

Examining the impact of the 3Cs: Content, collaboration and customisation of social media marketing on luxury fashion brand perception

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ABSTRACT

The rise of the internet and digitalisation, interconnected global markets, increasing income levels, and heightened consumer awareness about global luxury brands have largely propelled the demand for luxury goods. Social media has emerged as the predominant channel for generating awareness, persuasion, and purchase intent for luxury brands. There exists a notable gap and dearth of empirical evidence in the existing body of literature on the impact of Social Media Marketing (SMM) on customer's loyalty and attachment to the brand. The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of the 3 Cs of social Media Marketing (content, collaboration, and customisation) on the customers' loyalty and attachment to luxury fashion brands, in turn impacting their willingness to pay for them. The study employed a structured questionnaire to gather data from 597 Gen Z customers who were actively engaged with luxury apparel brands; selected through convenience sampling. Partial least square-structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) was used to analyse the conceptual model. The results indicated that while all the three Cs were found to be significant determinants of brand attachment and loyalty; content had the greatest impact, followed by collaboration and customisation. It was further observed that SMM had a more significant positive impact on brand attachment rather than brand loyalty. The study further revealed that brand loyalty had a greater impact on the customer's willingness to pay a premium price, than brand attachment.

Keywords: social media marketing, 3Cs: content, collaboration, customisation, brand attachment, brand loyalty, willingness to pay, Gen Z India.



1. INTRODUCTION

The exponential growth of internet users has transformed the way businesses interact, communicate, and engage with their customers through social media marketing (SMM) channels (Natiqa *et al.*, 2022). The availability of social media sites has led to diverse methods of brand interaction, ranging from the user-generated content on Facebook, to generate excitement in Instagram (Webby, 2016) and financial sector's utilisation of X for addressing customer enquiries (Heine, 2016; Hobbs, 2016). The implementation of social media marketing in branding has grown significantly due to its multiple benefits to marketers (Ibrahim, 2022). These benefits encompass cost effectiveness (Dwivedi *et al.*, 2021), reach to global audience (Berthon *et al.*, 2012) real-time communication (Zhang *et al.*, 2021) with both current and potential customers (Koivisto & Mattila, 2018), improved customer insights through interactions between consumers and brands, consumer-to-consumer interaction (Alalwan *et al.*, 2020), and fostering a strong brand attachment (Alalwan *et al.*, 2019; Dwivedi *et al.*, 2021). The interplay of these factors enhances the customer experience, leading to increased attachment and brand loyalty (BL).

The widespread adoption of social media has brought about a significant transformation in the marketing strategies adopted by brands. Data-driven marketing based on insights from social media data facilitates customisation and tailored advertising (Rosário & Dias, 2023). Effective marketing campaigns on social media are recognised for their incorporation of narrative storytelling and interactive content (Kidd, 2011; Agius, 2016). The focus in SMM has shifted from marketing centred on products to strategies that are driven by narratives and centred on content (Panigyrakis *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, user-generated content has surfaced as a significant form of social evidence that strengthens brand loyalty (Adeola *et al.*, 2020). Despite of growing popularity of SMM there are still concerns to be addressed.

Luxury brands have historically shown reluctance towards the online sale of high-end products (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). In luxury sector physical stores continue to play a vital role, particularly in the apparel sector where direct inspection holds significant importance (Aw *et al.*, 2021). More than 70% of luxury purchases continue to take place in physical retail locations (McKinsey- BOF, 2020). However, data indicate that around 78% of offline luxury sales are influenced by digital channels (Achille *et al.*, 2018). Consequently, numerous luxury companies have implemented multichannel strategies, delivering products via diverse retail formats to enhance consumer reach and ensure convenient access (Kim & Kim, 2020). There is a noticeable trend towards utilising online channels for information gathering, product discovery, and price comparisons before finalising their purchasing decisions (Bazi *et al.*, 2020). The distinct characteristics of each channel can produce different levels of utility, which in turn influences cross-channel behaviour among shoppers (Verhoef *et al.*, 2015). This encompasses practices like "showrooming," in which consumers inspect luxury items in physical stores prior to making online purchases (Rapp *et al.*, 2015), and "webrooming," where they explore products online before completing their purchases in-store. Luxury stores are progressively incorporating digital channels to improve the personalised experience within consumers' luxury shopping journeys (Fernández *et al.*, 2018). These behaviours enable consumers to gain knowledge about luxury products and brands while simultaneously experiencing the prestige linked to acquiring luxury items in physical environments (Flavián *et al.*, 2016). Due to the considerable influence of social media on interactive marketing, luxury fashion firms have developed a presence on these platforms to connect with consumers (Chen & Wang, 2017).

