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How is the application of the Social Media Strategies impacting on the Brand Awareness? A multiple cases study approach to the Luxury Cosmetics Industry

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A mio nonno, a cui dedico questo traguardo

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of a digital marketing strategy, specifically the social media strategy, on the brand awareness in the luxury cosmetics industry. Social media platforms are increasingly assuming a crucial importance not only as a digital marketing strategy but as a fundamental way to drive awareness towards the brand and thus to accelerate the sales. Despite their controversial nature that allow people to share freely their opinions, eliminating the concept of exclusivity own by the luxury brands, beauty and luxury companies are exploiting these platforms to achieve their marketing and business objectives. Social media platforms' application, in designing the marketing strategy, represents a huge potential as it allows Brands to increase exponentially the customers data exchanged, the clients' engagement as well as the sales opportunities. Since there is a lack of theoretical and empirical studies on this field, this exploratory study aims to answer the present research question: "How the usage of Social Media impacts the Brand Awareness in the Luxury Beauty industry and which social media strategy is the most impactful, in terms of KPIs?". The analysis will be divided as it follows: (1) a literature review based on branding, digital branding, digital marketing strategies related topics, (2) a qualitative research based on a multiple case study analysis conducted through N-Vivo 12 software. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews to employees of the main beauty companies –The Estée Lauder Companies, Chanel Beauty and Dior Beauty– complemented by secondary data. The findings demonstrate that social media strategies have a crucial role for the luxury beauty brands since they have direct linkages in creating brand awareness. However, it is not possible to define a unique social media strategy to obtain better results as it is strictly connected to the brand values and marketing objectives, and it requires to be implemented through multiple social media platforms concurrently. In fact, as the beauty brands showed, there are different KPIs measuring social media impact on brand awareness, lacking a unique measure.

Keywords: Digital Branding; Digital Marketing; Brand Awareness; Social Media Strategy; Beauty Industry; Luxury Cosmetics Industry; Social Media Platforms; KPIs; Marketing Research

Introduction

Digital branding is a concept strictly connected to the corporate world and the development of the digital marketing strategy. In the last years, digital branding has grown considerably, leading to significant changes in marketing practices as well as on the consumer brand perception. Digital marketing represents today the most impactful part of the marketing strategy for Brands and Companies.

Digital marketing facilitates the companies to generate customer's traffic on their websites and therefore to increase sales, as well as it influences the customer perceptions. Specifically, luxury cosmetics brands due to the peculiar nature of the industry at which they belong to, benefit of the social media platforms in establishing deeper and emotional connections with their customers, strengthening their brand identity and, at the meantime, they enhance aspiration and desirability. Digital marketing strategies are changing the ways in which brands communicate with the customers, providing new opportunities through several platforms: social media platforms, in particular, have a significant impact in engaging consumers and building their loyalty. Luxury beauty brands can investigate the customers' perceptions and their preferences on products, allowing them to design the most appropriate marketing campaign.

The luxury cosmetic companies have understood the potential of these platforms and, in order to increase their brand awareness in the luxury market, they are implementing social media marketing strategies, reshaping their priorities, budgets, skills and processes. Luxury brands use the information obtained through social media platforms to improve customers' experiences and to anticipate the reactions.

Exploiting social media marketing, luxury brands are enhancing their brand recognition among customers and this allow them to increase their brand awareness and to establish deeper relationships with the clients (Jacob, 2006). The growth of strategic importance of social media created a new era for companies and brands, forcing them to seek new interactive ways of reaching and engaging. This quickly expanding marketing channel, which reaches almost the 60% of the global population, provides high-potential opportunities for brand and reputation building. Although social media provide opportunities and benefits for brand, one of the persistent challenges, despite growing scholarly interest, is the difficulty in measuring the impact of social media marketing activities on brand success measures. Research that evaluates social media marketing impact from the perspective of branding literature is still mainly exploratory and lacks empirical studies. This research contributes to expand literature, evaluating how strategies of social media marketing impact the brand equity, especially the brand awareness in relation to the luxury cosmetics brands, hence the Beauty Luxury Industry. The main objective is to examine the relationship of social media strategies applied by twelve luxury beauty brands and the brand perception, in terms of brand awareness . The secondary objectives of this dissertation are to fill the gaps in previous research and in particular: (1) evaluate the effectiveness of the social media marketing strategies in creating brand awareness; (2) analyse the main social media strategies applied by the beauty brands and the components of brand equity; (3) evaluate in terms of Key Performance Indicators the social media marketing strategies of the luxury beauty brands on creating brand preference. This study

examines twelve luxury cosmetics brands and their digital marketing strategies in the Italian market, specifically implemented on social media platforms. Research shows that marketing communication through social media channels is a strategic and important promotional strategy for luxury brands, with multiple positive effects. Luxury brands exploit social media platforms to increase the online traffic of their websites, to expand their audience and to engage with a wider range of customers at a emotional level.

This study reveals that social media platforms assume a crucial importance for the luxury cosmetics brands in designing their marketing strategy. Social media strategies allow to obtain positive effects in engaging with the customers and increasing the brand awareness. The managerial implications of this study will help marketers to analyse the strengths and potential of the social media marketing strategies in the luxury industry. The dissertation presents a conceptual framework of Zahoor & Qureshi (2017) that links the social media marketing strategies to the elements of the brand equity, in particular to the brand awareness (Fig. 20). Thereafter, the study describes the social media strategies and main platforms used by the selected beauty brands, evaluating singularly their case studies, and completing the analysis with the interviews from brand marketing and customer relationship management levels. A discussion of the implications of the findings for future research and managerial practice concludes the dissertation.

Research question

The aim of this paper is to investigate how beauty luxury brands employ social media, particularly Instagram and TikTok, to increase brand awareness and enhance the brand loyalty. Changes in consumptive patterns of the media have led companies to shift their focus from products to people and from information delivery to information exchange. Brand-created content combined with eWOM approaches within the beauty industry reveal theoretical and empirical investigations. The present study seeks the impact of the digital marketing strategies, delivered through these two social networks, to the brand awareness and thus on the profitability of the companies, resulting in terms of KPIs.

As far as current research is concerned, there is no sufficient academic research on which social media platform and online strategy provide the most positive and effective results on the brand awareness in the luxury cosmetics industry.

The research questions that this dissertation aim to answer is : *"How the usage of Social Media impacts the Brand Awareness in the Luxury Beauty industry and which social media strategy is the most impactful, in terms of KPIs?"*.

Structure

The research analyses the importance of digital branding in Luxury Cosmetics, in particular the social media strategy and their impact on the brand awareness. Hence, the dissertation will be structured in 3 main parts. The first part regards the literature review by analysing articles and publications with "Branding", "Luxury Cosmetics Industry", "Social media Strategies" as keywords. The purpose of selecting these keywords is to drive a precise selection of the most pertinent topics of this dissertation and review the most relevant articles. The second part will include the explanation of the empirical methodology and the last part regards main findings and discussion expecting to contribute to the scarce literature existing on this topic so far. Therefore:

- To examine the concept of digital branding strategy, in particular in the luxury beauty market
- To analyse the social media platforms and the digital strategies which generate brand awareness in Cosmetics market
- To evaluate the role of digital marketing and social media strategies in the Brands selected as case studies and their impact on the brand awareness

Literature Review

The literature review is based on a systematic search and analysis of articles and studies found on relevant databases, including Google Scholar and Research Gate, among others. Besides the academic databases mentioned, this dissertation focuses on the latest business and marketing reports, press-release, websites and it includes statistics and data analysis on the social media trends issued by research firms. Furthermore, due to the specificity of the industry considered, portals dedicated to the beauty and luxury industries were also consulted.

Chapter 1

1.1 Concept of Branding

Evaluating the literature about "brand," it can be affirmed that the term, used principally both in mass marketing that consumer relationship, has become over defined and its meaning assumes different perspectives. Some researchers argue that brands consist of the visual and verbal representations associated with firms and services. The American Marketing Association in 1960 stated that brand can be defined as "a name, term, sign, symbol, design or combination of these which is intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors" highlighting the idea that the brand's logo and visual features were the basis for differentiation. Others suggest brands as images in consumer's minds with functional and psychological attributes (Pereira et al., 2012). Some examples of current metaphors used in marketing include: ''brand reputation'' which compares a person's character, thus ''the condition, quality or fact of being highly regarded or esteemed'' with that of the brand; "brand personality" ,that represents the most recent addition to the characteristics of brands and it compares brands and people in terms of their specific traits; 'brand identity' which makes a similar comparison on the basis of the distinctive traits common to both and "brand image" which is one of the main concept in marketing and consumer behaviour studies, dating from the1950s and which has been used widely and with various applications. Regarding the Brand Image, some researchers affirmed that that products have a social, psychological and physical nature and that the feelings, ideas and attitudes that consumers have about brands are the image of the brand, and that it is crucial in the purchasing choice. In fact it has been also demonstrated that products are often purchased or rejected not for their functional attributes but because of how, as symbols, they impact on buyer's status of self-esteem (Pereira et al., 2012).

The concept of branding is one of the most important aspects of marketing and business strategy, business. In an increasingly complex world, individuals and businesses are faced with more and more choices, but seemingly have less and less time to make those choices. The ability of a strong brand to simplify consumer decision making, reduce risk and set expectations is thus invaluable. More and more firms and other organisations have therefore come to the realisation that one of their most valuable assets is the brand names associated with their products or services. (Keller, 2003)

The most common statement in identifying the role of branding is that it is the image and logo of the company help the customers to recognise the company and other products and services. However, Brodie et al (2013) argue that the role of branding is broader in regard to building the image and the business of a particular product; it delivers a message to the customers to understand and then to buy the product from the company. As suggested also by Cai (2002) brand play the role of centric approach that attracts consumers towards the

company and a unique brand image include a logo, high-end product, price of the product as well as the location of its business range.

These factors all together build an effective brand image for a company. In addition, it also helps the company to maintain its competitive advantage. The author in his research also states that the concept of branding encompasses the brand culture that focuses on the awareness related to anthropology, history and social background of the company itself. Thus, it is necessary to identify the culture of the brand as a whole. However, following the viewpoint of Cai (2002), it can be affirmed that the concept of branding highlights three different perspectives that a company can utilise as an overall strategy for the business development and stability. These views are the legal viewpoint, business perspective and practical utilisation one.

In a general sense, brand equity is defined in terms of the marketing effects that are uniquely attributable to the brand and thus branding is all about creating differences. Most marketing observers agree that the differences in outcomes arise from the 'added value' given to a product as a result of marketing activities for the brand. There are many different ways that this value can be created for a brand. Brand equity provides a common denominator for interpreting marketing strategies and assessing the value of a brand (Keller, 2012). As affirmed by the author, the power of a brand lies in the minds of consumers and what they have experienced and learned about the brand over time. The challenge for marketers in building a strong brand is therefore ensuring that customers have the right type of experiences with products and services and their accompanying marketing programmes so that the desired thoughts, feelings, images, beliefs, perceptions, opinions and so on become linked to the brand. Consumer knowledge is what drives the differences that manifest themselves in terms of brand equity.

A brand represents a promise in consumer's mind, it is promise about the delivery of expected goods or services, and as any promise it has not immediate credibility for the audience, but it has to be built establishing a trust relationship with consumers. In the cases in which a predict or service presents 'hidden values', that means attributes that consumers are not able to evaluate ex ante, a good brand equity works as assurance for potential customers (Borden, 1942). This concept affirms that the consumer knowledge of the brand bring value to the company and the brand equity describes this relationship: it represents the value added to a product caused by the brand. Thus the brand equity is not valued as a financial asset, although it has a huge impact on performances. The main benefits of a strong brand equity are reflected both on consumer which can exploit familiarity, trust and psychological benefits, the search costs will reduce, and so it will potential perceived risk that on companies themselves, that will benefit in profitability.

An other essential and related concept is the brand knowledge, a powerful tool both for consumer and for the company, that allows to strengthen the relationships between the brand and the consumer segments According to Keller, brand knowledge is composed by the brand awareness and the brand image. Brand awareness, as it will investigated broader in the other part of this research, is the consumers' degree of

familiarity with the brand and it is viewed as the ability to recognize the brand among other competitors. Brand awareness is the consumers' degree of familiarity with the brand and it is the ability to recognize the brand among other competitors. It is characterized by brand recognition or aided awareness and brand recall or unaided awareness. The brand image instead, is the way in which consumer see the brand, thus it is the set of beliefs held about the brand, the specific positioning of it in the market and it shows its abilities to deliver emotional values to consumers. According to the model of Aaker (2000), there are three degree of brand   awareness:

• Brand recognition: the degree to which the consumer is able to recognize and identify the brand among others alternatives.

• Brand recall: (or unaided awareness) when in a product class, the consumer is expected to find   the   brand.

• Top of mind: among a product class the name of the brand takes the place of the name of the product

The researchers have investigated which are the effect of a powerful brand awareness on consumer perceptions and they discovered that a higher degree of brand awareness is directly correlated to positive perception. In details, it has a strong impact on the perception of quality, in fact consumers expect to find higher quality from brands they already know or highly advertised with respect to brands never seen before or generic products. Consumers are going to value more the product with the recognizable brand on it. As well as on the presumption of availability, in fact the higher degree of advertising is also linked to a well-established distribution and consumers are easily tempted to assume they can find well-known brands in every point of sales. Moreover, it impacts also on niche identification: a high level of brand awareness can build a strong sense of identity, to the degree in which small niche groups can use the brand as a mark of pride and association, as the case of Apple Brand.

The term brand identity, instead, is being encountered more frequently in business context. To formalize this concept, brand identity corresponds to the capacity of a brand to be recognized as unique, over time, without confusion, thanks to the elements that individualize it. As it can be seen in the Figure n.1 , the brand identity represents the invariant part of the overall company strategy where instead the other parts constantly change adapting to the competitive and environmental context. If it is true that brand identity plays a central role in any communication and creation strategy, its influence is less obvious on the choices companies make in terms of structure of the product offering, determination of prices and margins, choice of target customers, or organizational, industrial, and retailing choices. These choices, which also have an impact on the brand's perception, must of course be taken into consideration; however, it is clear that a formalized brand identity alone is not sufficient to guarantee that the best strategic decisions are made (Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2021).
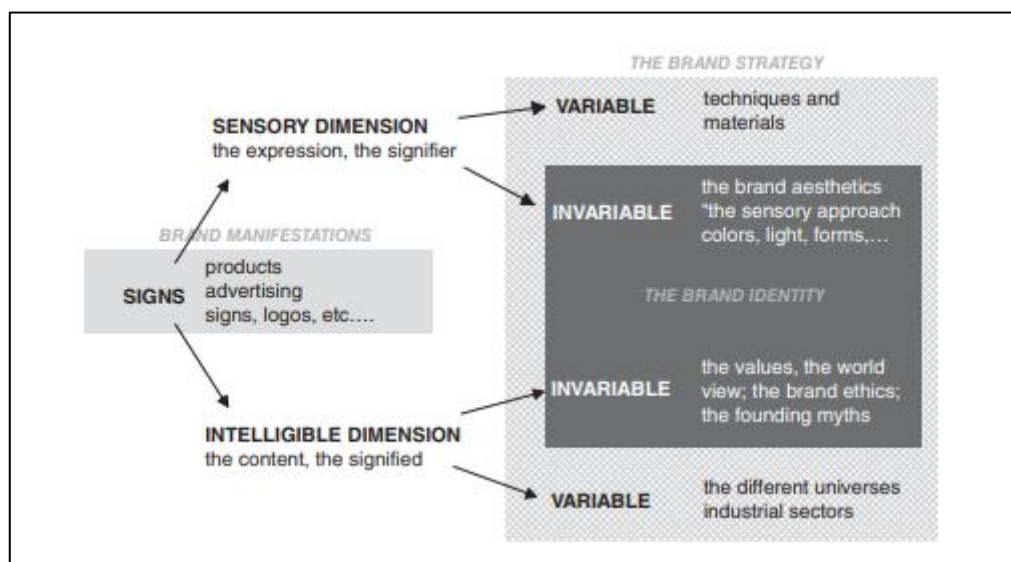
Figure 1 – *Brand Manifestations and Strategy*. (Adapted from: Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2021)

The overall strategy of a company can be splitted into functional strategies: products, customers, retailing, communication, production, logistics, and organization. While the brand identity plays a central role in any strategy of communication, it is also affected by decisions made by other functions. There is no activity in a company that does not affect or reflect, in one way or another, the brand's identity. The degree of influence of the brand identity will also depend on the industries. It will be of more importance in the luxury industry than in mass markets or in purely business-to-business industrial sectors (Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2021).

1.1.1 Models of Branding

As previously stated, researchers have determined that a brand is a name, term, sign, symbol, design or signalling combination that is intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers. They argued that the long-term success of a brand depends on selecting a brand concept prior to market entry. These authors define brand concept in terms of firm-selected brand meaning derived from consumer needs. Specifically, a brand concept consists of an aesthetic, functional and symbolic brand, which represent distinct constructs.

The researchers affirm that the aesthetic brands are designed to fulfil consumer's needs for sensory pleasure. The word *aesthetics* comes from the Greek word aesthesis, referring to sensory perception and understanding. In the eighteenth century, the philosopher Baumgarten picked up the term and changed its meaning into gratification of the senses delight. Aesthetic experiences are becoming increasingly relevant to the marketing due to growing importance of experiential aspects of consumption. Aesthetic experiences have nowadays a strong influence on consumer affect, cognition and behaviour. In a marketing context, aesthetic needs are defined as desires for products that provide aesthetic pleasure. When consumers take product quality for granted, aesthetics becomes an important criterion in the purchasing decision. The functional brands, on the contrary of aesthetic brands, should emphasize the functional performance. Research has defined functional

value as the ability to perform functions in the everyday life of a consumer. Functional needs are thus defined as those that motivate consumers to search for products that solve their consumption-related problems. These needs are linked to basic motivations and are met by products with functional performance. Therefore, functional brands are designed to solve externally generated consumption needs and they are related to product performance. Brands with visual representations of functional benefits are capable of reminding customers of the brand's functionality and communicating these benefits to them.

The literature presents also the symbolic brands: they emphasize the relationship between brand and self-identification. These brands can reflect a part of consumer's identities. As the researchers argue, brands have the ability to help express or define customers' actual or desired selves and to differentiate customers' selves from those of . Brands also become relevant to customers by connecting the individual to others who share similar values and beliefs. Symbolic needs are defined as desires for products that fulfil internally generated needs for self-enhancement, social role or ego-identification. A symbolic brand benefit is one that is designed to associate the individual with a desired group, role or self-image. For this reasons, consumers value the prestige, exclusivity or fashionability of a brand because it relates positively to their self-concept. Brands with symbolic benefits have the potential to not only express brand-self associations but also to reinforce and strengthen them, thus enhancing customers' willingness to invest resources towards sustaining their relationship with the brand (Jeon, 2017). Other scholars affirm that there are two branding models: the first one is the brand equity model of David Aaker. As Aaker explained, Brand Equity in Marketing refers to the premium value that a well-known brand will command as compared to a lesser known brand from their consumers. Brand Equity is one of the most important components which leads to higher financial value to the brand and makes the brand one of the most valuable assets of the organisation owning them. David Aaker defines thus brand equity as a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand name and symbol, which can add or subtract value to the product or service provided. Another aspect of the definition of brand equity that in his theory is highlighted was the argument that brand equity also provides value to customers. It enhances the customer's ability to interpret and process information, improves confidence in the purchase decision and affects the quality of the user experience. The other model is the Kevin Keller's Customer Based Brand Equity Model (CBBE). As the name suggests, this model is customer based. Keller believes that Brand equity can be created by providing the right experience to the customer. The brand needs to design how the customers think and feel about the product. Marketing and branding specialists need to manage the thoughts, feelings, beliefs, perceptions and opinions customers feel about a particular brand. The higher the positive experiences created, higher will be the brand equity. A high brand equity results into brand loyalty and better brand sales. The Model is also called as Brand Resonance Model because it wants to build a strong connection between the brand and the customer. The model states that brands with high resonance have benefits due to the fact that they can increase brand loyalty and reduce vulnerability to competitive marketing activities (Menon, 2016).

Considering the literature review on the concept of branding, it is evident that there have been insufficient models specifically related to the branding strategies, but there are many models for brand identity and brand equity. However, the PCDL model, discussed below, explains all the four main elements a brand is based on: communicating of the brand message, positioning of the brand, delivering of brand performance and leveraging the equity of brand (Chi, 2011).
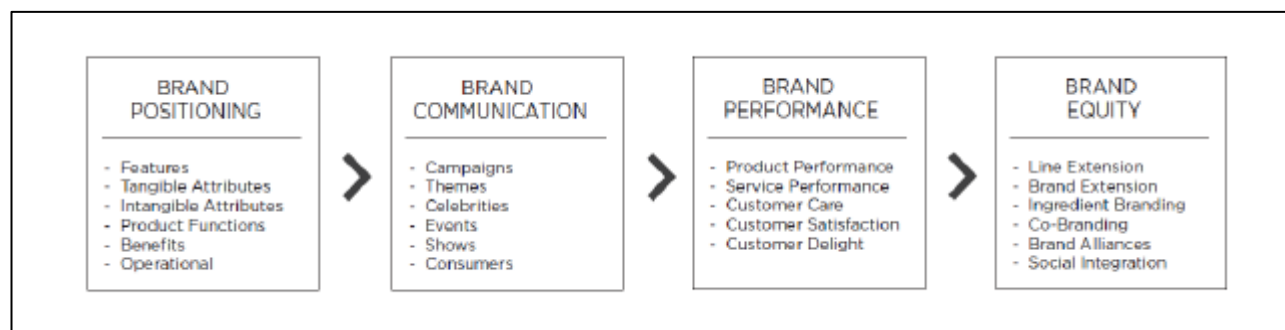

Figure 2 – Concept of Banding. Adapted from: Chevalier & Mazzalovo (2021)

1.1.2. Positioning the Brand

The positioning of the brand is related to the creation of the brands' perceptions within the minds of consumers while achieving the differentiation standing from the brands of competitors and satisfying the customers' expectations. The marketers of brands reflect the primary objective for the creation of the desired perception within the minds of target consumers. The position of brands is found to be the part of the brand identity as well as the value proposition that is being communicated to the target audience and demonstrating the advantages over the competing brands (Cretu and Brodie, 2007). There is always a strong value attached to a strong brand for reasons that are historical and social, as well as emotional. For luxury goods, brand identity is a very important element of the business. In certain ways, it can also be a constraint: it is not possible to launch a product that is outside its sphere of legitimacy. How do we measure the strength of a brand? The first question to ask is: How well known is it? This can be answered by asking 500 consumers what brands of luxury watches they know. Immediate answers as Rolex or Cartier, will give what is called spontaneous awareness. But from the same answer, researchers will be able to provide other information. They will also record the number of times any one brand is mentioned first, which gives the top of mind, an indication of great strength of a given brand for a product category. This allowed to see changes in the respective positions of the leading brands in the consumers' top-of-mind responses. In a second phase, interviewees are presented with a list of brands and asked to say which of them they know. This will give researchers what is known as ''aided awareness'' which provides an indication of the closeness of a brand with its customers (Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2021).

For cosmetic products, customer expectations are quite different. Make-up has strong social connotations: there is a much greater degree of sophistication conveyed by opening a handbag and taking out a Chanel or a Hermès lipstick than there is in pulling out a mass-market product from the same handbag. For skin-care products, expectations are again different as they deal with a long-term investment in personal appearance: the need to look good and the hope of remaining good-looking for a long time. What is clear is that consumers are looking for much more than is actually contained in the bottle. Of course, the fragrance is an important part of the deal, but the perceived quality of the bottle, its aesthetic value, and the social reinforcement it provides is certainly much more important. In fact, consumers are much more interested in what we might call the environment of the product than in the product itself. As Chevalier & Mazzalovo, (2021) explained, the mass-market segment has never really worked for perfumes. Mass-market merchandisers have offered extended low-price ranges, with retail prices around 10 or 15€ but without significant success. Most women, whatever their level of income, prefer to buy a €60 Dior perfume in a sophisticated perfumery or department store than spend €10 on a little-known brand in their supermarket.

1.1.2. Communicating the Message of Brand

The brand needs to reflect the vision of ways through which it wants to be perceived by the target audience. The position of brand allows to set the focus of brand identity as well as the main correleted aspect of communications, enabling in this way the organisation to set the objectives like the type of message or the brand differentiation. The main challenges being faced by the organisations in developing strong brands include being noticed, being remembered, manging changes in perceptions and creating deep relationships with consumers.

1.1.3 Brand Performance and Brand Equity

Organisations are required to track their brands against the influence of competition specifically in the aspects of aggressive competition. They have to follow the progress of the ways through which the brand is performing in the marketplace, with the possibility to act in the market in order to protect the
brand equity. This is about: the level of purchasing, consumption, recognition of the brand, and awareness of advertising. This kind of approach can allow the marketers to asses the influence of campaigns of marketing strategies for influencing the target customers.

The organisations found implementing strategies to leverage the brands such as line extensions, brand extensions, and co-branding. It has been found that the essential attributes of the brand can be incorporated into another brand to gain and increase value in the market.
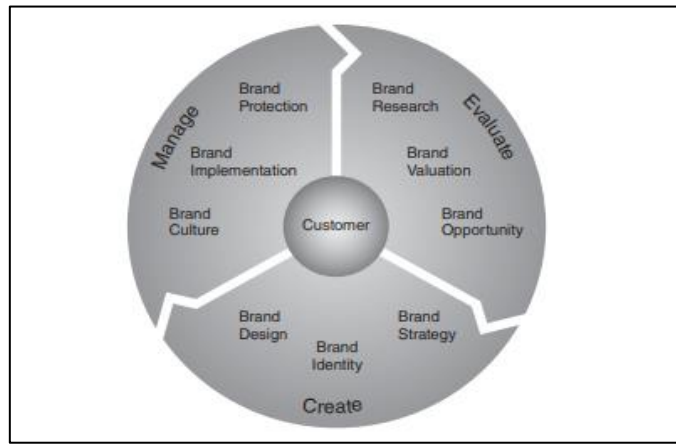
Figure 3 – Interbrand Brand -Value Model. Adapted from: Chevalier & Mazzalovo (2021)

The Interbrand Brand-Value Management Model summarizes all of the different elements of a brand that they are related to the customer. This is shown in Figure 3. This model puts the consumer at the centre and divides the brand management into three activities: the evaluation of brand opportunities; the creative process thus brand strategy, verbal identity, and brand design; the management process thus culture, implementation, and protection. The brand justifies a premium price, which, after subtracting the investment necessary to keep the brand where it is, can be considered the gross profit directly attributable to the brand.

