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Increasing brand accessibility: A case study on enhanced brand accessibility without compromising brand identity.

By Darragh Moorhouse, Haotian Zhang, and Hongning Wang

Abstract

Purpose: To study how exclusive brands can become more accessible to consumers whilst maintaining brand identity.

This paper aims to investigate methods deployed by brands to increase accessibility while maintaining brand identity, particularly in premium and luxury brands. A literature review will provide a basis for a deeper understanding of brand identity, accessibility, and rejuvenation. Within this paper case studies of collaborations and alternative product offerings by premium brands will be analysed. There is a research gap surrounding the enhanced accessibility of premium brands and what it has to offer firms. Existing research is centred around brand accessibility through brand extensions as opposed to brand accessibility through collaboration and product offerings.

Methodology: A literature review and case studies will be conducted on Omega x Swatch, Polestar and Cake, Prada and Bang & Olufsen. The development of a framework will enable the analysis of these four case studies.

Limitations: Analysis of only four cases limits the scale of this research. Without the use of a focus group, it is difficult to obtain true consumer insight. Most of the cases analysed are within the past few years meaning we may be unable to interpret the true effect their enhanced accessibility efforts have had on brand identity.

Findings: The paper gives four typical brands as case studies and analyses the reasons why luxury or premium brands can successfully increase brand accessibility through brand association and brand extension. In addition, this paper proposes four ways for improving the accessibility of premium and luxury brands.

Original/value: This paper combines both premium and luxury brands into one analytical perspective investigating brand accessibility while maintaining identity.

Keywords: Brand Accessibility, Brand Identity, Brand Alliance, Brand Extent, Premium and Luxury.

Paper Type: Research Paper

Introduction

With hundreds of new brands being created and booming every day, the luxury and premium brands that have already won a place in the market are bottlenecked in their development. When a brand reaches 80% awareness in a category, the brand faces "a ceiling effect" where there is little room for improvement (Kapferer, 2012).

One of the largest barriers to sales for premium brands is purchasing power. Consumers with less purchasing power cannot afford to own premium brands, therefore limiting the potential growth of premium brands.

Kapferer (2021) notes the difference between luxury and premium products being 'magic'. Luxury brands are creator-driven and not centred around the consumer, unlike premium brands which are traditionally managed and rely on traditional marketing principles. Kapferer (2021) criticises authors using the words luxury and premium interchangeably, however, in terms of brand accessibility it can be argued that it is a necessity to look at both to uncover efficient strategies of growth that maintain identity.

Managers are prevented from reducing the price of premium products due to development costs and the risk of diminishing premium or luxury brand identity. Collaborations offer an outlet for alternative product offerings that give consumers a chance to experience the brand without having to pay the full premium or luxury price. We will go into further detail about examples of this implementation in the case of Omega and Swatch and Prada and Wet market.

In addition, an increasing number of premium brands tend to use mass marketing. For example, some

premium brands have lowered their prices to reach a wider consumer base and increase sales during the recession (Mark et al., 2016). Although De Barnier et al. (2012) argue that mass marketisation can damage brand attributes, this paper attempts to explain how in some cases the mass marketization approach can increase brand reputation and brand accessibility without damaging brand identity accessibility. We will go into further detail about examples of this being implemented in the case of B&O and Polestar.

There are many studies on luxury or premium brands, but few studies have attempted to explain the accessibility and mass appeal of these brands. When we consider brands, the theoretical delimitation of this paper is to define a corporate brand rather than a product brand. Therefore, the brand strategy measurements in this paper are thought of from a corporate perspective, although in this case, we may go through a particular product.

To further investigate the activities of premium brands to increase brand accessibility, this paper aims to study how premium and luxury brands can become more accessible to consumers whilst maintaining brand identity. As a result, this paper poses three research questions:

1. In this case, what did the premium or luxury brand do to increase brand accessibility?
2. Why did the premium or luxury brand do this?
3. How can brands improve their accessibility in general?

Literature Review

Brand identity

Kapferer (2000) stresses the importance of brand identity defining it

as “the vision/key beliefs of the brands and its core values”. Akin to that Kapferer (2000), Greyer and Urde (2019) stresses the paramount importance of the core values of a firm when analysing its identity.

Brand identity is characterised by permanence and continuity, which means that it helps companies to know themselves, be themselves, and resist change (Kapferer, 2012). Therefore, one of the essentials in strategic brand management is to correctly identify the brand identity and maintain it.

