxury consumers who value experiences, authenticity and sustainability.

Digital brand experience for luxury

Assessing customers' perceptions and attitudes about a brand's digital experience is important for consumer satisfaction and loyalty (Remy et al., 2015). Digital collectibles, virtual metaverse spaces and gaming communities are becoming more popular among luxury brands to enhance customer engagement and loyalty. Luxury brands are increasingly focusing on digital brand experiences to enhance customer loyalty. Overall, luxury brands leverage digital channels to provide exclusive and personalised experiences to enhance customer loyalty and engagement (Aleem et al., 2022; Yeoman & McMahon-Beattie, 2018).

Brakus et al. (2009) categorised the brand experience into four constructs, sensory, affective, behavioural and intellectual.

In the past, experiences mainly occurred via in-person encounters. However, now as there are more channels than before, experiences are transited directly to consumers whenever they are via different marketing communication tools such as social media and websites. Because of this development, the brand experience can be conceptualised as subjective internal responses and subsequent behavioural responses evoked by brand-related stimuli received both physically and virtually.

Brand experience is a complex and multifaceted concept crucial to how customers perceive and understand brands. It is critical in creating an emotional connection with customers and building brand loyalty. Brand experience positively affects the quality of consumer-brand relationships, affecting customer engagement, trust, satisfaction and loyalty (Merdiaty & Aldrin, 2022).

Brand authenticity

Authenticity's properties encompass two aspects: indexical and iconic. Leigh et al. (2006) summarised that indexical authenticity occurs when an object has a connection with previous facts or a contextual interaction with people. On the other hand, iconic authenticity means an object is accurately presented as similar to the original physical object.

Brand authenticity can positively influence brand attachment, an essential concept in building brand attachment (Södergren, 2021). It expresses through origin, originality and uniqueness, and it refers to the degree to which a brand perceives as genuine, transparent and truthful in terms of its values and promises (Bruhn et al., 2012).

Creating an authentic luxury experience requires the development of complementary online and offline strategies. A well-managed and well-orchestrated online presence for luxury brands can ensure proper representation across all digital channels (Hennigs et al., 2012).

Choi et al. (2015) assume that the concept of authenticity has arisen in the current marketing field because of the rapid change in economic offering and put authenticity into the fashion industry. Their research identified seven factors of authenticity (authority, fashionability, consistency, innovativeness, sustainability, origin and heritage). It examined the effect of authenticity on brand attachment, brand commitment and brand loyalty in the fashion field.

Brand attachment

Brand attachment occurs when consumers have an affectional or emotional engagement with a brand, resulting in an active commitment to individual identities and a long-term relationship (Thomson et al., 2005). The conceptual properties of brand attachment can be reflected and measured by two key factors: brand-self connection and brand prominence (Park et al., 2010). Brand-self connection is the cognitive

and emotional link between a brand and an individual. Brand prominence occurs when positive feelings and memories about a brand take shape in a customer's mind. Brand prominence refers to the ease and frequency with which brand-related thoughts are triggered in a consumer's mind. Therefore, when emotions and feelings are perceived saliently, prominence could indicate attachment.

Thomson et al. (2005) and Kim et al. (2005) found that such feelings of attachment can drive the emotional commitment to a brand into the long term. In reference to brands, continuance commitment is assessed when consumers stick to a relationship with a given brand because of the cost they may pay off to switch to another or lack of an alternative (Bendapudi & Berry, 1997).

Development of research hypotheses

Digital brand experience on brand authenticity

The brand experience could stimulate a customer's internal or behavioural response, including consumer feeling and cognition, through brand-related elements. Meanwhile, authenticity is an effective tool for consumers to determine whether an experience is worthy. The virtual experience could further enhance this effect.

Consumers regard experience as authentic because of dating the experience or the product to a particular time in history or a place in the world. Luxury brands can provide holistic marketing by delivering virtual experiences that satisfy consumers and integrate into distinct and persistent brand value, which can help transform into luxury brand authenticity (Choi et al., 2015). In the digital environment, a brand provides experiences to consumers, still having to consider how the experiences turn into a real authenticity. Hence, we hypothesise that:

H1: Digital brand experience has a positive influence on brand authenticity for luxury fashion brands.

