

Luxury Marketing in the Digital Age: Does Exclusivity Still Matter?

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to examine whether luxury marketing and luxury brands can, without compromising their perception of exclusivity, embrace digital marketing, social media, and influencer marketing with Generation Z consumers. This paper investigated interpretivism philosophy with a deductive approach, and the research method is explanatory. Secondary data from journal articles and industry reports were used and analysed using themes analysis. The results also reveal that digitalisation can build a broader accessibility for consumers and still maintain the brand exclusivity. Nonetheless, it seems that luxury brands should be protecting exclusivity through providing the luxury experience and adapting the luxury experience in digital channels with journeying approach, personalisation and selecting a suitable influencer. The study pointed out the significance of digital innovation and brand heritage, prestige, and consumer confidence. The study suggested AI-driven Personalisation, credible influencers' collaboration and targeted digital marketing campaigns to enhance brand equity, increase profitability and ensure sustainable digital exclusivity of luxury brands.

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

Traditionally, luxury marketing has built consumer desire using exclusivity, scarcity, and prestige as elements in establishing a unique market position. In recent years, digital channels, social media, and influencer marketing have led to a complete change in how luxury brands communicate their message to consumers, especially to Generation Z (Tam and Lung, 2024). As a result, the digital marketing industry has been valued at USD 366.1 billion in 2023, increasing to USD 531 billion in 2025, and is expected to reach USD 1,310.3 billion by 2033 (Pangarkar, 2024). Besides, digital marketing offers improved engagement, accessibility, and brand reach, but ironically, it also opens the door to even more exposure for people to the brand. Thus, the digital age poses challenges and opportunities for luxury marketing attempting to be exclusive.

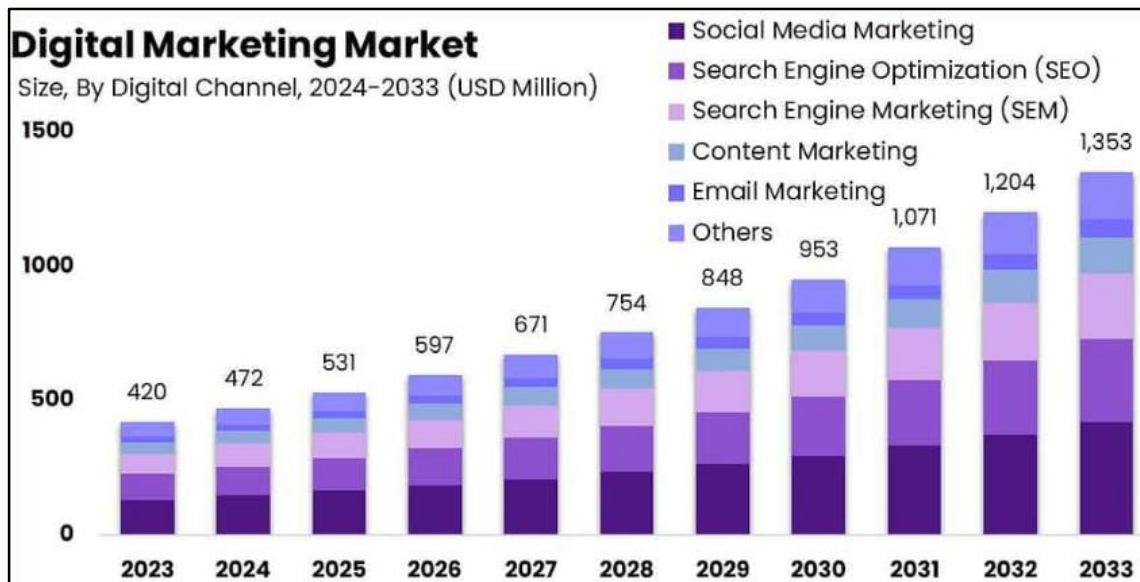


Figure 1.1: Digital Marketing Market

(Source: Pangarkar, 2024)

1.2 Research Aim

The study aims to investigate whether luxury brands can maintain perceptions of exclusivity while adopting digital platforms, influencer collaborations, and social media marketing strategies.

