# Customers' motivation to engage with luxury brands on social media

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## ABSTRACT

Customers engaging with brands on social media is critical to social media managers; however, there is still a lack of in-depth studies on the drivers of consumers' engagement with luxury brands. Drawing on 25 semi-structured interviews with customers following luxury brands in social media, this study explores what motivates customers to engage with luxury brands on social media. This research develops a theoretical framework for the motivations of customers' cognitive, emotional and behavioral engagement with luxury brands. The study identifies 13 motivations grouped into six macro-dimensions: perceived content relevancy (brand news, post quality, and celebrity endorsement), brand-customer relationship (brand love, and brand ethereality), hedonic (entertainment), aesthetic (design appeal), socio-psychological (actual self-congruency, status signaling, and enhance and maintain face), brand equity (perceived brand quality), and technology factors (ease of use and convenience). This study helps marketing managers of luxury brands to understand how they can improve engagement with their customers.

## 1. Introduction

Through Social Media (SM), consumers are able to connect and interact with their favorite brands and share messages with friends, peers, and acquaintances. SM is thus transforming consumers from passive recipients of marketing communications to influencers and active creators by shifting some marketing power over brands to consumers (Berthon, Pitt, Plangger, & Shapiro, 2012). The proliferation and widespread use of SM platforms creates a whole new opportunity for firms, the content they generate on SM enhances customers' spending, cross-buying, profitability and relationships (Kumar, Bezawada, Rishika, Janakiraman, & Kannan, 2016).

After initial fears that SM could negatively affect their prestigious nature, luxury brands are increasingly using and investing in SM (Phan, Thomas, & Heine, 2011). Luxury brands use SM platforms to enhance brand attitude and loyalty (Kim & Lee, 2019). Estée Lauder attributed recent sales growth to a "creative approach to digital engagement, particularly across social media" (Deloitte, 2017). Luxury brands like Burberry, Tiffany, and Louis Vuitton have turned to SM and regularly share pictures and videos of fashion shows or photo shoots. According to McKinsey & Company (2018), the total global luxury market is worth €254 billion, 80% of which is influenced by digital technology, with online's share of luxury sales expected to reach 20% by 2025. A report reveals that consumer engagement in digital environments will drive growth of luxury brands and retailers (BCG & Altagamma, 2019). Nowadays, luxury brands are sought, experienced, and purchased in very different ways than they were in the past; consumers, especially Millennials, expect efficient e-commerce websites, engaging and exciting interactions on SM, and multiple channels through which to interact with brands (Abtan, Barton, Bonelli, Gurzki, Mei-Pochtler, Pianon, & Tsusaka, 2016).

Scholars have identified several benefits that SM can provide to marketers including: stimulating purchase intention, electronic word-of-mouth and loyalty (Lipsman, Mudd, Rich, & Bruich, 2012), positively affecting customer-product, customer-brand, customer-company and customer-other customers relationships (Laroche, Habibi, & Richard, 2013), and leading to improved brand performance, retailer performance, and consumer–retailer loyalty (Rapp, Beitelspacher, Grewal, & Hughes, 2013). SM can also enable firms to better understand their customers, improving relationships and loyalty (Barreda, Bilgihan, Nusair, & Okumus, 2015), as well as acting as a means for responding to customers' complaints (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014). Moreover, using SM can enhance the credibility of marketing at a time when consumers are increasingly skeptical about traditional advertising; for instance the message of an engaged consumer is believed to be twenty-two times more persuasive than a marketer's message (Goh, Heng, & Lin, 2013).

Consumer brand engagement refers to consumer's cognitive processing (cognitive), affection (emotional), and activation (behavioral) activities during specific consumer-brand interactions (Brodie, Ilic, Juric, & Hollebeek, 2013). Consumer engagement with brands on SM has become a growing area of research in marketing (Malthouse, Calder, Kim, & Vandenbosch, 2016; Saridakis, Baltas, Oghazi, & Hultman, 2016). An increasing number of companies foster customer engagement on SM (Harmeling, Moffett, Arnold, & Carlson, 2017; Pansari & Kumar, 2017; Venkatesan, 2017). Previous research, specifically focusing on luxury brands, establishes that SM marketing can enhance customer trust, customer intimacy and purchase intentions (Kim & Ko, 2010), as well as relationship equity, value equity and luxury brand equity (Kim & Ko, 2012), and it impacts on brand awareness, image, loyalty, preference, and price premiums (Godey et al., 2016). Despite the significant expansion of luxury brand-hosted SM (Breitsohl, Kunz, & Dowell, 2015; Lee & Watkins, 2016) as well as the growing attention of scholars to consumers' engagement with brands on these platforms, there is a scarcity of studies that analyze what motivates customers to engage with luxury brands on SM platforms.

Studying customer engagement with luxury brands is important for three main reasons. First, luxury brands are different from other brands and industries. Elitism, exclusivity, uniqueness, refinement, superior quality, high prices, heritage and craftsmanship characterize luxury brands (Kapferer, 2009; Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). Luxury brands are consumed differently than other brands, require specific marketing strategies and satisfy needs that are peculiar to luxury products (Han, Nunes, & Drèze, 2010; Kapferer, 2009; Le Monkhouse, Barnes, & Stephan, 2012; Shukla, 2012; Veblen, 1899). The appeal of luxury brands is distinctive (Kapferer, 2009), suggesting it is dangerous to assume that the motivations for engagement on SM with luxury and non-luxury brands are identical. Luxury brand managers face challenges in maintaining and enhancing exclusivity and refinement on SM, especially given the importance of interactivity on brand relationship outcomes (Godey et al., 2016; Kim & Lee, 2019). Therefore, studying engagement with luxury brands on SM provides insights into customers' relationships with luxury brands and how they should be best managed. Second, this paper responds to the call for research by Hollebeek, Glynn, and Brodie (2014) regarding studying customer brand engagement relating to different brands and sectors and exploring in greater depth the motivations for customer brand engagement (Hollebeek, Srivastava, & Chen, 2019). Similarly, de Vries, Peluso, Romani, Leeflang, and Marcati (2017) call for investigations into engagement with luxury products, noting that their results may not be generalizable "to other types of brands (e.g. luxury products, fast moving consumer goods, cars, etc.)" (p. 280). Third, this paper adopts a holistic approach to study the psychological state of engagement, including the cognitive, the emotional, and the behavioral dimensions of engagement (Hollebeek et al., 2014), to match the symbolic and emotional attributes of luxury brands. Thus, this study addresses the following research question: why do customers engage with luxury brands on SM platforms?

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Luxury brands

Luxury brands are "high quality, expensive and non-essential products and services that appear to be rare, exclusive, prestigious, and authentic and offer high levels of symbolic and emotional/hedonic values through customer experiences" (Tynan, McKechnie, & Chhuon, 2010, p. 1158). Consumers buy luxury brands for more than their functionality, they are also motivated by perceived, symbolic features like status and prestige (Amaldoss & Jain, 2005), as well as, rarity and exclusivity (Berthon, Pitt, Parent, & Berthon, 2009). The marketing of luxury brands requires the communication of clear brand identities,

product integrity, high prices, exclusivity, heritage and supporting narratives (Fionda & Moore, 2009). Previous research establishes that the appeal of luxury brands relies on social stratification, namely their ability to signal the status and distinction of luxury users (Dion & Borraz, 2017; Han et al., 2010; Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2014). This relates to theories of conspicuous consumption (Veblen, 1899), and social comparison and referencing (Mandel, Petrova, & Cialdini, 2006).

In its early years, luxury brand managers were wary of SM as by allowing anyone to engage with their brands, there was a risk of reducing perceptions of exclusivity associated with luxury. Despite this concern, luxury brands started using SM. Burberry was a pioneer, implementing a successful SM campaign to rebuild its brand image (Phan et al., 2011). Since then, and supported by rising demand from Millennials and Generation Z; namely those born respectively between 1981 and 1996, and between 1997 and 2012 (Dimock, 2019), for whom SM is a primary channel for communications (McKinsey & Company, 2018), luxury brands have embraced SM marketing.