We chose India as the context for this study due to its evolving consumer perceptions of luxury, which are attributed to an expanding middle class and a tech-savvy youth demographic that makes up more than 65% of the total population (Economic Times Report, 2024). Historically, the wealthy class in India has been the main driver of demand for luxury goods, seeking out unique and renowned objects to symbolise their wealth and social standing (Pino *et al.*, 2019). But as the middle class has expanded and their incomes have increased, more people are searching for luxury goods to represent success and achievement (Mint Report, 2023). As a result, demand for these items has also been rising steadily in recent years. In 2002, Louis Vuitton was the first international luxury brand to enter the Indian market. In 2007, Gucci made its initial entry into India through a franchise agreement, and in 2009, it transitioned to a direct entry through a joint venture, Jio World Plaza, the largest premium luxury mall, launched in 2023. Luxury brands are now available at multi-brand retail outlets. There are specific online platforms focused solely on the luxury sector, such as Ajio Luxe and Tata CliQ Luxury that are vying to cater to India's rich customers by providing premium products. While global brands such as Louis Vuitton, Gucci, and Burberry maintain strong

popularity in India, domestic labels like Sabyasachi and Manish Malhotra also hold significant prominence, offering high-end designer apparel and contributing to the diversity of the luxury market. In 2009, Gucci and Burberry initiated the use of social media, subsequently joined by Chanel, Louis Vuitton, and Yves Saint Laurent, who created their Facebook and X accounts to interact with their brand followers (Kim & Ko, 2012).

India ranks second globally, with approximately 639 million social media users and nearly 70% of Indian consumers influenced by social media (Statista, 2022). Young Indians show a tendency to use fashion as a tool for identity expression in social settings and are willing to allocate resources towards luxury fashion brands (Aggarwal *et al.*, 2024). In India, the younger demographic demonstrates a strong proficiency in technology and exhibits a tendency to explore luxury brands through experimentation. A significant portion of the literature surrounding luxury branding emphasises traditional consumers hailing from developed countries (Ozbal *et al.*, 2024). Therefore, additional research is required on the new, emerging, and technologically adept consumers in the Indian context.

Social media contains features, such as collaboration, social connectedness, sharing knowledge, user-generated content and being free (Jami Pour *et al.*, 2021). Prior research has examined diverse frameworks to establish the core components of an effective SMM strategy. Mishra (2009) proposed the 4Cs: "community, collective intelligence, content, and collaboration". Barnes-Johnston (2012) introduced a 3C approach encompassing consumption, curation, and creativity. Cheung *et al.* (2021) similarly highlighted entertainment, customisation, engagement, and trendiness as the core components of SMM. SMM plays a crucial role in influencing consumer choices for luxury brands by enabling them to understand their customers through direct and real-time interactions, provide personalised content, and leverage collaborations with influencers (Zhang *et al.*, 2021).

Our study examines content, collaboration, and customisation as three core components of social media marketing based on the following rationale. The first C is identified as content. Research indicates that creating value-rich content has been a standing challenge for many brands (Lou & Xie, 2020). Content serves as an ongoing conversation between brands and consumers. Effective marketing campaigns on social media are recognised for their incorporation of narratives and interactive content (Kidd, 2011; Agius, 2016). Similarly, the second "C," collaboration plays a vital role in social media marketing, especially for luxury brands, as it facilitates the expansion of reach, enhances brand perception, and establishes cultural relevance. The third C of SMM, customisation, enables luxury brands to tailor their interactions with the customer and facilitates a more intimate and exclusive experience, thereby strengthening the emotional connection or attachment that customers establish towards the brand (Choi *et al.*, 2021). Research indicates that customised interactions and offerings on social media contribute to enhanced brand attachment, as they create a sense of understanding and value that a luxury brand holds for its customers (Schmieder & Johnson, 2022).

As a result, the study analyses the subsequent research questions:

RQ1. How do the 3 C's (content, collaboration, and customisation) of social media marketing enhance brand loyalty and attachment for luxury fashion brands?

Attachment theory asserts that the initial bond established between an infant and a carer profoundly impacts the infant's behaviour, personality development, and subsequent interpersonal relationships (Ainsworth, 1969). Attachment theory, initially developed to examine the relationship between an infant and a primary carer, has since been applied in various disciplines (van IJzendoorn & Kroonenberg, 1988).

Previous research indicates that brand attachment significantly contributes to brand loyalty, as individuals with a strong emotional connection to a brand are likely to demonstrate specific behaviours, including purchase outcomes and loyalty to the brand. In marketing literature, some researchers define attachment as the strong emotional connections consumers establish with brands, which reduce their likelihood of switching and fosters loyalty (Marsari & Yunita, 2023). Several studies in the past have focused on the impact of brand attachment and loyalty on willingness to pay (Gokarna, 2021; Fu & Chen, 2023). Consumers are willing to pay more for brands they are attached to, which reduces the appeal of alternatives and enables consumers to enjoy the positive emotions associated with the brand

(Rauschnabel & Ahuvia, 2014; Siew *et al.*, 2018). One of the best measures of brand loyalty is consumers' willingness to pay, which is also possibly the most accurate way to summarise total brand equity (Aaker, 1991; Netemeyer *et al.*, 2004).