1.3 Research objectives

Primary Objectives: To investigate whether luxury brands can maintain perceptions of exclusivity while embracing digital platforms, influencer collaborations, and social media marketing.

Sub Objectives:

- To examine the role of digital platforms in shaping perceptions of young and Gen Z consumers for luxury brand exclusivity.
- To evaluate how influencer collaborations affect consumers' perceptions of luxury brand exclusivity.
- To identify if luxury brands maintain exclusivity while embracing mass visibility, followed by digital accessibility

1.4 Research question

Primary Research Question: To what extent has digital marketing transformed the concept of exclusivity in luxury branding among Generation Z consumers?

Sub Questions:

1. What is the role of digital platforms in shaping perceptions of young and Gen Z consumers for luxury brand exclusivity?
2. How do influencer collaborations affect consumers' perceptions of luxury brand exclusivity?
3. To what extent can luxury brands maintain exclusivity while embracing mass visibility and digital accessibility?

1.5 Problem statement / Rationale of the research

However, while digital marketing is still expanding, luxury brands are facing difficulties in preserving exclusiveness, especially for Generation Z. Digital marketing offers luxury brands greater accessibility and visibility, consequently diluting the sense of scarcity, prestige and exclusiveness often attached to those brands. McKinsey & Company (2025) noted that the proportion of luxury purchase journeys via digital channels was approximately 80% of all journeys in 2025. This means that there is an increasing number of electronic points of contact. In this paper, it will be examined whether luxury marketing and brands have lost their influence or if they must regain it with consequently selective digital marketing offers.

1.6 Significance

This study is significant as it is focused on how luxury marketing influences Generation Z consumers and whether it is successful in establishing the perception of the exclusivity of luxury brands. It questions whether the established rules of luxury are still valid in the digital age, with luxury brands trying to satisfy a demanding audience and take advantage of their heritage. In turn, the implementation of luxury marketing may witness new strategies to increase visibility, engagement, and exclusivity.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Luxury brand exclusivity and digitisation

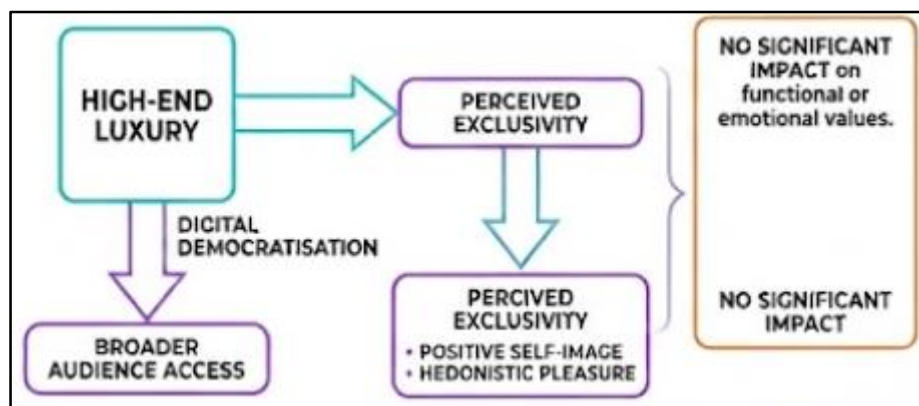


Figure 2.1: Correlation between exclusivity and digitisation

(Source: Author)