### 2.2. Consumer brand engagement

Hollebeek et al. (2014, p. 154) define consumer-brand engagement in a SM context as "a consumer's positively valenced brand-related cognitive, emotional and behavioral activity during or related to focal consumer/brand interaction". The cognitive element refers to brand-related thought processing and elaboration (Brodie et al., 2013), the emotional dimension relates to positive brand-related affect, while the behavioral component denotes the consumer's time and other resources devoted to a particular consumer-brand interaction (Wallace & Leventhal, 2014).

Hollebeek et al. (2014) developed a scale to measure consumer brand engagement on SM, including consumer involvement as a motivation, and self-brand connection and brand usage intention as outcomes. A number of studies adopted the dimensions of Hollebeek et al. (2014) and examined motivations of consumer brand engagement on SM across various industries. Specifically, studies consider tourism (Harrigan, Evers, Miles, & Daly, 2018), higher education (de Vries et al., 2017), consumer electronics (Hollebeek & Chen, 2014), mobile phone network service providers (Leckie, Nyadzayo, & Johnson, 2016), fashion (Kim & Johnson, 2016), no-profit organization (Algharabat, Rana, Dwivedi, Alalwan, & Qasem, 2018), and department stores (Stathopoulou, Borel, Christodoulides, & West, 2017). Table 1 summarizes the motivational drivers of brand engagement identified in prior studies. However, some motivations may be sector-specific and, as evident in Table 1, none of the listed studies specifically address engagement with luxury brands on SM.

### 2.3. Consumer' motivations to engage with brands

Research on consumers' motivations to engage with brands via SM largely focuses on behavioral aspects of consumer engagement, quantifying the creation and consumption of brand-related content (Saridakis et al., 2016; Verleye, Gemmel, & Rangarajan, 2014). An exception is the qualitative study of Muntinga, Moorman, and Smit (2011), which adopts uses and gratification theory. They find that consumers engage with SM for information acquisition, personal identity, integration and social interaction, entertainment, empowerment, and remuneration. Additionally, Baldus, Voorhees, and Calantone (2015) identify eleven motives to engage with online brand communities such as brand influence, brand passion, connecting, helping, like-minded discussion, rewards, seeking assistance, up-to-date information, and community support.

Other scholars adopt quantitative methods. For instance, Tsai and Men (2013) adopted Uses and Gratification theory (UGT) and media system dependency theory, when studying consumers' engagement with brand pages on Facebook, finding that remuneration, information, entertainment, empowerment, personal identity, and social integration,

**Table 1**
Motivations of consumer brand engagement in chronological order.

| Author(s) | Theory | Engagement dimensions | Product/Industry | Motivation(s) | Methodology |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gligor, Bozkurt, and Russo (2019). | Consumer-brand relationship | Cognitive processing, affection and activation | Various product categories | Brand involvement, brand interactivity, brand trust, brand satisfaction, brand commitment and brand loyalty | Quantitative and Qualitative |
| Islam, Hollebeek, Rahman, Khan, and Rasool (2019) | Social Exchange theory | Cognitive processing, affection and activation | Hotels | Service Quality | Empirical (Quantitative) |
| Hollebeek et al. (2019) | Service-Dominant Logic | Cognitive processing, affection and activation | Various product categories | Customer resource integration, customer knowledge sharing, and customer learning. | Conceptual and theoretical paper |
| Högberg, Ramberg, Gustafsson, and Wästlund (2019) | Self-determination theory | Affection and activation. | Sport retail stores | Gamification, Hedonic Value, Positive affect, and Reward Satisfaction | Empirical (Quantitative) |
| Ahn and Back (2018) | Brand Experience Theory | Psychological engagement (Cognitive, emotional, and behavioural) | Tourism (Integrated resorts) | Sensory, affective, behavioural, and intellectual brand experiencesdimensions. | Qualitative and Quantitative |
| Harrigan et al. (2018) | Social Exchange theory | Cognitive processing, affection and activation. | Tourism | Consumer involvement | Empirical (Quantitative) |
| Roy, Balaji, Soutar, Lassar, and Roy (2018) | Service-dominant logic | Customer engagement behaviors (CEBs): augmenting CEB, co– developing CEB, influencing CEB, and mobilizing CEB. | Hotels | Cognitive trust and affective trust, Value in-use. | Empirical (Quantitative) |
| de Vries et al. (2017) | Self-determination theory | Contributing and Creating | University | Entertainment, self-expression, socializing, Obtaining information and knowledge, and remuneration. | Qualitative and Quantitative |
| Stathopoulou et al. (2017) | Advertising creativity | Cognitive processing, affection and activation. | Mobile network (Three UK) and retail department store (John Lewis) | Advertising creativity (Creativity – Novelty, Creativity – Resolution, Creativity – Elaboration), and brand familiarity. | Qualitative and Quantitative |
| Dessart (2017) | Consumer brand relationship | Cognitive processing, affection and activation. | Various product categories | Community engagement, and product involvement. | Empirical (Quantitative) |
| Dimitriu and Guesalaga (2017) | Consumer brand relationship | Customer engagement Behavioral (CEBs) | Fashion | Brand tacit engagement, brand exhibiting, brand patronizing, and Brand deal seeking | Empirical (Qualitative) |
| Saridakis et al. (2016) | Uses and Gratification theory (UGT) | Behavioral engagement (Consumption, contribution, creation). | Sport (British Basketball League clubs). | Information, Entertainment, Remuneration, Personal identity, Integration & social Interaction, and Empowerment | Empirical (Quantitative) |
| Marbach, Lages, and Nunan (2016) | Personal trait theory | Cognitive processing, affection and activation. | Various product categories | Personality traits: extroversion/introversion, Agreeableness/disagreeable ness, Conscientiousness, Openness to experiences, neuroticism, need for activity, need for learning, need for arousal, and altruism | Empirical (Qualitative) |
| Leckie et al. (2016) | Service-Dominant logic and consumer cultural theory | Cognitive processing, affection and activation. | Mobile phone service providers | Consumer involvement, self-brand expression, and consumer participation. | Empirical (Quantitative) |
| Verhagen et al. (2015) | Uses and Gratification theory (UGT) | Behavioral engagement | Telecommunications | Cognitive benefit, social benefit, and hedonic benefit | Empirical (Quantitative) |
| Baldus et al. (2015) | Intrinsic motivation | Behavioral engagement (Participation intention) | Various product categories | Brand influence, hedonic rewards, helping, connecting, self-expression, like-minded discussion, utilitarian rewards, up-to- date information, brand passion, seeking assistance, and validation. | Scale development |
| Hollebeek et al. (2014) | Social Exchange theory | Cognitive processing, affection and activation. | Various product categories | Consumer involvement | Scale development |
| Brodie et al. (2013) | Relationship marketing theory | Cognitive processing, affection and activation. | Various product categories | Search for information, need to solve a problem, satisfy a want, identify a specific online community. | Empirical (Qualitative) |

