

The picture of luxury: A comprehensive examination of college student consumers' relationship with luxury brands

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Abstract

This study examines college student consumers' relationship with luxury brands through two studies. Study 1 analyzes collages to determine what represents luxury to them, how consumers perceive their relationships with luxury, and who they are as luxury consumers. Study 2 analyzes qualitative interviews to validate the findings of Study 1 and to add further insights. Results of Study 1 suggest that college student consumers represent a vibrant segment in the luxury market. These consumers perceive a wide variety of products and brands as meeting their luxury needs. They are currently interested in luxury and their potential will only increase as their incomes do. Results of Study 2 confirms their views of luxury and emphasizes the critical roles social media, peers, and family play in influencing college student consumers' luxury consumption and provide insights for how to build an emotional bond with them. Luxury marketers can build brand relationships with college student consumers by offering them entry-level products as they are current luxury consumers and see their consumption expanding in the future. Given that college student consumers are both vulnerable and savvy in recognizing when they are being manipulated, caution needs to be taken in approaching this segment in relationship-building efforts.

KEYWORDS

collage method, consumer-brand relationship, luxury, young adults

1 | INTRODUCTION

The luxury market continues to grow approximately five percent annually to an estimated 1.5 trillion-dollar market in 2017 (D'Arpizio, Levato, & de Montgolfier, 2019; D'Arpizio, Levato, Kamel, & de Montgolfier, 2017). While this growth has been attributed to various factors, among the most notable is the shift to young adult luxury consumers (D'Arpizio, et al., 2019; Eastman, Iyer, Shepherd, Heugel, & Faulk, 2018). Young adults represent the fastest growing luxury segment worldwide (Gentina, Shrum, & Lowrey, 2016; Schade, Hegner, Horstmann, & Brinkmann, 2016) and fueled 85% of luxury growth in 2017 alone (D'Arpizio et al., 2017). Young adults (Generations Y and Z) represent 47% of luxury consumers in 2018 and 33% of luxury

purchases (D'Arpizio et al., 2019). Existing research suggests these younger luxury consumers differ from older luxury consumers (Department, 2008; Eastman et al., 2018; Halzack, 2015; Kauppinen-Räsänen, Björk, Lönnström, & Jauffret, 2018), and therefore need further examination (D'Arpizio et al., 2017; Eastman et al., 2018; Halzack, 2015).

Current college student consumers are an essential portion of the young adult market and are important to luxury brands because they represent huge potential as a market segment, with \$207 billion spent in discretionary expenses annually (Pankoke, 2015). Given the increasing purchasing power of college students, with their corresponding interest in luxury brands, insight on how to reach these consumers (Noble, Haytko, & Phillips, 2009) is vital to encourage a lifetime of brand loyalty (Giovannini, Xu, & Thomas, 2015) and to

build consumer–brand relationships with them as they approach their peak earning years.

The consumer–brand relationship literature illustrates the importance of consumers developing a relationship with brands they consume similar to that of an interpersonal relationship, as this relationship impacts consumers' perceptions and behaviors toward the brand (Aaker, 1996; Fournier, 1998). This relationship may be even more critical in the luxury domain (Thakur & Kaur, 2015) to establish and maintain strong consumer–brand relationships (Hwang & Kandampully, 2012), especially with younger consumers (Ahrendts, 2013). While previous studies focused on various aspects of young adults' luxury consumption (Eastman et al., 2018; O'Cass & Siahtiri, 2013; Park, Rabolt, & Jeon, 2008) and luxury motivation (Kauppinen-Räsänen et al., 2018; Kim & Jang, 2014; Schade et al., 2016), a comprehensive examination of college student consumers' relationship with luxury is missing in the luxury brand literature.

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to examine college student consumers' relationships with luxury through utilizing two qualitative studies to better understand the nature of the relationship college students have with luxury products. Study 1 utilizes a projective technique through a content analysis of collages, known as an expressive projective technique, about what represents luxury to college student consumers and who they see as the luxury consumer. Study 2 follows up on the key findings from Study 1 through the use of online in-depth interviews with a separate sample of college students to further explore why college students feel the way they do about luxury. Consistent with previous research that utilized an undergraduate student sample in investigating the consumer behaviors of college student consumers (Nichols, Raska, & Flint, 2015; Shin, Eastman, & Mothersbaugh, 2017), the current research employed undergraduates as research subjects. Given the complexity of luxury consumption (Semaan, Lindsay, Williams, & Ashill, 2019), through the use of collages and online interviews this study answers the calls to better understand the diversity of consumer motivations that impact luxury perceptions (Ko, Costello, & Taylor, 2019), to better understand luxury brand consumption (Kim, Ko, Xu, & Han, 2012), and to further develop how consumers derive personalized meanings from luxury brands (Seo & Buchanan-Oliver, 2019).

The collage method allows consumers to represent their ideas about brands, consumption motives, or product usage by combining different materials such as pictures, images, or words (Belk, Ger, & Askegaard, 2003; Koll, von Wallpach, & Kreuzer, 2010). Although past studies employed this technique in identifying consumer–brand relationships (e.g., Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012; Koll et al., 2010), this technique is scarce in a luxury brand setting despite it being useful in triggering hidden thoughts, emotions, and associations, without encountering consumer reluctance, rationalizations, and social desirability (Belk et al., 2003; Koll et al., 2010). Furthermore, von Wallpach and Kreuzer (2013, p. 1325) note that “only few marketing researchers recognize the importance of studying nonconscious, embodied brand knowledge.” The current research responds to this study call by using a collage method that properly taps into college student consumers' personal accounts of their relationships with

luxury brands. Then with Study 2 that utilized interviews as a follow-up study, the research confirms and builds on the findings from Study 1 with the collages.

This paper first reviews what makes luxury brands a luxury, the luxury consumer–brand relationship, and who the young adult luxury consumer is, followed by the methodology and results of the collage research in Study 1 and the online interviews in Study 2. Lastly, the implications of the research findings to better understand, build, and maintain relationships with the younger luxury market are addressed.

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 | What is luxury?

While it is difficult to precisely define luxury (Kapferer & Valette-Florence, 2018; Seo & Buchanan-Oliver, 2019), luxury has been generally described as the idea of sensuality, splendor, pleasure, and extravagance (Park, Reisinger, & Noh, 2010) along with premium quality (Fionda & Moore, 2009), a higher price than the product's utility (Kapferer & Valette-Florence, 2018; Ko et al., 2019), an element of uniqueness and/or innovation (Fionda & Moore, 2009), and symbolic meaning (Kapferer & Valette-Florence, 2018; Ko et al., 2019; Roux, Tafani, & Vigneron, 2017). The luxury category is expanding with new products, services, and offerings to meet the growing desires of the luxury market (Park et al., 2010). There is concern that while growth in the luxury domain positively impacts awareness of luxury brands, it may negatively impact desirability (Kapferer & Valette-Florence, 2018), making it critical for luxury marketers to better understand the luxury consumer–brand relationship (Hwang & Kandampully, 2012).

2.2 | Luxury consumer–brand relationship

While luxury brands have been initially seen as signaling status and for purposes of social comparison (Han, Nunes, & Drèze, 2010), the link between a luxury brand and conveying one's identity goes beyond that to illustrate one's personal and cultural values (Ko et al., 2019) as luxury brands have both cultural and personalized meanings (Seo & Buchanan-Oliver, 2019). Luxury's value consists of luxury for the self (i.e., to satisfy their private self; self-reward, self-pampering, self-elevation) and luxury for others (i.e., to satisfy their social self; the emotional pleasure of flaunting prosperity) (Kapferer & Valette-Florence, 2018). Luxury for the self is inner-directed focusing on quality, hedonism, and power relating to the self-concept, while luxury for others is outer-directed related to elitism (signaling status), refinement (making a good impression), and exclusivity to differentiate oneself from others (Roux et al., 2017). As luxury is a part of one's self-identity today and can be passed down to future generations to aid consumers in becoming symbolically immortal and remembered (Lacroix & Jolibert, 2017), brands provide a symbolic language for consumers to communicate their personality to others (Kim et al., 2012). Thus, luxury values are important for

brand managers to understand as they relate to luxury brand attributes (Roux et al., 2017).