Greyer and Urde (2019) developed a brand identity matrix to allow companies to analyse each aspect of their organisation whilst keeping core values at the heart of the organisation. Greyer and Urde (2019) noted that this matrix acts as a tool for guiding executive teams through a set of questions intended to examine the identity of an organisation.

The result and interpretation of the brand identity are defined as the brand image (Kapferer, 2012). Kapferer (2012) defines identity as the sender in communication, while the brand image is on the receiver's side. Liu et al. (2012), examining two luxury brands (Chanel and CK), demonstrate that brand identity and brand image alignment with the desired user image of the potential market are key factors in maintaining the long-term relationship between consumers and the brand. To determine the consistency of the above elements, the corporate branding tool developed by Hatch and Schultz (2001) helps executives to identify discrepancies between corporate vision, culture, and image in practical applications.

Luxury and premium brands

Many researchers both past and present have defined and evaluated luxury

brands (Nueno and Quelch, 1998, De Barnier et al., 2012, Phau and Prendergast, 2000). Luxury Brand is defined as a subjective characteristic in the mind of the consumer i.e. tangible and intangible values (Nueno and Quelch, 1998). De Barnier et al. (2012) add to this notion that luxury brands should satisfy both psychological needs and traditional functional needs. Phau and Prendergast (2000) described luxury brands through four characteristics: exclusivity, established identity, increased brand awareness, and efforts to maintain sales levels and consumer loyalty.

In the field of marketing management, it is increasingly vital to build a brand image in the minds of consumers. Holden (1992) emphasises the neglected role of brand retrieval in the minds of consumers and the importance of brand awe. Kowalczyk underlines the importance of previous knowledge of luxury brands for consumers before entering the buying process (Kowalczyk and Mitchell, 2021). Kim, et al (2020) note how “Brands can also evoke awe when consumers perceive them to be vast”. Premium and luxury brands evoke a sense of vastness in consumers' minds due to exceeding consumer expectations through quality, social status, innovation, and aesthetics.

As luxury branding developed and matured, it was inevitably interpreted and redefined for the mass market (Atwal and Williams, 2009). Nueno and Quelch (1998) also explain the significance of mass marketing for brand improvement in the context of managers. However, there are still some researchers doubting the mass-marketing of luxury brands, since widely retails may lose the emotional value and scarcity of luxury products (De Barnier et al., 2012).

In contrast to luxury brands, Kapferer (2012) explains the realism of premium brands as a valuing of high tangible values rather than intangible or emotional values. On the one hand, premium brands offer consumers a tangible opportunity to enhance their experiential enjoyment by enhancing the brand experience (Dwivedi et al., 2018). On the other hand, Dwivedi et al. (2018) propose that premium brands also require consumers to accept a price premium because high costs lead to a positive experience. This means that premium brands are likely to make some changes to win over more consumers to achieve certain objectives. The research by Mark et al. (2016) supports the belief that premium brands will have the opportunity to expand their consumer base and increase sales by lowering prices during a recession.

Brand accessibility

Meyvis and Janiszewski (2004) present that consumers tend to try to retrieve accessible information first. Accessibility is one of the major barriers to growth for luxury brands due to factors such as geography, social class, and media (Jain et al., 2015). For premium or luxury brands with exclusivity, price is a limiting factor for brand accessibility (Brad, n.d.). Gruen and Corsten's (2021) study confirms that in marketing, insufficient accessibility means a failure of marketing investment. Along with acting as a barrier, Urkmez and Wagner remind us that "accessibility determines how customers may perceive luxury brands based on their availability" (Urkmez and Wagner, 2015). Gruen and Corsten (2021) emphasise that accessibility is one of the key elements of the consumer shopping experience. De Barnier et al. (2012) believe that the inaccessibility of luxury brands helps to increase the

emotional value of the brand in the minds of consumers. Traditional consumers of luxury goods prefer inaccessible brands to obtain more intangible value (De Barnier et al., 2012). However, Meyvis and Janiszewski (2004) highlight that increasing brand accessibility can help reduce damage to brand image and increase the success of brand extensions when extending a brand.

In addition, Gruen and Corsten, (2021) suggest that a lack of accessibility means that distribution is sometimes inadequate and consumers do not have easy access to products. Brad (n.d.) argues that accessibility helps companies to grow by increasing sales and developing new customers. Large brands have the advantage of higher awareness, market penetration, popularity, and customer loyalty. Therefore, brand alliances and expansions in line with the brand image can help brands to increase accessibility without hurting the brand image.

