

Research Article

Decoding the Luxury Brand Attachment: The Power of Social Media in Driving Consumer Action in Kuwait

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Enhancing the capacity of a luxury brand to stir a deep connection with customers has always been the focus of practitioners in the luxury industry. This study explores the potential role of social media in converting attachment with a luxury brand into desirable marketing outcomes. The relationships between “luxury brand attachment,” “motivation,” “social media usage,” “word-of-mouth,” and “purchase intention” are examined to understand the drivers and outcomes of luxury brand attachment in social media. A questionnaire was administered to a sample of 341 social media users on various platforms. Data were analyzed using SPSS and Amos. The results revealed that the most important attribute generating luxury attachment in social media is the capacity of a luxury brand to show prestige and status. The direct relationship between luxury brand attachment and purchase intentions is nonsignificant. A stronger attachment to a luxury brand does not entice direct intention to purchase it unless certain motives drive consumers’ luxury engagement in social media. These insights can guide marketing managers in creating effective strategies for their luxury products.

1. Introduction

Over the past years, the luxury market has seen significant growth, with generated revenues of US\$281 billion from the world’s top 100 luxury companies [1, 2]. The Gulf Cooperation Council’s (GCC) luxury sector has been valued at \$11.4 billion in 2020, demonstrating substantial potential for growth due to factors such as rising economic development, a large young population, increasing penetration of e-commerce, and strong growth in the tourism sector [3]. Kuwait, historically referred to as the “pearl of the Gulf,” stands out as a particularly attractive destination for luxury products. The Chalhoub Group reports that Kuwait is the third-largest market in the Gulf, exhibiting the highest growth of 35% in 2021 compared to 2019 [4]. Despite this attractiveness, Kuwait’s luxury market remains underinvestigated [5], presenting unique cultural challenges for luxury brand managers.

In this context, social media (SM) has emerged as a pivotal platform for luxury brands. Social media is broadly defined as a set of digital platforms that facilitate the creation and sharing of information, ideas, interests, and other forms of expression through virtual communities and networks [6]. It is characterized by its high interactivity, user-generated content, and the ability to connect and share with a broad audience. As of the latest data, SM platforms collectively boast billions of users worldwide, underscoring their influence and reach. Popular features of SM include instant messaging, content sharing, networking, and community engagement, which have become integral to modern marketing strategies, especially in the luxury sector [7].

The luxury brand attachment (LBA) concept, which refers to a deep and emotional connection consumers form with luxury brands, has gained increasing attention in academic research [8, 9]. However, studies exploring LBA are still limited [8, 10–12], and the distinctive nature of

luxury brand attachment from other brand attachments necessitates specific investigation [13]. The perceived luxury values that foster brand attachment are also known to vary across different cultural contexts [10, 11]. In Kuwait's context, the key luxury values that drive stronger attachment and influence consumer behavior remain unclear.

The integration of SM in luxury brand strategies is vital [14] for reaching and engaging with younger demographics [15, 16], yet the specific role of SM in influencing purchase intentions for luxury brands is not well-understood [17]. Research has explored the potential of SM to enhance luxury brand engagement [18–21] and purchase intentions [17, 22–24]. However, the direct relationship between LBA and purchase intentions in an SM setting remains unexplored. Furthermore, while some studies recognize the ability of luxury marketing to drive consumer engagement in SM [25, 26], others suggest that traditional luxury dimensions like uniqueness and quality may not align well with SM contexts [20]. Concerns about SM potentially harming the reputation and prestige of luxury brands due to high public exposure and consumer interactivity have also been raised [27]. As a result, among the issues that require further exploration is the extent to which the compatibility of SM with luxury brands allows the latter to utilize the SM tools [28] and how to benefit from SM without damaging their identity [29].

Therefore, this study is aimed at examining the direct relationship between LBA and purchase intentions and exploring the role of SM in this relationship. By integrating SM dynamics with the concept of LBA, this research seeks to contribute to the understanding of luxury brand management in the digital era. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for luxury brand managers in designing effective strategies that leverage SM's potential while preserving the distinctiveness of luxury values.

The structure of this paper is as follows: Initially, an overview of the existing literature pertaining to luxury brands and the characteristics of social media is presented, which then leads into the theoretical underpinnings and the formulation of hypotheses. Further, the section on research methods details the approach employed in the analysis. The following sections discuss the study's findings, delve into the research's implications, and conclude with a consideration of any limitations and directions for future research.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Luxury Brand Characteristics. Luxury brands emphasize prestige, exclusivity, authenticity, and uniqueness [26]. The prestige of luxury brands is related to having a higher status positioning compared to other brands. The sense of exclusivity is reflected in customized products limited to "the happy few" who feel they belong to a small circle representing the elite of society [30]. The price premium becomes an essential component that emphasizes the exclusivity and rarity of luxury brands [31].

A comprehensive definition of a luxury brand is provided by Ko et al. [1] as "a branded product that consumers perceive to (1) be of a high quality; (2) offer authentic value

via desired benefits, whether functional or emotional; (3) has a prestigious image within the market built on qualities such as artisanship, craftsmanship, or service quality; (4) be worthy of commanding a premium price; and (5) be capable of inspiring a deep connection, or resonance, with the consumer" (p. 2). Beyond economic and quality values, a luxury brand emphasizes emotional benefits related to social and experiential values [32] that may lead to a strong cognitive and affective bond (brand attachment) connecting the consumer with the brand.

2.2. Luxury Brand Attachment (LBA). The most common definition found in the literature about brand attachment is "the strength of the bond connecting the brand with the self" [33, p. 6]. The LBA is defined by Shimul et al. [8] as "the bond that connects a consumer to a luxury brand and develops deep feelings with it" (p. 4). Some authors use the term "brand love" to refer to the emotional devotion to a luxury brand [34], while Moussa [35] concludes that brand love and brand attachment are the same concepts but with different names.

From the literature review, the authors provided the LBA definition below:

LBA is the association of a consumer with the perceived values of a luxury brand in a cognitive and affective bond.

2.3. Purchase Intentions. The research on brand attachment has established that attachment is a predictor of the intentions to purchase a luxury product known as the most accurate indicator when predicting actual purchase behavior [33]. In the luxury context, only a few studies have explored the relationship between LBA and purchase intentions in a traditional setting [15, 36, 37], and no studies have been conducted in the SM context.