**Table 2**
Participants' profile.

| ID | Age group | Gender | Nationality | Purchased and engaged luxury brands names | Social Media Site | Frequency of use social networking site | Experience with the brand (since) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| P1 | 25–35 | M | Jordanian | Rolex | Facebook | Very often every day. | 2014 |
| P2 | 25–35 | F | Lebanese | Longchamp | Instagram | Log in every two hours. | 2012 |
| P3 | 25–35 | F | Chinese | Giorgio Armani, Louis Vuitton, Dior, and Chanel | Instagram | 5 to 10 times per one day. | 2009 |
| P4 | 25–35 | M | British | Fendi, Hugo Boss, Lloyds and Cartier | Facebook | Very often every day. | 2006 |
| P5 | 25–35 | F | Lebanese | Louis Vuitton | Facebook | 2–3 times per one day. | 2009 |
| P6 | 25–35 | F | Jordanian | Dior and Chanel | Facebook | 2 to 4 times per one day. | 2010 |
| P7 | 25–35 | F | Jordanian | Dior and Hugo Boss | Facebook | Every hour per one day. | 2007 |
| P8 | 25–35 | M | Chinese | Hugo Boss | Facebook | 4 to 6 times per one day. | 2011 |
| P9 | 18–24 | F | Kazakh | Dior, Givenchy, and Burberry | Instagram | Two to four times per a day. | 2012 |
| P10 | 25–35 | F | Thai | Hermes, Chanel, Dior, and Louis Vuitton | Instagram | 3 to 5 times per one day. | 2005 |
| P11 | 25–35 | M | German | Hugo Boss | Facebook | 3 to 5 five per one day. | 2004 |
| P12 | 25–35 | F | Jordanian | Chanel, Dior, and Gucci | Facebook | 3 to 5 times per one day. | 2005 |
| P13 | 25–35 | F | French | Louis Vuitton, Chanel, Armani, Gucci, and Dior | Instagram | 2 to 5 times per one day. | 2003 |
| P14 | 25–35 | F | Jordanian | Gucci and Tiffany & Co | Instagram and Facebook | 2 times per one day. | 2008 |
| P15 | 25–35 | F | Iranian | Gucci | Facebook and Instagram | 3 time per one day. | 2002 |
| P16 | 18–24 | M | British | Mercedes-Benz | Facebook | 3 times per day. | 2015 |
| P17 | 25–35 | F | Chinese | Burberry, Louis Vuitton, Hermes, Prada, and Chanel | Facebook | 2 to 4 time per one day. | 2004 |
| P18 | 18–24 | M | Chinese | Hugo Boss, Hermes, Fendi, Tiffany, Giorgio Armani, Cartier, and Jimmy Choo. | Facebook | Around 20 times per day. | 2010 |
| P19 | 25–35 | F | Chinese | Versace, Burberry, Chanel, Guess, and Dolce & Gabbana. | Facebook | 2 times per one day. | 2003 |
| P20 | 25–35 | F | Chinese | Van Cleef & Arpels, and Fendi. | Facebook | 4–6 times per one day. | 2003 |
| P21 | 25–35 | F | Jordanian | Dolce & Gabbana, Cartier, Armani and Chanel, and Gucci. | Facebook | 2 to 3 times per one day. | 2006 |
| P22 | 25–35 | F | Jordanian | Dior, Estée Lauder, and Gucci | Facebook | 2 times per one day. | 2007 |
| P23 | 25–35 | F | British | Audi, Mulberry, and Louis Vuitton. | Instagram | 2 time per one day. | 2007 |
| P24 | 25–35 | F | Turkish | Michael Kors, Chanel, and Dior. | Instagram | 2 times per one day. | 2007 |
| P25 | 25–35 | F | Emirati | Gucci, Fendi, and Louis Vuitton. | Instagram | 3 times per one day. | 2006 |

motivate consumers to engage. Leckie et al. (2016) identified consumer involvement, consumer participation, and a brand being self-expressive as motivations, and brand loyalty a consequence, of brand engagement. Teichmann, Stokburger-Sauer, Plank, and Strobl (2015) adopted self-determination theory, to assess the role of self-presentation, enjoyment, altruism, and opinion leadership, on consumers' engagement. Simon and Tossan (2018) considered consumer brand engagement on Facebook from the perspective of brand-consumer social sharing value. They find that satisfaction and brand gratitude mediate the relationship between brand-consumer social sharing value and consumer brand engagement. While identifying some common factors, such as relating to the management of personal identities, a degree of diversity in consumer motivations is apparent across studies, with an appreciation that the nature of the product category matters.

Luxury brands and goods are fundamentally different from other brands and require a different marketing approach (Kapferer, 2009). They require exclusive marketing strategies, entail specific consumption practices, and address needs not satisfied by other brands (Kapferer, 2009; Le Monkhouse et al., 2012; Shukla, 2012; Veblen, 1899). Consequently, customers' motivation to engage with luxury brands may be dissimilar from their motivations to engage with other types of brands, so that previous research on customer brand engagement via SM may not capture the specificity of management of luxury brands, where classical marketing rules may not apply (Kapferer, 2009). Thus, it is important to understand what motivates customers to engage with luxury brands on SM. As evident from Table 1, none of the previous studies focus on luxury brands or goods, or adopt theories which underpin research on luxury goods, such as conspicuous consumption (Veblen, 1899), social comparison (Mandel et al., 2006), self-concept (Berthon et al., 2009), or distinctiveness (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004), to study customer engagement. Furthermore, Ko, Costello, and Taylor (2019), in the context of luxury brands, recommend drawing on theories outside of those traditionally used for understanding

motivations in a marketing context and also call for theory building. Recently, Hollebeek et al. (2019) also call for research to contemplate customer brand engagement in different product contexts and explore in greater depth the motivations for customer brand engagement.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Research approach

This research analyses customers' motivation to engage with luxury brands on SM platforms. A qualitative approach was adopted due to the complex and multifarious nature of potential customers' motivations to engage with luxury brands as well as the relative paucity of prior research on customer engagement with luxury brands on SM. We chose semi-structured over other types of interviews because the former is suited to research on motives, attitudes, values, beliefs, and experiences (Adams, 2015). Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to ask probing questions, aiding the discovery of new, relevant issues and helping respondents to recall information effectively. Probing also increases the likelihood of social interaction, enhancing the rapport between the interviewer and interviewee (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018).

### 3.2. Sample, data collection and analysis

To ensure the selection of the most informative participants for our study, we adopted purposive sampling, recruiting participants that matched the "positive valence" (Hollebeek et al., 2014, p. 154) of the research question. Therefore, we only selected interviewees who had: (1) purchased (an) item(s) from their favorite luxury brand in the past six months (to reflect those who have experienced, used and consumed a luxury product), and (2) engaged with it on SM platforms. Volunteers who failed to fulfil these two screening questions were not invited for an interview. The interview guide followed the procedure
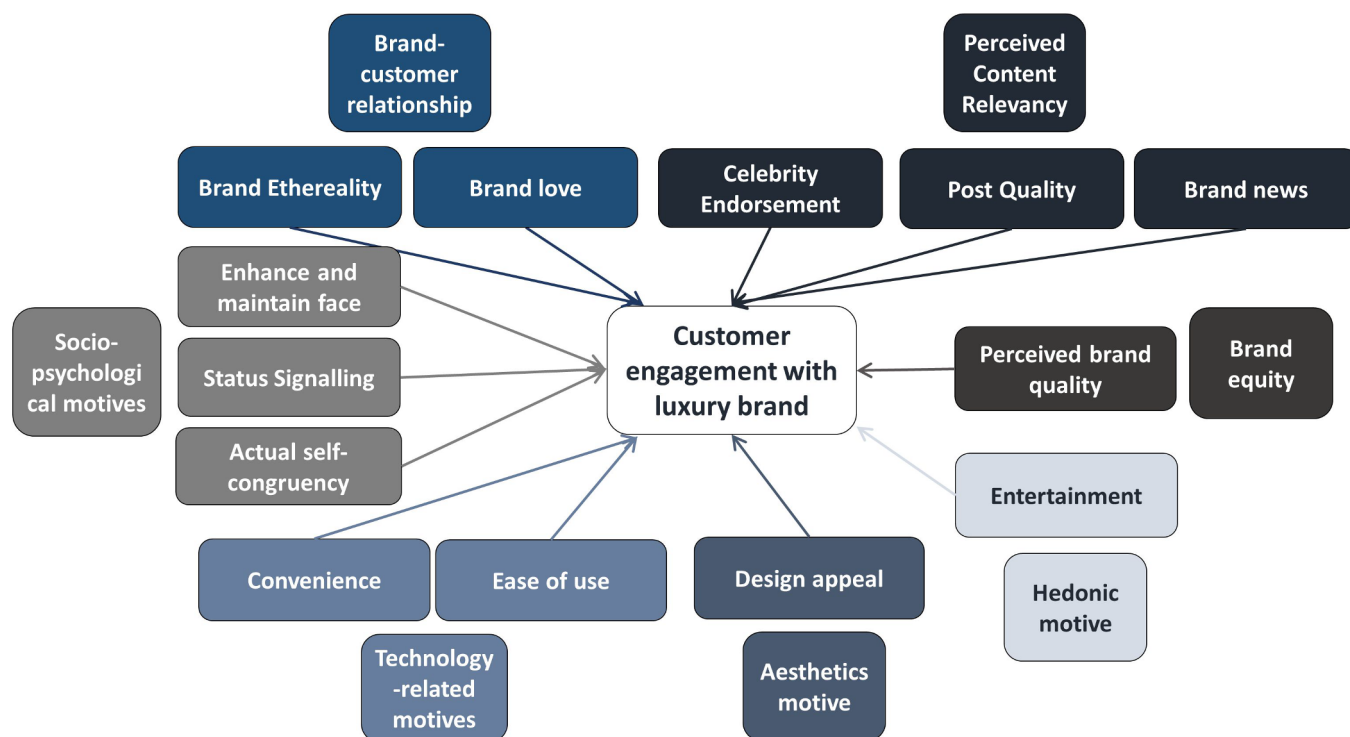
**Fig. 1.** Luxury brand engagement framework resulting from this study.

