



## Contributing clarity by examining brand luxury in the fashion market

Karen W. Miller <sup>a,\*</sup>, Michael K. Mills <sup>b,1</sup>

<sup>a</sup> University of Southern Queensland, T241, School of Management and Marketing, Faculty of Business, University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba Queensland 4350, Australia

<sup>b</sup> Faculty of Business, University of Southern Queensland, Springfield Campus, Queensland 4300, Australia

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received 1 December 2010

Received in revised form 1 April 2011

Accepted 1 July 2011

Available online 27 October 2011

#### Keywords:

Brand luxury  
Brand leadership  
Brand value  
Generation Y  
Fashion brands

### ABSTRACT

Research relevant to the creation and development of luxury brands is a growing area in the literature. Offering insight, previous research also contributes evidence of a lack of clarity regarding a definition, operationalization, and measurement of brand luxury. This study focuses specifically on this issue within the pre-eminent luxury fashion brands category. Carefully examining brand luxury and the dimensions and relationships underlying the luxury fashion brand, this study develops a conceptual model. Testing across three specific fashion categories the Brand Luxury Model makes important contributions, by clarifying the confusion evident in earlier brand luxury research, supplying evidence about the importance of brand leadership, and helping brand managers and academics by creating a useful framework to depict the luxury fashion brand.

© 2011 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

### 1. Introduction

Researchers are attracted to the luxury brands market for a number of reasons including the complexity, diverseness, size, status, and the rapidness and constant evolution of the luxury brands market (Atwal & Williams, 2009; Chadha & Husband, 2006; Christodoulides, Michaelidou, & Li, 2009; Fionda & Moore, 2009). Luxury brands outpace that of other consumer categories and are responsible for the development of a \$220 billion global industry (Keller, 2009). Brand luxury, often used synonymously with prestige, holds considerable intangible worth, has an enduring positive brand image and is at the forefront of design, quality, status and fashion (Juggessur & Cohen, 2009; Phau & Prendergast, 2000a). Despite the significant insights the luxury sector provides to contemporary business, brand luxury is under-represented in the academic literature (Berthon, Pitt, Parent, & Berthon, 2009; Fionda & Moore, 2009). The definition, operationalization, and measurement of brand luxury are highly subjective and remain inconclusive in the literature (Godey, Lagier, & Pederzoli, 2009; Kapferer & Bastien, 2009).

An increasing number of luxury categories of which luxury fashion brands (couture, ready to wear and accessories) account for the largest proportion of luxury goods sales, as well as the strongest product growth (Fionda & Moore, 2009) suggest this category's prominence for research. Luxury brands have marketing costs and complexities

that exceed those of other fashion categories (Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2008; Jackson & Shaw, 2004; Kapferer & Bastien, 2009; Moore & Birtwistle, 2004), because of the speed of change and short life of fashion merchandise, the result of more competitors, easier entry into the industry, and the considerable scale and breadth of fashion items under a single brand entity (Juggessur & Cohen, 2009; Moore & Birtwistle, 2004; Okonkwo, 2007; Tynan, McKechnie, & Chhuon, 2010; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). Despite the complexities and costs, in the fashion industry, luxury brands are the most profitable and fastest growing brand segment. However, luxury brands are also the most poorly understood and under investigated (Berthon et al., 2009 p 45).

While the literature relevant to branding of consumer goods is growing substantially, researchers do not pay enough attention to the application of consumer brands in the fashion luxury goods sector. Recent studies focus on delineating the form and function of consumer brands, yet very few empirical studies seek to identify and understand the processes that support the creation, and maintenance of the luxury fashion brand (Fionda & Moore, 2009). While some research addresses the dimensions of luxury branding, how those dimensions connect, and to what extent is unclear (Fionda & Moore, 2009).

