THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN SHAPING MASSTIGE MARKETING STRATEGIES

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Abstract:

The paper focuses on the role of masstige marketing on the internet, with a particular emphasis on social media as a key tool for attracting consumers. The introductory section explores the significance of luxury brands as a foundation for understanding masstige strategies. Masstige marketing, which combines the prestige of luxury products with broader reach and accessibility, leverages social media to create a unique market position. These platforms enable brands to utilise influencers, corporate advertising, and content marketing to enhance visibility and engage consumers. Influencer marketing plays a pivotal role, relying on authenticity and transparency to build trust and loyalty among consumers. Additionally, the Masstige Mean Index (MMI) is introduced as a tool for measuring perceptions of mass prestige, providing brands with insights into their marketing success. This paper analyses how masstige marketing, through digital platforms, can balance exclusivity and accessibility, adapting to the evolving needs and expectations of modern consumers.

Keywords:

masstige marketing, social media, influencer marketing, Masstige Mean Index, digital marketing.

1. INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly digital world, the intersection of luxury and mass market appeal, known as masstige marketing, has become a significant focus for brands aiming to balance exclusivity with accessibility. Masstige marketing blends the allure of luxury with broader market accessibility, creating products and experiences that are both prestigious and attainable (Kumar & Paul, 2018; Paul, 2018). As a result, masstige brands often occupy a unique market space that resonates with aspirational consumers who seek quality and status without the price tag of traditional luxury goods.

The emergence of social media has revolutionized the way brands communicate with consumers, making it a critical tool for masstige marketing strategies (Živković & Brdar, 2018). Social media platforms provide unprecedented opportunities for brands to connect with audiences, amplify their messages, and create a sense of community around their products. Through targeted content, influencer partnerships, and interactive campaigns, brands can cultivate a perception of prestige while remaining accessible to a wider audience (Živković et al., 2016; Živković et al., 2014).

Influencer marketing, a key component of social media strategy, has proven particularly effective for masstige brands. By collaborating with influencers who embody the desired brand values, companies can leverage authenticity and relatability to build trust and loyalty among consumers. This approach not only enhances brand visibility but also reinforces the perception of prestige in a way that feels genuine and engaging to the audience (Brdar, 2023b).

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This paper aims to explore the dynamic role of social media in shaping masstige marketing strategies, examining how digital platforms enable brands to balance the seemingly opposing forces of exclusivity and accessibility. By analysing key elements such as influencer marketing, content strategy, and the use of metrics like the MMI, this research provides a comprehensive overview of the evolving landscape of masstige marketing in the digital age.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. THE EVOLUTION OF THE LUXURY GOODS MARKET

Luxury brands attract consumers by emphasising high social status and the uniqueness of their products. According to Pathak et al. (2017), the appeal of luxury brands is based on the perception of rarity and exclusivity, which enhances their luxurious image. Wang et al. (2021) add that the perception of natural scarcity, created through marketing strategies, heightens the sense of luxury. Products such as luxury cars, watches, or handbags are often produced in limited editions, enhancing their sense of prestige.

Gupta (2023) emphasises that luxury brands provide a sense of belonging, superior quality, and exclusivity, making them symbols of success and sophistication. Today's consumers often aspire to imitate the lifestyle of higher social classes, drawn to luxury items that also satisfy hedonistic needs through self-reward. Traditionally, luxury products were regarded as symbols of prestige and elitism, with significant emotional value (Elena-Iulia, 2020). However, the concept of luxury has evolved to encompass diverse segments of clients with varied perceptions of luxury (Truong et al., 2009). The contemporary notion of luxury now includes personalisation, authenticity, and sustainability, adapting to the varied needs of consumers (Yeoman & McMahon-Beattie, 2011).