recommended by Arsel (2017) and Belk, Fischer, and Kozinets (2013). We piloted the interview guide with four UK-based customers who engaged with luxury brands on SM. According to Halpert (2012) young adults are the fastest-growing segment of luxury brand buying and they are heavy followers of luxury brands on SM (Ng, 2014). We used two sampling approaches; purposive and snowball sampling. Initially, similar to Quach and Thaichon (2017), we started seeking participants who had previous experience with luxury brands and followed luxury brands on SM. We sought respondents via luxury brand communities on SM, a bulletin board of a UK university and the social networks of the study's researchers. Subsequently, other participants were recruited using snowball sampling; in order to avoid non-representative participants. Specifically, interviewees recommended other people in their social circle who fitted the study's criteria, and were approached by the lead author. There were no financial incentives associated with participation in the study. Interviews occurred at a place and time most convenient to participants. All interviewees were adults with different occupations and ethnicities and aged between 18 and 35. Table 2 profiles participants.

We did not define, for participants, a luxury brand but followed the approach of Tynan et al. (2010) in allowing interviewees to express their own understanding. Interview questions initially addressed respondents' favorite brand, the perceived luxuriousness of the brand and attached meanings. Subsequently, after explaining the concept of engagement to respondents, we posed questions relating to the three dimensions of engagement. In summary, interview questions explored the motivations for cognitive, emotional and behavioral engagement with luxury brands on SM platforms.

To ensure consistency, the lead author conducted all interviews, transcribing each one without waiting until all interviews were completed (Silverman, 2016). In total, 25 interviews were conducted, recorded and transcribed verbatim. Data collection ceased after reaching a point of theoretical saturation (20th interview), when the marginal interview garnered no new insights (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). All the interviewees' identities were anonymized. The semi-structured interviews lasted between 45 min to 1 h, with all interviews conducted in

English.

We adopted thematic analysis for its flexibility to tackle the entire text as a potential unit of analysis and its ability to extract codes and themes (Braun, Clarke, Hayfield, & Terry, 2019). Two coding techniques were used: open and axial coding. Open coding helps to identify the concepts and its dimensions, which later can be grouped into categories, with axial coding used to make connections between the categories. In open coding, we identified responses directly from the interviews to characterize first order codes. In axial coding, we grouped the first-order codes into themes, naming each. The data analysis involved the identification and classification of themes with a view to understanding engagement with luxury brands. As in previous research (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Filieri, Chen, & Lal Dey, 2017), some of the codes were theory driven (i.e. perceived brand quality, brand love, self-congruency), while others were data-driven (i.e. brand ethereality).

In order to ensure validity and reliability, two experienced marketing scholars received each a sample of eight interview transcripts and coded them independently. We calculated inter-judge reliability using the approach of Perreault and Leigh (1989). On this measure, a reliability of 0.86 was achieved, which is above the 0.70 threshold recommended for exploratory research (Rust & Cooil, 1994). Comments on the research, solicited after presentations at two global marketing conferences, helped the researchers to further clarify and enhance the constructs in the emerging framework.

## 4. Findings

The findings reveal 13 factors that explain customers' engagement with luxury brands on SM platforms across the three dimensions of engagement: cognitive processing (CP), affection (AFF), and activation (ACT). We group the 13 factors into six macro-dimensions: *perceived content relevancy* (brand news, post quality, and celebrity endorsement), *brand- customer relationship* (brand love, and brand ethereality), *aesthetics motives* (design appeal), *hedonic motives* (entertainment), *socio-psychological motives* (actual self-congruency, status signaling, and

enhance and maintain face), *brand equity* (perceived brand quality), and *technology factors* (ease of use and convenience). Appendix A provides illustrative quotations for each engagement dimension (cognitive processing, affection, and activation). The remainder of this section discusses each factor in turn. Fig. 1 displays the theoretical framework emerging from the data analysis.

### 4.1. Motivations of customer engagement with luxury brands

#### 4.1.1. Perceived content relevancy
*4.1.1.1. Brand news.* Based on the findings of our interviews, customers engage with luxury brands on SM to acquire news of their favorite luxury brand in the form of information about new products and services, events, and other activities organized by the brand. Interviewees engage with brands on SM particularly to learn about new products, models and collections as soon as they are released. Hence, we define brand news as a customer's interest in seeking and gathering new information about the brand, including new trends, products and events.

> *I want to know each perfume Dior has, and each handbag Gucci introduce, it is about getting more information, more details and knowing what is the latest trend in perfumes and handbags. I love Dior and Gucci a lot, and I feel I should know everything about them. After, I tried their products, and they were great, I want to know more and more about Dior and Gucci, what more items they have and what other items they have. [P22, page 2, line 22–26].*

*4.1.1.2. Post quality.* The analysis reveals that the quality, and particularly the attractiveness, of the content posted on Facebook and Instagram motivate customers to engage with luxury brands. We define post quality as the perceived aesthetic quality and attractiveness of the visual content (pictures or videos) posted on SM. For instance, the quality of photography, background, and colors, are all elements that encourage interviewees to elaborate their thinking, feelings, and efforts with luxury brands on SM.

> *I remember I saw a video on its page, of a driver driving the E200 and all these emotions and effects. I thought I should do the same…so the next morning I recorded a video of myself driving the car from my home to my job, and then posted it on Facebook. I think the feel of driving my E-Class spurred me to record the video and post on my Facebook wall. [P16, page 2, line 13–17].*

*4.1.1.3. Celebrity endorsement.* Using actress/actresses, sporting personalities, fashion models, and music stars is very popular in marketing and advertising (Choi, Lee, & Kim, 2005). Celebrity endorsement is defined as "any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement" (McCracken, 1989, p. 310). Celebrities are considered as credible sources of information and motivate customers to engage with luxury brands via SM:

> *Sometimes they bring celebrities, which stuck on my mind, and say "WOW, it looks good on her, so I think it would look good on me", so I may try it before I purchase it. I think the celebrities play a role, yaa. [P25, page 3, line 16–19].*

#### 4.1.2. Brand-customer relationship motives
*4.1.2.1. Brand love.* Carroll and Ahuvia (2006, p. 81) define brand love as the "degree of passionate emotional attachment a satisfied customer has for a particular trade name". Based on the interview data, customers tend to engage with the luxury brands with which they have a strong and positive emotional attachment. Specifically, interviewees regarded engaging with a luxury brand on SM as a mechanism for expressing their love for it.

> *I don't want to say I am a branded person, it is not the only brand I follow, I follow tens of brands on Instagram, and maybe those brands are better than Gucci, but I fall in love with Gucci, I feel like it is the most fantastic one. [P25, page 3, line 41–43].*

*4.1.2.2. Brand ethereality.* Interviewees discussed the capacity of some brands to induce a dream-like state. Brand ethereality is defined here as the ability of a brand to induce, through their SM posts, customers to imagine ideal or fabulous states. Kapferer and Valette-Florence (2018, p. 2) note that "luxury brands sell dreams" and interviewees discussed how some brands' posts make them dream, for example, of becoming a princess or a queen:

> *Van Cleef & Arpel's page is so lovely and cute…when I watch the video, I feel I am in my own story and my dream to become a princess or a queen. (ACT) [P20, page 2 line 46, page 3 line 3].*

#### 4.1.3. Socio-psychological motives
*4.1.3.1. Enhance and maintain face.* An important theme that emerged from the analysis was that engaging with luxury brands on SM could enable customers to enhance or maintain face. Earley (1997, p. 43) defines face as "the evaluation of self, based on internal and external (to the individual) judgements concerning a person's adherence to moral rules of conduct and position within a given social structures". According to Filieri et al. (2017), consumers can through the brands they purchase increase or lose face.