RQ2. How do brand attachment and loyalty affect customers' willingness to pay a premium price for luxury fashion brands?

The study will provide important implications to both academic literature and practitioners. It will enhance understanding of SMM- 3Cs as core components. It will also provide useful insights into consumer perceptions of gen Z towards luxury on social media and guidance on building consumer attachment and brand loyalty in the luxury segment.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Attachment Theory

An individual's bond with another is called attachment (Bowlby, 1979). Since its inception, attachment theory has been widely applied and adapted in diverse fields, including psychology, sociology, and education, offering profound insights into human behavior and interpersonal relationships (Fraleley *et al.*, 2011). It integrates well into various developmental and psychological theories and has been validated through cross-cultural studies, establishing its universality (van IJzendoorn & Kroonenberg, 1988). Bowlby's Attachment Theory (1979) describes brand attachment as a meaningful and enduring connection between a customer and a brand. This bond is defined by sustained commitment and goal-directed interactions (Shimul & Phau, 2022). The connection to luxury brands, based on Attachment Theory, provides insight into the emotional attachment of customers with brands, shaped by their ambitions, identity alignment, and social influences (Marsari & Yunita, 2023). Brand attachment (BA) is the psychological bond that connects consumers to luxury brands, fostering profound feelings (Milheiro *et al.*, 2024). Studies have shown that emotional attachment leads to brand loyalty, influencing consumers' willingness to pay premium prices for these brands (Shimul & Phau, 2022; Marsari & Yunita, 2023). Recent studies reveal that the unique characteristics of luxury brands, their customer benefits, and the emotions they evoke, significantly influence loyalty. This is particularly evident in customers' perception of delight and exclusivity. The relevance of this research is highlighted in Table 1.

TABLE 1. REVIEW OF EXISTING LITERATURE ON LUXURY BRANDS

| Research Outline | Purpose and Sector | Theory and Study Population | Journal |
|---|---|--|--|
| Authors: Shimul et al. (2019) Method: Qualitative Methodology: Interviews | To study the impact of emotional attachment on affinity and brand attitude for luxury brands | Theory Used: None Study Population: Global | Journal of Brand Management |
| Authors: Natiqa et al. (2022) Method: Quantitative Methodology: Questionnaire-survey method | To study the impact of SMM on customer relationship, customer equity, and purchase intention towards luxury fashion brands | Theory Used: None Study Population: Indonesian | Business and Economic Education Science |
| Authors: Husain et al. (2022) Method: Quantitative Methodology: Survey questionnaire | To examine the constructs such as SMM activities, brand equity, trust, and intention to purchase for luxury fashion brands | Theory Used: None Study Population: Indian | Cogent Business & Management |
| Authors: Shimul &Phau (2022) Method: Quantitative Methodology: Survey method | To examine the relationship among variables such as luxury brand attachment; self-congruence; consumer advocacy. | Theory Used: Attachment theory Study Population: Global | International Journal of Consumer Studies |
| Authors: Mayangsari& Harti (2022) Method: Quantitative Methodology: Questionnaire survey method | To check the relationship among factors such as brand attachment, brand trust, brand experience, and brand loyalty for luxury Cosmetics | Theory Used: None Study Population: Female global consumers | Jurnal Mantik |
| Authors: Marsari & Yunita (2023) Method: Quantitative Methodology: Survey method | To analyse the relationship among factors like brand attachment, hedonic motivation, brand experience, and purchase intention towards luxury fashion brands | Theory Used: Attachment theory; self-congruity theory Study Population: Indonesian | Media Ekonomi Dan Manajemen |
| Authors: Fetais et al. (2023) Method: Quantitative Methodology: Survey Method | To investigate the relationships among SMM, engagement, love mark, and brand loyalty for luxury fashion brands | Theory Used: Love mark theory, Service-dominant logic theory, and brand equity theory. Study Population: Qatari females | Information Systems Frontiers |
| Authors: Heidari et al. (2023) Method: Quantitative Methodology: Questionnaire survey method | To check the relationship among factors such as SMM, brand attachment, brand equity, brand trust, and online purchase intention. | Theory Used: None Study Population: Iran | Marketing and Management of Innovations |
| Authors: Fu & Chen (2023) Method: Quantitative Methodology: Questionnaire survey method | To check the key factors for cosmetic brands impacting purchases of brands among brand attachment and consumer willingness to pay a premium price. | Theory Used: None Study Population: China | Highlights in Business, Economics and Management |
| Authors: Milheiro et al. (2024) Method: Quantitative Methodology: Questionnaire survey method | To check the factors associated with luxury car brand among attachment, satisfaction, commitment, trust, and loyalty. | Theory Used: None Study Population: Portugal | Administrative Sciences |

Source (s): Authors' own work

Based on the previous studies and discussion we propose the following hypothesised model (figure 1):

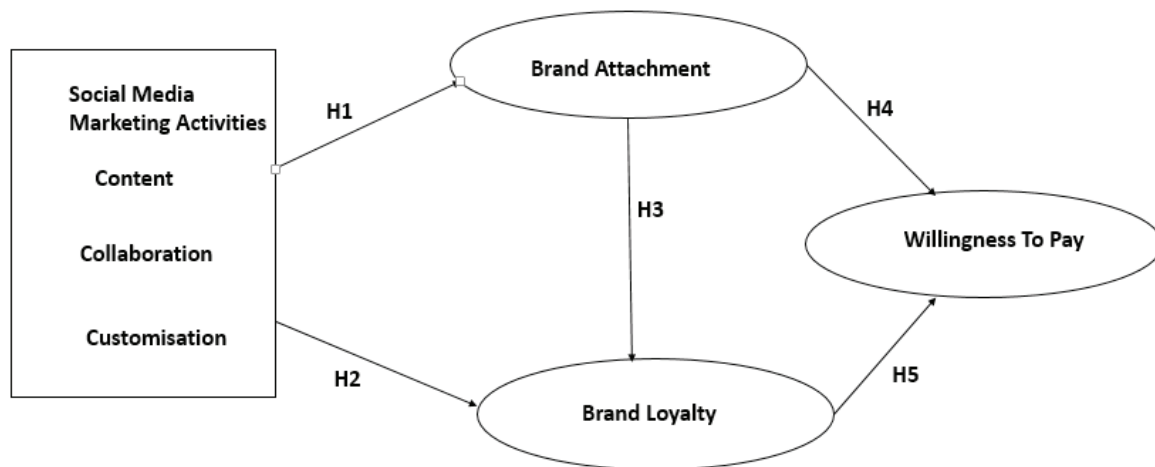


FIGURE1. CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Source(s): Authors' own work

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING (SMM), BRAND ATTACHMENT (BA) AND BRAND LOYALTY (BL)

Research has shown that social media marketing impacts various industries, including aviation (Seo & Park, 2018), automotive and home goods (Bilgin, 2018), telecommunications (Ebrahim, 2020), ride-sharing (Moslehpour *et al.*, 2021), and digital retail (Khan *et al.*, 2022). Social media enables the brand to reach and interact with existing and prospective customers. Social media platforms function as digital environments in which brand identity and association are built, maintained, and evolved, thereby reinforcing an emotional connection to a brand (Song & Yoo, 2016). Ebrahim (2020) outlines five dimensions of SMM—interaction, customisation, entertainment, word-of-mouth, and trendiness—that collectively influence brand loyalty. A review of the literature reveals that the extensive data available in the social media landscape facilitates the personalization of advertisements, resulting in increased involvement and potentially improving loyalty (Husain *et al.*, 2022; Heidari *et al.*, 2023). Further By collaborating with consumers and influencers, luxury brands foster a sense of bonding and loyalty, which strengthens attachment through common identities and experiences (Yu & Barnier, 2021).

Based on the arguments, we hypothesise that:

- H1: Social media marketing core components (content, collaboration, and customisation) positively impact brand attachment for luxury fashion.**
- H2: Social media marketing core components (content, collaboration, and customisation) positively impact brand attachment for luxury fashion.**

3.2 BRAND ATTACHMENT (BA) AND BRAND LOYALTY (BL)

BA is influenced by the strength of the emotional connection between a brand and a consumer (Park *et al.*, 2010). Previous, studies explain the substantial role BA plays in determining brand loyalty as well as other characteristics that are related to it, such as brand satisfaction, trust, and advocacy (Ahmadi & Ataei, 2024)). Like brand loyalty, brand attachment is sought by organisations as it generally forecasts customer repurchase behaviours (Shanahan *et al.*, 2019). The development of a strong attachment to a brand not only encourages customer loyalty but also increases the perceived value of the brand, the intention to advocate for it, and the level of satisfaction experienced by customers (Ahmadian *et al.*, 2023). Studies show that people have a strong loyalty to companies when they have an emotional connection to the brand, particularly when it aligns with their self-concept, leading to a sense of identity, security, and emotional stability (Lee & Workman, 2015). Thus, it is hypothesised that:

H3: Brand attachment to luxury fashion brands has a positive relationship with brand loyalty.

3.3 Brand attachment (BA) and Willingness to pay premium price (WTP)

Strong emotional connections to a brand often lead to customers being willing to pay premium prices. Such connections drive repeat purchases and prioritise a preferred brand over competitors (Albert & Merunka, 2013; Siew *et al.*, 2018). Consumers who derive emotional satisfaction and happiness from a brand are more likely to value its products highly, resulting in an increased willingness to pay a premium price (Zhou *et al.*, 2024). Furthermore, studies have shown that SMM activities directly influence brand equity, which in turn affects consumers' willingness to pay premium prices (Godey, 2016; Mudassar *et al.*, 2022). The literature also reveals a direct relationship between social media brand loyalty and consumer willingness to pay premium pricing (Panangian & Masnita, 2024). Studies indicate that consumers develop attachments to luxury brands due to their need for symbolic security, which leads individuals to pay a premium price (Japutra *et al.*, 2019). Additionally, factors like lifestyle marketing, social identity, and the functional and symbolic value of luxury products significantly affect consumers' willingness to pay premium price (Diallo *et al.*, 2021; Salem & Salem, 2018; Massara *et al.*, 2019). Based on above arguments, we hypothesise that:

H4: Brand attachment has an impact on willingness to pay more for luxury fashion brands.

3.4 Brand loyalty and Willingness to pay more

Research indicates that loyal customers are often willing to pay more for their preferred brands (Wieseke *et al.*, 2014; Bilgin, 2018; Gokarna, 2021). Brand loyalty drives favourable behavioural outcomes like repurchase intentions and positive word-of-mouth, which further strengthen the consumer's relationship with the brand and attract new customers through social proof and recommendations (Gulati *et al.*, 2023). Furthermore, attitudinal loyalty, driven by emotional commitment, often translates into a higher willingness to invest financially in the brand (Bahri-Ammari *et al.*, 2016). Previous studies have indicated the need to investigate how brand loyalty influences consumers' willingness to pay premium prices, particularly in the digital space (Bilgin, 2018; Ebrahim, 2020).

Thus, it is hypothesised that:

H5: Brand loyalty to luxury fashion brands has a positive impact on willingness to pay premium price.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 SAMPLING AND DATA COLLECTION

The study population comprises Indian gen Z consumers aged 18-27 who have at least once purchased luxury fashion brand products (apparels). Gen Z consumers were purposely selected as nearly eight out of 10 gen Z consumers follow luxury brands on social media (Statista Report, 2024). The focus of the study is specifically on luxury apparels as they are socially visible, gender neutral. In this context, luxury brands include high-end fashion labels like Burberry, Armani Louis Vuitton, Dior, Gucci, Chanel, and Prada. Data for this study was collected from a private university in Delhi-NCR, India, known for its affluent student base. Approval for conducting the survey was obtained from the university administration, and the participation was voluntary. The participants were well informed about the study academic purpose. Before sending out the questionnaire, we invited experts in the field of luxury consumer behaviour, social media marketing, digital marketing both from industry and academics to review it and suggest modifications. We employed a hybrid approach combining offline and online techniques for data collection.

The online administration entailed disseminating a Google Form link, together with a detailed description of the study objectives, to participants through email, social media, and WhatsApp. For this study, we utilised non-probability sampling method, specifically convenience sampling. Participants who indicated that they never purchased luxury goods were excluded from the analysis. Additionally, respondents were asked to identify their preferred social media platform (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, X) and their preferred fashion brand. A total of 724 responses were initially collected; however, incomplete forms and screening criteria led to the removal of 127 responses. The final sample consisted of 597 valid surveys (255 offline and 342 online), yielding a response rate of 82.4%.

Using G*Power software (Faul *et al.*, 2009), the required sample size was calculated with a minimum power of 0.80 for testing. Based on this calculation, a sample size of 597 was deemed appropriate, well above the minimum threshold of 159 at the 5% significance level. A pilot study was conducted with 70 students (representing more than 10% of the final sample size) to validate the survey instrument. Based on the pilot results, minor revisions were made to the language and question sequencing of the survey instrument. The measurement scales demonstrated satisfactory reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values exceeding 0.7.

4.2 MEASUREMENT SCALES

This study's conceptual model comprises four constructs: social media marketing (SMM), brand attachment, brand loyalty, and willingness to pay. All scales were adapted from prior studies. The multidimensional scale for SMM was adapted from Godey *et al.* (2016), encompassing three core components: content (CON), collaboration (COL), and customisation (CUS). Brand attachment (BA) and brand loyalty (BL), each consisting of four items, were adapted from Shimul *et al.* (2019) and Walsh *et al.* (2009), respectively. The scale for willingness to pay more (WTP) was adopted from Jang *et al.* (2011). All the construct items were detailed in Appendix 1.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The data were analysed using the PLS-SEM approach suggested by Hair *et al.* (2019). PLS-SEM was preferred as it is suitable for complex models that encompass the two data processes for data analysis namely, the measurement and structural model. The data was analysed using Smart PLS 4.0.