2.2. MASSTIGE MARKETING

Masstige marketing represents a sophisticated approach to branding, particularly for premium brands aiming for mass prestige (Kumar et al., 2020). This marketing strategy blends the prestige of luxury brands with the broad appeal of mass-market products, creating a unique positioning that resonates with a wide audience. By offering high-quality products and premium services at accessible price points, masstige brands deliver an unforgettable experience that allows consumers to enjoy a sense of luxury without the prohibitive costs traditionally associated with high-end goods. The success of masstige marketing lies in its deep understanding of the target audience and its ability to cater to their evolving needs and desires. This approach requires brands to carefully study consumer behaviour, preferences, and socio-economic conditions to tailor their offerings and communication strategies effectively. Brands must skilfully adapt their image and messaging to project luxury and exclusivity while remaining approachable and relatable to a broader demographic.

The implementation of masstige marketing involves strategic brand positioning as a symbol of luxury, quality, and superior service (Paul, 2018). This nuanced positioning builds strong emotional connections with consumers, fostering loyalty and repeat business. By creating a distinct identity that combines elements of both luxury and accessibility, masstige brands can stand out in the highly competitive marketplace, differentiating themselves from both traditional luxury brands and mass-market alternatives. This duality helps create long-term value by appealing to aspirational consumers who seek status and quality without compromising their financial comfort. The marketing mix (4Ps)—product, promotion, place, and price—plays a crucial role in masstige marketing. Special emphasis is placed on product innovation, compelling promotional strategies, and efficient distribution channels to reach a broad audience while maintaining a premium feel (Brdar, 2023a). Unlike traditional luxury marketing, which often employs high pricing to signal exclusivity, masstige marketing keeps prices stable yet competitive, ensuring that luxury remains within reach of middle-class consumers.

Positioning within masstige marketing revolves around the careful balance of high perceived prestige with accessible pricing. This strategy appeals particularly to middle-class consumers who aspire to experience luxury without a significant financial burden (Truong et al., 2009). Silverstein and Fiske (2003) underscore the significance of masstige marketing in bridging the gap between exclusivity and accessibility, drawing the middle class toward luxury goods by offering them at more attainable price points. The growing demand for masstige brands reflects the middle class's desire for luxury experiences that are not out of reach. Brands like Michael Kors, Coach, and Apple have successfully employed masstige strategies to create a perception of luxury that is both aspirational and accessible. The concept of "high quality, low price" is central to this approach, as it enhances price perception and boosts purchase intentions, especially among consumers who do not strictly associate high prices with superior quality (Shirai, 2015). This democratization of luxury aligns with broader societal shifts toward inclusivity and the desire for self-reward, making masstige marketing a powerful tool for modern brands.

2.3. MMI – MASSTIGE MEAN INDEX

Paul (2015) introduces the Masstige Mean Index (MMI), an innovative quantitative tool designed to measure a brand's mass prestige numerically, offering a comprehensive framework for brands to gain a deeper insight into their market presence and develop more targeted marketing strategies. The MMI serves as a diagnostic instrument that helps brands assess their positioning by quantifying consumer perceptions across multiple dimensions. By systematically evaluating a brand's standing in terms of luxury appeal, consumer awareness, and perceived quality, the MMI provides actionable data that can inform strategic decisions in brand management. The MMI is structured around a detailed questionnaire that captures three key factors critical to understanding a brand's mass prestige:

- Mass Prestige: This dimension evaluates how consumers perceive the brand in terms of luxury, exclusivity, and aspirational value, offering insights into how the brand is viewed in the marketplace. It measures the extent to which the brand has succeeded in balancing the allure of exclusivity with broad accessibility, a hallmark of successful masstige marketing. High scores in mass prestige indicate that the brand is perceived as desirable and prestigious by a wide audience, thereby reinforcing its competitive edge in appealing to aspirational consumers.

- Brand Knowledge: This factor assesses consumer familiarity with the brand, including their awareness of the brand's values, history, and product or service offerings. Brand knowledge reflects the depth of consumer engagement and the effectiveness of the brand's communication strategies. A well-informed consumer base is more likely to form a strong emotional connection with the brand, leading to increased brand loyalty and advocacy. By understanding the level of brand knowledge, companies can fine-tune their marketing efforts to enhance brand recall and strengthen consumer relationships.

- Perceived Quality: This aspect analyses consumer perceptions of the brand's product or service quality, focusing on attributes such as durability, performance, craftsmanship, and functionality. High perceived quality is crucial for sustaining a positive brand image, as it directly influences consumer satisfaction and repeat purchase behaviour. This factor also serves as an indicator of a brand's ability to meet or exceed consumer expectations, which is essential for maintaining a strong market position in the competitive landscape of masstige brands.

According to Paul (2019), findings from the MMI reveal that a higher Masstige Mean Index Value (MMIV) correlates with increased brand awareness, recognition, and a more favourable perception of quality among consumers. Brands with a high MMIV not only enjoy greater prestige but also benefit from a stronger emotional connection with their audience, which translates into higher consumer loyalty and market share. The MMI thus provides brands with critical insights into their strengths and areas for improvement, allowing them to refine their brand positioning and marketing strategies.

Moreover, the MMI's analytical approach helps brands identify specific consumer segments that perceive them as prestigious, guiding targeted marketing campaigns that resonate with these audiences. For instance, by pinpointing the exact factors that drive perceptions of prestige and quality, brands can optimise their product design, enhance their storytelling, and improve their customer service, thereby reinforcing their market position. In the broader context of masstige marketing, the MMI serves as a vital tool for navigating the challenges of balancing exclusivity with mass appeal. Brands can use the MMI to monitor changes in consumer perceptions over time, track the effectiveness of new marketing initiatives, and adjust their strategies to align more closely with evolving consumer expectations. Ultimately, the MMI empowers brands to make data-driven decisions that enhance their prestige and popularity, ensuring sustained success in a highly competitive market environment.

3. SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING IN THE CONTEXT OF SHAPING MASSTIGE MARKETING STRATEGIES

Dahlen et al. (2009) emphasise that brands with lower reputations are more effective in utilising non-traditional media to enhance visibility, whereas those with higher reputations must carefully align media usage with their image. Social media significantly impacts brand management, particularly in masstige marketing, where consumers actively shape brand narratives (Gensler et al., 2013). It is crucial for brands to carefully monitor and manage these narratives to build their image and achieve market success. Social media marketing enhances customer satisfaction, a sense of belonging, and perceived value, thereby encouraging purchases (Kim & Kim, 2022). This form of marketing plays a vital role in advertising, managing customer relationships, and strengthening the brand (Alalwan et al., 2017). Social media strategies enable efficient message delivery, targeting of specific groups, and campaign monitoring, while electronic word-of-mouth assists in gathering feedback. Fan (2023) identifies key social media strategies, including:

- Celebrity Endorsement: Engaging well-known public figures to increase brand visibility.
- Corporate Advertising: Direct advertising to enhance brand recognition and stimulate consumer spending.
- Content Marketing: Creating relevant content to engage users.

By combining these strategies, brands can effectively leverage social media to enhance their image and achieve marketing objectives.

3.1. STRATEGY I: CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT

Masstige marketing strikes a balance between luxury and accessibility, targeting middle-class consumers who aspire to sophistication but seek to avoid the high costs associated with luxury brands. These consumers value uniqueness and are influenced by interpersonal factors, motivating them to purchase masstige products. Their desire to stand out and follow social trends further fuels this inclination (Das et al., 2021). The purchasing decisions of these consumers are driven by their desire for distinctive and recognisable products. Social media influencers serve as a significant marketing tool, focusing on creating appealing content and transparent communication (Hudders et al., 2020). The effectiveness of influencer marketing depends on the influencer's originality, follower count, and sponsorships (Leung et al., 2022). However, overly direct advertising can provoke negative reactions. A strategic approach to influencer marketing involves selecting the right influencers, tailoring campaigns to brand objectives, and monitoring outcomes (Ye et al., 2021). The quality of content created by influencers, their credibility, and their relatability with followers strengthen consumer trust (Lou & Yuan, 2019). In masstige marketing, collaboration with influencers can enhance brand image, reduce advertising resistance, and increase consumer loyalty while maintaining the brand's exclusivity (Kim & Kim, 2022).

3.2. STRATEGY II: CORPORATE ADVERTISING

Corporate credibility plays an important role in shaping consumer responses to advertisements and brands. Sallam (2011) notes that corporate credibility, measured by honesty and expertise, significantly impacts consumer attitudes and purchase intentions, helping to create a positive brand image and enhance brand recognition and reputation. The credibility of endorsers can increase the effectiveness of advertising campaigns and influence attitudes towards advertisements (Lafferty & Goldsmith, 1999). Maintaining high corporate credibility is essential for building and sustaining a positive brand image,

allowing brands to effectively communicate their values and strategies to the target audience, thereby improving market position and consumer loyalty (Goldsmith et al., 2000). In masstige marketing, where brands balance prestige and accessibility, maintaining high corporate credibility is crucial for building positive perceptions and enhancing consumer trust (Weerasinghe, 2019). Effective management of this credibility allows brands to preserve their prestige while offering accessibility to a broader audience. The content created by influencers, including their reliability, attractiveness, and relatability with followers, significantly contributes to strengthening consumer trust, which is particularly important for masstige marketing (Lou & Yuan, 2019). This approach enhances advertising credibility and reduces resistance, enabling brands to reach target market segments more effectively.

3.3. STRATEGY III: CONTENT MARKETING

Digital content marketing is a crucial tool for brands in masstige marketing as it expands the target audience and strengthens relationships with consumers. Rowley (2008) highlights that a successful approach requires understanding the value consumers place on content and encouraging their active participation in content creation, which enhances loyalty and builds deeper connections between the brand and its customers. Hollebeek and Macky (2019) stress that relevant content on digital platforms builds trust and increases brand value, helping brands to stand out and connect with consumers in a way that contributes to long-term success. Plessis (2022) adds that further research is needed to better understand consumer behaviour online, which is essential for adapting strategies in the evolving digital environment. The HIT-ECM framework, as presented by Mansour and Barandas (2017), enables high-tech entrepreneurs to use content-based marketing to innovate business models through content customisation and strategic networking. Bondarenko & Yashchenko (2023) state that content marketing helps businesses strengthen loyalty and improve business processes using formats such as infographics, e-books, and videos. This approach allows brands in the masstige segment to combine accessibility and prestige, achieving success in maintaining exclusivity while connecting with a broader consumer base.

Social media plays a significant role in masstige marketing, which combines elements of mass and luxury marketing. This approach enables brands to promote effectively and engage consumers, providing a fast and interactive way of communication (Pricopoaia & Susanu, 2021). Brands use social media to build and enhance relationships with consumers, reduce promotion costs, and improve brand recognition, which is crucial for masstige marketing that combines luxury and accessibility

(Dwivedi et al., 2021). Through these platforms, brands can communicate with consumers in a way that supports brand sustainability, sharing information and gathering feedback for strategy development (Adwan & Altrjman, 2024). Social media marketing significantly impacts user intentions, with social identification and satisfaction playing an important role (Jamil et al., 2022). Brands create a sense of community and exclusivity typical of luxury brands while maintaining the accessibility of the masstige segment.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This paper has highlighted the importance of masstige marketing in the contemporary digital environment, emphasising the role of social media as a key tool for attracting consumers. Masstige marketing, which balances luxury and accessibility, leverages social media to enhance visibility and consumer engagement while relying on influencer marketing, corporate advertising, and content marketing to establish a unique market position. Future research should focus on gaining a detailed understanding of the impact of different social media platforms on masstige marketing, analysing the effectiveness of specific marketing strategies, and evaluating the long-term effects of masstige marketing on brand perception. Additionally, research could explore how masstige strategies adapt to new trends and technologies in digital marketing. Understanding these aspects can help brands optimise their marketing approaches and improve their market position, providing deeper insights into the dynamics of masstige marketing in the contemporary digital context.

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