The degree of luxury brands is moderated by digitisation. Baltezarević et al. (2025) conducted a systematic literature review to identify that the digital platforms have initiated a democratisation of luxury brands, which, to an extent, has affected the exclusivity. Hence, the digital platforms are ensuring that luxury brands are not limited within the elites. Therefore, exclusivity associated with these brands have eroded as these are available to a broader segment. The value of exclusivity on consumer's psyche is further emphasised by Devanathan (2023) through a literature review establishing the fact that perceived exclusivity helps in developing a positive self-image and hedonistic pleasure among consumers. Consumers, therefore, tend to elevate their self-perception through luxury brands. Thus, the democratisation of the luxury brands can erode this perception. On the other hand, an online survey of 331 respondents by Wang et al. (2024) established that exclusivity has no significant impact on the perceived functional or emotional values of the luxury brands among consumers. Hence, while digitisation of luxury brands can erode consumers' perception of exclusivity, there is uncertainty regarding the value of exclusivity in the first place.

2.2 Role of Social Media Influencers in shaping the perceptions of luxury brands among Gen Z

In the current age, influencers on social media play a substantial role in shaping the perception of Gen Z. Sun et al. (2022) conducted an online survey of 400 Gen Z representatives to establish that opinion leaders, and celebrities are among the most prominent forms of influencers on social media who shape the perception of Gen Z regarding luxury fashion brands. Cabeza-Ramírez et al. (2023) further specified the routes through which the influencers shape the perceptions of Gen Z through the survey of 690 representatives of the generational cohort. The survey highlighted that contents such as the unboxing of videos, specialised blogs, and product tutorials particularly shape brand perception among the Gen Z. Alternatively, Huh & Kim (2022) conducted quantitative experimental research involving Gen Z participants to establish that promotion of high-prestige luxury brands by influencers did not have any significant impact on the purchase intention of the consumers. Therefore, the studies reveal inconsistency regarding the impact of the influencers on the luxury brand perceptions of the Gen Z.

2.3 Conflict between mass visibility and exclusivity

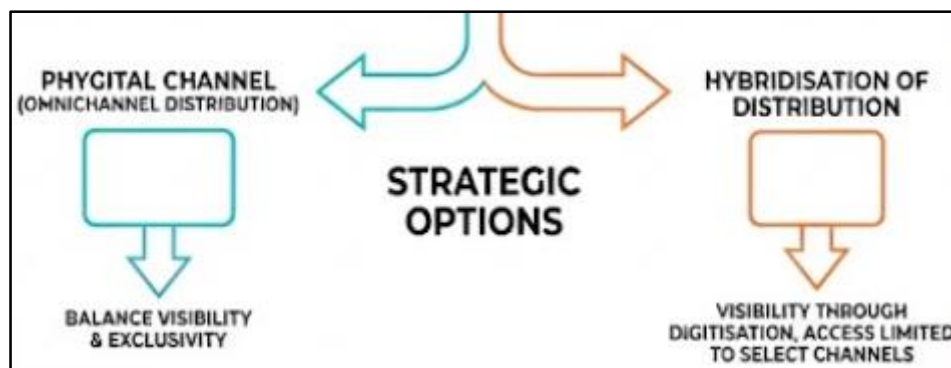


Figure 2.3: Strategies to mitigate the conflict between visibility and exclusivity

(Source: Author)

Studies identify and establish strategic choices to address the conflict between mass visibility of luxury brands and exclusivity. Matić and Bajš (2022) performed a case study-based analysis of the luxury brands such as Louis Vuitton, and H&M. The study establish that the luxury brands should adopt a digital channel to ensure omnichannel distribution and sustain the perception of exclusivity to an extent. This implies that an excessive reliance on the digital platforms is not recommended as it would dilute exclusivity. Rather, an optimal combination of physical and digital platforms is recommended to balance between visibility and exclusivity. Debenedetti et al. (2025) in this context offered a distinct opinion. The authors initiated an in-depth survey across 90 luxury stores in Paris. It was inferred that a hybrid tactic can help luxury firms address the constant tension between exclusivity and excessive visibility. In other words, the recommended suggestion is to provide access to the luxury products to the consumers through a niche group of premium channels. The digital platform would be used only to ensure mass-level visibility but not necessarily accessibility of the products. Thus, there are multiple views regarding the conflict between visibility and exclusivity and its mitigation.