Brand authenticity on brand attachment

Brand authenticity is associated with brand attachment emerging from the brand trust, emotional experience or quality (Kim et al., 2005; Paxton & Moody, 2003). The positive influence between brand authenticity and brand attachment exists in many different industries and has been confirmed by previous researches. For example, Choi et al. (2015) proved that brand authenticity could predict brand attachment in sports brands cases. Besides, Assiouras et al. (2015) stated that the impact of brand authenticity on brand attachment in food brands could influence consumers' subsequent behaviour and intention during their shopping experience. As consumers urge for authenticity more consistently, they tend to attach emotionally to brands that preserve this characteristic. Therefore, we posit that:

H2: Brand authenticity has a positive influence on brand attachment for luxury fashion brands.

Digital brand experience on brand attachment

When accepting holistic brand experiences, the experiences can become memorable and takeaway impression that takes shape in consumers' minds (Carbone & Haeckel, 1994; Klaus & Maklan, 2007). Brakus et al. (2009) proved that evoking brand experience would lead to emotional attachment. Based on previous research, experiences can motivate affection changes in consumers' minds. However, there is limited research answer if the digital brand experience can generate the same consequences in enhancing brand attachment. Thus, the following hypothesis is developed:

H3: Digital brand experience has a positive influence on brand attachment for luxury fashion brands.

Cultivating luxury brand loyalty

The relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty appears to be mediated by attachment or commitment (Iglesias et al., 2011). There were numerous researches indicated that brand loyalty is an endogenous variable of brand attachment and brand commitment (Ahn et al., 2009; Lee & Sung, 2001). However, brand attachment and commitment are often discussed as components affecting brand loyalty. This paper aims to observe the result of the Instagram presence of a luxury brand and how it brings the perception and inner change for a customer thinking of a luxury brand. The emotional aspect of commitment comes from the attachment to a brand. Therefore, this research only put the brand attachment into the research framework instead of placing commitment and attachment. Kim et al. (2005) found that brand attachment influences the long-term commitment to a brand. Brand loyalty interprets the extent of attachment a customer has for a brand and is also related to user experience (Liu et al., 2012). As a result, we posit the following hypotheses:

H4: Brand attachment has a positive influence on brand loyalty for luxury fashion brands.

Attitudinal brand loyalty describes a consumer's overall satisfaction when associating with a brand's distinctive value and giving rise to a certain degree of commitment, whereas behavioural loyalty emphasises the willingness of a consumer to purchase one brand continuously and repeatedly (Liu et al., 2012; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). In a more experiential statement, if a customer remains loyal to a brand can observe the traits of positive word-of-mouth, a recommendation to others, repurchase intention and a high tolerance for price premium (Wu & Ai, 2016).

Ramaseshan and Stein (2014) stated a direct illustration that as positive brand experiences lead to pleasurable outcomes, consumers should want to repeat these positive experiences. The brand experience should affect brand relationship judgements and lead to brand loyalty. Before, researchers are

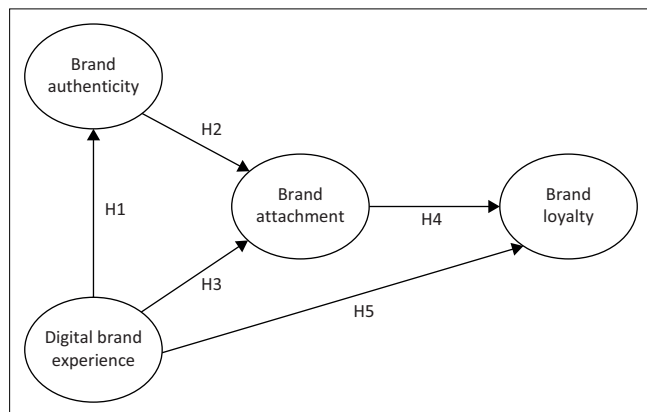
mainly focused on situations when brand experience in the physical environment affects brand loyalty. The analysis from Dessart et al. (2015) suggested that permeating through the customer's experience to construct engagement with the online brand community can enhance brand loyalty to a brand. As mentioned, social media platforms are seen as an online brand community. Thus, this research would like to discuss whether the brand experience in the digital environment (Instagram) positively affects brand loyalty. Thus, we posit the following hypotheses:

H5: Digital brand experience has a positive influence on brand loyalty for luxury fashion brands.

