

## Do Luxury Car Brands Market Premium Status in a World of Likes, Followers, and User-Generated Content?

Dr. S. Paige Gardiner<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

---

Effectively using social media to market a product or service is an evolving challenge for many marketers because of the vast possibilities to understand consumer needs and connect with consumers. Researchers have been examining how consumers engage with social media for the past few years. Priluck (2017) described the development of social media marketing strategy and how social media has changed consumers' evolving relationship with brands with her 7 C's social media framework. Her framework examines how consumers engage with brands in terms of convergence, community-orientation, and comprehensiveness, chaotic, content-driven, commercial, and calculable. The purpose of the study was to examine how luxury car brands attempt to engage consumers using social media engagement frameworks. The researcher conducted a content analysis study examining the Facebook posts of six luxury car brands during March of 2018. The Facebook posts were described and analyzed to explain how the luxury car brands used different social media marketing strategies and tactics in accordance with social media marketing frameworks. The researcher compared the Facebook posts and evaluates the posts category and post content type for effective consumer behavior engagement. The study contributes to the literature by offering a conceptual and empirical validation of possible social media marketing strategies for luxury brands.

---

**Keywords:** customer social media insights, social media marketing, Facebook marketing, content marketing, luxury goods marketing,

### 1. Introduction

Traditional luxury good marketing focuses on a set of strategies that played on consumers' needs of self-image to impress with the indulging ability to pay higher prices for products and services. Marketers met the needs of these consumers by communicating the traditional features and benefits of a product (Atwal & Williams, 2009). As consumers moved to the digital era, their relationships with luxury products evolved as their passions moved to self-indulgence, personal creativity, expressiveness, intelligence, and--above all, a demand for meaning (2009). Luxury brand marketing managers must understand the changing needs and passions of luxury consumers and how to connect products and services with these consumers through digital channels. In July 2019, Facebook reported to Wall Street the number of active monthly user reach 2.41 billion worldwide, an 8% increase from the previous year (Facebook, 2019). Ninety-two percent of American brands and 68% of small-and-medium size companies have a business profile page on Facebook (Clement, 2018). The current generation of luxury brand consumers expects a luxury digital experience that provides excessive information from a variety of credible sources, with exquisite, stylish images, and a personalized shopping experience that brings not only functionality but joy, pleasure, and entertainment to the buying process. According to a McKinsey & Company report, digital marketing now influences 45% of all luxury sales (Dauriz, Michetti, Sandri, & Zocchi, 2014). Luxury consumers have a well-established buyer behavior of searching and learning about products and services through social media platforms where the consumers connect with other buyers, innovators, and the luxury companies. Luxury brands need to develop dynamic strategies and sophisticated tactics to foster long-term relationships with the luxury brand consumer to ensure a positive life-time value with the consumer.

---

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, Utah Valley University, USA, [Paige.gardiner@uvu.edu](mailto:Paige.gardiner@uvu.edu). 801.863.5424

Luxury brand marketing managers face challenges developing long-term social media strategies for their brands on social media. While luxury brands engage with social media as a marketing channel, these brands continue to test the most effective ways to market in terms of creating community, soliciting consumer feedback, and implementing use-generated content.

While fearing that use of social media will diminish exclusivity (Turk, Scholz, & Berresheim, 2012). Luxury brands managers question whether excessive brand exposure on social media channels may change the perception of their brands from highly sought-after products to products that are now easily mass-produced. Luxury brands strive to create the idea of a limited supply in order to maintain elite, exclusive status that comes with high prices (Okonkwo, 2009). While questioning the relationship of brand position and social media, other important social media marketing activities, beyond spending, such as social media strategy, active presence, consumer engagement campaigns, and evaluating analytics, have been overlooked in the chaotic, fast changing world of social media marketing (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016; Valos et al., 2017; Tafesse 2018). While attempting to manage the complexity of social media marketing, many luxury brand managers are also aware of the positive impact of social media on enhancing consumer trust and intimacy with the brand, while creating strong relationships with consumers and developing brand evangelists (Dhaoui, 2014).