This lack of clarity is possibly because very few studies actually focus on defining, operationalizing and measuring brand luxury. To address this gap, this study seeks to contribute clarity by examining brand luxury in the fashion market. To accomplish this, the paper first discusses the relevant brand luxury literature, before addressing some of the dimensions and relationships regarding fashion brand luxury, and then developing hypotheses. The study discusses the results next, providing new information on fashion brand luxury, placing parameters around brand luxury, separating brand luxury from a

\* Corresponding author. Tel.: +61 7 4631 1264; fax: +61 7 4631 5597.

E-mail addresses: karen.miller@usq.edu.au (K.W. Miller), michael.mills@usq.edu.au (M.K. Mills).

<sup>1</sup> Tel.: +61 7 3470 4515; fax: +61 7 3470 4501.

number of specific concepts, and contributing empirical evidence for the beginning of a fashion brand luxury nomological network.

## 2. Brand luxury

Brand luxury management generates interest in both academic and business circles, because the brand is integral: the reason why consumers associate themselves with a luxury company (Okonkwo, 2007). Much of the previous research attempts to uncover tenets of luxury brands (Atwal & Williams, 2009; Berthon et al., 2009; Fionda & Moore, 2009; Keller, 2009; Nueno & Quelch, 1998; Truong, McColl, & Kitchen, 2009; Tynan et al., 2010; Wetlaufer, 2004). Some research seeks to identify motivations for purchasing luxury goods (Husic & Cicic, 2009; Kim, Kim, & Sohn, 2009; Park, Rabolt, & Sook, 2008; Prendergast & Wong, 2003) or fashion (Sung & Jeon, 2009). Other researchers tend to focus on luxury brand development (Christodoulides et al., 2009; Moore & Birtwistle, 2004; Nobbs, Birtwistle, & Fiorito, 2008; Silverstein, Fiske, & Butman, 2005; Truong, Simmons, McColl, & Kitchen, 2008; Vigneron & Johnson, 2004), purchase (Park et al., 2008), parental influence (Prendergast & Wong, 2003), protection (Clarke & Owens, 2000; Elsmore, 2000; Juggessur & Cohen, 2009; McDonald & Roberts, 1990; Phau & Min, 2009), the Internet (Nyeck, 2004; Okonkwo, 2009; Sung & Jeon, 2009) and brand extensions (Chen & Liu, 2004; Dias & Ryals, 2002; Glynn & Brodie, 1998; Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2009).

Paradoxically previous studies improve knowledge and increase brand luxury confusion. This is because of the variability in approaches, definitions and correspondingly different names, types and numbers of dimensions in brand luxury typologies. One of the areas of agreement in the brand luxury literature is the lack of agreement regarding what is a luxury brand (Atwal & Williams, 2009; Berthon et al., 2009; Christodoulides et al., 2009; Fionda & Moore, 2009).

The brand luxury literature (see Table 1 for a summary of a number of these studies) takes different approaches. For example, Atwal and Williams (2009) paper views luxury as experiential and varied in levels of customer participation and connection. Tynan et al. (2010) argue that luxury is at one end of a continuum with ordinary, so where ordinary ends and luxury starts is a matter of degree that a consumer judges. Alternatively, Nueno and Quelch (1998) utilize an economics perspective to define luxury brands, whereas Vickers and Renand (2003) propose a more psychological model, finding the primary value of luxury versus non-luxury is psychological. The lack of congruity is not a result of an evolving definition of brand luxury. Table 1 shows the terms of the actual dimensional measures and the number of dimensions researchers use are disparate. This disparity is unresolved and continues in very recent literature. Keller (2009), for example, argues that luxury brands have ten characteristics. Alternatively, Atwal and Williams (2009) include four dimensions of luxury, Berthon et al. (2009) argue luxury has three dimensions, Fionda and Moore (2009) believe that brand luxury has nine components and Kapferer and Bastien (2009) argue that brand luxury has two facets. These two facets are indulging in one's pleasures (luxury for one's self) and a demonstration of success (luxury for others). The lack of congruity is an indication that the underlying structure and relationships making up a fashion luxury brand remain unclear. Further evidence of this uncertainty occurs in Christodoulides et al. (2009) study. They could not support the underlying structure of Vigneron and Johnson's (1999) Brand Luxury Index (BLI) scale, finding a number of cross loadings and no evidence of discriminant validity. The results of Christodoulides et al. (2009) study add to the evidence regarding the conceptual confusion of brand luxury.