2.4. Social Media's Influence on Luxury Brands. SM are being recognized as an effective instrument for establishing a luxury brand image [23, 38]. The multidimensionality of SM characterized by entertainment, customization, interaction, and word-of-mouth creates the premise for generating deeper connections with consumers [39] and greater engagement through online conversations, leveraging luxury brands' power of influence among targeted audiences [16; 71].

Despite the indisputable benefits of SM to luxury brands, the formers are also perceived as a threat that can harm the luxury prestige and appeal of exclusivity, uniqueness, and status due to high public exposure [26], indicating that luxury brands should maintain psychological distance from SM to protect their core value perceptions [40]. In this context, a dilemma is created between a brand's overexposure to SM on the one hand, and the tradition of exclusivity and mystery, on the other hand, while underexposure could lead to perceptions of detachment [41].

2.5. Motives for Luxury Engagement and Word-of-Mouth. Mostafa and Arnaut's research highlights that in Kuwait, luxury consumption is influenced by a blend of functional, social, and personal elements, including brand reputation, societal standing, desire for uniqueness, and perceived public image [42]. These elements contribute to comprehending

the motivations behind luxury engagement in traditional contexts. Here, engagement with luxury brands is driven by consumers' pursuit of five distinct prestige-seeking values: conspicuousness, uniqueness, social connection, pleasure, and quality [43]. However, existing research on luxury brand management offers limited insights into the motivations for engaging with luxury brands via SM platforms. Luxury engagement on SM requires a congruence of SM attributes and luxury characteristics that is ensured first, by the capacity of SM to obtain social representation and build a certain image through luxury conspicuous consumption, and second, by the influence that luxury consumers have over others through interaction and dissemination of information about luxury brands [28, 44].

In this regard, authors have found that not all luxury engagement motives are relevant to SM. For example, Duong and Sung's [20] study revealed that SM users tend not to engage with content that emphasizes quality, hedonic, and unique values but only with conspicuousness value. Engagement with luxury products produces a significant contribution to brand performance in the form of word-of-mouth, a key concept that has leveraged marketing through the power of consumers' conversations. Luxury brand lovers engage in SM communities by sharing brand-related experiences and positive conversations and integrating active and emotional connections with them, leading to luxury brand advocacy [45]. These interactions on SM can help in the dissemination of information by influencing consumers at different stages in their purchase decision-making processes such as knowledge, affection, and loyalty [46].

3. Theory and Hypotheses

The theoretical framework of the current study is embedded around the self-congruity theory [47] and the social identity theory [48]. The self-congruity theory explains that consumers can develop their self-concept through brand-related behaviors. Consumers tend to create strong bonds with brands as they tend to fill the gap between their actual and desired self-image [35].

It is expected that the congruity of a luxury brand with consumers' intended self-image can affect their perception of luxury values and the level of identification with the luxury brand [49]. The association of the self-concept with a brand can form a deep connection that leads to brand attachment [49, 50]. While developing self-congruity orientations, consumers can enhance their self-image on SM by strengthening bonds with luxury brands and exhibiting engagement that leads to probrand behavior [9]. Applied to this study, this theory postulates that there is a direct and positive impact of LBA on luxury purchase intentions as a probbehavioral result of the congruity of an individual's self-image with the perceived luxury values.

The social identity theory (SIT) is defined as "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the emotional significance attached to that membership" [48, p. 69]. SIT supports that individuals think of themselves as members of a social group and the

sense of belongingness guides their social behavior. In the context of SM, SIT guides the behavior of individuals on SM platforms, as they define themselves from their distinct characteristics and the perceptions of belonging to various social groups in SM. Applied to this study, SIT postulates that individuals tend to increase purchase intentions for luxury brands to satisfy high self-esteem needs and belongingness to higher social status groups.

3.1. LBA and Purchase Intention Relationship. Building upon the definition of LBA derived from the literature, and the supportive theories discussed above, the new approach taken in this study extends the LBA concept by incorporating in the LBA construct not only the emotional dimension [8] but also all the perceived values from the luxury attributes that contribute to the self-concept creation, such as prestige and status, unique design, and style, excellent quality, self-presentation of personality and power, emotions and experience, and the sense of exclusivity and rarity reflected on the expensive price of the luxury brand.

Furthermore, attachment to a luxury brand has the potential to influence consumers' intentions to purchase that brand. Purchase intention, a key concept in marketing, is employed to forecast customers' imminent purchasing behavior [22]. While a limited number of studies have investigated and confirmed the positive relationship between LBA and purchase intention in traditional settings [15, 36, 37], none have explored this relationship within the context of SM. Grounded in the self-congruity theory, this study posits a direct and positive impact of LBA on luxury purchase intentions, stemming from the congruity between an individual's self-image and perceived luxury values. Consequently, the first hypothesis is formulated as follows:

Hypothesis 1. Luxury brand attachment has a positive direct impact on the luxury purchase intention.

3.2. The Role of SM on the LBA—Purchase Intention Relationship. The focus of this study is to investigate the role of SM in the relationship between LBA and purchase intentions for luxury brands. As SM is a broad concept and there exist concerns in the literature about the potential harm that SM can cause to reputation and prestige due to high public exposure and consumer interactivity [27], this study is aimed at confirming if SM can enhance LBA and its impact on purchase intentions.

Drawing from the broad SM literature, the success of SM marketing depends on its prevalent characteristics such as usage levels [45, 51], users' motivation to engage in SM [13], and engagement/interaction levels [18, 19, 26, 52]. Therefore, three SM factors prevail in the study model: motivation, SM usage, and word-of-mouth. First, we assume that SM users need to feel motivated to engage with luxury brands on SM platforms and the motives need to be analyzed; second, the intensity of using several platforms can increase the users' brand exposure and feelings of identification, association, and attachment with the brand; and third, active interaction and engagement with a luxury brand in

the form of word-of-mouth can affect the brand performance.