An other question that emerges from the literature is where does the brand get its power from. A study by Bernard Dubois and Patrick Duquesne affirmed that a brand's value comes from the following elements: A mythical value: This incorporates a brand's reason for being and how representative it is of its time; an exchange value that is referred to the best value for money; an emotional value, that it is quite different from the above and it delas with emotions and impressions; an ethical value, linked to social responsibility and the way the brand reacts in the marketplace; an identity value, that it is related to the way the brand can be used by consumers to convey something about themselves. Scholars analysed and formalized brand identity. In 1992, Jean-Noël Kapferer introduced the first comprehensive analytical tool for dealing with the complex area of brand identity: the identity prism, which is presented in Figure 7.9, applied here to Hermès, one of the main luxury brand, and functions with six dimensions positioned around a prism. The physique of a brand relates to the concrete elements that come immediately to mind when the name of the brand is mentioned. It is a set of sensory and objective characteristics, for instance: Hermès: a Kelly crocodile handbag and a silk carré; Levi's: a pair of blue jeans, with a distinctive label; Bally: a pair of shoes; Tod's: moccasins with rubber plots; Ferrari: a red racing automobile.
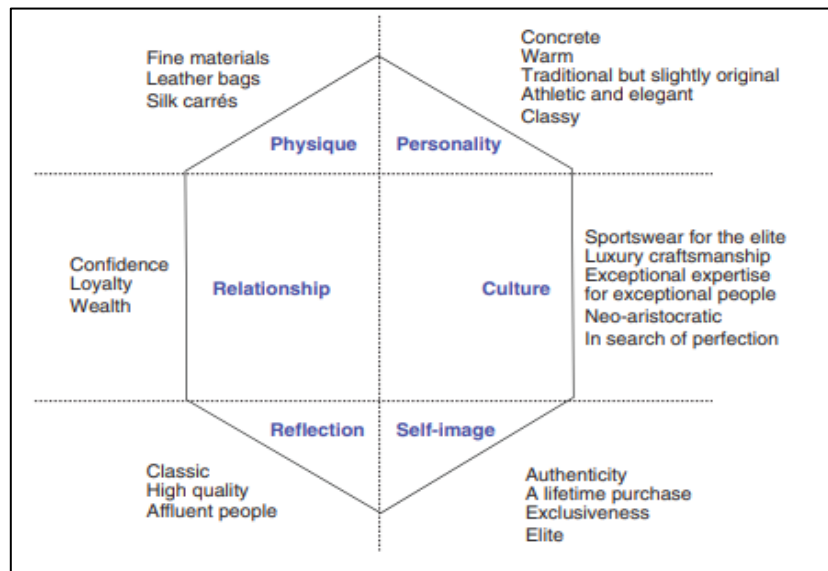
Figure 4 – Brand Identity Prism. Adapted from: Chevalier & Mazzalovo (2021)

The Brand's Culture, that it is linked to the original values of its creators, often the culture of the country, the region, or the city where the brand developed, for instance Madrid for Loewe, Sicily for Dolce & Gabbana, Majorca for Majorica, Japan for Shiseido, Paris for Chanel, and so on. But the geographical dimension is not the only one expressed. Relationship involves the social communication of the brand. A brand with strong identity influences relations between individuals, first through signs of belonging to a group, and then well beyond. The brand's reflection describes the typical customer the market associates with the brand. The brand's self-image instead corresponds to the image consumers have of themselves when using the product. Kapferer's prism introduced a major innovation. This tool for the first time in the marketing literature, made systematic reaserch possible while showing the complexity of any approach to brand identity. By the way, it has limitations. As Kapferer states, Self-image and reflection, the two sides of the mirror, are receptive in nature, they have more to do with the perception of the brand's identity than with the identity itself. As for the relationship dimension, it belongs more to the cultural domain, on the other hand the physique, culture and personality dimensions of the prism are directly related to the ethics and aesthetics of the brand (Chevalier & Mazzalvo, 2021).

1.2 Concept of Digital Branding

There are different papers, confronting the issue of brand management on the internet and digital world. Cervellon & Shammas (2013) stated the fact that the fundamental rules of branding include the

importance of the brand being online or offline. The interactive features on the online platform of brands of cosmetics are found to be essential for the internet marketing success. Yu et al. (2015) highlighted the presence of brand on the online platform is required to conceive in such ways that are found to be sympathetic to technology as well as the environment. For this reason, the online platform is expected to be consistent with the presentation of the entire brand while retaining the brand identity. The digital world is essential for the

successful branding of cosmetics as observed by and Hassan et al., (2015). Cervellon & Shammas (2013) also argue the fact that different organisations fail to succeed in the implementation of these, which further results in the non-fulfilment of needs and the expectations of the consumers.

According to Aoun & Tournois (2015), for the luxury brands in the cosmetics industry exist the rarity principle in the form of the prestige of brands getting eroded in case of too many people own it. It creates the inconsistency for the luxury brand management as the organisations are required to maximise the profitability, but they cannot sell or standardise more than necessary. The luxury brands of organisations are required to maintain the delicate equilibrium between the higher levels of exposure and the awareness of the controlled levels of sale. To maintain the value as desired while avoiding the risks related to commoditization, the luxury brands are required to be needed by all but consumed by few people or consumers.

Due to higher prices, luxury brands are not obliged to deliver the most appropriate, but through extensive customizations have to prove their consumer-focused strategies. As Brodie, et al., 2013 stated the digital world has enabled the organisation to implement the customizations to significant levels. Graham (2008) affirmed that e-commerce and the digital world have presented both opportunities and threats for luxurious brands. The digital world is expected to be used for purchases consumers not having easy access to certain distribution channels of luxury brands and also could be those who feel intimidated to enter into the boutiques of the luxury world. Moreover the brands with their image based on excellence, the selective distribution and information channels enhance the threat of commoditization. On the other hand, this sort of commoditization also influences the strength of the markets. The study of Aaker (1997) highlighted the framework for the organisations in Europe using the digital world for their branding strategies. The study also reflected the positive aspects of the use of the digital world for branding strategies as it believed that

it is expected to bring an innovative twist to the image of brand specifically as considered about the luxury sector. It highlighted that the presence in the digital world is required to be luxurious while implementing the effective aesthetics (Aaker, 1997)

As a central feature of their digital strategy, companies plan significant resources on what is called branded content. In fact, social media allow the company to reduce the use of traditional media and establish relationships directly with customers. Businesses have invested billions pursuing this vision. Nowadays brands have to compete directly with real entertainment. So companies have to develop meaningful digital strategies to make their brands famous, using short-form storytelling, (Holt, D. 2016).

Traditionally Branding has been limited to the name, term, design, and symbol identifying product or service for products sellers trying to project the uniqueness. This concept of visual identity can be identified as the feelings, perceptions, beliefs, and experiences associated with a brand. It has been then developed and it has been combined the brand image with the brand experience. Hankinson and Cowking (2005) stated that the complexity of brands is reflected in the form of traditional marketing, as well as media platforms, offers a

particular set of ways for engaging the consumers. The two authors affirmed that the benefit of digital branding is in the form of pre-programmed messages being delivered at a determined time through selected channels. The products are presented on the shelves of the store in fixed patterns and the digital presentation removes these constraints. The differences between the traditional and digital media are in the directions

And in the flow of the communication. Hankinson and Cowking (2005) stated The available traditional mediums of branding involve a one-way flow of communication, but the digital media is considered the two-way communication, working in a different way from the flow of information in the single

direction. There are five main areas where brands have benefited from the Web: the capacity to gather information on each customer, easier specific customer-targeted communication, new powerful market research techniques, the capacity to engage customers, more efficient and prospective techniques (Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2021). It has been discovered that contrary to the mass brands, which quickly understood the potential that the Web was representing, the luxury brands were initially reluctant to use the Web. After all, one of the specificities of luxury is precisely the multisensorial experience available only in a monobrand store. Initially, some specialized sites, such as eLuxury, launched luxury brands on the Web. This commercial site, pioneer of online luxury business, launched by LVMH in 2000, presented a wide selection of apparel and accessories for prestigious brands like Dior, Emilio Pucci, Céline, Marc Jacobs, Versace, Dolce & Gabbana, Fendi, Tod's, and Louis Vuitton. In a sign of the times, the site closed late 2009 probably because of the opening of their own commercial sites by most of the brands. It has since been transformed into a Web magazine called Nowness, which is now "a video channel premiering the best in global arts and culture across Art & Design, Culture, Fashion & Beauty, Music and Food & Travel." Then, in the middle 2017, LVMH launched a new proprietary multibrand luxury online store called "24 Sèvres," the address of its Parisian luxury department store Le Bon Marché. It features not only LVMH's own portfolio of brands but also curates luxury fashion, accessories, and beauty products outside of the group. Even though the name is somewhat reminiscent of the Hermès fragrance 24 Faubourg (Hermès's Paris flagship store), the concept is quite innovative as it puts the products in context. Contrary to the specialized luxury multibrand e-commerce sites such as Farfetch,, Yoox, Net-à-Porter, that rely on editorial content and fast delivery. 24 Sèvres focuses on digital "storefront" windows and is an attempt at rendering the online experience of shopping as close as possible to the one experienced in a physical luxury department store. Traditional multibrand distributors have also quickly understood the need to be active in this new market. In 2010, Saks Fifth Avenue launched its e-commerce site, which 10 years later can ship to 206 countries within a maximum of 14 days' delivery, offering most of the categories of products found in its traditional stores. Faced with the rapid development of multibrand sites, and especially with the popularity of certain segments of the market for online purchases, luxury brands started opening their own commercial websites. Thus, Gucci, in 2010, launched its online shop; Ferragamo had already been operational for some time; Louis Vuitton has been one of the pioneers in exploring the frontiers of digital activities. Its website contains an e-shopping feature that allows purchasing online, but the brand

also multiplies the electronic addresses. These multiple websites not only increase the presence and the possibilities of contact with consumers, but allow to connect many stakeholders along all the communication strategy. Most of the big players (Van Cleef and Arpel, Dior, De Beers, Hermès, Tiffany, Cartier, Guerlain, etc.) are selling online, as well as the smaller ones that need all the distribution power.

The Internet has revolutionized both trade and communication. Its capabilities allow brands to intensify and diversify their presence, in a quite controlled manner. The Web opens the possibility of interactivity in real time, of an increased exposure and multiplication of all brand manifestations. The screens as computers, tablets, mobile phones and the ways they are used hold the key to the future of many brands.

Communication, which used to be one of the links of the brand strategy, has become the strategy itself. Kotler's 4Ps have given way to brand manifestations and the communication chain that are shown by following.
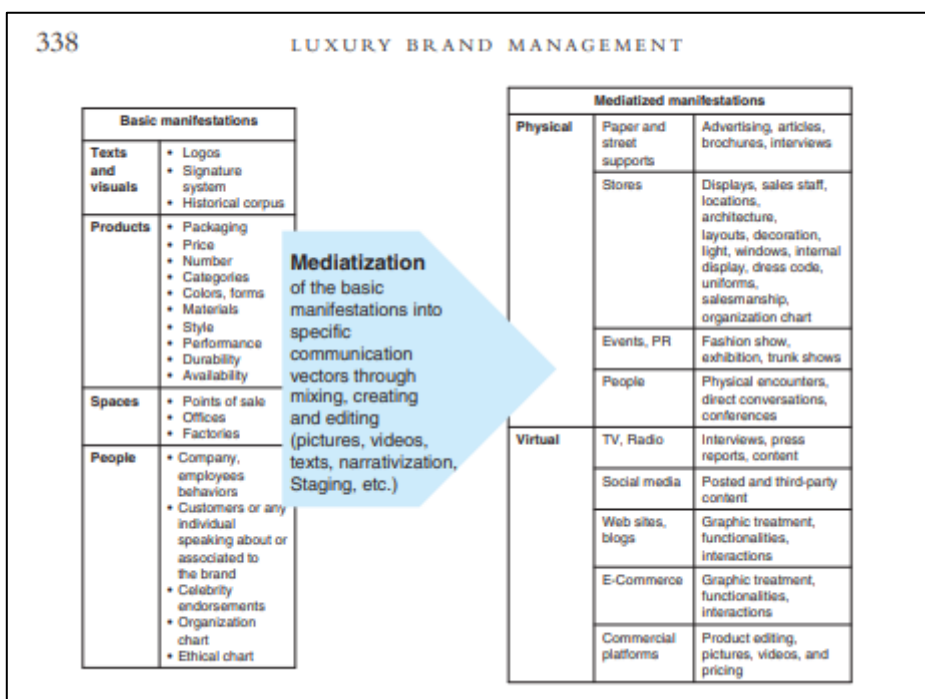

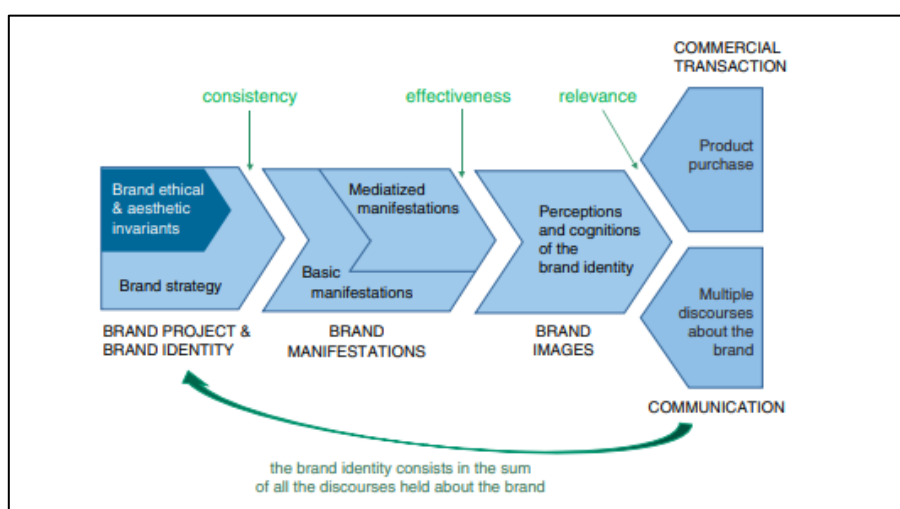Figure 5 – Brand Manifestations. Adapted from: Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2021

Figure 6 - *Communication Process.* Adapted from: Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2021

The occasions of experiences and encounters between brands and consumers are generated by brand manifestations. They are all the possible sensory interfaces with potential and existing customers. The recently introduced notion of touchpoint is quite similar to manifestations when defined as the ways that a brand interacts and displays information to prospective and existing customer. One of the main impacts of digital times on brands has been to make them realize that push-communication has definitely been replaced by engaging the customer. Kevin McTigue (2019) proposes a definition that fits perfectly with the version of brand manifestation meaning: "Brand touchpoints are any point where your brand intersects with the consumer. They are the multiple places you see, hear, touch, speak with, and experience a brand." The mediatized manifestations are classified in physical and digital. The physical part contains what used to be called traditional communication: paper and street advertising, PR and events, stores, and people associated with the brand encountered face to face, not through a screen. The digital part is instead classified by channel, media, and covers everything visible through a screen by all the Web established players: e-commerce and commercial platforms, social media, websites, and blogs; TV and radio having also been classified in that category.

On the other hand, the whole communication process, from the formalization of the brand strategy of which the brand identity is an essential component, to the act of purchase via the brand manifestations, it has been developed the communication chain scheme. This scheme is a powerful analytical tool that can serve multiple management purposes, for instance it can serve as a methodological framework for a brand communication audit or it can be used to manage the seasonal communication plan.

1.3 Digital Marketing and Channels

The term "digital marketing" has evolved over time from a specific term describing the marketing of products and services using digital channels to an umbrella term describing the process of using digital technologies to acquire customers and build customer preferences, promote brands, retain customers and increase sales (Financial Times, lexicon.ft.com). Following the American Marketing Association's firm centric definition, digital marketing may be seen as activities, institutions, and processes facilitated by digital technologies for creating, communicating and delivering value for customers and other stakeholders. Pursuing an inclusive perspective, digital marketing cab be also defined as "an adaptive, technology-enabled process by which firms collaborate with customers and partners to jointly create, communicate, deliver, and sustain value for all stakeholders". The adaptive process enabled by the digital technologies creates value in new ways in new digital environments. Companies which use digital technologies build foundational skills to create value for their customers and for themselves. Digital marketing itself is enabled by a series of adaptive digital touchpoints integrating the marketing activity, institutions, processes and customers. The number of touchpoints is increasing by over 20% annually as more offline customers shift to digital technologies and "younger, digitally oriented consumers enter the ranks of buyers". It has been identified key touchpoints

affected by digital technologies and it has been created a research framework that is inspired by the marketing process as well as by the marketing strategy process. The conventional marketing strategy process starts with an analysis of the environment including the five C's – customers, collaborators, competitors, context, and company (firm). Customers emerge as the central focus with other elements such as context, competitors and collaborators making up the environment that the company operates in.

The digital marketing strategy includes the channel strategy which affirms that the company must continuously research the customer channel behaviour and the company should also have knowledge about the competitors and publishers. The digital marketing strategy stated that the company is fully based on the objectives for the offline and online channels (Leeflang et al, 2014). The main objective of the company that develop a digital marketing strategy is to communicate the product to the customers in order to provide the knowledge about the product and to push them to use and to buy it. A digital marketing strategy is an effective tool for the company in order to promote its product into the market. According to Chaffey et al, (2012) the main purpose of the digital marketing strategy is to show how the company could meet the sales target. The digital marketing strategy will also help the company in evaluating and identifying the budget for the services provided by the company, acquisition and conversion budget and service budget. Aaker (2012) argued that the digital marketing strategy helps to provide the communication of the benefits of using the channel and in this way it contributes to the brand of the company. Ward et al, (2016) affirmed instead that the digital marketing strategy helps the company to take the effective decisions and this led to the successful of the company itself.

In the luxury cosmetics industry, strategies of experiential marketing for the virtual reality tool can be adopted as a strategy of digital marketing. These can be developed via computer games, mobile games, and mobile applications to tailor brand messages. Also, the strategy of e-WOM on social media through experiences shapes the attitude of new consumers shopping online that it can influence consumers attitude and encourage them to shop online. In the existing digitalized world, more people prefer to check reviews or recommendations before making any purchasing decisions. Experiential marketing through e-WOM luxury cosmetic brands influences pre and post-purchase experience through reviews, likes, shares, and views. Through event marketing and storytelling, the brands also use experiential marketing strategies to satisfy the self-esteem that it motives the consumers to complete the act of purchase. Existing studies highlighted that strategies targeting the psychological or symbolic qualities tend to have more impact on consumers. With these experiential marketing strategies, the willingness of consumers to buy is affected and it helps in creating preferences among consumers towards the brand (Ajitha & Sivakumar, 2017). Thus, the experiential marketing strategies focused on targeting consumer perception, innovating techniques, and exclusivity are more impactful for deriving consumer engagement, using for instance: free sample usage, online community, gift promotion, or virtual luxury stores (Dhillon et al., 2021)

One form of online customer interactions that has been studied deeply is the online review, or user generated content and electronic word-of-mouth, or eWOM. Just as with traditional offline word of mouth, eWOM

encompasses customers' knowledge about the products, their usage, experience, recommendations, and complaints, and is generally perceived as trustworthy and reliable. Moreover, eWOM have richer content and larger volume than offline word of mouth, and it is much more accessible and can be shared widely in the digital environment. Given the importance of eWOM, it has been the subject of extensive research over the last decade, addressing issues such as: the motivation for eWOM posts; the impact of eWOM posts on sales and the dynamics of such posts; how eWOM posts influence other posts and reviews; and the identification of the most influential people in the network, known as "influencers. It has been found that online reviews are generally positive and that these reviews can increase a sales rank, but that negative reviews have a stronger impact than positive ones. A part from the relationship between eWOM and sales rank, researchers are also developing tangible metrics to measure the return on investment (ROI) of social media. Kumar et al. (2013) introduced a metric to measure the viral impact of eWOM and its associated monetary value (Kannan et al.,2016).

"Digital contents can be updated quickly, distributed quickly, can change form and can be transformed. Digital marketing tools composed of digital contents are classified under two titles by Varnalı (2013): marketing communication tools that create paid digital content and marketing communication tools that create proactive digital content.''(Çizmeci & Ercan, 2015)

The use of new technologies has also helped the potential for experiential marketing. This is of particular relevance given the increasing significance of the Internet as a communication and distribution channel within the luxury sector. The Luxury Institute (Pedraza 2007) found that 88 percent of wealthy consumers cite a preference for using the Internet to research a luxury services firm, and 38 percent prefer to purchase luxury goods online, versus 33 percent who favour face-to-face transactions (Kepferer at al., 2017)

In order to help consumers mentally simulate interactions with products during their online experiences, marketers can change the way in which the product image is presented. By using dynamic images, for instance, marketers can increase the consumer's ability to generate mental simulations of transformation, rotation, and reorganizations of the imagined product with a positive effect on its evaluation (Petit et al. 2019)

1.4 Strategies to create Brand Awareness through Digital Branding

Brand awareness is defined as the buyer's ability to identify the brand in sufficient detail to make a purchase. Hence. Brand awareness is a necessary precursor to brand attitude (Rossiter, 2014).
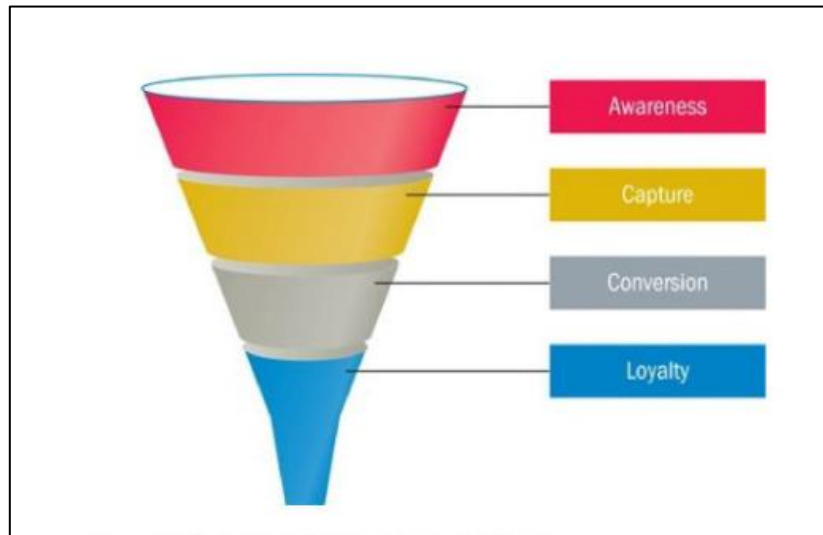
Figure 7 – *Communication Funnel..* Adapted from: Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2021

The First Step of Marketing Communication is Brand Awareness. Creating brand awareness allows recognition of a brand in the market. Recognition of a brand by a consumer means that the consumer can separate that brand from other similar brands in the market, can perceive the symbolic content that this brand represents and the social position that the brand promises. Accordingly, brand awareness can be defined as the impact of a brand in the minds of consumers. Rossiter and Percy (1987) defined brand awareness as an element that constitutes the basic step of occurrence of communication between the companies and consumers, which needs to take place before all other steps in that process. In this sense, brand awareness is the main element that has impact on the behaviour of the consumer and that shapes the brand preference of the consumer. If there is no brand awareness, there is no purchasing decision. From the consumer viewpoint, there are numerous options in the market that meets a similar need, the target of brand awareness is to have the very first communication with the consumer and to ensure that the brand always remains at the first place om the consumer 'mind after the first contact. Brand awareness does not mean to merely know the name of the brand or to have seen it before, it rather means that consumer can associate the name, logo and similar connotations in his mind. According to Aaker (2007), there are different levels of brand awareness. Brand awareness can have a very wide range from the emotion of vaguely knowing a brand to believing that the brand is the only product in a specific category. Aaker (1996) proposed an awareness pyramid to determine the level of brand awareness. There are 4 different levels in this pyramid. The first level in the awareness pyramid is "brand recognition". The first objective of the companies is to ensure that their brand is recognized by the target group they have determined. The concept of brand recognition is that a consumer is aware of existence of a specific brand and can distinguish that brand from the other brands in the same product category, which are produced to fulfill the same function. At the second level of the awareness pyramid is "brand recall". Brand recall means that when the product category of a brand belongs to is mentioned, that brand is one of the first brands that the

consumer recalls. At the third level of awareness pyramid there is the called "top of mind". The purpose is to ensure that when there is a need, among all other brands, only one brand that can fulfil that function is recalled by the consumer. To be the first brand that the consumer recalls in a specific product category means the awareness level is very high. Hence, it is essential for companies to position their brands as the preferred one. The highest level of the awareness pyramid is referred to as "brand name dominance". When a consumer group is asked to name the brands in a specific product category, and all people in the group give the name of the same single brand, this is called brand name dominance- The levels of brand awareness define the relationship of the consumer with the brand. Brand awareness level explain how much the symbolic meaning to the consumers and the social position of it. How higher the symbolic meanings represented by the brand is recognized and internalized by consumers, that much the possibility of that brand being preferred by consumers increase (Çizmeci & Ercan, 2015).
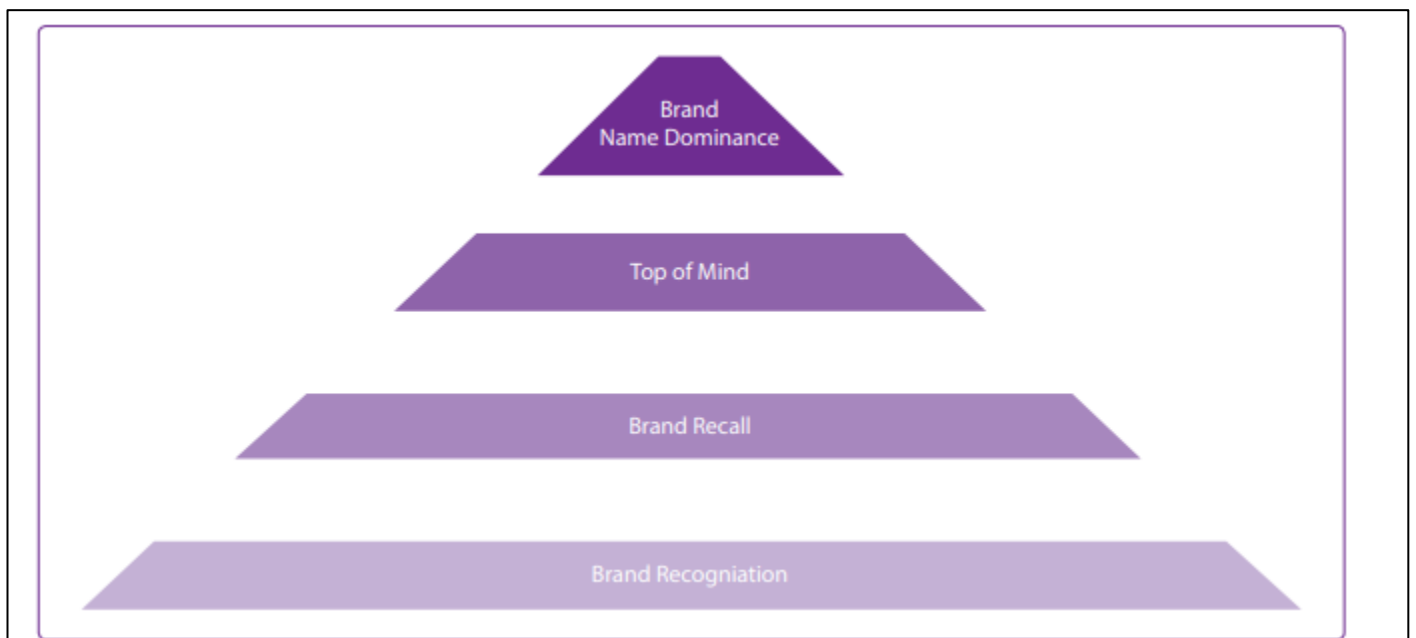
Figure 8 – *Brand Awareness pyramid.*. Adapted from: Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2021

1.5 Role of the online experiential marketing: focus on the luxury cosmetics industry

Nowadays, to target consumers' interest and overcome the expensive nature of products, a more advanced marketing technique is required. At a luxury level, consumers are more informed and are more socially aware. Thus, it is required to provide a high-end experience to consumers to increase their interest. Experiential marketing has been identified as a marketing technique focused on understanding consumer preferences and motivating them to make purchase decisions. As experiential marketing contributes to influencing the decision-making of the consumers, thus positive experience could be exploited by creating a positive atmosphere, customization, engagement, distinctiveness, and better interaction. Moreover, experiential

marketing helps in creating consumer satisfaction, motivating consumers to buy, and earning consumer loyalty (Siebert et al., 2020). Therefore, in order to create competitive advantage in the market, innovative consumer-centric model, and a strong brand image, experiential marketing is widely used by companies. Experiential marketing strategies support also the creation of long-term relationships with consumers by creating product desire, changing dissatisfied consumers' minds, or developing positive perceptions. For example, on occasions, consumers also feel that in-shop visits to luxury cosmetic brands are a reward in itself. This is due to the strong connection between consumers and brands that can be compartmentalized into courtships, friendships that enable luxury cosmetic brands to maintain strong relationships with their consumers. Furthermore, during these times, experiential marketing focuses on providing a more personalized experience. Experiential marketing strategies have to include the method of interactive online luxury stores. Online shopping experience depends on the knowledge or information available to consumers on the portal. Existing studies also identified that consumers tend to be more interactive or open to purchase when they derive the facility of trying out the samples. Thus, free sample distribution provides the consumer before making any purchase and engages more senses.

