



SCHOOL OF  
ECONOMICS AND  
MANAGEMENT

# Constructing the Feeling of Luxury on Social Media

*How Traditional Luxury brands, within the luxury goods sector, use Multimodal  
Communication to maintain Exclusivity on Instagram and TikTok*

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# Abstract

**Title:** Constructing the Feeling of Luxury on Social Media: How Traditional Luxury brands, within the luxury goods sector, use Multimodal Communication to maintain Exclusivity on Instagram and TikTok

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**Key words:** Luxury Branding, Multimodal Communication, Social Media Marketing, Marketing Semiotics, Exclusivity Online, Storytelling, Brand identity

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to explore how Traditional luxury brands construct the feeling of luxury on Social Media through multimodal communication.

**Theoretical perspectives:** The study uses a combination of theoretical concepts within; Conspicuous and Status Consumption, Luxury Branding In the Digital Age, Luxury Storytelling, Marketing Semiotics, Bourdieu's theory of Social Distinction and The Corporate Brand Identity Matrix. Together these provide concepts that give an understanding of how the feeling of luxury is constructed from different perspectives.

**Methodology and Empirical Data:** The study is grounded in a relativist and social constructionist perspective and is conducted with a qualitative and abductive research approach. It uses document study as a data collection method and multimodal analysis to analyse visual and auditory elements within content from three selected Traditional luxury brands on Instagram and TikTok. In addition, so-called New luxury brands are added to the analysis as a reference point to highlight differences and similarities within the communication.



**Conclusions:** The study finds that Traditional luxury brands, within the luxury goods sector, construct the feeling of luxury through multimodal communication on Social Media by creating symbolic distance, focusing on cultural depth and using craftsmanship and heritage focused storytelling within their content. This communication contributes to reconstructing exclusivity on seemingly open platforms by making it appear intellectually demanding and selective.

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# 1. Background

Anyone who has seen the world-famous Netflix show “Emily in Paris” (Netflix, n.d.) knows what it looks like when French culture collides with American culture. When Emily steps into the French office “Savoir” in Paris, her role is to contribute with her American touch and modernise the company. Emily photographs the French fashion she comes across and shares it on her Instagram, and clear cross-cultural tension among her new colleagues arises. The French way to represent luxurious haute couture is to let the quiet exclusivity speak for itself and let the garment represent its craftsmanship and history. Emily's idea leans more toward the mindset of “Did it even happen if it's not posted online?”. For her, luxury is something that should be seen online and shared with the public, while for her French colleagues it is something to be experienced quietly and reserved for the chosen few. This Netflix series reveals something central about luxury in our digital era. Brands no longer compete solely on reputable shopping streets but also for attention in the digital environment. This shows that luxury today is perceived and communicated differently than previously.

Luxury is a concept that means different things depending on its context, meaning there is no single definition of the concept as it depends on culture, time and place (Piatti-Farnell, 2024). The word “Luxury” comes from the latin word “luxatio”, which means distance (Kapferer, 2012). The distance refers to a feeling of separation, both socially and symbolically. It is an idea that is built upon cultural and communicative practices (Piatti-Farnell, 2024). Luxury has historically only been available to the rich (Piatti-Farnell, 2024), and has been associated with perceptions such as authenticity, heritage, rarity, exclusivity and relies on curated physical spaces and touch (Cardoso et al., 2025; Diallo et al., 2021; Kapferer & Bastien, 2012; Ornati & Kalbaska, 2022). The higher socio-economic class traditionally buy luxury products to show off their wealth by their ability to buy products without an actual function, but rather for emotional satisfaction (Sanz-Lopez et al., 2024). Luxury products fall under 9 categories; luxury personal goods, luxury cars, private jets, luxury cruises, yachts, fine food, fine wines and spirits, luxury hospitality and designer furniture (Figueiredo & Eiriz, 2021). This study focuses on the personal goods category.

### 1.1.1 Personal Luxury Goods

Within the personal luxury goods category, there are several sub-categories which is; menswear, womenswear, fragrances, cosmetics, watches, accessories and leather products (Figueiredo & Eiriz, 2021). Today, established brands within the fashion industry often include several of these subcategories, as an expansion of the brand, to achieve a higher profit (Figueiredo & Eiriz, 2021). Fashion has always been a part of society, and is a historical phenomenon. It has historically served as a status symbol and a political and cultural affiliation (Giurdanella, 2024), and along with that one way to show status and various class differences has been via luxury goods (Cardoso et al., 2025). Over time, luxury has evolved from symbolizing wealth to reflecting personal taste, craftsmanship, and brand identity. Today, when we think of companies that embody these qualities, we often refer to brands associated with *Traditional luxury* (Cardoso et al., 2025).

### 1.1.2 Traditional Luxury Brands

Traditional luxury brands were once known as family-owned brands and are characterized by their core values, brand heritage and exclusivity (Kapferer, 2015; Sanz-Lopez et al., 2024). A brand that is characterised by its heritage puts a great emphasis on its history, and uses it as a key component in their communication and creation of its identity (Urde, 2024). Traditional luxury brands are considered a social marker in society and are strongly associated with hedonic experience (Diallo et al., 2021), which is defined as an emotional and satisfying experience (Jiang et al., 2023). Consumers buy luxury goods to express their social status within society, as luxury brands are considered to have high social and symbolic value (Li et al., 2020). These are brands that are categorized with high prices and historically located on exclusive selected streets (Kapferer, 2015). Exclusivity, that historically is associated with the feeling of luxury, is defined by Debenedetti et al (2025) as something that is not for everyone but only for a few. It is partly maintained through having a small number of stores in the world, with closed doors, where you have to ring the bell to be allowed in. Luxury stores often include private rooms for added exclusivity (Diallo et al., 2021; Debenedetti et al., 2025). Traditional luxury brands focus on satisfying a limited selection of customers, called the “happy few”, instead of focusing on the “happy many” where everyone is welcomed (Debenedetti et al., 2025). Moreover, these brands must actively work to maintain their exclusivity by making the brand and their products seem rare (Wang et al., 2024). Exclusivity



is more specifically linked to a company's ability to signal distinction rather than create a community. Exclusivity is thus achieved by limiting access so that it is not available to everyone (Wang et al., 2024).

### 1.1.3 The Impact of Digitalisation on the Luxury Industry

During the twenty-first century, the luxury industry has undergone a digital transformation, connected to the rise of Social Media, which has changed the ways in which luxury is represented (Piatti-Farnell, 2024). Meikle (2016) describes Social Media as a platform database that allows people to communicate personal and public communication, meaning allowing people to say things, create things and share things with others. Social Media platforms consist of multimodal data, meaning several elements at the same time, that creates a meaning when combined (Li et al., 2024; Eksell & Thelander, 2014).

During Covid, the fashion industry was affected just like the rest of the world, this resulted in more need of digitalisation within the industry (Chan et al., 2022). Not only did it affect fashion in general, but it also affected the market of luxury consumption (Soni & Kumar, 2024). Digitalisation changed consumer behaviours and therefore also how companies now interact with consumers (Khan et al., 2022). Social Media platforms have become central for how brands communicate their identity and connect with consumers (Gensler et al, 2013). Social Media marketing in the fashion industry has become crucial, including for luxury brands, to maintain relationships with current customers and engage with potential customers, as well as to maintain their success (Zhang et al., 2024). For Traditional Luxury brands, this shift towards an increasingly digitised landscape presents a paradox: they need to adapt to these digital platforms, to remain relevant, but by doing that they risk undermining the very exclusivity that defines their identity (Cowan & Kostyk, 2024; Sanz-Lopez et al., 2024). Moreover, the reason why several Traditional Luxury brands have been hesitant to embrace digitalisation is that there has been a fear of not being able to deliver the same level of personal service online as in real life (Berridge, 2018). When operating online this type of service disappears (Piatti-Farnell, 2024; Lin & ku, 2023). In a digital environment, luxury brands can no longer rely on physical attributes and experiences, instead, other types of communication have become more important to maintain a luxury brand image online (Yoo, 2023). Furthermore, Ugglä (2016) writes that the line between what traditionally has been

seen as luxury and more contemporary expressions of luxury has been increasingly “blurred” because of digitalisation. The question is, whether the luxury industry can still be perceived as luxurious and maintain the attributes of luxury when entering the digital world (Cardoso et al., 2025). Since the stores can no longer rely on multisensory impressions such as scents and touch, it has become important to integrate other multisensory impressions, such as the visual and auditory online to keep delivering a sense of luxury (Piatti-Farnell, 2024; Lin & Ku, 2023).

## 1.2 Problematization

As digitalisation has transformed the luxury industry, both consumption behaviors and brand communication have undergone a significant change (Piatti-Farnell, 2024). Social Media platforms have become not only essential marketing tools but also primary arenas where brand identities are created and expressed (Yoo, 2023). This transformation has posed unique challenges for Traditional luxury brands whose traditional values are primarily created through among other attributes, exclusivity, heritage and highly curated physical spaces (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012). The digital environment is characterized by speed, visibility and accessibility (Harness et al. 2024; Kluge & Fassnacht, 2015), which are characteristics that stand in contrast to the fundamental elements of luxury (Sanz-Lopez et al., 2024). Traditional Luxury brands can no longer rely solely on creating exclusivity through physical inaccessibility and personal service, but now face the paradox of having to be visible to remain relevant, even if that visibility puts their exclusivity at risk (Hennigs et al, 2012).

Although multisensory communication has become more and more critical in digital branding, especially within the luxury sector and online (Piatti-Farnell, 2024; Lin & Ku, 2023), there is still limited research on *how* luxury is constructed multimodally on Social Media platforms. Since Social Media, as part of the digital environment, is based on speed and visibility, while luxury is based on exclusivity and heritage this underlines a challenge for the Traditional luxury brands and an area to explore further. Luxury is also used by consumers to show belonging and status and reflects bigger patterns in society. By exploring this, an understanding of how ideas of status and culture are created can be obtained. This highlights a gap that this study aims to explore.

## 1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore how Traditional luxury brands within the luxury goods industry construct the feeling of luxury through a multimodal communication on Social Media, while striving to remain a sense of exclusivity online. In this study, construct refers to how luxury is culturally and socially built. The feeling of luxury is built up on visual and audio elements on Social Media. These elements interact to "construct" the exclusive experience that maintains the feeling of luxury. More specifically, the study focuses on how Traditional luxury brands that are associated with exclusivity and heritage can convey exclusivity in a space that is characterized by speed, visibility and accessibility (Harness et al. 2024; Kluge & Fassnacht, 2015).

The study adopts a communication centered perspective and uses a qualitative document study with a multimodal analysis approach. It is grounded in existing theories of conspicuous and status consumption (Assimos et al., 2019), Luxury branding in the age of Social Media (Sanz-Lopez et al., 2024; Lin & Ku, 2023) Luxury storytelling (Piatti-Farnell, 2024), Marketing Semiotics (Oswald, 2012) Bourdieu's theory of Social Distinction (Arnould et al., 2023) and The Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (Urde, 2024). Through the combination of these perspectives, this study aims to contribute to existing literature within these areas by providing a symbolic, cultural and strategic view of how brands construct the feeling of luxury multimodally. From a managerial perspective the study hopes to provide insights into how brands can construct their content to an evolving luxury market. However, the aim is not to achieve generalizability but rather to gain transferable insights into how luxury is constructed and maintained on Social Media within this specific context.

## 1.4 Outline of the Thesis

This study is divided into six primary chapters, which are structured to align with the research purpose.

**Chapter 1:** Background. Provides an introduction to the subject, a problematization, the research purpose and delimitations of the study.

**Chapter 2:** Literature review. Gives an overview of previous research and key concepts including; Conspicuous and Status Consumption, Luxury Branding In the Digital Age, Luxury Storytelling, Marketing Semiotics, Bourdieu's theory of Social Distinction and The Corporate Brand Identity Matrix.

**Chapter 3:** Methodology. Describe research philosophy, research approach, New Luxury as a reference point, data collection, data analysis as well as discuss the quality of the study.

**Chapter 4:** Empirical findings and Analysis. Presents the main themes found in the content from the three Traditional luxury brands (Louis Vuitton, Dior, Gucci) and the reference brands within New luxury (COS, Ganni, Acne Studios).

**Chapter 5:** Discussion. Reflects on the implications of the findings and how it links to previous research as well as its broader societal context.

**Chapter 6:** Conclusions. Answer the purpose through presenting the main findings. Presents theoretical contributions and managerial implications as well as suggestions for further research.

## 2. Literature Review

In this chapter, the previous research that has guided the purpose of exploring how Traditional luxury brands construct the feeling of luxury on Social Media through multimodal communication, is presented. Given the purpose, it is important that the theories included allow for an analysis of both the symbolic, cultural and strategic dimensions included in the construction.

Literature and theories about *conspicuous and status consumption* are included as it provides a perspective that can be used to understand the social role of luxury. To understand the aim behind the luxury brands communication, it is crucial to get an understanding of the reasons for why consumers consume luxury goods in the first place, which this part examines. Moreover, the section *Luxury Branding in the Age of Social Media* focuses on how digitalisation and the emergence of Social Media platforms have changed the luxury market. This part underlines the challenge luxury brands face today with the paradox of visibility versus exclusivity.

*Storytelling* is included as it is a powerful tool for constructing cultural and emotional meaning. This is especially important connected to how Luxury is constructed in Social Media, when physical touch points are absent. Furthermore, *Marketing Semiotics* is used to examine how meaning is communicated through visual and auditory elements. This is a key theoretical perspective in the study that allows for a decoding of signs, symbolic elements and different means of expression to convey luxury. Another critical theoretical perspective that is included is Bourdieu's *Theory of Social Distinction*, which provides an understanding of how these expressions function as markers of cultural capital and social status. Lastly, *The Corporate Brand Identity Matrix* provides a more strategic perspective and is used to understand how brands express and shape their identity as luxury brands on Social Media.

Some perspectives were considered but then intentionally excluded to maintain analytical focus. One perspective that was considered is digital brand communities and co-creation, as these aspects are relevant on Social Media where consumers often participate in the communication. However, this was something that was excluded as the focus of the study lies in the communication in itself and its implications, rather than consumer interaction or user generated content.

Altogether, this chapter synthesises theories that together enable an investigation of the study's purpose from multiple angles. When combined they give a framework for how luxury is symbolically built, socially positioned and strategically expressed on Social Media.

## 2.2 Conspicuous and Status Consumption

To understand how the feeling of luxury is constructed, it is crucial to get a picture of what people want to achieve, consciously or unconsciously, when consuming in certain ways. To do this, the concepts conspicuous consumption and status consumption will be looked at and how they have been addressed in previous research. Consumption is shaped by culture and society (Assimos et al., 2019). This affects what we buy and how people make daily decisions within their consumption. Products gain symbolic meaning through social aspects, and the meaning can range from local to global. Thus, products are messengers of what an individual wants to convey. Veblen (1988) coined the term conspicuous consumption at the end of the 19th century. The coining of the term was to demonstrate status. According to Veblen, ownership of branded products should satisfy intellectual or aesthetic needs rather than just be useful (Assimos et al., 2019). Simmel (1957) further argued that individuals want to imitate the consumption behaviour of the upper social class to try to climb the social ladder (Assimos et al., 2019).

Veblen believes that consumption is an activity that is socially motivated, meaning that recognising symbols becomes an activity to show off. But at the same time, there is also a desire to be able to distinguish oneself as an individual. Status consumption does not necessarily have to be about showing off expensive products or one's wealth, rather the importance lies in owning the product. Ownership contributes to social recognition and contributes to self-respect, well-being and prestige of the owner of the product (Assimos et al., 2019). Conspicuous consumption rather has a focus on showing off and exposing one's wealth in public. The focus is on improving one's image, and is consumption with the purpose of signaling cultural capital and a distinctive self (Assimos et al., 2019; Sahin & Nasir, 2022). Self-expression links personal style and social identity. Brands become tools to show others who you are. The study's findings show that there is a tendency between consumers and how they link branded products to conspicuous consumption and

self-expression. The researchers underline that marketers should emphasize a product's unique characteristics, but at the same time highlight how a product fits into a social group, as this is something consumers are looking for (Assimos et al., 2019).

Another study that focused on similar concepts is Sahin and Nasir's (2022) study where they developed a model to look at the relationship between status consumption, conspicuous consumption, and symbolic status perception. They used a survey to explore how people's tendency to consume status and luxury goods is affected by their sensitivity to others' opinions as well as how much status these individuals experienced that they got compared to others when consuming these products. They found that the people who care and are influenced much by other people were more likely to engage in status and conspicuous consumption. Another finding was that people perceived getting a higher status by engaging in this type of consumption. Moreover, people believed that they got more status from using a product than they thought others would get by using the same product (Sahin and Nasir, 2022). Sahin and Nasir (2022) describe how these results can be used as implications for brands and retailers about how they can create more effective marketing by understanding the consumers' consumption behaviour and meet their social status needs. The study presents three effects: snob (differentiation), bandwagon (group belonging) and Veblen (wealth display), which guide branding strategies (Sahin and Nasir, 2022).

In conclusion, the presented studies illustrate central aspects of the concepts conspicuous consumption and status consumption. Both studies highlight how consumption can be used as a way to communicate status and wealth and differentiate oneself or show belonging through consuming products connected to a certain symbolic meaning, that they gain through social and cultural aspects. This is something that brands take advantage of in their marketing activities. However, although focus has been given to why consumers engage in status and conspicuous consumption, little attention has been given to in detail how brands construct their communication to take advantage of these attributes.

## 2.3 Luxury Branding in the Age of Social Media

To understand how luxury is constructed today it is necessary to get a picture of how the industry has changed due to the emergence of Social Media. To do this we will look at how it

has been addressed in previous research. Due to the internet, consumers' communication formats have changed and brands, including luxury brands, have had to update their Traditional marketing to a digital format with modern technology (Khan et al., 2022).

Sanz-Lopez et al. (2024) explain that luxury brands and their products are ways for consumers, usually from the upper class, to express their ability to spend on products that in themselves do not fulfill a function. The products within the luxury sector are considered to be like art that is designed for the exclusive market. Due to these associations to luxury, luxury brands have been hesitant to transition to the digital. Although there is a hesitation to embrace the digital, a change towards a more digitised approach is beginning to take place within the sector. This change reflects new customer behaviour. The authors argue that those who do not choose to embrace the digital change, or fail to do so, risk ending up with competitive disadvantages (Sanz-Lopez et al., 2024).

The research addresses two central concepts, digitalisation and digital transformation. Where digitalisation within the luxury segment is an analog transformation to become digital and includes more specific areas such as; use of Social Media, communication, digital marketing, and storytelling (Sanz-Lopez et al., 2024). The authors emphasize that the transition from analog to digital is characterized by specific features that make it a complex process. They believe that it is important to be able to find a balance between digital innovation while maintaining the brand's core values. This is done by carefully interacting digital channels and tools and not letting the digital take over. The other concept, digital transformation, is about integrating the digital within the whole organisation in everything from products, processes and business models and not just within the communication as mentioned above. Within the luxury sector, many brands have started to embrace digitalisation but few have committed fully to a digital transformation, as the challenge for these types of brands lies in balancing innovation with still preserving core values (San-Lopez et al., 2024).

Furthermore, Lin & Ku (2023) state that digital means of communication are something that is taken for granted in today's society. Luxury brands were late to digitalisation due to the loss of physical service, but now rely on Social Media as platforms to transmit the brand experience. Especially through, for example, Instagram, with its visual attributes, the brand's visual stories are transmitted to the consumer. Digital experiences are a key factor in shaping how consumers perceive luxury brands today, making it important to have communication



that is consistent across all platforms. The research shows that it is important for luxury brands to have a strong digital brand experience, where the visual and auditory are in focus and are appealing. Lin and Ku (2023) conclude in their study that there is a connection between attitudinal loyalty and an emotional connection to the brand, where attributes such as tradition and heritage create a stronger brand bond. The content should express authenticity through various elements that express the country of origin as well as integrate the logo. Moreover, intellectual and emotional experiences should be in focus to create a strong consumer preference. (Lin & Ku, 2023).

The digitalization has also been a contributing factor to what is called “democratization of luxury”. It started in the late 20th century and emerged due to globalization and a growing spending power within the middle class in emerging markets. It has transformed the luxury industry and made it more accessible than before (Shukla et al, 2022). Shukla and Rosendo-Rios (2025) explore how customers of Traditional luxury brands react to the democratization of luxury, as luxury becomes available to a broader customer base. The article finds that democratization of luxury negatively affects Traditional luxury consumers as their purchase intention decreases and their brand abandonment increases. This is because the consumers feel like the brands are not as exclusive when they are no longer as rare and hard to get. This leads to a decreased “pride of ownership”. which means that the customers no longer feel as proud to own the brand. However, luxury brands can counteract the perceived erosion of exclusivity, by using “rarity-principles”. Rarity-principles is initiatives which focus on reinforcing Traditional luxury values such as heritage and craftsmanship and originality by for example offering customized or limited edition collections (Shukla and Rosendo-Rios, 2025).