2.4 Theoretical underpinning

2.4.1 Brand Equity Theory (BET)

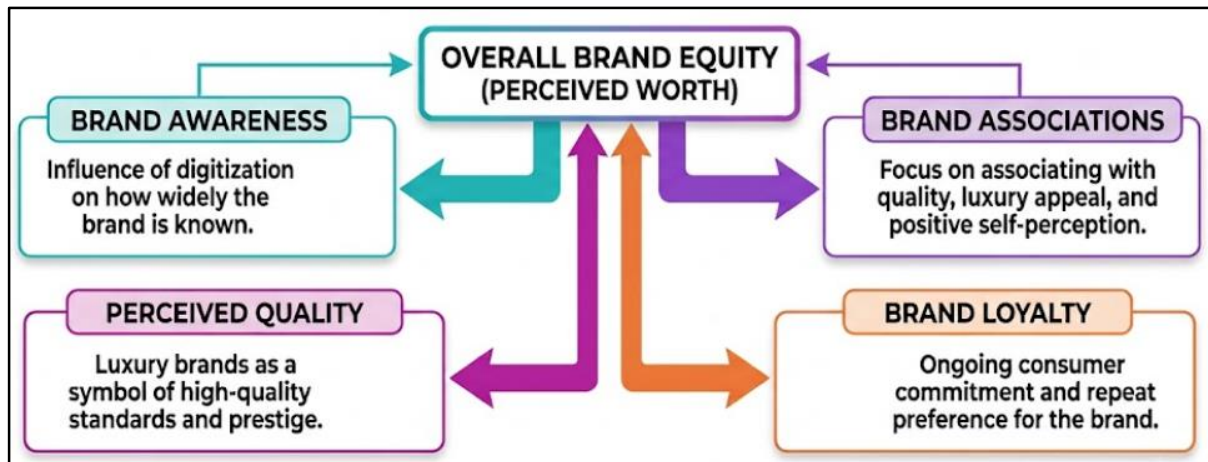


Figure 2.4.1. Brand Equity Model

(Source: Author)

BET focuses on the core attributes of a brand that influences its perceived worth. The theory states that a consumer's overall perception of a brand's worth or equity is correlated with its overall awareness, associations, perceived quality, and loyalty (Yandri & Marsasi, 2024). From the perspective of the luxury brands, association is an important element as the earlier discussions showed that consumers tend to associate high-quality with these products. Further, the democratisation through digitisation can have an influence on the awareness, while the luxury appeal can be associated with a perceived high quality of the brands. However, a potential limitation of the theory is that it does not quantify the value of the equity (Gutiérrez et al., 2024). Despite this weakness, BET would help assess a subjective worth of luxury brands in consumers' minds.

2.5 Literature gap

The literature does not offer conclusive evidence regarding the impact of the brand association of exclusivity of the luxury brands on the psyche of the consumers. Certain ambiguities were noticed regarding how the influencers manage to shape the perceptions of Gen Z. The approaches to cope with both visibility and exclusivity are also an incoherent strategy. The general purpose would be to tackle these inconsistencies and clearly understand the effect that digitisation has on the exclusivity of luxury brands through research.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Philosophy

This research adopted the Interpretivism research philosophy. The perspective regarding luxury brand exclusivity experienced by consumers and their perceptions and interpretations of the feeling of luxury is known as interpretivism and must be examined. Themes, patterns, and insights that emerge from secondary sources can be analysed using the interpretivism approach (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). Because of this, the philosophy has been chosen to gain a better understanding of the luxury marketing challenges from various viewpoints that would impact luxury perceptions as Generation Z consumers.

