

Unintended Brand Endorsers' Impact on Luxury Brand Image

Anita Radón

The Swedish School of Textiles, University of Borås

SE- 501 90, Borås, Sweden

E-mail: anita.radon@hb.se

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Abstract

This paper explores consumer perceptions toward luxury brand endorsers that are not explicitly paid by the company, and how their perceptions of these endorsers influence luxury brand image and purchase intentions. Drawing upon in-depth interviews with luxury consumers their perceptions of brand endorsement and luxury brand image is investigated. Two illustrations of 'unintended' endorsement are discussed. It is found that endorsers not explicitly paid by the company still have a strong bearing on consumer perceptions of brand image. The difficulty in excluding unwanted segments as well as endorsers is shown in this study and the implications of these findings for luxury brands are the reassurance of wanting to be seen in the right context and being restrictive in accommodating all desires of celebrities. The value of this paper lays in the combining of both online and in-depth interviews to reach a greater spread of consumer perceptions toward the phenomenon of 'unintended' endorsement.

Keywords: Luxury brands, Brand endorsement, Unintended/unwanted endorsers, Brand image

1. Introduction

Gardner and Levy (1955:35) in their classic article proposed that "a brand name is more than the label employed to differentiate among the manufactures of a product". They considered a brand name to be a complex symbol that represents a variety of ideas and attributes that tells consumers many things via the body of associations it has built up and acquired. Poesz (1989:461) held that there has been a "shift in attention away from the physical aspects and functional benefits of products to their symbolic associations". This shift in attention is arguably the fundamental principle of luxury branding today. For luxury brands symbolic associations and perception of exclusivity is crucial. Luxury brand image resides solely in the mind of the consumer and is subject to a wide variety of influences, for instance who else is wearing it and being seen with it. The signifying of union with those in the same class and at the same time the exclusion of all other groups has been examined by e.g. Simmel (1904) in his essay on fashion. This duality is one of the basic functions of a luxury brand today, it signals union to others in 'the same class' and consequently is supposed to excludes others, but with a higher accessibility of luxury brands today this class distinction is erased and brand image problems can arise when individuals seem to belong to a certain group but who in fact do not. The exclusion of groups is harder to accomplish and subsequently also harder to distinguish. Goffman (1951) pointed out that, symbols of class status have to be worn by the 'right' people otherwise the conspicuous consumption turns in to suspicious consumption, not indicating social status but mere wish of social status. Being a well known and also desired luxury brand is a sought after position, but this also means that you cannot always, if ever, choose who wears, but even more important is seen wearing, your brand. What happens when a luxury brand has little or even no control over endorsers and associations? Historically luxury goods have managed to 'keep people out' on the basis of barriers, in the form of selective or exclusive distribution, price and sometimes also taste (Kapferer, 1997). Today with increased sales of luxury goods, emerging Internet sales and an increasing affluent middle-class the barriers are hard to maintain, leading to on the one hand increased profits, but also new challenges in trying to assert control over the brand image.

2. Literature review

It has been pointed out that brand awareness with strong associations forms a specific brand image (see e.g. Keller, 1993) and brands strive to communicate awareness in order to get consumers to form strong favorable associations (see e.g. Aaker, 1991) toward the brand, and luxury brands are no exception. In a brand context the