Methodology

Measurement

The conceptual model for this study is shown in Figure 1 and contains four primary constructs: digital brand experience, brand authenticity, brand attachment and brand loyalty. The four constructs in the model were measured mainly based on established scales, and the references are provided in Table 1. The items used as research variables in this study were adapted and reworded appropriately to fit the luxury fashion and digital environment context of this research to increase the reliability and validity of the survey instrument. Digital brand experience items used scales from Brakus et al. (2009) as foundations; all items were measured on a seven-point Likert scale anchored by 'strongly disagree' (1) and 'strongly agree' (7).



H, Hypotheses.

FIGURE 1: Conceptual model.

TABLE 1: Measurement scales.

| Constructs | Sub-constructs | Sources |
|--------------------------|--|---|
| Digital brand experience | Sensory, Affective, Behavioural, Intellectual | Based on Brakus et al. (2009) |
| Brand authenticity | Authority, Fashionability, Consistency, Innovativeness, Sustainability, Origin, Heritage | Based on Choi et al. (2015) |
| Brand attachment | Brand-self connection, Brand prominence | Based on Park et al. (2010) |
| Brand loyalty | Behavioural loyalty, Attitudinal loyalty | Based on Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001); and Ramaseshan and Stein (2014) |

Note: Please see the full reference list of the article, Lin, F-L., & Ku, T-H., (2023). Effect of digital brand experience on luxury fashion brand authenticity, attachment and loyalty. *South African Journal of Business Management*, 54(1), a3583. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajbm.v54i1.3583>, for more information.

Data collection

As mentioned, Instagram is a properly fit social media platform for luxury fashion brands and a popular social application for individuals. The scope of this survey will focus on the digital brand experience on luxury fashion brands' official Instagram accounts. Participants must be one or some of Instagram's official account followers. However, this research aims to find out how the Instagram experience affects attachment, authenticity and loyalty to a luxury brand. Thus, each participant is asked to answer the survey based on their experience with one specific luxury brand. The total number of samples collected was 112. Regarding demographic variables, of the 112 participants, 24.1% were males, and 75.9% were females. In addition, 5.4% were younger than 20 years old, 65.2% were between 21 and 25 years old, 23.2% were between 26 and 30 years old and 6.2% were older than 31 years.

Data analysis

To validate the research model and test the hypothesis, this research uses partial least squares (PLS) regression to test this research model using Smart PLS 3.0. The main objectives of PLS regression are examining the significance of the relationships between research constructs and the predictive power of the dependent variables. Thus, PLS regression is appropriate for testing applicability with theory building and prediction (Fornell & Bookstein, 1982). This study adopts a two-step analysis procedure to examine the research model. Firstly, the assessment of the measurement model will be demonstrated to test the reliability and validity of the measurement instrument (Chin, 1998; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Secondly, the structural model will be applied to investigate the significance of the hypotheses and the predictive ability of this research model.

Results and discussion

Measurement model

In this research, a concept model with a second-order hierarchy was proposed. From the result of confirmatory factor analysis (Table 2), each factor loading was greater than the cut-off value of 0.70 under their respective constructs, indicating sufficient indicator reliability; moreover, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliabilities (CR) and rho_A are greater than 0.7, and the average variance extracted (AVE) except for two constructs in the second-order measurement, and the AVE values still exceeded 0.45. This outcome indicates adequate scale reliability and convergent validity (Hair et al., 2009).