In terms of luxury goods, Bain & Company reported luxury cars lead the nine luxury industry categories followed by hospitality and personal luxury goods. The global luxury car market maintains a constant growth of 5% with \$495 billion worldwide in sales (D'Arpizio, Levato, Prete, Fabbro, Montgolfier, 2019). Other industry leaders forecast the luxury cars market will grow from \$423,000 million in 2019 to 611,300 in 2024 in the United States (Reuters, 2019). While some marketing literature has begun to address the performance of luxury brands on social media the efforts are mostly focused on high-end fashion retail. No current literature exists that examines how companies are engaging luxury car consumers on social media or in the non-personal luxury item industries. More research is needed to shed light on how luxury brand marketing managers should develop social media marketing strategies for non-personal luxury goods. This paper provides an examination of the literature to give a background on how consumers engage with brands on social media and then a review of how luxury brands engage with consumers will be explained. Next, the methodology and description of data collection and findings will be explained. Finally, a discussion and proposed recommendations for luxury car brands managers will be suggested along with future research ideas and limitations.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Consumer Engagement Behaviors with Brands on Social Media**

Consumer segments engage with social media networks based on their needs, wants, and social psychology triggers. As consumers' needs, motivations, goals, and relationships with companies evolve and develop, consumers seek different types of social media engagement and the quantity and quality of social media posts they require also changes (Ashely & Tuten, 2015). Much of the social media literature examines how consumers engage with social media. Tafesse and Wien (2018) examined the development of social media strategy that actively engaged with consumers and used analytics to measure social media performance which lead to higher marketing performance at companies. They evaluated the social media presence of 141 firms by surveying marketing managers who worked closely with social media at the firms. The results of their research found companies need to have a social media marketing strategy that coordinates to the company's communication and marketing goals and that also produces content that is actively concerned with garnering consumer engagement (2018). Their research suggested that brands communicate with consumers on a personal level which creates a transformational experience triggering positive affective responses. As consumers feel positive affinity for a brand, their long-term behaviors toward creates a deeper brand loyalty. To ensure the social media strategy and marketing communications engage consumers, social media analytics should be used to foster a data-driven culture, encouraging marketing managers to prioritize strategy and resources to achieve the highest levels of consumer engagement. Tafesse and Wien (2018) stated that consumers who positively engage with brands on social media have favourable perceptions, feelings, and actions toward the company which may result in strong positive customer purchase and post-purchase behavior.

While Tafesse and Wien highlighted a relative approach to engaging different consumers on different social media, Priluck (2017) examined a strategic framework called the 7 Cs' for engaging consumers on social media. She described the development of social media marketing strategy and how it changed consumers' evolving relationship with brands. Each of the 7 C's have emerged synergistically to create a new type of consumer who expects his or her interaction with a brand to be convergent, community-oriented, comprehensive, chaotic, content-driven, commercial,

and calculable on social channels. Priluck described the 7 C's framework for how brands engage with consumers using the following framework.

**Convergent:** Consumers on social media platforms expect brands to provide diverse offering that combine technology, advertising, information, entertainment, and new channels to create cool new products and ways of purchasing (Priluck, 2017).

An example of convergence happens when a big brand creates a movie played on YouTube to celebrate their celebrity endorsers. Convergence happens when messages are used on different platforms and in different forms.

**Community-Oriented:** Consumers expect their social media marketing experience to refer to groups with common interests linked by the brand who are also concerned with social, economic, professional, or political concerns. According to Priluck (2017), consumers expect to see people sharing their lives, feelings, and impressions through personal narratives. Many groups raise money, complete projects, help others, offer product reviews, engage in politics, and entertain others because consumers are seeking human interaction and by nature are social beings. Additionally, because of the vastness of social media, there are social media sites for all types of people with varying interests, actions, and behaviors (2017). This community-oriented consumer demand was previously acknowledged by Sheehan and Morrison (2009) who studied social media and consumers. They agreed that consumers are inherently social and look for ways to create community and relationships not only with other people but also with brands.

**Comprehensive:** Priluck (2017) described comprehensive as being about the broader community in the sense that social media is open to everyone in the world which in turn creates an environment where crowd-sourcing allows groups of strangers in some cases to provide more valuable information about a product or service than the single brand. Consumers expect to research a product or service via social media in a store and to receive reviews, product descriptions, and pricing comparisons from around the world in seconds to inform their purchase behavior. Ashley and Tuten (2015) agreed with comprehensiveness of social media and highlighted that many social media marketing strategies are dependent upon content from journalists, brands, and users.

**Chaotic:** With the invention of Google and the smart phone, consumers expect immediate access to anything, which means the vast amount of data provided to consumers is often perceived as a chaotic mess, according to Priluck (2017). However, consumers have figured out a way to organize the massive volumes of chaos by ranking the information contributions using a social credibility hierarchy and the voice of industry influencers. Still consumers expect to see chaos to prove relevancy of a product or service. Ashley and Tuten (2015) agreed and found in their research that clutter and multiple psychological interferences are present on many social media channels and consumers expect this chaotic experience.