3.2 Research Approach

The deductive approach has been selected to study the impact of digital marketing, influencers, social media, and consumers' perception of the exclusiveness of the luxury brands. The deductive approach allowed the examination of existing theories by utilising evidence to develop appropriate conclusions from previous research and knowledge (Proudfoot, 2022). Thus, this approach was chosen because it systematically and consistently analysed secondary data and literature to understand changing Generation Z perceptions of luxury exclusivity.

3.3 Research Approach

The research was conducted with an explanatory research design to find out why luxury brand exclusivity is declining by means of digital marketing, collaboration with influencers, and social media platforms. An explanatory design permits the examination of the relation aspects of the various factors and the cause of organisational issues (Saunders et al., 2019). Hence, it was appropriate and facilitated the generation of a systematic secondary data analysis from reliable secondary sources of data in examining consumer branding issues within luxury marketing.

3.4 Data Collection Method

The research used in this study was taken from secondary sources in a study that investigated the impact of luxury marketing, influencer marketing, social media, and consumer mindset on Generation Z's perceived level of exclusivity for the brand of a luxury product. The secondary data facilitated access to the vast quantity of existing data sources and minimised data collection time and expense (Cheong et al., 2023). Furthermore, secondary data were sourced from peer-reviewed journals, Statista, Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, Emerald Insight, Taylor & Francis Online, SpringerLink, Wiley Online Library, and SAGE Journals. In addition, Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT) were utilised, and inclusion/exclusion criteria were set to select valid and reliable references. Last, systematic filtering and aggregation were conducted in compliance with the research objectives based on PRISMA guidelines.

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Relevance	Focus on luxury marketing, digital transformation, social media marketing, influencer collaborations, Generation Z consumer perceptions, and luxury brand exclusivity	Studies unrelated to luxury branding, digital marketing, consumer behaviour, or brand exclusivity
Time Frame	Recent studies published between (2020-2026)	Sources published before 2020
Source Type	Peer-reviewed journals, luxury industry reports, market research reports, annual reports, digital marketing reports, and company publications	Blogs, opinion articles, unverified websites, non-academic sources
Credibility	Reliable authors, recognised institutions, verified organisations, and reputable academic databases	Anonymous, biased, unsupported, or unverified sources
Content Focus	Digital luxury marketing, online consumer engagement, influencer marketing, social media impact, Generation Z behaviour, luxury brand identity, and exclusivity perceptions	Irrelevant marketing topics, non-luxury industries, or unrelated consumer segments
Language	English-language publications	Non-English sources without translation
Data Quality	Evidence-based, analytical, qualitative, and quantitative studies	Opinion-based content lacking supporting evidence

Table 3.1: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

(Source: Author)

Boolean Operator	Purpose	Example Search Query
AND	Narrows search by combining specific keywords	"luxury brands" AND "digital marketing"; "luxury exclusivity" AND "Generation Z"; "influencer marketing" AND "consumer perception"
OR	Broadens search by including related terms	"luxury marketing" OR "luxury branding"; "social media" OR "digital platforms"; "consumer behaviour" OR "purchase intention"
NOT	Excludes irrelevant results	"luxury marketing" NOT "automotive industry"; "influencer marketing" NOT "celebrity endorsement"; "digital branding" NOT "fast fashion"

Table 3.2: Boolean Operator

(Source: Author)