3.2.1. The Interplay between LBA, Motivation, Word-of-Mouth, SM Usage, and Luxury Purchase Intentions. Motivation to engage with luxury brands in SM is a new construct incorporated in the study's model. This motivation derives from satisfying certain needs such as entertainment, acquiring information, looking fashionable, convenience, and ease of interaction with luxury brands [13].

In addition, motivation is enhanced when consumers' desired prestigious self-image is reinforced among groups which they identify themselves with. The social identity theory posits that high self-esteem needs and belonging to a high-status social group can motivate individuals to achieve positive social identity [53]. Consequently, the more attached to a luxury brand, the higher the motivation to engage in luxury word-of-mouth conversations, resulting in positive purchase intentions.

Hypothesis 2. Luxury brand attachment has a positive impact on luxury engagement motivation.

Hypothesis 3. Motivation has a positive impact on luxury purchase intention.

Following the above discussion, greater motivation can positively affect the intensity of social media usage and word-of-mouth engagement by showing preferences, commenting, sharing information, and recommending the preferred brands to others. Considering the above, the following hypotheses are formulated:

Hypothesis 4. Motivation has a positive impact on word-of-mouth.

Hypothesis 5. Motivation has a positive impact on SM usage.

3.2.2. The Interplay between LBA, SM Usage, Word-of-Mouth, and Luxury Purchase Intentions. The power of SM nowadays is exploited by luxury firms to intensify communication and interaction with customers, expecting that customers with strong luxury bonds have a greater propensity to use SM than others. Schmalz et al. [53] argue that consumers' engagement with a brand and the degree of engagement simultaneously on different platforms varies as it is related primarily to individuals' efforts to seek personal and social identity. Furthermore, various online platforms can support users in developing self-congruity orientations while simultaneously presenting their actual, ideal, and social self [9].

The SM usage construct in this study measures the consumers' frequency of using different platforms to connect with luxury brands [54]. In addition, SM usage can determine the extent of online luxury engagement [19] since highly frequent users are keener to engage with luxury brands by liking, commenting, and sharing content about them [25], thereby enhancing their purchase intentions for luxury brands. Consequently, it is hypothesized that

Hypothesis 6. Luxury brand attachment has a positive impact on SM usage.

Hypothesis 7. SM usage has a positive impact on luxury word-of-mouth.

Hypothesis 8. SM usage has a positive impact on luxury purchase intention.

In the context of this research, word-of-mouth describes the level of engagement with a brand in SM in terms of commenting, sharing, reacting, and other activities that allow the spread of information about a luxury brand [40]. Individuals with a high attachment degree to a luxury brand are more committed [55] and may engage in positive conversations around it. When consumers display feelings of luxury attachment before a large audience by sharing persuasive information and preferences with others, they aim to build a social presence and a certain image. The social self-expressive attribute of a luxury brand can lead to word-of-mouth and loyalty intentions [34]. Therefore, it is argued that the exhibition of a strong attachment to a luxury brand on SM is associated with prob behaviors such as engaging in related positive word-of-mouth.

Hypothesis 9. Luxury brand attachment has a positive impact on luxury word-of-mouth.

Word-of-mouth information is characterized by high quality and credibility [17] since customers are deemed to be a more trustworthy and powerful source that affects brand image [56]. Ideas exchanged among consumers have a direct effect on their behavioral intentions. Consumers who engage in SM word-of-mouth activities are more likely to bear purchase intentions than others who do not [24, 39, 57]. Consequently, it is hypothesized that

Hypothesis 10. Word-of-mouth has a positive impact on luxury purchase intentions.

The conceptual framework of this study is presented in Figure 1.

4. Research Method

4.1. Survey. The culture of luxury is well-founded in Kuwait as it is supported by the high purchasing power of Kuwaiti consumers. Oil discovery and production ranked Kuwait among the richest countries in the world and affected dramatically the transformation of the Kuwaiti society's lifestyle. Nowadays, luxury fashion appears to be an essential commodity as luxury consumption is a determinant of consumers' identity and social status in Kuwait society [58]. It is common to observe long queues of consumers waiting in front of Louis Vuitton, Rolex, Chanel, Dior, and Cartier stores in Avenues Mall, Kuwait.

In the spectrum of accessibility of luxury brands, this study focuses on the inaccessible luxury due to the very expensive prices that justify their rarity and exclusivity [59].

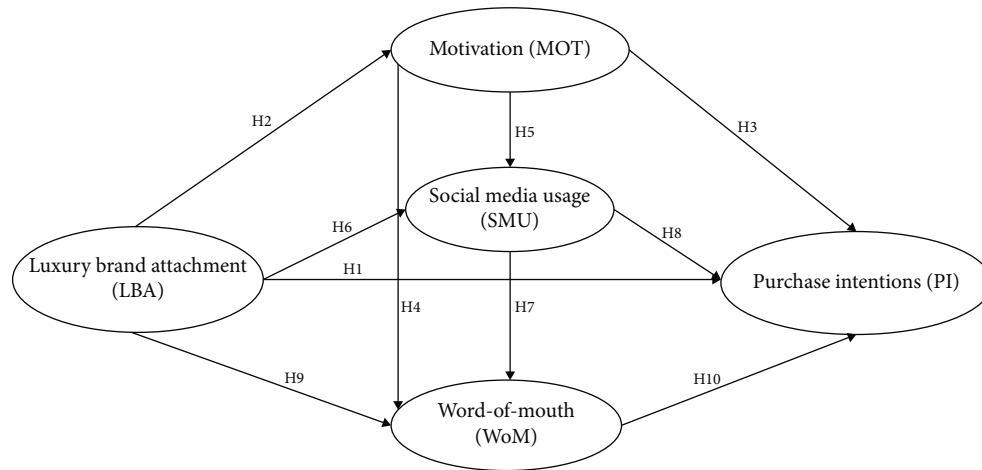


FIGURE 1: The conceptual framework.

A probability sampling technique was employed to achieve a sufficient sample frame for this investigation. An online survey was administered and delivered online to 341 users of various SM platforms in Kuwait (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, YouTube, and TikTok) who accepted to participate in the study.

A declaration of consent to participate voluntarily was provided in the survey to the respondents as follows: “I understand the purpose and nature of this study, and therefore, I agree to participate in the survey.” The participants have submitted their responses voluntarily, expressing this way their genuine assent to participate.

