Exploring the Relationship between Online Customer Engagement on Luxury Fashion Brands

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Abstract

Social media creates an environment for marketers to connect with target customers in a personalized and interactive manner. It also indicates social media interaction, engagement, and personal communication have become an essential brand communication channel for fashion brands. It is also a key marketing tool for brand equity, brand loyalty and brand preference. Among social media, Instagram is the most important platform for communication and marketing for the luxury fashion industry. This study examines how Louis Vuitton, a luxury fashion brand, engages with their customers on Instagram. While exploring the literature very few researches have been conducted on the relationship between online consumer engagement on the popular social media platform Instagram and luxury fashion brand Louis Vuitton. The objectives of this research are to clarify the concept of luxury brands, to analyze how these brands utilize Instagram for enhancing consumer engagement through content strategies and audience interactions, and to evaluate the effectiveness of influencer and celebrity endorsements in shaping brand image and influencing consumer behavior. Using Thematic Analysis and Sentiment Analysis, the study reveals that social media significantly contributes to brand equity. Engaging content and high levels of interaction foster an emotional connection between consumers and brands, leading to increased loyalty and purchase intent. By considering the research implications and recommendations for future exploration, stakeholders such as marketers, and academics can gain valuable knowledge. Marketers can optimize and develop effective social media strategies aimed at enhancing brand equity and shaping consumer behavior. Academics can expand the body of knowledge on social media's influence on consumer behavior.

Keywords: social media marketing; luxury brands; consumer engagement; influencer marketing; Instagram marketing strategies

1. Introduction

This research aims to examine the interaction that customers have with luxury fashion brands focusing on their activity on the Instagram platform using Louis Vuitton. This study seeks to determine the impact that Instagram marketing has on the luxury fashion market because it is one of the key strategies in this industry. Specifically, it looks at the strategies used by brands on Instagram to connect with their audience. It examines how the platform's content strategies, influencer endorsements, and audience interactions influence brand equity, loyalty, and consumer behavior (Bazi et al., 2023 & Wankhade et al., 2022). By examining Louis Vuitton's approach on Instagram, the research sheds light on how luxury brands use this platform not just to advertise but also to build deeper relationships with their audience and maintain their prestigious image in the competitive world of luxury fashion.

Social media is transforming the marketing landscape and creating an environment for brands to interact with consumers in personalized and engaging ways. According to recent data, Instagram will have over 2 billion active users by 2023, and 90% of these users follow at least one business account. Approximately 70% of shoppers visit Instagram to discover products, making it an important platform for digital marketing strategies, especially across the luxury fashion industry (Ahmed et al., 2023). Luxury brands like Louis Vuitton have taken greater advantage of Instagram's visual-first approach, where high-quality images and videos just align with the aesthetic value and aspirational qualities attached to luxury goods. In addition, studies show that posts by luxury fashion brands generate engagement rates of up to 3%, higher than most other industries (Wankhade et al., 2022). This combination of platform features and consumer behavior enables luxury brands to build equity, enhance customer loyalty, and foster deeper emotional connections with their target audience. Research further underscores the importance of platforms such as Instagram in showcasing a brand's heritage, craftsmanship, and exclusivity. For instance, luxury brands are increasingly employing Instagram stories and reels to provide behind-the-scenes looks into product creation and exclusive events, resonating with consumers seeking authentic and aspirational experiences. These strategies not only position the brand as desirable but also align with the modern consumer's demand for transparency and connectivity, critical for maintaining relevance in a competitive market (Ahmed et al., 2023).

Online customer engagement (OCE) is increasingly recognized as a critical factor in shaping consumer behavior and brand perception. Scholars define OCE as the depth of interaction, trust, and emotional connection that consumers develop with brands through digital platforms (Bonilla-Quijada et al., 2023). In the luxury fashion sector, where brand identity and exclusivity are paramount, engagement strategies have evolved to include immersive storytelling, visually compelling content, and influencer collaborations. Studies show that OCE drives brand equity by fostering trust and emotional connections, crucial for luxury brands like Louis Vuitton (Wankhade et al., 2022).

