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Consumer's Purchase Intention towards Luxury Retailer's Social Media Advertisements

—A Case Study of a Shoe Retail—UAE-Dubai Mall

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Abstract

Digital marketing is considered the preferred method comparing to traditional marketing nowadays [1], but is it true for luxury and expensive products? Since the perception prevails that the concepts "luxury" and "digital" are quite incompatible [2], this paper aims to explore the effectiveness of digital marketing advertisements of luxury retailers, while also exploring consumer's purchasing intent based on the viewing of such promotions. The overall goal is to provide a model of luxury purchase behaviour through harnessing social media. As a constructionist ontology-based researcher, I believe in multiple versions of reality which can evolve based on my target consumer experiences [3]. My epistemological stance is interpretivism with a subjective approach, inductively interacting with consumers to better understand what this "truth" means to them, incorporating textual material to support the analytical interpretations [4]. It is hoped this paper will inform fashion brands marketers about social media practice to achieve creation of purchase intention and ultimately achieve target sales. The paper is useful to both practitioners and academics in the fields of social media marketing and purchase intention. The research provides some initial insights into consumer perspectives of social media ads and online purchase behaviour.

Keywords

Social Media Marketing, Purchase Intention, Luxury Brands, Consumer Behavior

1. Introduction

Effect of social media was generously discussed in relation to marketing objectives, like, band image, awareness and loyalty, generating online traffic, reducing

marketing cost and stimulating sharing contents [5] [6] [7]. However, consumer's purchase intention and behavior are always dominant in stakeholders' goals to achieve financial targets and for market shares and success.

With the new era of digital media and communications, both consumers and marketers are approaching digital direction. Consumers can compare prices, seek for better quality and communicate openly on company's digital page, most importantly, being able to rate the product.

The problem of the research is focused on luxury brands and the approach of using social media channels to achieve consumer's purchase intention and behaviour. How can luxury products achieve purchase intention similar to more economical products who can stimulate emotional social advertisement, convincing customers to buy? The paper facilitates answering the main question of: Is social media advertisements effective in achieving consumer's purchase intention or not?

Supporting the purpose of this research, a case study was selected; a luxury shoe retail in Dubai mall, UAE. A pseudonym will be used in the following text so that the company cannot be recognized, and it will be referred to as (L123). The data gathered will ultimately demonstrate whether (L123)'s online advertising is effective in achieving sales.

2. Literature Review

Stephen [8] states there are two main purposes for using social media platforms: searching and communicating. Based on consumers interactions, comes the value of social media [9], aiding in projecting potential customer behaviour analysis.

Luxury brands have been pioneers in exploiting social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram [10], by effectively engaging with customers [11] [12] and securing brand preferences and loyalty [13]. However, balancing the consumer's desire with notions of success [14] remains a problem, which, if solved, could enhance brand equity.

The effect of social media has been discussed extensively in the literature. Interestingly, paying premium price found least effective when compared to brand preferences and loyalty [13], indicating that marketers should manipulate social media to generate increased sales.

With this in mind, understanding consumer purchasing behaviour on social media networks has become an imperative for the modern-day marketer; luxury brands stand to benefit greatly. Some studies have mentioned purchase intention as one significant effect factor; e.g. how mobile display advertisements influence brand attitude and purchase intention [15]. Another study demonstrates how seeking opinions about clothes and footwear influences consumer purchasing behaviour [16].

Kim & Ko [17] have effectively investigated purchase intention and found that trust has a significant impact on purchase intention. Trust, in social media mar-

keting, can be obtained through entertainment and communication. However, Chen & Wells [18] insist that entertainment variable has the most impact on website visiting attitudes, which was examined with the words Fun, Exciting, Cool, Imaginative, Entertaining, and Flashy

Factors influencing purchase intentions, precisely for luxury brands, on social media platforms remain uncertain. Therefore, since luxury brands stand to benefit significantly in terms of sales by mining social media [19], this paper aims particularly to investigate consumer purchase intention with attributes effecting it.

3. Methods

Having consulted the literature, considering the effect of trust and entertainment [17]. This paper targeted responses solicited from friends' discussion/influence (*i.e.*: [16]), checking websites (*i.e.*: [18]), liking/sharing the advertisement, purchasing from the shop, comparing prices, tagging friends, or completely neglecting the advertisement.

Appling an inductive, exploratory approach to analyse consumer purchase intention towards (L123)'s social media advertisements. The study used a purposive sample [20] which enables researchers to target specific information. selecting Dubai mall location, which has (L123) and other luxury fashion retail stores. semi-structured interviews was used, giving participants "freedom to answer the open-ended questions using as much time as they wish" [21], targeting consumers walking in the Mall, who range from medium to medium-high economical grade, aware of luxury brands and (L123), are prepared to purchase luxury items, have purchased luxury shoes in the last year and are active on social media.