Experiential marketing via online communities allows luxury cosmetic brands to create meaningful consumption experiences. The communities are used to reinforce ties and interactions with the consumers. (Dhillon et al.,2022). When the storytelling and event marketing are built around self-concept, it satisfy the self-esteem motives of the consumers and motivates them to complete the act of purchase consistently. The study of Dhilon & al. (2022) thus suggests that online experiential marketing strategies with other marketing methods help build the relationship between brand experience and loyalty. It also influences the buying intent in consumers that is favorable for luxury cosmetic brands.

2. Chapter 2

2. 1 The Luxury Cosmetics Industry

In the great civilisations of the ancient world, luxury goods were always associated with wealth, exclusivity, and power, as well as the satisfaction of non-basic necessities. In ancient Greece, the habit of indulging in luxury was regarded as a threat to society because it was held that excessive pleasure would shift citizens' attention from the polis to private life. Until the fall of the Empire, the Romans assigned an ambiguous, potentially negative meaning to the word luxury. According to the Oxford Latin Dictionary, the term "luxury" comes from the Latin "luxus", which means "soft or extravagant living, sumptuousness, opulence", and shares a root with the term "luxuria", which means "excess, lasciviousness, negative self-indulgence" (Dubois et al., 2005). In the following centuries, the concept of luxury was rehabilitated, and the term tended to be associated with the Latin root "lux", which means "light", and to refer to precious objects, like gold and gems that were used by kings, princes or church. In Europe, it was only with the emergence of the bourgeoisie that the idea of

luxury was associated with "sumptuous surroundings" that made life more comfortable. The second industrial revolution at the end of the nineteenth century gave the concept of luxury the modern meaning of the "habit of indulgence in what is choice or costly" or "something enjoyable or comfortable beyond the necessities of life". This transformation contributed to the different interpretations of the concept of luxury, such as status. (Brun & Castelli, 2013). The Growth of the Luxury Markey remained steady at 7% annually during 1995–2013; the rate rose near 9% annually in the decade later (Bain & Co, 2014), increasing the market from 390 million luxury consumers in 2014 to 465 million by 2021.

As in the research emerged, for 25 centuries, luxury has been the privilege of royalty, religious authorities, tyrants, or generals, displayed ostentatiously in public. Starting with the Renaissance and early capitalist societies, luxury spread slowly to bankers and captains of industry. From this shift, luxury goods entered a new era, providing occasional gifts that consumers grant themselves once in a while, according to a sort of democratic right to happiness, with a further increase inf the frequency. The inaccessible is thus accessible to nearly everyone. Modern luxury is positioned to capture the dreams of each consumer, as a medium of self-expression. These changes result from many parallel forces. Whereas previously luxury items required craftsmanship and artistic creativity, industrial production by giant, international financial groups facilitates their wider distribution, as well as their exposure to counterfeiting market.

Furthermore, the increased in consumer demand is due to the globalization and larger markets. The number of millionaires expanded, growing by 2.6 million every year (BCG Perspectives, 2014), and the emerging aspirational masses, account for more than 25% of total luxury spending. Recently, assuming a short-term financial perspective, luxury brands use "mass marketing" practices, giving rise to a new level of brand, mass and prestige one. Confusion about the concept of luxury also arises in the academic field, where researchers commonly confront difficulties and confusion among three concepts: upmarket products, expensive products, and luxury products. According to de Barnier, Falcy, and Valette-Florence (2012), luxury encompasses three domains, depending on the brand marketing: inaccessible, intermediate, and accessible. Some researchers affirmed that luxury and non-luxury goods are the two extremes of a continuum, "so where the ordinary ends and luxury starts is a matter of degree as judged by consumers." The potential confusion for consumers between luxury and other brands, as the premium brands let rise the question of how should a luxury brand be defined. Recent marketing studies focused on this and argue that person who buys a luxury product is buying into a dream, and the mechanisms underlying consumer reactions to luxury products tend to be impulsive, emotional, or extravagant (Dubois & Paternault, 1995). This subjective concept of luxury rests on a certain level of scarcity, which creates a paradox related to selling such goods: The point of luxury brands is to achieve high returns while retaining perceived scarcity. There are key characteristics that define luxury brand:

- Luxury brands form an exclusive family of brands in their own right, quite distinct from other brands (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004).

- In luxury categories, unlike non-luxury categories, brands are distributed along a continuum, according to the degree of luxury that each brand represents
- The luxury associated with a brand depends on the product category, so a brand may be perceived as a luxury in one product category but not in another.

Psychological benefits, including social recognition and self-esteem, mainly distinguish luxury brands from other brands (Vickers & Renand, 2003). Also Hagtvedt and Patrick (2009) stated the importance of hedonic dimensions and emotional orientations: "a luxury brand … has premium products, provides pleasure as a central benefit, and connects with consumers on an emotional level." These studies reveal that brand luxury is a multidimensional concept. Vickers and Renand (2003) summarize various characteristics that emerge from different studies, revealing three groups of motivations to consume luxury brands: functional motivations like the quality; experiential motivations, for pleasure or hedonism, and symbolic interaction motivations like the connection to a group or affirmation of social status. Adopting a broader perspective on customer perceptions and motives for purchasing luxury brands, Wiedmann, Hennigs, and Siebels (2009) proposed that consumers' perceptions of the value of luxury can be defined with four dimensions: financial, functional, individual, and social. The financial dimension of luxury value addresses monetary aspects; the functional dimension refers to core, basic product benefits. The individual dimension focuses on a customer's personal orientation toward luxury consumption and addresses personal matters such as materialism and self-identity and the social dimension of luxury value refers to the perceived utility people acquire from products or services within their own social groups, like the prestige value. (Chandon et al.,2015).

The luxury Cosmetics Industry is a significantly vital industry not necessarily in terms of its contribution to global GDP but by its striking influence on the colourful social lives of humans globally. The use of cosmetics, fragrances, and personal care products can be traced to ancient times as early as Egyptian, Greek, and Roman eras. Neanderthal man painted his face with reds, browns, and yellows derived from clay, mud, and arsenic. Bones were used to curl hair. Makeup, tattoos, and adornments conveyed necessary social information. Galen, an ancient Greek physician, invented cold cream. The Romans used oil-based perfumes on their bodies, in their baths and fountains, and applied them to their weapons. Crusaders of the 13th century brought fragrances back to Europe from the Far East. The perfumes developed during the 16th century were powders or gelatinous pastes. Natural perfumes were made from a variety of ingredients containing aroma (Kumar, 2005).

The luxury industry encompasses companies producing and selling such goods as cars, yachts, wines and spirits, clothing, leather goods, shoes, accessories, watches, jewellery, cosmetics and perfumes, but also services including luxury hospitality and spas. Globally, such industry is estimated to reach e1 trillion in few years. Nowadays the industry is largely dominated by multi-brand, publicly owned groups (Bain & Co., 2012). Today, the image of the brand has become one of the most relevant aspects for effective positioning in the luxury market, and emotional factors have acquired increased importance. Currently, customers want goods

that feature reliable performance, high quality and faultless precision but simultaneously wish to be emotionally immersed in a memorable shopping experience. The many trends that emerged in the 1970s, like the boom in travelling, the expansion of the range of luxury products and the growth in distribution networks, shaped the luxury industry. The 1980s saw an increased public exposure to luxury brands.

The historical review of how the idea of luxury has been transformed over time reveals how its multifaceted nature makes it difficult to establish a clear definition based solely on the research literature.

Most authors agree that luxury does not actually refer to a specific category of products but rather indicates a conceptual and symbolic dimension, which is strongly identified with the cultural values of the society of a particular historical period. The ambiguity of the term "luxury" immediately becomes apparent when seeking a definition from "experts" in this field: "luxury is first of all everything that makes life easy" (Tom Ford, stylist); "for our customers the ultimate luxury is defined by exclusivity and customisation" (Giorgio Armani, head and founder of the Armani group); "luxury is about the absence of vulgarity" (Coco Chanel, fashion designer and cultural icon); "luxury is promising and maintaining the brand experience" (Silverstein and Fiske, 2003). Practitioners as well as researchers have been unable to agree on an unambiguous definition of the term luxury. Most studies in the research literature do not differentiate between the terms "prestige", "status", and "luxury" (Dubois and Czellar, 2002), although the first two terms display different nuances of meaning for consumers.

Luxury is highly influenced by individual perception and individuals' definitions depend upon what they value (Hanna, 2004). However, it is possible to identify some common elements that are identified by various authors. Combining these elements provides a set of critical success factors, CSF, that characterise luxury products and drive competition in the luxury market. Market experts (Altagamma, 2008) agree that, due to the lack of an operational definition of luxury, the best option is to identify a set of product features that luxury companies view as desirable.

D'Arpizio (2007) elaborated a classification of luxury brands with three levels of luxury, observing that different performances are achieved in different markets: *absolute luxury brands* that are characterised by elitism, heritage and uniqueness, like Harry Winston, Hermes. *Aspirational luxury brands* that achieve their status by being recognisable and distinctive, which are represented by such brands as Gucci and Louis Vuitton. *Accessible luxury brands*, which are more affordable than other aspirational ones (Brun & Castelli, 2013). The global luxury cosmetics market size is expected to reach £ 80.57 billion by 2028, according to a new report by Million Insights. It is expected to expand at a CAGR of 3.7% from 2021 to 2028. Cosmetics products have become a routine part of humans to enhance and cleanse their skin. These products are manufactured using premium and organic ingredients, which are in high demand and are sold at high prices compared to other cosmetic products.

Specifically:

- Prestige Cosmetics and Fragrances Market: The global prestige cosmetics and fragrances market size is estimated to reach $ 100.9 billion by 2028. The market is expected to expand at a CAGR of 4.3% from 2021 to 2028. The main factor that contributing to the growth of the market includes the growing trend towards personal care and grooming across the globe. Additionally, the significant brand recognition and growing popularity of prestige cosmetics & fragrances products due to the rising adoption of social networking platforms is further projected to create ample opportunity to market in the near future.

- Prestige Skin Care Market: The global prestige skin care market size is expected to reach $ 36.80 billion by 2028. It is expected to expand at a CAGR of 5.8% from 2021 to 2028. Increasing consumer focus towards personal appearance and grooming is considered to be a major factor driving the demand for prestige skin care products at the global level. In addition, increasing brand recognition and growing popularity of prestige skin care via social media are anticipated to fuel the product demand.

- Prestige Cosmetics Market: The global prestige cosmetics market size is expected to reach $ 27.77 billion by 2028. Increasing consciousness about beauty and appearance has been the major factor responsible for the high demand for prestige cosmetics in the global market. The market is estimated to have a steady growth over the forecast period. Product innovations and technological advancements by key players will also contribute to market growth (Million Insights,2022)

2.1.1 Market Analysis

The incorporation of luxury cosmetics and personal care products into the lives of the general urban population has only been made possible in large part due to the consumer pool's increasing disposable income. Previously aimed only at the wealthy and elite, the global luxury personal care and cosmetics market is now filling up with products aimed at the urban elite and even the general population. Growth in the market is being driven by an increase in the disposable income of the population in developing countries.

Defying the market, ''cosmetics'' are products that are used to clean and beautify the physical features of humans, ''Luxury cosmetics'' are products that are manufactured with premium and organic quality ingredients and are sold at a higher price than drugstore products (Data Bridge, 2022). According to the analysis of Bain & Company, the overall luxury market includes nine segments: luxury cars, personal luxury goods, luxury hospitality, fine wines and spirits, gourmet food and fine dining, high-end furniture and housewares, fine art, private jets and yachts, and luxury cruises. Luxury cars, luxury hospitality, and personal luxury goods together account for 80% of the total market. According to our forecasts, the overall luxury market grew back by 13% to 15% in 2021, to €1.14 trillion, 9% to 11% below 2019 levels.
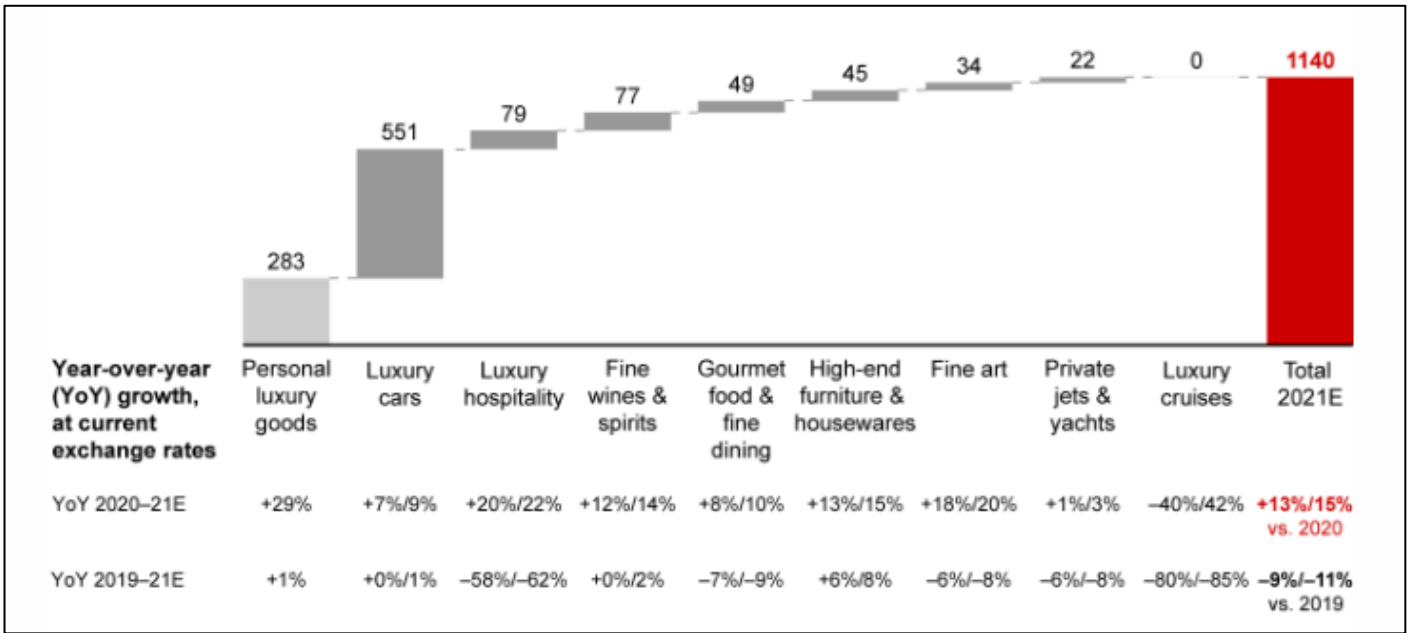
Figure 9 –*Global Luxury Market* .Source from: Bain&Co, 2021.

Watches and beauty grew back to their 2019 levels. Beauty recovered to €60 billion, just 1% below its 2019 level. Skin care was boosted by a persistent self-indulgence trend, while demand for makeup and fragrances remained constrained.
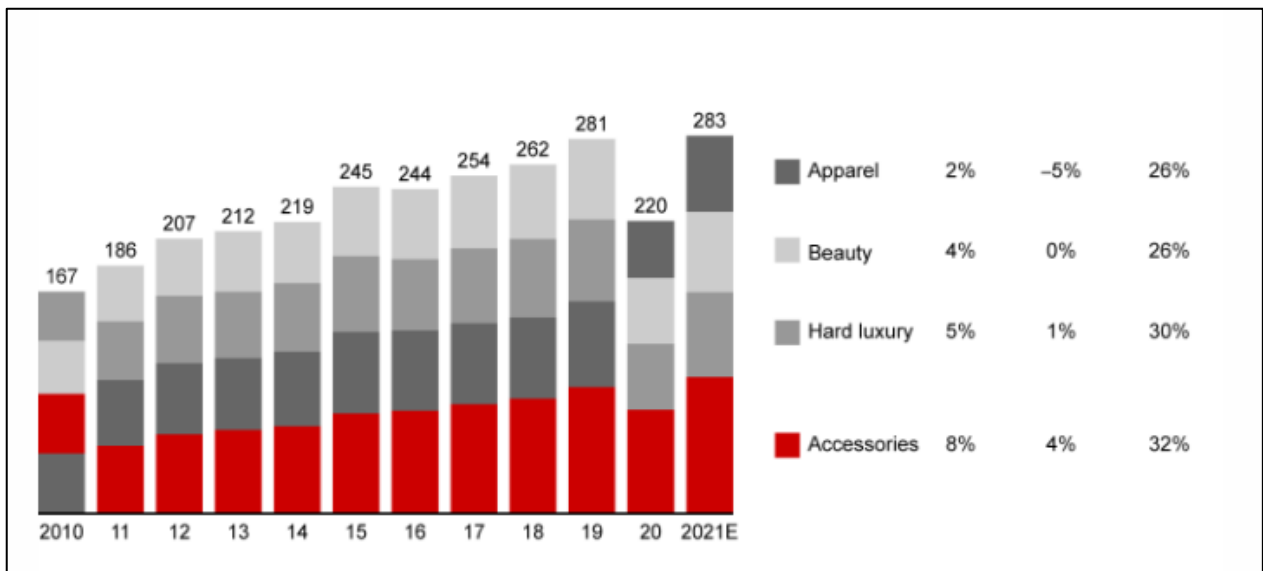
Figure 10 – *Share of Growth of luxury personal goods market.* Source from: Bain&Co, 2021.

Luxury brands have faced two years of tremendous turbulence, but the industry comes out of the crisis with more strength, resilience, and agility than before. Profitability has already recovered to pre-Covid levels-

Four growth trends will profoundly reshape the luxury market by 2025. First, Chinese consumers are set to become the dominant nationality for luxury, growing to represent between 40% to 45% of global purchases. Second, mainland China is on a path to overcome the Americas and Europe to become the biggest luxury market globally. Third, online is set to become the leading channel for luxury purchases. Fourth, younger cohorts (Generations Y and Z) became more demographically dominant in luxury, representing 70% of global purchases. Studies observed that the increase in tourist flows worldwide, the gradual reopening of China, and the rebound in consumption will offset the rise in inflation and the uncertain situation in 2023.

In 2023, apparel and cosmetics remain stable with the former at +6% with the upturn in less casual clothing and cosmetics at +5.5%, driven by the excellent performance of fragrances. Cosmetics in particular will stabilise and be driven by Asia, while clothing will see a clear contrast between accessible and luxury.

| PRODUCTS	2023 Consensus
Apparel	+6%
Leather goods	+8.5%
Footwear	+7%
Jewellery	+8%
Watches	+5%
Cosmetics	+5.5%

Figure 11 –*Forecasts of Consumption.* Source from: Altagamma, 2022.

Cosmetics are regulated to ensure safety, governed mainly by the European Union's (EU) Cosmetics Regulation. Beyond physical health, cosmetics can help to improve the mood, enhance our appearance, and boost our self-esteem. They can also help to exhibit personal style and, as such, are an important means of social expression. In a study by FEBEA, over 60% of respondents claimed that cosmetics have a positive impact on well-being, image, self-confidence and mood, with a large proportion (+40%) also identifying benefits in terms of social life, love life, family life, professional life and health. ''The Fragrance Industry is about making people feel good about themselves'' said the Managing Director of Coty, one of the main leader Cosmetics Company.

A study published by IKW, the German Cosmetic, Toiletry, Perfumery and Detergent Association, assessing the self-perception of adolescents and young adults, found that 73% believe body and beauty care is very important in their lives. Moreover, 85% feel safer when they use cosmetics products, and 63% feel more attractive when they do so.

All cosmetic products and their ingredients are governed by the comprehensive and stringent European Cosmetics Regulation to ensure they are safe for people.

Furthermore, all cosmetics made available in the EU must display a complete list of ingredients and have the same name in all countries: this helps consumers identify products with ingredients to which they know they are sensitive. The ingredients must comply with European requirements and use the International Nomenclature of Cosmetic Ingredients, known as INCI.

72% of European consumers consider cosmetics and personal care products very important in their daily lives, as published by the new perception study of Cosmetics Europe. Consumers highly value cosmetic products they use and see them as key in improving quality of life, boosting self-esteem, as well as for social interactions. John Chave, Director General of Cosmetics Europe affirmed "From body care, to skin care, hair care, oral care, perfumes, make-up, sun care, European consumers use, on average, over seven different cosmetic products daily and nearly 13 cosmetic products weekly" at the Cosmetics Europe Annual Conference 2022 (CEAC 2022). For 71% of European consumers, cosmetics are important in improving quality of life, for 70% in boosting their self-esteem. Hygiene is important, but also the use of cosmetics is essential to feel good (Cosmetics Europe, 2022)

2.2. Digital Branding in the Luxury Cosmetics Industry

The luxury cosmetics market is segmented on the basis of type, product type, end-user and distribution channel. As type it is divided in: Organic and Convectional Products; Product Type: Skincare; Haircare; Makeup; Fragrance; End user: Male; Female; Distribution channel: Hypermarkets; Online Channels; Specialty Stores; Monobrand stores; E-commerce; Others (Data Bridge, 2022).

Some of the major players operating in the luxury cosmetics market are:

- L'Oréal, (France)
- Shiseido Company, Limited (Japan)
- Christian Dior (France)
- Puig (Spain)
- Coty Inc. (U.S.)
- Kao Corporation (Japan)
- Revlon (U.S.)
- The Estée Lauder Companies Inc. (U.S.)
- Oriflame Cosmetics AG (Switzerland)
- KOSÉ Corporation (Japan)
- CHANEL (U.K.)

On the basis of product type, the global cosmetics market is segmented into skin care, hair care, fragrances, make up, and others. In 2022, skin care segment ha dominated the market as the consumers are become more concerned for their healthy skin. Social media has also played an important role in advertising of skincare brands.

Regarding the nature, the global cosmetics market is segmented into organic and inorganic. In 2022, inorganic segment dominated the market as these products are highly affective. Hair colors, anti-acne creams, anti-wrinkle creams, and various other products are manufactured with inorganic ingredients to enhance their outcome.

Relating to the category, the global cosmetics market is segmented into mass product, premium product, and professional product. In 2022, mass product segment dominated the market due to presence of wide a product range, distribution network, and affordable prices. The cosmetic products are being manufactured in mass due to increasing demand in the market.

About the packaging type, the global cosmetics market is segmented into bottles and jars, tubes, containers, pouches, sticks, pumps & dispensers, blisters and strip packs, and aerosol cans. In 2022, bottles and jars segment dominated the market as large portion of products are usually packaged in either a jar or bottle.

Relating the distribution channel, the global cosmetics market is segmented into offline and online. In 2022, offline segment dominated the market as it is a traditional form of distribution channel focusing on bricks and mortar, with its sales through supermarkets, specialty stores, pharmacies, and salons. The customers get a wide range of options, suggestions, and samples through these stores that improve their decision making.

According to the application, the global cosmetics market is segmented into women and men. In 2022, women segment is expected to dominate the market as the cosmetic market is highly women centric with a wide range of products available for women.

As previously stated cosmetics are used to enhance the beauty and physical appearance of a personage. Chiefly, these cosmetic products are manufactured from artificial sources. The purpose of cosmetic products is mainly intended for external cleaning, perfumes, changing appearances, correct body odor, protect skin, and conditioning among others. Ranging from antiperspirants, fragrances, make-up, and shampoos, to soaps, sunscreens, and toothpastes, cosmetics and personal care products play an essential role in in all stages of a consumer's life.

The current major factors driving the growth of the cosmetics market are the rising in awareness regarding skin care routine, innovative product branding and advertising strategies. Increasing developments in sustainable cosmetics are creating opportunities for the growth of the market. However, increasing movement

across consumers for transparency and traceability of ingredients used in products are acting as a major challenge for the growth of the market (Finance yahoo, 2022).

According to the Deloitte Report on the Beauty Industry at a global market level, ten among the 15 beauty companies, are based in the United States, France, and Japan. Most companies experienced a strong recovery in luxury goods sales in FY2021, with 11 companies reporting double-digit growth. Beauty companies are bigger than the Top 100 average, with average luxury goods sales of $3.8 billion. All of the ten beauty companies reporting net profits were profitable, except for Coty, which continued to have higher costs related to the company's Transformation Plan.
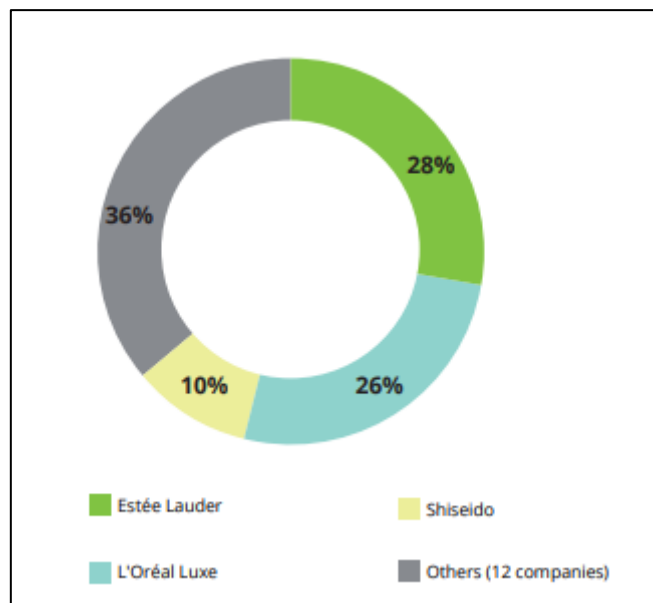

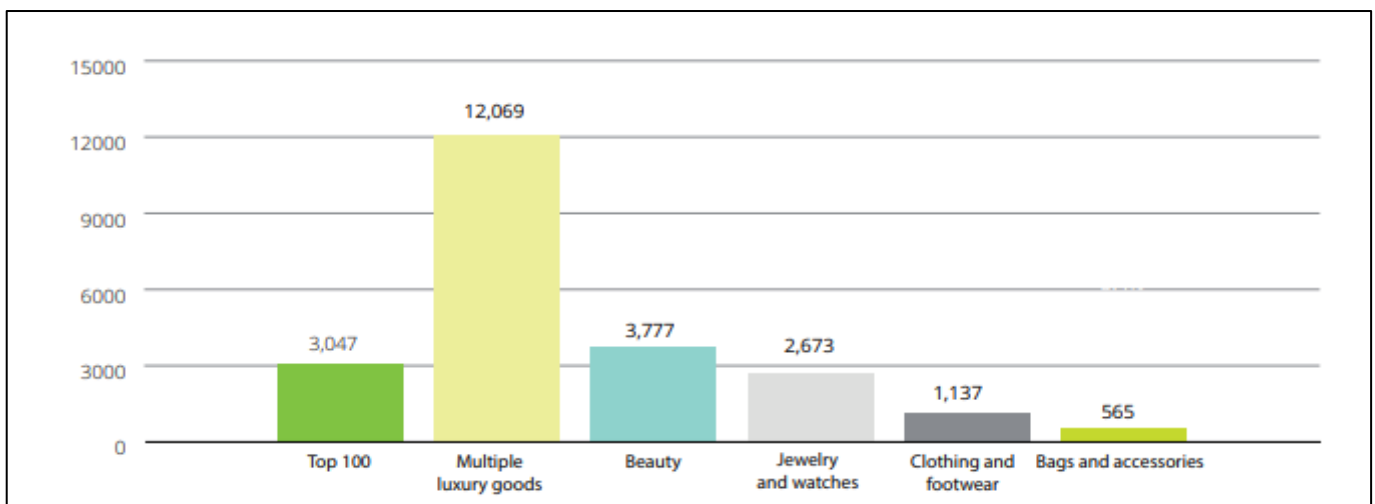Figure 12 – *Share of Luxury Good Sales.* Source from: Deloitte Report, 2022.

Figure 13 – *Average size of companies by luxury good sales.* Source from: Deloitte Report, 2022.

	Clothing and footwear	Bags and accessories	Beauty	Jewelry and watches	Multiple luxury goods
China	5%			30%	
France	5%		20%		30%
Germany	8%	14%		3%	
Italy	39%	57%	7%	3%	20%
Spain	3%		7%	3%	
Switzerland				27%	
United Kingdom	13%		7%	3%	30%
United States	11%	29%	27%	7%	20%
Japan	5%		20%		
Other countries	11%		13%	23%	

Figure 14 –*Percentages of Companies by country.* Source from: Deloitte Report, 2022.

According to Estée Lauder Annual Report (2022) there is significant competition within each market where the skin care, makeup, fragrance and hair care products are sold. Brand recognition, product quality and effectiveness, distribution channels, accessibility, and price point are some of the factors that impact consumers' choices among competing products and brands. Marketing, merchandising, in-store and online experiences and demonstrations, and new product innovations also have an impact on consumers' purchasing decisions. There continues to be increased interest and awareness from customers and consumers in responsibly-sourced ingredients and environmentally sustainable products, and thus it is important to deliver well-positioned strategies to benefit from the resulting change in consumer preferences due to our social impact and sustainability efforts. A portfolio of diverse brands sold in a variety of channels, the Estée Lauder Companies is one of the world's leading manufacturers, marketers and sellers of skin care, makeup, fragrance and hair care products. Some of the main competitors are large, well-known, multinational manufacturers and marketers of skin care, makeup, fragrance and hair care products, most of which market and sell their products under multiple brand names. These are: L'Oreal S.A.; Unilever; Procter & Gamble; Shiseido Company, Ltd.; LVMH Moët Hennessey Louis Vuitton; Natura & Co.; Chanel S.A.; Beiersdorf; Coty Inc.; Kao Corp; and LG Household & Health Care. There is a rise in competition from a number of independent brands, some of which are backed by private-equity investors, as well as some retailers that have their own beauty brands.
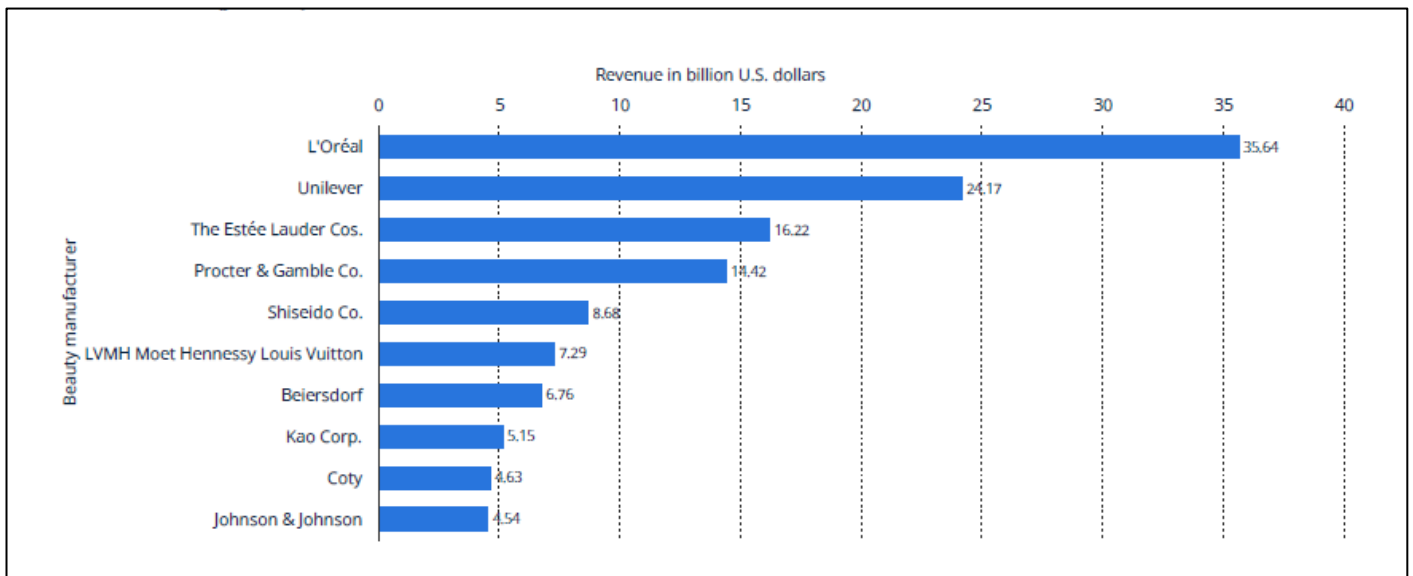
Figure 15 – *Revenues of the leading beauty brands worldwide.* Source from: Statista, 2022.

The degree of rivalry in the cosmetic market is high, mainly due to the fact that the leader companies own the majority of recognized brands and they are able to operate worldwide. The top 5 companies own about the 60% of the market at the moment. The intensity of rivalry is mitigated by the rise of innovative brands.

Competition in the industry is based on factors like pricing, innovation, perceived value, additional services to the final users, promotions, advertising, e-commerce. Diversification of the product portfolio is a key success factor, as it can be found in all the first leader companies, because it protects the companies' business against competitive pressure in any particular market. The rivalry is due to the switching costs; The treat of new entrants in this market is moderate, most of the new entrants in fact focus their business on e- commerce, since the bargaining power of big retailers in the market is too high for emerging labels. The industry may seem very fragmented looking at the brands, about 182 among the global market, and it composed by only 7 conglomerates companies that own the majority of the brands consumers know. (Business Insider, 2017)

2.2.1 Luxury Cosmetics Brands Online

The luxury cosmetics brands are now principally based on digital world such as e-commerce and social media platforms, exploiting all the opportunities of the digital world. It is found that around forty percent of luxury purchases are influenced due to the experience of consumers on the digital platform, for instance, the online research for a luxury cosmetic brand that is purchased offline or the buzz on social media leading to the in-store purchases. Considering the increasing power of the digital world, the luxury brands of cosmetic industry

have invest important resources on implementing strategies for their presence in the digital world. The appropriate digital strategy differs for almost every product of luxury cosmetic brand.

The most successful luxury cosmetics brands need to develop a compelling presence online while engaging and influencing the consumers through the use of social media and focusing on selected metrics of digital performance. It is noted that luxury cosmetics brands across the globe are gaining benefits from the introduction of interactive digital features to engage consumers not only remotely but also within the stores or outlets. For instance, the digital touch points allow luxury cosmetics brands enhancing the involvement of consumers through the exploration while being accompanied by the experienced sales representatives. Moreover, the luxury cosmetics brands are known for benefitting from the incorporation of insightful videos into the digital efforts, this approach allows consumers to explore products for exploring the products personally, and it is more likely to increase the awareness of a product.

The interactive digital content allows the consumers to try the product or observe the working of the product similar to the experience of an outlet. This empowers the consumers gain more comprehensive knowledge about the luxury cosmetics products. It is evident that the digital world is expected to follow the ways through which consumers can purchase the luxury cosmetic products while modifying their expectations. However, Jacob (2006) stated thati n order for to the brand to innovate themselves in the luxury cosmetics and thus to differentiate is t\o adopt the innovative technologies (Jacob, 2006).

As stated in the research published on the mazagine the BoF, In 2022, the rules of beauty changed: TikTok became the social marker of success, and omnichannel became the only path for survival 2022 was a year of transition for the beauty industry. Social media also changed. TikTok solidified its status as the social platform of choice for beauty. brands generated massive sales from one-off posts, and found innovative ways to insert themselves into viral trends and online conversations. Meanwhile, companies continued to manage the evolving expectations and desires of the customer,both online that and offline.

Beauty Brands took Advantage of TikTok Trends: The app, known for tutorials, hacks, and news has become a major beauty destination. Focusing on education it is used by brands as a rapid trend cycle.

The Way Consumers Buy Beauty Products Is Changed.: Department stores used to be ground zero for consumers looking to try and buy new makeup or skin care products, Make up is now growing twice as fast as skin care as beauty shoppers turn to neon eyeshadows and shimmery blushes for looks inspired by TikTok trends. Also the Refillable Beauty has been widely used: Chanel, Dries Van Noten and Target have launched beauty products that can be replenished, with an expansion on many other brands (Business of Fashion, 2022)

Traditionally, marketing perfumes and cosmetics is different from what happens at the mass-market level. For one thing, a perfume can be "hated" by most people and still be a great success if it is liked very strongly by 3–5% of the target audience worldwide. To be successful, a perfume must be different, and even if it is perceived as unpleasant by many people, it can still do well. In this industry, products that perform well in open tests and in blind tests are not necessarily strong performers in the marketplace. Product tests must be

conducted to see if a perfume has a strong negative or a special weakness that had not been perceived, but the final product decision should never be based on test results alone. Another difficulty in market tests is that a very great worldwide success may only have a penetration of 4%: it is very difficult to find users and to interview them. For example, in considering modifications to the packaging of its "Pour un Homme" product, Caron decided it would interview French current users, but these constituted less than 0.5% of the French male population; interviewing 200 of them would have required an original sample of 40,000. The company therefore decided to ask a group of perfume stores to take the addresses of those who bought the product and agreed to be interviewed. But, of course, the sample was not really representative of either the total population or of those who used the product. Today, this would be easy to do thanks to Internet platforms. Unfortunately, because of such limitations, target marketing is also quite difficult. Segmentations are difficult to study, target, and measure. Selective perfumes marketing is a bit like fashion marketing. Part of it is top down in that someone has to decide how the product fits into a given fashion trend at a given time; the shape, the fragrance, and even the colors of the packaging are not selected by chance. They often result from an analysis of major long-term fashion trends. Asking today's consumer what tomorrow's product should be would in fact miss the point. Nevertheless, market research is a very important aspect of the tactical decisions behind such things as shapes, positioning concepts, advertising execution, or baseline slogan, for example. (Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2021). Nowadays that online shopping has become a presence in the lives of consumers, the main challenge is to integrate online decision-making and purchasing processes into the physical world. New technologies now are setting the power of data, AI, and AR. Many brands are aware of this need and implement strategies to create a perfectly calibrated, personalized experience for their customers. The beauty and cosmetics industry are using smart technologies to create solutions that will positively impact the way consumers purchase products and interact with brands both in-store and online. As stated in the Statista Report (2022), Beauty tech is the term used for AI- and AR-based tools and software that can run skin diagnostics, predict beauty-related consumer needs, simulate appearances, and make informed and smart recommendations. It is still a niche component of the overall beauty market, but beauty tech in 2021 is estimated to have generated 3.8 billion U.S. dollars in the seven countries analysed in this study: the United States, China, Japan, South Korea, United Kingdom, Germany, and France. Significant developments are expected to have a growth in the beauty tech market, increasing its share of the traditional beauty market from 1.8 percent in 2021 to 3.1 percent by 2026. Beauty tech can be defined as the utilization of AI- and AR-powered apps, tools, and devices that are able to run skin analyses, virtually overlay colour cosmetics, predict product matches, and make recommendations based on data provided by customer input. Often, beauty tech apps and tools are launched by cosmetics and personal care companies in partnership with external tech providers.

One of the main objective of beauty tech is to enhance the customer experience and drive conversion by offering users a higher degree of personalization and customization. Some examples of the leading beauty tech solutions used but luxury cosmetics companies in 2022 are:

- mobile applications that simulate makeup and colour cosmetics;

- assessment software that analyses skin or hair type;

- smart mirrors in the storefront that allow virtual try-ons, as Tom Ford Beauty introduced in 2022 in the Rinascente store in Italy nd in the main store in the US

Beauty is one of the leading consumer goods markets where technological solutions have developed at a fast pace in recent years.
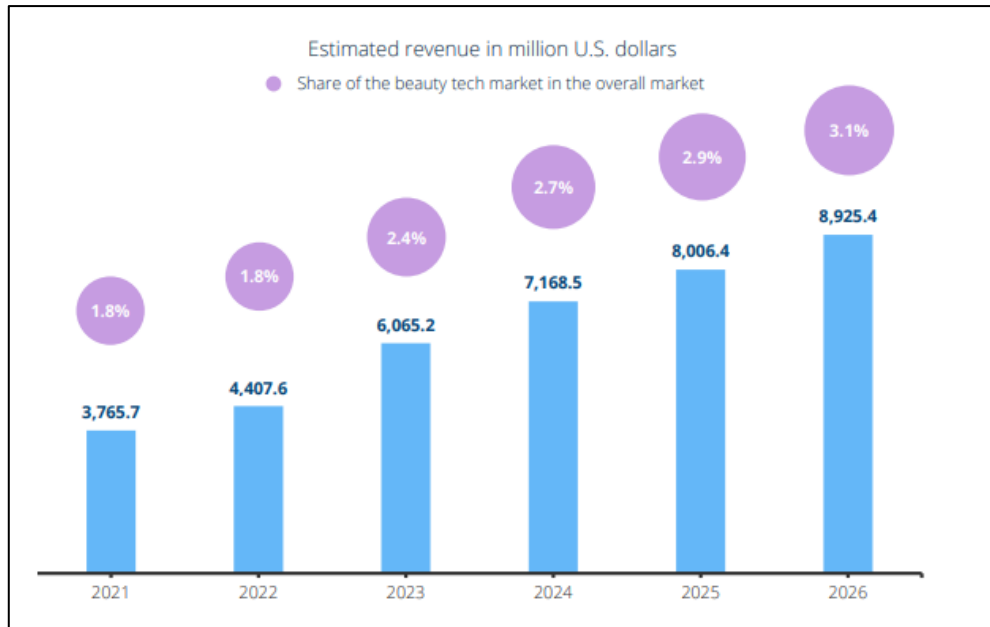
Figure 16 –*Estimated Revenues of the beauty tech in the global market..* Source from: Statista, 2022.

The conventional beauty care market is composed by three segments: cosmetics, personal care, and skin care. Personal care generates the largest revenue in this market but has limited beauty tech potential compared with other segments. This is mainly due to the fact that in the personal care segment are functional and require a lower level of customization, on the contrary other product require a higher level of personalization, like the haircare products. For cosmetics and skin care, despite they contribute less to the conventional market have the biggest potential for beauty tech, with up to 4.6 percent of all cosmetics purchases and three percent of skin care product purchases expected to be influenced and driven by this niche market by 2026.
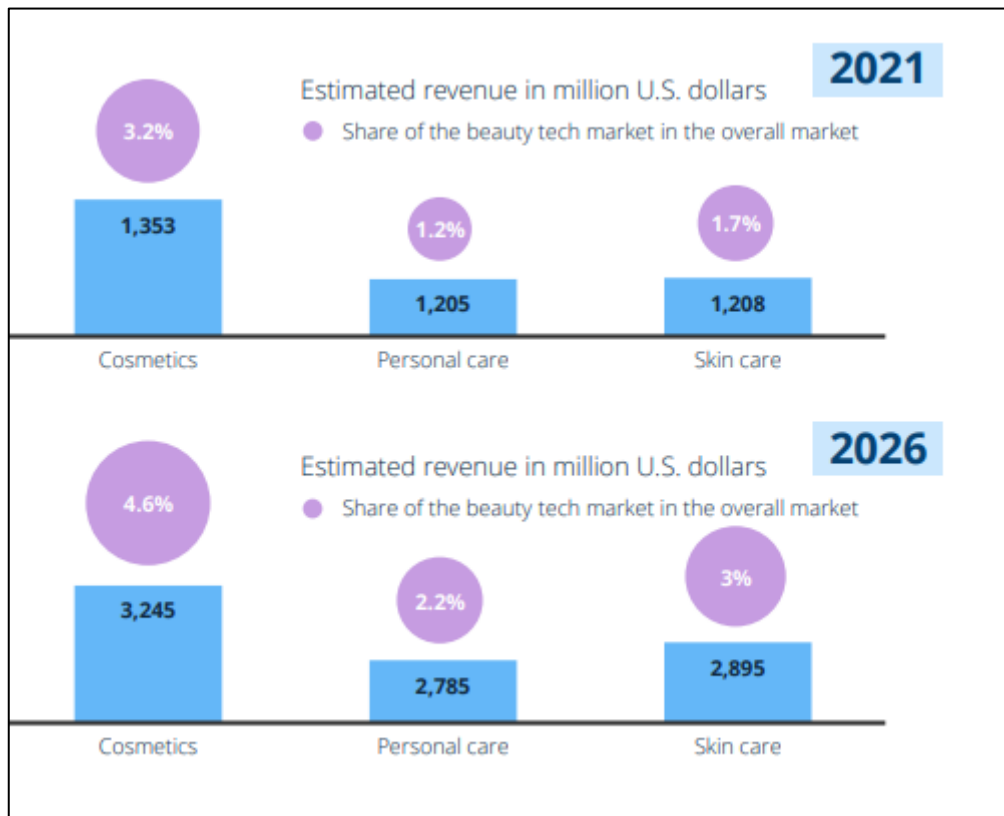
Figure 17 – *Expected Share of the beauty tech in the global market.* Source from: Statista, 2022.

In today world, where digital marketing strategies are developed together with an omnichannel retail environment, beauty tech solutions fulfil a key function in customer experience. Although beauty tech represents only a small portion of the huge beauty and cosmetics market, consumer awareness of the various types of beauty tech tools and applications is increasing. According to the Statista Global Consumer Survey, beauty consumers in China and South Korea are the most experienced with beauty tech, more than three-quarters of the survey respondents in China used beauty apps in 2021. Usage of beauty apps among beauty shoppers was lower in the United States and Europe. Beauty tech is expected to become more important for the overall beauty market. Consumer goods and retail companies are investing more in their digital capabilities, AR is becoming more widely available in the omnichannel customer experience, and data is being recognized as a key strategy in personalization. In the cosmetics segment, revenue is forecast to exceed $ 3.2 billion by 2026, more than the value of the personal care and skin care segments. In Europe, the beauty tech market is expected to surpass $ 1.6 billion by 2026(Statista, 2022). An other important aspect to consider is the fact that experiencing luxury products in a digital universe is more eco-friendly than the current clothing and accessories consumption model because there are no resourcing constraints and items could be used over and over or replaced without creating waste. In fact, producing digital garments lessens greenhouse gas emission by 97%, reduces waste and saves around 3,300 litres of water consumption. Going to digital clothing gives brands the possibility to decrease their carbon footprint by 30%. From a luxury company's perspective, going digital allow not only to cut clothing production costs, designing and testing a product virtually incurs no raw

material costs, but also have a beneficial profit in terms of social brand Image. Operating in the digital world allow also the brands to experiment different product lines before choosing which to launch in the real world. This lead to a decrease in overproduction, with less inventories of unsold items in stock and to a reduction in delivery and logistics costs. Moreover, selling in the digital worlds, before selling in real life, allow companies to test many clothing design process, as well as re-using old classic designs taken from brands' archives. Also the advertising is more sustainable due to the fact that brands could work with influencers to sell digital fashion without having to send actual products (Deloitte Report, 2022).

2.2.2 Digital Branding and Awareness
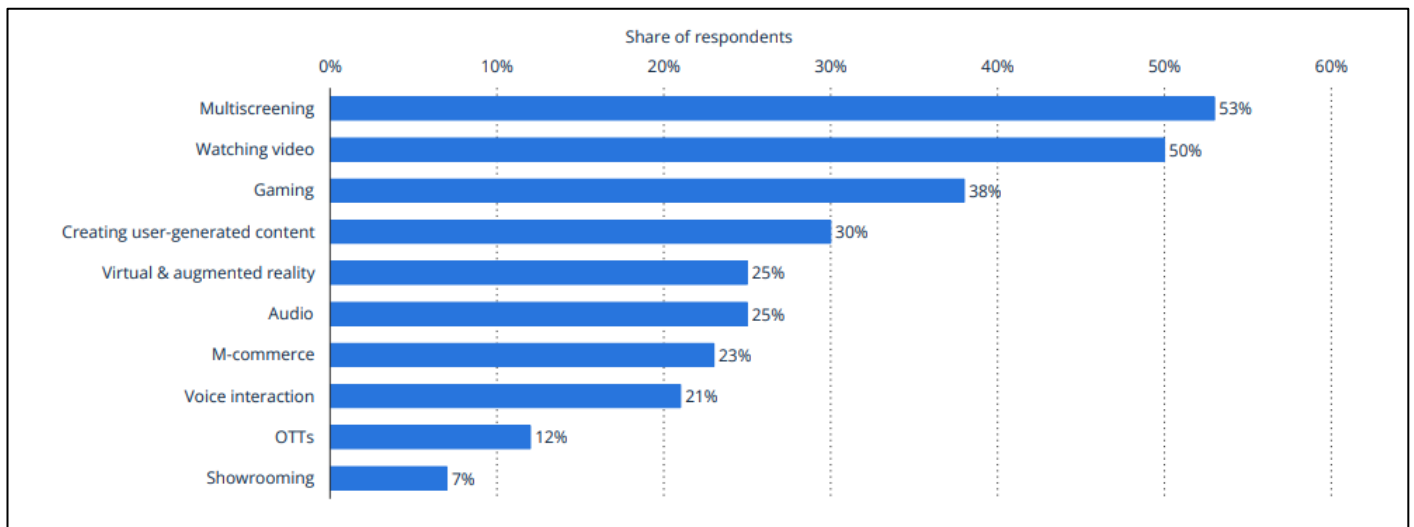
Figure 18 – *Digital Consumer behaviour in 2022.* Source from: Statista (2022)

Since the early 1980s, researchers have studied brand awareness and its impacts on consumer behavior and business outcomes. They defined brand awareness as "a rudimentary level of brand involving, at the least, recognition of the brand name". The researchers noted that there is a continuum of brand awareness ranging from simple name recognition to a detailed knowledge of a brand, its associated products, and other information. They established evidence that, when consumers are aware of a brand, they are more likely to choose that brand when they make purchasing decisions and social media can be used to increase brand awareness and engagement, indicating that brand awareness has an important influence to the business results. According to Hodge *et al.,* (2015), some information is beyond the control of an individual and the business world of the luxury cosmetic industry has understood the importance of managing the personal brands while offering strategic advice in order to enhance their brand identity, using different tools of social media.

There is still insufficient literature examining the ways through which luxury cosmetic brands can use the internet to develop their brands. On the other hand, Hodge *et al.,* (2015) have examined the motivations for the consumers to use the digital world. Also the digital branding is not examined for the luxury cosmetics

industry but its increasing importance is now recognized at a global level. Hodge *et al.,*(2015) affirmed that the digital branding is the main element of the strategies for the brands'image. The studies of Hodge *et al.,* (2015) have determined the ways through which people react to the judgments of online identities and that are created for reaching their digital branding objectives through effective strategies and information selection. Their research also focused on the self-expression on the digital environment and the ways through which people judge the effectiveness of the public impressions along with the effects of the assessments on their behaviour. It emerged that the technological improvements have enabled the luxury cosmetics brands to reflect the self-presentation and self expression along with the ways for people to learn about the brand. Hodge *et al.,* (2015) stressed the importance of self-presentation due to the fact that it delivers a huge information to the consumers about the luxury cosmetic brands. According to the authors,the social performance of luxury cosmetic brands can be compared to the theatre where the main actor selects the appropriate wardrobe for the desired identity for an audience through a complicated self-negotiations (Hodge, et al., 2015)

2.3. Digital Brand Strategies in the Luxury Cosmetics Industry

Over the past four decades, having a marketing strategy has become the main actor of research in both business and marketing literature. A marketing strategy can be defined as "the science and art of exploring, creating, and delivering value to satisfy the needs of a target market at a profit" as Kotler (2002) affirmed. The beauty industry is highly competitive, so for cosmetic brands to succeed they must be very creative and ground-breaking to gain an advantage against the competition and push awareness and commitment around their campaigns and products. Due to this competitive nature, it produces some interesting and innovative beauty marketing strategies.

Social media is a huge part of the international marketing strategies companies use to reach customer around the world. Beauty brands exploit marketing and advertising potential of social networks, making, making a daily use of the engagement to boost brand loyalty. The Instagram app is an essential platform in the beauty industry, all the major brands have an Instagram profile. YouTube and Tik Tok are the other platfroms that have become crucial for consumers to search cosmetic related videos. In particular Tik Tok has assumed a huge importance, since there are thousands of beauty vloggers and "influencers'', which after a shopping share and explain everything about the products, while giving a personal review. They do 97% of beauty related content on social media (Likeable, 2018).

According to Forbes, 2022, recommendations and reviews from consumers or people personal circle are often the ones that influence us the most. User-generated photos are trusted seven times more than traditional advertising. Seeing real people giving tips and sharing their "beauty secrets" not only creates trust in the brand but also a sense of peer pressure. In addition to being some of the most impactful content, user-generated content costs the brand very low budget and is available in high quantity across multiple channels. The most

powerful influencers have grown from being supporters of beauty brands to creating their own limited edition cosmetics line or becoming beauty entrepreneurs. For instance, Kylie Jenner a famous celebrity and social media star with millions of followers years before launching Kylie Cosmetics' famous matte liquid lipsticks, which eventually turned into a huge beauty business. Selling a 51% of her brand to Coty in 2019, turned Kylie into one of the youngest self-made billionaires.

As found in the article, Instagram is still the most valuable social app for beauty brands with 90% of all beauty-related posts in 2020 published on the platform. It offers options to integrate links to brands' websites or e-commerce shops and it is a crucial place to show beauty products to younger target audiences. Instagram is also the number one platform for influencers to display their content and engage with their audiences through makeup looks, video tutorials, giveaways.