Online reviews play a pivotal role in consumer decision-making, particularly in high-involvement purchases such as luxury fashion. Research by Wang et al. (2023) highlights that reviews serve as a form of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), influencing purchase intentions and shaping brand

perceptions (Bazi et al., 2023). Additionally, Thomas & Verma, and Bhattacharyya (2023) emphasize that brand responses to reviews can enhance consumer trust and strengthen engagement (Yoo, 2023). For luxury brands, positive online reviews amplify the impact of Instagram engagement strategies by adding authenticity and credibility to their brand narratives.

Despite the growing body of literature on social media marketing and luxury branding, few studies have examined the intersection of online customer engagement on Instagram and its impact on a global luxury brand like Louis Vuitton. Existing research often focuses on general social media marketing practices, overlooking the unique dynamics of Instagram in fostering emotional connections and influencing consumer behavior (Wankhade et al., 2022 & Bazi et al., 2023). Furthermore, while the role of influencer marketing in general has been widely studied (Yoo, 2023), the specific impact of influencers on luxury fashion brands' Instagram strategies remains underexplored. This study bridges these gaps by exploring the targeted strategies Louis Vuitton employs on Instagram, including content optimization, influencer collaborations, and user-generated content, to enhance consumer engagement and brand loyalty. Through thematic and sentiment analysis, this research provides novel insights into how such strategies contribute to brand equity and influence purchasing behavior (Ahmed et al., 2023 & Bonilla-Quijada et al., 2023). The findings have significant implications for marketers seeking to refine their digital strategies and academics aiming to expand the knowledge base on the intersection of social media and consumer behavior in the luxury market ("Fashion Communication in the Digital Age, 2023 & Souza, 2016).

2. Literature Review

Online reviews have emerged as a critical factor influencing consumer behavior and brand perception. Reviews serve as a form of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), offering consumers valuable insights into product quality and customer satisfaction. A study by Wang et al. (2023) highlights that online reviews significantly impact purchase intentions, especially in high-involvement sectors like luxury fashion (Bazi et al., 2023). Additionally, researchers such as Thomas and Verma (2023), and Bhattacharya (2022) emphasize that well-crafted responses to online reviews by brands can enhance consumer trust and engagement (Yoo, 2023). These findings underscore the importance of managing online reviews strategically to maintain brand equity in the competitive luxury market. As well as online reviews provide transparency and authenticity, which are pivotal in the luxury fashion industry. According to Kim and Ko (2012), positive reviews enhance value and relationship equity, while negative reviews require careful handling to maintain brand integrity. The role of consumer-generated content in shaping brand narratives is significant, as noted by Pentina et al.(2018), with reviews often co-creating brand meanings alongside official brand communications.

Floyd et al. (2014) highlighted that online reviews are trusted by consumers as much as personal recommendations, making them crucial for building trust in luxury brands. Positive reviews often enhance the perception of quality and exclusivity, while negative reviews can harm brand reputation. Ahmad et al.(2020) specifically studied the impact of online reviews on luxury fashion brands, finding that reviews significantly influence consumers' perceived value and purchase

decisions. Unlike mass-market brands, luxury brands must balance transparency with maintaining their exclusive image. Some luxury brands have started integrating customer reviews on their websites, as seen in premium skincare and fashion sectors. This inclusion not only boosts customer trust but also provides valuable feedback for continuous improvement. Luxury brands can leverage reviews as a form of digital word-of-mouth marketing. A well-curated online review system can highlight customer satisfaction, address grievances, and strengthen the relationship between the brand and its audience (Pentina, I et al 2018).