5.1 COMMON METHOD BIAS

Podsakoff *et al.* (2003) employed the Common Method Bias (CMB) and Harman's single-factor test to assess the validity of the constructs. We use Harman's single-factor test to consolidate all variables. The results of Harman's single-factor test showed that a single factor only explained 35.775 units of the total variation, which is much less than the 50% threshold value (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003).

5.2 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

The composition of the sample is as follows: 42.9% were male and 57.1% were female. 48.3% rated Instagram, 24.8% preferred Facebook, and 18.6% favoured X as their preferred social media platform. On average, 54.2% of respondents spent 1-2 hours on social media, while 30.2% spent 3-5 hours. Approximately 40% of respondents followed over three luxury brands on social media, and only 32% followed more than two premium brands.

5.3 MEASUREMENT MODEL

Table 2 presents factor loadings that surpass 0.7 and are statistically significant, indicating the reliability of each of the measured variables. The values in Table 2 for both the composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha are greater than 0.7. This proves that the measurement is internally consistent (Hair *et al.*, 2014). We assessed convergent validity by examining the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values, which needed to be greater than 0.5, and the Composite Reliability (CR) values, which needed to be above 0.7. To assess discriminant validity, the Fornell-Larcker criterion (1981) criterion is used. According to Hair *et al.* (2014), this criterion requires the square root of each

construct's average variance to exceed its correlation with other constructs, as a construct's variance shares more with its correlated indicators than with any other construct. Table 3 demonstrated discriminant validity by exceeding the correlation coefficients (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Another way to assess discriminant validity is the Heterotrait Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. Furthermore, Table 4 displays the Heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratios for each pair. The values were below the threshold of 0.85, indicating that the tests demonstrate discriminant validity (Henseler *et al.*, 2016).

TABLE 2. RESULT OF MEASUREMENT MODEL

| Construct | Items | Factor Loadings | Cronbach's alpha | CR | AVE |
|---------------------------|-------|-----------------|------------------|-------|-------|
| Content | CON1 | 0.858 | 0.856 | 0.856 | 0.699 |
| | CON2 | 0.857 | | | |
| | CON3 | 0.821 | | | |
| | CON4 | 0.807 | | | |
| Collaboration | COL1 | 0.777 | 0.795 | 0.796 | 0.620 |
| | COL2 | 0.793 | | | |
| | COL3 | 0.833 | | | |
| | COL4 | 0.744 | | | |
| Customisation | CUS1 | 0.747 | 0.771 | 0.772 | 0.593 |
| | CUS2 | 0.803 | | | |
| | CUS3 | 0.779 | | | |
| | CUS4 | 0.750 | | | |
| Brand Attachment | BA1 | 0.755 | 0.787 | 0.787 | 0.610 |
| | BA2 | 0.798 | | | |
| | BA3 | 0.803 | | | |
| | BA4 | 0.769 | | | |
| Brand Loyalty | BL1 | 0.820 | 0.858 | 0.850 | 0.686 |
| | BL2 | 0.843 | | | |
| | BL3 | 0.836 | | | |
| | BL4 | 0.813 | | | |
| Willingness To Pay | WTP1 | 0.804 | 0.749 | 0.750 | 0.666 |
| | WTP2 | 0.818 | | | |
| | WTP3 | 0.826 | | | |

Source: Authors' Analysis

Note: Item statements are mentioned in the Appendix 1

TABLE 3: FORNELL LARCKER CRITERION

| Construct | BA | BL | COL | CON | CUS | WTP |
|-----------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| BA | 0.781 | | | | | |
| BL | 0.552 | 0.828 | | | | |
| COL | 0.622 | 0.522 | 0.787 | | | |
| CON | 0.551 | 0.496 | 0.515 | 0.836 | | |
| CUS | 0.529 | 0.534 | 0.511 | 0.499 | 0.770 | |
| WTP | 0.555 | 0.61 | 0.534 | 0.478 | 0.537 | 0.816 |

Source: Authors' Analysis

TABLE 4. HTMT RATIO

| | BA | BL | COL | CON | CUS | WTP |
|-----|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| BA | | | | | | |
| BL | 0.671 | | | | | |
| COL | 0.786 | 0.632 | | | | |
| CON | 0.671 | 0.58 | 0.626 | | | |
| CUS | 0.679 | 0.659 | 0.652 | 0.613 | | |
| WTP | 0.718 | 0.762 | 0.689 | 0.595 | 0.704 | |

Source: Authors' Analysis

5.4 STRUCTURAL MODEL ASSESSMENT**TABLE 5. STRUCTURAL MODEL ASSESSMENTS**

| Hypotheses | β value | t value | P value | VIF (inner) | R Square | F Square |
|------------|---------------|---------|---------|-------------|----------|----------|
| SMM ->BA | 0.693 | 23.991 | 0.000 | 1.000 | 0.481 | 0.926 |
| SMM>BL | 0.478 | 9.257 | 0.000 | 1.926 | 0.424 | 0.206 |
| BA-> BL | 0.220 | 4.191 | 0.000 | 1.926 | | 0.044 |
| BA-> WTP | 0.311 | 7.123 | 0.000 | 1.439 | 0.440 | 0.120 |
| BL-> WTP | 0.439 | 9.616 | 0.000 | 1.439 | | 0.239 |

