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An Insider Scope of the Present Relationship Between Generation Z and Luxury Brands:

Producing and Executing Creative Display Advertisements for Five Luxury Brands

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Advisor Signature Approval Page

Abstract

This paper takes a deeper look into Generation Z's current relationship with luxury brands to gain a better understanding of how to successfully advertise and gain the loyalty of this cohort long-term. By exploring the psychographics of Generation Z consumers and gaining a feel for their lifestyles, shopping habits, and purchase behavior, digital advertisements were developed for five luxury brands to appeal to these consumers through working with graphic design elements that will lure Generation Z consumers to purchase from these brands. In order for Generation Z consumers to identify with the luxury brands illustrated in the digital advertisements, fundamentals of design including composition, layout, color, and photography were displayed to best attract these consumers. By thoroughly analyzing the behavior and preferences of Generation Z consumers, I have developed and executed five digital advertisements of the luxury brands Balmain, Burberry, Louis Vuitton, Prada, and the latest Generation Z luxury brand, Telfar, to not only appeal to these consumers, however, but also to develop long-lasting relationships with them to ensure their loyalty in the years to come. After both photographing and designing the creative advertisements, I found that the significance of luxury brands to Generation Z consumers lies in the connection, originality, and self-esteem they feel in their everyday lives.

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Introduction

Luxury brands have impacted different generations for decades and have influenced consumers' wants and self-perception. Each generation has its own particular understanding and experience in regard to luxury brands, and each responds differently based on adapting to social, economic, and technological changes. Consumers in Generation Z are gradually becoming the target audience for many luxury brands so that these companies can develop meaningful long-term relations with these individuals to ensure customer loyalty as they age. Many Generation Z consumers have become open to shopping second-hand through thrift shops and consignment stores and have a greater appreciation for vintage fashion and aesthetics. Ultimately, this has impacted their purchase behavior and perception of luxury brands that have been historically known in fashion to appeal to ego and social status. With this in mind, the production of different luxury brands' display advertisements aimed to attract Generation Z consumers must adopt the ideologies of these consumers to create a long-lasting bond where individuals will not think twice before supporting the brand and its overall image. This paper will explore the psychographics and purchase behavior of Generation Z consumers through in-depth analysis that will result in the creation of digital advertisements taken through film photography that will compel Generation Z consumers to purchase from luxury brands by recognizing their mundane, everyday life under a lens they strongly identify with and relate to.

Literature Review

Defining Luxury Brands

It is essential to define luxury brands before expanding upon the relationship they have with Generation Z. Each scholar defines luxury brands differently, yet, they all share the general

consensus that luxury brands elevate a consumer's status through uniqueness. Luxury can hold different meanings for consumers of all different social classes however, the persistent theme in the definition of luxury brands is that they create differentiation for an individual amongst all others. Some scholars have defined luxury brands as products that consumers believe to perceive are "high quality," provide "functional or emotional benefits", and hold a "prestigious image and premium price" (Shin et al., 2021, p. 396). This explanation describes what most consumers feel towards luxury brands without always realizing it. It emphasizes that luxury brands hold functional or emotional benefits that draw consumers in and allow them to develop a connection with a particular brand that is likely to last due to its high-quality features. The idea of high-quality features found in luxury brands can be furthered by Rienetta et al. (2017, p. 411) as they highlight that luxury brands are not only sold at a high unit price but are produced "from high quality and rare ingredients" with "premium packaging". This illustrates that luxury brands can be recognized as scarce to consumers due to rare elements in the production that motivate consumers to purchase so that they can experience differentiation in their own personal image. Personal image plays a significant role in the reason consumers purchase luxury brands. With luxury brands come exclusivity which accomplishes "consumers' need for uniqueness by creating distance from others" (Cho et al., 2021, p.24). The bandwagon effect can also be seen due to more and more consumers purchasing luxury brands in order to feel a "sense of affiliation with others" through identifying as an individual that reigns superior due to access to premium goods (Cho et al., 2021, p.24). The concept of differentiation and exclusiveness is often furthered when luxury brands offer the opportunity for consumers to personalize and customize their products for a greater sense of engagement with the luxury brand as well as "strengthening the power status" of said consumers (Bakir et al., 2020, p. 30). It is evident that luxury brands create