Customer engagement has become a strategic priority for luxury brands aiming to retain loyal customers in a competitive market. De Vries et al.(2017) emphasized the importance of social media engagement, particularly on platforms like Instagram, which allow luxury brands to showcase visual storytelling and build emotional connections. Engaging with customers through personalized comments, live events, and exclusive content helps reinforce brand loyalty. Fetais A.H, et al.(2023) argued that digital engagement is essential for fostering brand loyalty in luxury markets. Digital tools, including increased reality and gamification, create immersive experiences that resonate with younger, tech-savvy audiences. These tools not only drive engagement but also maintain the brand's exclusivity and appeal. According to the Oliveira M & Fernandes (2020), customer engagement on Instagram, revealing that interactive content-such as polls, Q&A sessions, and influencer collaborations-leads to higher engagement rates. Online communities, driven by shared values and aesthetics, enhance the emotional connection customers feel with luxury brands. Additionally, social identity and community building play a significant role in online engagement. Burnasheva, R., et al (2019) explored the influence of online brand communities on customer behavior, demonstrating that active participation strengthens the sense of belonging and brand loyalty.

Online customer engagement (OCE) refers to the depth of interaction, trust, and emotional connection that consumers develop with brands through digital platforms. Recent studies, such as those by Koç (2023), explore the role of social media algorithms in fostering customer engagement by personalizing content and interactions (Bonilla-Quijada et al., 2023). Furthermore, Li et al. (2023) argue that customer engagement activities, including likes, comments, and shares, act as vital indicators of brand loyalty and consumer satisfaction (Yu et al., 2023). Effective customer engagement strategies not only enhance brand visibility but also cultivate long-term relationships with consumers, especially within the digital landscape. For luxury fashion brands Online customer engagement plays a pivotal role in creating meaningful experiences, fostering loyalty, and co-creating brand value (Hollebeek et al.,2014)

Luxury fashion brands, characterized by their exclusivity and heritage, leverage Instagram as a critical platform for customer engagement. Research by Zhang et al. (2022) explores how luxury brands like Louis Vuitton use visually appealing content and influencer partnerships to engage audiences effectively (Wankhade et al., 2022). Additionally, Kim et al. (2015) discuss the strategic use of storytelling in social media posts, which fosters emotional connections and enhances brand perception (Ahmed et al., 2023). Instagram's visual-first nature aligns well with the aesthetics of luxury fashion, making it an ideal platform for showcasing craftsmanship, heritage, and exclusivity.

The intersection of online reviews, customer engagement, and luxury fashion branding highlights a synergistic relationship that shapes consumer behavior and brand equity. For instance, online reviews influence engagement by providing content that fuels discussions and interactions on platforms like Instagram. Studies by Gupta et al. (2017) reveal that positive reviews enhance the effectiveness of engagement strategies, amplifying brand advocacy ("Fashion Communication in the Digital Age," 2023). Similarly, Shankar et al. (2016) argue that engagement activities can amplify the impact of reviews by fostering trust and authenticity in brand communications (Bengtsson, 2016). Luxury brands, including Louis Vuitton, integrate user-generated content from reviews into their social media strategies to build credibility and stimulate further engagement. According to Godey et al. (2016), this approach not only increases consumer interaction but also reinforces the brand's position as a leader in the luxury market (Sánchez & Albarracín, 2024b). The relationship between these elements underscores the importance of an integrated approach to digital marketing, where reviews and engagement strategies work in tandem to enhance brand loyalty and equity.