Consumer–brand relationships are similar to interpersonal relationships as consumers' brand associations influence their perceptions and evaluations of that brand (Aaker, 1996). The literature establishes that consumers will feel a stronger attachment to brands when they feel a commonality or connection with a brand, leading to a stronger emotional bond (Fournier, 1998; Hwang & Kandampully, 2012). For example, people who see themselves as sophisticated will respond more positively to brands that they see as sophisticated (Hwang & Kandampully, 2012). As such, brands can be important to consumers as “a supporting actor” in describing themselves to others (Woodside, Sood, & Miller, 2008, p. 128). As this brand identification directly and indirectly affects consumers' perceived value, customer satisfaction, and brand trust and indirectly brand loyalty (He, Li, & Harris, 2012), there is need for more research on how luxury consumers develop meaning from luxury brands.

The need for establishing a brand relationship with luxury brands may be even more critical than other kinds of brands due to the fact that these are not products purchased daily, so establishing a long-term relationship is vital for repeat purchases (Lee & Watkins, 2016). Evidence shows consumers' positive attitudes toward a luxury brand influences brand equity which in turn enhances customer lifetime value (Kim et al., 2012; Ko et al., 2019; Shukla, Banerjee, & Singh, 2016). Given increasing competition in the luxury marketplace providing luxury consumers with more switching opportunities, marketers need to better understand what impacts a luxury consumer's commitment to a luxury brand (Shukla et al., 2016). Managers must recognize that the interaction consumers have with brands is a reciprocal identity cocreation process (von Wallpach, Voyer, Kastanakis, & Mühlbacher, 2017). Luxury cocreation can occur through art encounters/marketing and digital marketing as these emotional attributes impact consumer value which influences brand value to subsequently impact purchase intention (Choi, Ko, & Kim, 2016). Luxury marketers need to recognize that cocreation does not occur with one encounter but over time with numerous encounters (Choi et al., 2016). More specifically, brand interaction, such as with social media, is needed to build brand relationships to encourage luxury brand purchase (Ko et al., 2019; Lee & Watkins, 2016; Martín-Consuegra, Díaz, Gómez, & Molina, 2019). While the literature examining consumer–brand relationships has increased over the past two decades (e.g., Fetscherin & Heinrich, 2015), this study explores luxury consumer–brand relationships focusing on college student consumers.

2.3 | Young adult luxury consumers

The profile of who is a luxury consumer has changed in recent years (Halzack, 2015; Kauppinen-Räsänen et al., 2018). Consumer's motivations change throughout their life and there is a need to better understand the differences and similarities between groups of luxury consumers (Schade et al., 2016). Luxury consumption is impacted by both internal and well as external motives (Eastman &

Eastman, 2015). Hudders (2012) offers that emotional and functional motives as well as expressive motives, such as the need for uniqueness, conformity, and communicating identity, impact luxury consumption. Tsai (2005) acknowledges the role of luxury brands to manage impressions and social identification along with the more personal functions of hedonic pleasure (Roux et al., 2017) affect enhancement and mood-regulation (Eng & Bogaert, 2010) which facilitate brand-self congruity to ultimately impact luxury purchase. Research suggests that strong emotional ties to luxury products as a source for enjoyment is becoming more important for luxury products today (Oe, Sunpakrit, Yamaoka, & Liang, 2018).

This study offers that for college student consumers, while these internal motives play an important role, the external roles of luxury may be more impactful. For young adult consumers, their social needs result in using luxury brands as an extension of their social identity (Kauppinen-Räsänen et al., 2018). Consumers purchase luxury products as an expression of themselves and their identity (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). Distinctive brands and unique products are important to them as they enable self-expression (Noble et al., 2009; Shin et al., 2017; Valentine & Powers, 2013), but they also have a need for conformity (i.e., a bandwagon effect) (Park et al., 2008) that impacts their luxury purchases (Eastman et al., 2018). With the bandwagon effect, consumers buy luxury products merely because many other people have already bought them, and they follow their reference group in buying the same thing (Amatulli & Guido, 2012; Leibenstein, 1950). Giovannini et al. (2015, p. 35), in looking at the influences on luxury fashion consumption for U.S. young adults, found that the “social motivation of conspicuous consumption has a positive and significant influence on the consumption behaviors in terms of brand loyalty and purchase intention.” For younger consumers with a higher need for uniqueness, luxury consumption enables them to express their personal style in an acceptable manner in social settings, while for those higher in self-monitoring, luxury consumption allows them to modify their self-presentation to better fit in socially (Kauppinen-Räsänen et al., 2018) via the bandwagon effect (Leibenstein, 1950). Thus, branding is a key element of luxury products (Park et al., 2008; Valentine & Powers, 2013), especially for younger consumers (O'Cass & Siahtiri, 2013). Branding alone though is not sufficient as young adult luxury consumers also need a positive emotional experience with luxury consumption (Ahrendts, 2013).

Finally, young adult luxury consumers who have a steady cash flow, but little accumulated wealth are known as “HENRY” (high earners not rich yet) and spend money differently on luxury than previous luxury consumers (Halzack, 2015). As college student consumers may not be at the same financial level as older consumers, there are differences in luxury consumption, such as an emphasis on leasing and renting luxury goods (Vogel, Cook, & Watchravesringkan, 2019), a focus on functional luxury (Halzack, 2015; Schade et al., 2016), and the need for a customized luxury experience (Halzack, 2015). For marketers, cultivating a relationship with these young adult consumers can develop into a long-term loyal and profitable relationship (Nowak, Thach, & Olsen, 2006) and these consumers are

an important market for luxury brands (Ahrendts, 2013; Kim et al., 2012). To build these relationships, marketers need a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship young adults, particularly college student consumers as the future of the luxury market, have with luxury brands.

3 | METHODOLOGY STUDY 1

3.1 | Collage method

Since the purpose of this study is to examine college student consumers' relationship with luxury brands, rich data is required. Using pictures to probe for an individual's metaphorical thinking about a subject, the collage method enables consumers to freely express their image-based thoughts and feelings (Costa, Schoolmeester, Dekker, & Jongen, 2003). Researchers report collage construction to be rich in capturing implicit or unconscious knowledge as well as unexpected new associations with the brands (Belk et al., 2003; Koll et al., 2010). Collages increase respondents' engagement through storytelling and allow for more personal and meaningful insights to come through in elaborating consumer-brand relationships (Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012). Collages also help bypass social desirability especially in studying sensitive research topics, such as consumer desire behind consumption (Belk et al., 2003) and materialistic consumption (Chaplin & John, 2007). Due to its intuitive and expressive nature, collages are useful in dealing with younger research subjects, including children, adolescents, and college students in consumer research (e.g., Chaplin & John, 2007; Shin & Parker, 2017).

3.2 | Research process

Embedded in a senior level marketing course multipart assignment was the collage activity. Collage construction was the first activity as part of the multipart assignment as the later portions involved them applying the course materials. The instructions the students received were to create 10 personal collages that represent their thoughts and feelings/emotions, experiences/memories, ideas/perceptions about luxury brands and who consumes them, consumption motives, product usage/shopping occasions, and/or relationships with luxury brands. The students were told that this could involve luxury brands they or others, inside or outside their reference group(s), own or would like to own. The students were further instructed that the purpose of the collages was to provide 10 opportunities for them to illustrate and describe how they think and feel about luxury brands and the people who consume them. The students were responsible for finding all the images used in their collages and were allowed to use personal photos along with publicly available images online. Each collage included pictures/photos/images along with a typed description/summary that explains what each collage represents. This process of supplementing visual components of collages with written description was necessary to uncover rich and in-depth insights because the photos/images themselves were not sufficient in

explicating meanings (Koll et al., 2010). For an example of these type of collages, see Shin and Parker (2017).

A total of 63 U.S. undergraduate students completed the collage project, resulting in 630 sets of personal collages for analyses. These students were all traditional college students as the makeup of the students in the course did not include older, nontraditional students. As discussed earlier, undergraduate students were frequently used as research subjects in investigating the consumer behavior of the younger portion of the young adult market segment (e.g., Nichols et al., 2015; Shin et al., 2017). All respondents were 19–23 years old and 61.9% respondents were female. On average, 49 images/photos were included per submission and 19 brands were mentioned at least once in each submission.

3.3 | Coding procedure

A content analysis was conducted of the collages with their accompanying descriptions. Content analysis is a systematic technique for categorizing data into themes and counting how often each category or theme appears to identify dominant findings, and thereby make some generalizations (Kassarjian, 1977). To establish coding criteria, following the process taken by Ashley and Tuten (2015), the authors familiar with luxury branding literature reviewed the collages to identify themes that noticeably emerged. Through extensive literature review and iterative discussion, a coding sheet with a codebook that outlined definitions for the criteria and their respective codes were created.

The content analysis of the collages involved three judges. A two-thirds decision rule, where agreement of the presence/absence of each criterion by at least two out of the three judges, was used for content analysis (Belch & Belch, 2013). Before full analyses, to ensure consistency in coding across the judges and to ascertain that coding criteria and respective codes were sufficiently developed, two rounds of pretest were conducted using a random sample of five submissions (i.e., 50 sets of collages) respectively which were then analyzed by the three judges independently. Once each round of sample judging was completed, the three judges resolved any disagreement in categorization until the application of the criteria and interpretation of the code were agreed upon. One coding sheet was used per each submission composed of the 10 collages created by each respondent. The presence of each code was manually marked "X" on a coding sheet, while the absence of each code remained unmarked. Once the coding procedure was completed, all coded data were entered into Excel so that descriptive statistics and reliability in coding could be calculated.

Following the intercoder reliability procedure by Rust and Cooil (1994), proportional reduction in loss (PRL) reliability measure was calculated for each coded criterion. The PRL reliability is based on proportion of interjudge agreements and considers the number of judges and the number of coding criteria. The calculated PRL measures for each criterion ranged from a minimum 0.72 to a maximum 0.97, indicating that overall the categorization of this study was reliable.

4 | RESULTS OF STUDY 1

As described in the following sections, in examining the collages, the researchers focus on college student consumers' view on what luxury is, their luxury brand relationship, and who they are as luxury consumers. In reporting the percentages, it is important to note that the collages from one respondent could relate to multiple categorizations in varying levels of detail.

4.1 | What is luxury?

To address what luxury is, the researchers examined four aspects emerged from the collages. First, the researchers examined what luxury product categories and brands were prominently addressed by the respondents. For product categories and brands to be coded as prominent, they had to be shown and/or discussed in at least in half of one collage or in multiple collages. The researchers also looked at the types of luxury (e.g., out of reach, aspirational, affordable, or experiential luxury) described in collages. Finally, the researchers examined the characteristics of luxury that were either illustrated or discussed specifically in collages.

4.1.1 | Luxury product categories

Per D'Arpizio et al. (2017), luxury cars, luxury hospitality (i.e., travel), and personal luxury goods makes up 80% of total luxury market. The collages support the prominence of these three luxury product categories. As illustrated in Table 1, the product categories discussed by the respondents included vehicles, beauty and fashion, travel and entertainment, technology, homes, sports, exclusive services, and other. The most cited product type was automobiles and motorcycles, accounted for by 87.3% of the respondents. Luxury cars as a prominent luxury segment have support in the literature (Kapferer & Valette-Florence, 2018). Interestingly, several also discussed having the personal use of boats/yachts (23.8%) and/or jets (15.9%). *Time* magazine notes that young adults are twice as likely to want a private jet as previous generations, suggesting the importance of a luxury lifestyle to them (Department, 2008) and an interest in overt demonstrations of a luxury lifestyle (Kim & Jang, 2014).

Beauty and fashion were a second major luxury type for the college student respondents with watches (68.3%), fashion accessories such as bags (61.9%), and jewelry (61.9%) all being prominently noted by over half of the respondents. Fashion was noted by close to half of the respondents in a number of areas, including casual (46%), shoes (46%), and other fashion accessories such as belts and sunglasses (46%). Finally, less than a third of the respondents mentioned beauty/cosmetics (27%), fragrances (25.4%), professional clothing (20.6%), and formal wear (11.1%).

Leisure activities made up the third major category, including vacations (49.2%), beverages (34.9%), food (20.6%), eating out in restaurants (7.9%), or going to events like concerts or athletic events (4.8%). The fourth major category was technology, related with computers or electronics (41.3%) or smart phones (19.0%), which was

in line with the tech-savviness of college students (Valentine & Powers, 2013). The fifth major category was homes, both for primary (e.g., residence; 33.3%) or secondary (e.g., vacation; 3.2%) purposes. Sports, ranked in sixth, was also mentioned, including fitness (17.5%), traditional luxury sports, such as polo and golf (9.5%), and outdoorsy sports like hunting and fishing (4.8%). Golfing and being part of a country club as a means of gaining social status has literature support (Strombeck & Shu, 2016). Last mentioned categories include exclusive services, such as education (4.8%), personal services (3.2%), or financial services (1.6%).

4.1.2 | Luxury brands and types of luxury

As shown in Table 2, there were a wide range of brands noted by the respondents. Those brands mentioned by at least 10% of the respondents included the following: Rolex (57.1%), Louis Vuitton (44.4%), Tiffany (38.1%), Apple (36.5%), Chanel (30.2%), Gucci (30.2%), Prada (27%), Mercedes (23.8%), Ritz Carlton (22.2%), Christian Louboutin (20.6%), Michael Kors (20.6%), Ralph Lauren (20.6%), Rolls Royce (20.6%), Versace (20.6%), Tesla (19%), Burberry (17.5%), Cartier (17.5%), Hermes (17.5%), Audi (15.9%), Ray-Ban (15.9%), Giorgio Armani (12.7%), Lamborghini (12.7%), Porsche (12.7%), and Ferrari (11.1%). In comparing these brands to Kapferer and Valette-Florence's (2018) list of 60 worldwide luxury brands, all but five (Apple, Michael Kors, Tesla, Ray-Ban, and Lamborghini) mentioned by 10% or more of the respondents were also on their list, suggesting an U.S. sample may differ somewhat in what brands they see as luxury.

In looking at Table 2 relative to types of luxury, it is interesting that while the vast majority of them deal with either out of reach luxury (87.3%) or aspirational luxury (81%), a large number of them deal with masstige or affordable luxury (79.4%) as well as experiential luxury (76.2%), as shown in Table 3 and illustrated by quotes from the respondents discussing their love of going to concerts and major sporting events.

Finally, it is interesting to note that several of the brands listed are luxury brands specifically focused on young adults to engage with their brand, such as Burberry (Ahrendts, 2013; Phan, Thomas, & Heine, 2011) and Tiffany (Hughes, Bendon, & Pehlivan, 2016) as demonstrated in the collages created by the respondents.

4.1.3 | Luxury characteristics

As shown in Table 4, many of the luxury characteristics noted in the literature review were illustrated and discussed in the collages. The key aspect that appeared was high price (96.8%), followed by the idea of luxury representing a social marker (92.1%). As late adolescents are more concerned with the social-adjustive function of luxury (Schade et al., 2016), the idea of a social marker played a major role. Quality (88.9%) was also key with performance, reputation, and durability being seen as demonstrations of quality. This fits with Halzack's (2015) discussion of younger luxury consumers seeking quality, craftsmanship, and authenticity. A recognized style or design