**Content-driven:** This massive amount of data is also ranked based on the relevancy of creative content communications that comes in many forms that include blogs, white papers, podcasts, videos etc. According to Priluck (2017), consumers are interested in content created by the brand and also by the development of content by the users. Content needs to come from all sources on social media to give credibility to the brand's authenticity and relevancy in the market. Consumers expect to see content creators, joiners, critics, and spectators as part of the content journey on social media. Content is the currency of online because content embedded keywords drive online ranking and relevancy (2017).

**Commercial:** The ultimate goal of marketing is to sell more product to more people to generate a profit. Social media acts as both a direct and indirect channel for commercial selling (Priluck, 2017). Some social networks sites generate direct sells with features like Facebook Store, Pinterest shopping pins, or in app Instagram shopping. Also, social networking sites influence consumer choices on buying and selling despite the actual location of the purchase. In many cases social media is the channel that leads consumers to purchase on websites and at retail stores.

**Calculable:** Consumers and brands can see real-time impact of the social media strategy and validity by metrics like "tweets," "likes," or "shares." These key performance indicators are variables that communicate success of the brands which often translates to increase consumer confidence and future financial success (Priluck, 2017). While engaging on social media, consumers may not always purchase immediately, but the positive metrics communicate trust and authenticity about a brand to consumers which influences the consumers long-term purchasing behaviors.

Additional researchers have observed and defined consumers' engagement behaviors on social media that support similar ideas from the 7 C's framework. Another social media marketing strategy to engage with consumers was suggested by Ashley and Tuten (2015). In their research, they conducted a content analysis of the top 18 brands

in the world, and they captured and recorded the social media post for one day between June and August of 2010. The content from the study was analyzed to assess the unique types of content strategy used by the 18 brands. From their research, they found that brands first seek to exist on social media channel where their customers exist. They surprisingly discovered the vast majority of content produced by brands was functional rather than social.

They suggested brand marketers create social media messages with high level of abstraction rather than social or engagement marketing messages because the brands do not want to alienate consumers who already have a strong psychological relationship with the brand (2015).

Another interesting finding about consumer engagement was that consumers followed brands more for attainable and challenging contests than for other engagement activities like discounts or coupons (Ashley and Tuten, 2015). Also, from the data the researchers found only three types of appeals were made to consumers on social media. Brands appealed to consumers through images, exclusivity, and incentives. They found that consumers engaged more with entertaining content than with informative content.

Because of the changing business environment and the dynamic revolution of change on social media platforms, how consumers engage on social media should continue to be studied. Marketing managers need empirical stratagems and tactics to help them increase engagement on behalf of their companies. To make the matter more complex, consumers engage in different ways with luxury brands.

## **2.2 Social Media Consumer Engagement with Luxury Brands**

Pentina, Guilloux, and Micu (2018) examined the consumer engagement behaviors of luxury brand consumers to understand how luxury consumers interact with brands and to understand how the interaction affected the brands. Specifically, their research attempted to measure the cognitive and emotional attitudes exhibited by consumers as the consumer engaged in luxury brand-related engagement behaviors by intensity and scope. They conducted 23 in-depth consumer interviews for a content analysis study that revealed 11 engagement behaviors for luxury consumers based on engagement effort and creativity. The study results provided a ranking for consumer engagement behaviour with the lowest form of engagement occurring when a consumer “liked” or “followed” a luxury brand. The ranking of engagement then moved to commenting on a post, liking tagging or sharing, mentioning friends in comments, tagging brand names publishing photos of a brand’s product, soliciting comments brand selfies, initiating brand related conversions, publishing multimedia shopping stories, and modifying the product or suggesting an alternative use for the product (2018). Not surprisingly, when consumers engage with a brand at the various engagement ranking levels it signifies the consumers intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation of brand loyalty. The more engaged the consumer is on social media (i.e. publishing shopping stories for products) the more brand loyal the consumer (2018).

While many of these types of engagement behaviors existed with non-luxury brand on social media, Pentina et. al (2018) found for luxury consumers the greatest brand engagement in terms of intensity and connection occurred during conversations and interaction between the brand and the consumer on social media. The research also showed when a luxury brand framed their posts to provoke discussion, it promoted deeper brand discussion which increased brand loyalty.