To ensure that respondents were informed about the luxury brand meaning and had a good understanding of prevalent luxury brands, a statement about their familiarity with luxury brands was asked before presenting the scales. The goal of the study was clarified to participants before filling out the survey, and they were assured about the confidentiality of their answers. 92.96% of the respondents corresponded to the age group of 18-25 years old, and the rest were above 25. Only 61.3% were females, and the remaining 38.7% were males. 89% had completed higher education. 71% of respondents reported family incomes above 5 thousand KD (KD is the official currency in Kuwait, where 1 KD is approximately equal to \$3.25), and the remainder fell into the 3000-5000 KD income category.

A 5-point response Likert scale was adopted to rate respondents' agreement with statements adopted from previous studies, starting from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

In congruence with the LBA definition that the authors provided in this study, 7 items were initially included in the LBA construct to measure the attachment level with a luxury brand based on the perceived value of prestige and social status, high quality, uniqueness, the capacity of the luxury brand for self-presentation of personality and power, and provoking emotions and experience, and exclusivity, and rarity. The item reflecting emotional attachment was adapted from Shimul et al. [8]. Word-of-mouth engagement that was adopted from [25] includes characteristics of engagement such as endorsement, feedback, conversations, and recommendations. Items describing social media usage

and motivation were adopted from Bazi et al. [13]. Subject experts at the college level were consulted to improve the questionnaire's quality and validity. After incorporating their suggestions for changing the structure of a few questions and removing ambiguity, a pilot test was conducted with 35 participants. Cronbach's alpha test was applied to assess the items' reliability of the proposed scale. Cronbach's alpha scores achieved from 0.660 to 0.870 showed adequate internal consistency of acceptable items [60]. Table 1 shows the Cronbach alpha results obtained through the pilot test using 35 samples [61, 62] and later the Cronbach alpha results achieved after carrying out the test using 341 samples.

Structural equation modeling (SEM) is used to conduct the multivariate analysis of various casual linkages among the independent variables [60] and is regarded as suitable for small sample sizes [63]. SEM offers an instrument to examine structural models and portrays the complexity of the phenomena being observed in marketing research [64] allowing researchers to simultaneously model the relationships between multiple variables [65]. The classical SEM technique was carried out in two steps suggested by [66]. The initial step included evaluating the measurement model tested through the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The measurement model fit indices included “chi-square (χ^2), the goodness of fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI), root mean square of error approximation (RMSEA), root mean square residual (RMSR), normalized fit index (NFI), incremental fit index (IFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), and comparative fit index (CFI), recommended by Hooper et al. [67].

The next step included the testing of the structural model. The path coefficient (β) values were used to test hypotheses and evaluate the relationships between identified constructs in structural model testing. Further, critical ratio (CR)/ t -values and p values were considered to confirm the hypothesized relationships among proposed constructs [60].

5. Results and Discussion

5.1. Measurement Model Fit Valuations. The assessment of measurement model fit was carried out using AMOS 22. As per Hair et al. [60], “goodness-of-fit (GOF)” and

TABLE 1: Cronbach's alpha test results.

Cronbach's alpha test results for the proposed scale			
Factors/constructs	Items	Piolet test (35 sample size)	Cronbach's alpha test (341 sample size)
LBA	LBA1, LBA2, LBA3, LBA4, LBA5, and LBA6	0.660	0.760
SMU	SMU1, SMU2, SMU3, SMU4, SMU5, and SMU6	0.770	0.810
MOT	MOT1, MOT2, MOT3, MOT4, MOT5, MOT6, and MOT7	0.860	0.840
WOM	WOM1, WOM2, WOM3, and WOM4	0.840	0.860
PI	PI1, PI2, PI3, and PI4	0.870	0.790

Note: LBA = luxury brand attachment; PI = purchase intentions; SMU = social media use; MOT = motivation; WOM = word-of-mouth.

“reliability and validity” of the measurement model were used to obtain measurement model fit.

Five constructs with 27 items in the questionnaire were identified in the proposed study and tested utilizing CFA [60, 66]. An initial round of running the CFA presented poor fit measurement model results (GFI = 0.870, AGFI = 0.841, NFI = 0.843, IFI = 0.823, and TLI = 0.896) as they were lower than the standard criteria (≥ 0.900). Standardized factor loadings of LBA3 = 0.210 (high-quality value), BA6 = -0.038 (high price value), SMU5 = 0.299 (use of Facebook; for more details check Table 2), and MOT2 = 0.425 (information acquisition about luxury brands on SM) were found lower than the acceptable criteria (0.5). Therefore, these items were dropped from the scale. RMSEA = 0.059 and RMR = 0.074 values were under the adequate range (< 0.08), while CMIN/DF = 2.171 (< 3.0) was in an acceptable range.

The results from the second round of CFA improved. Acceptable values (GFI = 0.910, NFI = 0.902, IFI = 0.954, TLI = 0.945, CFI = 0.953, and CMIN/DF = 1.797) were attained. However, AGFI = 0.884 was still below 0.900. RMSEA = 0.048 and RMR = 0.065 were improved and standardized factor loadings of the remaining items and were within the acceptable range (≥ 0.5) [60, 68]. Finally, squared multiple correlations (SMC) which should be ≥ 0.300 were checked for each item. As a result, item MOT4 = 0.286 (SM emphasizes luxury brand quality) was dropped from the proposed scale. The results from the final round of CFA were found within the acceptable range (CMIN/DF = 1.613; GFI = 0.926; AGFI = 0.901; RMR = 0.061; RMSEA = 0.042; NFI = 0.919; IFI = 0.968; TLI = 0.960; CFI = 0.967), and the SMCs of the remaining items were checked and found adequate (> 0.3) for confirming the measurement model as fit. Figure 2 shows the final round of CFA and confirmed measurement model fit.

The next stage was the evaluation of the reliability and validity of the scale. Construct validity was assessed through the convergent and discriminant validity tests [60]. Evaluation of the convergent validity was carried out by using the criteria of Hair et al. [60] such as CR > 0.7 , extracted AVE > 0.5 , and factor loadings > 0.5 . Table 3 shows factor loadings and SMC results.