As is evident from Table 1 and the literature cited, approaches to brand luxury and dimensions of brand luxury vary. Many of these studies have no empirical support for their claims, and arguments of what brand luxury might be or contain remain confusing. The need for clarity is pressing. To develop clarity requires researchers to explore brand luxury studies more carefully, to look for convergence,

carefully examine the underlying dimensionality of the brand luxury, to unpack their relationships in terms of antecedent and consequences, and to build toward a nomological framework. Developing clarity should constitute a better understanding of brand luxury in the fashion context.

### 2.1. Brand luxury framework development

Even though the evidence regarding brand luxury is inconclusive, some areas of agreement exist. Areas of agreement in the literature include the notion that brand luxury is an assessment associated with intangible elements of the brand. Intangible elements include a history of success, or the brand's corporate identity, culture and spirit, or the brand's reputation, or how visionary, trendy and up-to-date the brand is and/or the brand's careful management (Alleres, 2003; Atwal & Williams, 2009; Beverland, 2004; Dubois & Paternault, 1995; Fionda & Moore, 2009; Kapferer & Bastien, 2009; Keller, 2009; Nueno & Quelch, 1998; Wetlaufer, 2004). These are all elements associated with the brand as a leader, a remarkably resilient brand (Beverland, 2004) and one which demonstrates success (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). While these elements are associated with luxury brands, the elements are not specific to luxury brands. Beverland (2004) points out these attributes are part of any successful brand and the above attributes are therefore more likely to be contributing factors to assessments of luxury rather than being a specific element of brand luxury. In all probability, an individual consumer may perceive a brand to be successful and the extent to which an individual perceives a brand to be successful or as a leader is likely to affect the degree, to which the individual perceives the brand as luxurious. As such, the hypothesis is:

**H1.** Brand leadership directly affects brand luxury.

Another area of agreement among brand authors associates brand luxury with originality, creative excellence, uniqueness, creative imagination, innovative design and creative quality, which links with the symbols, logos and package design (Alleres, 2003; Dubois & Paternault, 1995; Kapferer & Bastien, 2009; Keller, 2009; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999, 2004; Wetlaufer, 2004). Innovation is associated with originality (scarcity), uniqueness, creativity, and slight imperfections in handmade goods (Dubois et al., 2001; Nueno & Quelch, 1998). Some authors (for example, Dubois & Paternault, 1995; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999) in their discussions link brand luxury with innovative elements. Innovation (and perceptions of innovation and elements of innovation) is conceptually quite different to brand luxury. The extent to which a consumer perceives a brand to be innovative is likely to affect the degree to which a consumer perceives a brand as luxurious. Also likely is that brand innovation contributes to and affects perceptions of brand leadership. The more innovative, creative and unique a brand, the more likely an individual consumer perceives the brand as leading the way, a market leader or possibly as luxurious. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are:

**H2.** Brand innovation directly affects brand leadership.

**H3.** Brand innovation directly affects brand luxury.

The branding literature suggests brands that are leaders are likely to be more valuable than those that follow. In Hoeffler and Keller's (2003) article on strong brands, they argue that strong brands are more likely to be market leaders and are more likely to be more valuable in the customer's minds-eye. Therefore, the hypothesis is:

**H4.** Brand leadership directly affects brand value.

Another likely influencer of brand value is brand luxury. Richins (2004) argues the value of a brand stems partly from the perception

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

**ISI**Articles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات