The sound of luxury: A content analysis of hashtagged luxury brand posts and their music on social media

Lüksün sesi: Sosyal medyada hashtag kullanılan lüks marka paylaşımlarındaki müziklerin içerik analizi

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ABSTRACT

Luxury consumption functions as a means for individuals to project their status or ideal self. Consumers engage in conspicuous consumption by displaying luxury brands, utilizing price tags and logos as symbols of social identity. Music, a powerful determinant of emotions and consumer behavior, plays a pivotal role in brand communication, particularly for luxury brands seeking to establish exclusivity and a high-end identity. Given the critical role of music in luxury branding, this study aims to analyze the types of music associated with the hashtags #luxurybrand and #luxurybrands on social media. Employing qualitative content analysis, the research examines Instagram posts tagged with #luxurybrand and #luxurybrands, categorizing music presence, genre, and lyrical content. The findings reveal that while 884 out of 2000 analyzed posts feature music, the majority of luxury brand-related content does not incorporate musical elements. Jazz emerges as the most frequently associated genre, followed by pop, reinforcing the contemporary perception of jazz as a symbol of sophistication and high culture. Moreover, instrumental music is favored over vocal music in luxury brand posts, aligning with the industry's emphasis on timelessness and exclusivity. These findings suggest a departure from traditional perspectives in music branding, indicating that genre selection exerts a greater influence on luxury brand identity than lyrical content. Future research should further investigate consumer perceptions to enhance the understanding of music's role in luxury brand communication.

Keywords: luxury brands, music, consumer, hashtags

ÖZ

Lüks tüketim, bireylerin statülerini veya ideal benliklerini yansıtma aracı olarak işlev görmektedir. Tüketiciler, lüks markaları sergileyerek, fiyat etiketleri ve logoları sosyal kimliklerinin sembolleri olarak kullanarak gösterişçi tüketime yönelmektedir. Duyguların ve tüketici davranışlarının şekillenmesinde güçlü bir belirleyici olan müzik, özellikle ayrıcalıklılık ve üst düzey bir kimlik oluşturmayı amaçlayan lüks markalar için marka iletişiminde merkezi bir rol oynamaktadır. Müziğin lüks marka algısındaki kritik rolü göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, bu çalışma, sosyal medyada lüks marka etiketleriyle ile ilişkilendirilen müzik türlerini analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Nitel içerik analizi yöntemi kullanılarak gerçekleştirilen araştırmada, Instagram'da #luxurybrand ve #luxurybrands etiketleriyle paylaşılan gönderiler incelenmiş; müzik varlığı, müzik türü ve şarkı sözleri içerik açısından kategorize edilmiştir. Bulgular, incelenen 2000 gönderiden 884'ünün müzik içerdiğini, ancak lüks marka ile ilgili içeriklerin büyük çoğunluğunun müzik unsurunu barındırmadığını ortaya koymaktadır. Caz müziği, en sık ilişkilendirilen tür olarak öne çıkarken, onu pop müziği takip etmektedir; bu durum, cazın günümüzde sofistike ve yüksek kültürün bir sembolü olarak algılanmasını pekiştirmektedir. Ayrıca, lüks marka paylaşımlarında enstrümantal müzik, vokal müziğe kıyasla daha fazla tercih edilmekte olup, bu eğilim sektörün zamansızlık ve ayrıcalıklılık vurgusuyla örtüşmektedir.

Elde edilen bulgular, müzik markalama alanındaki geleneksel yaklaşımlardan bir sapma olduğunu göstererek, tür seçiminin, lüks marka kimliğinin oluşumunda şarkı sözlerinden daha büyük bir etkiye sahip olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Gelecek araştırmalar, müziğin lüks marka iletişimindeki etkisini daha iyi anlamak amacıyla tüketici algılarını derinlemesine incelemelidir.

Anahtar kelimeler: lüks markalar, müzik, tüketici, hashtags

1. INTRODUCTION

While being an important element for luxury consumption and luxury branding, conspicuous consumption means that individuals consume luxury products and brands publicly in order to signal their social status and wealth in social life (Greenberg et al., 2019). The origins of this concept can be traced back to the work of Thorstein Veblen, who first introduced the term in his seminal study, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899). The concept of conspicuous consumption was first mentioned by Thorstein Veblen in his study of *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, which was published in 1899. Veblen's analysis primarily focused on the upper social class, which he described as the 'leisure class.' Veblen (1899) mentions the upper social class, which is based on aristocrats who are distinguished from the middle class and lower class, and calls this social class the leisure class. According to Veblen (1899), the upper social class does not work, and they spend their leisure time showing off their wealth and possessions. Through these displays, they reinforce their social distinction and maintain a clear boundary between themselves and other social classes (Bocock, 1997, p. 24). While conspicuous consumption is a well-established concept in social theory, defining luxury itself presents a significant challenge. It is hard to define luxury as the term luxury is vague. The definition of luxury depends on the situation, and it changes from person to person, and it also depends on the meaning that has been loaded (Wiedmann et al., 2009). In this sense, luxury can be understood as an abstract and fluid concept that varies based on individual perceptions and cultural contexts. In this context, luxury meaning may be an abstract form.

Consumption within conspicuous consumption is not based on functionality; it is based on status and prestige (Uludağ & Soyer, 2023). The price tag is a symbol of prestige for wealthy people (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). In this context, luxury consumption and conspicuous consumption have attracted significant attention from researchers due to their role in shaping social hierarchies. Conspicuous consumption and luxury consumption are highly engaged by the researchers. The usage of luxury brands and products is a way of acquiring and maintaining status and prestige (Page, 1992). However, the desire to signal status through conspicuous consumption is not limited to the wealthy elite. Also, signaling status by conspicuous consumption is not only for rich and wealthy people. It is also used by lower statuses as they want to develop their status and they tend to imitate higher classes and statuses. This phenomenon, often referred to as "status imitation," highlights how individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds adopt luxury consumption patterns to elevate their perceived social standing. According to conspicuous consumption, ownership is the real symbol of status and people show their wealth and status by consuming luxury products conspicuously (Trigg, 2001). For individuals seeking to attain or sustain status through conspicuous consumption, social acceptance plays a crucial role. For people who want to own status through conspicuous consumption and to be able to maintain this status, it is important to be accepted by other status groups (Richins, 1994). This aligns with Veblen's (1899) argument that conspicuous consumption is not confined to the upper class but extends across various social strata. Veblen (1899) also underlines the fact that not only the upper class but also other social classes engage in conspicuous consumption. Each social class gives importance to show off their status. By engaging in conspicuous consumption, individuals position themselves within a specific status group and seek validation from others. Because in this way, they are positioned into a special status, and their status is accepted by others.

As an extension of conspicuous consumption, researchers have categorized luxury brands into two distinct types: loud and quiet luxury. Loud luxury means that there is an evident logo or signature that can be caught by the eye and identified quickly. On the other hand, quiet luxury means that there is no evident logo, and if there is any sign of the brand, it is discreet (Bagheri, 2014; Dealca et al., 2022; Greenberg et al., 2019; Jiang et al., 2021; Kauppinen-Raisanen et al., 2018).

Luxury as a Statement: Conspicuous Consumption and The Self

Self-presentation, which is also called impression management, is based on Goffman's (1990) study. Goffman (1990) explains self-presentation as the way each person manages and presents their impressions to their target audience. This process is being symbolized as a play by him. According to him, each individual acts like an actor on the stage and the actors stage themselves on the scene while presenting their performance to the audience. By doing so, the actor manages the way his audience sees him. This symbolization is being adapted to real life as each individual acts like an actor and performs in their daily life, but they can also perform different roles that are adapted for different audiences. This can be explained by our different behaviors in different circumstances and places. As an example, we act differently while we are surrounded by our family and friends or in our school life, work life, etc.

In the context of consumption, self-concept is examined in two ways. These are the real self and the ideal self. Individuals constantly navigate between these two selves, striving to align their real self with their ideal self. Individuals strive to bring their real selves closer to their ideal selves. Consumption is the key to reaching the ideal self (Asıl, 2017, p. 8). The distinction between these two selves plays a crucial role in consumer behavior. The real self is the self that an individual already has. The ideal self is the self an individual would like to have, and the ideal self is the self that the individual wants to have (Higgins, 1987, pp. 320-321). In this regard, self-perception influences purchasing decisions, as consumers seek products that reflect their desired identity. The relationship between self and product image influences buying behavior (Sirgy, 1982, p. 287). Individuals tend to consume products that they see as compatible with their identity. Through this alignment, individuals can shape their self-presentation in a way that reflects their aspirational self. Therefore, they can present their self in the way they want and in the way they see as ideal. As consumption extends beyond mere material acquisition, it transforms into a medium for self-expression. As consumption becomes a communication medium, individuals can express themselves and present themselves through consumption (Marcoux et al., 1997). This communicative aspect of consumption is particularly evident in conspicuous consumption, where individuals use luxury goods as signals of status and power. As Veblen (1899) underlined, individuals communicate with others through conspicuous consumption to have power, prestige, and status. In this sense, self-presentation serves a dual function: it allows individuals to express their personal uniqueness while also signaling their belonging to a social group. Self-presentation is a way to express personal uniqueness and social group belongingness. When consumption becomes visible to the public, consuming products related to wealth and status provides uniqueness for the self (Mann & Sahni, 2015). Thus, for individuals seeking to achieve their ideal self, luxury consumption—when displayed overtly—functions as a tool for self-presentation through conspicuous consumption. Therefore, in order to reach their ideal self, individuals consume, and if they choose luxury consumption overtly, then conspicuous consumption becomes the way of self-presentation. Given the significance of luxury in self-presentation, scholars have identified key characteristics that define luxury brands. There are 5 characteristics that were listed to define luxury brands. These are: excellent quality, high price, scarcity and uniqueness, aesthetic technical dimensions, ancestral heritage, and personal history (de Azevedo Rosa, 2012, p. 4).

Greenberg et al. (2010, pp. 3-4) divide consumers who consume luxury products into 4 types. These are patrician, parvenu, poseur and proletarian. Patricians are wealthy people who pay a premium for quiet luxury products. They use signals that can be only interpreted by other patricians. They want to be associated with other patricians but their need to consume luxury products to gain prestige is low. Patricians are in the high class as financial means. The second category is called a parvenu. Parvenus associate themselves with other parvenus and patricians. They want to show this association and differentiate themselves from the lower classes. They use loud signals and they consume loud luxury products. Therefore they can pay for the logo and show others that if they are not able to afford that logo, they are below them. The third luxury consumer group is called poseurs. As it is understood from the word itself, poseurs are people who act like they are someone, although they are not that person. They don't have financial power but they act like that by consuming loud luxury items. They want to differentiate themselves from other low-income people, and they tend to consume counterfeit brands and products. The final and fourth category is called proletarians. Proleterians are both low in wealth and need for status. They are not status-conscious, and they do not engage in signaling.

The dichotomy of loud and quiet luxury appeals to different consumer motivations (Jiang et al., 2021). Greenberg et al. (2010) underline that wealthy consumers who don't have high-status needs want to associate themselves with people they resemble, and they prefer quiet luxury brands that only they can recognize. This preference for quiet luxury is rooted in a desire for subtlety and exclusivity. On the other hand, wealthy consumers who have a high status need to consume loud luxury products to signal to the less affluent that they are different from them. The contrast between these two motivations highlights how status-driven consumption varies based on individual aspirations. People who are in need of high status but cannot afford luxury brands consume counterfeits to match the status they want to have. This behavior illustrates the importance of status signaling, even among those who cannot access luxury items. According to Bagheri's (2014, p. 316) study, people who consume loud luxury items aim to impress others by following trends. This desire to impress aligns with the broader concept of conspicuous consumption, where the public visibility of one's wealth becomes essential. On the other hand, people who consume quiet luxury items aim to feel accomplishment and social recognition through having possessions. This distinction underscores the different ways individuals use luxury goods to reflect their social standing and personal identity. Kauppinen-Raisanen et al. (2018) conducted a quantitative study with 215 young consumers from Finland, Italy, and France. The result of the study shows that most consumers prefer luxury brands to be quiet rather than loud. This finding suggests that, in certain cultural contexts, there is a preference for understated symbols of wealth. The study also finds out that social norms affect luxury brand choices, as Finns prefer quiet luxury more than Italians and French. This variation across cultures highlights how the perception of luxury can differ based on societal expectations. Also, more men link luxury consumption to self-presentation than women. This gender difference suggests that self-presentation may be more central to luxury consumption for men than for women. According to Greenberg et al.'s (2019) study, extraversion promotes a desire for status, and these consumers favor extravagant logos. This supports the notion that personality traits, such as extraversion, can influence preferences for conspicuous consumption. Another study, which was conducted by Jiang et al. (2021), shows that overt narcissistic consumers hold a value-expressive attitude toward luxury products and they prefer quiet luxury brands. This indicates that narcissistic tendencies, while often associated with a desire for attention, can also lead to a preference for understated forms of luxury that convey exclusivity. According to the study conducted on quiet luxury and logomania by Dealca et al. (2022), most of the respondents prefer quiet luxury over logomania. This preference highlights the growing appeal of subtlety in luxury branding. On the other hand, both logomania and quiet luxury impact customer satisfaction. While quiet luxury may appeal to those seeking exclusivity, logomania continues to resonate with consumers who wish to signal status in more overt ways. Another study conducted by Kooli (2024) shows that when it comes to luxury fashion brands, consumers place a higher value on quiet luxury brands and sustainability. This reflects a shift in consumer values, where sustainability and subtle luxury have become increasingly intertwined.

Sound of the Brand: Music as a Branding Tool

Music is an important factor that affects human emotions and, by doing so, has an impact on consumer behavior (Andersson et al., 2012). This emotional influence on consumers is a key element in shaping their purchasing decisions and overall brand engagement. At the point of adding value to the brand, music is expressed with 3 values, which are identity, interaction, and profit. These values collectively enhance how music contributes to a brand's identity and consumer relationship. The use of music through the brand communication process creates an emotional bond between the consumers and the brand, increasing brand recognition. This emotional connection strengthens the association between the brand and consumer loyalty. It can also create valuable content for consumers to share and discover (Jackson et al., 2013). Thus, music becomes a tool for amplifying the brand's message and expanding its reach through consumer engagement. Meaning is created by music when the brand is linked (Zhu & Meyers-Levy, 2005). In this sense, music acts as a powerful medium for linking emotional resonance to a brand, influencing consumer perceptions on a deeper level. Sonic branding has long been used since the early days of radio. While radio primarily established its communicative power through language, within the context of advertising, music became an indispensable element that enhanced the impact of spoken messages and reinforced brand identity. Indeed, radio commercials almost invariably relied on a musical background, which not only complemented the verbal content but also deepened the emotional connection with the audience. The absence of visual cues meant that brands had to rely on sound to communicate and build recognition. Although nowadays brand executives have different types of sensory elements, sound is important because human eyes may miss visual elements. Unlike visual cues, sound can capture attention even when the consumer is not actively engaging with visual content. For instance, you can look away for a few seconds and miss the brand message, but you can always hear it although you are not looking (Danziger, 2021). This ability of sound to

maintain presence even when consumers are distracted further solidifies its role in brand communication. The human brain synchronizes electrical activity when music is heard. This physiological response to music demonstrates how deeply integrated sound is within our cognitive processes. MRI studies showed that music matches memories and feelings and influences behaviors. By evoking specific memories or emotions, music creates powerful associations that influence consumer behavior. In this context, music creates associations that affect brand loyalty and purchase decisions (SoundOut, 2025). Ultimately, music has the capacity to drive not only emotional connections but also tangible behaviors like brand loyalty and purchasing choices.

If brands use familiar tunes to consumers, it has an impact on consumer behavior in product and brand selection (Valkeinen, 2020; Zander, 2006). This is because music plays a significant role in guiding consumer perceptions and decisions. The music used in television advertisements guides the audience, helps them to understand the image, and strengthens the ad message (Alexomanolaki et al., 2010, p. 38). In this context, whenever certain music is used in an advertisement, it begins to be associated with the brand (Apaolaza-Ibañez et al., 2010). This association between music and brand identity can positively influence consumer attitudes. Music is used as a stimulus in advertising and has a positive effect on the target audience (Kellaris & Mantel, 1996, p. 510). As such, research by Stewart and Koslow (1989), conducted on 1059 television advertisements, determined that TV ads containing music had a positive relationship with recall and persuasion, further emphasizing the importance of music in effective advertising. Additionally, another research conducted by Stout and Leckenby (1988) showed that the most effective of all music components is the mode of music. High-tempo music received more positive feedback than low-tempo music, demonstrating that tempo can play a crucial role in influencing consumer reactions. Building on this idea, Nguyen (2020) mentions that brand music can be divided into four types. These are brand sound, sound logo, brand voice, and brand song. Brand sound is a music piece or a short song that depends on the brand's core values. They are easy to remember and repeatable, often used at the beginning or end of a commercial. A sound logo is similar to a pictorial logo, designed to enhance recognition when heard alongside the brand's visual logo. Brand voice is used to differentiate the brand from other brands, further cementing its identity in the market. Finally, brand song, sung by a singer or composed by a company, expresses the brand's core values in a memorable and engaging manner. As a part of brand equity, brand sound and jingles also reflect brand personality (Brodsky, 2011), and they affect the information processing style (Fiedler, 2002). In fact, defining the brand with music helps remember the brand 96% more than the brands that don't use sound (North et al., 2004). Research comparing ads with music and ads without music shows that ads with music influence consumers more positively (Uğur, 2011, p. 5). Furthermore, the brands whose music and slogan are most liked are one step ahead of other brands. This is because there is a lot of knowledge and information in consumers' minds, and it is important for brands to stand out (Akay et al., 2016, p. 202). As a result, it is highly advised to combine jingles and slogans to maintain memorability (Karailievova, 2012). Music makes the advertising campaign, brand, and product more recognizable (Çupi & Morina, 2020), and verbal recall is improved if the melody is well-known (Rubin, 1977). According to Borgonos Quijano's (2021) study, participants see music as a critical element in an advertising campaign. The study highlights a clear relationship between music and attitudes towards the brand, as well as recall and purchase intention.

Music in advertising is an important element that contributes to brand association and personification. In this context, music enhances the key message of the advertisement (Hecker, 1984). Music also helps in creating memory associations, which in turn generate auditory memories (Clow & Baack, 2003). According to Morris and Boone (1998), this auditory impact not only influences memory but also directly affects consumer emotions during the commercial. Additionally, the tempo of the music plays a crucial role in influencing behavior. As Heshmat (2024) highlights, faster tempos tend to speed up consumer actions, while high-arousal music can induce impatience, as also noted by Sun et al. (2023). On the other hand, low-pitched melodies impact marketing messages in a more abstract and subtle way (Zoghaib et al., 2023). In addition to tempo, jingles, tones, and sonic logos are essential in shaping the brand's image in consumers' minds (Fraser & Bradford, 2013). For instance, Yalch's (1991, p. 273) study revealed that music improves memory when used with slogans, making information with music more memorable than those without. Furthermore, according to Jain and Jain (2016), jingles are particularly memorable and catchy elements of advertisements. In fact, they argue that an effective jingle can position a brand uniquely in consumers' minds, facilitating easier recall. Jingles are encoded into the consumer's memory and can be recalled later (Wallace, 1994). Moreover, as Yalch (1991) suggests, when consumers sing along with a jingle, it further strengthens the impact of the brand. Research by Roehm (2001) indicated that when a popular song is used in advertising, consumers who are unfamiliar with the original song tend to recall the brand more effectively. This suggests that the recall of the original song in the minds of consumers familiar with the popular song reinforces brand recognition, further supporting the effectiveness of music in advertising.

Using a famous singer and their song for a brand has both advantages and disadvantages. On the positive side, one significant benefit is the diverse choice of singers and songs available, allowing brands to select music that can create various meanings and associations. This flexibility helps brands align their music with the desired emotional connection they want to establish with consumers. As part of celebrity endorsement, partnerships with well-known singers can create a stronger bond between consumers and the brand, as the singer carries their own meaning in the minds of the audience. However, there are some drawbacks to consider. One major concern is the high licensing costs, as both the song and the singer need to be compensated, which can sometimes exceed the brand's budget. Additionally, the relevance and fit of the music are crucial; it must align with the brand's identity and message, and resonate with consumers. Finally, cultural considerations should not be overlooked, as music is a powerful element of culture. It's essential to thoroughly define and understand the target audience and their cultural context to ensure the music creates the intended resonance.

In brand communication, music is also strategically used in stores to influence consumer behavior. According to the research by Dogaru et al. (2024), brand recognition tends to be higher when sad background music is used in advertisements, while purchase intention increases with the use of happy music. This shows that the emotional tone of music can have distinct effects on consumer responses. Moreover, music in stores is not only important for enhancing the entertainment value but also plays a significant role in shaping the store image and influencing consumer purchasing behavior. For instance, music in stores has been found to encourage consumers to spend more time in the store (Milliman, 1982), which in turn can lead to increased engagement with products. Additionally, music influences the store's ambiance, consumer experience, and emotional connection with the environment (Morrison & Beverland, 2003). Supermarkets, for example, use different rhythms strategically to influence the duration of customer visits (Kotler & Keller, 2006). Blackwell et al. (2005) note that low-volume music fosters social interaction, while rhythm has a direct impact on how much time consumers spend in the store. As such, in-store music can subconsciously influence both consumer emotions and their behaviors, shaping their overall shopping experience (Doyle, 2002). In brand communication, music is strategically used in stores to affect consumer behavior by influencing brand recognition, emotional responses, store ambiance, and purchasing behavior, with factors like music tone, volume, and rhythm shaping consumer interactions and engagement.

The Sound of Luxury: Music as a Branding Tool for Luxury Brands

Luxury consumption is the desire to own symbolic meanings (Atwal & Williams, 2009), and it is related to hedonic value-seeking through new experiences and self-extension by symbols and meanings (Malenkaya & Andreyeva, 2016, p. 4). In this context, luxury advertising serves as an important promotional tool for luxury brands, helping to create a distinct identity. Luxury advertising aims to establish a unique identity and conveys high-end quality, identity symbols, and emotional value (Long, 2023, p. 67). Additionally, the use of music in advertisements for luxury brands has been found to have a greater impact on brand awareness and information recall compared to non-luxury brands (Min, 2018). This shows that music, being a key element for defining identity, plays a crucial role in establishing the luxury brand identity (Abugnem, 2018). Luxury stores often choose slower-tempo music to introduce a more leisurely experience, encouraging consumers to reflect on their purchases (Loureiro et al., 2020). Keh et al. (2021) exemplify how Rolex stores use sound to create an atmosphere of timelessness and exclusivity, reinforcing the notion that purchasing a Rolex is a significant and thoughtful investment. By using auditory branding, Rolex associates its products with a tangible sense of quality, enhancing both the purchasing behavior and the overall brand image (Lageat et al., 2003). Moreover, music plays an essential role in the luxury guest experience, as it helps create memories that foster loyalty (Les Roches, 2024). When consumers have a positive experience, it leads to increased brand loyalty, as music, experience, and memories become interconnected. Long (2023) discusses how Chanel advertisements on YouTube feature background music that presents a romantic narrative, inspiring and growing in accordance with the video. This strategy is commonly used by luxury brands to convey their heritage, with music and visuals working together to reinforce a luxury identity. Dynamic videos and music create a satisfying visual and auditory experience that resonates with the brand's core message. As highlighted by Global Brands Magazine (n.d), it is possible to shape brand identity through music. For instance, Rolls-Royce uses orchestral music in promotional videos, and luxury watch brands often incorporate film scores to align with their brand values. Thus, music plays a pivotal role in shaping associations, perceptions, and experiences that contribute to luxury branding.

Social media for luxury brands is an important tool as social media is how new trends are born and spread. In this context, young consumers who spend a long time on social media have a growing interest in luxury

brands and purchasing (Kim & Ko, 2010). This shift in consumer behavior highlights the influence of social media on luxury brands' positioning. Furthermore, the existence of luxury brands on social media has a direct impact on consumer perceptions and identity management, reinforcing their brand image (Chu et al., 2013; Lee & Watkins, 2016). As a result, luxury brands can position themselves uniquely in social media by presenting high-quality visual and audio content, creating a distinct and desirable presence (Pentina et al., 2018). In this context, social media serves as a vital platform for luxury brands to engage with young consumers, enhance their brand image, and create a distinctive identity through the strategic use of visual and audio content.

1.1. Purpose of the Study

This study aims to understand the types of music associated with the hashtags #luxurybrand and #luxurybrands on social media. It examines the role of music—one of the key elements in shaping brand identity on social media—in the perception of luxury brands. In this context, through a content analysis of posts using these popular hashtags, the study seeks to provide a framework for understanding the musical preferences in content perceived as representing luxury brands.

1.2. Aim of the Study

The primary objective of this research is to identify the types of music preferred in social media posts that incorporate luxury brand hashtags. The study aims to answer these research questions:

- Is music used in posts that include these hashtags?

- Do the hashtags associated with luxury brand perception tend to favor specific music genres?

- Do the hashtags associated with luxury brand perception tend to favor vocal or instrumental music?

1.3. Importance of the Study

This study offers valuable insights into the use of music in social media posts under the hashtags #luxurybrand and #luxurybrands. It finds that instrumental music, associated with timelessness and exclusivity, is preferred in luxury brand content. The study also highlights that many posts lack music, presenting an opportunity for brands to strengthen their identity and awareness. By identifying popular music genres like jazz and pop, the research helps luxury brands better align their content with their brand perception. Also this study contributes to the literature by emphasizing the role of music in shaping brand identity and consumer engagement, particularly in the context of luxury branding.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative content analysis approach to investigate the use of music in social media content shared under the hashtags #luxurybrand and #luxurybrands. Specifically, it aims to identify the types of music used, the prevalence of music in posts with the hashtags #luxurybrand and #luxurybrands, and whether music includes lyrics or is purely instrumental. Instagram was selected as the data source due to its prominence as a highly visual and increasingly auditory social media platform where luxury brands actively engage with global audiences. The hashtags #luxurybrand and #luxurybrands were chosen based on their popularity and relevance to the research topic. These hashtags aggregate a wide range of brand-related content and represent an organic of user-generated and brand-generated posts associated with the luxury sector.

The content analysis of #luxurybrand and #luxurybrands posts was conducted by two coders between February 10, 2025 – February 20, 2025. It was determined that there were 300,000 posts under #luxurybrand and 100,000 posts under #luxurybrands. Due to the large volume of data, a purposive sampling method was employed to ensure feasibility and relevance. For each hashtag, the first 1,000 posts were analyzed, resulting in a total of 2,000 posts coded by the researchers. To ensure reliability, both coders initially analyzed 100 posts, compared their results, and made necessary revisions before continuing the coding process collaboratively. Through this methodology, the study aims to systematically and meaningfully capture the musical preferences present in content associated with luxury brands.

The content analysis examined three main coding categories. The first category assessed whether music was present or absent in the content. The second category involved classifying the music genre for posts containing music, which were categorized into one of five genres—Jazz, Latin, Pop, Rock, or Other/ Unclassified—based on auditory analysis and, where applicable, metadata associated with the post. This genre classification was guided by established music taxonomies commonly used in media studies, while also being adapted to reflect the diverse and global character of Instagram content. The third category focused on the presence of lyrics, distinguishing between vocal music, which includes lyrics, and instrumental music, which does not.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the coding process, two coders were trained and engaged in a preliminary pilot coding phase. Both coders independently analyzed an initial set of 100 posts to test the clarity and applicability of the coding categories. Intercoder reliability was assessed by comparing their coding results; discrepancies were discussed in detail, and necessary refinements were made to the coding guidelines to improve consistency. To assess inter-coder reliability, Krippendorff's alpha coefficient was calculated, resulting in a value of $\alpha = 0.762$. Based on the thresholds proposed by Krippendorff (2004), this value demonstrates an acceptable level of agreement between coders.

Following this calibration phase, the coders proceeded to analyze the remaining 1,900 posts. They worked collaboratively, dividing the dataset equally and adhering to the finalized coding scheme. Regular check-ins were held to resolve any uncertainties and maintain consistency throughout the process.

2.1. Ethical Approval of the Study

In this study, all the rules specified within the scope of the "Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive" have been followed. None of the actions listed under the second section of the directive, titled "Violations of Scientific Research and Publication Ethics," have been committed.

3. FINDING

Table 1

Presence of Music in Content Numerical

	Music Present	Music Absent
#luxurybrand	486	514
#luxurybrands	398	602
Total	884	1116

As shown in Table 1, 884 posts (44.2%) of the total 2,000 analyzed posts contain music, while 1,116 posts (55.8%) do not. Specifically, within the #luxurybrand hashtag, 486 posts (48.6%) include music, and 514 posts (51.4%) do not. For the #luxurybrands hashtag, 398 posts (39.8%) feature music, while 602 posts (60.2%) are without music. These findings suggest that music is present in a lower proportion of posts under the #luxurybrands hashtag compared to #luxurybrand, with a difference of 8.8%. Although the use of music in luxury brands has more impact than non-luxury brands (Min, 2018), as a result of the study, it is seen that there are more luxury brand-related posts on Instagram without music than posts with music. As mentioned in the literature, music is an important way to create associations (SoundOut, 2025) and define an identity (Abugnem, 2018). In order to create the identity of luxury and associate the brand with luxury, using music would be an important method. The content analysis indicates a diverse content strategy within posts using the hashtags #luxurybrand and #luxurybrands. While a substantial number of posts include music, a noteworthy proportion does not, suggesting varying approaches to brand communication. The frequent use of jazz highlights its association with sophistication and high culture (Seo & Buchanan-Oliver, 2015), whereas the preference for instrumental over vocal music reflects an intentional effort to evoke timelessness and exclusivity. This suggests that genre selection plays a more significant role in shaping brand perception than lyrical content. Moreover, such posts contribute to entertainment, customization, trend-setting, purchase intention, engagement, and word-of-mouth marketing on social media platforms (Fetais et al., 2023).