To evaluate discriminant validity, we establish the assessment through a heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio (Table 3). From the HTMT results, none of the values are more significant than the threshold of 0.85, which supports the discriminant validity between the constructs (Henseler et al., 2015).

TABLE 2: Confirmatory factor analysis results of the measurement model.

| Second order | First-order | Items | Loading | α | CR | AVE | rho_A |
|--|-----------------------|--|---------|----------|-------|-------|-------|
| Digital brand experience [†] | Sensory | The official Instagram presence has a strong impression on visual | 0.874 | 0.850 | 0.909 | 0.770 | 0.853 |
| | | I find this luxury brand interesting in a sensory way | 0.888 | - | - | - | - |
| | | This luxury brand's official Instagram content appeal to my sense | 0.870 | - | - | - | - |
| | Affective | The content includes feelings and sentiments | 0.807 | 0.728 | 0.847 | 0.649 | 0.747 |
| | | I do have strong emotions for this luxury brand | 0.724 | - | - | - | - |
| | | The luxury brand is emotional | 0.879 | - | - | - | - |
| | Behavioural | I engage in actions and behaviour when I see the official account | 0.902 | 0.840 | 0.904 | 0.759 | 0.851 |
| | | The content appeal to me to result in bodily experiences | 0.911 | - | - | - | - |
| | | The content prompts me to become action-oriented. | 0.796 | - | - | - | - |
| | Intellectual | I engage in much thinking when I receive the content of the brand | 0.859 | 0.711 | 0.838 | 0.635 | 0.734 |
| | | This luxury brand's Instagram content makes me think | 0.816 | - | - | - | - |
| | | The content stimulates my curiosity and problem solving | 0.707 | - | - | - | - |
| Brand authenticity [‡] | Authority | This luxury brand is unique and easily recognised by people | 0.747 | 0.821 | 0.881 | 0.650 | 0.826 |
| | | This luxury brand is socially approved | 0.820 | - | - | - | - |
| | | I have a positive image of this luxury brand | 0.845 | - | - | - | - |
| | | This luxury brand is excellent and makes me feel self-confident | 0.810 | - | - | - | - |
| | Fashionability | This luxury brand is adopting fashion | 0.885 | 0.871 | 0.913 | 0.725 | 0.877 |
| | | This luxury brand leads the trend | 0.869 | - | - | - | - |
| | | This luxury brand is contemporary, never out of fashion | 0.907 | - | - | - | - |
| | | This luxury brand can reflect my style and taste | 0.733 | - | - | - | - |
| | Consistency | This luxury brand has identical images | 0.909 | 0.753 | 0.862 | 0.681 | 0.799 |
| | | This luxury brand maintains consistency in style | 0.904 | - | - | - | - |
| | | This luxury brand has a consistent price | 0.631 | - | - | - | - |
| | Innovativeness | This luxury brand is at the cutting edge of fashion luxury | 0.859 | 0.818 | 0.892 | 0.734 | 0.820 |
| | | I can distinguish this luxury brand from other luxury brands | 0.843 | - | - | - | - |
| | | This luxury brand is creative | 0.867 | - | - | - | - |
| | Sustainability | This luxury brand is environmentally friendly | 0.877 | 0.852 | 0.910 | 0.772 | 0.858 |
| | | This luxury brand concerned about public affairs | 0.906 | - | - | - | - |
| | | This luxury brand takes social responsibility | 0.852 | - | - | - | - |
| | Origin | This luxury brand shows its country of origin | 0.876 | 0.847 | 0.908 | 0.766 | 0.852 |
| | | This luxury brand has an exotic image | 0.845 | - | - | - | - |
| | | This brand can show its national identity | 0.904 | - | - | - | - |
| | Heritage | This luxury brand has a long history. | 0.844 | 0.721 | 0.875 | 0.778 | 0.769 |
| This brand is timeless and has an international reputation | | 0.919 | - | - | - | - | |
| Brand attachment [§] | Brand-self Connection | This luxury brand represents part of me and who I am | 0.886 | 0.917 | 0.941 | 0.801 | 0.918 |
| | | I feel personally connected to this luxury brand | 0.940 | - | - | - | - |
| | | I feel emotionally bonded to this luxury brand | 0.882 | - | - | - | - |
| | | This luxury brand says something to others about who I am | 0.869 | - | - | - | - |
| | Brand Prominence | My thoughts toward this brand often automatic coming to mind. | 0.817 | 0.855 | 0.902 | 0.698 | 0.866 |
| | | My thoughts towards this brand come to my mind instantly | 0.911 | - | - | - | - |
| | | My thoughts and feeling towards this luxury brand occur naturally | 0.824 | - | - | - | - |
| | | The luxury brand name automatically evokes many good thoughts about past, present and future | 0.784 | - | - | - | - |
| Brand loyalty [¶] | Behavioural | I will buy this luxury brand next time | 0.810 | 0.785 | 0.862 | 0.610 | 0.787 |
| | | I intend to continue buying this luxury brand | 0.759 | - | - | - | - |
| | | I do not buy from other brands when this brand is available | 0.831 | - | - | - | - |
| | | I buy this brand instead of other brands that offer similar products | 0.717 | - | - | - | - |
| | Attitudinal | I would be willing to pay a higher price for this brand | 0.758 | 0.778 | 0.857 | 0.600 | 0.785 |
| | | I am dedicated to this luxury brand | 0.839 | - | - | - | - |
| | | I say positive things about this luxury brand to other people | 0.763 | - | - | - | - |
| | | I would recommend this luxury brand to friends and family | 0.733 | - | - | - | - |

