

Chapter 8

Consumer–Brand Relationship and Use of the Website in Virtual Communication in the Luxury Furniture Industry

Vera Lúcia Lourenço

Urbanização Quinta de São José, Portugal

André Whiteman Catarino

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2907-6845>

Textile Engineering Department, University of Minho, Portugal

Manuel José Fonseca

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3290-8449>

Polytechinc Institute of Viana do Castelo (IPVC), Portugal

Bruno Barbosa Sousa

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8588-2422>

Polytechinc Institute of Cávado and Ave, Portugal

ABSTRACT

Luxury management can be considered the management of paradoxes between intangibility and functionality, rationality and emotion, modern technology with traditional craftsmanship, showing that luxury comes from creation, timelessness, emotion, excellence, heritage, and authenticity. This chapter results from two methods, a qualitative analysis, which presents an analysis grid with the most varied characteristics; these are divided into six groups: identification, content, product page, utility, entertainment and complementary relationship, speed and other presences visible on three websites of luxury furniture brands. The other method is the quantitative one, which was a questionnaire with the understanding the perceived quality of the website using the WebQual scale, as well as understanding the purchase intention and the importance of the internet in the purchase decision process.

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INTRODUCTION

The luxury market needs specific behaviors such as marketing strategies in order for these brands to differentiate themselves from mass consumer brands, and it is important to know which means have the most impact on all luxury values and which the positioning is not lost. “*Luxury*” is intrinsically inserted in society, and is usually defined as rarity and exclusivity, which is sought when a status or social position is desired. However, the term “*luxury*” in a systematized and integrated way is directly linked to exclusivity, desire, dream and exuberance, particularities that can become overly derogatory and ostentatious. Throughout the history of humanity, and based on the historical framework of luxury, its importance and its impact on society is understood from the earliest times to today’s society, which is positioned in the social differentiation that it produces, such as the appearance of a quality of life, the beauty and the pleasure of the products by consumers. Thus, the symbolic grandeur and social dimension of the concept of luxury, as well as its value, is not easy to define because it is treated and represented by subjective meaning, and because over time it has also undergone several changes in its characteristics. Lipovetsky’s *Ephemeral Empire* shows that the notion of luxury has changed, and nowadays this term has assumed a “more intimate than emotional character” (Lipovetsky, 2009) presenting itself to society as a way to satiate themselves, and not as an element of social differentiation, as was observed in past times. Thus, luxury is lived more emotionally than the essence of the product by consumers, where it is seen by the author of a “behavioral act that is based on the maxim of why I want and not why I can”. A brand, can have much more value than their products, because its positioning in the market allows its target audience to create perceptions and identify with the brand identity and image, so that it can create its preferences, where “building a luxury brand is inseparable from the symbolic management of its roots, the work of building a myth” (Lipovetsky and Roux, 2005). The brand is a guarantee of luxury, that is, the consumer when looking for a certain brand, this unconsciously associates with luxury, adding an identity to the product. On the other hand, consumers can also associate luxury with a particular brand simply by the positioning it occupies in their mind, however, the greater the perceived value of a brand, linked to exclusivity, the greater the preference for that same brand. But at the same time, the luxury consumer, being aware of the high value that the brand can adopt, will also perceive a devaluation of its prestige, where the desire may diminish. The fact that the world owns and confronts consumers daily with new brands in the market shows that competition will have to increase their ability to have a good management of their attributes, as their main objective to differentiate themselves from others and achieve their desired success.

Brands are increasingly consumed according to what they represent, whether in lifestyles, a concept, or even emotions and not so much product related. For the postmodern brand enriches the shopping experience by offering a fantasy or aspiration that gives specific meaning to any consumed product, brand and service. Today, the vast majority of consumers learn to manage and make life decisions based on information taken from the Internet. Proving that the internet is increasingly the beginning for buying products and services, where the advantages are significant, such as convenience, diversity of supply and saving time and money. The Internet has the ability to transform the way consumers relate to brands where, this transformation is affecting the marketing economy while making many of the traditional features and strategies outdated. In this sense, brands are increasingly looking for marketing solutions that use the internet as the main tool for publicizing goods and services. This is because the internet is used by the general public to gather information, surpassing the users of radio, television and others. Internet usage has been increasing over the years, as has its benefit. The communication of luxury

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