Previous research has primarily focused on the fact that luxury brands adapt to digitalisation and Social Media. However, little attention has been given to specific strategies of how the luxury brands core values are expressed and preserved in the digital content. There is a lack of information about how content can be used to construct the feeling of Luxury on Social Media, platforms that come with increased accessibility and visibility.

## 2.4 Constructing Luxury Through Storytelling

One important part of how brands construct the feeling of luxury is through the use of storytelling. To understand the topic, previous research has been reviewed. Moin (2024) describes how storytelling has been fundamental for human evolution as it has helped us to connect with each other historically. In branding, storytelling can be used as a strategic tool to create emotional connections between customers and brands, in a world that is overloaded with messages and commercials (Fog et al. 2005). Furthermore, Escalas (2004) highlights that storytelling is connected to narrative processing, which means that individuals give meaning to experiences by organizing them into stories. If the brand has a story that fits into the individual customer's narrative, the customers relate to the brand emotionally. The brands can also construct meaning and value through storytelling in their advertisement. Kapferer and Bastien (2012) means that storytelling is especially important for brands within the luxury segment as they rely on creating a unique identity and desirability.

Previously in the physical environment brands have used multisensory attributes, which are no longer available digitally. In a digital environment, only hearing and vision are available, therefore it is important to focus on these sensors when acting online (Lin & Ku, 2023). This means that expressions of luxury are often displayed via exaggerated iconography and pleasurable aesthetics. Visual exposure in particular has become increasingly important during the 21st century in relation to today's Social Media. Visual expressions are dependent on a context to be understood. To understand what luxury is and how it is constructed, one must understand the feeling that is being created, and this is done via visual stories (Piatti-Farnell, 2024), also called storytelling. Piatti-Farnell (2024) explains that luxury is based on visual language where it is divided into 3 different spheres, (1) the material, (2) the imaginary and (3) a combination of the two. In the third sphere, the visual is used to build stories around the physical product and gives the product and the brand a narrative (Piatti-Farnell, 2024).

One example of previous research within the topic is how Michael and Fusté-Forné (2021) looks at how luxury hotels advertise luxury gastronomic experiences on Social Media through visual storytelling. The researchers analysed Instagram posts from four luxury hotels in the United Arab Emirates and used a combination of content and semiotic analysis to find visual representations of how the image of luxury is managed. Another study by Kuehlwein

and Shaefer (2017) explored how, what the authors refer to as, “Ueber Brands” manage to take out higher prices compared to the average offer in the category. Ueber Brands meaning hyper luxury brands. The study showed that storytelling was one of the methods used to be able to take out a premium price, since it can engage followers, create exclusivity and make the brands become culturally and socially significant (Kuehlwein and Shaefer, 2017).

To conclude, previous research has stated that storytelling is important within the luxury sector. The studies highlight that storytelling can create an emotional bond, that luxury online builds on multisensory attributes and that it can be used to communicate the brand's cultural meaning. However, these studies have not specifically explored a combination of the dimensions specifically within the luxury goods sector and on Social Media. This underlines an underexplored area within the previous literature.

## 2.5 Marketing Semiotics

To look closer at how the feeling of luxury is constructed, it is essential to break down the visual and auditory parts to understand the meanings embedded in the elements. Therefore, marketing semiotics is a suiting theoretical lens through which what these elements symbolise can be understood. As only visual and auditory elements of expression can be looked at online (Lin and Ku, 2023), this study has delimited semiotics within marketing to these forms of expression.

Marketers use universal codes to communicate meaning. Since marketing is based on shared behaviors and perceptions about things, it is important to understand the collective understanding of signs, in order to create advertising or position a product range. Marketing semiotics draws from disciplines like film, art, and sociology to decode symbolic meaning (Oswald, 2012). In marketing semiotics, one looks for linguistic patterns and themes that are expressed through images and words. Semiotics helps us to find the hidden meanings behind messages, where one can find out which codes it is that make us perceive a category or a brand in a certain way. (Oswald, 2012). It is considered a system of signs where ideas are expressed (Manolica et al., 2021). Semiotics is something that is more than content-based or rhetorical analysis of meaning because it highlights cultural codes, meaning the cultural associations embedded in the symbols. This can be shown through the analysis of visual,

verbal and spatial signs (Oswald, 2012). These signs can be found by looking at, among other things, an image and its visual expressions, color choices, text's font, logo, and camera perspectives. These elements show how cultural interpretations are intended to be interpreted (Oswald, 2012; Manolica et al., 2021).

The use of marketing semiotics for brands is relevant as it can be used to create clear and persuasive communication. It is a way for brands to create coherent messages on their platforms (Oswald, 2012). By integrating semiotics in their marketing, it becomes clear what feeling and language the company is trying to convey (Oswald, 2012). Consumers use goods to express their needs, feelings and to create their identity. The feelings consumers get when they own the products are created through the messages conveyed in the advertisement from the brands (Oswald, 2012). Through these messages a product can feel like it has more value than the tangible product in itself might have (Oswald, 2012).

Within semiotics there is a distinction between *signifiers* and what is being *signified*. This means that a sign has a double meaning, where the signifier is what we see or hear, for example a picture or the sound of a car, that is, its external meaning. While signified refers to the meaning and idea we associate when we see or hear the word car, that is, a vehicle with four wheels (Oswald, 2012).

### 2.5.1 Myths, Metaphors and Metonymy

Semiotics is embedded in brands and is rooted in something deeper within society such as social structures and cultural myths (Oswald, 2012). *Myths* are influential stories that shape people's ideas and interpretations of the world. For example, it can be used for advertising purposes to sell a certain desirable life. These myths often include archetypes in the form of typical characters. Archetypes are recurring character patterns that brands use to help consumers recognize themselves in the story being told. Characters such as *the Creator*, who strives for originality and wants to open up the viewer's imagination, and *the Magician*, who represents transformation and improvement of one's life, or *the Ruler*, who represents power and influence over others. Designers in the luxury sector and creators of haute couture are often portrayed as magicians or creators (Arnould, et al., 2023). Ideals of what a good life looks like are often presented through advertising, with the perception that one can achieve,

for example, happiness, self-confidence or satisfaction by buying certain brands or a certain product. Luxury brand advertising often emphasizes attributes such as status, attractiveness and good taste (Arnould, et al., 2023). Thanks to semiotics, brands can position themselves so that they correspond to the cultural needs of consumers (Oswald, 2012).

Furthermore, Oswald (2012) writes that semiotics in marketing builds on metaphors and metonymy, which are based on associations between similarity (metaphor) and associations through contiguity (metonymy). A *metaphor* expands the meaning of something by connecting categories that usually do not belong together. Through these, connections are created to areas of meaning, which help the consumer to understand the original concept (Oswald, 2012). Metaphors connect similarities in different areas, for example, advertising a shoe and equating it with a turbo engine, are not in themselves similar to each other, but mean that both represent speed. While *metonymy* links concepts through their spatial proximity, where one term is replaced by another, such as smoke could replace the concept of fire. With metonymy, the reader must fill in the blanks to understand the action, and is an active way in advertising for the recipient, as it engages the viewer by actively allowing them to contribute to the understanding of the story. Metonymy is an effective figurative tool that can be used for only showing part of what is happening within an image and giving a hint of what is occurring outside of the image. For example, showing a bloody hand and someone screaming to stage a murder scene, it shows enough to let the viewer fill in the rest (Oswald, 2012).

### 2.5.2 Means of expression within marketing

Semiotics can be shown through several different means of expression such as images, sound, choice of color, composition and text. These elements include their own semiotic meanings, but also create a joined meaning when combined (Eksell & Thelander, 2014).

*Images* are ways to capture the attention of viewers by using different ways to capture their interest, since they can express emotions quickly (Manolica et al., 2021). Each visual element in an image contains a different amount of information. It can be anything from simple with little information that makes it easy and immediate to understand or more complex with more information that requires more time to understand. Visuality comes in different forms, still and in motion. When images are still we can scan them quickly and it allows humans to see

things in detail. Moving images, on the other hand, hold the viewer's focus longer. With moving images, the viewer perceives something as more real, it is the movement in the image that creates a strong sense of reality. With demands from advertising, television time has become increasingly shorter and within that it has contributed to people's attention span becoming shorter. This contributes to the need to quickly capture the attention of the viewer, through image or sound, so that they will continue watching the video. It is important that interest is captured within the first few seconds, otherwise there is a risk that the audience will scroll further and not stop for the longer appreciation that a video may need to be understood (Correia Castilho et al., 2025).

Furthermore, *sound* is another element used to communicate to create meaning (Oswald, 2012). Berger (2014) describes how music and sound can be used as signifiers to evoke certain emotions through culturally acknowledged associations. The choice of music and sound plays a role in creating cues for the viewer. The cues indicate what the audience of the material should feel (Berger, 2014). Audited elements are a central part of creative expressions, especially digitally. Music and sound capture the viewer's attention and contribute to the experience. Musical rhythms and well-known sounds easily capture our attention and are often used on Social Media. How sounds are chosen to be presented is important as it affects how humans will interpret them. (Correia Castilho et al. 2025).

*Colour* is used to build relationships and signal ideas (Eksell & Thelander, 2014). As brands are keen to build relationships with their customers, they want to communicate their brand consistently. The use of warm colors, such as yellow, red and orange, communicates and signifies energy and optimism. While cooler tones, such as blue and green, demonstrate and signify stability and reliability (Eksell & Thelander, 2014).

Furthermore, *composition* is an important means of expression. Composition contributes to the understanding of a message. It is about arranging elements within a certain area. Elements can be things, abstract shapes or people. The emphasis of the visual element helps to tell whether the element is less important or has a greater significance. This can depend on the size or movement of the element. When other elements are present, a hierarchy is created between the elements. Where the largest element, metaphorically speaking, is perceived as the most important (Eksell & Thelander, 2014). Eksell & Thelander (2014), emphasis that the

placement of elements also plays an important role. Elements placed in the middle are highlighted more than those around them. (Eksell & Thelander, 2014).

*Text* is also a medium of expression (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000). Visual and auditory signifiers are often anchored by accompanied text, something referred to as "anchorage" (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000). The text is connected to the symbolic connections and emotions that the entire message is trying to convey (Oswald, 2012).

Marketing semiotics is a theoretical framework that has been chosen for this study, as it allows for a more in-depth understanding of how the feeling of luxury is actually expressed when the multisensorial are limited to the auditory and visual. By examining how means of expressions and figurative languages as well as myths, function and are used, it can help the understanding of what cultural and emotional meanings they carry. Since this study focuses on how the feeling of luxury is constructed through visual and auditory means, semiotics is a particularly relevant analytical tool. The theory helps make the hidden codes that shape our perception of what the feeling of luxury is in a digital context visible.

## 2.6 Bourdieu's Theory of Social Distinction

Since the purpose of this study is to understand how luxury is constructed on Social Media by luxury brands, it is important to have a framework that addresses the social and cultural dimensions underpinning consumption. The lack of research connected to *how* brands use the concepts mentioned in 2.3, laid the foundation for using this theory. Therefore, Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social distinction (Arnould et al., 2023) is relevant since it addresses how products and services can be seen as symbolic markers of status, belonging and taste rather than just being consumed for their utilitarian value.

Arnould et al, (2023) explain that Bourdieu's theory of social distinction is built upon the idea that social class hierarchies are created and maintained through the volume and forms of capital the persons within a group possess. There are three types of capitals: economic, social and cultural capital. Economic capital refers to financial resources. Social capital refers to social connections, in the form of networks and relationships, an individual has that can give them access to resources and advantages. The third type, cultural capital, is central in

Bourdieu's theory and refers to the cultural resources, the knowledge and the skills one has acquired through socialisation processes. Moreover, there are three types of cultural capital. The first one is embodied cultural capital, which is skills that a person has acquired over time and that has become deeply integrated within the person. It shapes people's ability to act and participate in social situations. The second form is objectified cultural capital, which refers to how the objects one owns can signal one's taste and knowledge. It does not only require economic capital, but also cultural capital since the owner needs certain skills to appreciate the product and its value. The third type is institutional capital and relates to for example certificates and academic degrees where cultural knowledge has been validated by an institution. These validations can then be used to access certain opportunities and power. (Arnould et al., 2023).

The volume and form of capitals that an individual grows up with form their habitus, which Bourdieu describes as the habits and routines that a person develops over time, often beyond conscious reflection. Habitus is shaped by class through capital, socialisation and aspirations. Habitus, in turn, affects what is referred to as taste. Taste is a socially conditioned expression of preferences that governs aesthetic and consumption choices. Taste contributes to social distinction by working as an expression of individuals' social positions. (Arnould et al., 2023).

Bourdieu's theory of social distinction is relevant for this study as it offers a theoretical framework that can help understand the underlying social and cultural mechanisms behind luxury consumption. Since the aim of the study is to analyze how the feeling of luxury is constructed on Social Media, it is crucial to understand, not only the semiotic expressions, but also what these expressions signal in a social context. Through concepts such as cultural capital and taste, the theory can explain how Traditional luxury brands speak to different social groups through the use of visual expressions that function as symbolic markers. Bourdieu helps us understand why certain expressions are perceived as luxurious because of what they mean within a social structure.



## 2.7 The Corporate Brand Identity Matrix

To analyze how brands construct luxury, it is important to have an understanding of their identity and how they can express themselves strategically. For this purpose, The Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (Urde, 2024) will be used as it provides a framework to identify core elements of how brands are built and the strategies they can use to convey certain meanings. The matrix is a strategic tool that can be used by brands to build and manage strong corporate brands. However, in this study it will be used as an analytical framework through which it can be explored how Traditional luxury brands construct the feeling of luxury through different elements of their brand identity. The focus will therefore lie mostly on the communication and storytelling layer of the matrix to explore how the communication from the brands is reflected and interpreted as well as how they reflect certain elements.

Urde (2024) describes that the matrix is built on nine elements that are organised in a 3×3 grid (Figure 1). The elements are divided into three perspectives: internal, external and bridge. The internal perspective is built on *mission and vision*, which describes what the brand does and where it aims to go, *culture*, which describes the values and behaviours in the organization, and *competencies*, which are the unique strengths and capabilities of the organisation. These elements represent the organisation's internal foundation and the substance behind the brand. The external perspective consists of *value proposition*, which is the unique value the brand offers to its customers, *relationships*, which refers to the brand's engagement to its stakeholders, and *aspired position*, which represents the position the brand wants to reach in the market. This perspective represents how the brand wants to be perceived by the outside world. The third and final perspective bridges the gap between the internal and external and refers to how the brand expresses their identity. It consists of *expression*, which is how the brand communicates in distinct ways, *identity core*, which is a central element that describes what the brand stands for at a deep level, and *personality*, which refers to the brand's tone and characteristics. Together these aspects form a holistic view of the brand grounded in the core identity.

Additional layers that are relevant for the brand matrix are *communication*, *storytelling* and *reputation*. The communication and storytelling layer refers to how the brand expresses its identity strategically through communication techniques and engaging narratives. Moreover, storytelling can be a way for brands to communicate its history as an important aspect of its

identity, it is then referred to as *heritage storytelling*. The reputation layer represents how the brand is perceived over time. This dimension can be seen as an outcome and is influenced by all the other elements in the matrix. (Urde, 2024).

|                                |                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                              |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| EXTERNAL<br>BRIDGE<br>INTERNAL | <b>VALUE PROPOSITION</b><br>What are our key offerings and appeals to customers and stakeholders?            | <b>RELATIONSHIPS</b><br>What should be our relationships with key customers and stakeholders?                   | <b>ASPIRED POSITION</b><br>What is our aspired position in the market and key customers' and stakeholders' hearts and minds? |
|                                | <b>EXPRESSION</b><br>What is distinctive about our communication making us recognizable at a distance?       | <b>IDENTITY CORE</b><br>What do we promise, and what are the core values that sum up what our brand stands for? | <b>PERSONALITY</b><br>What human qualities form our corporate character?                                                     |
|                                | <b>MISSION &amp; VISION</b><br>What engages us (mission) and what is our direction and inspiration? (vision) | <b>CULTURE</b><br>What are our attitudes, and how do we work and behave?                                        | <b>COMPETENCES</b><br>What are we particularly good at, and what makes us better than the competition?                       |

Figure 1: The Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (Urde, 2024)

For this study, The Corporate Brand Identity Matrix is relevant as it enables a *strategic lens* through which it can be understood how identity is expressed and constructed. Since the purpose of this study is to explore how Traditional luxury brands, within the luxury goods industry, construct the feeling of luxury on Social Media through multimodal communication, the matrix enables an identification and interpretation of the symbolic and narrative elements that play a part in that construction. It is important to note that this study will use the framework as a tool to focus on selected components of the matrix shown through the communication such as the identity core, expression, personality and heritage storytelling, as

these elements are especially relevant when looking at how the brands present themselves visually and auditory across Social Media platforms like Instagram and TikTok.

## 2.8 Theoretical Synthesis and Relevance to the Study

To explore how luxury is constructed, this study combines multiple theoretical perspectives. These different perspectives help us gain knowledge about how the multimodal communication is reflected both from the aspect of how the consumer might interpret the communication and how the communication reflects what the brand wants to convey.

We start by exploring concepts within conspicuous and status consumption, which refers to the consumption that consumers engage in to gain social recognition (*status consumption*) and show off wealth; *conspicuous consumption and the Veblen effect*. Connected to this is the desire for consumers who want to buy products that are unique; *the snob effect*, but at the same time makes the consumer fit into a social belonging; *the bandwagon effect*. Next, we consider how the shift from *analog to digital* has changed the environment in which the luxury brands communicate. This shift has led to a need for the luxury brand to *balance their core values with digital innovation*. To do that, they preserve their *authenticity* by emphasising the *tradition and heritage* of the brand, this can be done by highlighting the *brand logo* as well as the *country of origin*. Since *visuals and auditory* are the only elements available in a digital environment, it becomes important for the brands to create *intellectual and emotional experiences*. The digitalisation has also led to a decreased pride of ownership within the Traditional luxury brands customer base. This underlines the need for these brands to employ counteract strategies such as *rarity principles* to maintain their *exclusivity*. In this context, storytelling is an important component. It is a key method that the brands use to build emotional connections to consumers. This is done by *aligning its story with consumers' own narratives*. By using storytelling it helps the brands to *create a unique desirability and identity*. To do this online they use *multisensory elements, audioactive and visual*, to arouse emotions. Brands give their products their emotional value through working with a combination between the *imagery and the material*. The theory consists of important concepts like *signifiers* (meaning what we actually see or hear) and *signified* (what the sound or visual means to us based on what we learned it means). To understand how this meaning is

built, marketing semiotics is useful. Since semiotics helps to explain *how products can feel more valuable than it might actually be*, it can help to explain how this meaning is created through the usage of semiotic aspects. A key part of how this is built is through *myths* and *archetypes*, or figurative language like *metaphor* and *metonymy*. Semiotics consists of *images*, moving and still, as well as *sound* that gives a cue of what to feel, *colour* that can radiate different things depending on tone, *composition* that gives an element different importance depending on placement, and *text* that is a part that contributes to the whole. Moving on, Bourdieu's Theory of Social Distinction gives a perspective on why some things are seen as luxurious. The theory emphasises that consumption is not just about money but about *cultural capital*, that is the knowledge and skills needed to understand and value symbolic products. Along with *economic capital* and *social capital* this forms a person's *habitus*, which refers to their learned ways of thinking and perceiving the world. This forms a *taste*, which reflects an individual's preferences. Finally, the Corporate Brand Identity Matrix is used to understand how brands shape and communicate their identity, and more specifically how that communication is reflected. The matrix consists of nine elements and offers a holistic view of how corporate brands are built up internally and externally as well as through the elements that bridges the two. In this study the focus will be on the additional layer, *communication and storytelling / heritage storytelling*, and how that is used to reflect particular elements within the matrix that are visible through content on Social Media such as *expression, personality and identity core*.

This study aims to fill the research gap identified within the literature review. In connection to research about conspicuous and status consumption it was identified that there is a lack of research regarding how the brands construct their communication to take advantage of the need within some consumers to signal status and wealth. It was also identified that little attention has been given to how the luxury brands manage to maintain their core values when moving to the digital environment. Finally, there was a lack of research regarding how the combination of aspects within storytelling and multisensory experiences work together to create a luxury experience online.

Taken together, this theoretical synthesis provides concepts from several different perspectives to understand how the feeling of luxury is created on Social Media by Traditional luxury brands.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Research Philosophy

Philosophical positions have a great impact on any study since it directly affects the choice of research design and outcomes. It not only affects what the researchers choose to study, but also how it is being studied and how the findings are interpreted and assessed (Easterby-Smith et al, 2021).