Brand alliance

Aaker (2004) argued that brand alliances offer an instant route to market development as opposed to brand building which is a notably longer process. As highlighted by Lukovitz (2009) combining high-end positioning with low-end positioning runs the risk of brand values being eroded. Such collaboration may confuse consumers and have a negative impact on the high-end brand. However, Vaidyanathan and Aggarwal (2022) claim that asymmetric brand alliances result in weak brands being negatively affected while strong brands increase brand salience. Alike to Lukovitz (2009), Kottler and Keller (2009) outline that organisations can "borrow" brand equity from a brand alliance, and therefore there is a risk that the low-positioned brand stands to

gain more brand equity. Luxury and premium brands must assess the risk to brand equity when considering a collaboration to increase growth. Cao (2017) stresses the significance of the secondary brand avoiding overexploitation. A secondary brand's role in a brand alliance is the attraction of new customers, hence why Cao (2017) urges caution in preserving the brand name.

Brand extension

Brand extension refers to established brands in the market using the same name for products initially not offered by the brand (Miniard et al., 2018). Loken and John (1993) show that consumers consider different perceptions of brand extensions based on different brand images, in particular, consumers lose confidence in the brand when some unique emotional attributes are broken. However, Olsen's (2011) study offers some possibilities for brand extension, which confirms that brand extension with strong associations hardly damages the brand image in consumers' minds compared to developments without brand associations. Furthermore, Loken and John (1993) confirm that for brands with common attributes (e.g. high quality), consumers do not lose confidence due to brand extensions. Along the same lines, as highlighted by Miniard et al. (2018), consumer acceptance of brand extensions depends on how well it fits with the brand identity and image.

Brand Rejuvenation

Many older brands fail to keep up with the pace of disconnected development, fail to attract new, younger customers, and gradually begin to age (Kapferer, 2012). Brand Rejuvenation becomes crucial for retro brands. Kapferer,

(2012) argues that the key concept of Brand Rejuvenation is that those old products are reintroduced, or reinvented, to face a market made up of younger consumers.

Day (1999) notes how corporations will be tempted to go for brand rejuvenation because of two fundamental forces affecting the company. One is internal forces having an inward focus and external forces changing because of dynamic markets, technology, and competition altering the company's position in both domestic and international markets. (Shetty, 2011). It is Shetty's (2011) opinion that brands are seen to rejuvenate to retain old customers as opposed to creating a new brand and seeking to gain recognition once again. The latter would prove more costly with barriers to entry once again being a factor in the development of a new brand.

Kapferer(2012). Changing the business model to a certain extent makes the brand more valuable than the old brand. brand rejuvenation, with a new business model and new products, using the old brand is more likely to evoke nostalgia, an emotion that enhances value (Kapferer, 2012). Just like a great brand, we only need to remind consumers how great it is (Sande, 2011)). Consumers will then consciously follow the old brand again. These brand traditions and consumers can be used to generate stronger attachments and commitments and ultimately increase sales (Rose et al., 2016). To be able to better pass on retro brands. Kapferer. (2012) suggests four ways in which brands can be rejuvenated 1. by introducing new products that incorporate elements of past products. 2. by giving old products a fresh makeover 3. by transforming the brand 4. by giving the brand a facelift and completely

changing the design. By demonstrating that new marketing is used to influence consumers' perceptions of the brand's heritage, which in turn influences consumers' attitudes toward the brand and their willingness to buy it (Orth et al., 2019).

Methodology

The methodology of this paper is a case study to explore in depth how luxury or premium brands can increase their accessibility while maintaining their brand identity. This paper uses qualitative research methods to collect and analyse information for answering research questions. These case studies will examine premium and luxury brands' attempts to make products more accessible. Case studies will enable us to investigate successful strategies implemented by luxury and premium brands to increase product accessibility.

The philosophical paradigm used in this paper is social constructionism. Social constructionism is based on the fact that interactions between collective and social contexts are constructed (Blackstone, 2014). Based on the fact that cases may present the phenomenon of changing brands, this paper discovers the explanation behind the phenomenon by establishing the relationships and interactions between cases.

Due to the differences between luxury and premium brands, multiple case studies are used as a research method. The brand identity, brand image, and the fact that a luxury or premium brand has launched representative products are the basic selection of cases. Yin (2018) emphasises that collecting significant evidence in a multi-case study can make the research more convincing. Selecting multiple cases in different contexts and using the same

methodology for in-depth understanding and analysis of the cases can reduce the interference of irrelevant information on the findings (Swanborn, 2010). We will examine four case studies in detail from the following companies: Omega & Swatch, Polestar & Cake, Bang & Olufsen, and Prada and the Wet market. Within these case studies, one of two methods is employed to increase accessibility collaboration and cost pricing.