TABLE 1 Results from the content analysis of the luxury product categories

Theme	Coding criteria	PRL reliability	Codes	N (= 63)	%
Luxury product categories	The “meaningful appearance” of any luxury product category in the collage/description for each respondent. To be meaningful, a product category needs to be shown and/or discussed in at least in half of one collage or in multiple collages	0.94	(1) Vehicles		
			Automobiles/motorcycles	55	87.3
			Boats/yachts (own, personal use only)	15	23.8
			Jets	10	15.9
			(2) Beauty and fashion		
			Watches	43	68.3
			Fashion accessories—bags (handbag, briefcase)	39	61.9
			Jewelry	39	61.9
			Fashion casual	29	46.0
			Fashion accessories—shoes	29	46.0
			Fashion accessories—other (belts, umbrella, ties, men's cufflinks or tie clips, scarfs, glasses/sunglasses)	29	46.0
			Beauty/cosmetics (hair/skin care/makeup)	17	27.0
			Perfume/fragrances	16	25.4
			Fashion professional (suit for work)	13	20.6
			Fashion formal (bridal gown, tux)	7	11.1
			(3) Travel/entertainment		
			Vacation/resort/hotel/travel (not by personal boat or personal jet)	31	49.2
			Beverage (alcoholic/nonalcoholic)	22	34.9
			Food	13	20.6
			Restaurants	5	7.9
			Tickets for concerts/shows/athletic events	3	4.8
			(4) Technology		
			Technology (computer, electronics)	26	41.3
			Smart phones	12	19.0
			(5) Residence		
			Home—primary/high quality neighborhood/interior/furniture	21	33.3
			Home—secondary/vacation condo	2	3.2
			Living in a certain countries (US)	1	1.6
			(6) Sports		
			Exercise/fitness (yoga, clothing, equipment included)	11	17.5
			Luxury sports (polo, horse riding; equipment included)	6	9.5
			Outdoorsy sports (hunting/fishing; equipment included)	3	4.8
			(7) Exclusive services		
			Education (private schools, college)	3	4.8
			Personal service (maid, butler, porter, assistant, driver/limo)	2	3.2
			Financial services (credit card, investment)	1	1.6
			(8) Other		
			Other	8	12.7

Abbreviation: PRL, proportional reduction in loss.

TABLE 2 Results from the content analysis of the luxury brands

Theme	Coding criteria	PRL reliability	Codes	N (= 63)	%
Luxury brands	The “meaningful appearance” of any luxury brand in the collage/description for each respondent	0.97	Rolex	36	57.1
			Louis Vuitton	28	44.4
			Tiffany	24	38.1
			Apple	23	36.5
			Chanel, Gucci (respectively)	19	30.2
			Prada	17	27.0
			Mercedes	15	23.8
			Ritz Carlton	14	22.2
			Louboutin/Christian Louboutin, Michael Kors, Ralph Lauren, Rolls Royce, Versace (respectively)	13	20.6
			Tesla	12	19.0
			Burberry, Cartier, Hermes (respectively)	11	17.5
			Audi, Ray-Ban (respectively)	10	15.9
			Armani/Emporio Armani/Giorgio Armani, Lamborghini, Porsche (respectively)	8	12.7
			Ferrari	7	11.1

Note: The brands that were mentioned by less than 10% of the respondents were excluded from the table.
 Abbreviation: PRL, proportional reduction in loss.

TABLE 3 Results from the content analysis of the luxury types

Theme	Coding criteria	PRL reliability	Codes	N (= 63)	%
Luxury types	The inclusion of images and/or description that clearly indicates the general categorization of luxury	0.76	Out-of-reach luxury (only for 1%)	55	87.3
			Aspirational luxury (if educated, work hard, could be attainable)	51	81.0
			Masstige (affordable to middle class)	50	79.4
			Experiential luxury (travel, service or experience)	48	76.2
			Other	0	0.0

Abbreviation: PRL, proportional reduction in loss.

TABLE 4 Results from the content analysis of the luxury characteristics

Theme	Coding criteria	PRL reliability	Codes	N (= 63)	%
Characteristics of luxury	The inclusion of images and/or description that indicates the characteristics of luxury	0.78	Expensive/very high price than other options/exclusive	61	96.8
			Social marker (social stratification)	58	92.1
			Excellent quality/performance/reputation for quality with high attention to detail/durability	56	88.9
			Design/recognized style	50	79.4
			Legacy/history/heritage/timeless/classic/established brand	48	76.2
			Extended self (symbolizes identity)	47	74.6
			Fashionable/legitimate fashion authority/on trend	46	73.0
			Hedonic value (pleasure, fantasy, fun)	46	73.0
			Technology (more advanced technology than other options)	33	52.4
			Beauty/artistic/exquisite in appearance	29	46.0
			Uniqueness/customization	28	44.4
			Country of origin	19	30.2
			Rarity/precious	19	30.2
			Controlled distribution	17	27.0
			Well-crafted (made by hand by experienced craftsman/artisan)	17	27.0
			Limited quantity/scarcity	15	23.8
			Other	18	28.6

(79.4%) as well as an established legacy or heritage of the brand (76.2%) were also important, demonstrating the importance of branding for luxury products (Kotler & Keller, 2016). The idea of expressing identity through luxury brands (Seo & Buchanan-Oliver, 2019) (74.6%) was also discussed as an important quality of luxury. Furthermore, the characteristics of being fashionable and fun (hedonic) (73%) were equally important.

Next, the characteristic of having advanced technology (52.4%) was noted which makes sense given the tech-savviness of these consumers (Valentine & Powers, 2013), and beauty with an exquisite appearance (46%) appeared also important to a significant portion of the respondents. Other characteristics noted by less than half of the respondents included uniqueness/customization (44.4%) and country of origin (30.2%) with those luxuries made in Europe being seen as more luxurious than those in America. Finally, described by less than a third of the sample were the more traditional characteristics of luxury (Kapferer, 2012), including rarity (30.2%), controlled distribution (27%), well-crafted (27%), and limited quantity (23.8%).

In accordance with the literature, our finding suggests that consumers construct multiple meanings of what is luxury (Seo & Buchanan-Oliver, 2019), as illustrated in the collages with quotes from the respondents discussing how luxury products represent multiple meanings including beauty, success, status, image, love, pleasure, and style. Also, it is evident that the characteristics of luxury may vary in importance for college student consumers compared to older consumers (Mundel, Huddleston, & Vodermeier, 2017) based on the respondents' discussion of how luxury has evolved, so marketers will need to revise their luxury strategies to effectively reach younger luxury consumers (Giovannini et al., 2015).

4.2 | The consumer–luxury brand relationship

In examining the consumer–luxury brand relationship in the collages, it became clear that the respondents discussed their relationship with luxury brand in terms of time (with either a past memory of a luxury brand, a luxury brand as an active part of their present consumption, or a desired future consumption postgraduation), as well as what influenced these relationships (made up of internal, external, and marketing influences).

4.2.1 | Consumption time of luxury

College student consumers are luxury consumers as luxury is a presence in their life currently (63.5%), as well as in the future (49.2%), with fewer seeing luxury consumption as a past activity (17.5%). These numbers suggest college student consumers are consuming luxury now, even if they did not when younger, and see their luxury consumption continuing in their future, which suggests that they are interested in building relationships with luxury brands.

4.2.2 | Internal and external influences on building luxury brand relationships

As illustrated in Table 5 for internal influences that affect college student consumers' relationship with luxury, motivation (92.1%) played the most significant role with specific elements of motivation including conspicuous (58.7%), snob (31.7%), and bandwagon (20.6%). These made sense given that young adults are more open to conspicuous consumption (Kim & Jang, 2014), but still want to fit in (Eastman et al., 2018). Luxury as part of a lifestyle was also a key theme (79.4%), as was emotions (74.6%) with positive emotions playing a dominant role (69.8%), compared to negative emotions (23.8%). Finally, memories and nostalgia were mentioned by a majority of respondents (57.1%). These results are supported by the literature emphasizing the importance of the emotional aspects of luxury brands (Hwang & Kandampully, 2012) in building connections with consumers (Martín-Consuegra et al., 2019), as illustrated by the discussion of the respondents about how they felt when consuming luxury.

As illustrated in Table 6 of external influences that affect college student consumers' relationship with luxury, demographics played a major role (95.2%), in terms of income (85.7%), social class (76.2%), gender (71.4%), occupation (50.8%), and age (49.2%), while education (7.9%) and ethnicity (4.8%) were seen as playing a lesser role. The collages acknowledged the role income, social class, and occupation played in being able to participate in luxury consumption. In terms of gender and age, the discussions were not in terms of luxury consumption being limited to a certain age or gender, but rather how luxury brands may adapt over time to better fit consumers and remain timeless.

