

Consumer responses to arts-based initiatives hosted by luxury brands

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"This work is part of a project that has received funding from the Institut Francais de Grece and speficially from the Bourses d'excellence à destination des jeunes chercheurs/chercheuses de Grèce pour un séjour scientifique en France pendant la période allant de septembre à décembre 2023"

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This research aims to explore the impact of arts-based initiatives on consumer responses within the luxury branding domain, focusing on cognitive, affective and behavioral responses. Drawing from a comprehensive review of relevant literature, the study underscores the importance of integrating artistic elements within luxury branding to enhance consumer engagement while maintaining exclusivity. Employing a qualitative methodology, the research conducted in-depth interviews with luxury consumers who had taken part in such arts-based initiatives. These interviews probed participants' perceptions and experiences regarding arts-based initiatives and their influence on consumer responses. Initial findings suggested that consumers viewed arts integration positively, associating it with heightened brand engagement and emotional connection. Moreover, variations in consumer responses across different stages of the customer journey highlighted the nuanced impact of arts-based strategies. These insights underscore the significance of incorporating arts within luxury branding to cultivate meaningful consumer experiences.

Keywords: luxury, experience, arts-based initiatives, consumer responses, customer journey, digital

Introduction

In today's competitive market, luxury brands are embracing the synergy between art and commerce, weaving creative initiatives seamlessly into their marketing fabric. From exclusive collaborations with renowned artists to immersive exhibitions and experiential events, these brands are transcending traditional boundaries to engage with consumers on

a deeper, more emotional level. By intertwining their products with the world of art, they not only elevate their brand image but also cultivate a sense of exclusivity and cultural relevance. Through this fusion of luxury and art, brands are not just selling products; they're curating experiences, inviting consumers into a realm where beauty, sophistication, and creativity converge, leaving an indelible mark on the ever-evolving landscape of luxury marketing.

Studies highlight the growing embrace of arts-based initiatives by luxury brands within their marketing strategies, emphasizing the symbiotic relationship between arts and luxury (Chailan, 2018; Grassi, 2020). Such initiatives contribute to unique consumer experiences and immersive retail spaces (Baumgarth, 2018; Choi et al., 2016; Dion & Arnould, 2011; Joy et al., 2014; Jelinek, 2018; Vukadin et al., 2016). Additionally, they elevate the evaluation of luxury products and reinforce the bond between brands and consumers (Logkizidou et al., 2019; Koronaki et al., 2018). Arts-based elements in luxury advertising enhance brand perception and improve perceptions of luxury products (Peluso et al., 2017; Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2008; Lee et al., 2015). This research aligns with contemporary consumer preferences for meaningful non-conspicuous consumption choices, exploring how arts-based initiatives contribute to the concept of 'everyday luxury' (Banister et al., 2019). Through qualitative interviews, this study seeks to delve into consumers' perceptions and experiences, exploring the multifaceted impact of arts-based initiatives on luxury consumption practices. In that direction, the objectives of the present study are: (1) to acquire a thorough understanding of the effects of arts-based initiatives, (2) to explore if these effects differ across the stages of the customer journey and to (3) identify the role of digital tools in the process.

Theoretical Background

Several studies highlight the antecedents of art's importance in the luxury brand landscape. Grassi (2020) emphasizes the necessity of authentic integration, while Logkizidou et al. (2019) propose the concept of second-order spillover effects, transferring artistic essence to displayed merchandise. Banister et al. (2019) discuss the role of consumers in shaping luxury meanings through everyday practices, complemented by Jelinek's (2018) exploration of strategic art utilization by luxury brands. Koronaki et al. (2018) suggest emotional value creation through arts-based initiatives, while Chailan (2018) identifies various modes of relationship between art and luxury brands. These studies collectively highlight how art contributes to enhancing brand perception, emotional engagement, and competitive advantage in the luxury market.