According to interviewees, engaging with luxury brands on social networks enables them to enhance their face, namely to improve the perception that significant others have of them. A positive social image makes individuals feel special, proud and honored (Filieri & Lin, 2017; Filieri et al., 2017) and engaging with luxury brands on SM enables customers to maintain a positive social image.

> *I have a sense of belonging to Chanel, I always like to see to it on Instagram, it is type of expressing who I am… and confirm my image and my dignity to my friends. [P10, page 3, line 19–21].*

*4.1.3.2. Actual self-congruency.* Actual self-congruency is the "congruity between the actual self-image and product image" (Sirgy, 1985, p. 195). According to Onkvisit and Shaw (1987) consumers select products and stores that correspond to their self-concept. Our analysis reveals that customers engage with luxury brands on SM because the personality of the luxury brand fits their self-perceptions. Customers discuss how luxury brands that they engage with reflect their values, beliefs, and ultimately who they are.

> *I feel more near to Dior, I have more access to the information, you can click on it if you want to purchase, but it is only about the relationship, they have a philosophy that I feel part of it. [P9, page 9, line 26–29].*

*4.1.3.3. Status signalling.* Customers typically buy luxury brands to signal status and wealth (Han et al., 2010) and status is an ingredient of luxury desirability (Kapferer & Valette-Florence, 2016), motivating further purchases of luxury brands (Mazodier & Merunka, 2014). Eastman, Goldsmith, and Flynn (1999, p. 42) define status consumption as "the motivational process by which individuals strive to improve their social standing through the conspicuous consumption of consumer products that confer and symbolize status both for the individual and surrounding significant others". Our findings show that some customers engage with luxury brands in order to fulfil this need to signal status and show they are part of an elite few who can afford buying them.

> *It is hard to express, I was excited, it is the same feeling when you have the Mercedes car, you feel the status of Mercedes Benz, that I am part of*

the Mercedes community, both: I have the car and I follow it on Facebook. [P16, page 2, line 21–23].

#### 4.1.4. Brand equity
*4.1.4.1. Perceived brand quality.* Interviewees reveal that superior quality is an important motivator to engage with luxury brands on SM. Perceived brand quality is defined as the "consumer's judgment about a product's overall excellence or superiority" (Zeithaml, 1988, p. 3). Brand quality is essential for luxury brands (Phau & Prendergast, 2000) and part of luxury brand values (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). Superior quality is integral to the definition of luxury brands (Kozinets, De Valck, Wojnicki, & Wilner, 2010).

*It is about quality, when I pay higher price for a brand, and that brand is high in quality, I should follow it on Facebook and Instagram. [P21, page 2, line 46- page 3 line 3].*

#### 4.1.5. Aesthetic motives
*4.1.5.1. Product design appeal.* Product design appeal refers to the extent to which the product design is perceived as beautiful, stunning, gorgeous, hence "the consumer's perception of attractiveness and pleasure from its appearance" (Kumar & Noble, 2016, p. 614). Product design appeal consists of several elements chosen and blended into a whole by the design team to achieve a particular sensory effect (Bloch, 1995). An aesthetically pleasing product design motivates customers to engage with their favorite luxury brands on SM.

*I spend a lot of my Facebook time with Versace and Chanel pages, their design is attractive; comparing with other brands, these brands are more attractive, because they are special, these brands have nice product styles which attract me, that's why I spend more time with Versace on Facebook. [P19, page 2, line 41–44].*

#### 4.1.6. Hedonic motives
*4.1.6.1. Entertainment.* While there is no agreed definition of entertainment, with multiple studies taking different approaches, most definitions incorporate notions of fun, excitement, and pleasure. Within self-determination theory, Muntinga et al. (2011, p. 19) defined entertainment as "escaping or being diverted from problems or routine; emotional release or relief; relaxation; cultural or aesthetic enjoyment; passing time; and sexual arousal. In keeping with UGT (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973), consumers browse media content to entertain themselves. McQuail (1983) summarize the entertainment factor as "escaping, or being diverted, from problems; relaxing; getting intrinsic cultural or aesthetic enjoyment; filling time; emotional release; sexual arousal" (p. 83). The study finds that this also holds for customer engagement with luxury brands on SM:

*I want to enjoy my time, when I feel lazy or under work pressure, I want escape from the pressure or fill my lazy time browsing what Gucci post to see what is new in fashion (CP). [P14, page 2 line 39 to page 3 line 1].*

#### 4.1.7. Technology-related motives
*4.1.7.1. Convenience.* Convenience is "a reduction in the amount of consumer time and/or energy required to acquire, use, and dispose or a product or service relative to the time and energy required by other offerings in the product/service class" (Brown & McEnally, 1992, p. 49). In this study, convenience refers to customers' perception that engaging with luxury brands on SM enables them to save time and access brand information at any time, in any place, and from the channel they prefer.

*At the same time, I save my time, instead of driving my car to the main store, I can access Dior easily via Facebook, check what it has. If it does fit, I would visit their website and buy it quickly. [P12, page 2, line 35–37].*

*4.1.7.2. Ease of use.* Ease of use is a construct of the technology acceptance model (TAM) developed by Davis (1989) who defines it as "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free of effort" (p. 320). SM platforms like Facebook and Instagram are perceived as easy to use, facilitating engagement by minimizing cognitive, emotional and behavioral efforts.

*the most of time I open its website and Instagram page, it is more interesting in Instagram than its website, it is easy to go through it in Instagram, it is easier to see the products than the websites, it is easier to see how it is worn and how it looks. [P25, page 1, line 14–17].*

## 5. Discussion

Drawing on a qualitative approach, this study analyzed customers' motivations to engage with luxury brands on SM. The study's findings can guide luxury brand managers to understand what engages their customers and to better manage their SM activities.

### 5.1. Perceived content relevancy

We defined the first macro-dimension as perceived content relevancy, reflecting that the sub-dimensions identified satisfy the information needs of luxury brand customers on SM. Previous research indicates that consumers engage with brands on SM to gain up-to-date information (Baldus et al., 2015; Hollebeek et al., 2019), and the brand news motive intersects with the seeking, gathering and obtaining information and knowledge motive found in studies on content engagement (de Vries et al., 2017), and behavioral engagement (Gao & Feng, 2016; Verhagen, Swen, Feldberg, & Merikivi, 2015). In a luxury brand context, post quality is particularly important. We define post quality as the perceived aesthetic quality and attractiveness of the visual content (pictures or videos) posted on SM platforms. SM platforms are a rich source of information, pictures, and videos. Visual content plays a pivotal role in luxury brands' SM management, facilitating brand information storage and processing (Marzocchi, Pizzi, & Scarpi, 2016). This finding highlights the importance of the use of high-quality pictures and videos in luxury brand SM marketing.

Luxury brands' SM posts often involve celebrities, and link to celebrities' SM pages. This study finds that celebrities' posts encourage engagement with luxury brands on SM. This adds engagement to the established list of benefits, such as enhanced brand awareness, brand equity, customer loyalty, and higher sales (Erdogan, 1999; Joseph, 1982; McCormick, 2016), that celebrity endorsements may deliver. Interviewees reveal that the presence of celebrities in pictures and videos disseminated on luxury brand SM platforms motivates their decision to engage. In particular, customers are interested in knowing how celebrities use the products, which in turn makes them more desirable.