TABLE 5 Results from the content analysis of the internal influences on luxury consumption

Theme	Coding criteria	PRL Reliability	Codes	N (= 63)	%
Internal influences on luxury consumption	The inclusion of images and/or description that attributes luxury consumption to the internal influences	0.72	Motivation	58	92.1
			Conspicuous (standout/showoff)	37	58.7
			Snob (unaffordable-high price key motivator)	20	31.7
			Bandwagon (conformity-to fit in)	13	20.6
			Lifestyle	50	79.4
			Emotions	47	74.6
			Positive emotion	44	69.8
			Negative emotion	15	23.8
			Memory/nostalgia	36	57.1
			Other	3	4.8

Abbreviation: PRL, proportional reduction in loss.

TABLE 6 Results from the content analysis of the external influences on luxury consumption

Theme	Coding criteria	PRL reliability	Codes	N (= 63)	%
External influences on luxury consumption	The inclusion of images and/or description that attributes luxury consumption to the external influences	0.78	Demographics	60	95.2
			Income	54	85.7
			Social class	48	76.2
			Gender	45	71.4
			Occupation	32	50.8
			Age	31	49.2
			Education	5	7.9
			Ethnicity	3	4.8
			Interpersonal influences	50	79.4
			Reference groups	45	71.4
			Family	24	38.1
			Culture/subculture	16	25.4
			Other	9	14.3

Abbreviation: PRL, proportional reduction in loss.

This relates to the idea that consumers will feel a stronger attachment to brands when they feel a connection that relates to the consumer's identity leading to a stronger emotional bond (Fournier, 1998; Hwang & Kandampully, 2012) and more positive brand outcomes (He et al., 2012). Another aspect of external influences illustrated in Table 6 were interpersonal influences (79.4%), with reference groups (71.4%) playing a stronger role than family (38.1%). This is in line with the importance of peer influence for young adults (Eastman et al., 2018; Gentina et al., 2016; Kim & Jang, 2014; Schade et al., 2016). Finally, culture/subculture played a role (25.4%). Per Seo and Buchanan-Oliver (2019), social meanings are a critical aspect of brand luxury as they illustrate the shared criteria and rules consumers utilize in deriving meaning from luxury brands. The respondents discussed the different influences and social meanings

from reference groups, both positive and negative, including how they bought luxury products to fit in with other college students and how specific luxury brands had sentimental meaning for their family.

4.2.3 | Marketing's influence on luxury consumers and consumption

As illustrated in Table 7, the college student respondents acknowledged the importance of luxury marketing. Product (98.4%) played the biggest role, in terms of brand elements (96.8%), development/innovation (81%), and high-level customer service (33.3%). Promotion (92.1%) also was vital, in terms of advertising (84.1%), celebrity endorsement (60.3%), product placement (41.3%), publicity/sponsorship (25.4%), and to a much lesser extent personal selling (4.8%). These

TABLE 7 Results from the content analysis of the marketing influences on luxury consumption

Theme	Coding criteria	PRL reliability	Codes	N (= 63)	%
Marketing influences on luxury consumption	The inclusion of images and/or description that attributes luxury consumption to the marketing influences	0.79	Marketing products	62	98.4
			Product development/innovation	51	81.0
			Brand Elements	61	96.8
			High-level customer service	21	33.3
			Marketing promotion	58	92.1
			Advertising	53	84.1
			Celebrity endorsement	38	60.3
			Product placement	26	41.3
			Publicity (includes sponsorship)	16	25.4
			Personal selling	3	4.8
			Marketing price	56	88.9
			Target marketing	53	84.1
			Marketing place	41	65.1
			Exterior of store	35	55.6
			Interior of store	30	47.6
			Controlled distribution	18	28.6
			Brand of retailer that carries luxury	16	25.4
			Marketing online	15	23.8
			Social media	10	15.9
			E-marketing/online selling	6	9.5
			Other	1	1.6

Abbreviation: PRL, proportional reduction in loss.

results suggested that while college student consumers want excellent products and communications from luxury brands, they do not want to feel like they were being “sold.” Traditional luxury marketing practices of pricing (88.9%) and target marketing (84.1%) as expected played a role, as well as place (65.1%), with store exteriors (55.6%), store interiors (47.6%), controlled distribution (28.6%), and the brand of retailer that carries luxury (e.g., Neiman Marcus) (25.4%) having an impact. The importance of retailers in creating a luxury experience for college student consumers was exemplified by the respondents discussing the overall experience they had in certain stores, such as Harrods (British luxury department store).

The online aspect was also mentioned (23.8%), in terms of social media (15.9%) and online selling (9.5%). This can be explained by the increasing use of social media by luxury companies (Ahrendts, 2013; Godey et al., 2016; Lee & Watkins, 2016). Our results suggested that luxury marketers’ social media efforts were reaching the college student market (Phan et al., 2011).

4.3 | College student luxury consumers

This study examined who college student consumers saw as luxury consumers, their attitudes toward luxury consumers as well as perceived luxury consumption situations.

4.3.1 | Who are luxury consumers

As shown in Table 8, in asking the respondents who they see as luxury consumers, the two major types include wealthy (87.3%), through either earned (23.8%) or inherited money (20.6%), or celebrities (69.8%), whether by acting (44.4%), music (31.7%), or modeling (19%). One interesting finding regarding the types of celebrities seen as luxury consumers by respondents was the rise of socialite celebrity (23.8%) (i.e., the idea of famous for being famous) exemplified by the

Kardashians and the online influencer celebrity (6.3%). Given the importance of social media to college students, the results suggest these consumers may feel more connection with these types of celebrities as they are more accessible online, making respondents feel they know them as friends and perceive more similarities with them than other traditional celebrities (Lee & Watkins, 2016). For example, several collages discuss the luxury consumption of the Kardashians as examples of who luxury consumers are.

In addition, professional athletes (31.7%) were also considered prominent luxury consumers. In terms of field of profession, while business professionals were named by many respondents (52.4%) which makes sense given the collages were done within a marketing class, doctors and lawyers were rarely named (1.6% each).

4.3.2 | Attitudes toward luxury consumption

College student consumers’ luxury consumption can be further explained by the respondents’ attitude toward luxury as summarized in Table 9. While the majority noted luxury as only for the wealthy and not the common person (88.9%), they also described luxury as being obtained by anyone (79.4%), suggesting aspects of affordable luxury as well as traditional luxury. This finding is in accordance with Mundel et al.’s (2017, p. 68) observation of young adults’ tendency “to trade up to signal their good tastes and expensive lifestyles” to their peers. College student consumers’ overall attitude toward luxury was positive (66.7%), but some were envious of luxury consumers (20.6%); fewer were antiluxury (7.9%) or had no opinion (6.3%). Interestingly, counterfeit luxury was not a major issue as few mentioned concerns with knockoffs (11.1%), and even fewer saw knockoffs as a means to get luxury-type products (4.8%). The concern of status dilution of the luxury brands by reaching the masses through overextension was noted by only few (4.8%) respondents. These findings may be comforting for luxury marketers as college

TABLE 8 Results from the content analysis of the luxury consumers

Theme	Coding criteria	PRL reliability	Codes	N (= 63)	%
Luxury consumers	The inclusion of images and/or description that indicates who consumes luxury	0.91	Wealthy	55	87.3
			Successful/earned money	15	23.8
			Inherited (family money or royalty)	13	20.6
			Celebrities	44	69.8
			Actors/actresses	28	44.4
			Rappers/musicians	20	31.7
			Socialites/other celebrities (famous for being famous) (e.g., Kardashian)	15	23.8
			Model (runway, print model used to promote luxury)	12	19.0
			Online influencer (YouTube star, blogger)	4	6.3
			Business professional	33	52.4
			Executive	10	15.9
			Entrepreneurs (owner of a business)	4	6.3
			Professional athletes	20	31.7
			Medical professionals	1	1.6
			Lawyer	1	1.6
			Other	18	28.6

Abbreviation: PRL, proportional reduction in loss.