3. Methodology

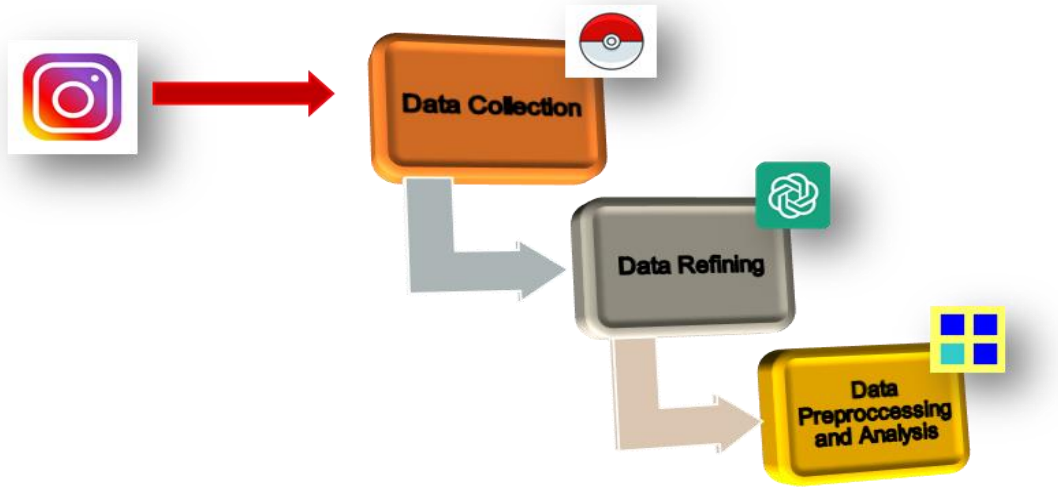

Figure 3.1-Data Processing Flow

Figure 3.1 visually represents this systematic flow, highlighting the interconnected steps from data collection to qualitative analysis. Each stage was designed to ensure the methodological rigor required to derive meaningful insights into how Instagram is utilized as a platform to enhance customer engagement and brand equity in the luxury fashion industry.

This study adopts a qualitative approach to explore the interaction between online customer engagement and luxury fashion brands, focusing specifically on Instagram as the primary data source. The methodology involves a systematic data processing flow, as illustrated in Figure 3.1, which encompasses three key stages: data collection, data refining, and data preprocessing and analysis.

The first stage, data collection, involves retrieving publicly available posts, comments, and user-generated content related to the luxury fashion brand Louis Vuitton from Instagram. Instagram was chosen due to its visual-first nature and its relevance to the luxury fashion industry. Content was identified based on specific hashtags, brand mentions, and posts featuring Louis Vuitton products, ensuring the dataset's alignment with the study's objectives. Following data collection, the data refining stage focused on cleaning and organizing the raw dataset to ensure its relevance and quality for analysis. This step involved the removal of duplicate entries, irrelevant advertisements, and spam comments. The refining process was essential to eliminate noise and improve the dataset's accuracy, ensuring that only meaningful and contextually relevant data were included in the subsequent stages.

The final stage, data preprocessing and analysis, involved preparing the refined dataset for qualitative analysis using KH Coder, a software tool designed for text mining and qualitative data analysis. During this stage, data were subjected to techniques such as coding, keyword extraction, and thematic categorization. This process aimed to identify patterns and recurring themes within the dataset, enabling a deeper understanding of the strategies employed by Louis Vuitton to engage with customers on Instagram.