As well as YouTube, with more than 2 billion monthly users, it remains a key channel for beauty brands. On the other hand the pandemic changed the trend toward short-form videos, as demonstrated by the rise of TikTok. With more than 100 million daily users, most of them from Gen Z, and a unique algorithm that encourages virality, TikTok has emerged as a major platform for beauty brands. That was evident in 2020, when e.l.f. Cosmetics' #eyeslipsface challenge set the TikTok record for the most viral campaign in the United States with more than 1 billion views. ''Even if they are not yet the primary sales channel for beauty brands, social platforms are increasingly offering tools that enable consumers to shop directly on their platforms, via social catalogs, shoppable pins or an integrated call to action.'' (Schwarz, 2022 February). The top 20 global beauty manufacturers generate only 14% of sales in e-commerce, but that's changing and the growth of influencer marketing will accelerate, since brands selling on social platforms are turning to influencers to boost traffic or host live shopping events.

From a Brand Perspective, according to a GWI report, for the first time ever, younger consumers have discovered more brands via advertising on social apps than any other media. With consumers spending more time on social media with their beloved content creators, beauty brands are increasingly contracting beauty influencers to engage with their target audiences. For instance, beauty leader as Estée Lauder is already spending 75% of its marketing budget on collaborations with social influencers.

Hence, influencer marketing has become a key success factor for beauty and cosmetic brands across their entire marketing funnel. From raising awareness and growing communities of brand lovers to generating e-commerce traffic and increasing sales in traditional retail, the opportunities are limitless (Forbes, 2022).

The luxury cosmetic brands exploit the strategies to be present on the different platforms for the reason of the the search engines: the higher the value source of rankings on various networks, the higher it will be the search results for the keywords related to the brand. Higher rankings of the search engine imply more visibility for the luxury cosmetic brands leadings to an increased levels of power (Skarmeas, et al., 2008).

Cross Promotion

The strategy of a digital brand is found to be interconnected. A strong digital branding strategy of luxury cosmetic brands has beeen found to be in promoting the quality content across every platform while modifying the presentation of each. The personas of consumers for luxury cosmetic brands use different channels at the same time, but at various points throughout the whole day. The luxury cosmetic brands are

most likely to miss the recent blog post when shared over Facebook, but they may notice the newsletters in their inbox. This has implied that the luxury cosmetic brands post on different platforms in the digital world (Wang,2006). As Brambilla et al.,2022 affirm, nowadays customer behavior towards brands has been altered profoundly throughout the whole purchase process and decision, making stages, from the awareness and recognition of needs to the final purchase. Social media has a considerable effect on consumer behavior from the phase of information to the purchase. Nowadays luxury brands are dealing with the challenge of keeping the balance between using mass media (social networks, mass marketing strategies) but it is also true that an incorrect marketing strategy implemented on these platforms can have a negative impact on the brand image and business. An example of mass-market strategy applied to luxury brands is the celebrity endorsement , thus the use of celebrities to promote the brand. With this strategy there is a transfer process of symbolic properties associated with an endorser to a specific product or brand, and then from the product to the consumers. Using celebrities brand can increase viewers' attention, redefine brand images, create brand awareness and also reposition existing brands (Brambilla et al., 2022).

Display Advertising

Display of advertisement is a widely used tool of digital marketing that involve the usage of web bulletins, or advertisements showed on a third-party site to drive traffic stream towards the company site and enhance the awareness of products among the customers (Aaker, 1996).

Search Engine Marketing

Search Engine Marketing is a type of digital marketing that it publicises the websites of the brands by creating and enhancing their search engines through the use of paid posts, incidental advancement, and paid extension, or through the use of free SEO procedures (Blackwell & Egan, 2006).

Search Engine Optimisations

Search Engine Optimisation is one of the most important digital marketing strategies that are used to enhance the website or page of the brands for improving their ranking. It helps the customers in finding the web pages quickly.

Social Media Marketing

Social Media Marketing is the methodology of getting awareness and increase traffic with the management of social networks platforms (Cai, 2002).

Email and Affiliate Marketing

This kind of marketing strategy implies promotion of a business message to individuals and groups using emails. Companies, through affiliate marketing techniques rewards one or more associates for bringing a consumer and also every site visit through the personal advertising extensions of the associates (Aaker, 1997).

2.4 Successful Cases of Luxury Cosmetics Brands in the Digital World
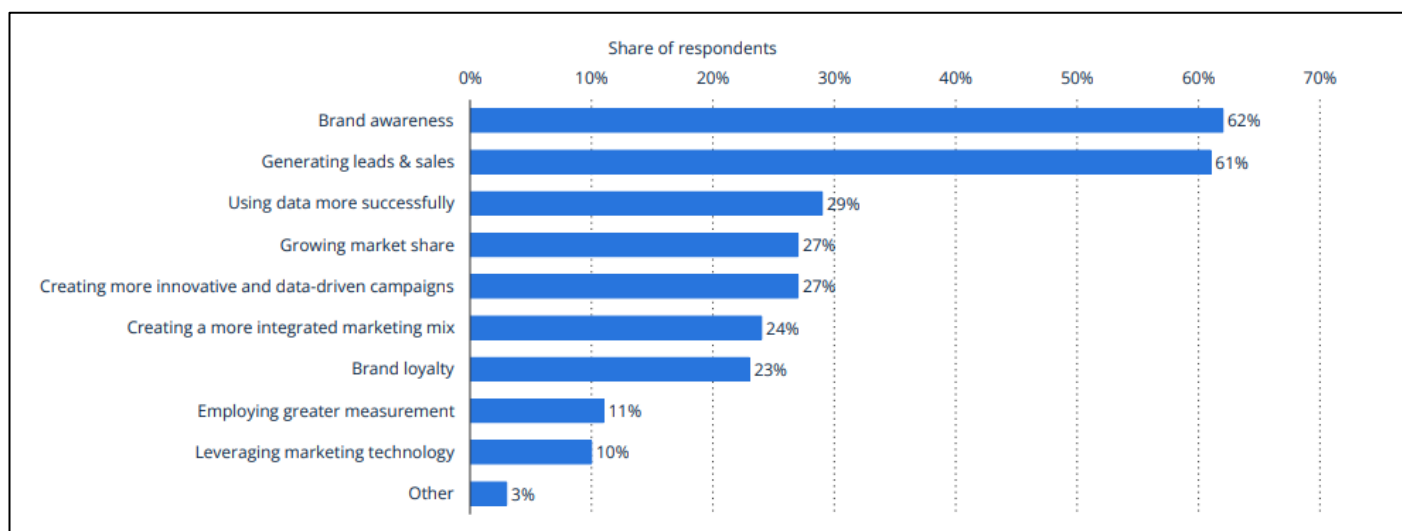
Figure 19 – *Digital Marketing Priorities.* Source from: Statista (2022)

The growth of the digital world has led the luxury cosmetics industry to flourish and innovate immensely while brands are evolving ways of communication and engaging their consumers or audiences. The last few years have showed important transition across the luxury cosmetics brands. Dior, Givenchy and Tom Ford are among most notable example of brands with successfully enabled interactions of consumers through the digital marketing strategies. Dior has used the multi-natured digital campaigns for launching the Art of Trench. The YouTube landing page of the Dior includes the backstage makeup microsite along with which the social media is responsible for promoting the new products of luxury cosmetics. Moreover, the Dior has a ability to target, engage, and interact with consumers on the global level. Another example of Chanel is also evident, which has attracted the entire globe through the series of short films and becoming in 2022 one of the leading digital cosmetics brand. It uses creative and authentic content through the storytelling. Also Burberry is one of the first brand which exploited the digital marketing strategy. Burberry has implemented the technological revolution to produce, engage, and entertain digital content. From the interactive stores, the digital campaigns

such as "Burberry bespoke" and "Art of Trench" along with the massive social presence has enabled the brand to be one of the most successful luxurious cosmetic brand in the digital world.

2.5 Critical Elements for successful Branding

The luxury cosmetic brands project the identity and the personality of the business as it produces more value than the name of an organisation and it more important than the sale of products and services. The luxury cosmetic brands are the core of their organisational images and the heart of which is presented in the digital world through the social media, website, and the contents are created. It has been found four elements that identify successful luxury cosmetic brands, through which they have gained online presence representing the beliefs of their respective organisations in the cosmetic industry (Shallu & Gupta, 2013).

Visiting the websites, a potential client can attracted to see a Brand's website pages, to look further into the products' features. From these leads, a writing on the website can persuade the customer to bring deals or to purchase a product. Providing pleasant experience through the digital marketing channel, the luxury cosmetics brands have many chances to generate customer traffic and to increase sales.

Brand narration has gained significant importance in the current market to create clear consumer memory by compelling stories or content. Brand narration helps in building awareness, empathy, brand-consumer relationship, recall and specific meaning to a brand. Stewart and Carey (2020) investigated the relationship between luxury brands of perfume and Millennial consumers. Many aspects like Consumer Brand Relationship, brand loyalty connections and symbolism of luxury brands were explored. The study concluded that lifestyle factors including hedonic and emotional factors proved to be the key elements that influence the buying behavior of luxury perfume brands in millennial customers. According to Keller (2013), brand equity can be considered as one of the most significant and popular concepts in the domain of marketing. Brand equity assists the consumers in distinguishing their desired brand from all the other brands (Sundaram et al., 2020)

2.5.1 Consumer Perceptions on Luxury Cosmetics Strategies

Understanding the consumer perceptions of the social media activities by the managers of luxury cosmetic brands is necessary for the consumer engagement while building trust for the brand.

It has been found that the distribution of luxury cosmetic brands is important in the maintenance of scarcity Element (Wang, 2006). It is evident that one of the primary attributes of luxury cosmetic brands is the perception that they are scarce. However, the growth in the spending power of consumers across the globe has increased the demand for the luxury goods as well as the online distribution channel.

Some researchers highlighted that in the branding and marketing of luxury cosmetic brands a there is a paradox due to the fact that If the brand if over-diffused it can lose its feature of being luxurious.

There is the need for those luxury cosmetics producers to maintain the illusion that their goods are scarce. The digital world contradicts the viewpoint of scarcity because it has been perceived as the mass channel of distribution. The interest in the luxury cosmetics branding has led the previous literature to explore the meanings of the luxury brands from the perspectives of consumers for developing the necessary attributes associated with the development and maintenance of luxury cosmetics brands from the perspectives of the industry. The researchers have also considered the concerns for the sustainability and longevity of luxury brands while examining the ways through which the luxury cosmetic brands can maintain status. The luxury cosmetics brands are one of the most rapidly growing segments of the global luxury industry, but at the same time, it is inappropriately understood and less investigated (Shallu & Gupta, 2013).

Looking at the consumer side, the beauty industry is considered a best practice in the FMCG sector, being the one more resilient to disruption regarding consumer interactions. This industry is used as an example for the other ones, since it is advanced in the way beauty lovers interact with the brands. Digital has completely changed the way consumers approach beauty, in the past big established companies have always ruled this market, today small digital enterprises have big chances to emerge thanks to their connection with customers. This is true in particular for color cosmetics, where the visual appeal is crucial both online and physically. In 2016 beauty was the 3rd most searched topic on Google, with YouTube being the beauty lead platform with more than 1.5 million beauty contents uploaded each month. The emerging beauty brands are appealing to millennials, not only for their digital approach, but also due to the fact that respect to previous generations, millennials are more willing to try new brands and assume that they can perform better than traditional ones. By creating communities on social media, emerging brands can reach a close and established relationship with consumers, which becomes co-creators. This helps the brand to increase its perceived quality and deliver exclusive experiences to customers, gaining an exclusive positioning in the mind of consumers and allowing them to ask for a higher price.

2.6 Strategic Framework: Social Media Strategies and Brand Equity

While social media platforms find application in many marketing and business functions, the role they perform in communication and advertisement stands alone. In particular, they play a significant role in developing product and brand awareness, thus brand equity, and for this reason they are considered very important in designing a brand marketing strategy. Aaker (1991) defines brand equity as a "set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm's customers". Brand equity is defined as the difference in consumer choice between

the focal branded product and an unbranded product given the same level of product features. Building brand equity is considered as an important part of brand building (Keller, 1998). The broad meaning attached to the term "brand equity" is similar to the definition provided by Farquhar (1989) as "the value endowed by the brand to the product". Researchers refer to it as the "incremental cash flow resulting from the product with brand name versus that which would result without brand name". In general, brand equity may be defined in terms of the marketing effects uniquely attributable to the brand. Different outcomes result from the marketing of a product because of its brand element, in comparison to outcomes if that same product did not have that brand identification.

The academic marketing research provides insufficient guidance about how best to leverage social media platforms for increasing brand awareness. Specifically, the literature on managerial issues related to direct linkages between them lacks a solid academic basis. For this reason, Zahoor & Qureshi (2017) developed a framework based on the social media strategies which will be applied in this thesis from a practical point of view, through the study of multiple cases application within the luxury-cosmetics industry. In the next paragraph I will detail this framework.

2.6.1 Conceptual Framework

Authors identified the underlying variables of social media marketing and brand equity and established a relationship between them (Zahoor & Qureshi, 2017). Social media marketing activities have positive and significant effect on brand awareness, brand loyalty and perceived quality. Social media platforms provide several positive benefits to brands, in fact they allow to secure the reputation of a brand, increase sales, involve consumers in brand creation process, expand brand awareness, positive associations and increase consumer loyalty. Social media platforms offer opportunities for customers to engage in sincere communications with the brand and other users, so the brand's intended actions on the social communication scene positively affect relationship and brand equity as well. There is a statistically significant impact of social media marketing on the brand equity, therefore companies need to focus more on social media marketing and increase its share in marketing mix activities, and this will in return help to generate huge revenues from enhanced brand equity. Researchers showed that social media communications strongly influence brand image; firm-created social media communication has an important impact on functional brand image, while user-generated social media communication generates a major influence on hedonic brand image. It has been argued that advantageous campaigns in social media are the most significant drivers of brand loyalty followed by relevancy of the content, popularity of the content among friends, and appearing on different social media platforms. While being in social media can generate brand awareness, different social media platforms establish different brand associations, creating different effects on customer-based brand equity.

Figure 20. Proposed Model. Source from: Zahoor, S. Z., & Qureshi, I. H. (2017). Social Media Marketing and Brand Equity: A Literature Review. *IUP Journal of Marketing Management*, *16*(1)

The figure 20 illustrates the linkages. The main components of the framework represented in the figure are:

- User-generated content: It has a positive impact on brand equity and brand attitude. The impact of user-generated social media communication on purchase intention is totally mediated by brand equity (Sashi, 2012). UGC can greatly enhance customer satisfaction, loyalty, and/or delight, especially as customer needs change over time.

- Customer Engagement: It influences brand loyalty (De Vries and Carlson, 2014). Consumer engagement in social media can enhance the elements of brand equity (awareness, association, and loyalty) at every stage of consumer engagement, thus watching, sharing, commenting, producing, and curating. It has been affirmed that consumer engagement enhances loyalty and satisfaction, empowerment, connection, emotional bonding, trust and commitment. It has been proved that companies can improve brand awareness and brand image through enhancing customer engagement on social networking sites, resulting in brand loyalty reinforcement.

- Firm-Generated Content: it has an huge impact on functional brand image, in fact it can positively impact brand attitude and brand attitude can positively influence brand equity and consequently the purchasing.

- eWOM: it influences brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty and perceived. It has been established a positive relationship between brand loyalty and eWOM. Brand image and perception could be influenced on a massive scale by consumers with the help of eWOM through the social media networks.

- Online Brand Communities: it haa been found they can strengthen the relationship between consumers and brands as well as they can enhance brand commitment, and online community members have been found to build stronger associations with the brand than non-participating consumers. The engagement with the online brand community and the brand itself can be translated into increased loyalty with the brand. Engaging consumers on social media.

As shown in Figure 20, Zahoor & Qureshi (2017) demonstrate that among all the attributes of brand equity, brand awareness, brand association and brand loyalty are effected most by social media marketing and brand trust is effected the least, while perceived quality and brand image are moderately effected.

2.7 Luxury beauty brands analysis and social media strategy

Nowadays luxury beauty brands employ social media, particularly Instagram and Tik Tok, to increase brand awareness and reinforce brand loyalty. Changes in the consumptive patterns of media have led companies to shift their focus from products to people and from information delivery to information exchange. Few studies exist that examine beauty brands or beauty companies' use of social media as a means of engaging with or interacting with their current and potential consumers. Analysing the relationships between social media tools, those used more frequently by the beauty brands, and the behaviour of their clients, it emerged that:

- The desire of participation in beauty category is enhanced by influencers being key opinion leaders:
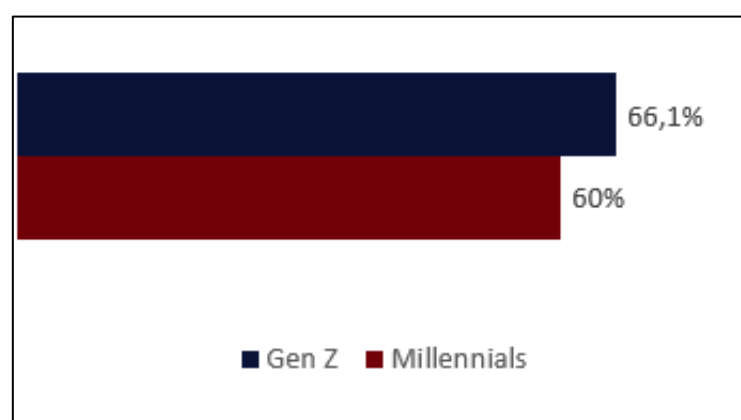
Figure 21. Follow beauty influencers on social media.

Source from: Dentsu (2022)
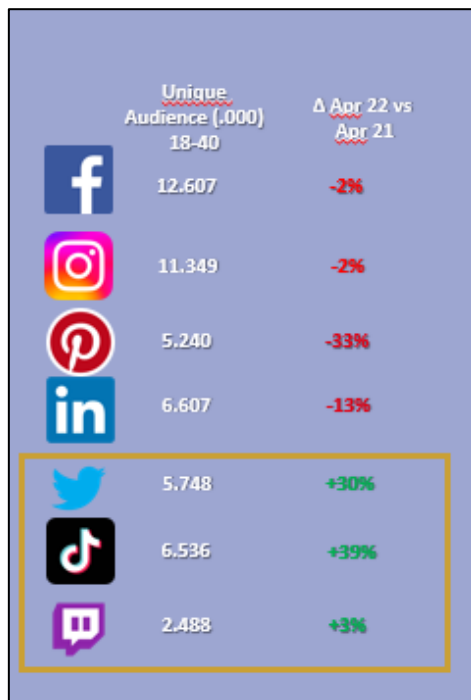
Figure 22. Social Media Platforms' Audience. Source from: Dentsu (2022)

- Tiktok has dramatically altered the beauty community, in fact it emerged that if a content goes viral, the product goes viral too. Trends start on TikTok and shape culture everywhere, across every beauty category.
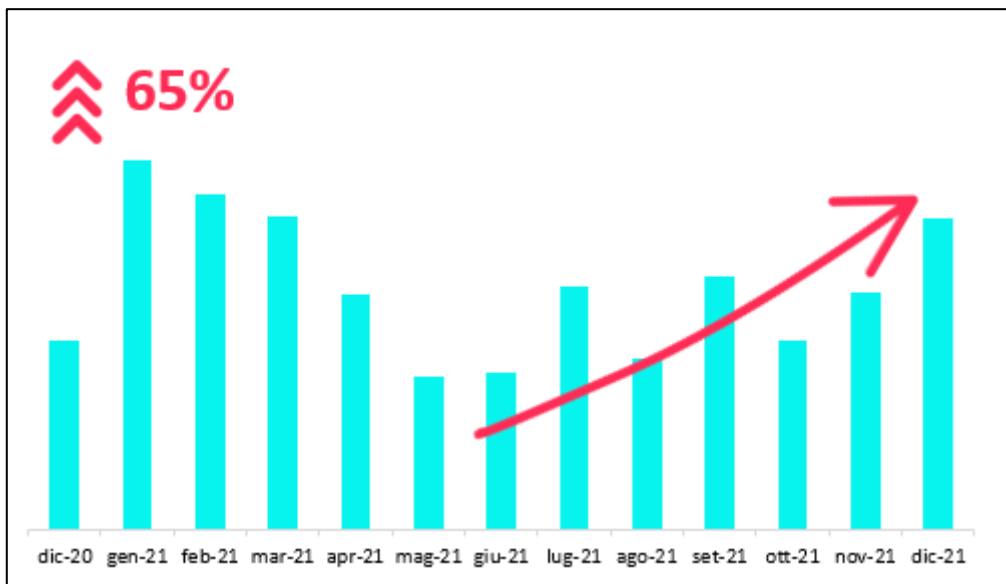
Figure 23. Content of Beauty Brands on Tik Tok. Source: TikTok, (2021)

TikTok's connection with the young audience makes it a potential sales channel for luxury brands around the world. A recent report found that Gen Z is set to be one of the top spenders in the luxury industry by 2025, accounting for 20% of net luxury spending. Another critical perspective for luxury brands is that more

than 85% of luxury purchases are influenced by digital content and marketing efforts. Luxury brands with a strong online presence can use their digital presence to increase sales.

Brands see in TikTok as an opportunity to connect with young audiences, connect more deeply with customers and prioritize digital experiences. By 2025, 130% of the growth in luxury personal items will come from Gen Z. A brand can sponsor a hashtag, and TikTok encourages users to use it to create content. Brands can offer promotional products or other prizes to top content creators in campaigns.

According to implementing a social media strategy, as the publication of posts and stories on Instagram and Tikok Brands' pages, managing keywords is crucial. Keywords can be effective and efficient for Search Engine Operation (SEO) and help content creation, as well as to reach a wider audience. Brands are finding new ways of managing the conversation on social media towards the positive through customer engagement. Brands use keywords to plan the content strategy and potentially drive a good amount of organic search traffic to the website. By creating different types of content that relate to one another, the visitor can easily move from one piece of content to the next and become more familiar with all the websites and business.

The Figure 24 below illustrates the researched keywords, exploited by the luxury beauty brands on their Social Media content:

Nr	Hashtag	Total Video Views
1	profumo	15.129.256
2	maisenzaprofumo	853.609
3	profumodonna	361.764
4	profumochallenge	71.716
5	drprofumo	60.326
6	profumoitalia	54.452
7	tictokprofumo	49.166
8	profumodolce	42.319
9	profumopazzesco	29.680
10	profumoassicurato😋	28.759

Figure 24. Keywords. Adapted from: TikTok (2022)

Overall, the impact of social media on the cosmetics industry is meaningful. Below I will summarize how marketing strategies implemented via social media is transforming this luxury and beauty business:

- Personalised advice tools: thanks to these platforms, consumers are affected by the recommendations provided by the influencers and celebrities which increase brand awareness and drive engagement to the product. Social media as Tik Tok offers beauty tips, tutorial and advice. This impact on sales and it is measured with conversion rate indicator as well as customer's brand loyalty.
- Customer engagement: Social Media platforms, in particular Instagram, help brands to provide more effective customer experience, enhancing the storytelling of a product campaign and allowing the customers to engage with the brand personally and emotionally. Moreover, software capture data from users' comments and reactions and figure out what exactly the users look for in a beauty product and experience.

- Shopping experience: Luxury Beauty Brand's Social Media Profiles interact with the costumers, allowing them to interact with the Brands, providing questionnaire stories and a call- to-action instrument can bring them directly tn the product page of their website, reducing to zero the time between product consideration and the purchase.

3. CHAPTER 3

3.1 Research Analysis

The aim of this dissertation is to fill the existing gap between the theoretical research and the practical one. Luxury Cosmetics industry is a sector where data produced across social media platforms create a huge potential to increase the customer engagement and thus, the brand awareness. In particular, since luxury cosmetics are highly dependent not only on personal customer needs but principally on emotions and phycological patterns, there is a strong opportunity to exploit social media platforms, as Instagram and Tik Tok, for personalization and targeted marketing strategies. Nevertheless, despite the relevance of the topic, there is still a lack of academic studies on this. Due to this existing gap, this dissertation has an exploratory nature based on the original framework developed by Zahoor & Qureshi, 2017, highlighting the successful implementation of the framework business contexts. Therefore, the following research question arises: *"How the usage of Social Media impacts the Brand Awareness in the Luxury Beauty industry, and which social media strategy is the most impactful, in terms of KPIs?"*. This chapter will be based on the description of a qualitative empirical study based on a multiple case study analysis. The data was collected through in-depth

semi-structured interviews to selected employees of different leading companies in the beauty sector complemented by data from secondary sources.

An exploratory research design is most suitable in order to fulfil the purpose of the study. Social Media marketing has not yet been considered together with the notion of generating brand awareness in the Beauty Industry. Hence, the lack of existing research renders the exploratory design suitable, as it strives to generate theory rather than testing theory. Multiple Case studies are appropriate when the research questions are formulated with "how" and/or "why" in focus, and when a contemporary phenomenon is studied. Due to the fact that the previous research on the field of content marketing is rather limited, a multiple-case exploratory study is the most appropriate strategy.

3.2 Research Method

The appropriate orientation to this research is an *inductive approach* as it focuses on discovering new patterns and themes based on the current phenomena, rather than analysing a previously stated theory (Marshall and Rossman, 2006). Furthermore, the qualitative research strategy adopted is often connected to an inductive approach. The inductive approach strives to find connections between empirical data and theoretical background, in turn leading to the generation of new ideas and theories. Since there is not a common protocol of the usage of social networks to all the companies involved in the industry, it is hard to fit a current analytical structure. This can be obtained through inductive research strategy, which is suitable for new research areas, in which testable hypothesis need to be created first (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Empirical academic research can be investigated through qualitative or quantitative methodologies or through a mixed method involving both. In order to address the research purpose and answer the research question, a *qualitative approach* is deemed suitable for this study; it is often used when there are no data available, and it tackles recent phenomena through the emphasis on words rather than numbers.

On this topic, there is no database available or quantitative studies to enable the building of a solid quantitative analysis. Therefore, this qualitative research approach would be the best solution to gain in-depth real-world understanding and knowledge by various stakeholder involved in the beauty industry, understanding a person's role, representing their opinions and add value to scientific evidence which is scarce so far.

However, it is appropriate to consider the limitation of the qualitative methodology. A potential negative aspect of a qualitative research design is the risk of biased results. The risk of bias is evident as the qualitative design requires the researchers to analyse qualitative data and draw results, which may be difficult to generalize. The risk related to the subjectivity is further pronounced by the judgement of the researcher who interprets data.

To overcome parts of the limitations I utilized NVIVO software as a support tool for my analysis. NVIVO is a qualitative data analysis computer software package that helps to organize and analyse non-numerical or unstructured data like interviews or open-ended survey responses. The software allows researchers to classify, sort and arrange information, examine data relationships and complete the analysis by linking, shaping,

searching and modelling. In this way it is possible to identify trends and information in multiple and cross-functional ways. Specifically, in this research I conducted a thematic analysis. The conceptual framework of the thematic analysis for my interviews was principally built in relation to the theoretical statement of Braun and Clarke (2006).In fact, According to them, thematic analysis is a method used for *'identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data'* (Braun and Clarke, 2006). I decided to exploit this method because the *'rigorous thematic approach can produce an insightful analysis that answers particular research questions'* (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thus, NVIVO was employed to verify the presence of similarities or discrepancies between the responses obtained from employees of different luxury brands and companies.