Examining these case studies provides the challenge of identifying the mean point at which brand identity and image are sacrificed to enhance consumer accessibility. Assessing these four case studies concerning the scale of their product accessibility campaign or collaboration will enable us to understand how growth was achieved while maintaining brand image. Case studies examples only serve to act as a basis until further analysis.

The first step of the study is a literature review to provide academic context and establish a theoretical framework for the case study. Literature reviews are used to familiarise readers with the topic and summarise previous research findings (Blackstone, 2014). Business source complete is the main search engine for searching journal literature along with Google Scholar. Based on the relative maturity of theoretical research in brand management, the validity of the references was judged based on a combination of theoretical relevance, authority, and the number of journal articles cited.

The second step of the study is to collect information for the case. We collect information from the company's website, news reports, and social media to gather the case as a brand story. However, due to the recency of these cases, the sources used for

examining these case studies are almost entirely limited to websites and thus non-peer-reviewed. This may act as a barrier to further research and provide difficulty in gaining extensive information on current research.

The third step of the study is to analyse the case. To analyse the cases, the study used a combination of inductive methods. The inductive approach starts with experience, identifies patterns, and then theories about these patterns (Blackstone, 2014). The analysis aimed to summarise a large amount of data into understandable information that would answer the research questions (Blackstone, 2014). By identifying brand identity, changes in brand image before and after 'strategic' product launches, strategies to increase brand affinity, and scale of collaboration, the four cases will be categorised into a matrix to demonstrate ways in which brands increase their advantage and risk of accessibility. The findings are expected to theorise the brand accessibility strategy matrix and answer the research questions.

Finally, to ensure the quality of the research, the reliability of the data collected and analysed was assessed to ensure that the research was conducted objectively. The multiple case studies increased the reliability of the research through in-depth discussion and analysis of the themes. In order to discover ways to grow brand accessibility while maintaining brand identity, four case studies were examined in depth to avoid the one-sidedness of a single case study. The analysis in this paper will combine the similarities and differences of the four case studies to generalise the theory and reduce the one-sided results due to the subjective opinions of the researcher, adding to the reliability of the chapter.

Case Studies

Omega and Swatch

Swatch is a low-end positioned watch brand. Simple watches for affordable prices are their sole product offering. On the opposite side of this spectrum is Omega. The Swatch Group owns Omega, however, Omega is positioned as a high-end luxury watch brand. The Swatch Group generates annual sales of roughly \$7.5 billion (Andy Hoffman, 2022) and includes 17 brands varying in positioning from Omega being the most expensive and Swatch being the cheapest offering.

Omega originally launched its Speedmaster watch model in 1957 with the Omega Speedmaster Moonwatch being introduced in 1965. Omega had great success with the Speedmaster Moonwatch due to the marketing aspect of the Speedmaster being the first watch ever worn on the moon years later in 1969. Omega wanted to rival Rolex's Daytona with the production of the Speedmaster. Throughout the years the Speedmaster gained recognition as being one of the most idolised luxury watch models of the 20th and 21st centuries.

Omega and Swatch collaborated in March 2022 to offer a range of 'Bioceramic' watches. These watches featured the Omega and Swatch logotypes on a velcro wrist strap. The Omega logo is slightly larger than the swatch logo beneath the face of the watch. The iconic Omega 'Speedmaster' name is featured on the watch face. Omega wants to ensure the sustainability aspect of the watch makes it feel authentic. Producing the watches from ceramic allowed the watches to be made at low cost without consumers feeling they are purchasing an inferior product.

Omega and Swatch ensured the

watches could only be purchased in physical stores throughout Europe. Customers were denied the option to purchase these watches online. Several different colours and choices are provided for consumers. Overall the theme of the ceramic 'Speedmaster' watches is planetary based. Both brands used the name 'Moonswatch'. Variations of the watch included Sun, Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Moon, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto. Each of these models of watches is labelled 'Mission to (Planetary offering)'. Watches can be viewed on the Swatch website and Omega website along with a story and the tagline 'Which Mission will you choose?'

Swatch-Omega MoonSwatch was released on the 24th of March 2022 and sold out on the 27th of March 2022 priced at \$260. Despite the potential risk to Omega's brand identity the watch was not produced in a limited quantity and is still being produced to this day. CEO of Swatch Group Nick Hayek said sales of all Speedmaster models have "risen by double digits" following the MoonSwatch launch (Andy Hoffman, 2022).