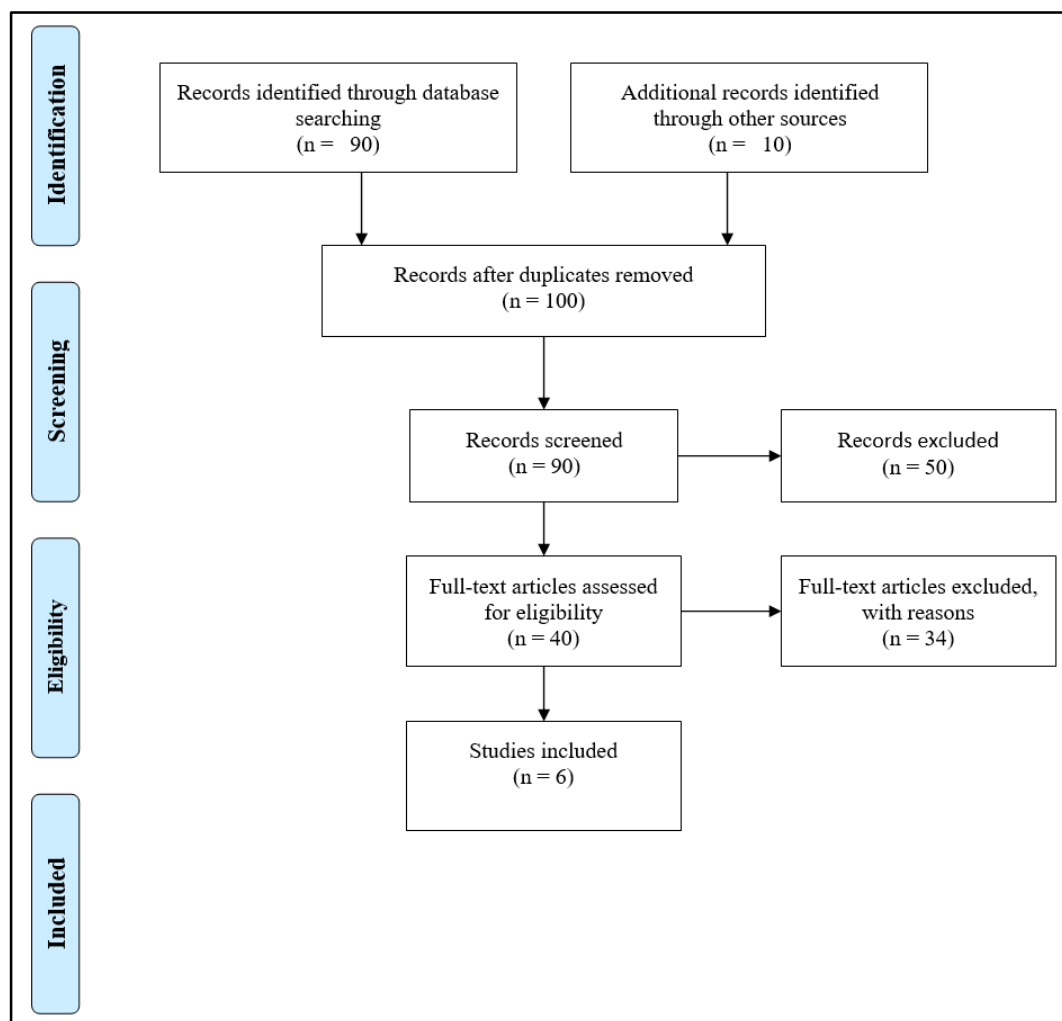


Figure 3.1: PRISMA Flow Diagram

(Source: Author)

3.5 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to uncover the effects of digital transformation on luxury brand exclusivity. Data analysis uses the six-step framework, which has already been widely used to analyse qualitative data in academic research by Braun & Clarke (2023). The first phase is in familiarising oneself with the gathered data by examining multiple academic journals, luxury industry journals, and luxury marketing publications online. The second stage is to create initial codes to be able to establish important ideas from the literature that was reviewed. The remaining phases included organising related code into general themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and presentation of the themes relating to the research objectives.

3.6 Ethics

The study used only secondary data, so there is no requirement for human involvement at any stage of the process. The data collected was processed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation 2018, with the aim of ensuring the confidentiality of the data (GDPR, 2018). Additionally, appropriate Harvard referencing was employed throughout the research process.