Before conducting the interview, two pilot tests were run with two neighbours, helping to effectively brainstorm about formulating more concise questions as a narrative sequence. During the interview, I added probing questions prompted by the responses [22]. The interview contained two parts: quantifiable demographic data and substantive qualitative data. Each question has different aim to achieve:

Question 1:

Aims to understand the context of consumer behaviour's style on social media and the reasons for spending so much time on social media. What patterns do they follow each day? Are searching and communicating [8] the only purposes?

Question 2:

Focuses on attention paid to luxury retailer advertisements as the first step in evaluating their effectiveness. Through the following probes, we can understand why the advertisement attracted attention in the first place. would it lead for "clicking" to open the advertisement?

Question 3:

Explores how the economical aspect is important for luxury retail, as prices

are intuitively expensive. The probes aim to investigate the degree of price importance and how consumers behave toward it.

Question 4:

Investigates the social network influence and to what extent it relates to social media purchase intention.

Question 5:

Targets consumers social media input which can help companies predict consumer behaviour, and it will help to strengthen brand preferences.

Question 6:

Explores consumer preferences of luxury brands which could affect the attention to the advertisements if certain logos are used in them. This question attempts to clarify inputs of higher possible responses to the advertisements.

4. Findings

Data was extracted through field interviews conducted in Dubai mall, where all luxury brands are represented. From the 13 questionnaires distributed, nine customers were selected to participate in interviews, each lasting between (35 - 50) minutes.

The analysis was able to code the process of purchase intention through three phases, and revealed six themes among the phases, which includes creation areas of the purchase intention. Figure 1 maps luxury consumer behaviour on social media. It shows three phases of purchase intention: stimulant, attitude and behaviour.

4.1. Stimulant

The data analysis revealed that luxury consumers do spend a minimum of 2 hours a day on social media, between checking notifications mainly on Facebook and Instagram and browsing through social media. The results confirm the findings in the literature that social media purpose is centred on searching and communicating [8]. While using social media, luxury consumers paid attention to luxury advertisements conditioned in two factors:
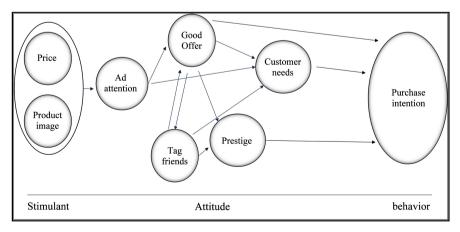

Figure 1. Purchase intention process for luxury products in social media.

1) The price of the product must be mentioned.

Despite that Kim & Ko [17] discussed the novel value (p. 164) of quality and services which are appreciated by customers, allowing them to accept the premium price of luxury items, this means, as stated by Lin, Li & Wu [23] that including the price in the advertisement will imply as a "lower category level" (p. 992). The challenge of luxury advertisement characteristic confirms previous literature of incompatibility between luxury and digital.

From the methodological perspective, this paper synthesizes the features of price approaches in advertisement, comprehensively considering social media luxury environment, to develop mechanism that can significantly enhance social media effectiveness.

The integration of price in luxury social media advertisement had been heavily coded in this paper. Data analysis revealed that online shopping has a time value counted along with daily tasks. This means that if the price of luxury item is mentioned, it will help in the personal evaluation process of each customer, deciding whether this item is worthy of their attention or not.

2) Attractive product image

The literature discussed the challenges for luxury brands in providing consumers pleasure and attaching success symbolically to their purchased luxury products. These challenges can fade away while demonstrating an attractive image in the advertisements. Callow [24] confirmed the importance of images in creating instant emotional power with the potential to recall the advertisement by images more than words (p. 3). Paying attention to attractive images is a way for consumers to visually fulfil their ambitions of a luxury life-style.

4.2. Attitude

This is defined as the consumer's overall evaluation [25], based on performance beliefs and subjective importance weights. Figure 1 proposes the following attitude:

1) Response to a "good offer":

The definition of "good offer" was articulated in the interviews, when participants repeatedly mentioned this phrase. Apparently, customers are not contradicting the high price-based on premium value [17]. However, customers do search for additional values on the actual retail price. Data analysis confirms if the price has promotional value, the advertisement would generate more attention and will impact on purchase intention behaviour. Montaner & Pina [26] confirms non-monetary promotions are primarily effective in high quality item's advertisement, it will reinforce brand equity giving entertainment benefits and enjoyable experience [27].

Responding to a "good offer" as additional gift like a small bag, will contribute to other expected actions by customers (Figure 1). The association between luxury advertisement and "good offer" can be followed by evaluating needs, which, if matched, will proceed to purchase intention. In the same time, it can lead to tagging friends who are also engaged in activities around prestigious-value

products.