One important finding from the study suggested that while many brands sought to engaged with consumers, luxury brands must be careful to support perceptions of exclusivity and premium quality which emphasize perfection (Pentina et. al,2018). The recommendation for luxury brand marketing managers from Pentina et. al (2018) suggested that luxury brands need to create perfect, aesthetically creative, top-of-class content to evoke pleasure and self-indulgence. Pentina et. al (2018) also suggest luxury brands create content that depicts unique manufacturing know-how and mystery to create exclusivity impressions for consumers. Another way for luxury brands to create exclusivity is to seek out the top influencers in their category to establish long-term relationships facilitating positive interactions with the brand. Finally, the research suggested luxury brands create spin-off brands where marketing managers can direct consumers to experiment with social media engagement behaviors rather than experimenting on the flagship social media accounts (2018).

Another study by De Souza, Wayne, Ferris (2015) observed how luxury brands market to consumers on three major social media channels (Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter) with the intent to describe the most effective social media marketing strategies for luxury retail. The researchers collected social media posts from three major luxury brands on three social networks and conducted a content analysis that revealed how the luxury brands were using the social media networks for different types of consumer marketing communication.

Facebook was used by the three luxury to effectively communicate and engage with consumers. Twitter allowed for the largest volume of posts, while brands sought consumer feedback from Instagram. The data were also coded and as either push or pull marketing messages. The authoritative push marketing tactics that employed strong consumer calls to action accounted for 52.6% of the marketing content while the softer, indirect creative pull marketing messages accounted for 47.4% of the marketing messages (2015). Push marketing messages appeared more often on Twitter while pull marketing messages on Instagram. The researchers found that social media proves to be a low-cost effective marketing tool that allows for greater connection with luxury brand consumers.

Because of the evolving dynamics of social media and the changing demands and desires of consumers, the way consumers behave with brands on social media will continue to evolve and needs to be studied.

#### **4. Research Questions**

The current literature on consumer engagement and luxury brands has largely focussed on high-end luxury retail clothing brands. No research exists that examines consumer engagement behavior on social media with luxury car brands. While projections for luxury car sales are forecasted to increase and as these brands will continue to target millennial consumer segments, marketing managers will need to increase the quantity and sophistication of their social media marketing. To inform marketing managers and to increase future sales in the luxury brand car marketing, marketing managers need to examine their marketing strategies. To frame the content analysis research, the following research questions were posed: What social media marketing messages are being communicated by luxury car brands to consumers on their Facebook pages? What post category and post type are most frequently communicated to consumers on the Facebook pages? Which consumer engagement behavior frameworks do social media marketers use to market luxury cars?

#### **5. Methodology**

A content analysis methodology was selected as the method of choice as it allows for locating and identifying specific message characteristics within social media posts (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 1999). After pursuing a specific research question to examine how luxury car brands engage consumers on social media channels, a specific collection and coding protocol was created where images and text were dichotomously coded. The content analysis method systematically and objectively identifies patterns and messages within the Facebook posts (Stemler, 2001). A trained research assistant collected the Facebook posts and was given a coding worksheet with examples of each specific post category and post content type. The author trained the research assistant on the procedures prior to the data collection process. The research assistant collected and coded the Facebook posts. The author also collected and coded the Facebook posts and the result were compared. Difference in the collection and coding were examined and discrepancies were resolved.

All Facebook posts for Acura, Audi, BMW, Cadillac, Lexus, and Mercedes were examined from March 1 to March 31 of 2018. Table 1 lists the detailed statistics for the number of posts, page “likes,” page “followers,” average posts per day, and post category type. The Appendix shows Facebook posts from the sample, and how they were coded according post content type. From the six luxury brand Facebook pages, 244 posts were coded and analysed for post category, post content type, reactions and shares.

If the Facebook post showed an image, the post was categorized as a photo type. If the Facebook post showed a video, the Facebook post was categorized as a video. If the Facebook post showed a car show, dealer event, special test drive or any other event the post was coded as an event. Finally, if the Facebook post provided the customer with an article to a newspaper story, white paper, safety report, or auto manual, the Facebook post was categorized as an article. Of the 244 Facebook posts the photo type was most frequent with 71% and video post content accounted for 26%.

After examining and recording the unique phrases, words, images, and hashtags, the content was coded and six post content type themes emerged. The six post content themes that emerged from the data were photos of the car, product launch for a new type or series of car, publicity, social, user tips, and vehicle style. For example, a Facebook post that showed a full car body photo with text that described the car or the driving conditions were coded as “car.” Facebook posts showing a new car with product launch announcements were coded as “new vehicles.” Facebook posts showing a corporate event, car show, or dealer announcement were coded as “publicity.” Facebook posts showing the brand supporting a local charity or social responsibility cause were coded “social.” Facebook posts that provided driving or car maintenance information content were coded as “tips.” Facebook posts showing a close-up shot of the steering wheel, gear shift, hubcap or other part of the car were coded “vehicle style.”

The coders also created a coding category for posts that did not fit into one of these themes; however, all posts were categorized in these categories.

**Table 1. Facebook Post Statistics from Six Luxury Car Brands**

	<b>Acura</b>	<b>Audi</b>	<b>BMW</b>	<b>Cadillac</b>	<b>Lexus</b>	<b>Mercedes</b>
Total Posts	36	14	49	7	27	111
Page "Likes"	1,152,253	11,236,333	20,275,361	3,945,824	4,073,985	20,993,779
Page "Followers"	1,127,517	10,959,965	19,888,666	3,889,782	3,988,303	20,623,448
Average post per day	1.09	1.17	1.76	1.00	1.18	3.39
Post Category – Photo	22	9	42	3	27	71
Post Category – Video	14	4	7	4	0	35
Post Category – Event	0	0	0	0	0	1
Post Category – Article	0	1	0	0	0	4

## 5.1 Results

### Facebook Brand Likes/Followers and Post Type

The most “liked” and “followed” luxury car brand on social media was Mercedes with 20 million “likes” and “followers” followed by BMW, Audi, Lexus, Cadillac, and finally Acura. Mercedes was also the most active in terms of posts with 111 Facebook posts during March. Mercedes also averaged the highest number of post per day with 3.39 posts per day. Mercedes had the most varied type of post category with 71 photo posts, 35 video posts, and four article category posts.

### Facebook Post Likes and Shares

Table 2 shows the reactions and shares for the 244 Facebook posts for each luxury car brand with high and low metrics. A reaction occurs when a consumer presses the Facebook post with his or her finger and selects one of the five offered emotions, which now include wow, love, haha, angry or sad. A share occurs when a consumer clicks the share button and posts the content on his or her own Facebook page, in a direct message or on a page managed by the consumer. For the Facebook algorithm relevancy, a share is more valuable than a reaction, but both metrics are important for social media assessment.

**Table 2. Facebook Reactions and Shares for Six Luxury Car Brands by Post Category**

<b>Post Category</b>	<b>Acura</b>	<b>Audi</b>	<b>BMW</b>	<b>Cadillac</b>	<b>Lexus</b>	<b>Mercedes</b>
<b>Reactions</b>	<b>high - low</b>	<b>high - low</b>	<b>high - low</b>	<b>high - low</b>	<b>high - low</b>	<b>high - low</b>
Photo	25000 - 98	10000 - 239	58000 - 1500	6800 - 1200	77000 - 420	33000 - 408
Video	7800 - 76	4700 - 636	22000 - 1600	3100 - 657	0	66000 - 380
Event	0	0	0	0	0	338
Article	0	8200	0	0	0	4500 - 1500
<b>Shares</b>	<b>high - low</b>	<b>high - low</b>	<b>high - low</b>	<b>high - low</b>	<b>high - low</b>	<b>high - low</b>
Photo	1300 - 4	826 - 169	2257 - 84	1300 - 96	551 - 24	1726 - 14
Video	840 - 11	507 - 71	2648 - 161	1000 - 133	0	13121 - 8
Event	0	0	0	0	0	0
Article	0	625	0	0	0	286 - 26

When comparing the reactions and shares of the six luxury car brands, no clear marketing content strategy emerged for post category or post content type. For example, the highest reaction across all six brands was for Lexus who had 77,000 reactions to a photo post with a publicity post content. Table 3 shows the highest reactions and shares for each of the six luxury car brands and no clear pattern for post category or post content type emerged.

**Table 3. Highest Reaction and Shares During the Month by Post Category and Post Content Type for Six Luxury Car Brands**

Luxury Brand	Post Category	Post Content Type	Highest Reaction	Highest Share
Acura*	Photo	Car	25000	—
Acura*	Photo	Car	—	1300
Audi*	Photo	Car	10000	—
Audi*	Photo	Car		826
BMW	Photo	Car	58000	—
BMW	Video	new vehicle	—	2648
Cadillac*	Photo	new vehicle	6800	—
Cadillac*	Photo	new vehicle	—	1300
Mercedes	Video	new vehicle	66000	—
Mercedes	Video	Publicity	—	13121
Lexus	Photo	Publicity	77000	—
Lexus	Photo	Car	—	551

\* Post was the same for highest reaction and shares

### Facebook Post Content Type

A total of 244 Facebook posts were coded, and six content marketing message themes emerged. Forty-two percent of the post content type message communicated to Facebook users the image of the car, which was the dominate theme. After showing content of the car, the next most frequent post content type was publicity (23%); then a product launch for a new car (18%); tips (4%), vehicle style shots (4%), and social responsibility (3%). Table 4 shows the post content type for the six luxury car brands.