TABLE 9 Results from the content analysis of the attitude toward luxury

Theme	Coding criteria	PRL reliability	Codes	N (= 63)	%
Attitude toward luxury	The inclusion of images and/or description that indicates respondent's attitude toward luxury	0.84	Luxury as only for the wealthy not the common person	56	88.9
			Luxury can be obtained by anyone	50	79.4
			Proluxury (luxury is a very positive)	42	66.7
			Envy/Jealousy of others who own luxury	13	20.6
			Counterfeit/fake/knockoffs are bad	7	11.1
			Antiluxury (high status is bad)	5	7.9
			Independent (don't care if luxury or not)	4	6.3
			Counterfeit/fake/knockoffs are a good way to get luxury-type products	3	4.8
			Status dilution (overextension of status brand name has hurt brand's status)	3	4.8
			Other	6	9.5

Abbreviation: PRL, proportional reduction in loss.

student consumers did not see counterfeit products within the same realm as luxury or did not see highly extended brands as an issue.

4.3.3 | Luxury consumption/usage situation

As illustrated in Table 10, the college student respondents primarily saw luxury as a means to improve their appearance/health (76.2%). This makes sense given the importance of peers for young adults (Eastman et al., 2018; Gentina et al., 2016; Kim & Jang, 2014; Schade et al., 2016), self-presentation motives for college student consumers (Shin et al., 2017), and the importance of luxury brands strengthening ones' image and identity (Seo & Buchanan-Oliver, 2019; Thakur & Kaur, 2015). Examples of luxury's role in self-presentation can be seen in the collages as the respondents described how they would like to wear designer suits to work to instill confidence, represent power, and have supreme productivity.

Luxury also represents something special to college student consumers (Godey et al., 2016), given their association with vacation (57.15), special occasions (55.6%), and holiday (11.1%). It also appears that luxury is commonly purchased or exchanged for gift-giving (41.3%), and for celebrating personal achievement or

milestone in the form of self-gifts (11.1%), as suggested by Godey et al. (2016). They also see luxury consumption in career (30.2%), school (22.2%), or social/networking (28.6%) situations, although they do not see luxury shopping itself as a social event (only 1.6%). These results suggest that college student consumers in general consider luxury a means of improving how they are seen by others, celebrating special events, or helping them with their career. Interestingly enough, luxury consumption usage is also discussed as being part of an outdoor activities, sports or leisure (27%), which suggests the idea of college student consumers utilizing nontraditional luxury products (e.g., going to a sports game or a concert) as a means of conveying social status to their peers (Mundel et al., 2017).

5 | METHODOLOGY STUDY 2

5.1 | Online interviews

To enhance the contribution of the research, further data and analysis of the key ideas from Study 1 were needed. Therefore, online in-depth interviews of college students, recruited from an

TABLE 10 Results from the content analysis of the luxury consumption situation

Theme	Coding criteria	PRL reliability	Codes	N (= 63)	%
Luxury consumption/usage situation	The inclusion of images and/or description that indicates a consumption/usage occasion of luxury	0.87	To improve one's appearance/health	48	76.2
			Vacation (purchased or used for or while on a vacation)	36	57.1
			Special occasions (e.g., wedding, prom, birthday, black tie type event)	35	55.6
			Gift giving to/from others	26	41.3
			Career-related	19	30.2
			Social/networking-related	18	28.6
			Outdoor activities/sports/leisure	17	27.0
			School-related	14	22.2
			Gift giving to self	7	11.1
			Holiday	7	11.1
			Shopping as a social event	1	1.6
			Other	3	4.8

Abbreviation: PRL, proportional reduction in loss.

introductory marketing course, were conducted to validate the findings from the Study 1 and to gain additional insights for college students' thoughts and feelings about luxuries. These interviews were computer-administered so that all the comments would be recorded of 14 college students age 18 or older. The list of open-ended questions asked in Study 2 are in Exhibit 1.

Exhibit 1 Study 2 online interview questions

Instructions: For each of the open-ended questions below, please provide detailed responses, justify your responses, and provide examples, if possible. For the first set of questions, we would like to know what you think/feel in response to the questions

1. When you hear the term luxury product, what product categories and brands do you think of and why?
2. Given the price was the same—which is more important to you: a luxury good (such as an item of clothing or accessory for examples) or a luxury experience (such as on vacation or a service for examples) and why?
3. What do you see as the role of social media in luxury marketing and why?
4. Do you follow any luxury brands on social media and if so, which ones and why?
5. Do you and/or your friends make posts on social media about luxury brands? If so, please describe what kind of posts and what you think of them?
6. Who do you see as the most impactful or important influencer in the luxury market (such as celebrities, social media personalities, athletes, musicians, etc.) and why? Please include a name of the influencer if possible

For the second set of questions, we would like your opinion of how you think the “typical college student” would respond

7. What impacts do the influencers have on college student consumers and why? How does their influence work? Can you provide a specific example(s) of where you have seen this happen?
8. How do you think peers influence college student consumers' luxury consumption and why? Can you provide a specific example (s) of where you have seen this happen?
9. How do you think families influence college student consumers' luxury consumption and why? Can you provide a specific example (s) of where you have seen this happen?
10. How do college student consumers differ from their parents in terms of luxury consumption and what they see as a luxury product and why? Can you think of an example of where you have seen this happen?
11. How do you think college student consumers consume for luxury now (while college students) versus how they will consume for luxury in the future (such as postgraduation)? How do you think their luxury consumption will change after graduation?
12. Which luxury brands do you think have been successful in reaching the college student market and why have they been successful? Can you think of some examples?
13. Do you think it is important for luxury marketers to develop an emotional bond with college student luxury consumers? Why or why not? How do you think they could successfully develop this emotional bond?
14. We would like to know if you think the questions asked earlier are realistic to investigate the luxury consumption behaviors of typical college student consumers and why?
15. What is your gender?
16. What is your age? (Write in number)
17. Comments (if any)

The first six questions asked how students feel/think in terms of luxury products/marketing. The next five questions asked them to respond from the “typical college student” viewpoint as those questions can be personal in nature in explicating about what influences college consumers' luxury consumption. The next two questions asked students' opinion about luxury marketing to the college student market. The final item asked how realistic the interview questions were to investigate college students' luxury consumption behaviors. The responses from all respondents to the final item indicated that the questions asked were perceived realistic and thought-provoking. Finally, two demographic questions about gender and age were included.

5.2 | Online interview process

There were 14 college students, 2 males and 12 females, who willingly completed the online interviews ranging in age from 19 to 22 years old. On average, each participant spent 43.6 min to respond to the online interview questions. To analyze their responses, a thematic analysis was utilized in which two researchers reviewed the responses independently, took notes, and then together developed discerning patterns of themes across a data set to identify those relevant to answering research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2012). As the primary purpose of the Study 2 was to validate the findings from Study 1 and to obtain additional insights, a combination of an inductive and deductive (or theory-driven) approach to data coding and analysis was used. The following section presents the results of the Study 2.

6 | RESULTS OF STUDY 2

6.1 | Validating Study 1 results

In reviewing the responses of the 14 college students to the online questions, there were vast similarities to the results found in the Study 1. First, in terms of the luxury product categories mentioned in response to Question 1, the top ones were cars, fashion/beauty and technology. The category of travel/entertainment, while not mentioned in Question 1, was discussed in responses to Question 2 as the respondents were almost unanimous in stressing the importance of luxury experiences over luxury goods. This can be seen in the following quote:

“I believe a luxury experience is more important than a luxury good because owning a luxury good is materialistic whereas splurging on a luxury vacation will create lifetime memories. Hence a luxury good is merely a possession—and, yes, it can feel great to own that good—but a luxury experience I think will create more value, happiness, and satisfaction from a human condition standpoint” (Bella).

Thus, the top four luxury product categories identified in Study 1 (see Table 1) were also discussed in Study 2.