This study takes on a relativist ontological position. This type of position refers to reality being viewed as being dependent on social and cultural contexts and perspectives rather than “objective truths” (Easterby-Smith et al, 2021). For this study, this means that the concept of luxury and what is perceived as “luxurious” is viewed as something that can vary greatly depending on context. The aim of this study is therefore not to find one true meaning of luxury, but rather to explore how it can be communicated and constructed in unique ways. Moreover, multimodal communication is viewed as being actively constructed and context-dependent rather than a passive reflection of the chosen brands.

This study is also grounded in a social constructivist epistemology. Social constructivist epistemology means that knowledge is perceived as being constructed and given meaning by people, interpretation and context rather than being objectively observed (Easterby-Smith et al, 2021). The multimodal communication materials that were analyzed in this study are therefore seen as representations that construct reality rather than fixed realities. With a social constructivist epistemology position, explanations are created by aiming to create a general understanding of a situation (Easterby-Smith et al, 2021), which is the purpose of this study. The study aims to create a general understanding of how the feeling of luxury is constructed and communicated specifically on Social Media. Furthermore, sampling requires within this position a smaller sampling size that is strategically chosen for the occasion (Easterby-Smith et al, 2021). Thus, 66 number of posts in total from Instagram and TikTok from the selected companies have been analysed.

## 3.2 Research Approach

In line with the described ontological and epistemological position, this study takes on a qualitative methodological approach as the focus lies in interpretations and exploration of how Traditional luxury brands construct the feeling of luxury on Social Media rather than for example hypothesis testing of numerical data (Easterby-Smith et al, 2021). A qualitative approach allows for a contextual and deeper understanding (Bryman & Bell, 2017), for this study of how meanings of luxury are produced and of the symbolic meanings embedded in the multimodal content. Critique against qualitative research has been that it can be overly subjective and too impressionistic (Bryman & Bell, 2017). This study assumes that meaning is shaped by culture and context. Due to this and although it is important to be aware of the influence of subjectivity, interpretation is understood as a necessary aspect of the analysis process. Furthermore, a coding scheme that is grounded in theory was used to guide the analysis and to ensure internal coherence.

The study was also conducted with an abductive approach, which means that observations were connected to theory by plausible interpretations (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). During the research process it was discussed whether a deductive approach would be more suitable, since only secondary data was collected. However, upon further reflection it was concluded that an abductive approach was more fitting since the aim of the study is not to test a theory (deductive approach) or to generate a theory (inductive approach). The aim is rather to systematically combine these two approaches to explore and develop a theoretical and practical understanding (Dubois & Gadde, 2002) of how meanings of luxury are communicated. More specifically, this means that there was a continuous interchange between empirical observations and the theoretical frameworks throughout the analysis process. The initial understanding of how luxury is constructed and communicated was created from the main theoretical lenses: Conspicuous and Status Consumption, Luxury Branding in the Age of Social Media, Constructing Luxury Through Storytelling, Marketing semiotics, Bourdieu's theory of Social Distinction and Corporate Brand Identity Matrix. However, as the secondary data, consisting of existing digital content from Social Media, was examined, the understanding of Luxury was continuously redefined as new patterns emerged in the data.

### 3.3 New Luxury as reference point

To get a better and more contextualized understanding of how Traditional luxury brands construct luxury through multimodal communication on Social Media, a selection of so-called "New Luxury Brands" have been included in the analysis. It will be used as a kind of benchmarking to more clearly demonstrate differences in unique expressions and patterns in the Traditional ones. Benchmarking is a management tool for improving one's own performance by comparing oneself with other actors (Bogetoft, 2012). In this study, this principle is applied in a similar way, as the comparison with New Luxury brands allows the study to produce a deeper analysis of how Traditional luxury brands communicate.

Luxury has historically only been available to the rich (Piatti-Farnell, 2024), and Luxury brands that are today associated with qualities like heritage and exclusivity, are as previously mentioned, referred to as *Traditional Luxury* (Soni & Kumar, 2024). However, during the 20th century, this changed, due to people becoming increasingly affluent and advertising becoming increasingly popular. More and more people in the working class wanted to start showing off their status and consuming luxury. The increased economy in combination with advertising contributed to luxury starting to be divided into different levels to satisfy different consumer groups. This contributed to luxury no longer being only available to the rich, but being more affordable and accessible to everyone while still offering good quality (Piatti-Farnell, 2024; Cardoso et al., 2025). Luxury brands associated with these New attributes are referred to as *New Luxury* (Soni & Kumar, 2024). This links back to the concept of *Happy Many*, meaning wanting to reach more people with their products (Debenedetti et al., 2025). Compared to Traditional Luxury brands that historically have built their identity on exclusivity and heritage, the New Luxury brands have used different strategies such as focusing on accessibility and emphasising the present and the future (Cardoso et al., 2025). They represent trends, creativity, openness to change and experiences and emotional connections (Cardoso et al., 2025). New luxury brands, also called premium brands, are positioned between luxury brands and regular brands (Sondhi & Basu, 2023), for the sake of simplicity, we will continue to refer to the concept of New luxury.

## 3.4 Data Collection

### 3.4.1 Document study

This study uses a qualitative multimodal document study to explore how brands in the luxury industry multimodally construct luxury. In a fundamental sense, a document means something that shows examples of, explains, proves and conveys information (Prior, 2019). In social science document studies, is not only about text as one might first think, but also multi-modal materials such as film, sound, symbols, photographs and Social Media are considered documents and can contain complex information and contribute to meaning making (Prior, 2003; Prior, 2019). Importantly, document studies focus on how the document is used to present and communicate information rather than what the document looks like (Prior, 2019). The purpose of this thesis is to examine how luxury brands construct luxury through multimodal communication, through their Social Media, hence the choice of document study as the method for this thesis. It is especially a relevant method to use considering today's modern digital area where communication using images, such as on Social Media, has become so relevant (Prior, 2019), as expression via images has today become increasingly more common than expression through text. In today's digital world, the need for engaging content has become greater than ever. People increasingly demand content that is engaging, grabs their attention quickly, and provides information effectively. This has led marketers to look for new ways to communicate, and are therefore starting to focus on visual material that has an effective and engaging appeal (Jadhav et al., 2024).

More specifically, the study focuses on secondary multimodal data, which is data that has been created for a purpose other than for the specific research project. Thanks to digital developments, visual elements are used more than ever to communicate with, for example, videos or images found online (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). There were several reasons for choosing to collect secondary data, rather than primary data, in this study. First of all, it meant that a large amount of data that already existed, thanks to the internet, could be collected. It could be perceived as a disadvantage to work with secondary data as the researcher is not as familiar with the material (Bryman & Bell, 2017), as they are when creating primary data, and it is a time-consuming process to gain insight into the material with secondary data. However, secondary data can provide insights that primary data may not be able to (Cheong et al. 2023). By analysing existing material on Social Media, authentic



and natural communications of luxury could be captured, which primary data potentially would not allow for since participants' awareness of being studied could alter the research purpose.

The secondary data has been collected via the companies' own Instagram and TikTok accounts. When using secondary data, it is important to ensure that the source is credible (Bryman & Bell, 2017). To ensure that the companies are owned and controlled by the companies themselves, it has been checked that the sources are marked with a blue tick, on both Instagram and TikTok. This means that the account is verified and that the account is authentic (Meta, n.d.; Tiktok, n.d.). Furthermore, since the focus lies in providing insights into the brands specific multimodal content that brands construct, document studies were preferred over approaches such as interviews, which tend to have a greater focus on individual perspectives (Bryman & Bell, 2017). Moreover, it was discussed whether netnography would be preferred as a method. However, it was concluded that a document study was more appropriate since netnography is more focused on online communities and consumer behaviours within these communities (Kozinets, 2002) rather than what specific documents, such as images, communicate (Prior, 2019). Thus, this study will not take a consumer perspective point of view but will focus on the communication itself and what is being conveyed.

### 3.4.2 Sampling

The sampling for this thesis has been done according to several aspects. The purpose of the study is to see how the companies multimodally construct luxury on Social Media, therefore this study's selection method is strategically controlled. This study uses a non-probability sampling approach as none of the samples are randomly chosen (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). With non-probability sampling the research question is used as a guideline for which units to select (Bryman & Bell, 2017). More specifically, the non-probability methods in this study were done via purposive sampling. This means that the selection is not made at random but rather the selection that provides the most relevant information to the study is made. Meaning that the researchers are aware of what is required for the research to be able to be done and selection is made accordingly (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). However, it should be borne in mind that the chosen approach hinders applying the results and is not generalizable to a larger population (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). The aim is not to design statistical generalizability

with the study but rather to contribute insights to similar cases (Bryman & Bell, 2017). The selections for this thesis are thus made to fit the study.

The second purposive sampling that was conducted was used when choosing platforms, that is, the companies' Instagram and TikTok. Two platforms were chosen to enable meaningful in-depth analysis and avoid content being biased from only one of the platforms as well as to contribute to a richer analysis as the platforms represent different types of content. To create authenticity digitally, it is necessary that the message is consistent across all platforms to provide an accurate representation of the company (Lin & Ku, 2023), thus two platforms, and not just one, have been chosen to understand overall communication, and therefore what is being constructed. Social Media has developed significantly and has contributed to more choices to choose from in the luxury goods sector. Customers rely less and less on information that comes directly from Traditional marketing, and today instead interpret impressions and messages from how the brand presents itself digitally before they allow themselves to be influenced. Social Media offers a variety of impressions that can influence a consumer's perception (Madzunya et al., 2021). Based on this, an analysis is required that contributes different types of content that enable interpretation, hence the choice of two platforms. Instagram, a platform that primarily focuses on sharing photos and videos with accompanying text, can be used for storytelling where the focus is often on aesthetics. While TikTok is a newer platform where the focus is on short engaging videos that often incorporate creative elements and music (Timmi et al., 2024). Instagram was chosen for this study because it is considered to be the best Social Media platform for brands who rely on their visual characteristics (Madzunya et al., 2021). In this case luxury goods. They rely heavily on being able to visually showcase products and models and thanks to Instagram's visual component, it can be done on the platform (Yoo, 2023; Madzunya et al., 2021). Furthermore, TikTok was chosen as the second platform as more and more brands are starting to use it, including luxury brands. TikTok's rapid growth has created new conditions for how companies communicate online today as the platform has emerged as a rival to Instagram in terms of marketing that affects the brands (Zhang et al., 2024). In this study, The empirical material consists of Instagram pictures and Instagram Reels as well as short-form videos on TikTok as well as accompanying text.

The next non-probability sampling, also a purposive sampling, was the choice of the companies. As mentioned with purposive sampling, the researchers are aware of what is

required to be able to answer the research question and make their choices accordingly (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021), hence companies that best fit to answer the research question were chosen. Three companies in Traditional luxury, as well three within New luxury, were chosen to enable a meaningful in-depth analysis. These were chosen based on some criteria. First, since the study is based on collecting content from Tiktok and Instagram, the brands need to have active accounts on both with uploaded posts. Second, as Europe is the hub for luxury production (Sanz-Lopez et al., 2024), the choices of brands have been chosen within Europe. Third, there was a further requirement for the New luxury brands, that they needed to be relatively newly established brands. This is because it is used as a point of reference in relation to the digital and thus needed to be "native" in the digital context, which the Traditional ones are not. This clarifies how digital conditions affect luxury segments. In the mid-1990s, the web began to grow and the technology continued to grow into the 2000s, where many digital applications that link people together started to merge (Bergström, 2010; Göteborgs-Posten, 2024), which justifies the choice that the New luxury brands must be founded in the mid 90s and onwards.

The three Traditional luxury brands were chosen after looking at which brands were the most valuable luxury brands in the world within the luxury goods sector in the year of 2024 (Statista, 2024a). What makes them the most luxurious in the world are attributes such as craftsmanship or good quality with a high price. Going from the list top down, the three most valuable brands in the world in 2024 were Louis Vuitton, Hermes and Chanel (Statista, 2024a). However, neither Hermes nor Chanel had any posts posted on TikTok and since this study is based on Instagram and TikTok, these two companies were excluded. The two brands below them on the list were Gucci and Dior (Statista, 2024a). Dior and Gucci were thus chosen to represent the Traditional luxury goods brands along with Louis Vuitton. Moreover the three brands are from European countries and also meet that criteria. Furthermore, the New luxury brands were also selected based on information from Statista (2024b), where the leading influential premium brands in the world in 2023 have been listed. Premium brands, also called New luxury brands, are listed after how influential they have been during the year. Since New luxury brands should serve as a digital benchmark, it is relevant to look at their digital presence. Statista (2024b) shows a current indicator of how the digital visibility of the product range has impacted Social Media. Based on the ranking of the list, brands were selected from the top down after the pre-established criteria mentioned above for the brand selection. Although the final sample of the brands included two French (Dior & Louis

Vuitton) as well as two Swedish brands (COS & Acne Studios), the results of this geographic destruction is a natural result based on the chosen criterias for the brands and is thus not an international choice. Thus, the choices that are consistent with how the global landscape looks are relevant for this study, as the aim is not to get an even geographic representativeness.

Lastly, the choice of the specific empirical material was made, these were also selected via purposive sampling. This concerns the specific Instagram and TikTok posts, where the number of posts is large enough to find recurring themes among the posts but not too large to not be able to conduct an analysis accurately. It is important that one's sample is large enough to contribute to an understanding but in qualitative research a smaller sample is more common to be able to go into more depth rather than breadth (Bryman & Bell, 2017), hence the choice of the number of posts is relevant for this study. Moreover a specific time frame is considered important in sampling (Bryman & Bell, 2017). Brands usually divide their year into collection-focused material. Which is usually referred to as seasonal, and are divided into two different seasons within a year. S/S which stands for spring/summer and F/W which stands for fall and winter (An & Park, 2020). Since fashion brands, and therefore also luxury brands within the fashion industry, work seasonally within a year, this study has a year as a timeframe to cover all parts. Even so, it is important to note that the study does not specifically look at trends but the overall communication throughout the year. But by choosing a year it can be seen how communication changes during the seasons of the year. Results may differ with trend shifts. However, it is kept in mind that communication is missed in cases of, for example, a crisis, such as COVID-19, as the communication may differ during times like this. Therefore, the choice of time frame is May 1, 2024 - May 1, 2025 was made. This is to avoid entries being made within the wrong month, so the first day of sampling was chosen as the starting point, and then one year back. To answer the studies research question and be able to analyze the material, A number of 66 numbers of posts in total were reviewed and have thereafter been coded. Since the study goes into depth with each empirical material, a smaller number of posts have been chosen to be able to answer the research question (Bryman & Bell, 2017).

### 3.5.1 Selected Brands

*Louis Vuitton* is a French company founded by Louis Vuitton. Louis came to Paris at the age of 16, in 1837, and started as an apprentice making trunks. At this time, people traveled roughly by horse or train and needed durable bags. Louis founded his own company at the age of 33, where he continued to make bags that there was a need for. When demand continued to grow, he started a manufacturer outside Paris. Which is the same manufacturer and location that the brand still uses today. His son developed a locking system for the trunks to escape thieves, and is a lock that is still used today (Louis Vuitton, n.d.). The classic monogram LV, based on his father's initials, was created by his son to stop imitators of their design (Golbin, 2012), and is still used on their designs today.

*Dior* was founded by the Frenchman Christian Dior in 1946, to revive joy and break the gloomy post-recession years. He enchanted women around the world with his visionary spirit. The vision began in 1947 with the launch of the New Look, a bar suit that highlighted and gave women flattering curves and elegance, inspired by the famous figure 8. His vision has not stopped celebrating women worldwide to this day and this timeless legacy, the New Look, continues to be recreated season after season. This ensures the continuation of this look but continues to add a touch of modernity (LVMH n.d.; Galerie Dior, n.d.a). Another important attribute of Dior is the star sign. One day, Christian stumbled upon a metal star on the ground while he was on his way to a meeting with a French entrepreneur. The entrepreneur agreed to finance a fashion house in Dior's name, and from that day on he saw the star as a sign of destiny as it changed his life. The star is used regularly within Dior today, it is a tribute to Christian himself but is also seen as a lucky charm for women who wear it (Galerie Dior, n.d.b.).

*Gucci* is an Italian brand founded in 1921 by Guccio Gucci, and is today considered a world-renowned symbol of Italian craftsmanship. Gucci's early years were about creating products for travelers but of first-class quality. This laid the foundation for the company's connection to discovering the world, and is still part of Gucci's identity and the brand's heritage. With a shortage of Traditional raw materials in the post-war period, bamboo began to be used. In the 50s, Horse-bite loafers were also introduced. They were embossed with a horse-inspired buckle, a reference to the sport of horseback riding. Both bamboo and the horsebit buckle are still used within the brand today. Furthermore, they are known for their

signature GG monogram and their flora pattern which already marked products in the 60s (Gucci, n.d.).

The New Luxury brands are not characterized by as much history as the Traditional ones. *COS*, which stands for collection of style, was founded in 2007 and is part of the H&M group, where the idea of COS was to fill the gap between really expensive clothes and what is called high street clothes (H&M Group, 2008; Jonsson, 2024). H&M group is a Swedish stock exchange listed company (H&M Group, 2025). *Ganni*, a Danish fashion brand founded in the year 2000 by Frans Truelsen. The brand was initially focused on cashmere sweaters but switched to a different direction in 2009. At that time, the brand broke away from the classic minimalist style that is common in Scandinavia because Frans did not think it reflected how the Danish woman actually dressed, by focusing on colorful garments. The brand is known for its graphic t-shirts and focus on sustainability (Mac Donnell, 2024). Lastly, *Acne Studios* is a Swedish fashion brand founded in 1996. Founder Jonny Johansson has an interest in various things such as art, architecture and contemporary culture which has given Acne Studios its so-called unique expression. Acne Studios is characterized by specially developed fabrics and selected material choices (Acne Studios, 2025a).

### 3.6 Data Analysis

Communication is multimodal and can consist of several elements. For example, visuals, color, graphics, music or speech (Eksell & Thelander, 2014). Since this study explores these aspects the analysis method for this study will be multimodal. Multimodal analysis pays attention to how communication interacts and has meaning combined in society (Eksell & Thelander, 2014). A multimodal analysis is based on semiotics and is a further development of it. However, there are some points that differentiate multimodal from Traditional semiotics (Eksell & Thelander, 2014). In multimodal analysis, the focus is not directly on the individual signs and their meaning within the empirical material. Instead of symbols and elements having a fixed meaning and significance, as they do in semiotics, different forms of communication together fulfill a central function. The meaning of these elements becomes intertwined with each other and creates a combined meaning (Eksell & Thelander, 2014). However as multimodal analysis is based on semiotics, elements and what they symbolize will be looked at both separately and what they communicate when combined.

Within this study all of the luxury brand's Social Media communication will be analyzed. Semiotics is highly relevant within marketing since brands rely on symbols, icons and visual codes to shape perceptions and establish corporate identities (Berger, 2014). It is appropriate to choose a multimodal analysis for this study as companies constantly use different means to communicate. Brands systematically use communicative elements to create a convincing and well-founded message for the consumers. Depending on the choice of different elements, different perceptions, feelings and associations about the brand are created. By examining these elements, meaningful patterns can be seen and analysed. Depending on how these elements integrate and complement each other, brands can reach a certain target group or create a certain idea (Eksell & Thelander, 2014). In the case of this study the idea is the idea of luxury, or rather, the feeling of luxury. Hence the choice of this analysis method to contribute within the marketing field.

The choice of a multimodal analysis is important for this study as it is based on Instagram and Tiktok, two Social Media platforms. It is a relevant analysis method as there has been a development in the use of multiple forms of communication through digital devices. Digital devices handle multimedia in a way that was unknown a couple of decades ago. On Social Media, images, sound, text and video occur at the same time and it is difficult to analyze the communication separately. With a multimodal analysis, it becomes possible to understand the integration between the elements (Eksell & Thelander, 2014) and is thus a suitable analysis method choice for this study.

For the study to have an in-depth multimodal analysis, the analysis has been done in conjunction with the literature review to identify attributes that are addressed in this section. Finding and understanding these attributes among the empirical material, and then connecting them together, can provide a holistic understanding of how luxury goods are constructed on Social Media. Presented in appendix is a coding scheme (Appendix 2, Table 1) that includes these attributes. This is to facilitate the analysis but also to help the reader understand what is being sought in the empirical material. To strengthen transparency in the analysis, examples of how the concepts can be identified within the empirical material have been added below. As the method requires interpretations, the examples were added as a way to make it more clear how abstract theoretical concepts were seen when analysing the empirical material.