communication between company and consumers can be examined in terms of brand identity and brand image (Nandan, 2005:265). Brand image has been defined in various ways by e.g. Aaker (1991:109) as “a set of associations, usually organized in some meaningful way”. Ditcher (1985) considered brand image as describing not individual traits of the product, but the total impression in the minds of the consumers. Keller (1993:3) defines brand image as “perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory”. These associations are defined as “...other informational nodes linked to the brand node in memory and contain meaning of the brand for the consumers (1993:2)”. He also outlines three dimensions of brand associations: attributes, benefits and attitudes. Attributes are descriptive features that characterize a product or service and are distinguished according to how directly they relate to product or service performance. Product-related attributes are defined as the ingredients necessary for performing the product or service function sought by consumers. Non-product related attributes are defined as external aspects of the product or service that relate to its purchase or consumption and, four main types are identified (1) price information, (2) packaging or product appearance information, (3) user imagery (i.e. what type of person uses the product or service), and (4) usage imagery (i.e., where and in what types of situations the product or service is used). While the first two types can be directly controlled by the brand, user and usage imagery attributes cannot. Keller (1993:4) argues that these can be formed directly from a consumer’s own experiences and contact with brand users or indirectly through the depiction of the target market as communicated in brand advertising or by some other source of information (e.g. word of mouth). Luxury brands can communicate a preferred user imagery by using brand endorsers and also a preferred usage imagery by for example sending products to celebrities and hoping that they will use them in a preferred setting. This was done by for example French luxury fashion brand Celine who sent a handbag to singer Jessica Simpson, something that was filmed for her reality-show ‘Newlyweds’ and then shown on TV, giving the brand the exposure they sought after with both the intended person and situation (user and usage imagery). The second category of brand associations is benefits, which are the personal value consumers attach to the product or service attributes, i.e. what consumers think the product or service can do for them (Keller, 1993:4). Keller further distinguishes benefits into three categories (based on Park, Jaworski and MacInnis, 1986:136) according to the underlying motivations to which they relate: (1) functional benefits, which are the more intrinsic advantages of product or service consumption and that usually correspond to the product-related attributes, (2) experiential benefits relate to what it feels like to use the product or service and also usually correspond to the product-related attributes, and (3) symbolic benefits which are the more extrinsic advantages of product or service consumption. Usually corresponding to non-product-related attributes and relate to underlying needs for e.g. social approval. This is consistent with for instance Meenaghan’s (1995) examination of the role which advertising plays in developing brand image where he suggested a variety of reasons for the increased emphasis on image in marketing. Among these was the “affluent society’s predilection with symbolic rather than purely functional aspects of products” (1995:23). Early and very influential work on symbolic consumption has been done by for instance Levy (1959:118) who held that “people buy things not only for what they can do, but also for what they mean”. The third category of brand associations is brand attitudes, which are defined as “consumers overall evaluations of a brand” and deemed important because they often form the basis for consumer behavior in the form of e.g. brand choice (Keller, 1993:4).

2.1 Celebrity endorsers

Through branding strategies and advertising messages an organization seeks to convey a certain image for the brand, consumers however may evaluate the company’s message through the prism of their own subjectivity (Nandan, 2005:265). Luxury brands can as a part of their market communication use for example brand endorsement, which could suit luxury brands very well since they are restricted in ‘traditional’ mass advertising and find themselves having to find new ways of reaching consumers. Brand endorsement is considered a part of the marketing mix and form of advertising a firm can employ to externalize their brand identity in order to form a favorable brand image. Marketers can invoke a variety of tools to develop and maintain appropriate associations and celebrity endorsers represent one way in which meanings can be transferred to brands (McCracken, 1989). But brand endorsement can appear in different forms not always instigated by the company. Implicit in the concept of brand endorsement is that it is instigated by the brand and would result in a positive brand image. However, not all brand endorsement is wanted or sought after. Endorsement where the endorser can be directly harmful for the company or brand image can occur, as with the case of O.J. Simpson’s arraignment on murder charges, Mike Tyson’s rape conviction or Michael Jordan’s gambling debt (Till and Busler, 1998). Despite these well-publicized problems with celebrity endorsers Till and Busler (1998) argue that the use of celebrity endorsement continues unabated. Recently we have noticed a slight change in attitude when model Kate Moss was dropped and the campaign for H&M featuring her was never released after a cocaine scandal that hit the newspapers worldwide, Brands like Chanel, and Rimmel among many others followed suite

and also cancelled their contracts with the model. Here it is clear that not all publicity is good publicity and for luxury brands the need to be associated with the 'right' things and be seen in the right context is even more pressing. Brand endorsement usually means that the endorsement is wanted and positive but endorsement could also be 'unintended' and 'unwanted'. One example where a brand has been endorsed 'unintendedly' by an unwanted group is Burberry's baseball caps that were frequently worn by football-hooligans in England, leading to Burberry taking the baseball caps out of production. Also during a period some pubs and restaurants in London would deny entrance to persons wearing Burberry caps as well as shirts. Another brand that had problems with unwanted brand endorsement is Fred Perry, a clothes company with high-quality sportswear with a target group of sporty individuals from the upper-middle class. With the logotype clearly embroidered on the front of the shirts Fred Perry experienced this problem when their polo shirts were being worn, not only by their target group, but also by skinheads (Salzer-Mörling and Strannegård, 2004). Incidents of unintended and even unwanted endorsement are far from scarce and Burberry had more problems with unwanted endorsement and are said to have paid an undisclosed amount of money to a public figure to stop wearing their merchandise.

Today brands are being endorsed "unwantedly" by both celebrities and non-celebrities. A number of studies have examined celebrity endorsement (see e.g. Agrawal and Kamakura, 1995; Kamins, 1989; Kamins et al., 1989; Ohanian, 1991) also the effects of multiple product endorsements has been addressed (Tripp, Jensen and Carlson, 1994) but little attention has been aimed at when a brand is 'unintendedly' endorsed. Being 'unintendedly' endorsed is a situation almost exclusively arising when it comes to fashion and luxury brands. Brand endorsement is usually a result of careful planning and effort from the company, to match the right endorser with the right product (see for instance McCracken, 1989). This paper addresses brand endorsement from an 'unintended' perspective, where the conspicuous endorsement from both a celebrity and non-celebrity affects luxury brand image. Brand endorsement in this paper refers to any person visibly using a brand and focuses on endorsers who are not explicitly paid by the company, by e.g. campaigns and such and investigates consumer perceptions toward unintended and unwanted brand endorsement as a non-product-related attribute or symbolic benefit (Keller, 1993).

2.2 The inherent connotation of exclusivity in luxury brand image

"Brands are complex entities that are conceived in planning documents, but ultimately they reside in consumers' minds" (de Chernatony, 1993:174). de Chernatony's definition pinpoints the difficulty for luxury brands; how do you occupy the 'luxury position' in a consumers' mind? Luxury brands build on perception and image and this image is created by associating the brand with favorable and desired values and images. The term luxury rests upon or exploits certain assumed connotations. Nueno and Quelch (1998) defined luxury brands as: "...those whose ration of functional utility to price is low while the ratio of intangible and situational utility to price is high" while Phau and Prendergast (2000) pointed out that while 'luxury' is a subjective concept "... luxury brands compete on the ability to evoke exclusivity, a well-known brand identity, [...] brand awareness and perceived quality". Perceived quality has been defined as "customers' perception of the overall quality or superiority of a product or service related to relevant alternatives and with respect to its intended purpose" (Keller, 1998:176).

To label an item a 'luxury' good is in itself a paradox. One the one hand retailers want to sell as many of their products as they can while, on the other hand, their very object in proclaiming their product a 'luxury' might seem to imply exclusiveness. It is in line with this exclusivity that luxury goods are seemingly, to be associated with expensiveness and rarity. Berry (1994) argues that the image of the 'exclusive' luxury good is a gambit to increase consumption and, secondly and perhaps less obviously, that neither expensiveness nor rarity are themselves sufficient conditions for a good to be accounted as a 'luxury'. A concept related to luxury brands is the 'rarity principle', meaning that the prestige of the brand gets eroded, if too many people own it (Dubois and Paternault, 1995). This creates the paradox that the company needs to maximize its profits but can never sell too much. Luxury brands have to maintain a fragile equilibrium between high exposure and awareness but a controlled level of sales (Roux and Floch, 1996 in Dall'Olmo Riley and Lacroix, 2003). Companies today have to tackle the problem of being out of reach for mass consumption and at the same time increasing profits. Due to the first entrance barrier in the form of high prices these goods will always be out of reach for mass consumption, but to keep their status as luxury brands they also have to be widely desired. Catry (2003:11) posed the question whether the notion of widely sold luxury goods is an oxymoron and claimed that: "Like magicians, the luxury incumbents seek to perform an illusion where actual scarcity is replaced by a perceived rarity". Alleres (1990 in Vickers and Renand, 2003) builds on the dimensions of socio-economic class in the context of luxury goods and sees it as a hierarchy consisting of three levels based on the degree of accessibility. When consumers see that people who they would not like to connect with the brand have the inaccessible luxury this affects their