Bang and Olufsen

Bang and Olufsen is an audio-visual brand that sells high-end speakers and televisions. Bang and Olufsen's products vary in price enormously with the most expensive speaker they manufacture costing \$84,990 and the cheapest costing \$177. A decision was made in early 2015 to adopt a more agile business model and divert from offering exclusively luxury speakers. This change in the business model allowed Bang and Olufsen to launch 'B&O Play' in 2016. B&O Play was a miniature portable speaker designed for convenience as opposed to the majority of Bang and Olufsen's larger

household audio devices. B&O Play was well received and contributed to a 12% growth in revenue for 2016/17 (Hojmark Jensen, 2022).

On Bang & Olufsen's website, they provide an overview of the history of each product. Notably, the tagline for the B&O play is "Bringing B&O PLAY to life. Attracting the younger generation". Typically the target consumer for Bang and Olufsen would be post-family consumers with excess income (high purchasing power) willing to spend a considerable amount on home entertainment systems. B&O Play is a disruption to this strategic direction. Bang & Olufsen are very clear on their website on the function of not only the B&O Play but also the range of affordable headphones they offered. The decision to launch this affordable range of Bang and Olufsen products was justified by the firm in saying the following:

"The reason was simple: a younger, broader crowd of technology adopters had emerged, with all the trappings of future Bang & Olufsen loyalists. The mission of B&O PLAY became to capture the hearts and minds of these customers in their 20s, 30s, and 40s and through the B&O PLAY product line increase their awareness of the mother brand." - Bang & Olufsen. (Bang & Olufsen.com, 2022)

Bang & Olufsen make it abundantly clear on their website that their affordable Beoplay products do not sacrifice quality to justify the price tag. Featured on the firm's website alongside the Beoplay products notes "It did not compromise on any of the core values of the Bang & Olufsen brand – sound quality, design quality, and craftsmanship.". B&O intends to protect its core values.

Prada and the Wet market

Prada is a famous Italian fashion and

luxury brand. Prada was founded in Italy in 1913 by Mario Prada, who established the brand's noble, elegant and hard-edged style. The core value of Prada is "With a thoughtful and pioneering vision, the Prada Group is a global leader in luxury (Prada, 2022)." Due to changes in the fashion environment, Prada was on the verge of bankruptcy in the 1970s. It was not until Miuccia Prada took over that Prada's sales grew exponentially. From leather goods and clothing to shoes and lingerie, Prada used crossover marketing to build the brand into a complete boutique empire and expand its brand influence worldwide. As a driver of change, Prada offers a contemporary interpretation of unconventional dialogue (Prada, 2022).

Prada has always had a unique marketing strategy for the Asia Pacific market. In 2007, Prada became known to Chinese consumers through the film "The Devil Wears PRADA" (Prada, 2022). In the same year, Prada also collaborated with LG to launch a mobile phone that received a great deal of interest from consumers (Prada, 2022). However, because of the limited availability, many consumers were unable to purchase Prada. These marketing strategies succeeded in solidifying Prada's position as a premium luxury brand (Prada, 2022).

In 2021, Prada succeeded in bringing Prada and its consumers closer together. When it comes to Prada, no one would associate it with a vegetable market, which has a vastly different positioning from that of Prada's fashionable high-end luxury. However, these two different styles have recently merged. To promote the new season's autumn/winter collection, Prada named the event "Feeling Prada" and contracted the Shanghai Wuzhong Market and wrapped its walls and stalls with a representative geometric

print (Dao, 2021).

At Prada wet market, all items are packaged in Prada-printed paper. When a purchase is worth more than 20 CNY, the consumer will receive a free paper carrier bag (Dao, 2021). Many consumers say that it is not the vegetables they want but the Prada packaging and bags.

Prada's alliance with the Wet market transforms the grocery market into an art gallery. By combining it with the market, Prada brings luxury closer to every ordinary consumer. Fruits and vegetables packaged with Prada elements became a successful advertisement for Prada's Fall 2021 fashion show.

Polestar & Cake

Polestar is a company with the strategic goal of making sustainable electric vehicles and helping to create a sustainable society (Polestar, n.d.c). CAKE, is a company with the strategic goal of inspiring people on a mission to move towards a zero-emission society (Cake, n.d.a). Both companies also originate from Sweden but share the same strategic brand objectives in different industry sectors. At the IAA 2021 in Munich, Polestar and CAKE are launching the same product, the Makka electric motorbike from CAKE - Polestar version (blog, 2021). It is evident the Cake Makka is an electric motorbike that has been released as an alliance between two brands. As a product released as an alliance between two brands, the Cake Makka product is sold in the official stores of each brand. The product can be released as an alliance brand collaboration. The product will have the characteristics and mission that both brands have been given together. Firstly, the CAKE Makka must meet CAKE's requirements for a light, quiet and clean product (Cake, n.d.b). It must