a social class of their own that consumers have the option to partake in if they can afford to. This social class is extremely exclusive because it represents a cohort of individuals that can buy their way into the best of the best products and services. With this level of exclusivity, luxury brands have also been defined as showing a sense of “conspicuousness” that makes it obvious to others that an individual can afford a luxury brand, thus, highlighting uniqueness and affluence, even (Dobre et al., 2021, p. 2544). Not to mention that with luxury brands comes “the idea of sensuality, splendor, pleasure, and extravagance” of the consumers that are purchasing premium products, regardless of their generation (Eastman et al., 2019, p. 57). Scholars have even emphasized that luxury brands hold “symbolic meaning” that extends beyond the purchase of goods, yet, underscores the power of individuals that are consuming luxury brands to show the status they have “chosen” in society (Eastman et al., 2019, p. 57). Within each article, scholars have depicted luxury brands as exclusive goods that produce a unique image for consumers that place them above everyone else in the social hierarchy.

Relationship Between Luxury Brands and Generation Z

After evaluation of various meanings behind luxury brands within the articles, the relationship between luxury brands and Generation Z was also studied to understand the future of these high-end goods better. Studies have shown that Generation Z identifies with luxury brands to varying degrees. One particular study focused on determining whether or not Generation Z likes or loves luxury brands and how this relationship influences how this generation identifies themselves. After conducting an experiment that consisted of 56 Generation Z respondents who created brand collages of 38 luxury brands, the study concluded that approximately 55% of respondents identify with luxury brands at a low level and that approximately 44% identify with luxury brands at a high level (Shin et al., 2021, p. 402). This emphasizes that most individuals

within Generation Z identify with luxury brands, which in turn can impact a part of their personas. Furthermore, another study presented findings that indicate that as mentioned in the definition of luxury brands, Generation Z also feels the need to be unique and to set themselves apart by purchasing luxury brands (Cho et al., 2021, p.31). Additionally, the findings portrayed that Generation Z behavioral attitudes and actions are impacted positively by the bandwagon effect which leads to their persuasion in not only purchasing luxury brands but, keeping up the image of an individual that can consistently purchase luxury brands. Although many in Generation Z may not be aware of the influence of the bandwagon effect in their purchase behavior, it is clear that the rarity and superiority linked to luxury brands continue to impact their decision-making processes when shopping. This theory is furthered through another article that found that the bandwagon effect occurs, even more, when Generation Z consumers are encouraged and motivated to shop through the values instilled in them by varying social media platforms (Dobre et al., 2021, p. 2545). The success of social media has heavily drawn in Generation Z and has been implemented in their everyday lives, causing it to sway their opinions and values substantially and subconsciously. This alludes to subtle encouragement on online platforms that further creates a superior perception of owners of luxury brands to Generation Z social media users. Despite these findings, several studies have discovered that Generation Z has redefined what it means to purchase and own luxury brands in some ways. For instance, a study found that Generation Z is becoming more focused on intrinsic meaning rather than extrinsic meaning when it comes to luxury brands. To elaborate, Generation Z was said to prioritize intrinsic domains such as “family support and virtue” instead of “extrinsic domains such as competition and social approval” to convey that although luxury brands may hold significance in some aspects to Generation Z, luxury brands do not mean as much to them as they do to previous

generations (Bakir et al., 2020, p. 30). Moreover, other studies illustrate the perceived superiority of luxury brands is not enough for Generation Z, they expect and want more than a brand name (Rienetta et al., 2017). These consumers are looking for benefits that extend beyond “limited quantity or controlled distribution of the [luxury] products”, Generation Z is looking for increased hedonic value with a focus on fashion and technological products as well (Eastman et al., 2019, p. 70). Although it seems that Generation Z may be attracted to luxury brands due to their high-quality features, the uniqueness it provides, and the differentiation it offers them as a whole, the relationship between luxury brands and Generation Z is more complex than expected. Generation Z can understand the apparent functional and emotional benefits that are provided by luxury brands however, expect more and keep their standards high, even if they can be heavily influenced through the use of social media.