perception of the luxury brands' image. The wrong brand endorser could be more harmful to a luxury brands' image than losing the perception of exclusivity. The wrong endorser could lead to the loss of perception of exclusivity. Kapferer (1997) points out that luxury glitters and the fact that luxury is visible is essential: luxury must be seen, by the consumer and by others. That is why luxury brands externalize all of their signs: the brand signature must be seen and recognized on the person wearing the brand, and it must be recognized worldwide. Made to perfection, luxury items stand out and embody certain ideals. Since luxury brands do in fact externalize their signs, in the form of e.g. visible logos and such, it is easier to see who is sporting what brand and of this person is an 'unwanted' endorser the externalized signs of recognition are a liability. According to Kapferer (1997:92) the deepest values of a brand must be reflected in the external signs of recognition, and these need to be apparent at first glance.

2.3 Endorsement as an extraneous factor in the brand identity – brand image construct

Park et al. (1986:135) considered brand image to be "not simply a perceptual phenomenon affected by the firm's communication activities alone. It is the understanding consumers derive from the total set of brand-related activities engaged in by the firm". Their definition of image however lies on the company side. Instead of brand identity, Park et al. (1986:136) talk about brand concept, which they describe as "a firm-selected brand meaning derived from basic consumer needs" and identify three types of consumer needs: functional, symbolic and experiential (also proposed by Keller [1993] as the brand association, benefits). A brand with a functional concept is defined as one designed to solve externally generated consumption needs. A brand with a symbolic concept is designed to associate the individual with a desired group, role or self-image and a brand with an experiential concept is designed to fulfill internally generated needs for stimulation and/or variety. Park et al. (1986) also propose that many brands offer a mixture of symbolic, functional, and experiential benefits and their use of the terms 'functional', 'symbolic' and 'experiential' refer to the image created in a brand, not a product class.

Brand identity refers to the sender's side and brand image is on the receiver's side. Image research focuses on the way in which certain groups perceive a product or brand and the image refers to the way in which these groups decode all of the signals emanating from the products, services and communication covered by the brand. An image results from decoding a message, extracting meaning and interpreting signs. These signs come from two possible sources: brand identity and extraneous factors (what Kapferer terms 'noise') which speak in the brand's name and thus produce meaning, however disconnected they may actually be from it. The extraneous factors could be; (1) companies which choose to mimic, who focus on competitors and imitate their marketing communication due to lack of a clear idea of what their own brand identity is; (2) companies that are obsessed with the need to build an image that will be favorably perceived by all; (3) is that of fantasized identity: the brand as one would ideally like to see it, but not as it actually is. Brand endorsement is seen as part of the brand identity while 'unintended' brand endorsement is seen as an extraneous factor.

2.4 Matching endorser with product or brand

Celebrity endorsers can transcend that of simply being an executional device which might be most appropriate in low involvement situations (Petty et al., 1983) and become a powerful mechanism for managing brand equity. It is the endorser as a 'powerful mechanism' that renders this type of communication very well suited for luxury brands.