To increase transparency a concrete example is included to clarify how theoretical concepts identified in the literature review were applied to the analysis. Not only does this guide the analytical process it also helps the reader understand how abstracts codes are interpreted in the empirical material. For instance, *conspicuous consumption* explains how consumers can show off one's wealth in public through socially motivated consumption (Assimos et al., 2019). For example, this can be seen in a hypothetical Social Media post from a brand where a person is seen going on a holiday. For example, in a setting like airport lounges of private hotels that signal exclusivity. This post now gets the attribute of conspicuous consumption in the noted coding scheme. Furthermore the same hypothetical post includes the caption of "Life is a Dream", which is seen as a part of Marketing Semiotics as an *anchored text* (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000). It could also at the same time reference the text as a *metaphor* as it compares two terms that normally do not belong together, but combined create a deeper meaning (Oswald, 2012). The expression (Urde, 2024) is interpreted as luxurious as the saying can be interpreted as an ideal life condition. This post now gets the attribute of anchored text and metaphor connected to Marketing Semiotics in the noted coding scheme.

To find presentable results in the empirical material and find something of importance that can later be shared with outsiders, it is important to become familiar with one's data (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). Thus, the collected data has been carefully reviewed, sorted and resorted. Through sorting, one gets to know the material and can thus analyze it better (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). The work with the material began by scrolling through the platforms. The review phase was done by looking for posts, on all of the Traditional and New luxury brands Instagram and TikTok, within the specified timeframe (1 May 2024 - 1 May 2025). This phase included looking for the codes within the coding scheme and how they appeared in the material, post by post (Appendix 2, Table 1). Then, the collected material was sorted (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018), based on the codes appearing in the material. Based on the sorted material, it became notable that several aspects that were highlighted in the literature review, that guided the coding scheme, were noticeable in the content. It also became evident that attributes that represent different parts of the coding scheme frequently appeared with each other. There were also attributes that emerged from the empirical material that contributed to how luxury was communicated, that was not necessarily outlined in the literature. These observations in combination laid the foundation for a pattern seen within the material, which can also be called themes (Ryan & Bernard, 2003), that showed how several codes and attributes interacted and contributed to the multimodal communication that worked



together to shape the feeling of luxury. This step went beyond the identification of individual codes, and looked at aspects that occurred across posts and platforms to group codes into broader categories. The themes illustrate how the different parts of the coding scheme are brought together to get a more integrated view of how various aspects come together and reinforce each other to construct the feeling of luxury. Finally, the identified themes were resorted (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018) to highlight the most significant themes that then were chosen to be included within the analysis to be able to answer the purpose of this study.

The goal was not to count how often the codes appeared to shape the theme but to interpret how the different codes interacted to create different meanings. This allowed the result to remain closely tied to the theoretical concepts while also allowing space for new insights to be interpreted. To conceptualise how the analysis went from identified aspects connected to concept, in the coding scheme, to themes the same hypothetical example will be continued. Drawing back to the hypothetical post above of the person that is traveling with the caption “Life is a Dream”. The post plays on wealth, coded as conspicuous consumption, at the same time the caption functions as a metaphor, coded as anchored text and metaphor within marketing semiotics. When combined, these elements form the basis for the hypothetical theme “Luxury as Escapism” where it is coded into a broader category where the theoretical concepts can interplay. Within this theme, it is now possible to see how luxury is portrayed as an ability to live beyond the ordinary.

The analysis process was made in the same way for both the Traditional and the New luxury brands. It is important to note however that since the purpose of this study is to explore how Traditional luxury brands construct the feeling of luxury on Social Media through multimodal communion, the themes are based on the Traditional luxury brands materials and New luxury was used as a reference point within these themes. This reference point contributes with knowledge of the distinct characteristics within the communication of Traditional luxury brands and whether this differs from the communication from New Luxury brands.

## 3.7 Research Quality and Ethical Considerations

### 3.7.1 Validity

Validity is referred to how well the study measures what it is supposed to. It can be divided into internal and external-validity, where the former refers to how well the results reflect the phenomenon that is intended to be studied and the latter refers to the generalizability of the results (Bryman & Bell, 2017). Since this study is employed from a social constructionist standpoint, the internal validity lies in how well the perspectives and phenomenon within the given context have been captured and meaningfully interpreted, rather than finding an objective truth (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). To ensure internal validity, the images and videos were collected directly from the brands own digital platforms, which ensures that it was luxury from the brands narrative that was analyzed, which aligns with the aim of the study which is to look at how brands communicate luxury in a digital context. A critique to only looking at the brand narrative is that it can give a one-sided understanding of how luxury is constructed, but this was a conscious delimitation to provide a more clear and focused analysis. However, it is important to also recognize that meaning and the concept of luxury is co-constructed within a broader cultural context.

Based on the qualitative approach of this study, the external validity was focused on transferability, sense-making and dependability rather than on generalizability (Bryman & Bell, 2017). The goal of the study is therefore to contribute with knowledge and implications from this comparison of how Traditional and New luxury brands visually communicate luxury that can be transferable to other contexts rather than generalised and exactly replicated.

### 3.7.2 Reliability

Based on the epistemological starting point of the research, various criteria are met to determine the quality of one's work (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). Since the study is based on a constructivist approach, the issue of reliability is seen with greater importance in terms of transparency credibility rather than replications of results. That is, researchers should be able to make similar observations based on this, rather than finding exactly the same result (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). To ensure that this is feasible, focus has been placed on clearly

describing the study's analysis process and sampling. By showing in detail with images and explaining how the researchers have perceived and interpreted them, the research becomes understandable to others. In the analysis process, patterns have been identified as common factors and the analysis has been divided accordingly. Themes are included to show that the observations reflect actual patterns rather than isolated cases. This is to increase the internal reliability of the study (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). With a focus on transparency like this, it strengthens the reliability of this study. However, it should be borne in mind that the analysis is based on the researchers' own perceptions and interpretations and can never be repeated by someone else who has different perceptions. To minimize their own subjective interpretations, the researchers have based the analysis on Table 1 (Appendix 2), as well as discussed perceptions with each other to make the observation as a whole consistent.

Transparency through documentation is important as others should be able to understand how one has worked throughout the course of the study (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000). Accordingly, a coding scheme has been introduced. The template contains themes that have emerged during the study. When coding the material, it was done simultaneously between the two researchers of the study. By having more people code the material together simultaneously, an interpersonal reliability is created (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000).

### 3.7.3 Ethical considerations and methodological criticism

When studying visual and contextual figures, one actively has indirect contact with people. It is therefore important to reflect upon one's ethical considerations (Ahrne & Svensson, 2011). Therefore this study has been conducted with the key principles of research ethics in mind (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). Since the empirical material consists of publicly available data, issues like confidentiality and informed consent have been less relevant. However, it has been important to respect the dignity of the brands and avoid misleading interpretations as well as using the data in a responsible way and conduct a fair analysis of the visual content. It should be borne in mind that the researchers for the study have not asked for permission from the companies to analyze their material, but since the material is public, permission is not considered necessary. However, there is a risk that posts on the companies' websites may be removed without our knowledge. This can damage the reliability of the study (Ekström & Larsson, 2010). Thus, images and videos have been downloaded to the researchers' personal

devices in case the material disappears from the public. In addition, the images and still images from the videos have been linked as attachments so the reader can check the material themselves. Furthermore, to protect private users who have commented on the company's posts, a blue box has been added over the attached figures.

### 3.7.4 Positionality and Reflexivity

Within qualitative research, an important aspect to critically reflect upon is how the research process is affected by the researcher's role. It is also important to reflect upon the relation the researchers have to the research context (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021), especially thanks to today's global access that contemporary digital media provides, the boundary between what is being researched and the researcher has become blurred when working with secondary data (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021), and have to be kept in mind. Given that this study deals with concepts that are deeply embedded in cultural and social hierarchies, such as representations of luxury and status, it is crucial to recognize how our own backgrounds and positions may affect how the multimodal cues are interpreted and which meanings are ascribed to them.

To remain as reflexive as possible, we need to be aware of our geographical place and the current time frame we live in. Since both researchers are born and raised in Sweden, with a Western background, we will involuntarily interpret the material from a Western perspective. Where our perception of luxury is influenced by Western culture. For example, it affects how we perceive how images are designed and interpret images from left to right, as that is how people read in the Western world (Eksell & Thelander, 2014). Because of this, brands from the Western world, more specifically European countries, have been chosen to get a fair view and contextual relevance. At the same time, the researchers have a similar cultural background, experiences, gender and age, with similar education from the same university, which means that the researchers' perceptions may be similar. Thus, a coding scheme has been introduced to follow a guiding frame of reference. However, it is important to mention that subjectivity is still inevitable. Since this study has a social constructivist approach the researchers are a part of the society and therefore the material (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). With that said, it is essential to highlight that doing qualitative research with a constructionist approach, meaning that reality is created through social interaction and language, the researchers are a part of what is being observed and the analysis thus creates its own meaning

as we interact with the material. However, even though these aspects are inevitable they can be minimised. For example, have the interpretations in the analysis of the researchers been discussed continuously to challenge each other's assumptions, which can make the results less biased and subjectivity (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000). Moreover since the analysis was grounded on concepts within the previous literature, it reduces the influence of personal assumptions.

## 4. Empirical Findings and Analysis

In this section the collected empirical material from Traditional and New luxury brands is analysed. The themes presented below emerged through the systematic coding of the empirical material guided by the coding scheme (Appendix 2, Table 1). The themes have been selected based on how the codes showed within the Traditional luxury brands material. Additionally, New luxury brands have been added as a reference point to see how they address the same attributes within the same themes.

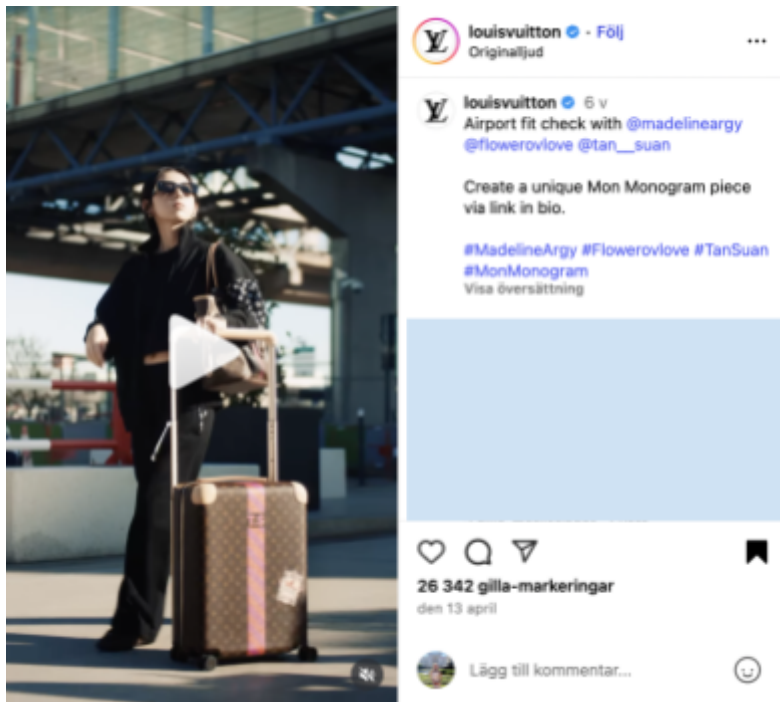
The process of how our themes emerged was done through 5 steps. (1) The empirical material was looked at and repeated expressions of how luxury was communicated was noted down. Expression could be like the use of a certain color or particular ways to capture craftsmanship. (2) In the second step we saw which attributes appeared to be repeated. Attributes that consistently appeared together were seen as a pattern. The elements that seemed to belong to the same type of communication were placed in the same group. Elements that were expected to come in combination were seen as a pattern. For example the posts that showed signs of craftsmanship, for example visuals of stitching a dress, were placed within the same group as posts that showcased references to history, for example showing the brand monogram. (3) In the third step, we look at how the posts appear continuously in different part of the coding scheme. Creating overlapping explanations to what could be seen in the content. Here, the focus shifted from individual attributes to how they interacted in practice to creating a recurring theme that contributed to answer our research purpose, that is how the feeling of luxury is created. For example, the post grouped within craftsmanship could also be seen in other groups for example, the incorporation of statements that emphasise hedonic value. (4) In the fourth step, we moved from how attributes interacted in practice together, and analysed what these combinations actually meant. Here the interpretation of how these attributes work together to create a meaningful understanding of how the feeling of luxury is constructed. For example, when a video of a perfume glass bottle is created, highlighting the craftsmanship, is combined with instrumental exciting music this communicates that luxury is not only rooted in the craftsmanship, but the music also adds another layer of that it is energetic and intense, emphasising that luxury is carefully made but at the same time emotionally charged. (5) Lastly, we define the interpretations by formulating three overarching themes, that is based on the recurring patterns and meanings. Each theme reflects different underlying common threads within the

communication that leads to how the feeling of luxury is constructed. Each theme showed an underlying thread, when the attributes repeatedly were combined. This thread represents the name of themes; “The Eye-Less Luxury”, “Luxury as Silent Knowledge” and “Luxury as Slow Creation”.

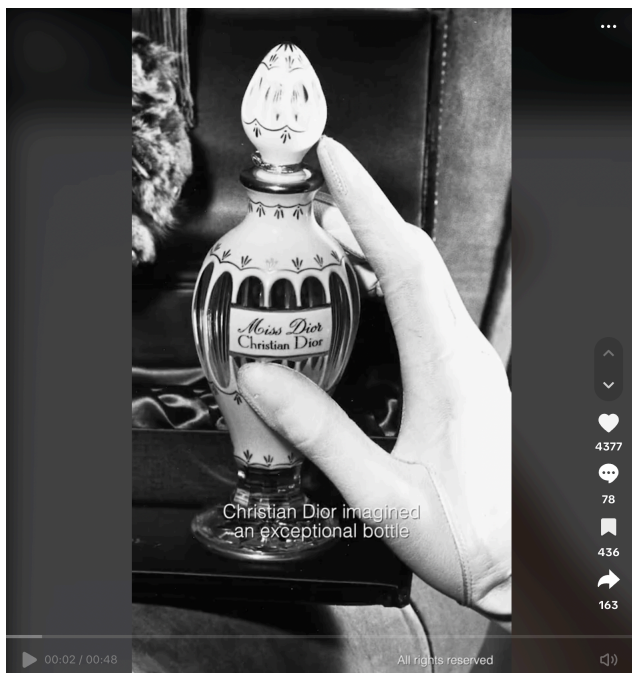
## 4.1 The Eye-Less Luxury



*Figure 2: (Louis Vuitton, 2025a)*



*Figure 3: (Louis vuitton, 2025b)*



*Figure 4: (Dior Beauty, 2025a)*

The first theme that emerged from the Traditional luxury brand's material was a combination of several attributes. The focus was on; where the products are placed, how the brand plays



on belonging, what needs the product satisfies as well as the choice of background environment. Within the material where this theme emerged, another attribute that the previous research could not directly cover also occurred, namely that the models in the posts of the Traditional luxury brands rarely meet the camera with their eyes. Hence the name of this theme is “The Eye-Less Luxury”. Why this is an event that coincides with the mentioned attributes will be further analyzed within the theme and what it can be interpreted as.

Posts from Louis Vuitton (Louis Vuitton, 2025a; Louis Vuitton, 2025b) are depicted as different women walking through the airport with similar bags branded bags. The women never meet the camera's gaze. The bags are centrally placed in the middle of each slide and can be considered the largest object throughout. Even though other things are around the centered product, the focus is on the mentioned object. This is then seen as the hierarchically largest and is according to Eksell and Thelander (2014) the most important element. Moreover they are additionally mostly placed in the middle of the content, which Eksell and Thelander (2014) believe creates a feeling that the product is highlighted more than the things that are around it. The centered composition invites the viewer to focus on the product's aesthetic. According to Assimos et al. (2019), for a person to be proud of owning a branded product it is important to satisfy the aesthetic needs rather than just showing off that is useful. Additionally by using still images it allows for the viewer to see things in detail (Correia Castilho et al., 2025), letting the viewer to appreciate the craftsmanship and to observe the product in detail which reinforces the product as something more than functional.

Moreover, there are women in the posts in the product's surroundings, but because of the product's semiotic compositions, the women do not take over the main focus from the product. However, this does not necessarily mean that the presence of these women is not important. The women in the posts are young, are at an airport and have similar bags. It is perceived as if the women are traveling, perhaps from different airports in the world, and have the same suitcase from Louis Vuitton. This gives the experience of the bag being a “must have” or a must for a young traveling woman like those in the post. The post suggests that stylish, traveling women form a group identity around the product. This confirms and reflects that products should fit into a social belonging as this is something consumers are looking for, and can also be considered to play on the concept of “the bandwagon effect” where content plays on the fact that consumers want to imitate others by buying products to fit into a group (Assimos et al., 2019; Sahin and Nasir, 2022). Furthermore, as mentioned, a

focus is placed on the fact that the posts take place in an airport environment. Traveling is and is normally considered an expensive activity. By linking the product to expensive environments, it can be perceived as the product being shown together with, and thus associated with, environments and activities that are expensive. This can be considered to play on conspicuous consumption (Assimos et al., 2019). While the environment in the posts helps to create a type of group belonging, it also helps to reinforce a way to show off one's wealth. At the same time, the use of place in combination with planting the product there can be perceived as the company working with metaphors. A metaphor is when two terms are connected that help the viewer understand what is being conveyed (Oswald, 2012). The airport setting symbolises global belonging, which viewers may aspire to join. It can then be perceived as needing this product to become "her". This in turn could be considered to play on Escala's (2004) concept that when the consumer can recognize themselves in the story that is being conveyed, it allows the consumer to create an emotional bond with the company.

In addition, these attributes can also be seen in other contexts. In Dior's post (Dior Beauty, 2025a) the history of perfumes is demonstrated, the content is a moving image which describes the emergence of Dior's first perfume "Miss Dior" (Dior Beauty, 2025a). The post tells how the shape of the perfume bottle is inspired by several things, but primarily by the famous figure eight. This figure is a recurring inspiration within Dior (Galerie Dior, n.d.a) and the shape can be interpreted as inspiration of the female body. It is expressed in the post via the narrator that this perfume bottle has traveled through history "from hand to hand" (Dior Beauty, 2025a). It features visually though black and white images, to today colored images, all where a woman is holding or seen with the bottle. Although the perfume bottle is inspired by the female body, none of the women take the focus away from the product. This may be because Dior also works with semiotic composition. The perfume bottle is regularly placed in the middle of the content throughout the video. This helps to ensure that, despite the fact that things and people are around the product, it retains its focus and continues to be highlighted throughout the material (Eksell & Thelander, 2014). At the same time, the product is always allowed to be relatively large throughout the material and helps to maintain its hierarchical position between all elements in the material (Eksell & Thelander, 2014).

Like Louis Vuitton, the material is also characterized by women who are in the perfume's surroundings but who in the same way do not take the product into focus. The content is also characterized here by the women not focusing on meeting the camera's gaze. On the other

hand, there are two women who look forward, however, it is clearly visually marked that these women have looked into another camera and been photographed and not for the sake of the story of this perfume. This subtle representation where women interact but are not in focus paves the way for demonstrating that the presence of the perfume unites them. The women in the video can be perceived as having worldly backgrounds with different cultures, this in combination with the expression that the product has traveled from hand to hand. It can be perceived as the perfume functioning as a common closer between the women and that the product symbolically transcends cultural boundaries that form a form of female community. The brand plays on the product's social belonging (Assimos et al., 2019).

To further reinforce this sense of community, other semiotic attributes are used to visually demonstrate that the product passes from hand to hand. This belonging can be interpreted as expressed by the recurring image of the perfume bottle that is said to be passed from hand to hand and can function as a visual metonymy. The concept means that parts are shown, which can then be used to represent something larger (Oswald, 2012). By focusing on the zoomed-in hand holding the bottle in combination with what the narrator's voice expresses about its journey between hands, the hand becomes the physical carrier of the product, but where the whole is actually something larger. It is not the women themselves that we get to follow, but the symbolic journey of the bottle through women's hands. The hand becomes a metonym for generational participation.