2) Evaluate needs:

Kim & Ko [17] presented their model of social media marketing, demonstrating that consumer relationships affect the purchase intention, confirming that Intimacy and trust are the two main indicators of customer relationship. Data analysis revealed another indicator "needs" that can be added to the previous model. Needs was defined (based on the data extracted from participants interviews) as: the function of an item specifications that can fill a shortage or satisfy a desire. Participant number 3 said: "if I want it and I don't have it before, then yes will purchase it".

Needs are not related to liking/disliking a brand or being attached/detached to an item. For example, one must own sandals during summer in UAE. Therefore, consumers need these items and continuously will desire new ones especially if it's fashionable and trendy.

If needs are arranged hierarchically according to importance with purchasing based on a good offer, it would come second. This prioritizing then naturally led further questioning.

The data sampling was based on a set of criteria of targeting medium to medium-high consumer economical grades, because, high graders are expected to neglect price. Thus, their purposing to buy online will require another purchase intention model. Participants in this study were found to be willing to purchase luxury items but are still conscious of cost.

3) Tagging friends

The data analysis revealed that the attitude of bringing attention of other friends to luxury advertisements can be considered because of responding to economically convenient deals. On the other hand, generating new potential customers and buyers.

Figure 1 shows that tagging friends is essential in the purchase intention, in which the social influence will be generated after tagging or sharing with friends. Friends, after being notified, will discuss and influence each other's purchase intention.

The interviews included questions about whether other friends are interested in being notified of luxury brands. The social interactions reveal the significant effect of discussing luxury items between friends. It is deemed an entertaining topic of conversation to discuss newly launched products. Apparently, the main theme of friends' discussions about luxury items is "prestige".

4) Prestige

The emerging theme of "prestige value" extracted from participants comments have matched with the concepts of luxury brand in the literature. This attitude of gaining a prestigious status can result directly to purchase intention. However, it can only be created after the economically convenient offer was viewed or if the consumer was first exposed to it from a discussion with a friend.

Concerning the positive association between trust and purchase intention [17], participants were asked about their intention to purchase a brand that ap-

pears prestigious but had not been experienced to the consumer previously. however, results were inconsistent, revealing that despite what brand preference a consumer has, if prestigious style is matched, consumers would proceed with purchase intention for any brand without prior experience or preferences.

4.3. Behaviour

Consumers intention seems possible to be created through social media advertisements (Figure 1), it has certain stimulant and attitude towards luxurious value-added items. Data analysis shows purchase intention here as the first step in predicting actual sale. Participant's answers revealed that it was not necessary to purchase online if the purchase intention had already been created. According to interviews results, the most likely way to interact with the product was for consumers to either visit the retailer or browse the website.

5. Critical Reflection

From the results of extensive research, the interview was the main source of conducting qualitative research. I thoroughly reviewed proper interview technique, from choosing participants to transcribing the responses. Patton [28] follows the "empathic neutrality" (p. 55) which I attempt to observe and interpret all settings as they are.

Following a guided "framework for developing specific designs and concrete data collection tactics" [28] was essential to have a proper sequence of interview questions and topics, ensuring participants can concentrate on their own experience for each topic (p. 59).

The sequence was not strictly adapted throughout the interviews. In contrast, the interview was flexible in searching for the Truth to construct a "power with which the information is understood and used" [29] (p. 84).

Allowing for context of the moment situations to be managed usefully. Using a mix of open ended and structured questions [30] was helpful to understand participants experiences and the meaning of their experiences.

Congruency was ensured by having the interview anchored to the purpose of the study and the research questions [31]. The following protocol steps were followed:
-   Developing clear interview questions

Brainstorming to evaluate research question first empowered the data collection of various contexts of consumers' lives and experiences. Patton [32] states, "you're hoping to elicit relevant answers that are meaningful and useful in understanding the interviewee's perspective. That's basically what interviewing all about is" (p. 471), *i.e.* building rapport [3] between questions provided to the interviewee the joy of personal experience shared through story telling.
-   Maintain the interview guide

Brinkmann & Kvale [33] addressed the importance of having interview questions expressed in everyday language (p. 158), having "presence of voice in the text" [34] (p. 36), unlike the research questions which are stated in a theoretical

language. Also, employing language proper for participants precludes jargon [20] [32]. In addition, questions were asked one at a time without interruption, the participants spoke while interviewer showed understanding of the question through nodding or expressing gratitude [3].

Follow-ups and prompts were helpful to seek in-depth data. Some were used necessarily on-the-spot and some were prepared and expected before the interview [3]. Berg [35] also recognized scheduled scripted probes and unscheduled probes arising from the dialogue.

The interview schedule included four types of questions [3] [20] [36] [37] following a sequence to extract themes from, based on the answers received.

Table 1 presents the four types used in the interview schedule.