Brand Loyalty

Understanding the complexities of the relationship between luxury brands and Generation Z is significant to how Generation Z responds to luxury brands long-term and if brand loyalty is present. Brand loyalty can be recognized by consumers' preference for a particular brand that they support and continue to purchase from amongst all other competition. Previous studies have showcased that Generation Z experiences brand loyalty to luxury brands despite not completely identifying with them. For example, one study emphasized that "although the participants showed a high degree of loyalty", the “loyalty did not translate into a high level of self-brand connection” (Shin et al., 2021, p. 402). Generation Z feels a degree of brand loyalty toward luxury brands because they rely on luxury brands to feel some sort of satisfaction and uniqueness in their lives (Dobre et al., 2021). This expands upon the concept that Generation Z is able to appreciate and support luxury brands without it defining a part of who they are, as they do not

always experience a self-brand connection. Several researchers found that brand loyalty can be prevalent amongst younger ages of Generation Z, meaning teenagers. Even if the younger crowds in Generation Z may not easily afford or have access to luxury brands the way that the older crowds in Generation Z do, it was found that brand loyalty sticks with younger ages because it plays a vital role in reinforcing teenagers' self-perception (Bakir et al., 2020).

Teenagers can also exhibit brand loyalty by being influenced by the luxury brands' presence on social media platforms so the brands can feel more relatable despite the rarity and high prices (Rienetta et al., 2017). These findings directly correlate with a particular study that utilized a conceptual model to provide empirical evidence on Generation Z's brand loyalty opinions about luxury brands. It found that Generation Z's need for differentiation "influences their multi-motivational functions of attitude and, in turn, the attitude functions affect their purchase intentions" (Cho et al., 2021, p.32). This goes to show that there is some balance between Generation Z wanting more from luxury brands and their attitudes regarding ego influencing them to continue to purchase from luxury brands. The balance between the two opposing ends can be met by the findings that advise luxury brands to keep up with their brand image and identity whilst developing meaningful relationships with Generation Z "through personalized products, services, and messages" to ensure brand loyalty (Eastman et al., 2019, p. 70). All of the findings presented demonstrate that Generation Z experiences brand loyalty towards luxury brands without it defining their image, even if it influences their self-perception, especially with the younger end of Generation Z.

Generation Z Psychographics

Diving into the psychographics of Generation Z is also essential to understanding the relationship the cohort has developed with luxury brands over time. Psychographics refers to the

overall activities, opinions, and lifestyle. This concept will be further examined to shed light on Generation Z's consumer and purchase behavior. A variety of scholars have studied the ins and outs of Generation Z and how their beliefs and habits highly influence their purchase behavior and long-term brand loyalty. One study highlighted that Generation Zers are "interpreting their political, environmental and social concerns into expressed purchase behavior" which is evidently leading the cohort to "seeking out and paying more for ethical products" (Seyfi et al., 2023, p. 4). It is clear that Generation Z is interested in environmental factors and sustainability which attracts them to purchase products that have a vintage aesthetic and are recognized as "unique". The term vintage translates to "of age" and can be recognized as a timeless aesthetic that showcases an older style with a bit of a modern twist. The vintage aesthetic plays into the young consumers' "need for uniqueness" which could drive them to luxury brands that put a spin on their luxury products that are trendy and up-to-date with Generation Z's fascination with vintage apparel and imagery (Zang et al., 2021, p. 6). Looking at the psychographics of Generation Z, there is an emphasis on creating a nostalgic feel for products whilst still maintaining an original and exclusive image. Not to mention that the popularity of social media and the world of online engagement continuously encourages Generation Z consumers to shift their purchase behavior to have the next "cool thing" and to be distinct amongst others with a retro feel (Kadam et al., 2021, p. 22). The Generation's use of social media plays an important role in determining in what aesthetic is popular and how it can be demonstrated through different forms of content (Dobre et al., 2021, p. 2545). With this, Generation Zers' desire to reimagine vintage aesthetics in their fashion is highly shown on a variety of social media platforms which may be an opportunity for luxury brands to attract these consumers in a way that is appealing to them.