This symbolic passing of the perfume could also be grounded in a more emotional belonging. This belonging may be rooted in the idea that consumers want products that fulfill intellectual and aesthetic needs rather than functional (Assimos et al., 2019). Especially relevant here since the perfume's scent is never mentioned. Since attributes such as scent cannot be interacted with when working online (Lin & Ku, 2023), focus on other attributes. This is shown through several aspects. First, it is clear that the images go from black and white or dull colors to end with more colorful tones, where the warm yellow tone is shown. By first focusing on colder tones, it can give the impression that the perfume has stability and reliability (Eksell & Thelander, 2014) when the focus is on the history of the product. But by further adding warm tones, associations of joy and optimism are created (Eksell & Thelander, 2014), when the narrator means that perfume is still traveling into the future. This, in combination with the fact that it has explicitly traveled from hand to hand, can create a perception that this perfume continues to brighten women's lives and still does today. There is

visual joy in being a woman in history and being the owner of the product. Moreover, the focus on the bottle's design, where there are close-ups of the glass's star-shaped foot, reinforces the product's capacity to fulfill consumers' aesthetic needs (Assimos et al., 2019). The aesthetic attributes invite the viewer to appreciate its design over its function. Furthermore, the product also satisfies the intellectual needs of the consumer (Assimos et al., 2019). Since the perfume is not presented with its scent but through its long history, cognitive processing is required to be able to understand the product's value in addition to the functional one. The product is portrayed as a cultural carrier of history rather than being presented as an object that is sold. Thus, the intellectual need of the consumer is satisfied by offering something that needs to be interpreted to be understood. The moving format contributes to communicating this intellectual need. The material consists of moving material probably to maintain the focus of the viewer as the video can be perceived as long for a TikTok. Since moving material is useful for capturing focus (Correia Castilho et al., 2025), it could be seen as a strategic choice. Through moving material, the content is perceived as more real to the viewer (Correia Castilho et al., 2025), which reinforces the feeling that it is not just a product but that it is a product that is an emotional story rather than some quick purchase information or function and can contribute to the perception that the product has an intellectual satisfaction. On the other hand, moving images are more complex to understand (Correia Castilho et al., 2025), and can be perceived as requiring a certain intelligence in the viewer. This further contributes to the fact that the perfume must be understood and thus requires an interpretation. This can be considered to contribute to the commonality as only those who understand the history and cultural references of the perfume, such as stars, feel part of the community. This shows that women can feel a sense of belonging through the product, not because of its fragrance, but rather because it has a history that is based on emotional and cultural elements, something that one can be considered to want to be a part of.

Overall, there is a focus on understanding the history of the brand to understand the value of the product, in addition to the functional one. The strategy of fulfilling the needs of a product's aesthetic and intellectual belonging is done via the interaction of its history. Where they work with their brand heritage to make it relevant to a contemporary time and with that consumer. The posts exemplify how the brand's history is preserved but at the same time is strategically adapted to consumers' needs. This is in line with what Urde (2024) argues that by using one's heritage is a way to show one's proof of performance over time. But at the same time, one's history is not only something that must be preserved but that one must

actively and strategically make relevant in the present and be able to make one's cultural heritage relevant for future generations (Urde, 2024). It is visually readable that both Louis Vuitton and Dior not only manage their cultural heritage but also activate this heritage in the present through strategic renewal. Dior's bottle is visually shown to have had several different forms over time. It is shown as a visual metaphor for the development of heritage where the heritage is maintained but adapted to contemporary aesthetics. It is expressed that it continues to write new chapters and can be perceived as continuing to adapt to the present. Louis Vuitton has an important heritage attribute, namely their monogram (Golbin, 2012), but where now the anchor text shows that the focus is now on something called "mon monogram". Customers can personalize the classic monogram bag with their own initials. Through personalization, it becomes contemporary but still retains the Traditional. Offering personalization can be perceived as a modern desire of the present but also goes in line with the fact that products should offer ways to belong to a social belonging but where one can at the same time distinguish oneself as an individual (Assimos et al., 2019). We can see this here by adding personal name initials. This can be seen as playing on the concept of "the snob-effect" that is referred to when consumers buy status products to differentiate themselves from others. This is done by offering customers unique product options (Sahin & Nasir, 2022).

Furthermore, as mentioned, the attributes in this theme that cannot be immediately explained with the help of the previous research are emphasized, namely the gaze. The gaze of the models in the Traditional luxury brand rarely meets the camera with their gaze. The models exist rather as a supporting means for the brands rather than personal individuals and can be perceived as only existing to embellish the brand's narrative. A possible interpretation of what this is due to could be that one does not want to take the focus away from the product. Since the product is often clearly centered in the middle and is hierarchically largest, the product is considered and experienced as the most important. By not capturing the viewer's gaze, it allows the viewer to follow the product instead. A further interpretation of what this could be due to is that it allows the historical context to speak for itself and the consumer can then interpret what is being communicated for themselves. By directly avoiding eye contact, it can be assumed that it allows the consumer to understand for themselves what is being staged.

#### 4.1.1 New Luxury as Reference Point



*Figure 5: (COS, 2024a)*



*Figure 6: (COS, 2025a)*



*Figure 7: (Ganni, 2024a)*

As a reference point, it shows the New Luxury brand also uses women to portray their products, just like the Traditional luxury brands do. However, the attributes differ compared to the Traditional ones as New luxury is not perceived to play on a sense of belonging or on a hierarchical product placement, and the models often look into the camera at the New luxury companies. Why this is so will be explored further.

To exemplify, COS and Ganni have models that are visible with products (COS, 2024a; COS, 2025a; Ganni, 2025a). In the posts, it can be perceived as unclear what the posts want to focus on communicating as it can be perceived as trying to convey several attributes at the same time. This is when several attributes are allowed to take place at the same time and lack the same hierarchical order as the Traditional luxury brands have. Composition of elements is important as it contributes to understanding the message that is being communicated (Eksell & Thelander, 2014). By not letting the product be in a central focus or hierarchically take place, it becomes unclear to the viewer what it is that is being conveyed with the post. An anchorage text is needed (Oswald, 2012) to understand what it is that is being communicated with the entirety of the post. Unlike Traditional product ranges where it was visually clear what is hierarchically most important and centrally clear, even though other attributes were

present in their surroundings. Since New luxury brands are characterized by accessibility (Cardoso et al., 2025), the choice of composition by these companies can be interpreted as them wanting to highlight that they also have other products that they sell and want to show that they are available. To exemplify, the focus easily falls on the white dress and the large jewelry on the COS posts. It is necessary to read the associated text to understand which product they mean that the post should focus on. This can be interpreted as them consciously not positioning their products hierarchically, but instead broadening their available attributes. By allowing multiple products to compete, it can indicate that there is not one specific product that carries the entire brand value, as is often done for Traditional products, but rather a trending lifestyle highlight where the consumer can create their own narrative of how they want to use and wear the garment. This reflects the accessibility ideology that New luxury stands for (Cardoso et al., 2025). The interaction between possible choices in this way creates accessibility for a wider audience. In addition, by basing these posts with still images, it can be perceived that you have the opportunity as a viewer to focus on details and be able to overview all attributes that are in focus (Correia Castilho et al., 2025) and further contribute to accessibility as several products can be reviewed at the same time.

Furthermore, the associated text of the New luxury brands is used to describe the function of the product rather than satisfies the intellectual and aesthetic needs as the Traditional brands do. For example, Ganni's post has the anchored text “A new icon for both work + play” (Ganni, 2025a), emphasizing the products are completely new and places emphasis on the functional use in combination with the images of the shoes. The post tells when and how the shoes can be used. The reason for this focus could be explained by the fact that the New luxury companies are relatively newly established brands and have no history to build on and thus have no own heritage attributes to build on. New luxury brands do not have a heritage to build on and must instead focus on and emphasize on the future (Cardoso et al., 2025) and its functional usage.

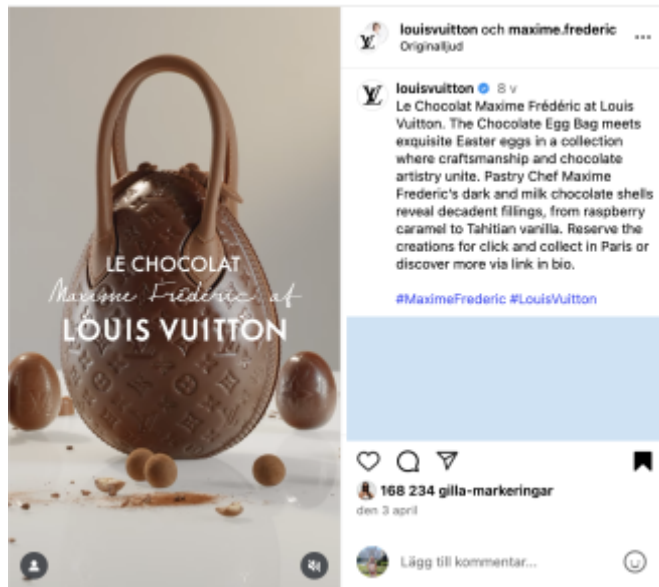
Interestingly, New luxury companies are characterized by attributes such as accessibility to a larger market than Traditional ones (Cardoso et al., 2025). At the same time, a sense of belonging is not highlighted in the same way as with Traditional ones. In the posts of New luxury companies, it is the same model that always shows the product, which can give the perception of an individual identity rather than exclusive belonging that was in focus with Traditional ones. This may be because New Luxury companies do not try to create an



exclusive community to the same extent but instead offer attributes for self-expression and rather offer the unique within the general for consumers. By dressing the same model in the posts with different garments while keeping the same product that you are trying to market (Ganni, 2025a), it gives the impression that different personalities can dress and fit with the product. You do not have to belong to a specific group to be able to use the product. Location also affects accessibility. The locations can be on a road, at work or on a sofa that can be perceived as representing home, creating a further sense that these products do not delimit to specific groups. Most people have a home and a job and those who recognize themselves in it can just as easily recognize themselves in these environments. This keeps the door open for a wider audience to be able to feel appealed by the content and continues to play on its attribute of accessibility (Cardoso et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the main common denominator for this theme, the gaze. New luxury can be perceived as the exact opposite of eye-less, as the models' gaze often meets the camera. This is an aspect that cannot be explained with a direct application of previous research. The gaze often draws attention from the product. This can be speculated about the desire to create closeness with the viewer and to be able to enable identification with the model. Rather than models becoming anonymous carriers of the product, as it is with Traditional luxury brands, models become part of the central communication here instead, as the gaze can be experienced as a direct address.

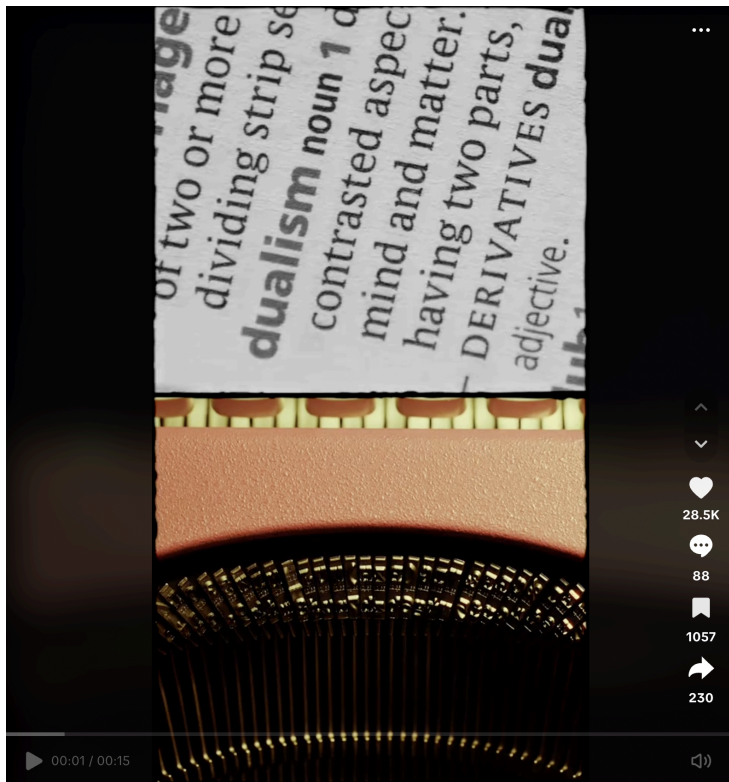
## 4.2 Luxury as Silent Knowledge



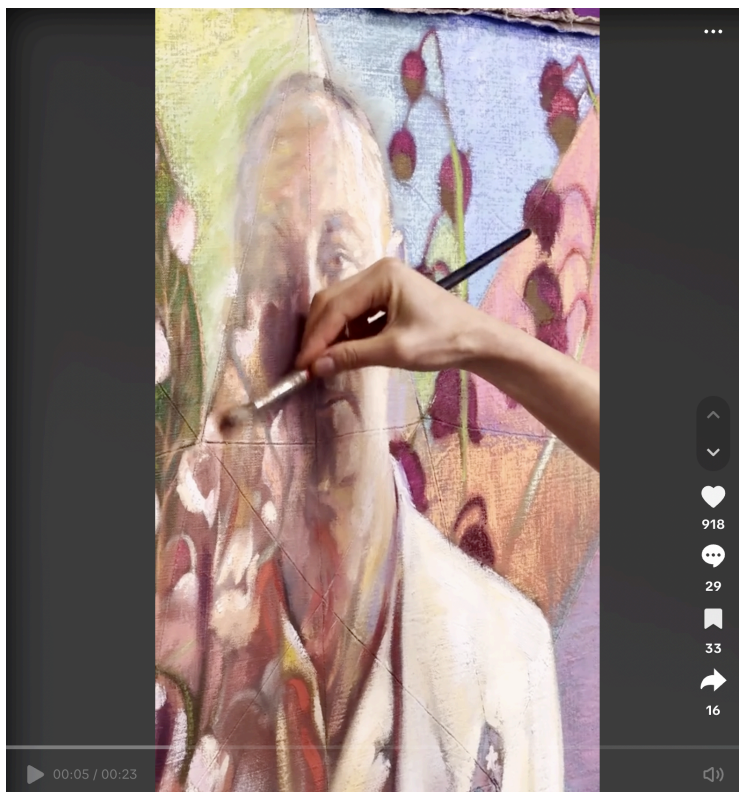
*Figure 8: (Louis Vuitton, 2025c)*



*Figure 9: (Gucci, 2025a)*



[Figure 10:](#) (Gucci, 2025b)



*Figure 11: (Dior, 2025a)*

When looking at the empirical material, another pattern that emerged was that the brands do not communicate luxury explicitly but rather use subtle aesthetic codes, and cultural references in their communication as a way to signal luxury to those who are able to recognize it. The attributes that were identified in the material that led to this theme was for example; references to fine art, brand internal references (logos, shapes) and product presentation that focus on abstract values such as creativity rather than functional value. This unspoken understanding can be seen as a silent knowledge for what signals refinement, taste as well as creates distinction, something that aligns with Bourdieu's theory of social distinction (Arnould et al, 2023). By referencing for example history and art, the Traditional luxury brands activate shared cultural associations, which give the products and the brand a meaning beyond its functional form (Assimos et al., 2019). Furthermore, these messages are enhanced by semiotic elements. By often using high quality moving images, putting the art pieces in center and including instrumental music, the Traditional luxury brands create multisensory digital experiences that elevate the content beyond just showcasing products to instead being intellectual and emotionally appealing (Lin & Ku, 2023).

One example of this is Louis Vuitton's post on Instagram (Louis Vuitton, 2025c) of a handbag entirely made of chocolate. This edible piece of art is referred to as "The Chocolate Egg Bag" (louisvuitton, 2025c), combining seasonal symbolism with a creative design. The video is minimalistic and features close up imagery, which creates an intimate visual experience that highlights details and texture. The background music is calm, instrumental and neutral, which works as a signifier (Oswald, 2012) that contributes to a feeling of timelessness and sophistication. This, since sound can be seen as a cue for the viewer of what they should feel (Berger, 2014) and how the image is interpreted (Correia Castilho et al. 2025). This can be connected to how multisensory impressions can be used to create a feeling of luxury (Piatti-Farnell, 2024). The "Egg" is not a functional handbag but rather a creative fusion of culinary art and fashion design. This can be linked back to Sanz-Lopez et al. 's (2024) explanation of how people of a higher socioeconomic class often buy products for more than just its functional value. It can also be linked to Bourdieu's theory of social distinction as this product becomes a cultural object that targets an audience with a high cultural capital that is likely to appreciate the artistic presentation, craftsmanship and aesthetic details. The brand

also uses rarity principles (Shukla and Rosendo-Rios, 2025) as the product seems to have a limited availability, as the caption says “click and collect in Paris” (Louis Vuitton, 2025c), something that also enhances its exclusivity. This can be linked to conspicuous consumption as it plays on the Veblen effect by targeting consumers who seek distinction (Sahin and Nasir, 2022). The Louis Vuitton identity is reinforced in elements such as the signature monogram that is crafted into the surface. The use of a French pastry chef also reflects the brand's heritage and connections to French craftsmanship. The integration of these elements can be seen as creating authenticity (Lin & Ku, 2023) as well as a reinforcement of their unique identity (Kapferer and Bastien, 2009). It can also be connected to heritage storytelling (Urde, 2024), since it can be seen as a way to create a narrative around Louis Vuitton's core identity as a heritage brand.

Another example of how Traditional luxury brands post pictures featuring connections to art is Gucci's post of a sculpture created by the artist Anton Alvarez (Gucci, 2025a). It is an abstract sculpture where the focus lies on nature and balance rather than commercial products. The brand uses storytelling by including a behind the scene narrative where the sculpture's construction process is showcased. By doing this, Gucci appeals to the customers who appreciate the artistic process and not just the final product, that is most likely people with high cultural capital that possess the knowledge and skills to value it. This contributes to a distinction between the consumers, where luxury is not just about the price or quality of a product but also about understanding cultural codes. The storytelling is also enhanced through the accompanied text in the caption where the artist reflects upon what the sculpture symbolizes. This anchoring text guides the viewer's interpretation (Correia Castilho et al. 2025) and works as a semiotic element that reinforces Gucci as a cultural symbol, rather than just a commercial brand. By including this post in their communication, Gucci's brand personality (Urde, 2024) comes across as creative, innovative and forward thinking. The collaboration with a contemporary artist strengthens the brand's identity and reinforces its reputation (Urde, 2024) as a key player both in the fashion luxury market but also in the cultural sphere. The usage of cultural references enhances the perceived value of the brand as culturally sophisticated and intellectually engaging. Placing them primarily as not a producer of luxury goods but as artistic authority that frames luxury as something to appreciate rather than just material consumption.

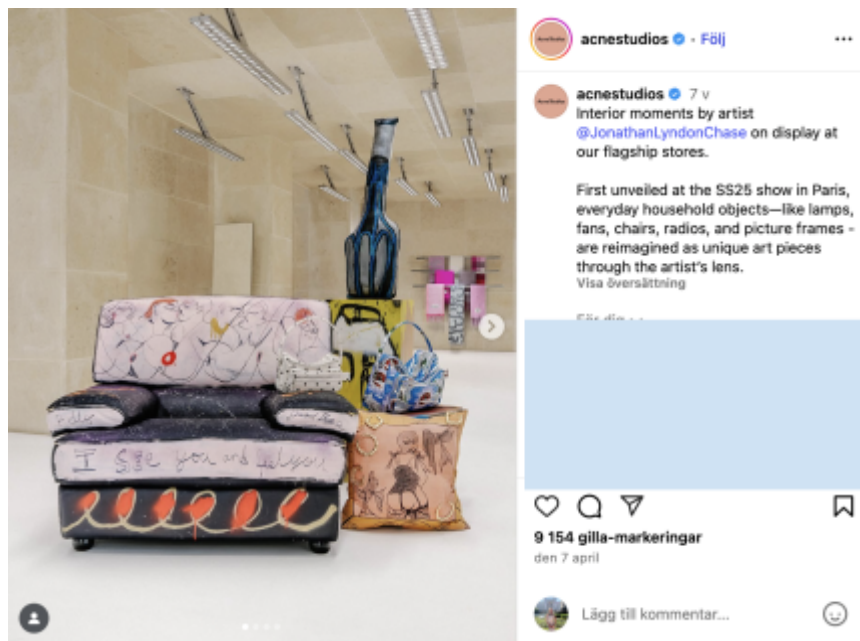
The inclusion of elements that play on cultural capital does not only consist of references to art. There are several examples within the material where the consumers need cultural knowledge about the brand to fully understand and value the content. This is for example done in the TikTok post by Gucci (2025b), where Gucci uses abstract nature photography, which signals that these images are a representation of their new collection drop. The brand builds up a visual narrative that by using the third sphere (Piatti-Farnell, 2024), connects the material, the new collection, to the imaginary, the symbolic meanings around it. The consumers who do not have any pre knowledge about Gucci, may not understand what these images represent. This is also demonstrated in a post from Dior (Dior, 2025a), where moving images show an artist is filmed painting a stylised portrait of Christian Dior on a canvas. The post has the caption “A life portrait in layers by Zadie Xa for #DiorDesignerofDreams” (Dior, 2025a). The post assumes familiarity with Dior, reinforcing cultural exclusivity. Luxury is created through the viewer's ability to decode subtle cues. The anchored text, in the form of the caption, acts as a poetic hint rather than an explanation of the content, which contributes to making the communication feel exclusive. The music is classical and instrumental and uses sensory cues such as the sound of a rhythmic rasp as well as brush movements made from the drawing material when pigment is added on the canvas. The sound catches the viewer's attention (Correia Castilho et al. 2025) and becomes an additional layer of meaning. It becomes a sensory narrative that adds to the luxury experience, the same way that touch would do in a physical store (Lin & ku, 2023).