Finally, the assessment of discriminant validity checked whether the intercorrelations among constructs were not excessively high. Table 4 indicates the sloping values above the rest of their column values, and these confirm the fitness of the measurement model [66].

5.2. Structural Model Fit Valuation. The next stage is to test the structural model fit for confirming the hypothesized relationships among various constructs of the proposed scale. Path coefficient (β) was used to assess the association between independent and analogous dependent variables [60]. The overall structural model fit measurements indicate that the structural model is adequately fitted, and the fit indices were found above their corresponding acceptance values.

As shown in Table 5, six path coefficient values were identified as significant; however, three path coefficient values were found nonsignificant (H6, H8, and H9) as they did not meet the acceptance criteria (critical ratio or t -values ≥ 1.96 and p values at $***p \leq 0.001$; $**p \leq 0.01$; $*p \leq 0.05$) provided by Hair et al. [60]. The findings of the hypothesis testing using path analysis are shown in Figure 3.

5.3. Discussion of Results. One of the objectives of this study was to examine the luxury values that generate consumers' attachment to luxury brands in SM. The research's findings revealed that the capacity of a luxury brand to show prestige and status is the most important attribute of LBA, followed by unique design and style, self-presentation of personality and power, and provoking emotions and experience.

The study found that the perceived superior quality of luxury products is nonsignificant to LBA since consumers perceive the excellent quality of an inaccessible luxury good as a given. In line with Mostafa and Arnaut [42], excellent quality cannot contribute to luxury brand differentiation. In addition, the expensive price does not serve as a signal of rarity value perception to reflect a stronger bond with a luxury brand.

Four out of the ten formulated hypotheses were rejected. More concretely, the direct LBA-purchase intention relationship has not been tested before in an online setting, and this study found it nonsignificant (Hypothesis 1 rejected). The nonsignificant relationship between LBA and purchase intention in an online setting, despite strong brand attachment, could be attributed to several potential reasons. First, the luxury purchase decision is often characterized by high costs and substantial financial commitment. While consumers may possess a strong emotional attachment to a luxury brand, financial constraints, especially among young consumers, might hinder the translation of attachment into purchase intentions. The desire to own a luxury brand might exist, but the actual purchasing power may not align with these intentions. Second, in societies like Kuwait, where collective influence and societal

TABLE 2: Respondents’ responses on social media usage.

		SMU (social media usage)					
		Which of the following social media accounts do you use to follow luxury brands and how often?					
Responses from 341 respondents		SMU1 (Snapchat)	SMU2 (Instagram)	SMU3 (YouTube)	SMU4 (Twitter)	SMU5 (Facebook)	SMU6 (TikTok)
5	Several times a day	109	132	69	55	11	48
4	2-3 times a day	43	56	33	52	16	25
3	Once a day	25	54	60	40	17	24
2	I see it if I have time	70	75	71	63	31	63
1	I do not see it at all	94	24	108	131	266	181
		Dropped					

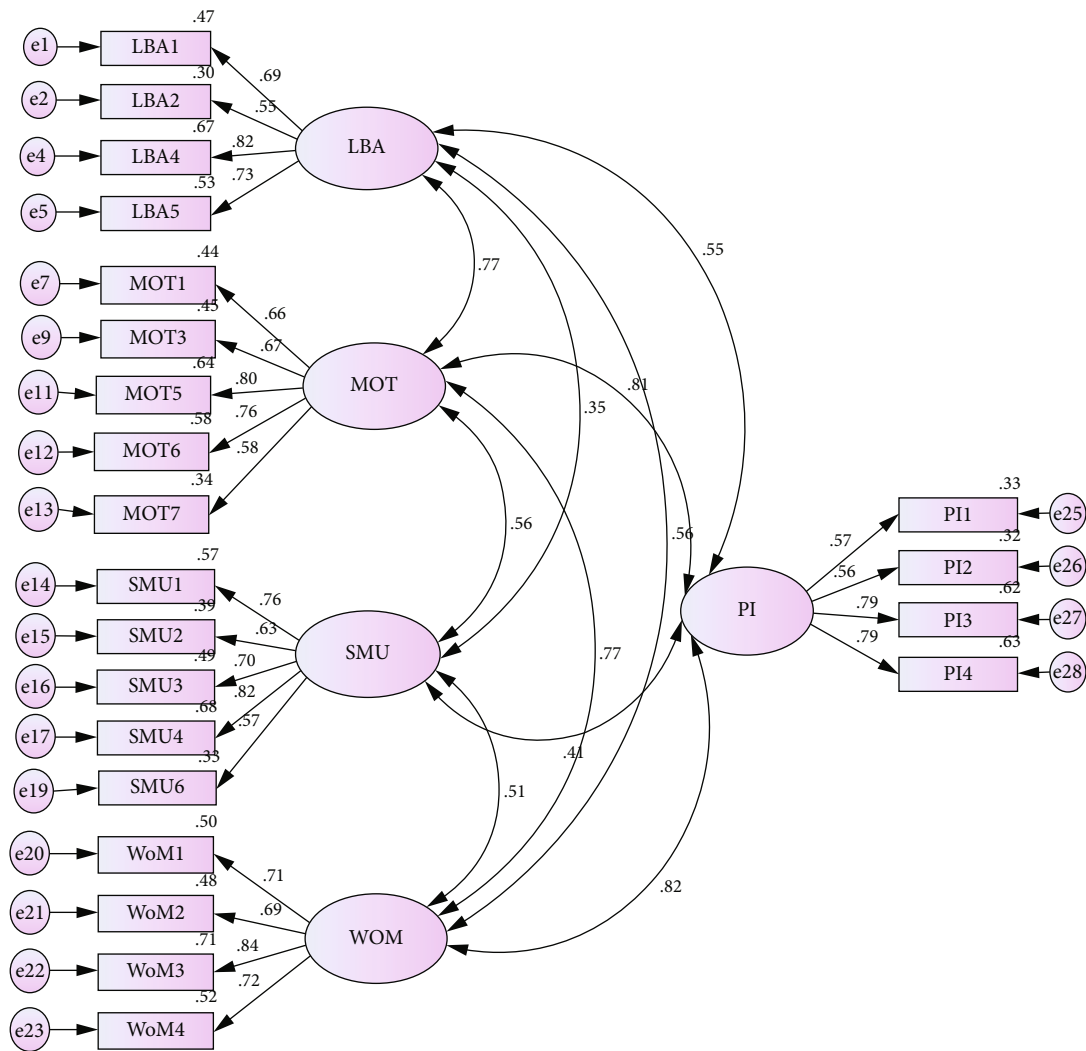


FIGURE 2: CFA for measurement model fit.