also meet Polestar's core requirements for electric vehicle products, namely the goal of eliminating climate impact and recycling (Polestar, n.d.c). The Scandinavian design of the two companies is key to their move towards a brand alliance. Having long admired each other's focus on design, Polestar, and electric motorbike company CAKE, the chief executives of both organisations recognise the shared brand values of their businesses (Polestar, n.d.a). A common pursuit of everything including sustainability and product design for both businesses. This pursuit can be outlined by Polestar's CEO, "Polestar feels a close connection with CAKE, sharing a belief in redefining performance and a passion for design. Our desire to create an electrified and zero-emission future is a clear bridge between us" (Polestar, n.d.a). We are proud to extend our relationship with Polestar through the joint development of the CAKE Makka bike" (Polestar, n.d.a), said Stefan Ytterborn, CEO of CAKE. In addition to a consistent sustainable strategy and design, the two companies share a new vision of marketing, branding, and retail (Polestar, n.d.b). The success of the project is driven by further emphasising the shared ambition of both Polestar and CAKE brands to accelerate their shift toward sustainable mobility (blog, 2021). Like Polestar's electric vehicle products, the CAKE Makka was built primarily for people's freedom to commute and was therefore designed with the modern urban commuter (Cake, n.d.b) in mind. customers who identify with and appreciate both brands (Polestar, n.d.b). Buyers of electric motorbikes are introduced to the Polestar brand through the perceived common brand strategy of both brands. Similarly, when people buy a car in a Polestar shop they will see an electric scooter on display. CAKE's founder and CEO

see the two products as complementary and says: "Instead of wasting time in traffic, looking for a parking space or squeezing into a crowded metro train, together with the team at Polestar we want to make the future of mobility flexible, convenient and emission-free as complementary products" (Polestar, n.d.d).

Findings and Analysis

Totally, this multi-case study includes four examples of brands that have succeeded in enhancing their accessibility while maintaining their identity. The collaboration between Omega and Swatch in March 2022 to offer a range of 'Bioceramic' watches not only resulted in good sales of the allied products but also doubled the sales of Omega's Speedmaster models. Bang and Olufsen highlight on their website that appealing to a younger audience is important to create a heightened sense of awareness in the interest of creating future Bang and Olufsen consumers. Bang and Olufsen launched the inexpensive B&O PLAY product range which not only attracts a younger consumer group but also raises awareness of the parent brand while maintaining core quality and high-end products. Prada organised a joint event with the Wuzhong Wet market in Shanghai, China, which allowed more consumers to experience the Prada brand at a lower cost and reinforced brand influence with Prada's image of luxury and prestige in the minds of consumers. Polestar and CAKE have joined forces to develop the CAKE Makka bike, reinforcing Polestar's core values of sustainability and product design and offering a wide range of options to Polestar consumers. This answered research question one.

Swatch's reputation is also enhanced due to being associated with a luxury

watch brand. Omega offer consumers 'a taste' of owning their Speedmaster watch through the budget MoonSwatch. This product seeks to not only increase awareness and accessibility but evoke brand awe. Consumers should revel in the thought of being able to own an Omega for under \$300. Omega evaluates the risk of being associated with cheap watchmakers in the pursuit of enhanced awareness for younger consumers.

Bang and Olufsen is a high-end electronic brand renowned for its outstanding quality. When we examine why a luxury audio manufacturer such as Bang and Olufsen would offer a product for \$177 when the mean price for their products is approximately 119,039 SEK (\$10,583). One notable reason would be to compete with the increasingly popular mid-range audio producers such as Anker, JBL, Sony, and Marshall. Bang and Olufsen benefit from the sale of these somewhat budget mini speakers in terms of sales figures, however, they are providing consumers with a sense of brand awe. Consumers seek to own premium and luxury products due to the status symbol perception in their minds.

Prada is a typical luxury brand. Compared to the four luxury brand characteristics suggested by Phau and Prendergast (2000), Prada does possess exclusivity, established identity, increased brand awareness, and efforts to maintain sales levels and consumer loyalty. However, as a luxury brand, Prada organises joint events with the Wu Zhong vegetable market in Shanghai, China. A possible explanation for this phenomenon is that Prada, as an agent of change, already has extensive experience in communicating with consumers through non-traditional forms of

dialogue, such as *PRADA* films and Prada & LG mobile phones (Prada, 2022). This time, Prada took a bolder step by bundling wrapping paper and paper bags with the Prada pattern with cheap vegetables and fruits from the vegetable market in an attempt to increase the accessibility of the brand. The reason for this is that Prada chose the most crowded vegetable markets to try and connect with more consumers in order to promote the upcoming fashion week. Judging from the feedback from the crowd, many consumers said that it was not the vegetables they wanted but the Prada packaging and bags. This means that consumers are not less in awe of the brand because of Prada's alliance with the vegetable market. Even more, Prada brings intangible value to more consumers as they can experience the emotional value that the Prada brand brings by buying vegetables at a cheaper price.