Various studies underscore the significance of art in the luxury brand landscape, emphasizing its role in enhancing brand perception, emotional engagement, and competitive advantage (Grassi, 2020; Logkizidou et al., 2019; Banister et al., 2019; Jelinek, 2018; Koronaki et al., 2018; Chailan, 2018; Peluso et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2015; Kapferer, 2014; Joy et al., 2014). Positive consequences of arts-based initiatives include increased perceived luxury and brand prestige, strategic value creation, and the transformation of retail spaces into hybrid art experiences (Choi et al., 2016; Kapferer, 2014; Joy et al., 2014; Vukadin et al., 2016; Dion & Arnould, 2011; Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2008). Moreover, arts-based initiatives contribute to favorable product evaluations, emotional value creation, and enhanced consumer engagement, reflecting the multifaceted impact of art in luxury consumption (Logkizidou et al., 2019; Koronaki et al., 2018; Grassi, 2020).

Methodology

In-depth interviews serve as a valuable tool for comprehending and documenting consumer experiences, as outlined by McCracken & McCracken (1988). 17 in-depth interviews were conducted with consumers who had experienced an arts-based initiative organized by a luxury brand. Contacted customers were told that the interviews were for academic research about arts-based initiative organized by a luxury brand. Interviews were conducted online. Interviews were conducted until theoretical saturation was reached. Participants were mainly female business students. Regarding data collection and analysis, a semi-structured interview protocol was designed to capture consumer responses to arts-based initiatives. During the interview, we started with deciding on the type of arts-based initiative they were going to analyze. Each participant referred to approximately three such experiences visited. Then, three key sections were explored. Firstly, attention was given to consumers' responses to arts-based initiatives, encompassing their cognitive, affective, behavioral, and multidimensional reactions. Secondly, the discussion delved into the influence of the customer journey on these responses, examining how different stages of the journey shape consumers' perceptions and behaviors towards arts-based initiatives. Lastly, the role of digital tools in shaping consumers' cognitive, affective, behavioral, and multidimensional responses to arts-based initiatives was thoroughly analyzed, highlighting the evolving landscape of consumer engagement in the digital age.

To address our research questions, analysis was conducted manually and started with a deductive approach by first locating themes that related to the structural characteristics identified in the literature review. An inductive approach was then used to categorise themes identified to represent different facets of consumption practices and experiences (Strauss and Corbin, 1994). The categories were then refined iteratively

drawing on relevant literature (Spiggle, 1994). This back-and-forth process resulted in the final themes that addressed the research questions.

Results

Consumer characteristics significantly influence arts-based initiatives. One respondent showed a keen interest in luxury brands, particularly Dior events when traveling. Another expressed loyalty to Lancôme and a strong interest in skincare, influencing their exploration of Lancôme products. Additionally, the convenience of Lancôme products encouraged another respondent to try new ones. These insights highlight the diverse motivations consumers bring to such initiatives, emphasizing the interplay between individual characteristics and consumer behavior. The findings illustrate key aspects of attendees' experiences in arts-based initiatives. Respondents found the Dior exhibition at Fondation Louis Vuitton enriching and educational, with surprising architectural elements. They also felt a sense of exclusivity and "mini celebrity" moments, appreciating engaging installations and well-organized spaces. However, they noted the balance between the temporary nature of the exhibition and the repeatability of experiences. These elements collectively shape perceptions, highlighting the multifaceted nature of arts-based initiatives.

The findings reveal a nuanced interplay between cognitive, affective, behavioral, and multidimensional responses among attendees of arts-based initiatives. From a cognitive perspective, attendees exhibited an enhanced brand knowledge, particularly regarding Dior's product lines, leading to increased brand confidence, exemplified by Lancôme's perceived creativity. Affective responses were diverse, with attendees experiencing a range of emotions from feelings of luxury and comfort to initial anxiety, later transitioning to contentment. Behaviorally, attendees demonstrated heightened purchase

intention for Dior products and continued exploration of Lancôme skincare, indicating a tangible impact on consumer behavior. Multidimensional responses underscored the complexity of attendee engagement, including online interactions with Lancôme's website, overall satisfaction with the Dior store experience, and evolving perceptions of brand image for both Louis Vuitton and Dior. These analytical insights shed light on the multifaceted nature of consumer experiences in arts-based initiatives, emphasizing the dynamic relationship between consumer perceptions, emotions, behaviors, and brand engagement.