Source: Authors' Analysis

We used the guidelines outlined by Hair *et al.* (2019) to evaluate the outcomes of the structural model and test hypotheses. The VIF analysis identified no multicollinearity issues, indicating that they were below the essential threshold of 3.33 (Hair *et al.*, 2019). Table 5 presented the measurements and path coefficients in the structural model, consistent with the results of Ghasemy *et al.* (2020). Table 5 demonstrates that all of the relationships are statistically significant. As per the results, SMM has the greatest influence on brand attachment ($\beta = 0.693$), with the association between SMM activities and brand loyalty coming in second ($\beta = 0.478$). Similarly, BL has a strong influence on the extent to which consumers are willingness to pay ($\beta = 0.439$).

The R square falls within a good range of 0.424 and 0.481, indicating 48.1% variance in BA is due to SMM, while 42.4% variance in brand loyalty is due to the presence of both SMM and BA. Furthermore, 44% of the variance in WTP is due to brand attachment and loyalty meeting the threshold level (equal to or greater than 0.10) of R-squared values (Falk & Miller, 1992). An exogenous construct (SMM activities) measured by content, collaboration, and customisation) has a small, medium, or large impact on the dependent construct, as shown in Table 5. The f^2 values are 0.021 to 0.150, 0.150 to 0.350, and above 0.350 (Geffen *et al.*, 2000). We investigated the goodness-of-fit index using standardised root mean square residuals (SRMR) to ascertain model fit. The root mean square difference between the correlations that were observed and the correlations that were predicted by the model. It does this by looking at any correlation matrix that the proposed structural model predicts in relation to the empirical correlation matrix. The value of SRMR for the estimated model was found to be 0.069, which was less than the critical value of 0.08 (Hair *et al.*, 2022).

6. DISCUSSION

The luxury sector has experienced significant advancements in e-commerce adoption, omnichannel marketing, and the extensive application of AI and data mining for customised marketing (Moslehpour *et al.*, 2021). Additionally, there has been an increase in immersive shopping experiences, including augmented reality, with an increased emphasis on social media for fashion brands (Nawres *et al.*, 2024). The current research has examined the influence of SMM focusing on the three 3Cs on consumers' brand loyalty and brand attachment in the context of luxury apparels. In support of H1, our findings demonstrate a significant connection between SMM and brand attachment, consistent with previous research (Khan *et al.*, 2022; Heidari *et al.*, 2023). Consumers frequently seek guidance through influencer collaborations on platforms like Instagram, where they engage with content that aligns with their personal traits and helps them craft a self-image that mirrors that of the influencer. Furthermore, customisation enhances the uniqueness and personal touch of a luxury brand, deepening the connection between the buyer and the brand. In support of H2, the study found that SMM significantly influences brand loyalty signalling that brand loyalty will increase if the company can manage SMM well. Fostering brand loyalty is crucial for all businesses, particularly in the luxury sector where competition is fierce and customer expectations are high. These findings align with previous studies, which emphasise that building brand loyalty should be a core marketing objective for businesses. (Bilgin, 2018; Ebrahim, 2020; Fetais *et al.*, 2023). It is concluded by the study that among the three Cs, the content is the most important followed by collaboration and customisation for luxury apparel brands. Content takes primacy because it lays the groundwork for the identity and narrative of a luxury brand. Collaboration comes in second because of its capacity to increase the attraction and exclusivity of the brand. Customisation, on the other hand, plays the role of a personalised but selected interaction tool.

In support of H3, the current study found a significant influence of BA on BL. BA significantly contributes to the strengthening relationship between consumers and the brand. Customers are more loyal to a brand when they feel a stronger emotional attachment to it. Luxury brands, through their limited-edition products, personalised offerings and communication offer exclusivity, leading to greater brand commitment. The desire for superior quality amongst the consumers, creates a strong emotional connect with luxury brands; hence leading to brand loyalty. In support of H

the findings of the study also demonstrate that BA has a significant direct impact on the consumers' willingness-to-pay a premium for luxury brands. These findings corroborate previous studies by Fu and Chen (2023) that the consumers' willingness-to-pay for luxury brands increases when they have a strong attachment to the brand. Consequently, in the domain of luxury, premium pricing is reflective of a higher standard of living. In support of H5,

the study results also support the assertion that BL has a significant impact on consumers' willingness-to-pay; hence corroborating earlier studies (Bilgin, 2018). Leveraging SMM enables luxury brands to strengthen brand attachment, connect with younger consumers, and adapt to evolving customer preferences in a competitive digital landscape.