Table 2

Distribution by Music Genres

	#luxurybrand	#luxurybrands	Total
Jazz	183	145	328
Latin	56	36	92
Pop	146	140	286
Rock	26	30	56
Other	75	47	122
Total	486	398	884

Another aspect considered in content analysis is music genres. In the content analysis jazz, latin, pop, and rock music genres stand out. As shown in Table 2, the distribution of music genres across posts featuring music is as follows: a total of 328 posts contain jazz music, 92 posts feature Latin music, 286 posts include pop music, 56 posts represent rock music, and 122 posts are categorized under other music genres. When examining the distribution of music genres by hashtag, it is evident that the #luxurybrand hashtag contains 183 posts in the jazz genre (37.7% of the posts under #luxurybrand), 56 posts in the Latin genre (11.5%), 146 posts in pop (30.1%), 26 posts in rock (5.4%), and 75 posts in other genres (15.4%).For the #luxurybrands hashtag, 145 posts (36.4%) are in the jazz genre, 36 posts (9.0%) are in Latin, 140 posts (35.2%) are in pop, 30 posts (7.5%) are in rock, and 47 posts (11.8%) are categorized under other genres. As a result of the content analysis it is seen that jazz music and pop music is being favored by the luxury brand content. It is surprising, given the nature and definition of popular music and jazz music, that they are associated with luxury. According to Adorno, classical music is a part of the high culture. Although there are different musical genres, popular music is standardized, and popular music points to low culture. Low culture is produced by the culture industry and as being produced by the culture industry, popular music is commoditized (Adorno, 2003). Luxury addresses higher status and prestige. It is the symbol of a wealthy lifestyle (Page, 1992; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). Therefore when it comes to status and prestige, high culture indicates luxury. Jazz, in particular, has a complex history. While it originated as a form of popular music within African American communities, it has evolved over time and been embraced by certain segments of the elite. Its improvisational nature and association with sophistication have made it appealing to luxury brands seeking to project an image of exclusivity and refinement.

Table 3

Presence of Lyrics in Music

	Vocal	Instrumental
#luxurybrand	162	324
#luxurybrands	142	256
Total	304	580

As shown in Table 3, a total of 304 posts (34.4%) feature music with lyrics, while 580 posts (65.6%) contain music without lyrics. For the posts under the #luxurybrand hashtag, 162 posts (33.3%) contain lyrics, while 324 posts (66.7%) do not. In contrast, under the #luxurybrands hashtag, 142 posts (35.7%) include lyrics, and 256 posts (64.3%) do not. These findings suggest that the majority of posts under both hashtags do not feature lyrics, with slightly more posts with lyrics found under the #luxurybrands hashtag compared to #luxurybrand. According to the literature, singing along to a song and listening to a song have differences in information processing therefore, while singing along to a song, a person generates the lyrics from mind and memory; on the other hand, while a person is listening to an instrumental song, it is more a passive reception (Roehm, 2001). Within this framework, messages that are sung tend to be more effectively retained in memory compared to those that are merely heard. The common use of instrumental music in social media content could therefore reduce opportunities for deeper cognitive involvement, which music with lyrics or vocal elements might otherwise facilitate. Although instrumental tracks can successfully establish a particular atmosphere, they may fall short in fostering memorability and emotional depth when compared to music that invites active listener engagement.

4. CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Luxury consumption is a way that people present themselves according to their status or ideal self. By consuming luxury brands, the price tag and the logo become the tag of a person. People tend to consume luxury brands in a conspicuous way. Conspicuous consumption means that people consume luxury publicly in order to signal their status (Greenberg et al., 2019, p. 1). Each individual has an ideal self in their mind that they define for themselves, different from their real self. Consumption is a way to achieve that ideal self. In this context, if an individual wants an ideal self who has a luxurious lifestyle and wealth, he would like to consume luxury brands and show off this to others in order to be accepted in his ideal self and social status.

Music affects emotions and has an impact on consumer behavior (Andersson et al., 2012; Morris & Boone, 1998). Music creates auditory memory (Clow & Baack, 2003) and, contributes to brand association personification, enhances the key message (Hecker, 1984); as music is important for brand communication, it is also important for luxury brand communication. Min (2018) underlines the fact that music is more important for luxury brands than non-luxury brands. Luxury brands need a higher classification; therefore, music is used for creating luxurious, high-end identity and value (Long, 2023, p. 67). In this context, music is essential for influencing consumer behavior and emotions, and for luxury brands, it plays a key role in establishing a high-end, luxurious identity and enhancing brand value.