3.3 Multiple Case Study Methodology

The methodology applied in this empirical part of the dissertation, of a qualitative nature as explained above, will rely on case studies from the beauty industry. The choice of this method allows researchers to explore a certain situation not having enough information available and in it is very common in the field of management (Starman, 2013). There are different definitions associated with the "case study" terms. In particular, based on Starman academic research entitled: *"The case study as a type of qualitative research.",* there is an explanatory definition of the application within this research: "*A case study is a description and analysis of an individual matter or case [...] with the purpose to identify variables, structures, forms and orders of interaction between the participants in the situation (theoretical purpose), or, in order to assess the performance of work or progress in development (practical purpose)".* (Starman, 2013).. Due to the fact that the previous research on the field of digital marketing is rather limited, a multiple-case exploratory study is deemed the most appropriate strategy. Including multiple cases in a study makes the outcome more robust compared to a single case study, rendering the evidence more compelling (Yin, 2009). The aim of this thesis is to present a broad perspective on the topic of social media marketing and brand awareness creation, why it was necessary to include more than one case. This study does not aim to draw statistical generalizations, as this is one of the constraints of a multiple case study. Yin (2009) explains that multiple case studies lead to analytic generalizations, where a previously developed theory is used as a template that the empirical findings are compared against. The main advantage of this methodology is the possibility to deep dive on complex situations and explore new perspectives from the real world.

This dissertation, after the first empirical part, is composed by the analysis of the case studies selected among the most important cosmetics luxury brands. Anyway, in the current luxury beauty market there are several brands competing and which adopts different kind of social media strategies, thus it could be interesting to analyse and study their real strategies, assuming different point of views. The sources of these case studies will be based mostly on secondary analysis, supported by primary analysis in order to provide a comprehensive view for this dissertation, which will be discussed in the paragraph below.

3.4 Data Collection Methodology

Aiming at improving the overall validity of this study, data from primary and secondary sources were adopted. Throughout the research process secondary data has been gathered in order to present the systematic literature review. The secondary data utilized in this process consists of research papers, companies' reports and social media pages, as well as details, academic research, companies' websites, official press releases as well as information and quotes from official websites, electronic articles and reports. I adopted a highly critical view towards the sources in order to reduce the subjectivity of the study. Furthermore, in order to maintain an actuality within the study, since it is a rather unexplored field, the main focus has been on recently published reports and papers.

For the purpose of this dissertation, primary resources refer to the data collected through semi-structured interviews. The research interview is considered one of the most significant strategies to conduct a qualitative data collection as it can provide a great amount of data (Qu & Dumay, 2011). The reasoning underlying the choice of the semi-structured interviews is that it involves systematic questioning, for example questions with "multiple choices" and "open questions" allowing the respondent to easily answer explaining a single concept and then enrich the given information with a statement. The aim of the primary data collection is to examine how social media marketing is used in practice to create awareness and whether there is a connection between digital marketing and brand awareness. The primary data in this study consists of interviews, developed as semi-structured interviews, as they are characterized by one or a few topics being the focus of the interview. Semi-structured interviews allow the respondent some flexibility when answering the questions. Moreover, this type of interviews allow a deeper understanding of the topic (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

First of all, in order to obtain reliable information, the target Brands belonging to beauty and luxury companies and the respective figures working specifically in the digital marketing sector were identified. Twelve Brands were selected, but only six companies actually participated in the interview, for the other six relevant information was collected through secondary data. To obtain valuable information, all the inteviewers were selected for their roles as CRM (customer relationship management) or Brand Manager. Moreover, all interviews were conducted face-to-face. According to Bryman & Bell (2011), face-to-face interviews are preferred to telephone interviews as they allow the interviewers to capture the setting and atmosphere, as well as to get more complete answers.

3.5 Survey instrument and structure

The questionnaire designed for this dissertation is divided into four main parts: general information about the interviewer, general information on social media usage at Brand Marketing Management level, specific questions related to social media platforms in the Luxury Cosmetics Industry considering both present that future perspectives and finally the relationship between social media and the brand's consumer perception, with the focus on emotional engagement.

The complete and detailed version of the survey instrument can be found in *Annex 1* to this dissertation. Below there is a brief explanation of the survey instruments structured for the interviews.

• General information about the interviewer: This part aims to investigate relevant information about the interviewer's role respect the Brand: Brand Management, CRM manager, Communications and Marketing Specialist. This information will help to understand important aspects about the interviewers.

• General information on social media usage at Brand Marketing Management level: This part aims to understand the social media platforms' usage and the strategies for the marketing campaigns adopted by the different Brands. Moreover, it aims to understand the factors that influence their choice and the main metrics (KPIs) used to evaluate their performances. This information will help to catch the linkages between the choice of the social media in relation with the Brand's objective and if they vary from brand to brand, despite belonging to the same industry.

• Specific questions related to social media platforms in the Beauty Industry considering present and future perspectives: This part, related to the framework proposed, aims to investigate deeply the social media strategy and their impact on the Brand Equity with its components. This involves questions that aim at evaluating the exploitation of the social media platforms used by these Brand and how they affect the awareness of the brand itself. In addition, questions were proposed to allow employees to state their opinion on the development of new technologies and how some of the new high-traffic platforms, like TikTok, could affect the Brand and the Beauty Market in the future. Open-questions were proposed in order to allow a deeper understanding of the topic from a top-brand management perspective.

• The relationship between social media and the Brand's consumer perception, with the focus on emotional engagement: An open-ended question was presented in the final part of the interview in which the respondents were asked to reflect on how the social media platforms have impacted the image and the identity of the Brand and to consider if and how the emotional attachment of the consumers to the Brand has been impacted. This sort of behavioral question is intended to find out whether the Luxury Brands values and identity can be influenced and impacted by their presence on social media and online world.

Interviews have been conducted with two different Companies, four Brands belonging to the same beauty company, the Estée Lauder Companies, and the other two Brands were selected because belonging to cross-industry multinationals. The second criteria of choice was based on the fact that the Brands' interviewers had to work in digital marketing and being Communications or Brand Specialist for this industry, thus with direct experience in the field. The case companies selected adopt the most sophisticated social media strategies in the luxury sector. The aim of the primary data collection is to examine how social media marketing is used within the Luxury Cosmetics Industry to create Brand Awareness, and to evaluate the connections between social media strategies and their impact on the Brand Equity, in terms of Image, Awareness and Identity. The

primary data in this study consists of interviews. All interviews took place in Milan in the respective office of each respondent, therefore all of the interviews were conducted face-to-face.

4. Chapter 4

4.1 Data analysis and findings

This chapter will analyse inside case study analysis to answer to the research question. Each company chosen will represent a unique case to obtain a perspective of the strategy adopted in the luxury beauty industry. The Brands investigated for this analysis are from the Business to Consumer side (B2C), as this research aims to investigate the correlation between their digital marketing strategies and their results in terms of awareness. Specifically, the companies on the B2C side are some of the leaders in the beauty industry which are currently succeeding in the beauty market and exploiting a strong presence in the social media. Some of the Brands investigated with direct interviews of their internal managers are part of the Estée Lauder Companies, the main reason is due to the fact that these brands are global leaders in the beaty industry and specialized only in this sector, thus Tom Ford Beauty, Jo Malone London, Mac, Estée Lauder, instead the other two Brands are part of cross industry multinationals, Dior and Chanel Beauty.

For the other Brands, specifically Prada, Lancôme, Guerlain, Dolce & Gabbana, Gucci and Burberry since it was not possible to contact and reach employees for these Beauty Brands, their case studies will be based on secondary data such as internal reports, website and social media official profile's information, press release and other online sources available.

4.2. Business to Consumer companies (B2C)

This part will analyse the motivations that led to the choice of the above-mentioned B2C companies as the object of the research. In particular, the focus is on evaluating their marketing strategies adopted in the social media in correlation with their results in terms of brand awareness, customer engagement and overall profitability. The paragraphs start with the overview of the global company and then go deeply in considering each brand as a single case, with the focus on digital and social media strategies, collecting data from the interviews and gathering secondary data that allows to fill the gap among the interview responses obtained.

The data thus include how they work with social media marketing, and how and if the respondents consider the visibility of the brand in the digital contest, assuming the framework in the previous chapter as main base to evaluate each case.

4.3 Multiple Case Studies

The Estée Lauder Companies Overview

The Estée Lauder Companies Inc. is one of the world's leading manufacturers, marketers, and sellers of quality skin care, makeup, fragrance, and hair care products. The company's products are sold in approximately 150 countries and territories under brand names including: Estée Lauder, Aramis, Clinique, Lab Series, Origins, M·A·C, La Mer, Bobbi Brown, Aveda, Jo Malone London, Bumble and bumble, Darphin Paris, TOM FORD BEAUTY, Smashbox, AERIN Beauty, Le Labo, Editions de Parfums Frédéric Malle, GLAMGLOW, KILIAN PARIS, Too Faced, Dr.Jart+, and the DECIEM family of brands, including The Ordinary and NIOD. In 2022 it ha generated $ 17.7 net sales in billions and $13.7 billions of operating income. The Estée Lauder Companies sells products in approximately 150 countries and territories. We have three main geographic regions: Asia/Pacific; Europe, the Middle East & Africa; and The Americas

It's the leader in the beauty industry due to the global recognition of the brand names, the excellence in product innovation, the strong position in key geographic markets and the consistently high quality of the products and "High-Touch" services. The prestige products are sold through distribution channels that complement the luxury image and prestige status of the brands.

"All of our brands are spending increasing amounts in digital and social," noted Estée Lauder's group president, Jane Hertzmark Hudis, in an online interview with the fashion site Glossy. "It's not about how a brand defines itself today; it's how an audience defines you in their mind.… Consumers tell our stories now." When Estée Lauder launched its new Double Wear Foundation, it therefore did so on Facebook. It has also begun using augmented reality to help consumers with their questions.''

founder, Mrs. Estée Lauder, formulated this unique marketing philosophy to provide "High-Touch" service and high-quality products as the foundation for a solid and loyal consumer base. The "High-Touch" approach is demonstrated through our integrated consumer engagement models that leverage our product specialists and technology to provide the consumer with a distinct and truly personalized experience that can include personal consultations with beauty advisors, in person or online, who demonstrate and educate the consumer on product usage and application. As the business has grown and channel mix has evolved, the Company have further expanded the marketing philosophy and "High-Touch" execution to build both online and offline personalized consumer experiences through digital and physical demonstration, targeted digital media and tailored trial-to-loyalty pathways. This enables to elevate the consumer experience and address the transformation of consumer shopping behaviours.

Social Media Strategy

The Company build brand equity and drive traffic to retail locations and authorized retailers' websites through digital and social media, magazines and newspapers, television, billboards in cities and airports, and direct

mail and email. In particular, they seek editorial coverage for the brands and products in digital and social media to drive influencer amplification. They are increasing their brand awareness and sales through their strategic emphasis on technology, by continuing to elevate the digital presence encompassing e-commerce and m-commerce, as well as digital, social media and influencer marketing. They are investing in new analytical capabilities to promote a more personalized experience across thier distribution channels. They continue to innovate to better meet consumer online shopping preferences, for instance with how-to videos, ratings and reviews and mobile phone and tablet applications, support e-commerce and m-commerce businesses via digital and social marketing activities designed to build brand equity and "High-Touch" consumer engagement, in order to continue to offer better experiences and services and set the standard for prestige beauty shopping online. They support authorized retailers to strengthen their e-commerce businesses and drive sales of the brands on their websites. The Company plan to expand the brand portfolio online around the world, and thy are continuing to invest in new omnichannel concepts in the United States, China and other markets to increase brand loyalty by better serving consumers as they shop across channels and travel corridors. They have dedicated in 2022 resources to implement creative, coordinated, brand-enhancing strategies across all online activities to increase their direct access to consumers. Promotional activities, in-store displays, and online navigation are designed to attract new consumers, build demand and loyalty and introduce existing consumers to other product offerings from the respective brands.

Tom Ford Beauty and Jo Malone London

Tom Ford Beauty is a covetable collection of cosmetics and fragrances, shaped with Tom Ford's singular vision of modern glamour and crafted with the ultimate in quality and luxury. The mission of the Brand is to create the first true luxury brand of the 21st century. According to the research analysis Tom Ford is the Brand among all the beauty luxury brand that is increasing the most rapidly in awareness. Its strategy is based on a huge attention to the digital marketing strategy and a perfect execution of the social media and online activations. In order to continue increasing the brand awareness and push the conversion rete, especially between the Gen z and Millenials, the Brand adopts a strategy focused on social media, in order to stimulate the engagement with the clients and the online storytelling across the social networks.

Figure 25. Tom Ford Beauty Awareness. Source From: The Estée Lauder Companies (2022)
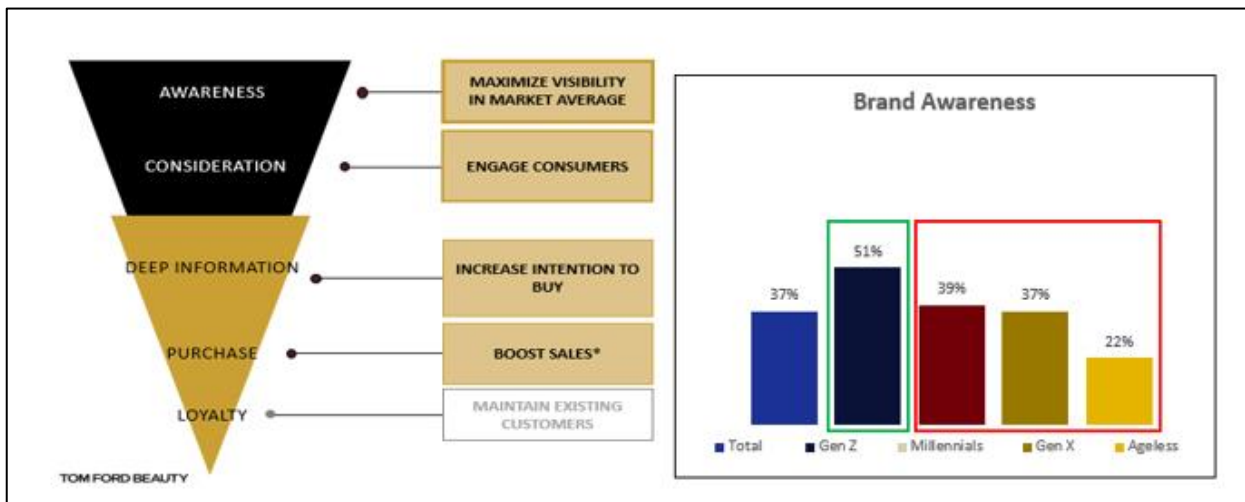
The digital strategy is focused on:

- Leveraging video content on tactical channels, in order to help in generating brand awareness in tactical areas.
- Boosting brand affinity with impactful video advertising experience. For instance, sponsored sessions on Spotify.

Figure 26. Social Media Strategy. Adapted From: The Estée Lauder Companies (2022)

- Video Takeover ads are delivered during a listening session when the user is actively browsing through the catalog to discover music and podcasts guaranteeing viewability.
- Maximizing visibility with high impact placements, as online webpages and online magazines allowing to expand the visibility, and thus to enhance the brand equity.

Figure 27. Social Media Brand Strategy. Adapted From: The Estée Lauder Companies (2022)

- Working along the funnel in order to recruit new consumers and to increase online sales. CRM campaigns, implemented via weekly newsletters is on of the main strategy of the brand. Re-targeting users exposed at the awareness phase with drive to site format such as carousel; working at the middle part of the funnel with lead ads format to deliver samples to new users.

Figure 28. Social Media Tom Ford Strategy. Adapted From: The Estée Lauder Companies (2022)

Jo Malone London is a British fragrance and lifestyle brand, with a contemporary point of view. From the start, their colognes have been revolutionary in their elegant simplicity and pioneering in their use of ingredients. Jo Malone London has evolved to become synonymous with coveted scents and luxurious products for bath, body and home. It ranks 77 in the beauty luxury market worldwide.

The social media strategy is implemented along the full-funnel, specifically:

- Online posts on webpages to win gifting moment with drive to site activations. This is an extension of social media campaigns by using the classic Meta page post link on display network.
- Creating engaging online experiences: younger consumers want to live branded experiences and are ready to share them on social media.

- Leveraging creators on social media, as they have the power to make a product shine and become a must have, particularly on TikTok.
- Implementing digital print and online storytelling, in order to expand the audience pool and increase sales.

Figure 29. Social Media Jo Malone Strategy. Adapted From: The Estée Lauder Companies (2022)

- Interactive and personalized video to better engage users telling the brand's story and addressing the right message. The Brand adopts interactive elements perfectly integrated with the brand video to reinforce some messages, redirect users to a specific action (for instance different products' pages or specific promo or stores map) and deliver customized messages.

Estée Lauder and MAC

Estée Lauder is the flagship brand of The Estée Lauder Companies Inc. Founded by Estée Lauder, one of the world's first female entrepreneurs, the brand today continues her legacy of creating the most innovative, sophisticated, high-performance skin care and makeup products and iconic fragrances. Today Estée Lauder engages with women in over 150 countries and territories around the world and at a variety of touch points, in stores and online. And each of these relationships consistently reflects Estée's powerful and authentic woman-to-woman point of view. The Brand reach 62M+Followers across Estée Lauder social platforms globally. According to the framework of this research, the social media strategy is focused on:

- Seedtag: to exploit the personalization and dynamism of the in-image display format to engage users and bring traffic to the site. Seedtag creates contextual and effective creativity for users and integrates the message into the most relevant and suitable content in order to enhance the brand and product.

Figure 30. Seedtag online strategy. Source from: The Estée Lauder Companies (2022)

- To boost brand consideration, the Brand leverages social platforms, traditional and emerging, to give inspiration to users
- To increase intention to buy and collect new leads, the brand is present on Tik Tok through conversational marketing

Figure 31. Social Media Strategy on Instagram. Source From: The Estée Lauder Companies (2022)

M·A·C (Make-up Art Cosmetics) is the pioneering makeup authority for all the Brands. Since its creation in Toronto, Canada, over 30 years ago, the brand's popularity has grown through a tradition of world-of-mouth endorsement from makeup artists, models, photographers and journalists around the world. Part of the Estée Lauder Companies since 1994, M·A·C is sold today in over 120 countries and territories around the world. It remains committed to developing new categories, products and over 50 collections each year, all of which continue to serve the demand of consumers and professional makeup artists alike. Collaborations with adored names from popular culture, art and fashion continue to enhance the brand's relevance and reach to existing fans as well as new ones, while M·A·C's makeup Artists' rock-steady presence backstage at over 200 fashion week shows around the world secures the envied status of M·A·C as the world's leading beauty trendsetter. The social media strategy is focused on:

- Exploiting Meta to create geo-localised campaign and diffuse knowledge of the products to drive-to-store approach.
- Creating interactive product shop windows with Meta's collection ad format to help to drive traffic to the site and generate conversions.
- Exploiting Influencers visibility on Instagram to maximize the marketing strategy effectiveness.
- Increasing brand visibility on mobile device with high impacts images and using simple language to engage the users.

I move below the discussion on the analysis of the other two Beauty Brands, Chanel Beauty and Dior. Each brand in not merely born to be a cosmetic brand. To compare them with specifically beauty ones, they are both taken into consideration.

Chanel Beauty

Chanel is a private company and a world leader in creating, developing, manufacturing and distributing luxury products. Founded by Gabrielle Chanel at the beginning of the last century, Chanel offers a broad range of high-end creations, including Ready-to-Wear, Leather Goods, Fashion Accessories, Eyewear, Fragrances, Makeup, Skincare, Jewellery and Watches (Chanel Annual Report,2021), Fragrance & Beauty demonstrated strong resilience based on market share gains in key countries, and demand both in boutiques and online, from local clientele as travel retail remained impacted by restrictions. 2021 was also a milestone year for Fragrance with Chanel celebrating the 100th anniversary of its iconic CHANEL N°5. Chanel has extremely strict control over the media of advertising, which must be closely related to the target consumer groups of Chanel, such as fashion magazines, high-end hotels or clubs.. In terms of the number and cycle of advertising, Chanel is targeted and planned, and their advertising requires precision rather than wide coverage (Zihan, 2021). The objective of digital campaigns of luxury brands like Chanel is not merely to increase sales, but more essentially, it is to preserve the quality of the brand and continue the success story for another century (Mau, 2014). With more than 57 million followers globally, Chanel boasts the most social media followers. It is the leading luxury brand on all platforms except Facebook where it is a close second to Louis Vuitton, both at around 20 million. On both YouTube and Facebook, Chanel has posted more videos and generated more than 300 million views more than any other industry leader. Chanel uses a powerful narrative with good content as a key for its digital marketing strategy. To create intrinsic motivation to purchase the products, it aims at deepening customers' understanding of the brand and its culture. The content of the Chanel stories not only indicates the core elements of the brand, but it stays true to its legacy and expresses the brand's values and identity creatively and powerfully. Chanel's digital *marketing* strategy is one of the most robust in its category. Chanel's Instagram account boasts 54.5M followers, and Chanel Beauty 5.5m, the most of any luxury brand in the world. Meanwhile their YouTube channel has 2.07M subscribers, and their video content has everything

from mini-documentaries to beauty tutorials. Clients can't buy Chanel online, at exception for cosmetics. Chanel's free virtual lipscanner app allows anyone to scan their surroundings for a color they like, then matches that color to a shade of Chanel lipstick, which can be tried on and purchased through the app. "The main innovation is the ability to bridge inspiration and product discovery," said Cédric Begon, director of Chanel fragrances and beauty's Connected Experience Lab. The content of the Chanel stories on social media plastforms not only demonstrates the core elements of the brand, but it stays true to its legacy and expresses the brand's values and identity in a creative and powerful way. Digital marketing stands out highly in the marketing strategies of the brand- Chanel has not ventured into e-commerce, makes use of social networks, website and blog to approach and connect with the public, offering information of history. The creation of videos as a digital strategy in Chanel is one of its strong strategies to articulate the identity of the brand in a narrative way. The videos also invite to be shared by their consumers in social networks, creating virility to the campaign in different online platforms, by the inspiration that these provide to the consumer and the revolutionary spirit of the creator of the mark. Consumers by sharing information among their friends and acquaintances through the mobile phone, makes them feel that they are that or are part of what they share in the network.

The social media strategy of the Brand is focused on:

- Creating one-to-one connections through personalized communication: when engaging face-to-face is not possible, creating an intimate connection with consumers online is particularly important to ensure brand loyalty. A key part of Chanel Beauty digital strategy is connecting consumers to the experts 24/7 via live video chats on its e-commerce portal.
- Creating communities through storytelling to build long-term relationships: engaging communities through storytelling is vital for brands to target and retain their consumers when live and in-person events are unable to take place. This will create long-term relationships that can be enhanced by going forward.

Digital marketing is evident in each strategy that helps brand awareness, consumer interaction and buying motivations. Through digital marketing the brand communicates the history of the brand through storytelling loaded with good stories and good content. Its relationship with the most influential bloggers and instagramers is another of the digital marketing strategies the brand adopts to influence their consumers through social networks. According to reports, Chanel's social success has sky-rocketed in a short space of time, with the brand seeing an average growth of 50% across multiple platforms in just a year. One reason looks to be its video   strategy.
Chanel posts consistently on YouTube in particular, using the platform for narrative-led, feature film content. Consequently, its 'Make Up' playlist is full of short and informative tutorial-based content, designed to instil

desire for products as well as offer value for viewers looking for tips and advice. Despite an overriding focus on video content, Chanel doesn't use a blanket approach, instead choosing to optimise content for different platforms. For example, it often takes short-form videos to pique interest on Instagram, while it might post the long-form ad on YouTube or Facebook.

Dior Beauty

Christian Dior, one of the most prominent luxury brands in the world, breaks the record in 2017 with total revenue of 49 billion dollars. According to Forbes, Dior now becomes the world's largest fashion brand. Dior's success is inseparable from its Instagram champions. Dior's official Instagram has 21.4 million followers and a total of 4,301 posts. The brand also owns many sub-Instagrams for each type of its products, such as Dior Parfums and Dior Makeup. On each Dior Instagram, it includes a quote from its founder, Christian Dior, to deliver the brand's critical concepts to its customers. Furthermore, by posting backstage stories, relevant social events, and insights about the brand, Dior Instagrams effectively characterizes the brand as elegance and love. Dior is rated the leading luxury brand for performance on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Google out of the top 60 luxury brands, according to the *Vogue Business* Index. The brand's presence and perception, as well as the strength of its storytelling, can be further developed. "Audiences seek a deeper connection, one with true meaning, rooted in identity and heritage, equal parts inspirational and aspirational," Beccari (2022) affirmed. "This is all inherent in broadening the understanding and appeal of the Dior dream." (Vogue Business, 2022). TikTok's popularity with Gen Z was an important factor, requiring more casual, informal content, packaging Dior as an accessible, open-minded luxury brand. "We pay a lot of attention to the evolutions of the market and to the way our clients consume information, and to what that information is" (Beccari, 2022). Dior digital innovation and strategic planning manager, Arthur Poulain, affirmed that luxury beauty and technology must collaborate in order deliver innovative experiences, in fact: "Using WhatsApp meant we could think outside the box in terms of how we engage our dedicated Instagram community, giving them the opportunity to chat to Jisoo like they would a friend and empowering them to choose the content they want to see next, [ ] This is a first for Dior on WhatsApp and the influencer messaging experience is one of a kind on the platform. The users clicked buttons to choose the content they wanted to receive next, where they could only click and receive one of them. This created a sense of exclusivity and excitement in both Dior's communities with followers who wanted to collect all the content from the experience and share them through social media." (Cameron, 2022) affirmed. Dior Beauty launched a four-day messaging-based campaign on WhatsApp featuring Blackpink member and the brand's global ambassador Jisoo. For the release of its new Dior Addict lipstick, the luxury label allowed users to talk with a chatbot representing the K-pop superstar, attracting enthusiasm from her devoted fan base. "WhatsApp marketing, or messenger app marketing, is going to be part of the normal marketing mix in the midterm, as it regroups the best of tech, the best of conversational marketing and the best of community-driven approaches," said Arthur Poulain (Cameron, 2022). Dior's first

WhatsApp campaign was accessible to consumers via the brand's Instagram Stories, where Jisoo invited users to join her exclusive WhatsApp group. Presented in English along with videos by Jisoo in Korean with English subtitles, the campaign was aimed at a global audience and geared toward the ages of 13-34, representing the main age group among Jisoo fans.
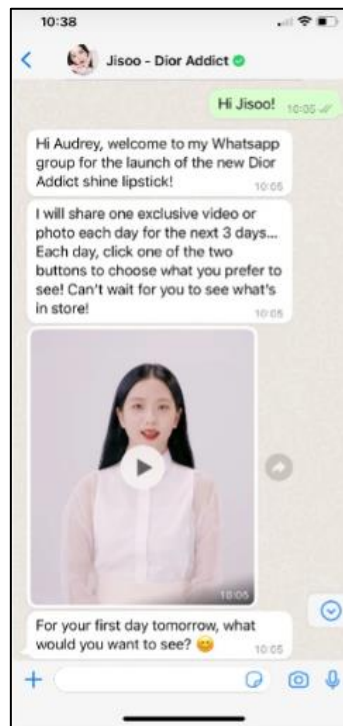
Figure 32. Dior Beauty on Whatsapp, Source From: Cameron (2022)

"The WhatsApp platform offers a tremendous opportunity to build the next storytelling frontier'' affirmed Laurent François (Liz,2022) the digital marketing firm that worked with Dior on the campaign. ''While public-facing social media platforms like Instagram have become overcrowded with brands, the 1:1 messaging experiences provide a narrowed-down perspective, around one key affinity, for one kind of community of interest" François continued (Liz,2022).

