

Chapter 46

When Luxury Brands Changed Their Approach to Social Media

Fabrizio Maria Pini

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0485-3919>

MIP School of Management, Politecnico di Milano, Italy

Dinara Timergaleeva

Wyde – The Connective School, Italy

ABSTRACT

COVID-19 lockdowns led to a new approach to social media communication by luxury fashion brands. This chapter explores recent pandemic-related changes in the social context and the need for brands to rethink their narrative to engage consumers and influence purchase decisions. The authors selected a panel of 28 fashion luxury brands, both independent and conglomerate-owned, to analyze the paradigm shift in social media communication and content creation. Their findings show that with social media acting as the main touchpoint, luxury fashion brands have effectively produced new communication archetypes, revealing the latent potential of digital platforms as strategic tools.

INTRODUCTION

Luxury fashion brands can be described as latecomers to marketing strategies for digital media—long regarded as incompatible with their image of exclusivity and uniqueness (Heine & Berghaus, 2014). The main reason for this lack of interest was the assumption that digital media was better suited to mass-market products, with their e-commerce websites and low-priced merchandise. Luxury fashion consumers, on the other hand, were traditionally perceived as an elitist group demanding a personal touch and a rich, multi-sensory experience that could only be provided through physical touchpoints (Dell’Olmo, Riley & Lacroix, 2003).

Only in recent years have luxury fashion brands gained a new perspective on digital and social media, and they have done so because of an evolution in their customers’ shopping habits. The growing relevance of millennials as the core customer segment, along with their extensive use of social media

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-4503-7.ch046

When Luxury Brands Changed Their Approach to Social Media

and participation in groups and communities, has forced luxury brands to adopt new communication strategies, such as increasing their presence in social media and partnering with influencers to reach and engage customers. Involvement in social media content and participation in groups and communities affect customers' brand-perception and motivation to buy luxury fashion goods, and may eventually lead to an offline purchase. Luxury fashion shoppers generally access social media platforms to become acquainted with a brand's lifestyle, collections, and iconic products. Consumers' attitude towards brand engagement is more reactive than proactive (Mosca & Casalegno, 2017; Pini & Pelleschi, 2017) and related to the consumption of visual content as a source of inspiration and sense of belonging (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012). In this sense, the interaction between customers, fans, and luxury brands still retains some of the traditional perception of luxury brands as detached from customers and dictating standards, trends, and tastes (Remuary, 2004).

The social and economic crisis brought by the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing lockdowns across the world have led to a very different set of circumstances, created by consumers' new communication needs and demand for deeper, more personal engagement with brands. These events have brought a radically new perspective to social media content creation and management, and a new engagement model that may affect the relationship between consumers and luxury brands over the long term, as well as carrying some interesting implications for future social media marketing efforts.

In order to analyze this paradigm shift in social media communication and content creation, the authors selected a panel of 28 luxury fashion brands, both independent and conglomerate-owned. The research aimed to answer the following questions: How have luxury fashion brands reacted to lockdown measures? Did their narratives undergo an evolution or change? Did any archetypical brand narrative approaches emerge during the crisis? A grounded research exploratory method was adopted (Glazer et al., 2006) to answer the research questions, with an ethnographic approach based on artifact analysis (Hine, 2015; Rose, 2012). Special focus was given to brand communication artifacts (frequency, layout, tone of voice, object of communication, communication details) published on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn over a time span encompassing: (i) the month before the crisis hit Europe; (ii) the onset of the crisis and subsequent lockdowns; (iii) the first easing of lockdown measures.

The remainder of this chapter is organized as follows. First, drawing upon data from a wide variety of sources, the authors provide a historical perspective on the evolution of communication strategies in the luxury fashion industry (Howell and Prevenier, 2001), highlighting different phases as well as social and economic determinants. The next section outlines research design and methods used in assessing luxury fashion brands' communication approach at the onset of the pandemic. Finally, the authors describe the main findings from the research and offer recommendations for management that will likely prove beneficial to social media marketers in the luxury fashion industry.

1.COMMUNICATION PRACTICES AND STRATEGIES IN THE LUXURY FASHION INDUSTRY: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Luxury fashion brands' narratives and meanings have evolved over time, becoming the portal through which customers and fans could "enter the legend" (Remaury, 2004; Mosca & Casalegno, 2020) and transform themselves into the heroes of the myths that are constructed and disseminated by brands¹ (Sachs, 2011).

16 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:
www.igi-global.com/chapter/when-luxury-brands-changed-their-approach-to-social-media/297342

Related Content

Contemporary Trends in Women's Entrepreneurship and Managerial Positions: A Comprehensive Global Overview of Women Shining in Tourism and Hospitality

Hafizullah Dar, Uma Pandey and Mudasir Ahmad Dar (2025). *Empowering Women Through Rural Sustainable Development and Entrepreneurship* (pp. 37-50).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/contemporary-trends-in-womens-entrepreneurship-and-managerial-positions/364748

Introduction to Smart Grids and E-Mobility Ecosystem

Leo John, Fairosebanu Abduland Jaffer A. Alzubi (2024). *E-Mobility in Electrical Energy Systems for Sustainability* (pp. 90-111).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/introduction-to-smart-grids-and-e-mobility-ecosystem/341164

Foreign Direct Investment: Motivations, Trends and Challenges

Carmen Veronica Zefinescu, Marian Ctilin Voica and Panait Mirela (2019). *International Journal of Sustainable Economies Management* (pp. 36-48).

www.irma-international.org/article/foreign-direct-investment/223206

Stochastically Balancing Trees for File and Database Systems

Aziz Barbar and Anis Ismail (2013). *International Journal of Green Computing* (pp. 58-70).

www.irma-international.org/article/stochastically-balancing-trees-file-database/80239

IoT and Big Data Security Issues and Challenges: A Technological Perspective

Swati Gupta, Meenu Vijarania, Anjali Gautam, Aarti Yadav and Jyoti Goel (2023). *Intelligent Engineering Applications and Applied Sciences for Sustainability* (pp. 59-76).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/iot-and-big-data-security-issues-and-challenges/329572