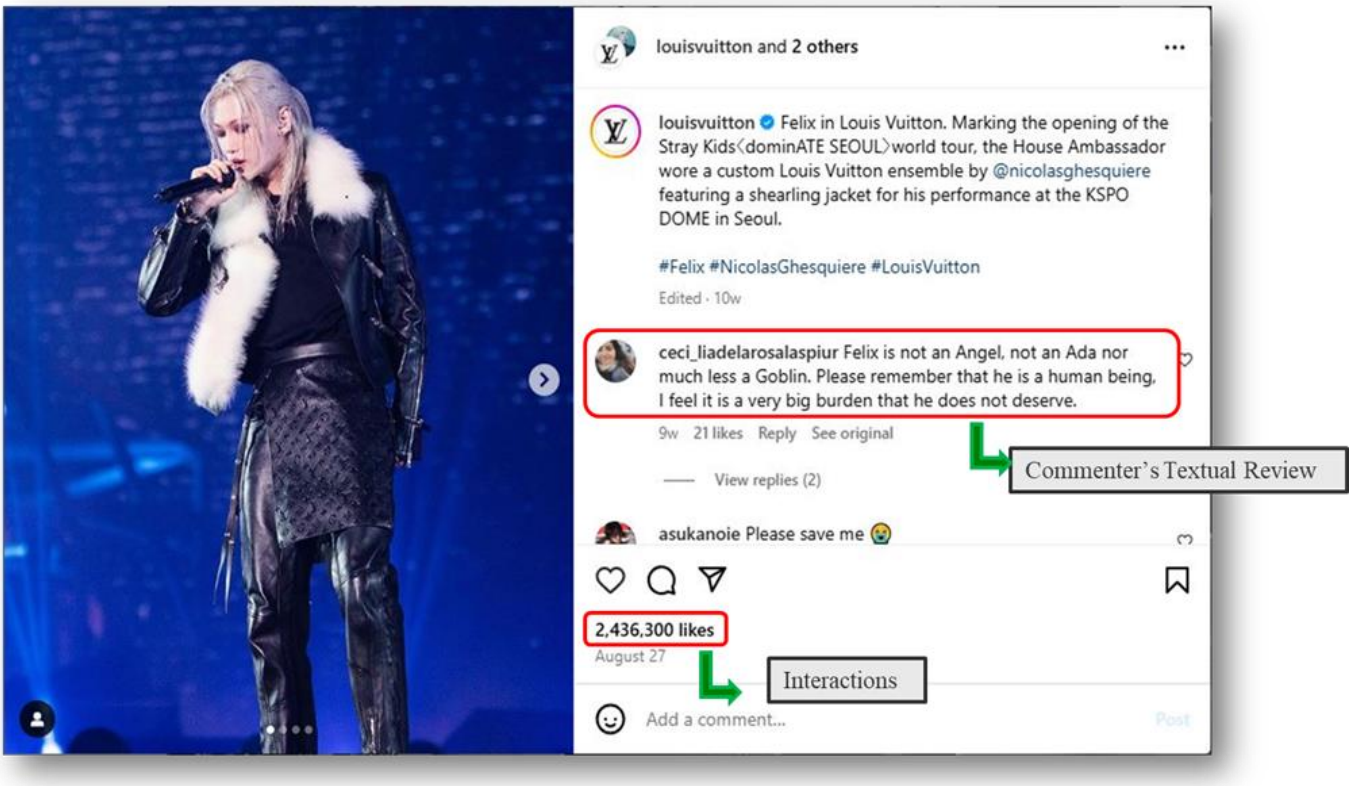

Figure 3.2-Textual Comment and Interactions

Figure 3.2 illustrates an example of textual comments and interactions on Instagram, focusing on user engagement with Louis Vuitton's content. The post showcases Felix, a House Ambassador, wearing a custom Louis Vuitton ensemble during a performance, reflecting the brand's strategy to associate with high-profile individuals to maintain its luxury status.

4. Results and Discussion

The analysis of online customer engagement on Instagram for Louis Vuitton revealed several key clusters that provide understanding on how the brand connects and interact with its audience. These findings illustrate the different ways customers' engagement and the role of luxury branding in digital world.