CR, composite reliabilities; AVE, average variance extracted.

[†], CR = 0.913; AVE = 0.469; [‡], CR = 0.949; AVE = 0.461; [§], CR = 0.942; AVE = 0.673; [¶], CR = 0.905; AVE = 0.546.

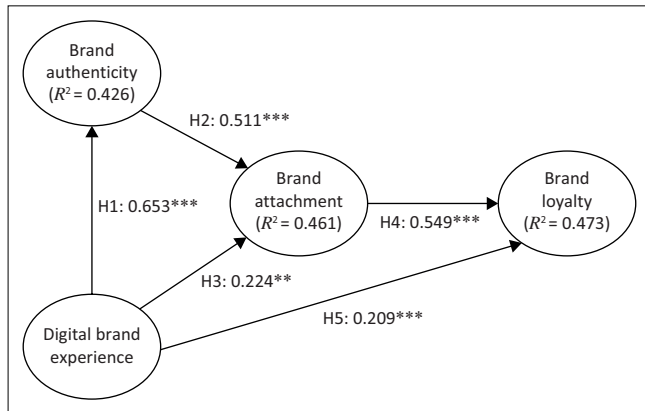
Structural model and hypotheses testing

Path analysis was performed by bootstrapping with 5000 iterations. The path analysis results for the proposed model are summarised in Figure 2. The standardised regression coefficients were demonstrated above each path to explain the relationship of four constructs: digital brand experience, brand authenticity, brand attachment and brand loyalty.

According to the result in Figure 2, brand authenticity is significantly influenced by digital brand experience (path coefficient = 0.653, $p < 0.001$), and brand attachment is significantly influenced by brand authenticity (path coefficient = 0.511, $p < 0.001$) and digital brand experience (path coefficient = 0.224, $p < 0.01$); these results supporting H1, H2 and H3. Moreover, brand attachment (path coefficient = 0.549) and digital brand experience (path

TABLE 3: Heterotrait-monotrait analysis results.

| Constructs | Digital brand experience | Brand authenticity | Brand attachment | Brand loyalty |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|------------------|---------------|
| Digital brand experience | - | - | - | - |
| Brand authenticity | 0.717 | - | - | - |
| Brand attachment | 0.614 | 0.708 | - | - |
| Brand loyalty | 0.583 | 0.567 | 0.736 | - |



** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

H, hypothesis; R^2 , coefficient of determination.