4.4 Analysis of multiple case study

The following analysis will be based on the interviews of the six companies selected as main case studies and extended to the other six cases in order to provide a broader perspective to answer the research questions of this dissertation. The 8 interviews were recorded and then transcript in pdf format, noting that two respondents chosen to be anonymous. All the interviews were imported into QSR Nvivo-12 forming the project resources. This material was composed by 3700 words that were coded into 12 conceptual categories defined as "thematic nodes and sub-nodes". For this analysis the thematic nodes are "descriptive", this means that each answer was coded by linking the part of the text with its related topic. The first part of the analysis was developed into themes. At this stage, the coded nodes on NVivo were read to identify significant linkages and patters strictly

related to the purpose of this research. The analysis revealed 5 main categories and 8 sub-categories. For instance, the most mention category was "Online Storytelling'' (10 times), and the least one wea "Online Brand Communities" (2 times). According to Braun and Clarke (2006) the thematic analysis allows flexibility in determining themes and their relevance.

In the second part of the analysis, the respondents' answers were manually re-coded for each case Brand . This last stage of procedure was implemented to assure deeper linkages with the framework of the research and in order to control the analysis. Successively, I decided to re-code all the data, organizing the information obtained in table which follow the logic of the nodes, in order to make clearer the analysis and provide a more accurate understanding of the coding. As affirmed by Ishak and Bakar (2012): ''*NVivo is just another set of tools that will assist a researcher in undertaking an analysis of qualitative data''*, was useful to organise all the data collected form the interviewers, on the other hand as a tool of data analysis has limitations. Ishak and Bakar

My objective of this research has been to compare luxury Cosmetics Brands and common themes (social media strategies) to obtain fair conclusions to validate and possibly extend the research stated in the strategic framework of Zahoor & Qureshi, 2017.

4.5 Findings

For each thematic area there are reported tables or findings extracted from the interviews and the secondary data (Social Media Brands' profiles, websites, press release, surveys). Based on the information collected, the thematic are:

- Social Media Strategy and Brand Equity:

    - Social Media: User Generated Content
    - Social Media: Customer Engagement
    - Social Media: Brand-Generated Content
    - Social Media: eWom
    - Social Media: Online Brand Community
- Social Media Strategy and Emotions
- Social Media Strategy and Uniqueness
- Social media Strategy: KPIs

4.5.1 Social Media Strategy and Brand Equity:

	User Generated Content	Customer Engagement	Brand-Generated Content	eWom	Online Brand Community
Tom Ford Beauty (The ELC)	Influencers Tik Tok You Tube	Instagram, Meta CRM campaigns	Instagram, Meta YouTube Network(Seedtag) Spotify	Influencers Social Media	
Jo Malone London (The ELC	Influencers Tik Tok You Tube	Instagram, Meta, Tiktok CRM campaigns Linkedin	Instagram, Meta, Tiktok YouTube Linkedin Network(Seedtag) Spotify CRM campaigns	Influencers Social Media	
MAC (The ELC)	Influencers Tik Tok	Instagram, Meta CRM campaigns	Instagram, Meta	Influencers Social Media Social Media	

Estée Lauder (The ELC)	Influencers Tik Tok You Tube	Instagram, Meta, Tiktok CRM campaigns	Instagram, Meta, Tiktok YouTube Network(Seedtag)	Influencers Meta Launch	
Chanel Beauty	Influencers Tik Tok You Tube	Instagram, Meta, Tiktok CRM campaigns LInkedin	Instagram, Meta, Tiktok YouTube Network(Seedtag) Spotify CRM campaigns	Influencers	Chanel Online Blogs
Dior	Influencers Tik Tok You Tube	Instagram, Meta, Tiktok CRM campaigns	Instagram, Meta, Tiktok YouTube WhatsApp Network(Seedtag) Spotify		Online Blog
Prada	Influencers TikTok	Instagram, Meta, Tiktok CRM campaigns	Instagram, Meta, Tiktok YouTube	Influencers Meta Launch	Online Blog

		LInkedin	CRM campaigns		
Burberry	Influencers TikTok	Instagram, Meta, Tiktok CRM campaigns LInkedin	Instagram, Meta, Tiktok Network(Seedtag) Spotify YouTube CRM campaigns	Influencers	
Lancome	Influencers Youtube	Instagram, Meta, Tiktok CRM campaigns LInkedin	Instagram, Meta, Tiktok YouTube CRM campaigns	Influencers Meta Launch	
Guerlain	Influencers TikTok YouTube	Instagram, Meta, Tiktok CRM campaigns LInkedin	Instagram, Meta, Tiktok YouTube CRM campaigns	Influencers	

Gucci	Influencers TikTok YouTube	Instagram, Meta, Tiktok CRM campaigns LInkedin	Instagram, Meta, Tiktok YouTube CRM campaigns Network(Seedtag) Spotify	Influencers Meta Launch	Online Blog
Dolce & Gabbana	Influencers YouTube Tikok	Instagram, Meta, Tiktok CRM campaigns LInkedin	Instagram, Meta, Tiktok YouTube CRM campaigns	Influencers	Online Blog

Table 1. Social Media Strategy and Brand Equity. Elaborated from interview and secondary data.

The table was created in relation to the framework of Zahoor & Qureshi, 2017, that connects the social media strategies to the Brand Awareness, part of the Brand Equity.

This was developed in order to evaluate in detail which social media strategy of the theoretical framework is exploited by the luxury cosmetic brands and the correlation of their impact on the Brand Awareness. Tom Ford's Italian CRM marketing manager states: "*Ultra prestige brands are creating bonds within the Beauty consumers that last long. Building a consistent presence on social media is key to install brand heritage. Creating impactful storytelling both for the brand campaigns that for the new launches on the social media at 360° is the key to increase brand awareness and for this reason Tom Ford Beauty is succeeding, scaling up the Top 10 in the luxury beauty ranking*. Also in Jo Malone's case there is an extraordinary investment in the social media to gain results in term of awareness, as the Italian Brand Manager affirms: *"Social media*

platforms enhance conversations, they are able to enhance experience and in beauty are able to actively influence consumers. Ultra prestige consumers seek advocacy through experts, influencers, vip on the social. Trust boost desirability and for this reason the brand is collaborating with beauty influencers. social media have the power to make a product shine and become a must have, particularly on TikTok, Create engaging experiences is a key objective. Younger consumers want to live branded experiences and are ready to share them on social media''. According to the CRM manager MAC Italia *"Interactive and personalized video to better engage users telling the brand's story and addressing the right message is part of the Brand Strategy. It has been registered a +85% engagement rate with video with Interactive elements perfectly integrated with the brand video to reinforce the message".*

Regard the digital marketing strategy, it is important to highlight that the Brands surveyed, although they belong to the same Beauty Industry, implement and develop the social media strategies with different focus, according to the features of the Brand and the objective of the marketing campaign. However, all the Brands Manager agree that the enhancement of the brand awareness is reflected in the increasing of sales. Working on the base and up funnel, thus on awareness and purchase/loyalty is the win marketing strategy.

Chanel having a strong purely Brand Identity, uses the social media as platforms to reaffirm also online its value. The CRM strategy of Chanel highlights*: ''The brand heritage with an extraordinary usage of the digital strategies aims to affirm the prestige of the Brand. Consumers affirm themselves in Chanel, the social media strategy maintains the vision, talking online to the new-type consumers''.* Dior, on the other hand, exploits strategically the social media to expand its market and to obtain a double-digit growth in engagement and conversion. Being present on TikTok allows a wider engagement and therefore a more effective positioning of the brand. The Italian Communications Manager of Dior Beauty affirms: *''The Brand stand out in the Beauty market for the prestigious of its name and heritage, but to maintain its value in the new type of customers means to excel in the online world. Communicating the prestige of the Brand becoming the top performer in the new platform and technology means to maintain a competitive advantage''.*

4.5.2. Social Media Strategy and Emotions

Social Media Strategy Impact on Consumers' Emotions	
Tom Ford Beauty (The ELC)	xxx
Jo Malone London (The ELC	x
MAC (The ELC)	x
Estée Lauder (The ELC)	xx
Chanel Beauty	xxx
Dior	xxx
Prada	xxx

Burberry	xx
Lancome	xx
Guerlain	xx
Gucci	xxx
Dolce & Gabbana	xxx

Table 2. Social Media Strategy and Emotions. Elaborated from interview and secondary data.

In the table 2 it is illustrated how the beauty brands perceive the impact their social media strategies and communications on the Consumers' Emotions and feelings. This aspect was revealed meaningful, since the emotion sphere is the basis to create a deep connection between the Luxury or Prestige Brands and the consumer. The results are showed with a ''x'' marked from ''x'', that means the lowest impact, and ''xxx'' the maximum impact. The answers showed how Brands with a deep and strong heritage use the social media as a mirror of their brand and thus the communication on the social media aims at highlighting the Brand Image and its value, influencing the emotions and feeling of the customers. As it is affirmed buy the Communications Manager of Dior Beauty: *"We communicate to the consumers' emotions, to their desires and influence what their needs are. The interactive platform as Tik Tok allows to talk to them directly, building a stronger connection ".* CRM Manager at Tom Ford agrees that: *''the impact of social media is an extremely powerful means of connection with the consumers and the ultra prestige Brand communicates strong emotions via social media campaigns. Passion, Audacity, Love are the key pillars of every product campaign and they have to be communicated online at 360° in order to obtain great results in term of brand awareness and conversion''.*

Furthermore, as stated by Estée Lauder' Italian Brand Manager: *"Digital Marketing strategies have an extraordinary key role in engaging customers and building a strong Image of the Brand. From delivering performance campaigns on social media to the first AI App that we have just lunched, online, for not talking of Metaverse, it's the main pillar of our marketing strategy''.*

4.5.3 Social Media Strategy and Uniqueness

Social Media Strategy and Impact on Brand Uniqueness	
Tom Ford Beauty (The ELC)	High-Impact (Brand Awareness, Brand Image, Brands Association)
Jo Malone London (The ELC	High-Impact (Brand Awareness, Brand Image, Brands Association)

MAC (The ELC)	High-Impact (Brand Awareness, Brand Image, Perceived Quality)
Estée Lauder (The ELC)	High-Impact (Brand Awareness, Brand Image, Brands Loyalty)
Chanel Beauty	High-Impact (Brand Awareness, Brand Image, Brands Loyalty)
Dior	High-Impact (Brand Awareness, Brand Image, Brands Loyalty)
Prada	High-Impact (Brand Awareness, Brand Image, Brands Loyalty)
Burberry	High-Impact (Brand Awareness, Brand Image, Brands Loyalty)
Lancome	High-Impact (Brand Awareness, Brand Image, Perceived Quality)
Guerlain	High-Impact (Brand Awareness, Brand Image, Perceived Quality)
Gucci	High-Impact (Brand Awareness, Brand Image, Brands Loyalty)
Dolce & Gabbana	High-Impact (Brand Awareness, Brand Image, Brands Loyalty)

Table 3. Social Media Strategy and Uniqueness. Elaborated from interview and secondary data.

Starting from the data collected from the empirical studies, the interviewers were asked to state the degree of impact of the digital marketing strategies, in particular social media strategies, on the Brand Equity and all of its different components (Brand Awareness, Brands Image, Perceived Quality of the products, Brand Loyalty). Moreover, they were asked to state their opinion on how and if, the presence on social media influence the perception of the luxury brand among the consumers. From the Brands with a position within the luxury market as luxury or ultra luxury brands emerged that the presence on social networks has a strong influence on the brand vision, as it enhances the desirability and the prestige of the brands. Consumers can be in touch 24h with the Brand and to be engaged in its values, news and initiatives, and this allow to increase its brand image, but it does not affect the perceived quality, that remain stable. On the contrary, luxury Brand with a middle-high positioning emerged to be affected by social media also on the perceived quality of their products. The CRM Manager of MAC affirmed: ' *For our Brand the opinions of women are very important and we want to preserve not only the image but also the heritage of this incredible Brand, for this reason to talk to our clients promoting its values, its new products and initiatives with influencers which can represent our Brand is*

essential. In the Beauty industry women want to feel unique, beautiful and happy of themselves, for this reasons in the online world where people express freely their opinion on the products, quality and ideas, managing the online channels assume a strategic importance. Social networks are an extremely important resource to gain information and guide the strategy to deliver the right message.''

4.5.4 Social media Strategy: KPIs

One objective of the research is to estimate which social media strategy has the greatest impact on brand awareness and thus which one is the most relevant. Therefore, respondents were asked to highlight among the key performance indicators (KPIs) of brand awareness which one is the most impacted by the social media strategies, and how it can be increased.

- All the Brands of the Estée Lauder Companies agreed that the Brand Awareness, being one of main KPI to measure the effectiveness of a digital marketing campaign, is itself a in indicator to measure. However to increase the Brand Awareness it can be split in diverse minor KPIs, as: Brand Advocacy, Brand Action, Brand Appraisal, Brand Recall, Engaged Reach, Attentive Reach, Net campaign Reach. Therefore, as the CRM Manager of Estée Lauder affirm: ''Each online campaign generate results, measured with different KPIs based on the objective of the campaign. For instance, in a media campaign a carousel post on Meta can aim to generate traffic to the websites or to drive (customers) to stores, and they are measured in CTR, Conversion Rate, based on CPC cost per click, or a IG story can aim to gain the highest number of in target users as well as to generate a good completion rate, measured with other KPIs.'' Maximizing all of this ''minor'' KPIs, obtaining esxcellent results in all of them allows to increase in Brand Awareness. The Brand Manager of Tom Ford stated: *''To excel at 360° in all the media campaigns, outperforming in all the social media stratgies is the key to success. All the social strategies have to work in synergy along the full-funnel in order to increase in awareness and accelerate in sellout.''* Concerning the remaining six Brands involved in the research, there were no reference KPIs.

4.6 Discussion

This paragraph discusses the main findings obtained through the qualitative analysis from a managerial perspective.

The development of the brand equity concept resulted in significant changes to the brand concept. The model of brand equity that Keller (1993) proposes is dominant, providing the link between its two dimensions, brand awareness and image. Brand awareness refers to the strength of the brand node, or the trace of this brand in memory, which consumers' ability to identify the brand under different conditions represents (Rossiter &

Percy, 1987). That is, brand awareness is the likelihood that a brand name will occur to consumers as well as the ease with which it does so (Keller, 1993). On the other hand, Keller describes brand image as perceptions about a brand which the brand associations in consumers' memory reflect. In a social media setting, marketing activities enhance customer based brand equity. According to Mangold and Faulds (2009), social media marketing actions are part of the promotional mix in the new brand communication paradigm. Bruhn et al. (2012) disclose that traditional as well as social media communication have a significant impact on brand equity. While traditional media have a stronger impact on brand awareness, social media communication strongly influences brand image. In the light of this discussion, this study expects the social media marketing efforts of luxury brands to have an impact on brand equity creation.

As demonstrated by respondents, social media is habitually exercised for numerous motivations. Social networking sites, such as Twitter, Facebook or Instagram, have today become the go-to platforms social media users turn to for real-time updates on any political, economic or social matter. Brands and social media users have implicitly manifested a win-win arrangement that sees brands enveloped in followers and consumers allowed the platform to build social identities through brand associations. The luxury industry has especially excelled in implementing social media as a key channel for brand delivery. This research provides a foundation for future studies to investigate the profundity of social media use in beauty marketing and the importance of social identity in establishing and maintaining online brand–customer interactions.

4.6.1 Social Media Strategy and Brand Equity:

Results showed that the increase of brand awareness is strictly interconnected with the development of digital marketing strategies, specifically through the social media. This is in line with current literature, as stated in the research paper of Helal et al. (2018):''Brands and social media users have implicitly manifested a win-win arrangement that sees brands enveloped in followers and consumers allowed the platform to build social identities through brand associations''. The luxury industry has in particular excelled in implementing social media as a key channel for delivering brand equity. Experts from the companies interviewed consider the social media application as an integral part of the digital marketing strategies that allow to reach the prefixed objective. As expressed by the Brand Manager of Tom Ford: ''In order to increase awareness, accelerate in sell-out and to succeed in the new launches, brand strategies have to be built at 360° and online is the most important part. Visibility on social media platforms like a story on Instagram, a post on Linkedin or a TikTok video with an influencer, is essential to fix a positive and strong image of the brand. On the basis of Zahoor & Qureshi (2017) framework, from the obtained results it can be deduced that social media marketing actions are part of the promotional mix in the new brand communication paradigm, as Mangold and Faulds (2009) stated. Bruhn et al. (2012) affirmed that traditional as well as social media communication have a significant impact on brand equity, in particular, social media communication strongly influences brand image. Keller

explained brand image as perceptions about a brand which the brand associations in consumers' memory reflect. In a social media strategy setting, marketing activities enhance customer based brand equity. Social media marketing strategies allows to present not only products that consumers might not have considered before, but also the Brand itself, engaging with the consumers in their daily life and creating a strong connection that can be translated in identification with the Brand Identity, and thus loyalty. As stated by Helal et al. (2018): ''Social networking sites, such as Twitter, Facebook or Instagram, have today become the go-to platforms social media users turn to for real-time updates on any political, economic or social matter''. As from the interviewers and the data analysed was affirmed, brand perceptions are significantly shaped by the image that brands portray on social media (Weinberg and Pehlivan,2011). Offline content is generally expressed through traditional advertisements and campaigns as well as through packaging and store aesthetics. However, the presence of social media has provided brands with an additional outlet to conveying brand identity via the content of their posts. The CRM Manager of Jo Malone expressed that social media platforms allow the brand to think outside the box in developing its strategy. It is essential to be innovative and offer new content from one campaign to another, using for instance important influencers in the current online world. Social media strategies are a crucial part to complete the marketing strategy that feeds relevant content to the large young millennial consumer base. The Brands use Instagram, Tik Tok and Linkedin to show new launches and their products to buy online, and each platform is connected to the other ones, offering consistent content across all platforms (Helal et al., 2018).

4.6.2. Social Media Strategy and Emotions

Consumers are empowered to be a part of building and circulating of a brand's delivery via expansive networks of connections, ultimately redefining value creation as co-creation between brand and customer. Helal et al. (2018) affirm: ''The brand–customer exchange has evolved from the restricted one-way scene of a brand solely relaying messages to a two-way dynamic interchange that devises brand–customer intimacy. Social media's accessibility factor has bridged consumers' urgency for relevance and brands' commitment to content distribution into a link that ultimately hoists the modern-day brand–customer relationship.'' As discussed from the interviewees and emerged from the data collected, the brand presence on social media enhances the relationships with the customers, engaging with them especially at a deeper and unconscious level. Emotions are what allow the brand to assume a strong positioning in the consumer minds and especially in the Beauty Industry, they are strategically used in the digital strategies to create a deeper connection with the consumer. The beauty industry is based on the concept of being the best version of themselves, thus on emotions and ideas of desirability. Social Media platforms are a powerful way to deliver this message built around a product or brand campaign, as felt by the CRM Manager of Mac. In the paper of Helal et al. (2018) it is argued that: ''We are all constantly on social media to check for something to buy from posts that we see. Content brands promoting via Instagram and other social networking sites are continually influencing brand perceptions and

creating a closer connection to consumers. Customers feel closer to a brand through the instant exchange social media offers''. From the results of the interviews, more a brand is prestigious and assume a higher position in the luxury market, more its social media campaigns are built to deliver emotions and feeling a sense of emotional engagement, respect to the product itself,

4.6.3 Social Media Strategy and Uniqueness:

The findings reveal that by social media and online brand presence, existing and aspirational customers are encouraged to uphold affiliation with a brand in enhancing the self. As the Kim & Phua (2020) state: ''Customer engagement is consequently heightened, and relationships are formed within brand communities as such interchanges promise customers the symbolic benefit of social placemen Individuals are more compelled to associate with a brand that empowers them to climb the ladder of social enhancement […] Individuals adopt social media as a platform to enforce social inclusion by expressing identical behaviour among the desired social group''. Turner et al. (1994) describe social identity theory as self-categories that define the individual in terms of his or her shared similarities with members of certain social categories in contrast to other social categories. They explain that social categories are used as a means of social classification or identification. Individuals form definitions of themselves based on the characteristics of the groups they follow, but the self-definition formed by an individual arises from the social categories he/she pursues. According to the results of the interviews, Luxury Brand, for definition of themselves, express their equity and uniqueness, in which their clients identify themselves. Social media allow individuals to identify themselves with the Brand and providing a closer relationship between the two parts. In fact, as Estée Lauder Brand Manager argues: ''One of the most important strategies of to social media campaigns are branded hashtags. Hashtag allow to identify a brand to generate brand awareness. they can encourage consumers to share pictures of products with the hashtags.'' As Kim & Phua (2020) explained, using hashtags on a branded post has several benefits and enhance the Image of the Brand, its uniqueness and the features of the products. They in fact allow to understand the message that a brand wants to communicate, they invite consumers to participate in brand-related conversations, therefore increasing electronic word-of mouth (eWOM) effects and especially provide a simple way for consumers to engage with a brand (Kim & Phua, 2020).

4.6.4 KPIs

Based on results obtained, a unique value for measuring the impact of the social media strategies on brand awareness is not sufficient, since every social media campaign is aligned with unique KPIs and specific objectives. Therefore, as interviewers argued, Brand Awareness can be increased with the contemporary execution of multiple digital strategies, implemented cross-social platforms. Therefore, succeeding in all the social media platforms allows to increase all the second-level KPIs and consequently, the Brand Awareness.

Engage Reach, Net Campaign Reach, thus number of individuals reached, Brand Recall, the Brand Appraisal, Brand Contact are some of the second-level KPIs observed in order to increase the awareness.

4.7 Managerial Implications

This study contributes to the study carried out by Zahoor & Qureshi (2017). From a theoretical point of view, this research has served to broaden our understanding of the main factors that influence luxury brand in the beauty industry to focus on digital marketing strategies, specifically social media strategies. The main contribution of this research can be found in the collection of information regarding the relationship and correlation between the social media strategies, within the luxury beauty industry, and the Brand Equity, from a business perspective. The Table 1 is particularly useful to understand in detail the social platforms adopted by the luxury brands which lead the beauty market to increase their awareness, based on the theoretical framework. In fact, as analysed in the current literature, the adoption and the implementation of cross functional social strategies, in a 360° marketing campaign, is crucial to leverage the image of the brand and reach a broader audience. While the theoretical framework can be applied indiscriminately in each industry, this research aims to investigate specifically the most suitable social media strategies in the luxury and beauty industry, that currently lacks academic visibility. Furthermore, this study aims to investigate the relationship developed online between brand and the consumer, assuming the perspective of the luxury Brand. Thus, my research seeks to fill this gap and expand the existing literature. This dissertation also helps to understand how the luxury companies consider the potential of social media platforms to engage with the customers and inspire them, starting from an emotional connection. In addition, this study evaluates the theme of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that luxury cosmetics companies use to measure the impact of the social media in measuring the effectiveness of the marketing campaigns and their relationships with the brand awareness, which has not been explored in the current literature so far. Due to the important aspect that Brand awareness as KPIs itself measures the effectiveness of a marketing campaign, social media strategies should be implemented in synergy across all the platform, in order to succeed and increase all the KPIs, which allows consequently to incremental effects on brand awareness. However, the critical part is to understand the consumer perceptions and to excel with the appropriate strategy in the right social platform. The following research revealed the difficulty for the brands to implement their brand awareness, as it is the direct achievement of excellent campaign's results across all the social media platforms. Therefore, it is not possible to find a unique social media strategy which allow to increase the awareness, in fact each brand enhance different values based on its Identity and objective, however the application of multiple strategies, across all the platforms, aligned with the consumers' expectations, leads to an increase in brand awareness.

4.8 Limitations and future research

Although this study contribution to implement the scarce available literature, the study presents some limitations. First, the generalization of the results regarding the impact of social media strategies to the brand awareness may be limited because the data used in this study were collected in a small sample. Since there are not available quantitative databases that allow detailed analysis of the proposed research question, my research analysis was based and limited to the information provided by interviewers and secondary data. Further in-depth analysis with large-scale beauty brands and companies at global level is needed. Moreover, I did not investigate the levels of interactivity and relationship from the perspective of social media users to determine how they generally use social platform of beauty brands, like their favourite type of posts, their motivations to make comments to a post, or their preferred integrated channels. Investigations on this perspective will be necessary on future research. My research based on multiple case studies has focused on exploring the Brands' side, providing general information on all the social platforms that can be exploited in a digital marketing campaign. Lastly, the relations between social media marketing and brand equity have been observed individually for each brand and therefore measuring these empirically can possibly lead to some different results. Therefore, since the findings are limited to the experience of the six Italy-based luxury beauty brands, .in the future academic researchers can investigate to alternative types of brands/companies or whether the success of social media marketing strategies hold for different industries in the same platforms.

Conclusion

This dissertation aims at answering the following research question: ""How the usage of social media impacts the Brand Awareness in the Luxury Beauty industry and which social media strategy is the most impactful, in terms of KPIs?''
By investigating the topics deeply through a comprehensive literature review and examining in detail as a manner as possible six different case studies, this dissertation further contributes to the limited available literature by providing new insights regarding the impact of social media platforms on beauty companies. Firstly, a conceptual framework of Zahoor & Qureshi (2017) was exanimated to evaluate the linkages of social media in the brand strategy, and how their application, being one of the main digital marketing channels, can affect the brand equity.

The cosmetics luxury industry has been evolving in the last years aligning with the evolution of new technologies and especially of the online opportunities given by the changes of the relationship between consumers and social media platforms. Consumers feel the need to be engaged with the brand in their daily life, sharing online with the other consumers their experience with the products' brand and on the other side

companies satisfies and anticipates the consumers' needs and products' using new social media channels in their marketing strategy.

The integration of the social media platforms in this specific industry based on the concept of beauty, desirability, and self-perception, provided new ways to express the product and the brand itself, engaging with the consumers at 360° in their daily life and providing one-to-one communications. The evolution of social media and their widespread usage has impacted the consumer journey and companies have adapt their marketing strategies, exploiting the online channels of the social media. They have become an opportunity for beauty brands to increase the online sales channels, engaging the customers on the social media platforms and connecting the social media to their online store. However, at the same time, social media platforms have a direct impact on the brand Image, its identity and especially on its awareness.

This dissertation bases its conclusion on six relevant case studies, whose face-to-face interviews were examined with Nvivo-12 software, of twelve selected luxury beauty brands cases: Tom Ford Beauty, Jo Malone, Estée Lauder, Mac, Chanel and Dior, and integrated sources from secondary data. This research has found that strategies built through social media platforms represent the most impactful part for the brands to increase their awareness and to engage with the customers. Consequently, a higher brand awareness conduct brands to scale up their positioning in the beauty-luxury market, and a stronger engagement with the clients lead to loyalty relationship between the parts and also to increase the online sales.

In terms of implementation as social media strategies, findings have showed that, in order to increase the awareness, brands have to build their social media strategy exploiting all the social media platforms simultaneously, as its increase is correlated to the performance of the brand strategies in all the platforms, and not by one specific. Moreover, social media impacts all the brand equity' components, as it is shows in Zahoor & Qureshi (2017) frameworks, and particularly the social media platforms have exponentially increased the eWOM, allowing ideas, customers' preferences and comments to be shared freely and easily among people. Via social media, beauty brands anticipate the consumers preferences and expectations, collecting valuable data on the social media platforms, as well as they can influence the customer perception, increasing the desirability both for the Brand itself that for the products, with impactful online strategies. As was evident, brand awareness is impacted by the performance of the marketing strategy' results obtained successfully cross-platforms, since brand awareness, that it is itself a KPI, increases by the sum of each social media strategy' performances (KPIs).