7. IMPLICATIONS

Our investigation extends attachment theory from luxury brand attachment perspectives, demonstrating how emotional connections and social media marketing through 3Cs (Content, collaboration, and customisation) interplay to encourage long-term consumer-brand relationships through brand loyalty. The study further emphasises the role of Brand attachment as an important determinant of loyalty that is strengthened via social media marketing. Thus, luxury consumers communicate their commitment to a brand through continuous emotional bonding and loyalty (Hinson *et al.*, 2019). This research further enhances the attachment literature by performing an empirical analysis from the perspective of an emerging economy.

The study result validates the significant role of three core components of SMM. Managers should focus on creating high-quality, visually appealing content that reflects the brand's values, exclusivity, and legacy. User-generated content allows customers to share their experiences with the business, increasing reach and ensuring authenticity. SMM can effectively utilise AI-powered algorithms to recommend customised offers based on a user's likes and specification. Social media analytics can help managers understand customer preferences and adjust content accordingly, enhancing brand value, attachment, and customer loyalty. Luxury brands can utilise these techniques to maintain exclusivity while also providing personalised involvement. In addition, collaborating with influencers helps the luxury brand connect with local communities. Managers must carefully evaluate potential collaborators to align with brand value and reputation. Our study demonstrates that social media acts as a catalyst, enabling two-way interactions and fostering a sense of attachment and loyalty between luxury brands and their consumers or followers.

8. LIMITATIONS

The first drawback of the study is its reliance on generalisations of respondents' characteristics, as it employed the convenience sampling technique. Second, the respondents (students) were all Indian high-end fashion brand consumers. The study is restricted to users on Instagram, Facebook, X, and other social media users. The study results may not apply to WhatsApp, Google+, and LinkedIn. Extensive research is needed to determine how social media affects customers' brand preferences. Thus, future research may examine these outcomes for different nations, industries, or social media networks. Studies also suggest testing crucial indicators, such as brand reliability, to test brand attachment, thereby strengthening the results (Cardoso & Sousa, 2020). In future studies, concentrating on involvement with luxury fashion brand sites, postings, or stories may be more meaningful. This study also used quantitative tools to examine how social media marketing affects consumers' willingness to pay. Future studies may provide rich insights through qualitative or mixed-method analysis.

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APPENDIX 1: DESCRIPTION OF CONSTRUCTS

| Constructs | Determinants | Items | Sources |
|-------------------------------|---------------|---|---|
| Social Media Marketing | Content | <p>"Content shared by social media of luxury fashion brand seems interesting."</p> <p>"Looking for information on social media of luxury fashion brand is exciting."</p> <p>"It is fun to collect information on social media of luxury fashion brand."</p> <p>"It is easy to kill time by looking for information on social media of luxury fashion brand."</p> | Kim & Ko (2010) and Godey et al. (2016) |
| | Collaboration | <p>"It enables information-sharing with others on social media of luxury fashion brand."</p> <p>"Conversation or opinion exchange with others is possible on social media of luxury fashion brand."</p> <p>"It is easy to provide my opinion on social media of luxury fashion brand."</p> <p>"It is possible to achieve a two-way interaction on social media of luxury fashion brand."</p> | |
| | Customisation | <p>"It is possible to search for customised information on social media account of luxury fashion brand."</p> <p>"It provides useful information feed for me on social media account of luxury fashion brand."</p> <p>"Information can be looked at anytime, anywhere on social media account of luxury fashion brand."</p> <p>"It is easy to search for the information I need on social media account of luxury fashion brand".</p> | |
| Brand Attachment | | <p>"The usage of this luxury fashion brand is very calming for me."</p> <p>"This brand offers me a certain kind of self-reliance."</p> <p>"I feel good with this luxury fashion brand."</p> <p>"Affection, Connection & Passion characterise my feeling towards this luxury fashion brand."</p> <p>"This luxury fashion brand is exactly what I need."</p> | Bidmon (2017) |
| Brand Loyalty | | <p>"My favourite luxury fashion brand is always my first consideration when buying."</p> <p>"When I go shopping, I do not even notice other premium or fast fashion brands."</p> <p>"I always use positive words to describe my experience of using my favourite luxury fashion brand."</p> <p>"Even if I get any premium or fast fashion brand for free, I will buy my favourite luxury fashion brand."</p> | Shen et al. (2014) |
| Willingness To pay | | <p>"I am willing to buy the product of my favourite luxury fashion brand at a higher price."</p> <p>"If there are other products in the same category at a lower price, I will still buy my favourite luxury fashion brand."</p> <p>"I feel proud to have my favourite luxury fashion brand in my wardrobe though they are more costly from other premium or fast fashion brand products."</p> | Jang et al. (2011) |