4. Findings and Analysis

4.1 Findings

Theme 1: Effects of collaboration on Luxury brand exclusivity and digitisation

Author	Year	Methodology	Findings
Krsmanović	(2026)	Secondary Qualitative (literature Review)	The article by Krsmanović (2026) revealed that digital marketing has revolutionized luxury branding, enabling Chanel, Dior, Louis Vuitton, Hermès, Burberry, Rolex, Ferrari, and Rolls Royce. A myriad of personalised digital features are associated with these brands. These features help in maximising the perceived loyalty among the consumers regarding a brand. This leads to engagement.
Sanz-Lopez et al.	(2024)	Secondary Quantitative (Systematic literature review)	Sanz-Lopez et al. (2024) found that digital transformation is becoming essential for the luxury industry. Luxury brands like Chanel, Louis Vuitton, Gucci, Hermes, Ritz Carlton, Four Seasons, and others are invading themselves on artificial intelligence, e-commerce, social media, blockchain and digital marketing. These technologies are boosting them to communicate more effectively with customers and win global competitiveness.

Table 4.1: Effects of collaboration on Luxury brand exclusivity and digitisation

(Source: Author)

Theme 2: Role of Social Media Influencers in shaping the perceptions of Gen Z regarding luxury brands

Author	Year	Methodology	Findings
Bhatt et al.	2025	The research used a survey-based analysis of the quantitative study undertaken with the Generation Z consumers.	The key outcome is that the influencers are considered authentic testimonies to the high quality of a luxury brand by the Gen Z. The luxury brands leverage this perception by promoting the products via the influencers and creating the perception that the brands are accessible.
Handranata & Kalila	2025	The research was conducted through the methods of Quantitative study using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)	The investigation found that a positive attitude towards the fashion influencers positively affects the attitude towards the brands which ultimately leads to higher intentions towards purchase. The results show that the credibility and attractiveness of the influencers significantly influence the positive image of the brand among the Generation Z consumers.

Table 4.2: Role of Social Media Influencers in shaping the perceptions of Gen Z regarding luxury brands

(Source: Author)

Theme 3: Conflict between mass visibility and exclusivity

Author	Year	Methodology	Findings
Shukla et al.	2024	Systematic review and conceptual synthesis of recent literature on the luxury marketing research conducted in Psychology & Marketing.	The research revealed that the luxury world has been revolutionised by digital transformation. However, the growing dependence on the social media has also given rise to the rising apprehension regarding the access to confidential consumer data and a breach of privacy.
Basil et al.	2024	Adoption of non-participatory ethnography, and qualitative content analysis of user-generated content in three luxury fashion brand communities.	The results that digitally powered community is not an exclusive model, but rather can achieve balance and inclusivity and exclusivity can coexist by establishing a feeling of belonging and guaranteeing the values of the brands.

Table 4.3: Conflict between mass visibility and exclusivity

(Source: Author)

4.2 Analysis

Theme 1:

Baltesarevic et al. (2025) pointed out that digital platforms make luxury brands “available to everyone,” therefore reducing the notion of exclusivity. However, Krsmanovi (2026) argues, digital transformation provides luxury brands the ability to stay true to their selectiveness using AI, personalisation, and exclusive digital strategies. Similarly, Devanathan (2023) emphasised the psychological importance of exclusivity in luxury consumption, whereby it enhances consumers’ self-image and the pleasure from the consumption experience. This finding is further confirmed by Sanz-Lopez et al. (2024), who stated that luxury brands are perpetual and can lead toward a path of digital technology adoption, while holding onto their ‘heritage, prestige and customer trust’. Conversely, Wang et al. (2024) challenged even the effect of exclusivity in the perceived value of functional and emotional dimensions through a web survey with 331 participants. Nonetheless, the literature from existing literature by Krsmanovi (2026) and Sanz-Lopez et al. (2024) has suggested that digital personalised experiences would facilitate the development of consumer relationships and then, their influence on brand equity. In recent years, the results above are supposed to be added to the publication, so that exclusivity might be converted from access to value in experience.