- Piloting the interview

After preparing the interview questions, it's better to check if the questions are arranged in the right order [20], research instruments should be tested [38] to reach for a conclusive revision by piloting the interview with consumers who mirror the characteristic of the participants of the research interview.

This research had used two pilot interviews with two neighbours chosen carefully according to the criteria set for the interview participants, the only difference was the location.

Actual interviews took place in Dubai Mall, this location confirms participants are matching the research target. However, Due to noisiness around the place, it was challenging to strictly maintain congruence [39] between the questions.

Having completed the interview, this method was highly effective for studying consumer behaviour. Moreover, it can eliminate ambiguities, which are inherent in human language, as the precisely formulated interview questions and prompts were able to clarify all meanings. Also, the experience was beneficial in that it allowed to discuss a case study with consumers face-to-face, with the aim of uncovering themed experiences that affect marketing objectives. In addition, of gaining an in-depth understanding of consumer-purchase intention in real-life context & setting [40].

Table 1. Interview question types.

Type of Question	Example
Introductory Questions	Based on the information that you provided in the questionnaire, you spend an average 5 hours a day on social media, please explain briefly the context of your daily routine and purpose of using social media
Transition Questions	you said you are familiar with the (L123), and you have purchased luxury shoes before. Is that correct? #2: Do you pay attention if you notice (L123) advertisements on social media? If no: go to #3. If yes: why did it grab your attention? Would you click to open the advertisement? If yes: go to the next probe. If no: why not?
Key Questions	What would you identify in advertisement? Is it important to mention price in luxury brands advertisements? (see questions listed under #4)
Closing Questions	Before we conclude this interview, is there anything from your experience of online shopping from luxury retailer like (L123) that we did not talk about?

On other hand, Glaser & Strauss [41] and Strauss & Corbin [40] refer to the "theoretical sensitivity" of researcher, and since it's a one-to-one method, this paper had presented analytical characteristic, showing "the ability to give meaning to data and the capacity to understand" [40] (p. 42).

6. Areas for Development

Milena, Dainora, & Alin [42] claims that some questions are more suitable for group discussions like focus group (p. 1282) highlighting more themes about consumer experiences to be used in interviews. Other potential helpful approach in selecting participants could been using consumers data from Dubai mall, sending emails for interview proposal, and assigning time/date to conduct the interview. Jones & Pitt [43] recognize programs that can automatically analyze responses (p. 557) which leads for a faster interview progress.

7. Conclusion

The study aimed to highlight consumer purchase intention of luxury brands as represented on social media platforms. Earlier research was focused on consumer engagement behaviour (*i.e.*, [44]), or by quantifying brand equity (*i.e.*, [13]). Some studies have recognized purchase intention as an independent variable which needs measurable investigation. Kim & Ko [17] found that social media marketing can affect positively on purchase intention from three aspects: entertainment ($\beta = 0.31$, t = 4.32, p < 0.001), interaction ($\beta = 0.25$, t = 3.54, p < 0.01), and word of mouth ($\beta = 0.19$, t = 2.65, p < 0.01). Our paper extends latter research by incorporating more in-depth themes tied to consumer's purchase behaviour. The semi-structured interview was effective in social movement research [45], enabling collecting a comprehensive data of participants perspectives [21].

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Appendix 1: The Interview Schedule

Name:

Age:

Profession:

Marital status:

Income range: *bellow 30,000 *31,000 - 50,000 *51,000 - 70,000 *71,000 - 100,000 (AED)

Social media daily average usage:

Ever purchased online?

Ever purchased luxury brand shoes?

Ever purchased online from (L123)?

Introductory Question

1) Please explain briefly the context of your daily routine of using social media.
- What social media you check?
- Any difference between your social media usage during early morning, med day and evening?

Transition Questions to Social Media Advertisements

2) Do you pay attention if you notice (L123) advertisements on social media?
- Why did it grab your attention?
- Do you believe the (L123) advertisement conveys truthfulness?
- Did you enjoy the (L123) advertisement?
- Would you click to open the advertisement?
- Any chance you could check their website for more options that can be tailored to your preferences?
3) What would you first recognize in the advertisement?

Key Questions of effective variables of social media advertisements

4) Is it important to mention price in luxury brands advertisements?
- If yes, do you compare prices with other retailers, or even the difference between the online price and price at the shop?
- If the price was less than the price at the shop, would it impact your purchase?
5) Do you often tell your friends about (L123)'s advertisements?
- Do you think any of your friends may be interested in purchasing from (L123)?
- Have you planned with your friend to visit the shop after discussing a specific advertisement?
- Have you ever tagged friends to share their advertisement?
6) Would you like/share a (L123) advertisement to keep as a future reference to purchase?
7) Is there a brand you are interested in for yourself that you have experience with on social media?

Closing Questions

8) Is there anything from your experience of online shopping from luxury retailer like (L123) that we did not talk about and you would like to mention?