Polestar is traditionally a Swedish company and has entered the market as a manufacturer of high-end electric vehicles. In 2021 Polestar and CAKE jointly launched an electric motorbike. In this brand alliance business partnership, CAKE enters the Polestar brand segment as a start-up. Polestar and CAKE have been able to develop a brand alliance and launch products in two completely different segments mainly because they share the same brand values and design model. For this collaboration, both brands have their logos printed on the common products to ensure that the products act as allied brands. Often, customers choose products from premium brands because of the tangible value the brand brings to the customer rather than the emotional value (Kapferer, 2012). Therefore, the core values of Polestar are effective in attracting the customer base, and CAKE's customer base buys

CAKE Makka electric motorbikes also attracted by the core values of the brand. Therefore, the same core values of both brands do not lead to a decrease in consumer recognition of the brand due to the difference in price and variety of products. On the contrary, Polestar's electric cars and CAKE Makka electric motorbikes are both alternative options and complementary products. Premium branded products that offer lower prices during the current recession represent a greater opportunity to expand the consumer base and increase branded product sales (Mark et al., 2016). Therefore, it is profitable for premium brands to engage in brand alliances, which is the answer to research question two.

Finally, to answer research question three, we divide these four cases by two dimensions, respectively extended category and types of value provided by the brand. In consideration of both Lukovitz (2009) notes that brand alliances between high-end and low-end positioning may affect brand value, and Miniard et al. (2018) highlight that consumer acceptance of a brand extension depends on how well it fits with the brand's identity and image, It is necessary to distinguish between the attributes that characterise a brand alliance or brand extension. Figure 1 shows the distinction between brands, in which the horizontal axis is the extension category and the vertical axis is the types of value provided by the brand.

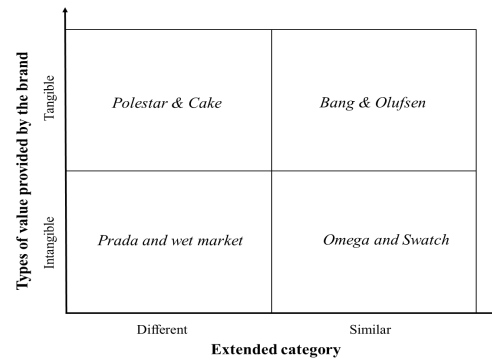


Figure 1: The difference between brands.

Kapferer (2012) argues that premium brands focus on providing tangible value to consumers while luxury brands focus on providing tangible and intangible value to that consumer. Therefore, the types of value provided by the brand are the first dimension that brands consider when considering strategies to improve accessibility.

Kapferer (2012) argues that while premium brands focus on providing tangible value to the consumer, luxury brands focus on providing both tangible and intangible value to that consumer. For example, Prada for its elegance and fashion leadership, and Omega for its perfection and excellence. However, as the luxury market becomes saturated, both Prada and Omega are turning their attention to mass marketing to bring luxury brands closer to consumers. Although De Barnier et al. (2012) argue against mass marketing strategies for luxury brands, the case of Prada shows that mass marketing can increase customer impact without damaging the brand image. And the case of Omega shows that the alliance with Swatch has led to a brand revival by boosting sales of not only new products but also existing products. One possible explanation is that Prada and Omega increased the accessibility of the brand rather than reducing its exclusivity as the brand's core products did not become

lower-end and more accessible. The products designed by luxury brands for mass marketing strategies only provide consumers with a rudimentary experience of access to a luxury brand, which still falls short of the experience of buying a true luxury product.

In contrast to luxury brands, changes in premium brands should focus more on securing core values, and Loken and John (1993) suggest that consumers do not usually lose confidence in a brand because it has changed if it maintains its tangible core values. Bang and Olufsen and Polestar are both premium brands that bring tangible value to the consumer.

Bang and Olufsen and Polestar both rely on tangible value creation. Consumers of both of these brands seek functionality. Brand awe is less prevalent in premium brands compared to luxury brands.