FIGURE 2: Partial least square regression results for the research model.

coefficient = 0.209, $p < 0.01$) significantly affect purchase brand loyalty, supporting H4 and H5. All the hypotheses in the proposed conceptual model are subjected to a $p < 0.05$ significance level. In addition, the explanatory power was provided by the R -square value that brand authenticity is 0.426 (H1), brand attachment is 0.461 (H2 and H3) and brand loyalty is 0.473 (H4 and H5); the results show that the explanatory ability of the research model is sufficient. Moreover, the Q-square values for brand authenticity, brand attachment and brand loyalty are 0.161, 0.302 and 0.244, respectively. The Q-square value is predictive relevance, measuring whether or not a model has predictive relevance. Q-square values above zero indicate that the model is well reconstructed and has predictive relevance.

The path analyses of the research prove the direct positive effects of digital brand experience, and those findings show that a higher perception of digital brand experience can lead to more positive results of brand authenticity, attachment and loyalty.

Firstly, digital brand experience significantly affects brand authenticity (H1). The result shows that consumers who perceive the brand experience on a luxury brand's digital platform to be beneficial considering that luxury brand to be more authentic. This result may also imply that authenticity is essential for consumers to decide whether an experience is valuable.

Secondly, the two exogenous variables of digital brand experience and brand authenticity, and their direct effects on brand attachment are 0.224 (H3) and 0.511 (H2), respectively. It was also found that brand authenticity as a mediator variable, and the indirect effect of digital brand experience on brand attachment is 0.334, which is more significant.

Therefore, brand authenticity is important for luxury brand marketers to consider when enhancing brand attachment.

The relationship of brand attachment to brand loyalty is significantly proved in this study (H4), and brand attachment has a partial mediating role (the indirect effect is 0.122) on the relationship between brand attachment and brand loyalty. The higher cognitive and emotional link between a brand and an individual, and more positive feelings and memories about a brand taking shape in a consumer's mind, will turn into higher brand loyalty. Consumers are more willing to purchase from the brand continuously and repeatedly, and they have more sincere commitment and recommendation in mind. These results reflect the indication from previous research from Thakur and Kaur (2016) that emotional attachment and attitudinal brand loyalty are essential for luxury fashion.

In addition, the result of this study proved that digital brand experience on Instagram influences brand loyalty, and the direct effect is 0.209 (H5). When customers accept a luxury fashion brand experience on Instagram, they are somehow willing to have a degree of engagement with that brand depending on the different purposes of interest, lifestyle and identity. Similar results were proved by Dessart et al. (2015), throughout experiences from online brand community help construct consumer engagement and further enhance brand loyalty.

General discussion

Female consumers, in particular, are more easily influenced by positive emotional attachment and stimulating attitudinal loyalty to a luxury brand. The relationship between brand authenticity and brand attachment is proven. The result reflects Carlston's (1992) research finding that the more associations a consumer makes with a brand, the stronger the relationship between the brand and the consumer generates.

According to Assiouras et al. (2015), in brand authenticity, the heritage factor provides the necessary association with elements such as history, tradition, country and place that lead to self-brand connection and brand attachment. The results of this study can reflect the indication from Assiouras et al. (2015). When consumers feel a luxury brand's authority, fashionability, consistency, innovativeness, sustainability, origin and heritage, they may obtain positive attachment (e.g. brand-self connection and brand prominence) to a luxury brand. Among the conditions of authenticity, authority is the most effective influence on audiences. Napoli et al. (2014) also indicated that consumers' perceptions of authenticity could help illustrate their attitudes towards a brand. Although luxury brands share similar properties with fashion brands, the importance of exclusivity and a sense of desirability makes marketing strategies for luxury fashion brands so different from other fashion brands. To respond to the characteristics, the impact of brand authenticity needs transformations or more affection in consumers' inner hearts,

such as brand attachment, therefore further may enhance loyalty to luxury fashion brands.