### 5.2. Brand-customer relationship motives

Being favored over mass market alternatives, luxury brands have the power to generate emotional reactions and SM facilitates emotional bonding. Brand love is part of the consumer relationship quality model (Fournier, 1998). Baldus et al. (2015) found that brand passion motivates participation in online communities and this study indicates that brand love, which is stronger than passion, is a driver of customers' cognitive, emotional and behavioral engagement. Wallace and Leventhal (2014) identified brand love as motivation for "liking" a brand on Facebook, while this study indicates that brand love also relates to the cognitive and the affective (emotional) sides of psychological engagement. This includes not only passion, but also attachment, positive feelings, and declaration of love for the brand. Some interviewees reported that they would feel unhappy if they did not possess a particular brand and/or engage with it.

Advertising for luxury brands often seeks to stimulate fantasies,

particularly linked to the achievement of higher social status (Kapferer, 2009). Interviewees discussed how some brands' posts made them daydream, for instance, to become a princess or a queen. Brand ethereality is a new construct in both the marketing and engagement literature, and we define it as the capacity of the brand to induce customers to dream ideal or fabulous states through their SM posts. Luxury brands' activities on SM have to bridge the imagination gap between brands and customers, so that customers can fantasize how brand ownership would alter their sense of being.

### 5.3. Socio-psychological motives

Sirgy (1985) argues that consumers use and purchase brands whose personalities are consistent with their self-concept. Customers tend to express their self-concept by possessing brands they feel match with their own personality (Belk et al., 2013). In the case of luxury brands, this is particularly apt; a distinctive feature of luxury brands is enhancing customers' identity through ownership (Schade, Hegner, Horstmann, & Brinkmann, 2016). This study finds that actual self-congruency drives customers' engagement with luxury brands on SM. It is important for luxury brands to imbue their brands with traits that fit their customers' self-concepts and that this is reflected in their SM engagement.

Another socio-psychological motive is customers' desire to maintain and enhance face(Filieri et al., 2017). Consumers, especially in collectivist cultures, are oriented to fulfil their social belongingness and save, maintain, and enhance face (Filieri, Lin, D'Antone, & Chatzopoulou, 2019; Triandis, 2001). The ability to do so leverages perceptions of luxury brands, especially relating to conspicuous consumption (Le Monkhouse et al., 2012). Our study shows that customers engage with luxury brands on SM because it enables them to maintain or enhance face. For instance, customers often use SM (e.g. Instagram) to post pictures with the luxury brands they purchase for self-promotion, namely to give a favorable impression to others.

According to Veblen (1899), individuals buy luxury goods to convey status and power to others, so that their symbolic function is the most important feature of luxury brands. Owning luxury goods communicates status (Berger & Heath, 2007; Rucker, Galinsky, & Dubois, 2012). The need to signal status appears highly salient to interviewees, they wish to convey information about their social class, prestige, and success to other people in their SM network. As they own and use luxury brands, they employ SM engagement as a mechanism for signaling status and social achievements (e.g. climbing the social ladder).

It is important to distinguish between enhancing and maintaining face and status signaling. Enhancing and maintaining face concerns obtaining admiration from others; it relates to the maintenance of one's public dignity, standing, honor, and respect (Earley, 1997). Owning luxury brands enable its owners to join a community of a lucky few who can afford buying luxury brands, which also enhances self-worth, and fosters feelings of pride, dignity, and vanity. While status signaling aims to increase one's power, influence social relationships (Berger, Rosenholtz, & Zelditch, 1980), and gain access to future resources (Huberman, Loch, & Önçüler, 2004).

### 5.4. Brand equity

Quality is an essential characteristic of luxury goods and brands. Quality is a functional driver in perceptions of luxury brand value (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004) and luxury brands are recognized as having superior quality by their customers (Brun & Castelli, 2013). In this study, consumers are motivated to engage with luxury brands as their products are perceived to be of superior quality, and the "best in class". Regardless of pleasure and hedonic experience, luxury brands must be not only seen as trendy, fashionable and well-designed but also regarded as of superior quality to engage customers online.

### 5.5. Aesthetics motives

Design appeal stimulated interviewees to engage with luxury brands on SM. Accordingly, previous research establishes that product design provides hedonic benefits, inducing feelings of excitement, fun, and fantasy (Bloch, 1995; Creusen & Schoormans, 2005; Franzak, Makarem, & Jae, 2014). Our research shows that the influence of product design is not limited to affective elements but also can inspire customers' psychological and cognitive engagement with luxury brands.

An appealing product design is likely to stimulate customers to engage with a luxury brand in SM; the design provokes emotions and customers like to engage with 'well-designed' products that can also help them to express their taste and style. This highlights the importance of the aesthetic appearance of luxury products and their presentation, and their roles in stimulating digital engagement.

### 5.6. Technology-related motives

Customers engage with luxury brands on SM because they find these platforms convenient and easy to use. Ease of use is a pillar of the technology acceptance model (Davis, 1989) and various research found it to be an important motivation of technology adoption (Rauniar, Rawski, Yang, & Johnson, 2014). Ease of use plays a central role in online buying (Ha & Stoel, 2009) and SM adoption (Rauniar et al., 2014). In this study, greater convenience, compared with engagement via conventional marketing channels, and ease of use motivate customers' engagement via SM. These two technology-related motives are new to the engagement literature.

## 6. Theoretical implications

The study offers several theoretical contributions. The paper theoretically contributes to both literatures on customer engagement (Hollebeek et al., 2014, 2019) and SM marketing for luxury brands (Kim & Ko, 2010, 2012; Kim & Lee, 2019). Our research identifies the motivations for customers' engagement with luxury brands on SM and responds to a recent call for in-depth research on the motivations to engage with different types of brands and products (Hollebeek et al., 2019). While previous research addresses many different sectors (Table 1), there is little prior evidence relating to customers' motivations to engage with luxury brands on SM platforms, and the paper responds to Ko et al. (2019), who call for theory building relating to motivations and luxury brands on SM. Further, the study responds to the call of Kim and Lee (2019) for research that generates a better understanding of customer-brand relationships in the SM era. It does so by adopting a holistic approach to the study of customers' psychological (cognitive and emotional) and behavioral engagement.

The qualitative nature of this study enabled the identification of factors that motivate customers to engage with luxury brands on SM that have not been found in previous studies, facilitating the development of the luxury brand engagement framework illustrated in Fig. 1. Customer engagement with luxury brands is motivated by perceived content relevancy (brand news, post quality, and celebrity endorsement), brand-customer relationship (brand love, and brand ethereality), hedonic (design appeal and entertainment), socio-psychological (actual self-congruency, status signaling, and enhance and maintain face), brand equity (perceived brand quality), and technology factors (ease of use and convenience).

The paper reviews the extant literature on factors affecting consumer brand engagement (Table 1). As it can be noted, while some constructs are not new in the marketing and branding literatures, they have not been considered in the specific literature on SM engagement, namely: celebrity endorsement; brand ethereality; post quality; actual self-congruency; enhancing and maintaining face; status signaling; product design appeal; convenience, and ease of use.

We define brand ethereality as the capacity of a brand to induce

customers to dream ideal or fabulous states through their social media posts. We also coined the concept of post quality, which is distinct from information quality, in that it incorporates the attributes of attractiveness and aesthetically pleasing content. Thus, while information quality refers to the relevance, timeliness, accuracy, and comprehensiveness of information (Cheung, Lee, & Rabjohn, 2008), in contrast, post quality relates to the aesthetical and emotional properties of visual information, including videos and pictures.

We can explain the influence of some motivations for brand engagement identified in this study with recourse to the distinctive nature of luxury brands. For instance, one of the motivations to purchase luxury brands is to signal status (Kapferer, 2009), hence the importance of status signaling as a motivator to engage with luxury brands on SM. Moreover, given the exclusivity of luxury brands, some customers use them to reinforce their social image in front of others, in their SM networks, and by doing so they feel proud and honored. Hence, they engage with luxury brands on SM to maintain or enhance their face.