Based on the analysis of four case studies, we finally came up with four ways to improve brand accessibility for different cases of brand alliances and brand extensions. Figure 2 illustrates the approach to increasing brand accessibility based on the differences between brands.

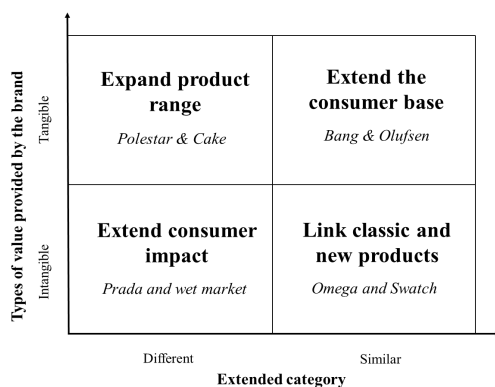


Figure 2: Approaches to increasing brand accessibility based on the difference between brands.

When the brand is oriented towards providing intangible value and

extending products that are different from the brand's inherent categories, the brand can increase brand accessibility by some method of expanding consumer reach. For example, Prada spreads Prada's paper bags through the vegetable markets in order to give consumers a brief feeling of owning a Prada bag. However, based on the alliance of Prada's paper bags with the Wet market, Prada did not lose loyal consumers and lose its brand image, as consumers still clearly perceive the gap between the two products.

When brands are oriented towards providing intangible value and working on the same products, brands can rejuvenate classic products and increase brand accessibility through brand alliances by establishing links between classic and new products. Omega's offering of a variation of their iconic 'Speedmaster' watch for a fraction of the normal value equates to the creation of brand awe being ingrained in the minds of consumers.

When a brand is oriented towards tangible value and expands its offerings beyond the brand's inherent categories, the brand can increase brand accessibility by expanding its product range to increase the chances of consumer purchase. For example, Polestar has expanded its product range through its alliance with CAKE, thus enabling consumers to buy innovative, designed and sustainable cars and e-bikes that cover Polestar's core values. By maintaining the brand's core values in different but similar areas, polestar preserves its brand image while increasing brand accessibility.

When a brand is oriented towards tangible value and working on the same products, the brand can increase its accessibility by increasing its audience and expanding its customer

base in several ways. B&O increasing their accessibility allows them to reach a younger consumer base. The aim of the affordable product offering of B&O Play is to immerse consumers in the B&O experience. By being immersed in this experience and heightened brand awareness consumers may seek to buy more expensive B&O products in later life when they have more disposable income.

Discussion

Theoretical implications

This study proposes a model for improving the accessibility of premium and luxury brands. Although previous research has been conducted in depth in different directions, this paper is the first to combine brand strategy, brand alliance strategy, product business development, and brand revitalisation strategy, and provides a supporting argument for the theory that premium or luxury brands can improve brand accessibility without damaging the brand image.

Practical implications

In practical application, the model proposed in this study to improve the accessibility of different brands provides two reference dimensions when developing brand strategies, brand alliance strategies, product business expansion, and brand revitalisation strategies. The model creates an interaction between brand business development and brand value based on two dimensions: the type of value offered by the brand and the extended product range. High-end and luxury brands can refer to this model for their business decisions.

Management implications

For managers, on the one hand, the findings of this paper can reduce

uncertainty when managers consider brand alliance and brand expansion strategies. Based on the discussion in this article, managers of premium and luxury brands will have the opportunity to emulate the success cases mentioned in this article to improve the accessibility of their brands without damaging their brand image.

Conclusion

Based on four typical case studies, this paper discusses and analyses how luxury or premium brands can improve brand accessibility through brand alliances and brand extensions. We have summarised four approaches that companies can take to improve brand accessibility without damaging their brand image, respectively expand product range, extend consumer impact, extend the consumer base, and link classic and new products. To apply these four approaches, this paper has developed a model for improving the accessibility of premium and luxury with two dimensions.

Limitations

There were several limitations of this research that make further research necessary to gain a true understanding of increasing accessibility for premium and luxury products. We were limited to carrying out only four case studies due to time constraints. The recency of these case studies was also an issue as we cannot investigate the impact on the brand identity over the long term. Due to the recency of the Omega and Swatch collaboration, I cannot provide financial figures for the year 2022. Sales are short term however, brand building is long term hence why this acts as a potential limitation to the future impact these product offerings will have in the four mentioned brands.

Future Research

Large focus groups would be necessary to establish a balancing point between accessibility and image.

Future research could focus more on

the brand aware aspect of creating brand accessibility. The focus of this paper was brand accessibility, although brand awareness could also offer enlightenment in regard to brand aware.

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