In my literature review, I examined how different scholars interpreted the definition of luxury brands to find that the meaning is complex, however, can be recognized as high quality, premium, and rare products or services that offer superior attributes and create an egotistical image for its consumers. After analyzing each article, I've come to an understanding that each scholar presented that the relationship between luxury brands and Generation Z is one that is not easy to explain due to different approaches and comprehension of how Generation Z feels and acts towards these brands. Most scholars would agree that Generation Z enjoys luxury brands and will support them without it consuming their personality image, which is where their brand loyalty comes into play. Analyzing the psychographics and appeals of Generation Z consumers also offers insight into which ways luxury brands can attract this cohort in a way that they can relate to. I hope to further analyze the relations between luxury brands and Generation Z to fully comprehend the purchase behavior within the generation and how they respond to luxury brands currently and how it will impact their actions, opinions, and overall image long-term.

Methodology

In order to capture the attention of Generation Z consumers, the ultimate goal is to develop and execute luxury brand display advertisements that offer an enticing and vintage aesthetic that aligns with current Generation Z consumers' appeals. After analyzing the following five luxury brands: Balmain, Burberry, Louis Vuitton, Prada and Telfar, it's evident that the overarching theme of the advertisements includes elevated products and individuals that exude affluency and emphasize a luxurious lifestyle that appeals to both ego and creates the idea that a higher social class will be purchasing from these brands. Not to mention that the display advertisements produced by these luxury brands allow for the concept of elitism to persist by only showcasing a specific demographic wearing the luxury brands to signify the exclusivity of

the consumers that purchase from these brands. Although these luxury brands and many others prosper through the exclusivity of their brands, Generation Z consumers' opinions shift towards affordable fashion that is often second-hand and has a vintage aesthetic rather than a more modernized look that is meant for the upper-class individuals. It is transparent that in order for luxury brands to increase traffic from Generation Z consumers long-term, they must evolve with the interests of their new target market by developing creative campaigns that maintain their brand image but also appeal to the lifestyles of Generation Z consumers. The display advertisements of these luxury brands must continue to portray the image of unique products that are differentiated from other brands that entices Generation Z consumers to buy whilst connecting these individuals to a compelling story that relates to their experience in a variety of ways. To produce digital advertisements that maintained luxury imagery and entices Generation Z in a way that has not been done before, I studied elements of graphic design and determined that color, format, image, contrast, and space were essential to capturing the attention of Generation Z. In addition, to create a relatable tone with the advertisements, Generation Z consumers were photographed in their daily lives while using the luxury products under a vintage lens. Using these basic principles of graphic design and taking inspiration from important elements of each luxury brand, I constructed five digital advertisements that would lure in Generation Z consumers.

To begin the process of producing the display advertisements, I had to first decide how the five luxury brands could have a slight rebrand through a campaign that would connect on a personal level with Generation Z consumers. After gaining access to different luxury brand products, I planned the creative direction that reflects natural settings that Generation Z consumers can commonly be found in, a coffee shop, a rooftop restaurant, a local store, a park,

and a public garden. The concept behind the use of the five settings originates from the marketing technique of the closure principle where Generation Z consumers can “fill in the blanks” and picture themselves in the settings that can be found anywhere and identify with the moments at hand. The photographs will be captured on a film camera to create a nostalgic, vintage feel that is often sought out by Generation Z as they are often found with old fashioned cameras to commemorate a distinct nostalgic feeling of the past. The pictures showcases individuals and pairs of a diverse group of Generation Z individuals engaging in the settings in their daily lives with the appearance of the luxury product always elevating their look and overall confidence in each environment.