Concluding, I hope that my findings will encourage further research and extensive analysis to explore the impact of social media strategies and its brand management applications, as beauty and luxury brands are extremely influenced by this highly potential channel of digital marketing.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Abstract

This study examines the impact of a digital marketing strategy, specifically the social media strategy, on the brand awareness in the luxury cosmetics industry. Social media platforms are increasingly assuming a crucial importance not only as a digital marketing strategy but as a fundamental way to drive awareness towards the brand and thus to accelerate the sales. Despite their controversial nature that allow people to share freely their opinions, eliminating the concept of exclusivity own by the luxury brands, beauty and luxury companies are exploiting these platforms to achieve their marketing and business objectives. Social media platforms' application, in designing the marketing strategy, represents a huge potential as it allows Brands to increase exponentially the customers data exchanged, the clients' engagement as well as the sales opportunities. Since there is a lack of theoretical and empirical studies on this field, this exploratory study aims to answer the present research question: "How the usage of Social Media impacts the Brand Awareness in the Luxury Beauty industry and which social media strategy is the most impactful, in terms of KPIs?". The analysis will be divided as it follows: (1) a literature review based on branding, digital branding, digital marketing strategies related topics, (2) a qualitative research based on a multiple case study analysis conducted through N-Vivo 12 software. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews to employees of the main beauty companies –The Estée Lauder Companies, Chanel Beauty and Dior Beauty– complemented by secondary data. The findings demonstrate that social media strategies have a crucial role for the luxury beauty brands since they have direct linkages in creating brand awareness. However, it is not possible to define a unique social media strategy to obtain better results as it is strictly connected to the brand values and marketing objectives, and it requires to be implemented through multiple social media platforms concurrently. In fact, as the beauty brands showed, there are different KPIs measuring social media impact on brand awareness, lacking a unique measure.

Keywords: Digital Branding; Digital Marketing; Brand Awareness; Social Media Strategy; Beauty Industry; Luxury Cosmetics Industry; Social Media Platforms; KPIs; Marketing Research

Introduction

Digital branding is a concept strictly connected to the corporate world and the development of the digital marketing strategy. In the last years, digital branding has grown considerably, leading to significant changes in marketing practices as well as on the consumer brand perception. Digital marketing represents today the most impactful part of the marketing strategy for Brands and Companies. Digital marketing strategies are changing the ways in which brands communicate with the customers, providing new opportunities through

several platforms: social media platforms, in particular, have a significant impact in engaging consumers and building their loyalty. The luxury cosmetic companies have understood the potential of these platforms and, in order to increase their brand awareness in the luxury market, they are implementing social media marketing strategies, reshaping their priorities, budgets, skills and processes. Luxury brands use the information obtained through social media platforms to improve customers' experiences and to anticipate the reactions. Exploiting social media marketing, luxury brands are enhancing their brand recognition among customers and this allow them to increase their brand awareness. Research that evaluates social media marketing impact from the perspective of branding literature is still mainly exploratory and lacks empirical studies. This study contributes to expand literature, evaluating how strategies of social media marketing impact the brand equity, especially the brand awareness in relation to the luxury cosmetics brands, hence the Beauty Luxury Industry. The main objective is to examine the relationship of social media strategies applied by twelve luxury beauty brands and the brand perception, in terms of brand awareness. The secondary objectives of this dissertation are to fill the gaps in previous research and in particular: (1) evaluate the effectiveness of the social media marketing strategies in creating brand awareness; (2) analyse the main social media strategies applied by the beauty brands and the components of brand equity; (3) evaluate in terms of Key Performance Indicators the social media marketing strategies of the luxury beauty brands on creating brand preference. This study examines twelve luxury cosmetics brands and their digital marketing strategies in the Italian market, specifically implemented on social media platforms. The managerial implications of this study will help marketers to analyse the strengths and potential of the social media marketing strategies in the luxury cosmetics industry.

Conceptual Framework

Zahoor & Qureshi (2017) identified the underlying variables of social media marketing and brand equity and established a relationship between them. Social media marketing activities have positive and significant effect on brand awareness, brand loyalty and perceived quality. Social media platforms provide several positive benefits to brands, in fact they allow to secure the reputation of a brand, increase sales, involve consumers in brand creation process, expand brand awareness and increase consumer loyalty. They offer opportunities for customers to engage in sincere communications with the brand and other users, so the brand's intended actions on the social communication scene positively affect relationship and brand equity as well. While being in social media can generate brand awareness, different social media platforms establish different brand associations, creating different effects on customer-based brand equity.
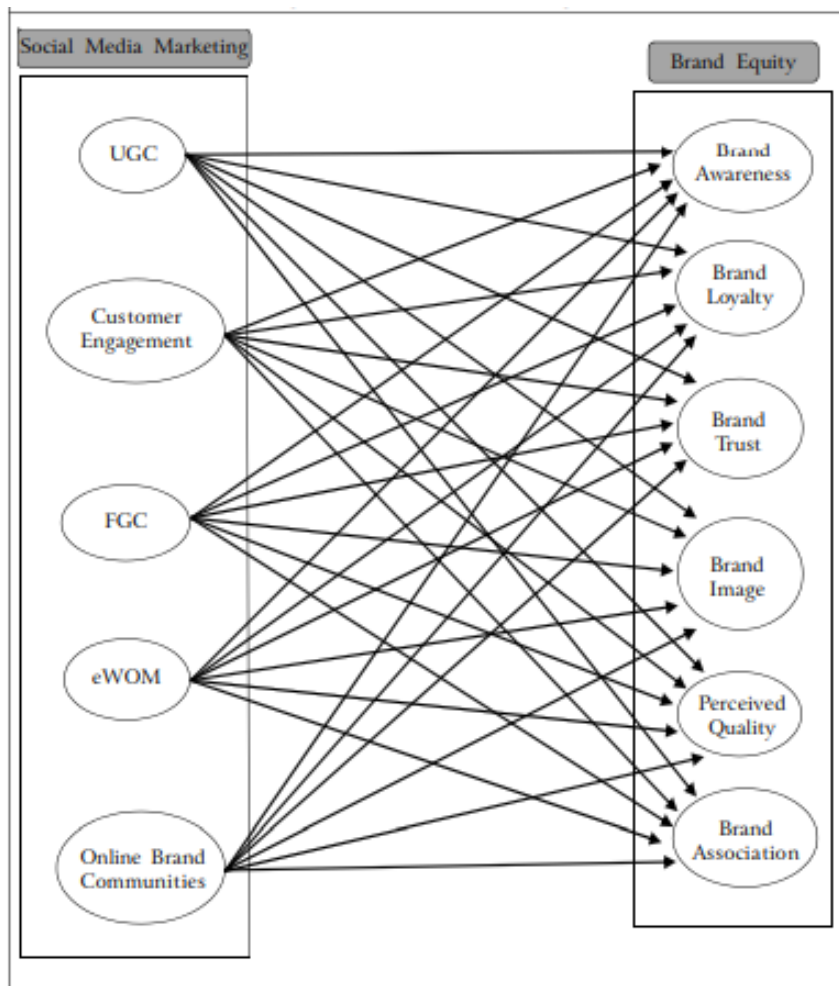
Figure 20. Proposed Model. Source from: Zahoor, S. Z., & Qureshi, I. H. (2017). Social Media Marketing and Brand Equity: A Literature Review. *IUP Journal of Marketing Management*, *16*(1)

The figure 20 illustrates the linkages. The main components of the framework represented in the figure are:

- User-generated content: It has a positive impact on brand equity and brand attitude. The impact of user-generated social media communication on purchase intention is totally mediated by brand equity (Sashi, 2012). UGC can greatly enhance customer satisfaction, loyalty, and/or delight, especially as customer needs change over time.

- Customer Engagement: It influences brand loyalty (De Vries and Carlson, 2014). Consumer engagement in social media can enhance the elements of brand equity (awareness, association, and loyalty) at every stage of consumer engagement, thus watching, sharing, commenting, producing, and curating. It has been affirmed that consumer engagement enhances loyalty and satisfaction, empowerment, connection, emotional bonding, trust and commitment. It has been proved that companies can improve brand awareness and brand image through enhancing customer engagement on social networking sites, resulting in brand loyalty reinforcement.

- Firm-Generated Content: it has an huge impact on functional brand image, in fact it can positively impact brand attitude and brand attitude can positively influence brand equity and consequently the purchasing.

- eWOM: Electronic Word-Of-Mouth influences brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty and perceived. It has been established a positive relationship between brand loyalty and eWOM. Brand image and perception could be influenced on a massive scale by consumers with the help of eWOM through the social media networks.

- Online Brand Communities: it haa been found they can strengthen the relationship between consumers and brands as well as they can enhance brand commitment, and online community members have been found to build stronger associations with the brand than non-participating consumers. The engagement with the online brand community and the brand itself can be translated into increased loyalty with the brand. Engaging consumers on social media.

Research Gap

The aim of this dissertation is to fill the existing gap between the theoretical research and the practical one. Luxury Cosmetics industry is a sector where data produced across social media platforms create a huge potential to increase the customer engagement and thus, the brand awareness. In particular, since luxury cosmetics are highly dependent not only on personal customer needs but principally on emotions and phycological patterns, there is a strong opportunity to exploit social media platforms, as Instagram and Tik Tok, for personalization and targeted marketing strategies. Nevertheless, despite the relevance of the topic, there is still a lack of academic studies on this. Due to this existing gap, this dissertation has an exploratory nature based on the original framework developed by Zahoor & Qureshi, 2017, highlighting the successful implementation of the framework business contexts.

Research Method

In order to address the research purpose and answer the research question, a *qualitative approach* is deemed suitable for this study; it is often used when there are no data available, and it tackles recent phenomena through the emphasis on words rather than numbers. On this topic, there is no database available or quantitative studies to enable the building of a solid quantitative analysis. However, it is appropriate to consider the limitation of the qualitative methodology. A potential negative aspect of a qualitative research design is the risk of biased results. The risk of bias is evident as the qualitative design requires the researchers to analyse qualitative data and draw results, which may be difficult to generalize. To overcome parts of the limitations I utilized NVIVO software as a support tool for my analysis. NVIVO is a qualitative data analysis computer software package that helps to organize and analyse non-numerical or unstructured data like interviews or open-ended survey responses.

This qualitative empirical study is based on a multiple case study analysis. The data was collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews to selected employees of different leading companies in the beauty sector complemented by data from secondary sources. An exploratory research design is most suitable in order to fulfil the purpose of the study. The questionnaire designed for this dissertation is divided into four main parts: general information about the interviewer, general information on social media usage at Brand Marketing Management level, specific questions related to social media platforms in the Luxury Cosmetics Industry considering both present that future perspectives and finally the relationship between social media and the brand's consumer perception, with the focus on emotional engagement. Throughout the research process secondary data has been gathered in order to present the systematic literature review. The secondary data utilized in this process consists of research papers, companies' reports and social media pages, as well as details, academic research, companies' websites, official press releases as well as information and quotes from official websites, electronic articles and reports. I adopted a highly critical view towards the sources in order to reduce the subjectivity of the study.

Data Analysis and Findings

The Brands investigated for this analysis are from the Business to Consumer side (B2C), as this research aims to investigate the correlation between their digital marketing strategies and their results in terms of awareness. Specifically, the companies on the B2C side are some of the leaders in the beauty industry which are currently succeeding in the beauty market and exploiting the social media platforms. Some of the Brands investigated with direct interviews of their internal managers are part of the Estée Lauder Companies, the main reason is due to the fact that these brands are global leaders in the beaty industry and specialized only in this sector, thus Tom Ford Beauty, Jo Malone London, Mac, Estée Lauder, instead the other two Brands are part of cross industry multinationals, Dior and Chanel Beauty.

For the other Brands, specifically Prada, Lancôme, Guerlain, Dolce & Gabbana, Gucci and Burberry since it was not possible to contact and reach employees for these Beauty Brands, their case studies will be based on secondary data such as internal reports, website and social media official profile's information, press release and other online sources available.

Tom Ford Beauty and Jo Malone London

Tom Ford Beauty is a covetable collection of cosmetics and fragrances, shaped with Tom Ford's singular vision of modern glamour and crafted with the ultimate in quality and luxury. The mission of the Brand is to create the first true luxury brand of the 21st century. According to the research analysis Tom Ford is the Brand among all the beauty luxury brand that is increasing the most rapidly in awareness. Its strategy is based on a huge attention to the digital marketing strategy and a perfect execution of the social media and online activations.

Jo Malone London is a British fragrance and lifestyle brand, with a contemporary point of view. From the start, their colognes have been revolutionary in their elegant simplicity and pioneering in their use of ingredients. Jo Malone London has evolved to become synonymous with coveted scents and luxurious products for bath, body and home. It ranks 77 in the beauty luxury market worldwide.

Estée Lauder and MAC

Estée Lauder is the flagship brand of The Estée Lauder Companies Inc. Founded by Estée Lauder, one of the world's first female entrepreneurs, the brand today continues her legacy of creating the most innovative, sophisticated, high-performance skin care and makeup products and iconic fragrances. Today Estée Lauder engages with women in over 150 countries and territories around the world and at a variety of touch points, in stores and online. And each of these relationships consistently reflects Estée's powerful and authentic woman-to-woman point of view. The Brand reach 62M+Followers across Estée Lauder social platforms globally.

M·A·C (Make-up Art Cosmetics) is the pioneering makeup authority for all the Brands. Since its creation in Toronto, Canada, over 30 years ago, the brand's popularity has grown through a tradition of world-of-mouth endorsement from makeup artists, models, photographers and journalists around the world. Part of the Estée Lauder Companies since 1994, M·A·C is sold today in over 120 countries and territories around the world. It remains committed to developing new categories, products and over 50 collections each year, all of which continue to serve the demand of consumers and professional makeup artists.

Chanel Beauty and Dior Beauty are not merely born to be a cosmetic brand. To compare them with specifically beauty ones, they are both taken into consideration.

Chanel Beauty

Chanel is a private company and a world leader in creating, developing, manufacturing and distributing luxury products. With more than 57 million followers globally, Chanel boasts the most social media followers. It is the leading luxury brand on all platforms except Facebook. Chanel uses a powerful narrative with good content as a key for its digital marketing strategy. To create intrinsic motivation to purchase the products, it aims at deepening customers' understanding of the brand and its culture. The content of the Chanel stories not only indicates the core elements of the brand, but it stays true to its legacy and expresses the brand's values and identity creatively and powerfully. Chanel's digital *marketing* strategy is one of the most robust in its category.

Dior Beauty

Dior's success is inseparable from its Instagram champions. Dior's official Instagram has 21.4 million followers and a total of 4,301 posts. The brand also owns many sub-Instagrams for each type of its products,

such as Dior Parfums and Dior Makeup. On each Dior Instagram, it includes a quote from its founder, Christian Dior, to deliver the brand's critical concepts to its customers. Dior is rated the leading luxury brand for performance on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Google out of the top 60 luxury brands, according to the *Vogue Business* Index. TikTok's popularity with Gen Z was an important factor, requiring more casual, informal content, packaging Dior as an accessible, open-minded luxury brand.

Analysis of multiple case study

The following analysis will be based on the interviews of the six companies selected as main case studies and extended to the other six cases in order to provide a broader perspective to answer the research questions of this dissertation. All the interviews were imported into QSR Nvivo-12 forming the project resources. This material was composed by 3700 words that were coded into 12 conceptual categories defined as "thematic nodes and sub-nodes". For this analysis the thematic nodes are "descriptive", this means that each answer was coded by linking the part of the text with its related topic. The first part of the analysis was developed into themes. My objective of this research has been to compare luxury cosmetics Brands and common themes (social media strategies) to obtain conclusions to validate and possibly extend the research stated in the strategic framework of Zahoor & Qureshi (2017).

Findings

For each thematic area there are reported tables or findings extracted from the interviews and the secondary data (Social Media Brands' profiles, websites, press release, surveys). Based on the information collected, the thematic are:

- Social Media Strategy and Brand Equity:

The theme was created in relation to the framework of Zahoor & Qureshi (2017) that connects the social media strategies to the Brand Awareness, part of the Brand Equity.
This was developed in order to evaluate in detail which social media strategy of the theoretical framework is exploited by the luxury cosmetic brands and the correlation of their impact on the Brand Awareness. Tom Ford's Italian CRM marketing manager states: "*Ultra prestige brands are creating bonds within the Beauty consumers that last long. Building a consistent presence on social media is key to install brand heritage. Creating impactful storytelling both for the brand campaigns that for the new launches on the social media at 360° is the key to increase brand awareness and for this reason Tom Ford Beauty is succeeding, scaling up the Top 10 in the luxury beauty ranking*. Also in Jo Malone's case there is an extraordinary investment in the social media to gain results in term of awareness, as the Italian Brand Manager affirms: "*Social media platforms enhance conversations, they are able to enhance experience and in beauty are able to actively influence consumers. Ultra-prestige consumers seek advocacy through experts, influencers, vip on the social.*

Trust boost desirability and for this reason the brand is collaborating with beauty influencers. social media have the power to make a product shine and become a must have, particularly on TikTok, Create engaging experiences is a key objective. Younger consumers want to live branded experiences and are ready to share them on social media''. According to the CRM manager MAC Italia*"Interactive and personalized video to better engage users telling the brand's story and addressing the right message is part of the Brand Strategy. It has been registered a +85% engagement rate with video with Interactive elements perfectly integrated with the brand video to reinforce the message".*

Regard the digital marketing strategy, it is important to highlight that the Brands surveyed, although they belong to the same Beauty Industry, implement and develop the social media strategies with different focus, according to the features of the Brand and the objective of the marketing campaign. However, all the Brands Manager agree that the enhancement of the brand awareness is reflected in the increasing of sales. Working on the base and up funnel, thus on awareness and purchase/loyalty is the win marketing strategy. Chanel having a strong purely Brand Identity, uses the social media as platforms to reaffirm also online its value. The CRM strategy of Chanel highlights*: ''The brand heritage with an extraordinary usage of the digital strategies aims to affirm the prestige of the Brand. Consumers affirm themselves in Chanel, the social media strategy maintains the vision, talking online to the new-type consumers''*

- Social Media Strategy and Emotions

This theme investigates how the beauty brands perceive the impact of their social media strategies and communications on the Consumers' Emotions and feelings. This aspect was revealed meaningful since the emotion sphere is the basis to create a deep connection between the Luxury or Prestige Brands and the consumer. The answers showed how Brands with a deep and strong heritage use the social media as a mirror of their brand and thus the communication on the social media aims at highlighting the Brand Image and its value, influencing the emotions and feeling of the customers.

- Social Media Strategy and Uniqueness

Starting from the data collected from the empirical studies, the interviewers were asked to state the degree of impact of the digital marketing strategies, in particular social media strategies, on the Brand Equity and all of its different components (Brand Awareness, Brands Image, Perceived Quality of the products, Brand Loyalty). Moreover, they were asked to state their opinion on how and if, the presence on social media influence the perception of the luxury brand among the consumers. From the Brands with a position within the luxury market as luxury or ultra luxury brands emerged that the presence on social networks has a strong influence on the brand vision, as it enhances the desirability and the prestige of the brands.

- Social media Strategy: KPIs

One objective of the research is to estimate which social media strategy has the greatest impact on brand awareness and thus which one is the most relevant. Therefore, respondents were asked to highlight among the key performance indicators (KPIs) of brand awareness which one is the most impacted by the social media strategies, and how it can be increased. All the Brands of the Estée Lauder Companies agreed that the Brand Awareness, being one of main KPI to measure the effectiveness of a digital marketing campaign, is itself a in indicator to measure. However to increase the Brand Awareness it can be split in diverse minor KPIs, as: Brand Advocacy, Brand Action, Brand Appraisal, Brand Recall, Engaged Reach, Attentive Reach, Net campaign Reach

Discussion

This part of the study discusses the main findings obtained through the qualitative analysis from a managerial perspective.

Social Media Strategy and Brand Equity

Results showed that the increase of brand awareness is strictly interconnected with the development of digital marketing strategies, specifically through the social media. This is in line with current literature, as stated in the research paper of Helal et al. (2018):''Brands and social media users have implicitly manifested a win-win arrangement that sees brands enveloped in followers and consumers allowed the platform to build social identities through brand associations''. The luxury industry has in particular excelled in implementing social media as a key channel for delivering brand equity. Experts from the companies interviewed consider the social media application as an integral part of the digital marketing strategies that allow to reach the prefixed objective. As from the interviewers and the data analysed was affirmed, brand perceptions are significantly shaped by the image that brands portray on social media.

Social Media Strategy and Emotions

As discussed from the interviewees and emerged from the data collected, the brand presence on social media enhances the relationships with the customers, engaging with them especially at a deeper and unconscious level. Emotions are what allow the brand to assume a strong positioning in the consumer minds and especially in the Beauty Industry, they are strategically used in the digital strategies to create a deeper connection with the consumer. The beauty industry is based on the concept of being the best version of themselves, thus on emotions and ideas of desirability. Social Media platforms are a powerful way to deliver this message built around a product or brand campaign.

Social Media Strategy and Uniqueness

The findings reveal that by social media and online brand presence, existing and aspirational customers are encouraged to uphold affiliation with a brand in enhancing the self. As the Kim & Phua (2020) state: '' Individuals adopt social media as a platform to enforce social inclusion by expressing identical behaviour among the desired social group''. According to the results of the interviews, Luxury Brand, for definition of themselves, express their equity and uniqueness, in which their clients identify themselves. Social media allow individuals to identify themselves with the Brand and providing a closer relationship between the two parts.

KPIs

Based on results obtained, a unique value for measuring the impact of the social media strategies on brand awareness is not sufficient, since every social media campaign is aligned with unique KPIs and specific objectives. Therefore, as interviewers argued, Brand Awareness can be increased with the contemporary execution of multiple digital strategies, implemented cross-social platforms. Therefore, succeeding in all the social media platforms allows to increase all the second-level KPIs and consequently, the Brand Awareness. Engage Reach, Net Campaign Reach, thus number of individuals reached, Brand Recall, the Brand Appraisal, Brand Contact are some of the second-level KPIs observed in order to increase the awareness.

Managerial Implications

This study contributes to the study carried out by Zahoor & Qureshi (2017). From a theoretical point of view, this research has served to broaden the understanding of the main factors that influence luxury brand in the beauty industry to focus on digital marketing strategies, specifically social media strategies. The main contribution of this research can be found in the collection of information regarding the relationship and correlation between the social media strategies, within the luxury beauty industry, and the Brand Equity, from a business perspective. As analysed in the current literature, the adoption and the implementation of cross functional social strategies, in a 360° marketing campaign, is crucial to leverage the image of the brand and reach a broader audience. While the theoretical framework can be applied indiscriminately in each industry, this research aims to investigate specifically the most suitable social media strategies in the luxury and beauty industry, that currently lacks academic visibility. This dissertation also helps to understand how the luxury companies consider the potential of social media platforms to engage with the customers and inspire them, starting from an emotional connection. In addition, this study evaluates the theme of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that luxury cosmetics companies use to measure the impact of the social media in measuring the effectiveness of the marketing campaigns and their relationships with the brand awareness, which has not been explored in the current literature so far.

Limitations and future research

Since there are not available quantitative databases that allow detailed analysis of the proposed research question, my research analysis was based and limited to the information provided by interviewers and secondary data. Further in-depth analysis with large-scale beauty brands and companies at global level is needed. Moreover, I did not investigate the levels of interactivity and relationship from the perspective of social media users to determine how they generally use social platform of beauty brands, like their favourite type of posts, their motivations to make comments to a post, or their preferred integrated channels. Investigations on this perspective will be necessary on future research. My research based on multiple case studies has focused on exploring the Brands' side, providing general information on all the social platforms that can be exploited in a digital marketing campaign. Lastly, the relations between social media marketing and brand equity have been observed individually for each brand and therefore measuring these empirically can possibly lead to some different results.

Conclusion

The cosmetics luxury industry has been evolving in the last years aligning with the evolution of new technologies and especially of the online opportunities, given by the changes in the relationship between consumers and social media platforms. The integration of the social media platforms in this specific industry based on the concept of beauty, desirability and self-perception, provided new ways to express the product and the brand itself, engaging with the consumers at 360° in their daily life and providing one-to-one communications. This research has found that strategies built through social media platforms represent the most impactful part in a marketing strategy to increase the brand awareness and to engage with the customers. In terms of implementation of the social media strategies, findings have showed that, in order to increase the awareness, brands have to build their strategy exploiting all the social media platforms simultaneously, as its increase is correlated to the performance across all the platforms, and not by a specific one. Beauty brands can anticipate the consumers preferences and expectations, collecting valuable data on the social media platforms, as well as they can influence the customer perception, increasing the desirability both for the Brand itself that for the products. As was evident, brand awareness is impacted by the performance of the marketing strategy' results obtained successfully cross-platforms, due to the fact that brand awareness, that it is itself a KPI, increases by the sum of each social media strategy' performances (KPIs). Concluding, I hope that my findings will encourage further research and extensive analysis to explore the impact of social media strategies and its brand management applications, as beauty and luxury brands are extremely influenced by this highly potential channel of digital marketing.

Annexes

Survey: Interview Structure

1) Good Morning, thank you very much for your time! I'm Nicole Mazza and I am going to graduate in International Management at Luiss Guido Carli in Rome. For my thesis in Advanced Marketing Management, a research paper on digital branding in the luxury cosmetics industry, specifically on social media strategy and their impact to the brand awareness, I am conducting this interview. All answers and data will be treated confidentially and used only as a statistical sample for my dissertation.
   For any future inquires, my email is niky.mazza@gmail.com

2) Firstly, I would ask you some general information about your company and your role.
   a) What is the name of the Company and for which Brand do you work in?
   b) In which department do you work in and which is your role?
   c) What are your responsibilities and which are the main tasks of your role?
   d) Which kind of decisions do you take as the Brand/CRM Manager for the Brand?

3) Considering now in details the marketing strategy of the Brand, the next question will be more specific:
   e) Regard to the digital marketing strategy of the Brand, which kinds of strategy are you adopting?
   f) I saw the Brand is widely present on different social media platforms with its official profile, what are the main platforms are you using and which marketing strategies are you adopting in relation to them?
   g) Social media strategy assumes an important part in your overall marketing plan for the brand?
   h) Which are the main advantages social media platforms and the Brand strategies developed by them are providing to the Brand?
   i) Has the Brand a social media platform preferred to communicate to the costumers?
   j) Which are the KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) are you using to evaluate the digital strategies, specifically the results of social media strategies?

4) Considering now the relationship between the Brand and social media strategies:
   k) How much social media platforms are impacting on the Image of the Brand?
   l) In the Luxury Beauty Industry, the social media platforms are increasing or damaging the Brand Identity?
   m) The customer perception of the Brand is highly influenced by the social media platforms?

n) In the Beauty Luxury Industry, which social media strategy will have the most impact to build brand awareness, in the next 5 years?

o) Which do you consider the main negative effects of social media platforms in relation to the Brand Equity, specifically on the Image, Identity and Awareness?

5) In your opinion, considering the luxury and cosmetics industry, how the Brand social media strategy should be implemented to gain awareness respect the competitors, in the next 5 years? Which are the Key aspects to focus on, for the Brand?