Some of the factors motivating engagement found in several previous studies, such as extrinsic rewards, social interaction, and seeking help (i.e. Baldus et al., 2015; Muntinga et al., 2011; Tsai & Men, 2013), were not mentioned by interviewees in this study. This may reflect that customers are motivated by different psychological and social factors when they engage with luxury brands and therefore, for example, they do not expect extrinsic rewards (i.e. monetary rewards, deals or incentives). Rather, for such customers, engaging with luxury brands is self-fulfilling.

Two of the factors motivating customer engagement with luxury brands recognized in this study were identified in previous studies on consumer brand engagement. First, Brodie et al. (2013) discern seeking brand news as a motive for both psychological (cognitive processing and affective) and behavioral engagement (activation). Similarly, Hollebeek et al. (2019) recognize customer learning as a motivation for customer engagement, defining it as "an iterative process that involves a customer's development of mental rules and guidelines for processing relevant brand-related information, the acquisition, of new brand knowledge or insights, and ensuring behavioral modification based on new brand knowledge or insight gained" (p. 9). Similar to Hollebeek et al. (2019) we find customers engage with luxury brands on SM to keep updated and acquire information about existing and, more importantly, new products. Second, a desire for entertainment triggers customer brand related-content engagement and behavioral engagement (de Vries et al., 2017), but we also find that entertainment motivates cognitive and emotional engagement. Overall, the research identifies considerable differences in the motivations to engage with luxury brands on SM, compared to the non-luxury brands studied previously (see Table 1). This reflects the distinctiveness of luxury brands.

## 7. Managerial implications

This study identifies the motives that drive customers' engagement with luxury brands on SM and can help SM marketing managers to devise appropriate campaigns to foster better engagement on SM platforms. The results of this study confirm that the management of luxury brands on SM must be different from that of other brands. The findings highlight that customers' engagement with luxury brands on Facebook and Instagram is mainly driven by perceived content relevancy, the nature of brand-customer relationships, socio- psychological, brand equity, hedonic, aesthetic, and technology-related factors. The framework incorporating thirteen factors driving customers' engagement on SM can be used by luxury brand managers to assess their current strategy and identify how improvements can be made. For instance, to what extent do their current SM activities stimulate users to dream? How can SM activities increase the ability of a brand to signal status? What product designs stimulate greater customer engagement? Similarly, luxury brand posts should be highly professional, artistic and attractive, so in keeping with the expectations customers have of luxury brands.

This study unveils the motivations to engage with luxury brands, which cannot generally be measured using SM analytics platforms. For instance, popular SM analytics platforms such as Hootsuite or Social Bakers enable managers to measure only the visible reactions of consumers to posts, such as likes, comments, shares. This study enables luxury brand managers to understand the underlying motivations that foster customers' emotional and cognitive engagement with luxury brands. Luxury brands managers should be aware that some motivations overlap with those of non-luxury brands; namely seeking brand news, perceived brand quality, and entertainment. Luxury brand managers should not ignore these motivations but consider how they can perform better, to differentiate themselves. For instance, luxury brand managers should consider how they could provide superior entertainment, higher quality features, and news in their SM activities. Superior quality products require superior quality content on SM, therefore managers should pay attention to the quality of pictures, videos and other content. Moreover, they should consider the other drivers; brand ethereality can be a substantial point of differentiation for luxury brands on SM. For instance, some luxury brands already implement this concept in their SM marketing campaigns. For example, Christian Louboutin launched a SM campaign for its luxury shoes called "A Cinderella Experience: If you can dream it, we can make it", Bulgari dubbed its campaign #WishUponAStar, and Tiffany &Co's "Believe in Dreams". Luxury brand managers should also consider how best to deliver creative and novel pictures and videos, sensational design, congruence with customers' personalities, help customers to enhance and maintain face, and signal social status.

## 8. Limitations and future research

While the research achieves the study's purpose, some limitations should be noted. Our study is qualitative and theory building in nature. A quantitative study is recommended to test the hypothesized relationships in the emerging framework and to develop scales for measuring the newly identified factors. Furthermore, the analysis draws on customers aged between 18 and 35 years old, of different nationalities and occupations. Consumers and customers are different (Webster, 2000) and it would be interesting to test whether the theoretical framework developed in this study can explain the engagement with luxury brands in SM of both customers of luxury brands and consumers who only follow luxury brands on SM.

Moreover, different cultures perceive and use luxury brands differently (e.g. Shukla, 2012). Therefore, it is recommended to test the developed framework in different cultural contexts to verify whether the motivations for customer engagement identified in this study are salient across cultures.

A further step would be to investigate the relationships between motivations and meanings, symbolic worlds, routines, interactions, and cultural norms that characterize the relational bonds between customers and brands in SM environments. In so doing, it would be interesting to gain the perspectives of luxury brand managers, and learn from their experiences of SM marketing and attempts to foster engagement.

Given that the literature on the consequences of customers' engagement with luxury brands on SM is in its infancy, future research would benefit from studying the consequences of SM engagement on luxury desirability. Finally, in this paper we rely on cross-sectional data, collected at a single point in time. However, just as the concept of luxury evolves with a society's social and economic development, the motivations for people desiring luxury goods also can change with time (Jiang & Shan, 2018). Thus, future research could adopt a longitudinal approach and investigate how motivations fluctuate over time.