norms play a significant role, the impact of social factors on purchase intentions cannot be underestimated. Social pressures and the desire to conform to group expectations may override personal brand attachment when it comes to making purchasing decisions. Consequently, the influence of SM in enhancing the LBA-purchase intention relationship becomes crucial, as it can potentially bridge the gap between individual

attachment and the collective dynamics of purchase decisions, aligning personal attachment with social influences to drive purchase intentions more effectively. Similarly, when Ko et al. [15] investigated the effects of luxury perceptions on brand attachment and purchase intention, they reported differences found in the structural relationship among Chinese consumers, compared to Hong

TABLE 3: Factor loading and SMC.

Constructs	Items	Statements	Factor loading	SMC
LBA	LBA1	My favorite luxury brands (LBs) show prestige and status	0.687	0.472
	LBA2	My favorite LBs emphasize unique design and style	0.549	0.301
	LBA4	My favorite LBs talk more about my personality and power	0.820	0.672
	LBA5	My favorite LBs provoke emotions and experience	0.727	0.529
MOT	MOT1	It is exciting and fun to follow LBs on SM	0.663	0.440
	MOT3	It is fashionable to follow LBs on SM	0.674	0.454
	MOT5	My desired prestigious self-image is reinforced when following LBs on SM	0.800	0.639
	MOT6	The prestige of LBs contributes to my image/status on SM	0.761	0.578
	MOT7	It is convenient and easy to interact with LBs on SM	0.581	0.338
SMU	SMU1	Which of the following SM platforms do you use to connect with LBs (Snapchat)	0.756	0.572
	SMU2	Which of the following SM platforms do you use to connect with LBs (Instagram)	0.627	0.393
	SMU3	Which of the following SM platforms do you use to connect with LBs (YouTube)	0.697	0.485
	SMU4	Which of the following SM platforms do you use to follow LBs (Twitter)	0.823	0.677
	SMU6	Which of the following SM platforms do you use to connect with LBs (TikTok)	0.574	0.329
WOM	WoM1	I tend to share with others in SM opinions and feelings about my favorite LBs	0.707	0.500
	WoM2	I would like to pass out information on my favorite LBs to my friends on SM	0.694	0.482
	WoM3	I usually leave a comment when I like the information regarding my favorite LBs in SM	0.840	0.706
	WoM4	I would recommend my favorite LBs to other people on SM	0.724	0.524
PI	PI1	I believe that SM makes me understand which LBs I favor most	0.573	0.328
	PI2	I believe that SM raises my awareness about new attributes of LBs	0.563	0.317
	PI3	SM reminds me to buy my favorite LBs more often	0.787	0.620
	PI4	I would consider purchasing LBs directly from SM in the future	0.791	0.626

Note: LBA = luxury brand attachment; PI = purchase intentions; SMU = social media use; MOT = motivation; WOM = word-of-mouth; SMC = squared multiple correlation.

TABLE 4: Convergent validity and discriminant validity.

	LBA	PI	WOM	MOT	SMU	CR	AVE
LBA	0.756					0.793	0.573
PI	0.550	0.768				0.777	0.591
WOM	0.557	0.521	0.744			0.831	0.553
MOT	0.575	0.512	0.567	0.768		0.826	0.590
SMU	0.355	0.412	0.513	0.563	0.770	0.826	0.594

Note: LBA = luxury brand attachment; PI = purchase intention; SMU = social media use; MOT = motivation; WOM = word-of-mouth; CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted.

Kong and Taiwanese consumers. These differences were attributed to the high social influence on the brand attachment and purchase intention relationship.

The relationship between LBA and purchase intention remains nonsignificant even for higher SM usage levels. The hypotheses about positive relationships between LBA and SM usage, and SM usage and purchase intentions were rejected (Hypotheses 6 and 8). This might be due to the suitability of certain SM platforms for luxury products and the variability in consumer motivations on these platforms. Greater attachment does not generate higher SM usage since not all SM platforms are suitable for luxury products and the usage levels of consumers in various SM platforms are deter-

mined by the motivation to engage with luxury brands on SM (Hypothesis 5 accepted).

Furthermore, greater SM usage does not affect the purchase intentions for a luxury brand although users may exhibit a strong attachment to it (Hypothesis 8 rejected). This could be due to different user segments in SM having varying propensities to buy luxury products despite high engagement levels. This finding is in line with Ramadan et al. [69] who identified segments of higher luxury engagement in SM with a lower buyer propensity suggesting that high engagement in SM does not always translate to a higher likelihood of purchasing luxury products. The study confirms that SM usage can have a significant impact on

TABLE 5: Structural model fit results.

Hypothesis	Path	(β)	CR (t -value)	p value	Results
Hypothesis 1	LBA \rightarrow PI	-0.5	-0.631	0.528 ^{n.s.}	Rejected
Hypothesis 2	LBA \rightarrow MOT	0.74	8.589	***	Accepted
Hypothesis 3	MOT \rightarrow PI	0.47	4.171	***	Accepted
Hypothesis 4	MOT \rightarrow WOM	0.58	5.308	***	Accepted
Hypothesis 5	MOT \rightarrow SMU	0.57	5.204	***	Accepted
Hypothesis 6	LBA \rightarrow SMU	-0.07	-0.682	0.495 ^{n.s.}	Rejected
Hypothesis 7	SMU \rightarrow WOM	0.20	3.198	0.001	Accepted
Hypothesis 8	SMU \rightarrow PI	-0.10	-1.780	0.075 ^{n.s.}	Rejected
Hypothesis 9	LBA \rightarrow WOM	0.05	0.559	0.576 ^{n.s.}	Rejected
Hypothesis 10	WOM \rightarrow PI	0.56	6.166	***	Accepted

Note: LBA = luxury brand attachment; PI = purchase intention; SMU = social media usage; MOT = motivation; WOM = word-of-mouth; CR = composite reliability; n.s. = nonsignificant. The accepted level of statistical significance is p values at *** $p \leq 0.001$.