Previous studies mainly discussed the brand experience in the physical environment, especially in the luxury fashion sector. This research constructs the idea of digital brand experience, which is proposed generating from the presence on a luxury brand's social media platform. This study offers useful implications in practical terms. When marketers consider a presence on luxury brands' social media expressed by senses of visual and auditory, they should remember to consider the aesthetic and sensational degree of the photos and videos, and also whether the contents can raise emotions and feelings in the audiences. Further, the contents are better for urging consumers' lifestyle change or encouraging them to take physical actions like buying luxury fashion products. Thought-provoking content is also a key point to consider for luxury fashion brands.

This research suggests that marketers of luxury brands manage the brand experience on social media to bring thoughts of authentic to the viewers because it is what consumers evaluate a brand and then generate more attachment and loyalty. Ko et al. (2016) also suggests that luxury brand investments in social media marketing efforts could have positive effects on consumer brand loyalty and behaviour. It is a cost-effective marketing tool for brands. Among the elements of luxury fashion authenticity (i.e. authority, fashionability, consistency, innovativeness, sustainability, origin and heritage), authority is estimated as the most critical condition. Thus, when marketers think about content on social media, they should consider a more positive image for the luxury fashion brand to make trust and recognition by the audiences. The quickly identify logos, brand names and feature products can be shown often on the luxury brand's social media content. It also can remind the audiences of the luxury brand's unique selling points. Also, a luxury brand's origin and heritage are associated with consumers' attachment degree.

When marketers build content on social media, images and videos related to brand origin countries, such as cultures and regional identity, should be presented; emphasising the long history of the luxury brand and its timeless reputation are also beneficial to present as the content. Apart from this, the digital brand experience has to express a consistent posting style of material. At the same time, the creative and distinctive content are also made consumers more well-engaged. According to the research of Ko et al. (2016), luxury consumers tend to focus on the hedonic benefits of the loyalty programme, in contrast to non-luxury consumers who focus more on the practical benefits. As people focus more on sustainable fashion, the digital brand experience can add some materials to remind the connection between the luxury fashion brand and environmental issues or social responsibilities.

Conclusion

Because of the feature of storytelling and visual-based content, Instagram is the natural fit social media platform

for luxury fashion brands to engage with consumers. In the digital age, the brand experience is not only related to the physical environment anymore but should utilise online tools. These research findings suggest that luxury fashion brands should consider using Instagram. Experiences online are an important aspect of thinking and also provide suggestions for effort. Digital brand experience is seen as the origin for the further engagement and thoughts of the audiences on social media, for instance, authenticity, attachment and loyalty. With more positive sensory, affective, behavioural and intellectual experiences from luxury fashion brands, the audiences will generate higher preferences in authenticity, attachment and loyalty. Digital brand experience on Instagram can strengthen brand loyalty for consumers and influence their brand attachment and authenticity to brands. The positive experiential assessment brings a more delightful mood and a stronger attachment to brands (Lou & Xie, 2021).

The importance of brand authenticity should be concerned to achieve a more effective affective connection with consumers on social media. The exclusivity and myth would be the points for luxury fashion houses when they would like to set up marketing strategies on digital content. By understanding more elements to determine the audiences' positive attitudes and behaviours, a luxury brand can know how to integrate with the offline marketing strategy, thus providing completed experiences while keeping exclusivity in the ubiquitous environment on the Internet.

Limitations and further research

The features of social media are keeping updated, as are the updating features on Instagram. It may impact participants' experiences. The participants for this research are primarily women. If there are more male participants, it may make more comparisons between gender differences in the study. Further research can explore other moderating effects of constructs in the research model. Also, the results of the present study are based on samples from Greater China; future research can extend samples to other markets of luxury brand consumption to identify and understand the characteristic of diverse consumers. In addition, it is possible to compare samples from Great China with emerging markets in Asia.

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Authors' contributions

F.L.L. and T.H.K. designed the conceptual model, verified the analytical methods and analysed the data. F.L.L. and T.H.K. contributed to the design and implementation of the research, to the analysis of the results and to the writing of the manuscript.

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

Funding information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the authors.

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