**Table 4. Facebook Post Content Type for Six Luxury Car Brands**

Post Content Type	Acura	Audi	BMW	Cadillac	Lexus	Mercedes	Total	% of Content
Car	14	11	31	3	11	33	103	42%
Publicity	4	1	1	2	7	41	56	23%
New Vehicles	8	0	9	2	0	25	44	18%
Social	0	1	5	0	0	2	8	3%
Tips	0	0	1	0	0	8	9	4%
Vehicle Style	5	0	2	0	0	2	9	4%
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%

## 6. Discussion and Recommendations

### 6.1 Post Category

The findings from the research showed that 71% of the luxury car brand Facebook post category were images and 21% of the post category were video. Facebook reports viewership of video is up to 8 billion views a day with 85% of consumers viewing the videos without sound (Chen, 2019).

Additionally, consumers are spending three times as much time on a live Facebook video than a in-studio produced video (Chen, 2019). None of the luxury brand video posts from the Facebook feeds included live Facebook videos. The majority of video content showed the drivers racing the cars over beautiful terrain. Luxury brand managers may want to test live Facebook videos with elite brand influencers making sure to include captions, text overlays, and bold words to capture the 85% of consumers who are watching the video without sound.

In terms of using Facebook events, only one post out of the 244 posts used the Facebook event functionality. While no research exists to indicate the success or failures with Facebook events, Facebook reports that 35 million people see a public Facebook event everyday (Facebook, 2016). Luxury brand marketing managers may want to test the Facebook event for car shows, dealer events, and tradeshow. Finally, surprisingly only four of the 244 posts were external or internal published articles about the luxury car brands. Luxury car brand managers should consider publishing more community articles from journalists, influencers, celebrities, and independent sources if the articles raise the level of exclusivity of the brand.

## 6.2 Post Content Type

If the luxury brand marketing manager used the 7 C's social media framework from Priluck (2017), the post content type may have reflected convergence, community, comprehension, chaotic, content-driven, commercial, and calculable indicators. However, with almost 80% of the content reflecting the product, publicity, and a product launch for a new car, it appears the marketing message reflect more of a traditional product-centric content strategy. The luxury car market may expect to see a large convergence of marketing on social media platforms; however, the Facebook posts in the study showed pictures of the luxury cars reflecting a lack of convergence on the part of luxury brands. No apps, Youtube videos, or tributes to celebrity endorsers appeared on the Facebook pages. However, some researchers point out the development and inclusion of games, mobile apps, and podcasts—even for many large powerful brands—is beyond the scope of standard development for content creation (Ashley & Tuten, 2015).

The post content type also lacked community-oriented messaging. Not only did the Facebook posts not reflect community consumers groups, the content also failed to reflect interest in a larger community with only 3% of the posts engaging with a social responsibility cause. Luxury brands need to carefully consider how to create a social media strategy that creates community to provoke deeper consumer discussion and relationships, while still showing the brand as exclusive for only a few elite consumers.

With the broader community on social media, the Facebook posts of the six luxury car brands may have included some crowd sourcing and product comparisons to other top brands. The second largest content category was publicity. Luxury brand managers included positive publicity in the Facebook feeds (23% of the content was publicity). Luxury brand managers should continue to integrate positive comprehensive posts into their long-term social media strategy because it builds a sense of external exclusivity for the brand.

Examining the post content from the study, no external content from journalists, critics, employees, or users appeared in the social media feed for the six luxury car brands which showed a lack of comprehensiveness. One possible explanation for the lack of comprehensive content is that luxury marketing managers do not want to have a variety of consumer and community voices reflecting the brand. When luxury consumers engaged with a variety of different messages for a brand, they may perceive the brand as messy lacking true elite vision with a standard for excellence (Pentina et. al, 2018). However, if the crowdsourcing or influencer content aligns with the brand strategy, it may be influential to post more comprehensive content. Additionally, if luxury consumers described their greatest level of brand intensity and connection occurred during conversations and interaction between the brand and the consumer on social media (Pentina et. al, 2018), luxury brand managers may also want to engage social listening automation programs to increase their direct connection with consumers on Facebook and Twitter.

The study suggested that rather than embracing the chaotic environment of social media, the luxury brands were hesitant and reluctant to participate in social media. Part of this may be a strategic decision to protect the brand image, part of the reason for this may be because of a lack of resources; however, as luxury consumers continue to evolve, they will demand a more chaotic and dynamic social media engagement. Luxury brand managers may want to embrace increased social media chaos as consumers expect that type of environment. Additionally, increasing their social media presence on different platforms may increase their brand exposure and search ranking.