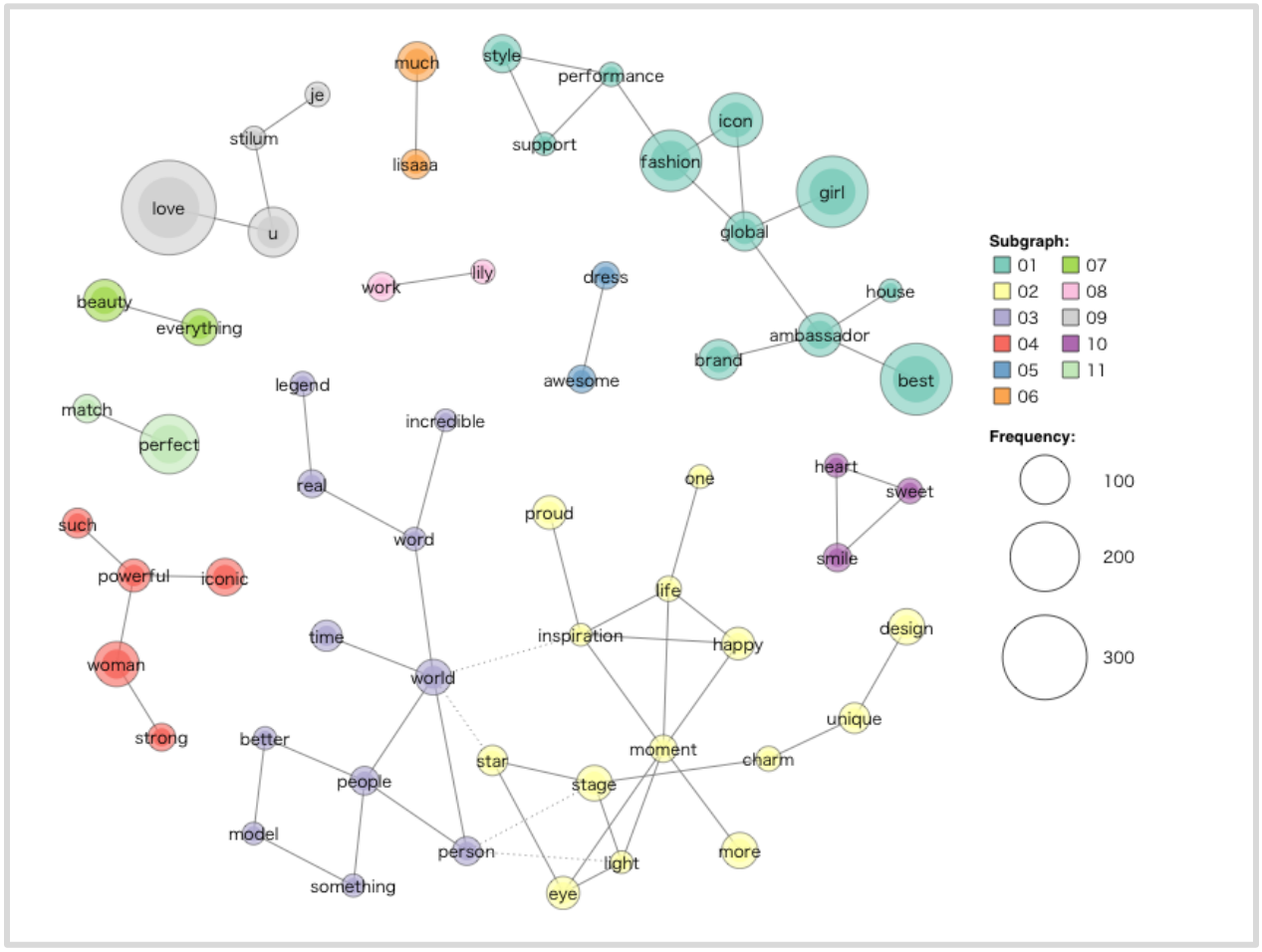

Figure 4.1- Network Analysis

According to the Co-occurrence Network Analysis (thematic analysis and network visualization), the main three clusters emerged. **Fashion and Style the green and cyan clusters** prominently feature terms such as "icon," "girl," "style," "performance," "fashion," and "ambassador." These words show that comments often focus on fashion trends, Louis Vuitton's global influence, and its iconic reputation. Commenters frequently mention specific styles, collections, and campaigns especially led by ambassadors, demonstrating how the brand successfully sets and maintains fashion standards worldwide. These findings align with prior studies that show how showcasing luxury fashion captivates audiences by connecting with them visually and emotionally, thereby driving engagement (Casaló et al., 2018 & Wankhade et al., 2022). The second main cluster is the