The luxury brands mentioned in Study 1 (see Table 2) were also mentioned by multiple respondents in Study 2, including Gucci, Louis

Vuitton, Prada, Tesla, and Audi. In terms of luxury types, the results from Study 2 were similar to those of Study 1 (see Table 3) as respondents discussed out-of-reach luxury, aspirational luxury, masstige, and experiential luxury. Finally, in terms of luxury characteristics, again the results were similar to Study 1 results (see Table 4), in stressing the three most important luxury characteristics of high price, social stratification, and high quality. We then proceeded with analyzing the next set of interview questions that extended the contribution of the current research by looking at key themes in terms of the role of social media, influencers, peers, and family, and college students' relationship with luxury. As a number of the collages in Study 1 illustrated the importance of marketing online and social media (see Table 7), and as influencers, such as celebrities and athletes, were frequently mentioned in Study 1 (see Table 8), these were areas of inquiry that needed additional investigation in Study 2.

6.2 | Key themes extending Study 1 results

6.2.1 | Social media is important but be careful

The respondents indicated that social media played a tremendous role and was effective in marketing luxury brands to college student consumers (Question 3). Social media posts about luxury products have been reported to influence students to desire luxury products to feel empowered as illustrated in the following quote:

"Social media probably has the biggest role in luxury marketing because it reaches more people who are seeing others all over the world with these products. Average people want these products so they can feel and look like the celebrities and influencers that they see plastered all over social media" (Darby).

While the majority of the comments about luxury brands' use of social media were positive, there were some negative issues raised, such as if social media makes consuming luxury the norm, one cannot feel unique by owning luxury products. Also, for those who cannot afford luxury products, they may feel like they do not belong as illustrated in the following quote:

"I see all of marketing is on social media, all the influencers are trying to promote their brands and prove they have money. I feel it's causing a problem because if someone doesn't have the luxuries they do, the people who don't are seen as outsiders" (Allyson).

Additionally, the idea of people getting paid to post about luxury products was negatively viewed and was mentioned in response to several of the interview questions. The idea of people being envious/jealous of others who own luxury was an idea emerged in Study 1 (see Table 9) which was also brought up by a few of the respondents in Study 2 in discussing the role of social media in luxury marketing.

6.2.2 | Influencers work but peers work better

As illustrated in responses to multiple questions (Questions 3–8), the respondents were well aware of the use of influencer marketing employed by luxury brands. Considering that the majority of respondents did not specifically follow luxury brands on social media

(Question 4), along with their common sentiment that there was already too much advertising on social media, influencers may play a key role in influencing college students about luxury consumption. In terms of who the respondents saw as influencers (Question 6), while members of the Kardashian-Jenner family (Kim, Kendall, Kylie) were mentioned most often, as in Study 1 also, other celebrities, athletes, and online (YouTube, Instagram) influencers specifically mentioned in responses included Rihanna, Justin Bieber, David Dobrik, Danielle Carolan, and Emma Chamberlin. When luxury brands partner with younger, particularly those who were not-famous-otherwise influencers, college students viewed these influencers to be more similar to them and related more to these influencers than to big-name influencers as illustrated in the following quote:

"I see some Youtubers, such as Danielle Carolan or Emma Chamberlain, mostly as influential because they act as genuine and normal people, going through normal tasks like college or corporate jobs, but also showing off favorite products that they say has improved their lives in some way, as a sponsorship" (Kelly).

The responses, however, also illustrated (Question 7) that the fact that these influencers got paid for their postings was seen as negative by some as evidenced in the following quotes:

"I don't trust influencers because the odds of them actually using the product is slim. They are just in it for the money" (Lex).

The respondents also noted that their peers' social media posts had a strong influence on them as illustrated in the following quote:

"We all have a huge influence on each other. When Gucci belts were becoming trendy if one girl had it, it made you want to buy a Gucci belt even more. They look flashy and draw attention, so if your friends have a luxury item or people you think are cool do, you want one for your own" (Jordan).

This peer influence started as new freshmen in college and impacted them throughout college as illustrated in the following quote:

"People want to have the nicest things so they can stand out especially new freshman college students still in the high school mindset. Many people wanted air pods when they came out because they were known as being for rich people" (Joshua).

Students also indicated the pressures of keeping up with their peers in terms of luxury consumption as expressed with the following quote:

"You don't want to be the poor one in the frat or sorority so you have to get the latest things to stay relevant" (Lex).

Finally, in terms of whether the respondents and their peers made their own posts about luxury brands on social media and what they thought of them (Question 5), the respondents generally indicated that they and/or their peers did make posts about luxury brands, and half of the respondents viewed them positively, and another half viewed them negatively as expressed in the following quote:

"I think sometimes it's overboard. People don't really care to see the same Gucci belt in 5 different pictures" (Allyson).

In summary, social media and peers play significant roles in encouraging college students' luxury consumption. Although

influencers, particularly those that college students feel they relate to, may have a substantial impact on college students' luxury consumption, given their concerns with commercial nature of those posts made by influencers, peers may play a greater role than influencers

6.2.3 | Family socialization of luxury

In addition to peers, family plays a key role in socializing college students as luxury consumers (Questions 9–10). This socialization occurs with both normalizing what luxury is and with spending for luxury as well as influencing college students' spending habits as illustrated with the following quotes:

"I think if a person grows up having luxury products as a normal, they will continue to find ways of obtaining products into adulthood. A lot of my friends got nice cars when they first started driving, such as BMW's, and I believe they will continue to purchase luxury cars later in life because that is what they are used to" (Danielle).

"Parents either have the money to invest in luxuries and you see how their kids invest their money in the same or you see the parents investing in other things and the child following their example. Like my friend's dad saved up and bought a new watch and his daughter saved up to buy a golden bracelet the next year" (Kelly).

In terms of how college students' luxury consumption differs from their parents, while a few of the respondents noted that their luxury consumption may be similar to their parents, more noted that college students may spend more (relatively speaking) than their parents because college students like to show off their luxury consumption. Further, respondents commented that the view of luxury varies between them and their parents because of the changing trends and the different ways students and their parents spend money as illustrated in the following quote:

"I think college-age consumers see luxury consumption and products as eating at the fanciest places, getting the most expensive drinks at a bar, paying for everything and wearing branded clothing. I think parents see this as buying a brand-new car or the biggest and best house and more elaborate things than food and drink" (Allyson).

6.2.4 | Establish a relationship of value with college students

The final three questions about luxury addressed possible changes in now versus future consumption of luxury for college students (Question 11), luxury brands that have been successful in reaching the college student market (Question 12), and the importance of building an emotional bond with college students for luxury brands (Question 13). With the first question (Question 11), the students were fairly split about whether their luxury spending will increase or decrease. As their luxury spending currently is influenced by money received from family and financial aid, there is the idea that with employment will come increased income to spend on luxury purchases. On the other hand, others realistically acknowledge that postgraduation, they will be responsible for more bills such as rent

and student loans so luxury consumption may need to take a back seat until they are more established financially.

In terms of discussing luxury brands respondents saw as being successful in reaching the college student market (Question 12), the same luxury brands as those mentioned in response to Question 1 on representative luxury brands emerged. The two most frequently mentioned brands were Gucci and Louis Vuitton. The students acknowledged how these two luxury brands made an effort to make their products fashion must-haves among college students as illustrated in the following quote:

"Gucci and Louis Vuitton have been very successful in reaching college students and I think it is because a lot of influencers and celebrities posting pictures on social media wearing the brands and including them in music and videos" (Darby).

Luxury firms' success in reaching the college student market has been due to marketers developing this emotional bond (Question 13), as many of the respondents see this bond to be critical; only one respondent did not feel an emotional bond is important. Firms though need to be cautious in how they develop these bonds as college students are both vulnerable and savvy in recognizing when they are being manipulated as shown in the following quote:

"Yes I do believe the emotional bond between marketers and consumers is important, but it is sometimes manipulative. Luxury items are not necessities, so in a way marketers are feeding on college students desire to feel or appear to be the best in every way possible, and for many of the vulnerable, including myself at times, that means having luxury products. It makes us feel worthy of the value companies place in the products, and without it we feel less than" (Adia).

The respondents acknowledge the need for luxury marketers to establish a sense of trust and connection with the college student consumers in building this relationship. According to the respondents, quality and satisfaction are important in building this trust, and therefore, marketers need to see things from the college students' perspective. Furthermore, marketers may establish this relationship now using communication tools popular among college students (such as social media), so that these consumers continue to be brand loyal postgraduation as their income increases as illustrated in the following quote:

"Yes, you want to make that connection early on so it continues into adulthood. They could market in a way younger audience accesses easily, such as social media" (Danielle).