In this study it is aimed to understand the types of music associated with the hashtag #luxurybrand and #luxurybrands on social media. It examines the role of music—one of the key elements in shaping brand identity on social media—in the perception of luxury brands. The primary objective of this research is to identify the types of music preferred in social media posts that incorporate luxury brand hashtags. In this context, through a content analysis of posts using these popular hashtags, the study seeks to provide a framework for understanding the musical preferences in content perceived as representing luxury brands. This study employs a qualitative content analysis approach. The data source consists of posts shared under the hashtags #luxurybrand and #luxurybrands on Instagram. During the data collection process, the study examines the popular music genres used by luxury brands on the selected social media platforms. The coding process categorizes the following aspects: Presence of Music in Content, Music Genres, and Presence of Lyrics in Music. Answers to these research questions were searched:

The first research question of the study examines whether music is used in posts that include these hashtags. As a result of the conducted content analysis, it was seen that 884 posts out of 2000 contain music. 486 posts of #luxurybrand and 398 posts of #luxurybrands contain music. As a result of the study, it is seen that there are more luxury brand-related posts on Instagram without music than posts with music. As mentioned in the literature, music is an important way to create associations (SoundOut, 2025), define an identity (Abugnem, 2018), and has an impact on brand awareness and recall (Min, 2018). The content analysis reveals that while music is present in a significant number of posts related to luxury brands on Instagram, the majority of posts still do not incorporate music, highlighting a potential missed opportunity for enhancing brand identity and awareness through auditory associations.

The other research question of the study investigates whether the hashtags associated with luxury brand perception tend to favor specific music genres. The analysis aims to explore if certain genres of music are more commonly linked with luxury brand-related posts on Instagram, shedding light on how music genre choices align with brand identity and perception. As a result of content analysis, luxury brand perception tends to favor jazz music, which is followed by pop music. 328 posts have jazz music, and 286 posts have pop music. Both hashtags have the most posts in jazz music which is followed by pop music. In today's world jazz music is more related to luxury and high-end lifestyle, with higher educational and cultural background. On the other hand, in the past, jazz music was seen as the music of slaves, and in this context, it was defined as belonging to the subculture. From a historical perspective, high culture is associated with classical music. Adorno (2003) positions popular music, as opposed to classical music, as a commodified output of the culture industry, stripped of its autonomy and shaped by the logic of mass production and consumption. Yet, the findings of this study indicate a paradox: despite classical music's symbolic capital and association with cultural prestige, it is not commonly utilized in luxury brand communications.

The final research question of this study examines whether the hashtags associated with luxury brand perception tend to favor vocal or instrumental music. While 304 of the posts examined contained music with lyrics, 580 contained instrumental music. Both hashtags have the most posts in instrumental music. According to the content analysis carried out hashtags associated with luxury brand perception tend to

favor instrumental music. This result differs from the information in the literature. According to the literature singing along to the song is an active process as the individual recalls the words in her mind. On the other hand, listening to instrumental music is a passive perception process (Roehm, 2001). The use of music with or without lyrics is important in the context of the image and identity desired to be created. High-end luxury brands tend to create timelessness and exclusivity (Keh et al., 2021). The study reveals that hashtags related to luxury brand perception favor instrumental music over vocal music, aligning with luxury brands' aim to evoke timelessness and exclusivity. Therefore, it is suggested that the genre of music plays a more significant role than whether the music is vocal or instrument.

This study is limited to Instagram posts under the hashtags #luxurybrand and #luxurybrands, which may not fully represent luxury brand perceptions on other platforms. The sample size of 2,000 posts may not capture the entirety of related content, and the categorization of music genres could be influenced by subjective interpretations despite efforts to ensure reliability. Additionally, the study does not consider the emotional responses of consumers to different types of music, which could provide deeper insights into brand perception. Building on these limitations, future research could further explore the influence of specific music genres and types on consumer perception and purchasing behavior in the context of luxury brands through a quantitative approach. Also for further research, it would be beneficial to explore the influence of specific music genres and types (vocal vs. instrumental) on consumer perception and purchasing behavior in the context of luxury brands through a quantitative approach. A larger sample size and statistical analysis could provide more reliable insights into how music impacts consumer decision-making and brand engagement. Future studies could investigate the relationship between music preferences and brand loyalty, consumer engagement, and emotional connection with luxury brands on social media. Additionally, examining cultural differences in music preferences related to luxury brands could offer valuable insights, as well as studying how music interacts with other sensory elements (such as visuals) to shape the overall luxury brand experience. It is recommended that future studies explore consumer perceptions in greater depth to better clarify the role of music in luxury brand communication. The use of quantitative methods, such as surveys or experiments, would help quantify these effects and allow for more generalizable conclusions.

Ethical approval

This study does not require ethics committee approval as it does not involve human, animal or sensitive data.

Author contribution

Study conception and design: AS, EG, ES; data collection: AS, EG; analysis and interpretation of results: AS, ES; draft manuscript preparation: AS, EG, ES. All authors reviewed the results and approved the final version of the article.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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Çalışmanın tasarımı ve konsepti: AS, EG, ES; verilerin planması: AS, EG; sonuçların analizi ve yorumlanması: AS, ES; çalışmanın yazımı: AS, EG, ES. Tüm yazarlar sonuçları gözden geçirmiş ve makalenin son halini onaylamıştır.

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