Red cluster, which shows the **Empowerment and Iconic Figures**. This cluster includes terms like "woman," "powerful," "strong," and "iconic," indicating female empowerment and the admiration of influential figures linked to the brand. This coincides with Vuitton's strategic use of ambassadors who represent strength and sophistication. These findings reflect a broader trend in luxury fashion marketing that prioritizes aligning with cultural values and influential figures (Bonilla-Quijada et al., 2023 & Oliveira & Fernandes, 2020). **Emotion and Admiration** Purple Yellow Clusters show the features of emotionally charged terms such as "love," "life," "inspiration," "proud," "moment," and "happy." These terms show how the customer's emotional connection and admiration towards the brand and its ambassadors. The findings suggest that Louis Vuitton successfully fosters an aspirational image, and express positive emotions and strong admiration, further strengthening its connection with its audience. This aligns with prior findings on emotional branding in luxury markets (Pentina et al., 2018).

These findings reflect the existing literature about social media's role in luxury branding. Studies have previously focused on the role of visual storytelling and influencer endorsements in shaping how people perceive brands and influence their behavior (Chu et al., 2019). Furthermore, the clusters identified in this study strengthen prior conclusions about the significance of emotional branding and cultural focus in driving customer loyalty (Godey et al., 2016 and Sánchez & Albarracín, 2024). However, this study extends the understanding of how distinct themes emerge within user-generated content, providing a deeper understanding of what drives customer sentiment and engagement.

The network visualization highlights how fashion attributes, emotional connections, and empowering stories come together to create a deeper understanding of consumer engagement. This combination of components adds valuable insights, showing how luxury brands like Louis Vuitton inspire and connect with their audience through meaningful narratives and shared emotions.

5. Conclusion

This research has depicted the significant impact of online customer engagement (OCE) on Instagram in enhancing the brand equity of luxury fashion brands, with Louis Vuitton. The study found that Instagram's unique platform characteristics, such as its visual-first nature, interactive features, and storytelling potential, play a significant role in maintaining the emotional connections between luxury brands and their audiences. Through thematic and sentiment analysis, the research revealed three key clusters fashion and style, empowerment and iconic figures, and emotion and admiration that shows the core of consumer interactions with Louis Vuitton. These findings reveal that strategic use of content, including influencer collaborations and immersive storytelling, not only reinforces the brand's prestige but also creates deep emotional connections that translate into loyalty and purchase intent.

Theoretically, this study contributes the literature on social media marketing and luxury branding by highlighting the consumer engagement within a digital context. It bridges the gap between existing research on influencer marketing and luxury branding by providing insights into the specific dynamics of Instagram interactions. The identification of recurring themes in user-

generated content extends the understanding of emotional branding, revealing how visual storytelling and cultural alignment influence brand equity. This research emphasizes the evolving role of digital platforms in shaping consumer behavior, suggesting that luxury brands must integrate these insights into their broader marketing frameworks to remain competitive in a rapidly changing marketplace.

From a practical standpoint, this study provides valuable insights for marketers and luxury brand managers. It emphasizes the need to craft visually appealing and emotionally engaging content that resonates with the target audience's values and aspirations. Louis Vuitton's effective use of Instagram demonstrates how strategic partnerships with influencers and brand ambassadors can boost both reach and authenticity. Marketers should adopt data-driven methods, like sentiment and thematic analysis, to refine their content strategies in response to consumer feedback and evolving trends. Additionally, building genuine emotional connections and prioritizing transparency can strengthen brand loyalty and equity in today's competitive luxury market.

While this study offers valuable insights, it does have its limitations. The analysis relied on publicly available Instagram data, which means it couldn't fully capture the depth of interactions between Louis Vuitton and its audience, such as private messages or direct communications that might provide a richer understanding. Additionally, by focusing solely on Louis Vuitton, the findings may not entirely reflect the broader dynamics of the luxury fashion industry. Expanding this research to include a variety of luxury brands could help create a more comprehensive picture. Exploring other social media platforms like TikTok or Pinterest could also reveal different patterns of engagement. Looking ahead, it would be fascinating to see how these strategies evolve over time, especially as consumer behavior and technology continue to change. Conducting long periodical studies could offer deeper insights into these ongoing transformations.

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