This type of communication can be interpreted as it does not appeal to the viewer through product functionality, but rather the usage of aesthetic and symbolic complexity. It creates an experience that is not intended to be immediately consumed or understood by the viewer, but rather for it to be interpreted. This complexity appeals to consumers who have cultural capital and are capable of decode expressions like this. By doing this, luxury brands within the luxury goods sector can position themselves as something that must be understood, not just aesthetically but also culturally and intellectually. This thereby reinforces exclusivity through symbolic distinction, drawing on Bourdieu theory of social distinction (Arnould et al, 2023). This theme can be interpreted as a deliberate pattern that the brands seem to do. The content excludes those unable to decode it. In this way the luxury brands appeal primarily to the viewers who have a certain cultural understanding, while those who lack it may feel alienated or simply not addressed by the content. Luxury therefore becomes a cultural language that is not expressed through words but through being familiar with the symbolic world it draws



from. Content that is built on this requires a knowing audience, since the symbolic values are not explained explicitly but rather understood implicitly. It is within this quiet understanding that the feeling of luxury can be seen as exclusive and refined.

#### 4.2.1 New Luxury as Reference Point



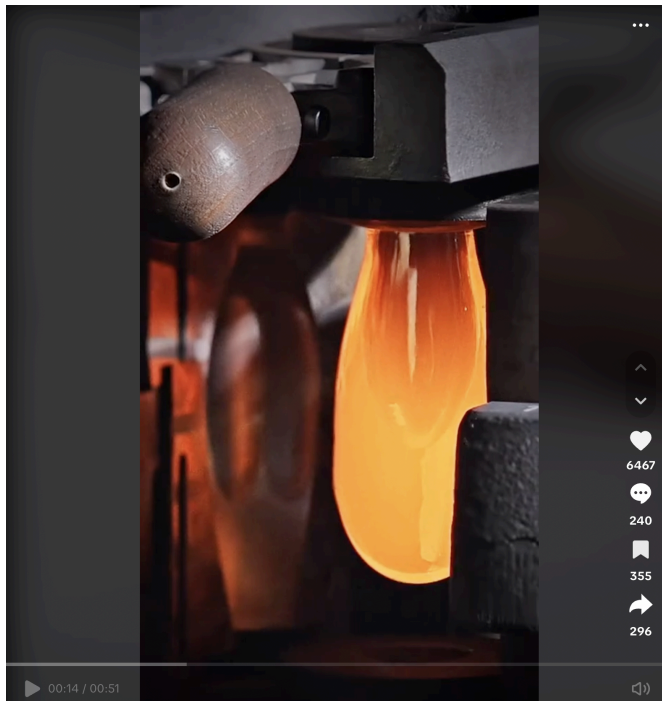
*Figure 12: (Acne studios, 2025b)*

The New luxury brand Acne Studios also uses art and cultural references in their communication, but has a more bold and confrontational visual language. In a post on their Instagram page (acne studios, 2025b) they show a scenography made by the artist Jonathan Lyndon Chase, where household objects have been placed together to form an artistic installation. The installation is colorful and includes bold imagery such as illustrations of a woman wearing only a minimal mesh based look and a balaclava, as well as emotionally charged phrases such as “I see you and feel you” (acnestudios, 2025b) which is marked at the center of the sofa. The installation is placed in a minimalist setting, a showroom that is white and sterile. This could signify (Oswald, 2012) the tension between expressive boldness and environmental restraint. However, this contrast does not neutralize the boldness but rather makes it stand out even more. The viewer's focus is drawn to the installation and they are left to figure out the meanings embedded in the content. Meaning is suggested, but not stated,

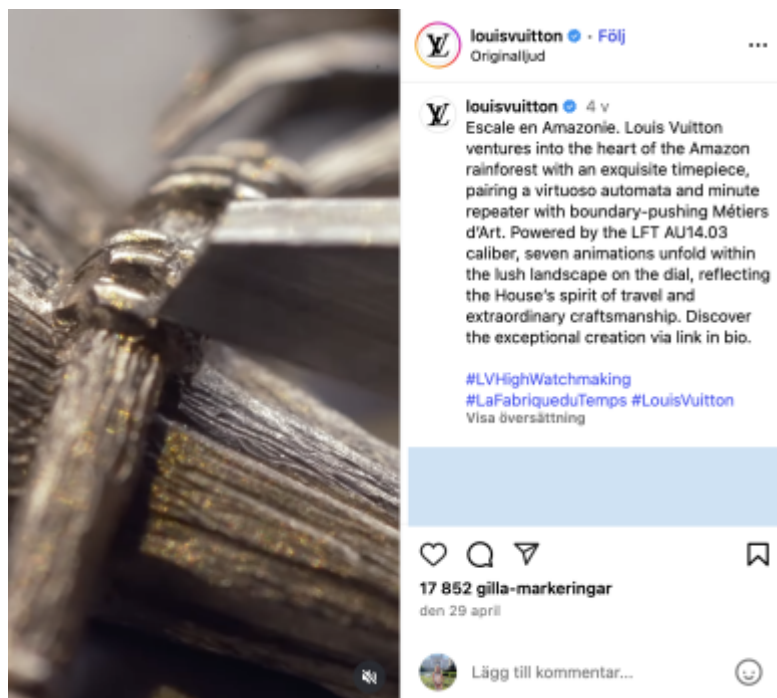
creating a kind of silent knowledge. In comparison with the examples from Louis Vuitton and Gucci, this post does not focus on expressing luxury through heritage and craftsmanship but rather through creative expression and relevance. However, like the Traditional luxury brands, Acne Studios also targets consumers with a high cultural capital but by speaking to an audience that cares about identity and originality rather than tradition. This contributes to the construction of luxury in subtle ways since it connects the brand with associations such as refined taste (Arnould et. al, 2023) and exclusivity. The brand balances associations to exclusivity with associations to inclusivity and relatability by for example including everyday household products that most people can relate to. The post consists of still images of the art constellation and close up pictures of details such as the pillow on the side. The pillow, which has illustrations of a masked figure, can be seen as a representation of how the brand wants to be perceived as culturally progressive and bold. This is a difference from the Traditional luxury brands that puts a greater emphasis on values such as sophistication and timelessness.



### 4.3 Luxury as Slow Creation



*Figure 13: (Dior Beauty, 2025b)*



*Figure 14: (Louis Vuitton, 2025d)*

This theme highlights how Traditional luxury brands highlight craftsmanship. The attributes were for example close up pictures of details, moving images with narratives built around the product and cues associated with Traditional craftsmanship. Rather than presenting the finished product, the Traditional luxury brands focus on embedding each product with a rich narrative of heritage, craftsmanship and tradition by including how it transforms from drawing to the finished display. The brand turns creation into an emotional and intellectual narrative. A feature within the material was that the Traditional luxury brands often showcase the full process behind their products as part of their communication on Social Media. By not only revealing the outcome, but also the history of the product's origin, initial sketches, behind the scene footage of ateliers and other parts of the creation journey, the brand infuses the product with symbolic value and engages the audience cognitively as well as effectively. This aligns with Lin & Ku's (2023) emphasis on creating digital experiences that are intellectual and emotional.

A post from Dior (Dior Beauty, 2025b) exemplifies The slow creation, where they show the viewer the glass-blowing process of their perfume bottle. The post has exciting background music that gives a cue to the viewer (Berger, 2014) that the process builds up to something, which creates a feeling of suspense. By doing this, the brands carry the physical craftsmanship directly into the digital space, rather than using overtly digital aesthetics the brands persevere their authenticity and do not let the digital take over. This aligns with Sanz-Lopez et al. (2024) emphasis on balancing innovation with core values when moving from analog to digital.

A post from Louis Vuitton (Louis Vuitton, 2025d) further demonstrates the time and craftsmanship that lies behind every product. The post includes moving images that show how an exquisite timepiece is made. The focus lies in how the timepiece is assembled in extreme close up where every detail of the miniature components is shown. The visuals create a narrative around the product where luxury is not shown as fast and flashy but rather precise and quiet. This can be connected to Sanz-Lopez et al. (2024) description of how branded products can be like art within the exclusive market. It can also be connected to how messages can make a tangible product feel more valuable (Oswald, 2012). The video presents the timepiece as an artwork rather than a commodity by showcasing the carefully crafted creation. This type of communication showcases the brands competence (Urde, 2024) as it

can be seen as a silent demonstration of the expertise Louis Vuitton has when it comes to creating exclusive products in this case horological craftsmanship.

The slow creation is also illustrated in a post from Dior (Dior Beauty, 2025a) one can follow the history behind their first perfume. This is done through a narrator voice who takes the viewer through history with images between photographs of Christian Dior, sketches of the perfume bottle and the finished product and how it looks today. This story can be seen as a way to engage with followers through emotional connection and contribute to reinforcing Dior's unique identity and thereby the creation of desirability (Escalas, 2004; Kapferer and Bastien, 2009; Kuehlwein and Shaefer, 2016). By doing this, the brand appeals to the customers who appreciate the artistic process and not just the final product, emphasising the hedonic value over the functional one (Assimos et al., 2019). As Arnould et al (2023) express, haute couture designers are often positioned as an archetype as a creator or magician, who brings their imagination to life. Through the narrative in Di6, the post conveys a mythical story about the perfume's origin, which is shaped by Christian Dior who embodies the creator archetype as his vision and imagination gives birth to the product. In the content, Christian's originality and creativity are seen. He has created "an exceptional bottle" (Dior Beauty, 2025a) inspired by both the origins of the perfume, as well as to imitate the famous figure-8 silhouette that was the basis for his haute couture collection. The archetype manifests through this blend of historical inspiration and creative vision. Christian's inspiration for the design can be considered based upon the female body, and the bottle becomes one with the feminine form. This type of mythical storytelling gives depth to the brand and its products, but also becomes a larger story about the creativity, and the cultural connection. The archetype is used as a narrative framework that elevates the history of the products and how they're made and ultimately shapes the feeling of luxury as it gives a meaning beyond the functional one.

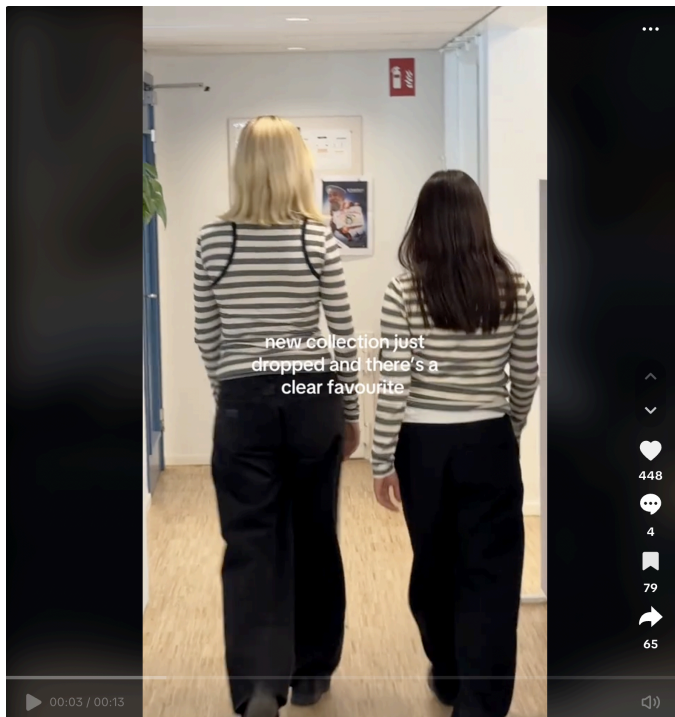
Moreover, the process-orientated narratives are likely to appeal to consumers with high cultural capital (Arnould et al., 2023), since they are more likely to value the heritage and invisible labour that is encoded in the craftsmanship if they have knowledge about the brand and its history. This further contributes to how the brands play on social distinction (Arnould et al. 2023) to create exclusivity by targeting the "happy few" (Debenedetti et al., 2024). The storytelling around the products also align with elements in the Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (Urde, 2024) since it reflects the brands core identity through references to their

heritage and subtle expressions of how the brand wants to be perceived as well as who they want to reach out to. The emphasis on the time and skills that is needed for each individual item signals the feeling of luxury and refinement by implicating that the item is qualitative and carries a certain value.

#### 4.3.1 New Luxury as Reference Point



*Figure 15:* (COS, 2025c)



*Figure 16: (Ganni, 2025a)*

In contrast to the Traditional luxury brands that embed their product with narratives of detailed craftsmanship and history, where each detail is in focus, the New luxury brands seem to focus more on communicating complete products that are ready to wear. In the post Co1, COS markets a pair of denim jeans. The post consists of two still images where the jeans are worn by two different men (one in each picture). The caption “Denim's New look: organic and recycled cotton in lighter washes that signal spring.” (COS, 2025c) puts the finished product in focus and anchors the visuals in themes of seasonal transition and sustainability. The post does not include narratives of creators or heritage elements. However, it can be seen as that it does touch on a slow creation by evoking a sense of consciousness about material and quality. Moreover, when compared with the Traditional luxury brands, the New luxury brands communication is different regarding the feeling the content conveys. In contrast to the Traditional luxury brands that connect themselves and their products to meanings of history, craftsmanship and exclusivity, the New Luxury brands seem to place a greater emphasis on meanings such as relatability, authenticity and humor (Ganni, 2025a). This is for example shown in a video from Ganni (Ganni, 2025a) where their new collection is filmed in a relaxed office setting and where three employees have come to work with shirts that are nearly identical. The showcasing of actual staff members rather than prestige craftsmanship

or historical founders creates a sense of authenticity and transparency. Moreover the post is playful, with the coordinated shirts, and evokes a sense of humour that feels self aware.

## 5. Discussion

This study set out to explore how Traditional Luxury brands, within the luxury goods industry, construct the feeling of luxury through multimodal communication on Social Media, with a particular focus on how exclusivity is kept in an environment that is characterised by speed, visibility and accessibility (Harness et al. 2024; Kluge & Fassnacht, 2015). The multimodal analysis resulted in three themes: *The Eye-Less Luxury*, *Luxury as Silent Knowledge* and *Luxury as Slow Creation*. Each of these revealed different communication patterns of how brands construct the feeling of luxury. The application of the concepts from the previous literature made it possible to see subtle signs of how exclusivity was retained by the brands through a symbolic, cultural and strategic lens. In this part, the broader implications of the findings are reflected in the light of the purpose and in connection to prior research and a broader societal context.

A critical contribution of this study is how multimodality can work as a central tool to maintain exclusivity. In contrast to Social Media as an open space for interaction, the Traditional Luxury brands use visual and auditory elements (Lin & Ku, 2023) to create a space of curated exclusivity that is available for all to see but symbolically available for those who can decode it. A common factor across all the three themes is that the Traditional luxury brands use carefully composed elements in their communication that emphasize distance, interpretative depth and complexity that together form a feeling of luxury that is culturally coded. These culturally coded messages contribute to a sense of exclusivity that is created through selective communication rather than for example material scarcity. This is supported by Eksell and Thelander (2014) concept of how multimodal is used to decode communication and how it interacts to combine a meaning within the society.

The first theme *The Eye-Less Luxury* reflects how the feeling of luxury is constructed through a combination of carefully composed attributes that together contribute to a distance between the sender (the Traditional luxury brand) and the receiver (the consumer). A clear pattern that emerged in the material and that shaped this theme was the absence of direct eye contact in the content from the Traditional Luxury brands. This was a pattern that was not part of the initial coding scheme, but that was seen in conjunction with attributes that showcased visual and auditory restraints and emotional inaccessibility. Contrary to the New luxury brands communication where the models looked directly into the camera lens, the models seen in the

Traditional Luxury brands content looked away or had their eyes obscured. This contributes to a sense of inaccessibility that creates a symbolic distance to the viewer. Although this pattern did not emerge explicitly through the coding scheme, it could be interpreted as an embodiment of Bourdieu's concept of habitus (Arnould, 2023), which is the socially learned ways an individual perceives the world, behaves and presents themselves. The absence of direct eye contact could be seen as a representation of learned behaviour of those within an elite group and a way for the Traditional Luxury brands to subtly signal that they don't need approval from the viewer. In addition to this, another key element that was observed was compositional centrality of the product. In the content from the Traditional luxury brands where a product was shown it was placed in the center of the frame and highlighted as the most prominent feature. This aligns with Eksell and Thellander's (2014) description of visual hierarchy and on how emphasis on an element contributes to its perceived importance. It reflects a communication where the item speaks for itself and is valuable and important enough to take up space in the images. Another attribute that contributed to the sense of exclusivity was the use of elevated spaces, such as airports and curated environments, instead of relatable everyday spaces like an office. This contributes to a feeling that what is shown is not meant for everyone but only the "happy few" (Debenedetti et al., 2024) who can relate. This can be connected to the bandwagon effect (Sahin and Nasir, 2022), where those who are included gain a symbol belonging to an elite group, which the Traditional luxury brands play on. A final key attribute within this theme is that the Traditional luxury brands seldom communicate the functional value of their products. The content is rather focused on emotional, intellectual and aesthetic cues, which makes the product a part of a broader narrative rather than just a practical offering. Taken together these attributes demonstrate how *The Eye-Less Luxury* is a part of the construction of a multimodal message of distanced exclusivity. This communication reflects Bourdieu's theory of Social distinction (Arnould et al, 2023).

In *Luxury as Silent Knowledge* it was further showcased how a refined multimodal language symbolically, culturally and strategically constructs the feeling of luxury on Social Media. This theme illustrates how subtle audiovisual cues such as references to fine art, brand specific attributes and abstract ideas are used by Traditional luxury brands to appeal to those who understand them. This is highly connected to Bourdieu's theory of social distinction as it showcases how the brands play on cultural capital (Arnould et al, 2023). A key attribute within this theme is that the Traditional luxury brands use references to art within their



content, which creates exclusivity as it targets an elite group of consumers and excludes the people that lack the knowledge needed to understand and take in the messages and the underlying meanings fully. *Luxury as Silent Knowledge* was also reflected in how the Traditional Luxury brands incorporated parts of their heritage in their content. This appeals to those who understand the references, and the value embedded in the cultural code and legacy. The use of instrumental music, sensory narratives and poetic captions contributes to a feeling that luxury should be felt rather than seen, also on Social Media. This is in line with Lin & Ku's (2023) meaning of how digital experiences should be emotional.

This theme shows how exclusivity is maintained by the Traditional Luxury brands by creating messages that speak to those who understand the deeper meaning. It further reflects how the feeling of luxury on Social Media is constructed through complex cultural codes embedded in the content on Social Media.

Finally *Luxury as Slow Creation* revealed key insights about how Traditional Luxury brands rely on slow process focused visuals and auditory as well as heritage storytelling (Urde, 2024) to construct the feeling of Luxury on Social Media. This was done by not just showing finished products, which was done by the New luxury brands, but rather displaying Traditional craftsmanship processes, rich narratives and details that underline the skill, history and heritage behind each item. In combination with close up imagery, mythical stories and the use of archetypes, the narrative around the items portrays it as a cultural artefact rather than a commodity.

The results of this study show that the attributes within the themes mentioned above together create a subtle construction of the feeling of luxury. The Traditional luxury brands use attributes such as composition, plays on belonging, reference to art, craftsmanship and culture, to construct luxury and maintain exclusivity without explicitly stating it. The distinction that is created through the use of these combined attributes is subtle and created through cultural and symbolic means. This means that even though the communication from these brands are accessible to everyone on Social Media, does not mean that the luxury is. The accessibility of luxury on Social Media is largely illusory, everyone can see, but not everyone can understand. A more critical reflection and an alternative interpretation on this is that the brands strategically use these symbolic and cultural attributes to exclude some groups by using elements that need cultural knowledge and intellect to be interpreted. This evokes

questions about inclusion and accessibility in the Social Media age. Social Media is available for anyone, and anyone can create, share and consume content and is presented as democratic platforms. However, the results of the study indicates that luxury brands use these platforms to refine and deepen excluding strategies rather than breaking them. In a seemingly open space, luxury brands succeed with communicating exclusivity through complex multimodal content and narratives. Luxury brands use selective communication to remain exclusive despite high visibility.