In terms of post content type, the six luxury car brands mostly produced images of the cars and new cars that were being launched, which showed a lack of content-driven social media marketing strategy. Ashley and Tutens (2105) found that consumers engaged more with entertaining content than with informative content.



While the Facebook posts reflected a very traditional type of marketing, luxury marketing managers may want to find ways to increase the entertainment value of their post. Creating videos that show innovative, advanced manufacturing in an environment of action with car influencers may help the brand to achieve new levels of status in the consumers mind (Pentina et. al, 2018). Luxury brand managers need to carefully balance user-generated content to seek content that reflects the splendour and lavishness of the luxury brand.

The Facebook post for the six luxury brands served as social media advertising with the objective of the posts to create general brand awareness for the luxury cars. No commercial apps appeared to allow luxury brand consumers to design a car of their choice and see the purchase price. The commercial social media element existed as an information marketing strategy only. Many of the posts lacked links to the brands website or “shop now” buttons. Even the clearest direct sales posts, lacked strong calls to action to purchase the luxury brand cars. While social media marketing is about the social aspect of luxury products with exquisite and stylish images, luxury brand managers should create highly personalized shopping experience where they communicate directly with the consumer to help the consumer purchase a dream, luxury car.

When examining the most engaged consumer posts in the study, luxury brands had a variety of different metrics in terms of “likes” and “follows.” It appears the brands are not using analytics to measure the most “liked” and “followed” posts, and the brand managers fail to replicate their past successes posts. Additionally, with their highest reaction and shared posts, luxury brand managers may want to reach out to these customers to engage them in more personalized conversations to qualify them as prospects. Luxury brand managers need to design a more comprehensive strategy with clear calculable metrics to ensure their vision and success for the brand.

The Facebook post content type for the six major luxury car brands lacked many of the consumer engagement elements from Priluck’s 7 C’s social media engagement framework. Luxury marketing managers must seek consumer engagement because in the long run it creates intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for brand loyalty. While seeking higher levels of consumers engagement, luxury brand managers must also weigh and develop social media marketing strategies that maintain the perfect, aesthetically creative, clean, sophisticated image of their brands.

## **7. Limitations and Future Research**

The content analysis study is limited because of the purposive sampling, researcher bias, and the changing social media strategies and content of the Facebook pages over time. Also, as the Facebook algorithm changes, the results of the study will change and may be difficult for subsequent researchers to replicate the study. This first qualitative research study serves as the beginning of a larger study where the research would like to examine specific social media marketing tactics like examining the use of Facebook live video in comparison to in-studio produced video to examine consumer engagement. Further research could also examine the use of commercial apps for luxury car brands and their effectiveness with consumer engagement. Finally, the researcher would like to examine the use of contests as a form to engage luxury consumers on social media. Further research could provide recommendations for how luxury marketers managers could create social media campaigns that appeal to luxury consumers.

## **8. Conclusions**

The purpose of the research was to give luxury car marketing managers and other luxury brand marketing managers a baseline to understand how luxury industries are using social media to solicit consumer engagement. As luxury brands continue to experiment with social media marketing strategies increasing their social presence through consumer engagement campaigns and tying those activities to social media analytics and performance measure, additional research will be needed to examine and explain the highly complexity area of luxury brand social media marketing strategy.

### **Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest exists with this research.

### **References**

- Acura (n.d.) In Facebook [Business Page]. Retrieved April 1, 2018, from <https://www.facebook.com/Acura/>
- Ashley, C., & Tuten, T. (2015). Creative strategies in social media marketing: An exploratory study of branded social content and consumer engagement. *Psychology & Marketing*, (1), 15. Retrieved from <https://doi.org.ezproxy.uvu.edu/10.1002/mar.20761>