The stage in the customer journey plays a pivotal role in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors. During the pre-purchase stage, the impact of the exhibition experience, particularly at the Dior exhibition, influenced consumers' feelings towards the brand, prompting them to try Dior products and eliciting different experiences compared to existing brand relationships, as evidenced by Lancôme. However, initial anxiety was noted, reflecting apprehensions about engaging with unfamiliar brands. Despite this, consumers often felt special upon entering exhibitions, but also experienced a sense of not belonging, particularly at the Dior exhibition, due to heightened security measures. Additionally, comparisons of brand accessibility between temporary and continuous events further shaped perceptions during this stage. In the post-purchase stage, customer relationships and confidence, exemplified by existing relationships with Lancôme, played a crucial role, influencing repurchasing decisions and overall satisfaction derived from prior usage. These dynamics highlight the intricate interplay between consumer emotions, experiences, and brand interactions throughout the customer journey.

Digital tools play a pivotal role in enhancing presentations and engaging audiences in the luxury brand experience. Through the use of screens, both small and

large, content, including commercials, is effectively projected, adding dimensionality to the viewing experience and capturing viewers' attention. These tools not only encourage engagement but also facilitate access and inclusion by inviting individuals into the brand's universe without the need for substantial financial investment or physical presence. Consequently, digital tools serve as powerful vehicles for promoting accessibility and inclusivity while amplifying the immersive nature of the brand experience.

Discussion

This study set out to explore the multifaceted impact of arts-based initiatives on luxury consumption practices. The results support the notion that arts-based initiatives align with contemporary consumer preferences for meaningful non-conspicuous consumption choices in luxury consumption, echoing findings by Banister et al. (2019). Our findings align closely with the literature on consumer responses to arts-based initiatives in the luxury brand landscape. Specifically, our identification of the diverse motivations and preferences that consumers bring to such initiatives resonates with Banister et al. (2019)'s emphasis on the role of consumers in shaping luxury meanings through everyday practices. Similarly, our observations regarding the cognitive, affective, behavioral, and multidimensional responses among attendees mirror the findings of Peluso et al. (2017), Joy et al. (2014), and Koronaki et al. (2018), who discuss how arts-based initiatives contribute to enhancing brand perception, emotional engagement, and consumer engagement.

Moreover, our insights into the role of digital tools in enhancing presentations and engaging audiences align with Choi et al. (2016)'s findings on strategic art application in luxury brands, which lead to sustained value creation and increased brand equity. Similarly, our observations on the use of screens to add dimensionality to the viewing

experience resonate with Hagtvedt & Patrick (2008)'s demonstration of the art infusion phenomenon, where visual art positively influences product evaluations.

While our findings largely align with existing literature, we further contribute to the current knowledge in the field. For example, our focus on the pre-purchase and post-purchase stages of the customer journey adds depth to the understanding of consumer responses to arts-based initiatives, which may not be explicitly discussed in all the cited studies. Additionally, our emphasis on the interplay between individual characteristics and consumer behavior in the context of arts-based initiatives provides valuable insights into the complexities of consumer engagement in this domain, which may complement but not fully overlap with the existing literature. Our findings offer significant implications for managers as well. Firstly, brands should recognize the diverse motivations and preferences that consumers bring to such initiatives, tailoring experiences to resonate with different segments of their target audience. This necessitates a deep understanding of consumer characteristics and behaviors throughout the customer journey, allowing for personalized and impactful interactions. Secondly, brands should prioritize the integration of digital tools to enhance presentations and engage audiences effectively. By leveraging screens and other digital platforms, brands can create immersive experiences that capture consumer attention and foster a sense of inclusion and accessibility. Furthermore, brands should carefully consider the temporality of arts-based initiatives and the balance between exclusivity and accessibility. While temporary exhibitions may create a sense of urgency and exclusivity, continuous events can offer ongoing opportunities for consumer engagement and relationship-building. Overall, by strategically leveraging arts-based initiatives and digital tools, luxury brands can cultivate meaningful connections with consumers, driving brand loyalty, and long-term success in the competitive luxury market.

This study has limitations worth noting. Firstly, its qualitative approach may limit generalizability, prioritizing depth over statistical representation. Additionally, the exclusive inclusion of student participants may introduce bias. The geographic focus on France may restrict applicability to other cultural contexts. Lastly, the emphasis on pre-purchase stage participants may overlook insights from other stages of the customer journey.

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