From a societal perspective this means that luxury brands play a role, even on Social Media, in determining social differences, but now with new types of tools. How the feeling of luxury is expressed on Social Media gives an important understanding of our contemporary time. There has been a shift from the explicitly exclusive, that has been expressed for example through carefully curated places, to the subtle codes and symbols online. Today the digital presence of luxury can create exclusion and contribute to social comparison as well as an increased social distance between people. Another important insight about how this affects our time, is that the use of symbolic and cultural attributes are further affecting how value is perceived, where the product's functional value is being put to the side. Our perception of value has thus further shifted. As described in the previous research, the consumption behaviour of the higher social class is often imitated by people from lower classes in the hope to climb the social ladder (Assimos et al., 2019). Through the analysis, it was indicated that the Traditional luxury brands target an exclusive audience through their use of the mentioned attributes and the aim of reaching consumers with a high cultural capital. This means that, in the long run, what the Traditional luxury brands communicate contribute to which ideals are created and maintained in society. Thereby, luxury brands gain a meaning that goes beyond the materialistic, they become tools that affect and signal social hierarchies in today's society. This means that luxury brands have a powerful, but discrete, influence in society. They are not just commercial actors but also cultural actors that form what is perceived as desirable in the western society. In a society where belonging and identity is increasingly expressed through consumption, these brands gain an important role for defining what is considered valuable. Therefore, Traditional luxury brands are not just producers of luxury goods but also actors that influence our worldview.

## 6. Conclusion

To conclude this study, the main findings of the analysis have been compiled and presented below. Then, the theoretical contributions and managerial implications are presented. Finally, further research that would have been interesting to delve into is discussed.

### 6.1 Main Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore how Traditional luxury brands within the luxury goods industry construct the feeling of luxury through a multimodal communication on Social Media, while striving to remain a sense exclusive online. Through a qualitative document study and a multimodal analysis, the study has identified several key patterns used by the Traditional luxury brands to maintain their exclusivity on Social Media. These are based on content from the selected brands, Louis Vuitton, Dior and Gucci, from their profiles of the platforms Instagram and TikTok and with New luxury brands, COS, Ganni and Acne Studios as a reference point. The analysis of the identified themes revealed key findings of how the feeling of luxury is constructed by the brands both symbolically, culturally and strategically. Taken together, the implication within each of the three themes, demonstrate how the Traditional luxury brands construct the feeling of luxury on Social Media, through careful choices of multimodal communication.

First, the Traditional luxury brands, within the luxury goods sector, construct the feeling of luxury on Social Media by creating a symbolic distance through nonverbal cues such as; avoiding direct eye contact, using central product placing and by using exclusive environments. These aspects combined, contribute to maintaining exclusivity by making the content more difficult to intellectually access. This creates a feeling of separation by not directly inviting the viewer in and therefore makes the brand appear more selective, even on platforms that are technically accessible to everyone.

Second, the brands elevate their cultural positioning by using and referring to abstract and artistic elements, presenting luxury as something to be appreciated rather than just being purchased, this frames luxury as something that needs to be understood. These aspects combined, contribute to maintaining exclusivity by basing the content on cultural codes as well as on intellectually demanding content. Only those with the right knowledge can fully

connect with the content. By doing this the brand can narrow its audience down for the “happy few” they want to reach and thereby remain exclusive.

Third, by showcasing the processes and giving each product a rich narrative, the brands add cultural and symbolic value that elevates the products beyond its functional value. These aspects combined, contribute to maintaining exclusivity by focusing on appreciation of the products' craftsmanship and heritage. By showcasing that the process takes time and requires knowledge and time to give it its true value. This makes the product feel less of a product that can be bought and narrows down to something that only a few people can fully comprehend.

These implications demonstrate that operating on Social Media does not mean that the brands have to lose their exclusivity, but rather that the exclusivity is re-constructed online through the use of multimodal and cultural attributes that reflect the brand and cues to suit the open platform of Social Media.

## 6.2 Theoretical Contributions

This study contributes to existing theory by addressing the gaps identified in the literature review based on the previous research. The gap is responded to by exploring how Traditional luxury brands construct the feeling of luxury on Social Media through multimodal communication. By using theoretical concepts from the different parts within the literature review this study contributes with insights regarding how luxury is communicated, how luxury is kept exclusive in a digital environment and how it is constructed through a combination of narratives and multisensory expressions.

This study contributes to literature within conspicuous and status consumption. Previous research has often focused on the consumer perspective and on why consumers choose to engage in conspicuous and status consumption (Sahin and Nasir, 2022; Assimos et al., 2019) while this study shifts the focus from a consumer perspective to a communication perspective by exploring how the outward facing content from the luxury brands contribute to creating symbolic meanings. Moreover, the study also extends the previous research by applying it to the specific context of the luxury goods industry. The findings of the study confirm the

previous research as the communication from the brands included the key elements mentioned in the literature review such as that products should satisfy intellectual and aesthetic needs rather than functional ones (Assimos et al., 2019), however other parts such as that people perceive a higher status from engaging is conspicuous and status consumption (Sahin and Nasir, 2022) could not be confirmed due to the research scope that did not include consumer perceptions. The study also contributes to existing literature about the luxury market and how it is changing in the age of Social Media. While digital challenges, such as the democratisation of luxury and the tension between visibility and exclusivity, have been discussed before, this study contributes to concrete ways in which brands work against these challenges through for example creating a distance by not looking into the camera, using heritage storytelling, and referring to cultural references. Moreover, although this study does not aim to contribute directly to multimodal theory, it illustrates how a multimodal analytical lens can be applied to efficiently explore how visual and auditory elements interplay to construct feelings of luxury online. The findings highlight that multimodal cohesion is a critical factor for how brands maintain their luxury identity on Social Media.

### 6.3 Managerial Implications

The findings of this study offer insights for marketing professionals who work with Traditional luxury brands and navigate through Social Media, especially regarding how to strategically navigate without compromising a brand exclusivity. Social Media presents strategic challenges for luxury brands that risk diluting exclusivity. As shown in the literature review, a contributing factor to the decreased “pride of ownership” (Shukla and Rosendo-Rios, 2025) within the Traditional luxury brand's original consumer group, was when they became too accessible to the masses, something that Social Media platforms intensifies due to its accessible nature. Therefore, it is important for these brands to have strategies to maintain their luxury and exclusivity also online. Practitioners who are operating within the luxury sector on Social Media should have these implications in mind.

First, Traditional luxury brands should focus on composition strategies. These should be based on a product's centrality and visual hierarchy, allowing the product to be seen as the most important. As observed in the study, luxury is created by the product being the dominant focus while models are used as narrative carriers. In combination with this, the carrier of the

product, the model, should avoid direct eye contact with the camera to create the feeling of distance and let the product be in focus. By doing this the brand can signal that it does not seek mass validation.

Second, Traditional luxury brands should focus their communication on artistic references. Social Media posts should interact with internal brand references as well as mythic storytelling, which requires the receiver of the message to have cultural capital to fully understand. By doing this, the content becomes an easy filter that is accessible to many but is only understood by a few, highlighting the exclusivity.

Third, by showcasing the story of foundation to end product, Traditional luxury brands offer the viewer the crafting and creative process of their products. This helps to communicate time and heritage through the making of quality. By doing this, it creates an aura of authenticity around the product and shows more than its functional value.

Together these implications create the feeling of luxury on Social Media. However it should be kept in mind that this study does not aim to gain generalizability but rather to create transferable insights about how luxury is constructed on Social Media while striving to remain a sense exclusive online. It shows that the feeling of luxury is not something that is about visibility, but rather how the visibility is managed. Through selective choices the brands maintain their exclusivity within the open landscape of Social Media, where many are invited to look, but only few to truly understand what wants to be conveyed. However, it is important to note that while these implications are targeted to those who work with Traditional luxury brands to reach the “happy few” (Debenedetti et al., 2025), the implications can also be used in a reversed manner to target the “happy many” (Debenedetti et al., 2025). To practitioners who work with brands that want to signal accessibility and inclusion, like New Luxury brands, these strategies can be inverted to not construct a feeling of luxury and exclusivity.

## 6.4 Future Research

There are several areas that could be explored in further research. First, one area for further research is to look at the audience participation connected to how the feeling of luxury is constructed on Social Media. This could for example be done by adopting a netnographic

approach to explore how consumers interact with the content from Traditional luxury brands online. This could provide insight into audience engagement that may change or challenge the intended brand narrative. Another area to explore further is how other dimensions of Social Media, that is for example collaborations, might play a role in the construction of luxury. It could also be interesting to look at how a limited digital presence may play a role in constructing exclusivity. Lastly, it would be interesting to compare how constructions and interpretations of luxury may differ depending on region. Further research could for example explore if the construction of the feeling of luxury differs significantly in the Middle East or East Asia, where other symbolic markers of luxury may dominate.

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## 9. Use of AI

In this study, AI tools have been used selectively without compromising academic integrity. The AI tool ChatGpt (OpenAI, n.d.) has been used to help translate and navigate articles to make it easier to find our way through the material, it has been used consistently to find suitable synonyms and word choices for the essay, and to provide suggestions for shortening the text when the word count was over the limit at the end of the work process. However, it is important to note that these suggestions were only used for inspiration in an initial state and that writing and analysis have been carried out independently by the authors.

The screenshot displays a ChatGPT chat window. On the left, a PDF document titled "Visual Culture and the Realms of Luxury" is shown. Below it, a button reads "översätt texten till svenska". The chat history shows a user prompt: "Självklart! Här kommer en översättning av texten på bilden (stycket 'Visual Culture and the Realms of Luxury') till svenska med tydlig och korrekt ton:". The AI response includes a heading "Visuell kultur och lyxens sfärer" followed by a paragraph explaining the term. Below the text is a search bar with the placeholder "Fråga vad som helst" and buttons for "Sök" and "Fråga". On the right side of the interface, a PDF titled "Marketing Semiotics.pdf" is visible, and a button asks "Vad handlar artiklen om?". Below this, a summary of the article is provided, including a list of bullet points.

översätt texten till svenska

Självklart! Här kommer en översättning av texten på bilden (stycket "Visual Culture and the Realms of Luxury") till svenska med tydlig och korrekt ton:

**Visuell kultur och lyxens sfärer**

Som termen antyder syftar "visuell kultur" på specifika uttryck inom vår kultur som bygger på bilder som ett sätt att kommunicera (Dikovitskaya). Visuell kultur är ett brett begrepp som inkluderar olika typer av berättande och uttryck, vilka berör olika delar av livet. Tidigare har konst, mode, fotografi, film, tv, serier och reklam varit de tydligaste exemplen. På senare ↓, var även datorspel och sociala medier blivit en del av den visuella kulturens värld, vilket lett till utvecklingen av det som idag kallas "digital visuell kultur".

Fråga vad som helst

Marketing Semiotics.pdf  
PDF

Vad handlar artiklen om?

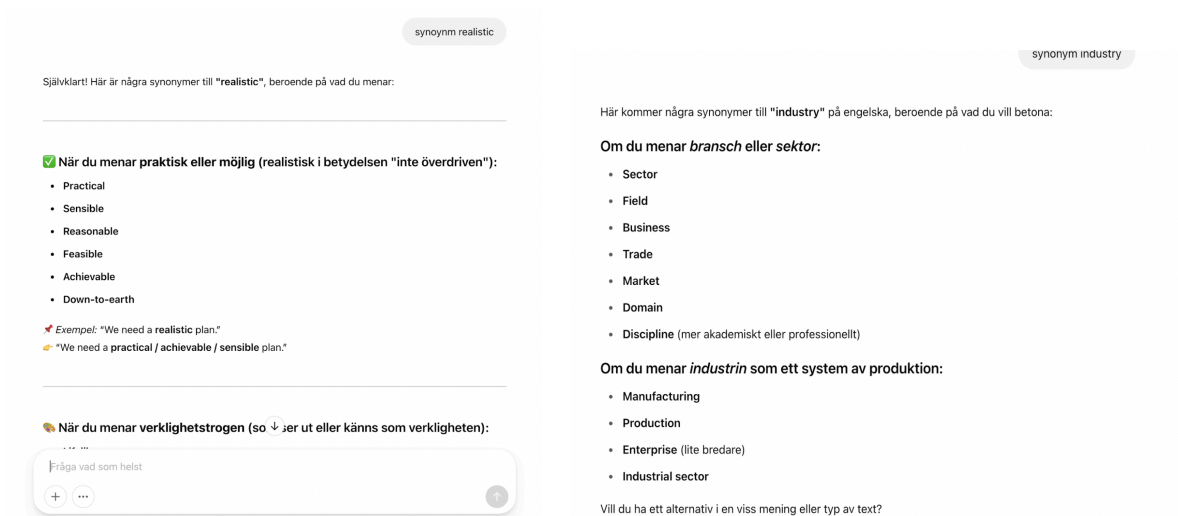
Artikeln "Marketing Semiotics: Signs, Strategies, and Brand Value" av Laura R. Oswald handlar om hur semiotik (teorin om tecken och betydelser) kan användas inom marknadsföring för att skapa och förstärka varumärkesvärde.

Sammanfattningsvis:

- **Semiotikens grund:** Artikeln förklarar strukturell semiotik och hur tecken (som logotyper, annonser, produkter) fungerar som bärare av kulturella och emotionella betydelser.
- **Varumärken som teckensystem:** Varumärken ses som symboliska system som konsumenter tolkar och kopplar till sociala och emotionella behov, såsom status, identitet och tillhörighet.
- **Praktisk tillämpning:** Ett fall presenteras där ett nytt parfymvarumärke ("Woman") misslyckades på marknaden eftersom deras annonsering skickade motstridiga budskap – kvinnan framställdes både som en "gudinna" och som "tjejen från grannskapet". Semiotisk research visade att ett tredje alternativ (en "amerikansk legend") hade kunnat positionera varumärket mer framgångsrikt.
- **Strategisk användning av semiotik:** Semiotik kan och bör användas tidigt i marknadsföringsplaneringen för att positionera varumärken på ett sätt som är kulturellt relevant och differentierande.
- **Vikten av kulturella koder:** Artikeln betonar vikten av att förstå konsumentkulturens koder och hur dessa formar hur produkter och varumärken uppfattas.

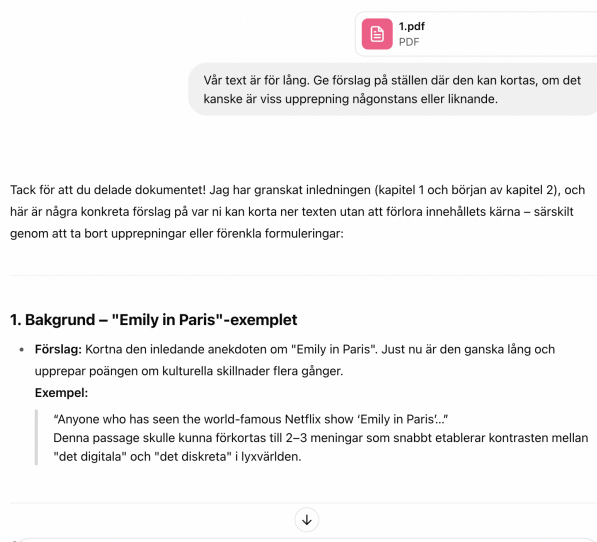
(OpenAI, n.d.)

At the start of this thesis work it was discussed which streams and theories would best fit into the thesis to suit the research question. AI was thereby used to help us navigate through the large amount of literature that had been collected by us. This helped us to get an overall idea of what the articles were about, what reasoning they discussed and came to. With the help of this, it helped us to narrow down to which literature streams we wanted to focus on and which we thought fitted our research question and which could add something to the study.



(OpenAI, n.d.)

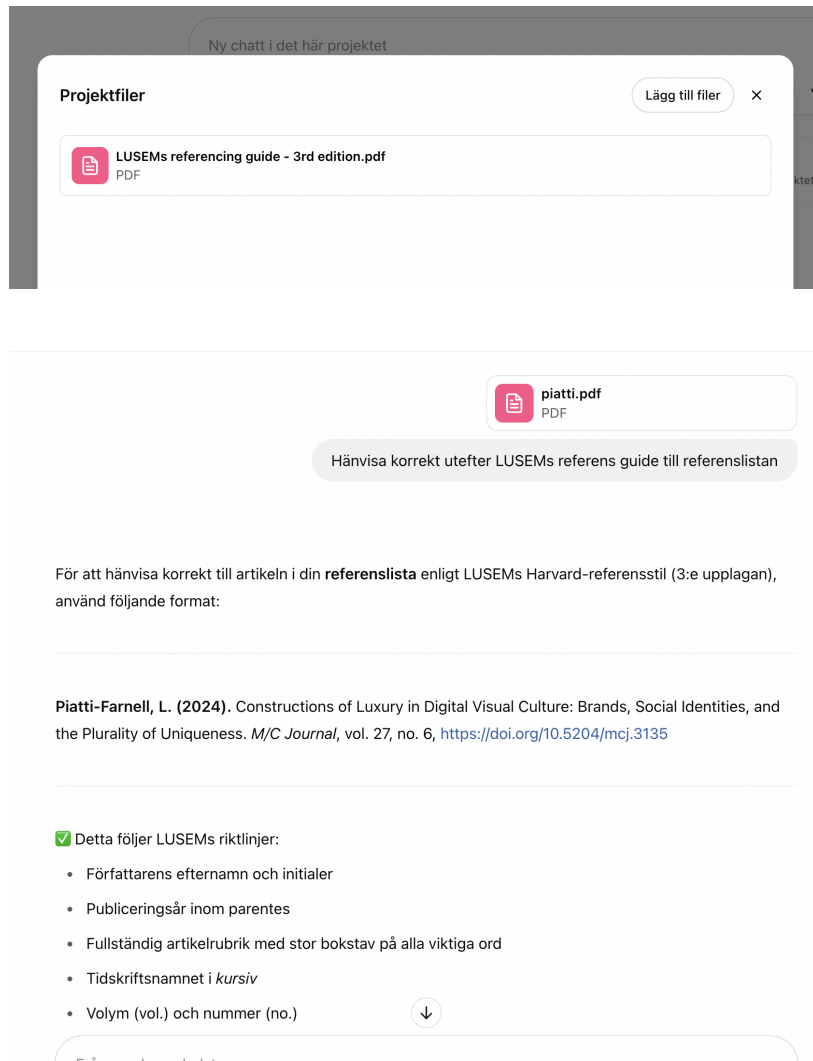
Furthermore, the AI tool ChatGpt (OpenAI, n.d.) has been used throughout the work to suggest synonyms to ensure that the text flows without the words becoming too repetitive and disrupting the reading flow.



(OpenAI, n.d.)

At the end of the essay, the text was too long because we had too many words. ChatGpt (OpenAI, n.d.) was then used to provide suggestions on where the text could be shortened.

We considered and discussed the suggestions and changed the places where we agreed that the text could be shortened.



(OpenAI, n.d.)

Finally, ChatGpt (OpenAI, n.d.) has been used to facilitate source verification. Where LUSEM's reference guide has been uploaded so that it can be used to refer correctly. However, the source has always been double-checked to make sure it is actually the right journal, name and year, but it has facilitated the work process by putting the format in the correct order. In addition, the DOI link is always added by us to avoid linking to the wrong



page. When completing the study report, it was also double-checked that all the sources were in alphabetical order.