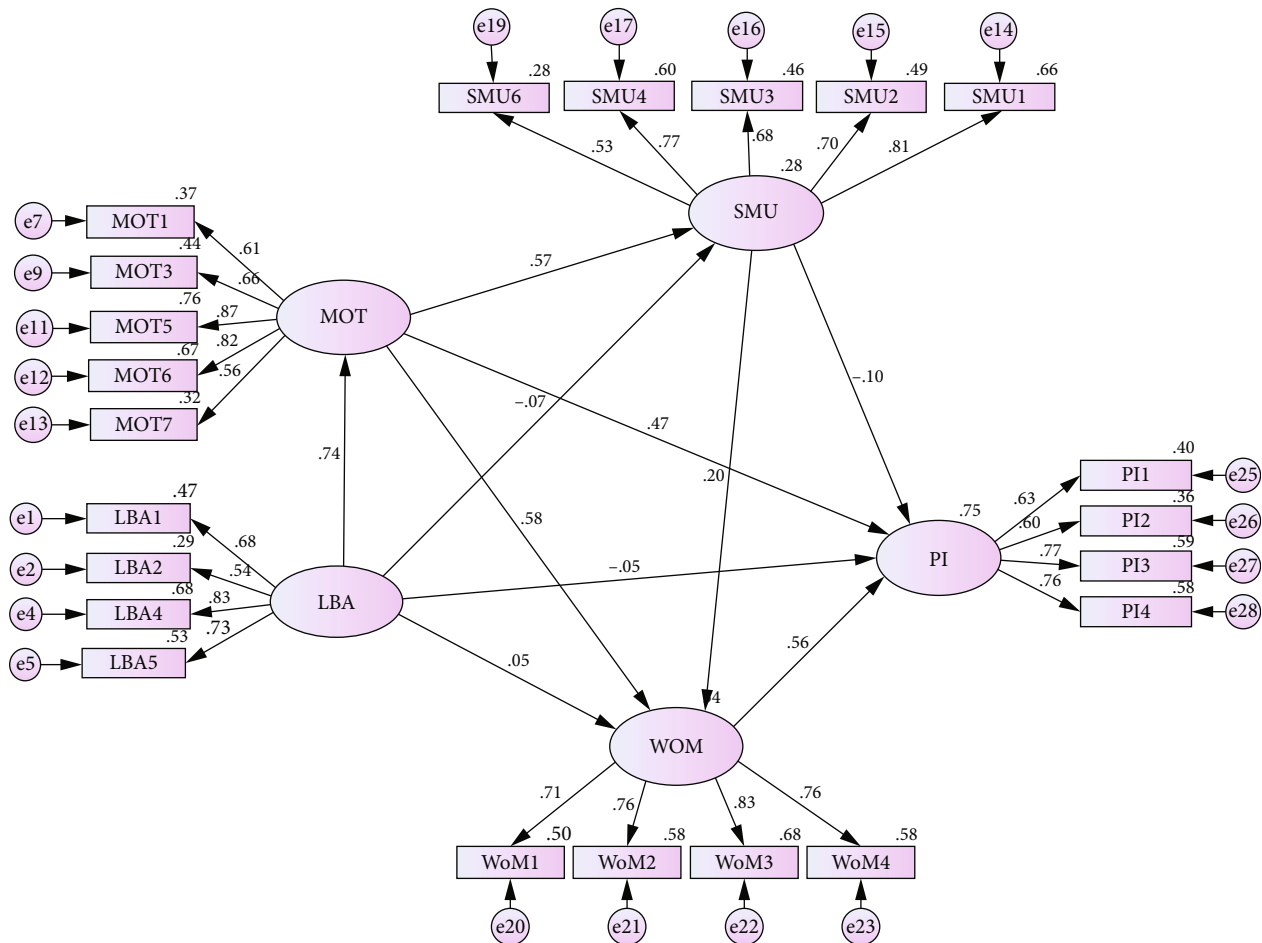


FIGURE 3: Path analysis using a structural model.

purchase intentions only when the engagement with a luxury brand (WoM) on SM is higher (Hypothesis 7 accepted).

Also, greater LBA does not directly generate word-of-mouth on SM (Hypothesis 9 rejected) unless the motivation to engage with luxury brands in SM is significant (Hypothesis

4 accepted). The rejection of the hypothesis can be attributed to the interplay between the self-congruity and the social identity theory. While consumers with high LBA may form strong internal bonds with a luxury brand due to congruence with their self-concept and perceived luxury values, their

willingness to generate WoM on SM is influenced by external factors. Factors such as the perceived relevance of sharing, concerns about diluting the brand's exclusivity, and the receptiveness of their SM audience play crucial roles. Additionally, the social identity theory highlights the desire to reinforce group membership and gain approval from reference groups, which can motivate the WoM generation. However, if these external factors and social dynamics do not align with consumers' LBA, it may explain the rejection of the hypothesis, indicating that WoM generation is a multifaceted process shaped by both individual attachment and social context.

The current model confirms the key role of motivation in the direct relationship between LBA and purchase intentions. A higher level of attachment can affect users' motivation to engage with luxury brands (Hypothesis 2 accepted), which in turn may generate purchase intentions (Hypothesis 3 accepted). As deep-rooted in the social identity theory, this study confirms that the need for high social status motivates consumers to engage with luxury brands in SM.

Lastly, new insights are provided concerning the managers' choice of SM platforms to optimize region-specific marketing efforts. The findings revealed that the most engaging luxury platforms are Instagram and Snapchat (Table 2), confirming previous studies' assertions about Instagram as the top SM site for luxury brand followers [24], and contradictory to Jahn et al. [70] about the low performance of luxury brands on Instagram. In addition, Facebook is found an nonadequate platform for luxury brands.

6. Research Implications

The study provides valuable insights into marketing theory and practice. Overall, the findings offer theoretical contributions to the literature on LBA [8, 49] and luxury brand engagement on SM [17].