Theme 2:

The effectiveness of luxury brand engagement on social media influencers is created when social media influencers are perceived by Gen Z consumers and purchasing behaviours. Sun et al. (2022) conducted an online survey on 400 Generation Z audiences, identified opinion leaders and celebrities on social media as one of the most powerful influencers that influence perceptions toward luxury fashion brands. On the contrary, Bhatt et al. (2025) finds using quantitative tests via questionnaire methods of Gen Z audiences revealed that influencer-driven trust, authentic, and relatability increased the attractiveness and accessibility. In the same direction, Cabeza-Ramirez et al. (2023) studied the 690 Gen Z population and found that influencer generated contents (unboxings, specialised blogs, tutorials, etc) affects the perception of luxury brands. Similarly, in the study conducted by Handranata & Kalila (2025) with SEM, positive attitudes towards lifestyle influencers positively influence attitudes toward the products and purchase intention, while credibility or appeal of fashion influencers positively influence brand image. By contrast, Huh and Kim (2022) conducted quantitative experimental research to decide whether favourable effect was formed on purchase intention while it was promoted by one of high-end luxury brands' influencer. Therefore, it illustrates that influencer marketing is not always an advantage for luxury brands.

Theme 3:

The challenge to the digital transformation was for these luxury brands to be muscled by the mass considering their exclusivity. Regarding the luxury brands, Mati & Bajs (2022) proposed the utilisation of phygital channels in the omnichannel strategy to keep the luxury brands exclusivity. Shukla et al. (2024) provided that digital transformation offers improved accessibility, personalisation, and brand experience, but at the same time, highlights the issue of losing the brand's exclusivity and privacy, including data security. Debenedetti et al. (2025) also suggested strategies based on their five months of taking the role of a participant observer in 90 luxury stores in Paris to reach an optimal balance between availability and exclusivity. Basil et al. (2024) have contrasted the potential of user-generated content to promote symbolic and experiential value by establishing digital communities that symbolically include and exclude multiple elements. In this way, digital transformation changes the exclusivity for accessibility control and personalisation, for the symbolic value of the brand, and not for lack of product.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1 Conclusion

This study examined the effect of digital marketing, social media, and influencer activity on luxury brand exclusivity among the Gen Z consumers. Existing studies reveal that the rise in digital visibility and influencer access could undermine the perceived luxury exclusivity as it appears more accessible. Still, this can be sustained by providing customised experiences and time-limited interactions, and by the symbolic image created by digital campaigns.

5.2 Study Limitations

This research is based on secondary data, and it has not used any direct information on Generation Z consumers' purchase experience, perception, or attitude. The outputs and the results have been built based on the studies, reports, and databases, which may have some variations of method, and some incompleteness of the data or a few biases. Those may affect the significance, generalizability, and applicability of the findings across various luxury markets and consumers.

5.3 Future Scope

The foundation of further academic research in the future should be primary data to investigate the perception of Gen-Z luxury exclusivity to gain in-depth knowledge of the aspect. Further research in different regions and within different luxury firms needs to be conducted to gain in-depth knowledge of digitalisation effects of the luxury market. The changes of technological development and attitudes for future exclusivity strategies can be measured through longitudinal studies.

5.4 Recommendation

5.4.1 *Implementing Personalised Digital Experiences*

Luxury brands need to adopt AI-driven personalisation and exclusive digital experiences to stay exclusive and boost engagement. For example, Louis Vuitton and Chanel utilise digital platforms and the personalisation of services to deepen the customer relationships (Zheng, 2024). Further, similarly strategy brand should adopt to help build enhanced customer satisfaction.

5.4.2 *Strengthening Influencer Brand Alignment*

Luxury brands could have further association with an influencer who has a personality or authenticity that aligns with the brand value and brand authenticity. These brands such as Dior and Gucci, are working with influencer as a strategy to capture the demographic market that is Gen Z (Peng, 2026). It is very critical for luxury brands to select the right influencer that would uplift the trust and brand image, thus, consumer brand loyalty.

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