After the creative direction and execution of the photography, the photo design platform Adobe Illustrator served as the primary software that aided in enhancing the film and creating a special twist on each of the luxury brand’s images. To maintain the luxury image for each brand, I took inspiration from previous advertisements from each so that the display advertisements could easily fit into their overall brand image, however, it was still clear that the campaign would be aimed at the future buyers of luxury items, Generation Z consumers. It is very important to keep a consistent and simple brand image so that consumers are still able to identify the luxury brand no matter if they see the advertisement online or in person. For this reason, I kept each display advertisement simple as luxury products typically are known for saying less and showing more to entice consumers to feel luxurious when they actually purchase the product instead of being told that they will feel luxurious through the ad itself. With this perspective, for Balmain Burberry, Louis Vuitton, Prada, and Telfar, the branding was bold yet concise to communicate the message that the luxury products hold much meaning without having to say a word. As recognized in previous advertisements for each brand, minimalism prevails. Oftentimes, the

luxury brand has such a great effect that the name of the brand is not even shown to emphasize the exclusivity of simply being able to distinguish one luxury brand from the next. However, through analyzing secondary research, it proved to be clear that Generation Z is not afraid of being loud and proud of what and who they are wearing and are inclined to share the details of the products and accessories they are wearing. To best reach Generation Z under these guidelines, I made sure to include the logo, luxury brand name, or tagline for each brand where it best suits the brand's overall image and its desired target market. For a brand like Prada, that means displaying the brand name in bold, black print in the brand's iconic font or for Telfar, that means including the well-recognized logo being displayed.

In terms of color for the display advertisements, each photo was specifically captured to blend natural colors seamlessly whilst limiting light exposure to give each photo a "soft lighting" effect. The use of color in each advertisement played a significant role in giving a vintage feel to the photos to take individuals back to a different period of time in their lives and create a nostalgic essence that feels lifelong. With this particular imagery, formatting and positioning of each Generation Z consumer seen in the film was placed loosely to strategically capture a beautiful moment in time instead of a picture that was specifically posed. This candidness would allow for Generation Z consumers to feel attracted to the natural curation that is so effortless about their daily lives. The display advertisements for Balmain, Burberry and Prada all portrayed three Generation Zers in natural settings capturing an effortless moment such as completing work in a coffee shop, applying lip gloss on a rooftop as preparation to take a selfie, and striking a confident pose in the public garden. Both the Louis Vuitton and Telfar display advertisements play on vintage, nostalgic aesthetic as the pairs are captured laughing in a local shop and enjoying youth on the playground in a park. Furthermore, the space found in each advertisement

in relation to the logo creates a distinct contrast between the photo and body copy to evoke emotions by consumers by the imbalance to feel connected to the advertisement rather than them feeling that they are being sold a luxury product.

The beauty in generating each display advertisement lies in the strategy of understanding each particular brand and the message they are attempting to communicate with the target audience. All of the design elements utilized were essential parts in allowing Generation Z consumers to form a strong attitude towards each luxury brand and to form a connection with the advertisement they are seeing beyond being sold a product, but feeling bonded to the message illustrated by the advertisement. Each advertisement for the five luxury brands had to align with the core vision of the brand itself, however, was made to be elevated in a way that could potentially attract a new wave of Generation Z consumers in a way that has not yet been done in the past. Through implementing color, formatting, positioning, imagery, and contrasting design elements to the advertisements, each conveyed a special story that best represents the virtues of each luxury brand. After these final touches were added, the last step in the process included downloading each advertisement for the five brands and viewing them on different platforms to witness the potential attraction of Generation Z consumers.

Results

[Advertisements Attached]











Conclusion

As an Advertising and Integrated Marketing Communications major, producing creative advertisements that conveyed specific and significant messages has been a vital part of my degree. Understanding and analyzing the core of different brands to revitalize their imagery to rebrand to a larger target audience played a major role in my learning experience and has engulfed my education at large. I have always understood the importance of using the foundations of marketing to communicate essential messages to the right audience by producing advertisements that not only sell a product or service, but that share a story that will have a long-lasting impression on an audience. Through developing each display advertisement specifically curated to five luxury brands, I realized the importance of being consistent and speaking that into existence by strategically designed and complex advertisements that could connect to any individual under any circumstance.

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