- Audi (n.d.) In Facebook [Business Page]. Retrieved April 1, 2018, from <https://www.facebook.com/audi/>
- BMW (n.d.) In Facebook [Business Page]. Retrieved April 1, 2018, from [https://www.facebook.com/BMW/?ref=br\\_rs](https://www.facebook.com/BMW/?ref=br_rs)
- Cadillac (n.d.) In Facebook [Business Page]. Retrieved April 1, 2018, from <https://www.facebook.com/cadillac/>
- Chen, J. (2019, July 1). 15 Facebook stats every marketer should know for 2019. [Sprout Blog] [Online] Available:<https://sproutsocial.com/insights/facebook-stats-for-marketers/#FB-video>
- Clement, J. (2018, July 10). Brands on social media – Statistics & facts [Statista]. [Online] Available: <https://www.statista.com/topics/2057/brands-on-social-media/>
- Dauriz, L., Michetti, A., Sandri, N., & Zocchi, A. (2014). Digital is affecting not just sales of luxury goods, but the entire value chain, from digital marketing and enhanced in-store experience to product co-creation. (Report on Digital Luxury Experience: Keeping Up with Changing Customers). [Online] Available: <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/marketing-and-sales/our-insights/digital-luxury-experience-keeping-up-with-changing-customers>
- D'Arpizio, C., Levato, F., Prete, F., Fabbro, E. D., & de Montgolfier, J. (2019). Future of luxury: A look into tomorrow to understand today. (Bain & Company Report). [Online] Available: <https://www.bain.com/insights/luxury-goods-worldwide-market-study-fall-winter-2018/>
- De Souza, I. M., Paterson, W., & Ferris, S. P. (2015). Social media marketing in luxury retail. *International Journal of Online Marketing*, 5 (2), 18-36. DOI: 10.4018/IJOM.2015040102
- Facebook. (2019, July 24). Facebook Reports Second Quarter 2019 Results [Press release]. Retrieved from [https://s21.q4cdn.com/399680738/files/doc\\_financials/2019/Q2/FB-Q2-2019-Earnings-Release.pdf](https://s21.q4cdn.com/399680738/files/doc_financials/2019/Q2/FB-Q2-2019-Earnings-Release.pdf)
- Facebook. (2019, July 23). Facebook Business. [Facebook Business Page]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/business/pages/post-event>
- Frey, L. R., Botan, C.H., & Kreps, G. L. (1999). Investigating communication an introduction to research methods (2nd ed.). Pearson.
- Godey, B., Manthiou, A., Pederzoli, D., Rokka, J., Aiello, G., Donvito, R., & Singh, R. (2016). Social media marketing efforts of luxury brands: Influence on brand equity and consumer behavior. *Journal of Business Research*, (12), 5833. Retrieved from <https://doi-org.ezproxy.uvu.edu/10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.04.181>
- Hollbrook, M.B., & Hirshman, F. C., (1982). The experiential aspect of consumption: Consumer fantasies, feelings, and fun. *Journal of Consumer Research* 9: 132-140.
- Lamberton, C., & Stephen, A. T. (2016). A thematic exploration of digital, social media, and mobile marketing: research evolution from 2000 to 2015 and an agenda for future inquiry. *Journal of Marketing*, 80, 146–172.
- Lexus (n.d.) In Facebook [Business Page]. Retrieved April 1, 2018, from <https://www.facebook.com/lexus/>
- Mercedes (n.d.) In Facebook [Business Page]. Retrieved April 1, 2018, from <https://www.facebook.com/MercedesBenz/>
- Okonkwu, U. (2009). Sustaining the luxury brand on the internet. *Journal of Brand Management*, 16(5/6), 302-310. doi:10.1057/bm.2009.2
- Pentina, I., Guilloux V., & Micu, A.C. (2018). Exploring social media engagement behaviors in the context of luxury brands. *Journal of Advertising*, 47(1), 55-69.
- Pine, B. J., & Gilmore, J. H. (1999). *The experience economy*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Priluck, R. (2017). *Social media and mobile marketing strategy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Reuters. (2019). Luxury vehicles market 2019 shares, size, business growth, opportunities, worldwide, trends, regional demand, vehicle type, services and industry overview, statistics 2024. (Luxury Vehicles Market Report). [Online] Available: <https://www.reuters.com/brandfeatures/venture-capital/article?id=90486>
- Sheehan, K., & Morrison, D. (2009). The creativity challenge: Media confluence and its effects on the evolving advertising industry. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 9, 40–43.
- Statista, (2019), Luxury cars. [Online] Available: <https://www.statista.com/outlook/1060000/109/luxury-cars/united-states>
- Stemler, S. (2001). An overview of content analysis. *Practical assessment, research & evaluation*, 10, 1-7. <http://pareonline.net/getvn.asp?v=7&n=J7>
- Tafesse, W. & Wien, A. (2018). Implementing social media marketing strategically: an empirical assessment. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 34:9-10. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2018.1482365>
- Turk, B., Scholz, M., & Berresheim, P. (2012). Measuring service quality in online luxury goods retailing. *Journal of Electronic Commerce Research*, 13(1), 88-103.
- Valos, M., Mapelstone, V. L., & Polonsky, M. J. (2017). Integrating social media within an integrated marketing communication decision-making framework. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 33 (17–18), 1522–1558.