## Appendix A. . Illustrative quotations

| Category | Engagement motivations | Cognitive engagement | Affective engagement | Behavioral engagement |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Perceived content Relevancy | Brand news | *I want to know each perfume Dior has, and each handbag Gucci introduce, it is about getting more information, more details and knowing what is the latest trend in perfumes and handbags. I love Dior and Gucci a lot, and I feel I should know everything about them. After, I tried their products, and they were great, I want to know more and more about Dior and Gucci, what more items they have and what other items they have. (CP). [P22, page 2, line 22-26].* | *I was happy and passionate to know more about the latest colors of lipsticks, the latest designs of dresses, and the new ingredients of the foundations. (AFF). [P3, page 2, line 28 – 30].* | *Every day I like to see them when I opened Facebook, I access Facebook 10 times a day, I check these brands two to three times from the ten times I access Facebook. I am easy to get bored, so I spend five to ten minutes with these brands. Sometimes, I go to their pages directly, this happens when I want to buy something new, so, I want to know more about new designs. (ACT). [P18, page 3, line 19-23].* |
| | Post quality | *I remember I saw a video on its page, of a driver driving the E200 and all these emotions and effects. I thought I should do the same…so the next morning I recorded a video of myself driving the car from my home to my job, and then posted it on Facebook. I think the feel of driving my E-Class spurred me to record the video and post on my Facebook wall (CP). [P16, page 2, line 13- 17].* | *I feel happy, and replete with energy that never feel on time when I check Hugo Boss pictures and videos. (AFF) [P8, page 2, line 1-2].* | *I can say Armani is the most, when I logged my Instagram account, I started to scroll down the screen, and the only post I stopped at is Armani. I check it. I seldom click on Dior post or others, but Armani stopped me….I become familiar with Armani page; their posting style and the posted pictures are attractive. You know it has become a habit to look at Armani. I had a good time on their page (ACT) [P3, page 3, line 1-6].* |
| Brand–customer relationship | Celebrity endorsement | *Sometimes they bring celebrities, which stuck on my mind, and say "WOW, it looks good on her, so I think it would look good on me", so I may try it before I purchase it. I think the celebrities play a role, yaa. Like, Rihanna. (CP). [P25, page 3, line 16-19].* | *Now, I so touched by Louis Vuitton, because I think LV is for elder people, not like Burberry…a lot of celebrities buy and wear LV, and I think its series of advertisements in 2007 was so popular and nice, the advertisement included Gorbachev, the very famous political man, Andre Agassi and Steffi Graf, the famous tennis players, with the duffel bags beside them, those advertisements touched me the most. …. From that time, I become so interesting in LV, since that time, I am following LV news, and when they created a page on Facebook, I was one of the first followers. I like LV advertisements, from year to year, they were brilliant. (AFF). [P17, page 2, line 22-30].* | *I started following Dior and Gucci four years ago, I saw an advisement for Dior, it was a sponsored advertisement for Dior on Facebook, the advertisement was attractive, they used a famous actress called Julia Roberts, I was attached to this advertisement because Julia Roberts is doing this advertisement for Dior, and I love Julia Roberts, it started with me like this (ACT). [P22. Page 2. Line 7-11].* |
| | Brand love | *I belong to Chanel and its makeup, Chanel let you to join its Instagram page in a voluntary manner, I love it, and so I should follow, hear it, see it, feel it every day and I want to learn more about it. (CP). [P10, page 2, line 36- 38].* | *I feel proud honestly, I love Gucci, and I want to see always on my Instagram newsfeed. If I would not love it, I would not follow and buy it again and again. I do not buy a product I do not love it for sure, that's applicable to following brands on Instagram, If I do not love it, I would not follow it. (AFF). [P14, page 2, line 19-22].* | *I usually spend more time on Facebook during my weekend, where I logged to Facebook and visit Dior and Chanel pages………..as I said, I love Chanel, I feel excited when I see its posts (ACT). [P6, page 2, line 15-…19].* |
| | Brand ethereality | *When I see a dress posted on Versace page, I imagine myself wearing it, it is quite stimulating and interesting, and begin asking myself "Do I look good and beautiful?". (CP) [P19, page 2 line 26-28].* | *I imagine myself wearing or holding their product, for example, when I see lipstick posted from Chanel, I say to myself "how it would look like on my lips", it is really warm feeling. (AFF) [P24, page 4, line 13-16].* | *I imagine when I graduate, I would walk in the ceremony, wearing an Armani suit, I will ask my friends to record that to post on my wall on Instagram. I dream myself sitting in the office as a successful businesswoman, also wearing an Armani suit, definitely I will post it on Instagram. Sitting in the office with an Armani suit will give the picture which I will post on Instagram a different thing and different reaction (ACT). [P3, page 36-40].* |
| Socio-psychological motives | Enhance and maintain face | *Since I buy LV for seven years, I want to bring my image on the physical world to the online platforms as well. Because this is me, so what I am in the physical world, I have to appear same as it in the online social world. (CP). [P13, page 3, line 3-6].* | *I have a sense of belonging to Chanel, I always like to see to it on Instagram, it is type of expressing who I am, and this is what I want to be and confirm my image and my dignity to my friends. (AFF). [P10, page 3, line 19-21].* | *Let me start with this, before I buy something, there is always a reason, like, a business meeting or event, and I choose the product that matches that particular event. So, the event and the importance of the event define the minutes I spend on Hugo Boss page on Facebook and Hugo Boss website. The more important the event, the more time I spend there. It is also relating to my behavior, I would like to buy something, and I do not want to return to a suit I used before, I want something new, new suit design and shape, that's why I spend more time with Hugo Boss. Hugo Boss gives me an image, a kind of upper class, status and proud. I remember, I had a meeting with one of our suppliers in Paris, I needed to wear a good suit, for a supplier who is really important to our company. So, as always Hugo Boss is the choice, I logged in and check their new notifications, new posts, new models, and designs and so on, then I visited their website, signed to my account, chose the model I wanted, and bought it. (ACT). [P11, page 3, line 1-19).* |
| | Actual self-congruency | *But I think how Instagram connects people and brands, every individual has one step forward to the other, I feel more near to Dior, I have more access to the information, you can click on it if you want to purchase, but it is only about the relationship, they have a philosophy that I feel part of it. (CP). [P9, page 9, line 26-29]* | *Interesting, …I feel that the way I pick my item is part of my personality, so when I pick a watch from Gucci, for example, it is part of me, it looks like me, that I am a tidy person, I like to have a tidy special watch (AFF). [P14, page 2, line 16-19]* | *Mercedes is me, I can't assume myself, in the morning, driving something else, impossible. To some levels, I think there is a similarity, yes, I feel it expresses me and that also draw me to its Facebook page and postings, it reflects part my personality (ACT). [P16, page 3, line 17-19].* |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Status Signaling | I would say Armani quality, shape, fame and purity stuck in my mind. Armani is glamorous brand. It is a brand for successful business man and women [P3, page 2, line 33-35]. | It is hard to express, I was excited, it is the same feeling when you have the Mercedes car, you feel the status of Mercedes Benz, that I am part of the Mercedes communities, both: I have the car and I follow it on Facebook. (AFF) [P16, page 2, line 21-23]. | When I login to my Instagram, I see a lot of posts from different brands and people, I rarely focus on them, but I stopped at Chanel's posts, I stopped a lot at its posts; that post is by Chanel, it deserves to stop at it. (ACT) [P3, page 2, line 12-14]. |
| Brand equity motive | Perceived Brand quality | Hugo Boss has never disappointed me, they are brilliant, high quality of the material…it not unique or special only, Hugo Boss combines excellence and quality. (CP). [P8, page 2, line 5-7]. | When it comes to shoes, Fendi is number 1, its functionality and super quality. When it comes to watches, I always buy Cartier, its utility, features, and long life. Yes, I follow these two brands on Facebook. (AFF) [P4, page 1, line 14-16]. | It is about quality, when I pay a higher price for brand, and that brand is high in quality, I should follow it on Facebook and Instagram. (ACT). [P21, page 2, line 46- page 3 line 3]. |
| Technological-related factors | Convenience | I can know more the products. I save time, before I had to [go to ] the store to check the latest collection, but now, it is very easy to know anything about Gucci. (CP). [P15, page 2, line 43-45]. | At the same time, I save my time, instead of driving my car to the main store, I can access Dior easily via Facebook, check what it has. If it does fit, I would visit their website and buy it quickly (AFF). [P12, page 2, line 35-37]. | There is no possibility to go to the shop regularly, because of my work and I live in small town and there is no store selling Gucci. So, it is really good to engage with Gucci on Facebook and Instagram. (ACT). [P15, page 2, line 8-9]. |
| | Ease of use | Most of time I open its website and Instagram page, it is more interesting in Instagram than its website, it is easy to go through it in Instagram, it is easier to see the products than the websites, it is easier to see how it is worn and how it looks (CP). [P25, page 1, line 14-17]. | When I follow it, I feel it is so easy to browse it, I think Instagram manages this well, I am following thousands of pages, but all appear smoothly. I was interested, because it was what LV does, and what I get it, what opportunities might work out for me to buy (AFF). [P23, page 2, line 44- page 3 line 2]. | It is easier to get involved with Hugo Boss through Facebook than visiting its website every day (ACT). [P11, page 4, line 10-11]. |
| Hedonic motive | Entertainment | I want to enjoy my time, when I feel lazy or under work pressure, I want escape from the pressure or fill my lazy time browsing what Gucci post to see what is new in fashion (CP). [P14, page 2, line 39 to page 3 line 1]. | The first time I followed them, I felt much more excited, because in China, we use WeChat application which I cannot follow a brand, but here in the UK, Facebook is allowed, so I can follow them, and all the brands. It really makes me feel excited. (AFF). [P20, page 2 line 36- 38]. | It is really excited to see Hugo Boss on Facebook, it fulfils my time, (ACT). [P13, page 2, line 37]. |
| Aesthetics motives | Design appeal | When they have new style, for example, they post it on Facebook, so I can know it, it directly appears on my newsfeed, I just click on post, if it is a picture to check it. Van Cleef & Arpels are famous with their classic design, they do not have many new designs every year, but Fendi has a lot of designs each season, there are different bags from Fendi each year, although they have an icon bag, but they have many designs each season (CP) [P20, page 2, line 27-32]. | Overall, for Versace, Chanel, D&G and the others, I really like their design, it is really special for young people…… I could not believe what these brands are offering, when I saw Versace at the first time, I said to myself "Versace is quite expensive" and at the time I did not think Versace's design could be suitable for me, because I do not like the bright colors, Versace clothes are very bright, I said to myself "No, I do not think I will buy". [P19, page 2, line 15-16…..line 24-27]. | I spend a lot of my Facebook time with Versace and Chanel pages, their design is attractive; comparing with other brands, these brands are more attractive, because they are special, these brands have nice product styles which attract me, that's why I spend more time with Versace on Facebook (ACT). [P19, page 2, line 41-44]. |

Notes: ACT: activation, CP: cognitive processing, and AFF: affection.

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