Thus, for luxury brands' long-term success, understanding not only the needs of college students for luxury, but also how to best reach them to establish an emotional bond that meets their needs, both now and in the future as they age, is critical.

7 | DISCUSSION

7.1 | Theoretical and managerial implications

The college student consumer is an important market segment of the luxury brands. In looking at their collages (Study 1) as well as their interview responses (Study 2), college student consumers are active

luxury consumers. They are proluxury and see a wide variety of luxury categories and brands that meet their needs for luxury. For luxury marketers, this is a segment amenable to luxury goods, services, and experiences, and inroads have been made by luxury brand marketers as seen in both collages and interview responses. It is clear that college student consumers want more than luxury offerings, as the characteristics they are looking for in luxury go beyond the limited quantity or controlled distribution of the products to also focus on fashion, hedonic value, technology, and the need to demonstrate who they are with unique, customized luxury products (Halzack, 2015; Mundel et al., 2017). Per Sirgy (1982), people purchase products they feel represent, define, and/or enhance who they are, and the consumption and use of these products can be utilized to communicate one's self-concept to others. This can be seen in the majority of collages of Study 1 illustrating the use of luxury products to improve one's appearance and in the interview responses of Study 2 describing how luxury consumption make a social statement. Consumers express themselves and their identity through luxury brands (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004) as they select luxury products with images congruent with their self-image (Fionda & Moore, 2009; Tsai, 2005). College student consumers are open to a conspicuous luxury lifestyle that helps both define them as well as fit in with their peers as interpersonal influences are important for this segment. This is illustrated in both the collages in Study 1 as well as their discussion of peer influences in interviews in Study 2. The need for younger consumers to fit in with their peers through fashion luxury consumption is noted by Eastman et al. (2018). Additionally, our findings in both studies are consistent with previous research of younger South Korean consumers that found desire for social recognition to be high correlated with purchase intention for luxury brands (Park et al., 2008). For externally motivated consumers, status-enhancing brands may be used as a means to make a desired impression on others via their symbolism, such as through purchases of status symbols, expensive gifts, and global luxury brands (Eng & Bogaert, 2010) as people make inferences about others and their level of success based on their possessions (Solomon, 1983). Solomon (1983) suggests that others evaluate individuals based on the products they consume, and this symbolism is used to create one's own social identity. Luxury consumption allows consumers to "integrate self and object, thereby allowing themselves access to the object's symbolic properties" and these properties can serve to classify consumers to build affiliations and/or enhance distinctions (Holt, 1995, p. 2). According to Giovannini et al. (2015), marketing strategies that position luxury brands as status symbols that relate to a desired lifestyle or personal value would aid in reaching younger luxury consumers. This social aspect of luxury consumption is stressed in the findings of both studies.

It is clear from the collages that college student consumers desire a luxury lifestyle both now and in the future. This need is discussed in both the collages and the interviews. This suggests an opportunity for luxury marketers to build a relationship now with their younger customers (Lee & Watkins, 2016). The need to develop a relationship is critical as the emotional bonds younger consumers now feel with

luxury brands will enhance their brand loyalty (Hwang & Kandamully, 2012). Luxury marketers need to develop relationships with these consumers through personalized products, services, and messages, to meet their needs while staying true to their brand identity and legacy (D'Arpizio et al., 2017). The responses of Study 2, in particular, stress the need for luxury brands to establish an emotional bond and trust now with the college student market utilizing social media.

The findings of Study 1 suggest that luxury consumption goes beyond goods to focus on vacations and special occasions illustrating the importance of experiential luxury for college student segment (Mundel et al., 2017). In Study 2, the interview responses overwhelming illustrate that college students prefer luxury experiences to luxury goods suggesting that college students are a viable market for luxury services and experiences. The collages emphasize that college student consumers buy luxury brands not for the functional features, but rather for the subjective emotional benefits, intrinsically pleasing aspects, sensory gratification, and pleasure (Eng & Bogaert, 2010; Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). Such consumers are also often willing to pay a premium price for products that offer unique emotional experiences (Amatulli & Guido, 2012). Marketing for this segment needs to convey a positive emotion and avoid a hard sell. Study 2 especially illustrates that college student consumers understand how the influencer marketing works and are wary of being manipulated.

Something surprising from the collages is the acknowledgement of their families in providing the luxury as this comes out both in the collages and in the interviews. This differs from the status seeking and "keeping up with the Jones" attitudes conveyed by older consumers (Eastman, Goldsmith, & Flynn, 1999) focusing on conspicuous consumption, but rather college student consumers acknowledge the sacrifice their families make to provide them with luxury. Given that consumption memories begin with childhood experiences (Babin & Borges, 2009) and that consumer nostalgia is an important avenue to develop a long-lasting customer-brand relationship (Brocato, Baker, & Voorhees, 2015), luxury brands may emphasize the memories with family or the role of family in providing the luxury in their communication to target college student consumers.

Finally, while college student consumers see luxury consumption as something mainly for the wealthy and celebrities (whether from sports, music, entertainment, or the Internet), they also see that luxury can be obtained by anyone. The interview responses from Study 2 indicate that influencers who college students see as more like them may have a greater impact on their luxury consumption than traditional influencers such as celebrities or athletes. The results suggest an opportunity to utilize internet/social media stars and digital marketing to promote luxury to college students (Lee & Watkins, 2016; Thakur & Kaur, 2015). In Study 2, the respondents discuss key online Instagram/YouTube influencers such as David Dobrik, Danielle Carolan, and Emma Chamberlin. Online sales represent 9% of the luxury market currently (D'Arpizio et al., 2017) and younger consumers are more likely to shop online for luxury than

older consumers (Department, 2008). Therefore, luxury marketers are advised to increase their digital marketing efforts to approach the college students (Pentina, Gouilloux, & Micu, 2018). In doing so, however, digital marketers need be careful with how they utilize online influencers as consumers are aware of how the paid sponsorship process works as the results of Study 2 indicate. College students are skeptical of claims made and wonder how the influencer could actually afford the luxury product. Digital marketers will need to track their use of influencers to ensure that they are not getting overexposure or mocked by the target market using sentiment analysis techniques which allows identification of customer emotions within social media (e.g., Liu, Burns, & Hou, 2017).

7.2 | Limitations and future research

A limitation of the current research is that only U.S. college students were examined in both studies. Given the importance of the luxury market globally, particularly in Asia, Europe, and emerging markets (D'Arpizio et al., 2017; 2019; Ko et al., 2019; Oe et al., 2018), international research is needed to discern differences as research suggests there are cultural differences in the impact of peer influence and need for uniqueness on luxury attitudes (Gentina et al., 2016), as well as preference for loud versus subtle luxury brand markings (Kauppinen-Räsänen et al., 2018). With future research utilizing the collage process as described in this study to examine a broader group of young adults, researchers may be able to better develop a systematic framework for how young adults deal with luxury brands. Additionally, as 63.5% of the sample described luxury as being a current presence in their life, the majority of the sample are luxury consumers in some way. However, future research may specifically categorize who luxury consumers are and who are not, such as by asking if they have purchased a luxury item within the past 12 months and if/so what item.

To be consistent with the research objective, a purposeful sampling of college students was conducted in both studies in sample selection. To extend the results of the current investigation, future researchers may examine other older cohorts, mainly noncollege student population, and further compare similarities and differences in relationships with luxury brands between college student consumers and noncollege student consumers. Past studies, for example, demonstrated that college student consumers were more strongly influenced by social factors than postcollege consumers in luxury brand consumption (Shin et al., 2017), which was explained by the importance of social influences and the need to fit in for college student consumers (Eastman et al., 2018; Gentina et al., 2016; Kim & Jang, 2014). Therefore, future researchers need to closely examine the differences between college student consumers and noncollege student consumers in terms of how to best reach them and establish long-term relationships.

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How to cite this article: Eastman JK, Shin H, Ruhland K. The picture of luxury: A comprehensive examination of college student consumers' relationship with luxury brands. *Psychol Mark*. 2020;37:56–73. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21280>