## 10. Appendixes

|                                |                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                              |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| EXTERNAL<br>BRIDGE<br>INTERNAL | <b>VALUE PROPOSITION</b><br>What are our key offerings and appeals to customers and stakeholders?            | <b>RELATIONSHIPS</b><br>What should be our relationships with key customers and stakeholders?                   | <b>ASPIRED POSITION</b><br>What is our aspired position in the market and key customers' and stakeholders' hearts and minds? |
|                                | <b>EXPRESSION</b><br>What is distinctive about our communication making us recognizable at a distance?       | <b>IDENTITY CORE</b><br>What do we promise, and what are the core values that sum up what our brand stands for? | <b>PERSONALITY</b><br>What human qualities form our corporate character?                                                     |
|                                | <b>MISSION &amp; VISION</b><br>What engages us (mission) and what is our direction and inspiration? (vision) | <b>CULTURE</b><br>What are our attitudes, and how do we work and behave?                                        | <b>COMPETENCES</b><br>What are we particularly good at, and what makes us better than the competition?                       |

*Appendix 1: Figure 1: The Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (Urde, 2024)*

Appendix 2: Table 1: Coding scheme

| Theoretical lens and analytical focus | Features                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Conspicuous and status consumption    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How products gain symbolic meaning through social aspects<br/><i>For example: A Luxury bag can gain symbolic meaning through limited availability and associations to elite groups</i></li> <li>● Branded products to satisfy intellectual and aesthetic needs, rather than just be functional<br/><i>For example: A pen designed to capture your inner thoughts.</i></li> <li>● Products and messages that signal of signaling belonging <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Bandwagon effect</li> <li>○ <i>For example: Communication that indicates that “everyone” have a product through statements like “The must have item for the season”</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>● Products and messages that signal uniqueness and differentiation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Snob-effect</li> <li>○ <i>For example: limited edition</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>● Products and messages that signal a wealthy lifestyle and exclusivity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Veblen effect</li> <li>○ <i>For example: flying</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>● Factors that contribute to a sense of social recognition by owning a product (status consumption) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>For example: by saying "something every woman should have"</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

|                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Luxury Branding in the Age of Social Media | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Products within the luxury market are considered to be like art <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <i>For example: Bag presented as an art object</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Moving the luxury from the analog to the digital <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <i>For example: see the work process of a product now digital instead</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Balance digital innovation with core values <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <i>For example: interacts with digital tools such as trends while still maintaining its core value</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Expressions of authenticity connected to heritage and tradition through for example showing country of origin and integration of logo<br/><i>For example: speaking french</i></li> <li>• Digital experiences that are intellectual and emotional<br/><i>For example: information where you have to understand the background to understand the meaning, such as a company's heritage</i></li> <li>• The use of rarity-principles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <i>For example offering limited edition collections</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| Storytelling                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brand have stories that align with individual narrative, which results in emotional connection<br/><i>For example: The viewer could recognizes themselves in the</i></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

|                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                                                     | <p><i>feeling and situation, not just in the product, e.g. a young woman who travels a lot</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Creation of a unique brand identity and desirability through storytelling<br/><i>For example: Story of origins and heritage</i></li> <li>● Use of multisensory elements, visual and audio, to arouse feeling of luxury <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Through exaggerated iconography and pleasurable aesthetics</li> <li>○ <i>For example: the use of sensual light and exciting music</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>● Expression of luxury through a combination of the material and the imaginary to give the brand and their products a narrative (The third sphere)<br/><i>For example: Mineralwater with the text “From ancient Nordic springs”</i></li> </ul> |
| <p>Marketing Semiotics</p> <p><i>Find patterns and themes in a system of signs where ideas of luxury is expressed through visual (image and text) and audio</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Signifiers of luxury and what they signify <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The double meanings of what we see and hear <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ (Signifiers) External meaning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>For example: a picture or sound of a car</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>■ (Signify) The idea associated with it <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>For example: vehicle with four wheels</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>● Messages that make a tangible product feel more valuable than it might actually be<br/><i>For example: adding the reference of “Designed in Italy”</i></li> </ul>                                                                                                          |

|  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|--|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Myths and archetypes (Influential stories that the brands use to affect the interpretation of the consumers) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>For example: The creator</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>shows their ideas through artistic expression</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>● Metaphors (Connection of different areas to create meaning) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>For example, compare shoes with turbo engines, different areas but combined represent speed.</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>● Metonymy (Concepts links though spatial proximity) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>For example, showing a bloody a hand to illustrate a murder scene</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>● Still and moving images <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Little information is easy to understand <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>For example: 1 object</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>○ More information is more complex to understand <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>For example: 5 object</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Still image; allow to see in detail <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>For example: can zoom in</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Moving images: Hold viewers focus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>creates a sense of reality</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>● Sound <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Cues for what the viewer should feel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>For example: Exciting → feel excited</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Musical rhythms and well-known sounds used to easily capture attention <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>For example: Waterdrops dripping</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>● Colour <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Warm colors: signify energy and optimism</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
|--|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

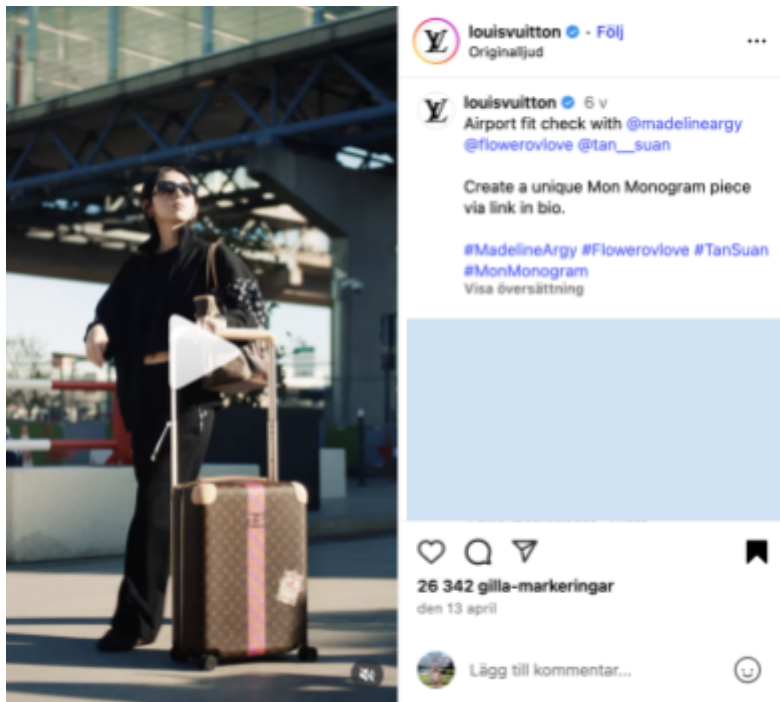
|                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Cooler tones: signify stability and reliability</i></li> <li>● Composition (Different significant depending on placement) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>The larger element, most important</i></li> <li>○ <i>Middle, more important than the the things around</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>● Text <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Anchorage: a part of a whole</li> <li>○ <i>For example: "This colour is my favourite" along with an image of a colour</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <p>Bourdieu's Social Distinction</p> <p><i>How luxury is constructed through signals of social distinction by subtle communication of taste and cultural capital</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Markers of high economic capital: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>For example: Expensive products such as luxury watches and designer handbags</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>● Messages that require and signal high cultural capital <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>For example: Prestige environments, Exclusive hotels, art galleries etc</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>● Intellectual or artistic references <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>For Example: Owning a luxury handbag requires knowledge to appreciate it and its value</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>● Indicators that reflect a type of taste <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>For example: Exclusivity cues, refined messages, art references and visual aesthetics</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>● Habitus (representing internalized habits shaped by class) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>For example: Models body postures, facial expressions, movements patterns</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

|                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Distinction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>For example: Signs of exclusivity: Limited editions, limited access, Cultural elitism, niche references, elitist activities</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <p>Corporate brand Identity Matrix</p> <p><i>How brand identity elements are used to construct and communicate luxury</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Storytelling of heritage and brand origin <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>For example: speaking italian</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>● Showcasing <b>brand culture</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>For example: references to tradition and craftsmanship</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>● Distinctive <b>expression</b>, distinct ways that make the communication recognizable for the brand <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>For Example: visual cues of exclusivity, typography, video style, tone of captions</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>● Showcasing <b>competence</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>For Example: such as expertise and artisanal craftsmanship</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>● Showcasing of <b>brand core</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>For example: through repeated use of logo, signature elements and brand colors</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>● Showcasing the brands <b>Personality</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>For example: Tone and characteristics through human qualities like being bold</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

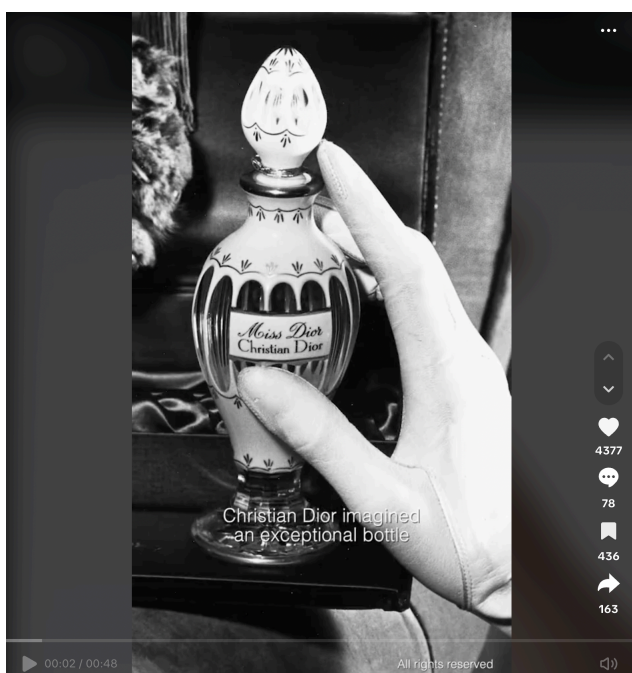




Appendix 3: [Figure 2](#): (Louis Vuitton, 2025a)



Appendix 4: [Figure 3](#): (Louis vuitton, 2025b)



Appendix 5: [Figure 4](#): (Dior Beauty, 2025a)



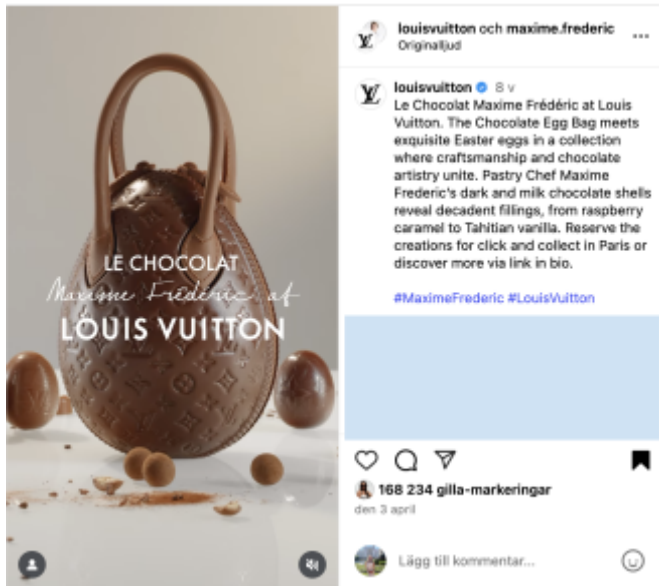
Appendix 6: [Figure 5](#): (COS, 2024a)



Appendix 7: [Figure 6](#): (COS, 2025a)



Appendix 8: [Figure 7](#): (Ganni, 2024a)

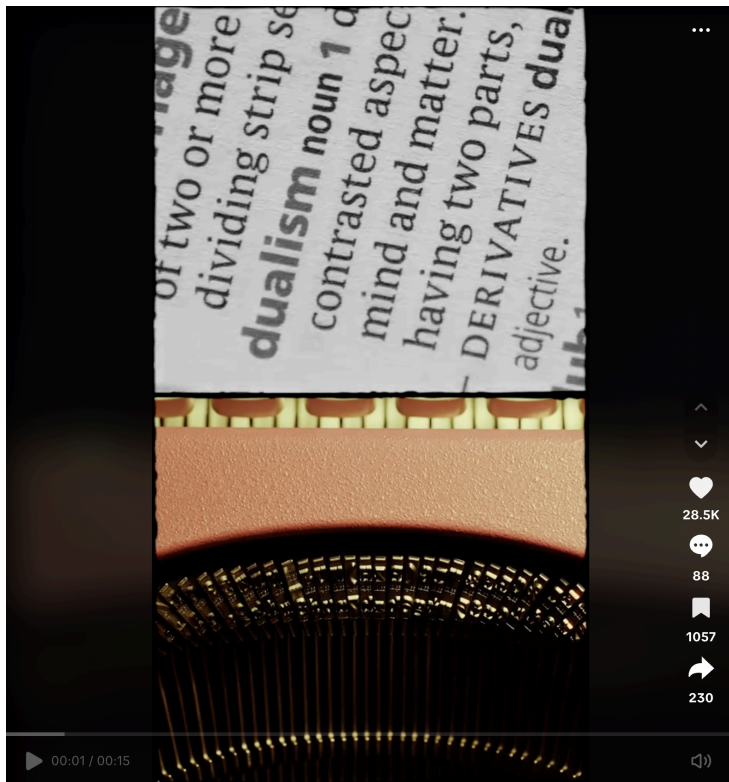


Appendix 9: [Figure 8](#): (Louis Vuitton, 2025c)

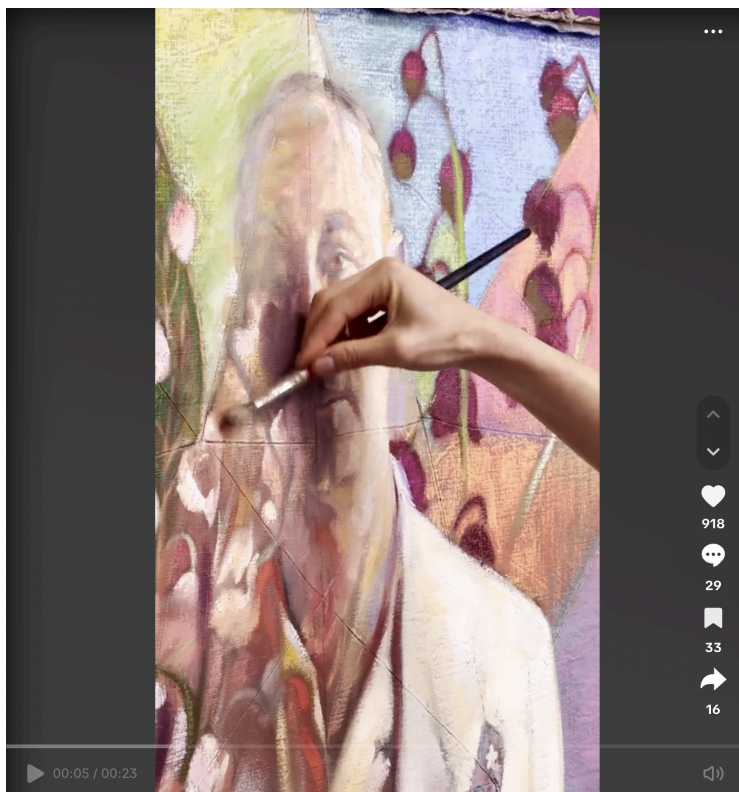


Appendix 10: [Figure 9](#): (Gucci, 2025a)

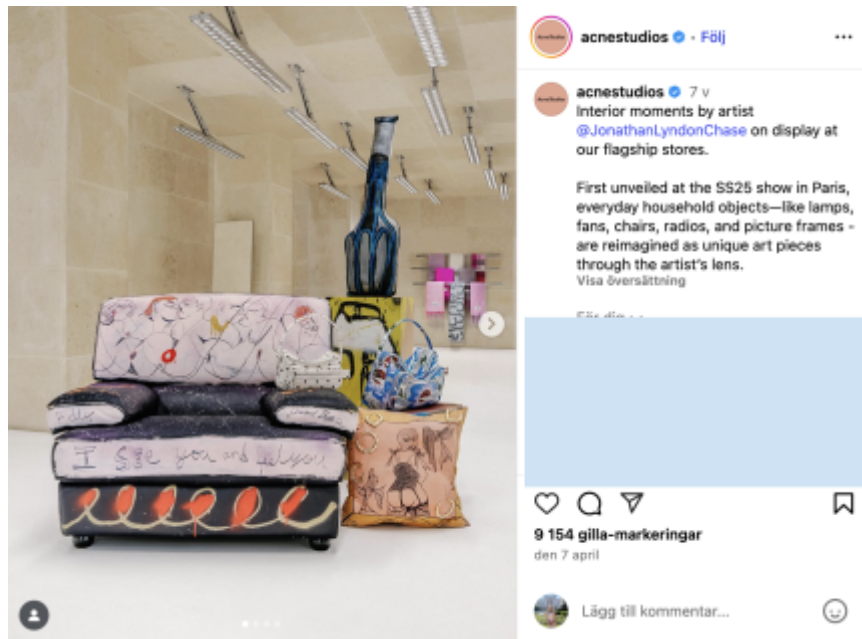




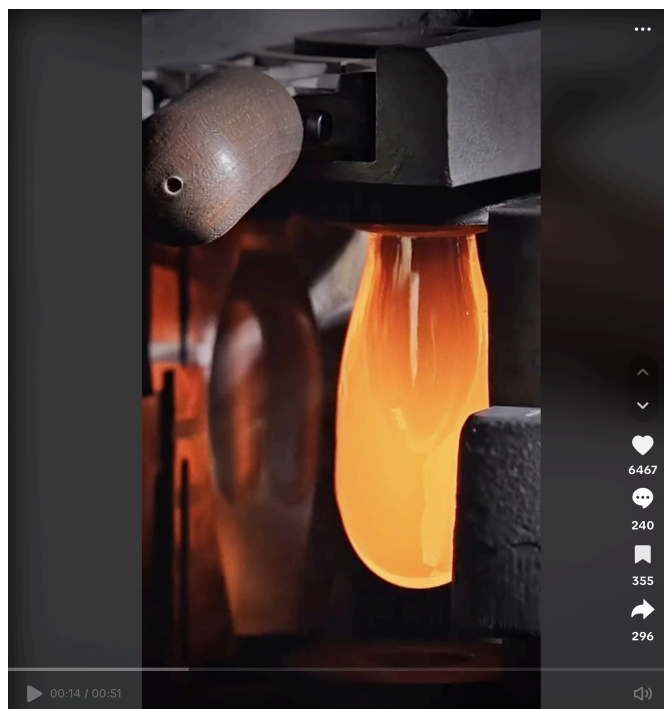
Appendix 11: [Figure 10](#): (Gucci, 2025b)



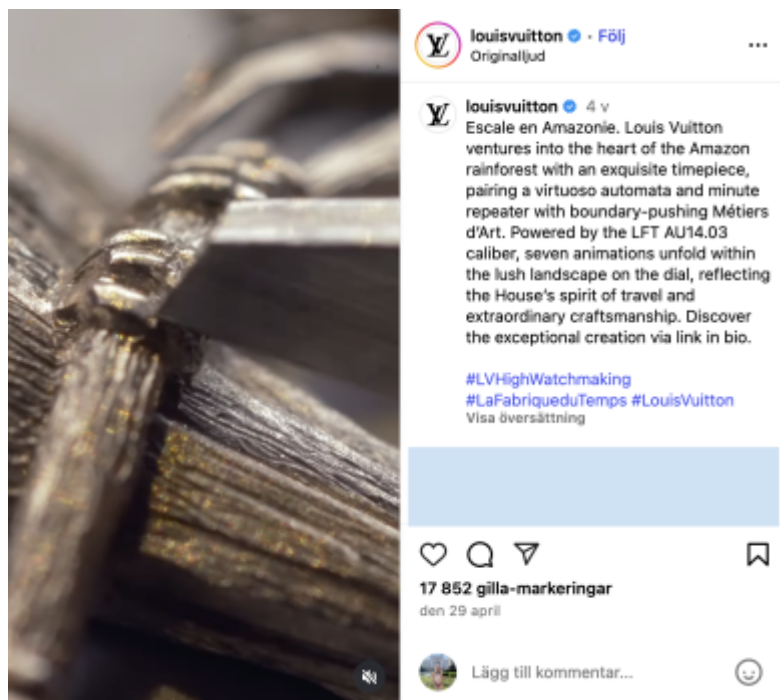
Appendix 12: [Figure 11](#): (Dior, 2025a)



Appendix 13: [Figure 12](#): (Acne studios, 2025b)



Appendix 14: [Figure 13](#): (Dior Beauty, 2025b)

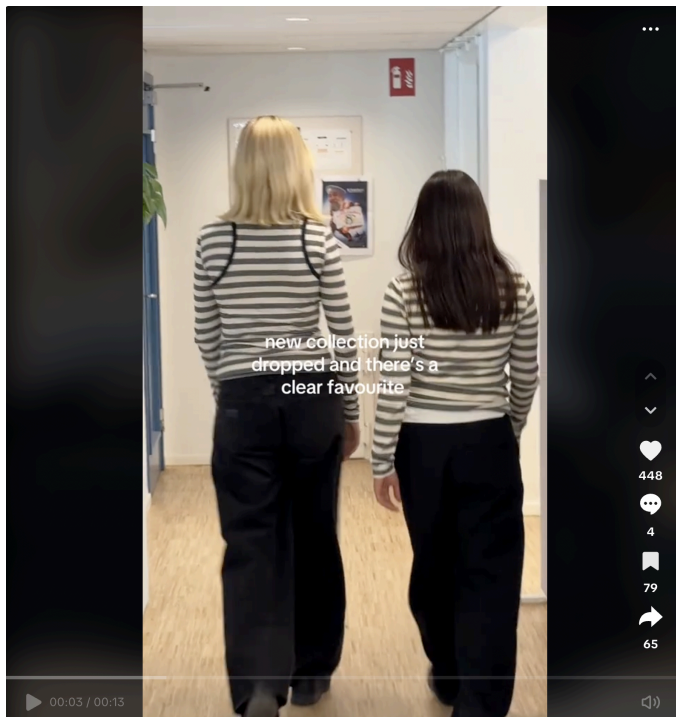


Appendix 15: [Figure 14](#): (Louis Vuitton, 2025d)



Appendix 16: [Figure 15](#): (COS, 2025c)





Appendix 17: [Figure 16](#): (Ganni, 2025a)