Theoretically, the new scale of LBA presented in this study contributes to the advancement of LBA literature. To the best of the authors' knowledge, to date, only Shimul et al. [8] have developed an LBA scale, and the latter includes only items reflecting the emotional connection with a luxury brand. In line with the new LBA definition provided, the items of the LBA construct in this study measure the attachment level with a luxury brand based on the perceived value of prestige and social status, uniqueness, self-presentation of personality and power, and emotions provoking and experience. Therefore, in the context of the Kuwait market, this research provides new insights into the determinants of LBA for Kuwaiti customers, an understudied but intended market for many global luxury brands.

Furthermore, this study supports managers in segmenting the luxury market utilizing the LBA scale. Once they comprehend the strength of attachment between consumers and luxury brands, they can recognize, listen to, and reward the highly attached customers who promote luxury brands.

Inaccessible luxury brands like Hermès and Louis Vuitton are reluctant to fully utilize the potential of SM. They deliver unified encoded messages to their global market through their platforms without considering consumers' cultural differences in SM. This study recommends that luxury

brands should appeal to their intended markets by designing tailored SM activities that address the specific characteristics and needs of users of different cultures. Drawing on the self-congruity theory, the results of this study revealed that the luxury brand's capacity to show higher prestige and social status is the most important factor in building attachment in Kuwait, consequently, luxury managers are required to design communication activities that address this factor. It is time for luxury brands to focus on luxury brand societal acceptance and cultural adaptation by designing SM activities that would simultaneously satisfy customers' desire for uniqueness and cultural appropriateness. Typically, the Islamic religion, as an important component of culture, greatly affects the acceptance of luxury design and style in Kuwait [42].

The study results confirm the positive role of SM word-of-mouth in enhancing purchase intention for luxury brands. This influence can guide the decision-makers to harness the power of SM-driven word-of-mouth. However, as this study revealed, word-of-mouth can potentially increase in two situations: when customers are incentivized to intensify their presence in SM and when they feel motivated to engage with luxury brands. Consequently, successful promotion campaigns may require developing a link between luxury attachment and motivation to enhance luxury engagement on social media. Therefore, luxury firms seeking to develop positive user behaviors should ensure that SM activities not only provide updated information but also emphasize prosocial values of luxuries [22] more than their high quality. This is in line with Creevey et al.'s [27] assertion that luxury communication remains more emotional than informational, and to convert the power of strong bonds into higher purchase intentions, managers should focus on creating and transforming consumers' needs for luxury possessions into desires to be well-represented in their social circles.

In addition, for consumers who are attached to certain LBs, other implications can support their motivation to stay engaged with LB on SM, e.g., designing SM content that has an entertaining appeal that captures and retains the attention of SM users. Luxury brands can run engaging competitions, trivia posts, or classy humor snippets through their SM handles to enhance customer engagement and subsequently create purchase intentions.

Also, developing an innovative cocreation approach (e.g., LV with Nike) would emphasize the novelty and uniqueness of luxury brands and stay relevant in the dynamic luxury industry. To optimize the SM presence of their brands, luxury firms should stay connected with their customers by paying attention to the constant evolution of mobile applications. For instance, Hermès has shown ingenuity in leveraging the power of SM by developing apps such as Silk Knots which teaches customers to tie scarves in twenty-four different ways.

Additionally, the introduction of mini programs for luxury brands, following the successful example of WeChat in China, can be useful for multipurposes without ruining luxury exclusivity. For example, Louis Vuitton's latest WeChat Mini Program was designed to release the new limited sneakers and educate consumers on its most recent news

and products, while Hermès utilized the WeChat Mini Program to introduce its craftsmanship to new fans in China and provide the chance for consumers to register for an exclusive Hermès event [71].

Finally, the integration of traditional media with SM would leverage attachment and engagement with luxury brands. Richard Mille has combined its marketing and press materials with its social media activities—illustrating and reinforcing its brand identity. In 2014, Hermès became the official sponsor of the US Show Jumping Team by utilizing this event to showcase its fine leather products and long-standing association with horses. It is also a visibility-generating avenue for Hermès before their affluent audience. Sharing such high-class events on SM would leave a glimpse of the brilliance and grandiosity of luxury brands.

7. Conclusion and Future Research Directions

In conclusion, this study delves into the complex relationship between LBA, social media engagement, and purchase intentions, particularly within the context of Kuwait's affluent market. The findings underscore that the display of prestige and status is pivotal in cultivating LBA, which, however, does not directly lead to purchase intentions. The key lies in the role of motivation, which acts as a vital link in turning luxury attachment into consumer purchasing actions. This finding is particularly relevant for luxury brands aiming to effectively leverage SM without compromising their unique brand identities.

While the study contributes significantly to both theoretical and practical domains, it is not without limitations. The reliance on self-reported data from social media users about past behaviors and future intentions may introduce biases. Future studies might employ more objective data collection methods or triangulate findings with qualitative insights to enhance validity. The focus on a specific demographic in Kuwait limits the generalizability of the findings. Expanding future research to include diverse demographics and geographic regions will enhance understanding and applicability considering economic and cultural factors in these diverse regions. The cross-cultural studies would support the understanding of how digital platforms influence consumer behavior in distinctive luxury markets, filling the knowledge gap in the literature regarding the motives driving luxury brand engagement on SM. Additionally, the study's approach to general luxury brand perceptions, without differentiating between various luxury levels, opens the door for more nuanced future research. Investigating how attachment to different tiers of luxury brands on specific SM platforms influences purchase intentions could offer deeper insights, considering the limitation that our study's focus is not on specific platform usage but on the overall impact of SM on luxury brand engagement. Furthermore, exploring the psychological underpinnings, such as social identity and self-concept, that drive luxury purchases, particularly in the ever-evolving social media landscape, could yield valuable findings. This would not only address the current study's limitations but also guide luxury brand managers in developing adaptive strategies in the digital era that resonate with a sophisticated and dynamic consumer base.

Data Availability

Data can be available upon request.

Ethical Approval

The authors declared no ethical issues related to this research paper. The research project has obtained approval from the Research Committee of the American University of the Middle East.

Disclosure

The authors have conducted this research under the affiliation of the American University of the Middle East.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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