McCracken (1989) addressed endorsement from a cultural perspective, arguing that the endorsement process depends upon the symbolic properties of the celebrity endorser. He proposes that using a 'meaning transfer' perspective, these properties are shown to reside in the celebrity and to move from celebrity to consumer good and from good to consumer (1989:310). McCracken (1989) believes that some celebrity/product endorsements work better than others due to an inherent match or congruency between the celebrity and the product. He cites examples where well-liked celebrities were mismatched with their endorsed product. The idea of endorser/product fit or congruence has been labeled the "match-up-hypothesis". This suggests (e.g. Kamins, 1990) that endorsers are more effective when there is a 'fit' between endorser and the endorsed product. A study by Walker et al. (1992) demonstrated that pairing products (in their study, VCR, bath towel, and jeans) with very different celebrities (Madonna or Christie Brinkley) affected subjects' images of those products consistent with the image of the celebrity with which that product has been paired. Celebrity endorsers should always be chosen carefully by the brand, in order to make sure that, the image of the celebrity corresponds with the image, as well as identity, of the brand.

Models on source credibility and source attractiveness, originally devised for the study on communications and latterly applied to the endorsement process, are designed to determine the conditions under which the message

sender or source is persuasive (McCracken, 1989:310). The source credibility model rests on research in social psychology (Hovland and Weiss, 1951-1952; Hovland et al.1953). The Hovland version of the model contends that a message depends for its effectiveness on the “expertness” and “trustworthiness” of the source (Hovland et al. 1953:20). Expertness is defined as the perceived ability of the source to make valid assertions. Trustworthiness is defined as the perceived willingness of the source to make valid assertions. The Hovland model holds that sources exhibiting expertness and trustworthiness are credible and, to this extent persuasive. Meyers-Levy (1989) suggests that brand name memorability might be enhanced when the name can be meaningfully related to many other concepts already stored in memory. He refers to such groups of concepts that are meaningfully related to a target word or brand name as association set.

3. Methodology and findings

To show how brand endorsement can be seen as an extraneous factor this paper illustrates two situations of ‘unintended’ brand endorsement: the hip hop community’s conspicuous use (as well as verbal use) of luxury brands and the ‘chav’ culture. Conspicuous wearing of luxury brands is not appreciated or strived after by everyone. Sometimes called the ‘bling-factor’; this type of endorsement can often increase sales, but can also become a liability for the luxury brand. The other type of ‘unintended’ endorsement is the phenomenon of ‘chav’ culture which has recently become more acknowledged and has now even entered British lexicons. The Oxford dictionary (online edition, 2005-03-16) describes a ‘chav’ as: “a young person, often without a high level of education, who follows a particular fashion”.

Interviews with consumers as well as potential consumers have been conducted online (via instant messaging) and also face-to-face. The online respondents have been identified through online communities discussing fashion, luxury and brands. The online respondents were believed to have greater knowledge about different types of brand endorsers given their active participation in these communities. The interviews show that there is not much difference in the impact on image and purchase based on if the endorser is a part of the company’s marketing strategy of as an extraneous factor, i.e. a brand endorser not employed or encouraged by the company.

The interview material is based into three categories: (1) consciousness, (2) celebrity, and (3) exclusivity. Category (1) shows that the consumers are very aware and this consciousness is equally strong between the two groups interviewed (i.e. online and face-to-face) the difference in consciousness instead lies in the age differences. Older respondents are more aware of brand endorsers in the form of peers, younger are more aware of endorsers, from e.g. the hip-hop culture. It is very different who they like and do not like as an endorser. Category (2) shows that celebrities are usually accepted as endorsers but to see people who are not celebrities, endorsing a brand is not popular. The thought of all publicity is good publicity is prevailing. Category (3) shows opinions on that some people can relate to luxury and some cannot, they can be cool or trendy but they can lack the history. Someone with history is usually a good endorser, like a Hollywood actor or actress.

The consumer interviews show that it is the matching (see e.g. Kamins, McCracken, 1989) of luxury consumer with brand endorser that is the most important connection. For instance the same celebrity was used by different consumers as an example for a celebrity they would not like to see endorse their brand, either officially or unofficially, and by others it was an example of a celebrity they would like to see wearing their brand. Expressing their views on luxury brand endorsement the interviewees clearly show that they are well aware of the fact that celebrities often are seen wearing a particular brand and that this in fact is a strong influence on consumer purchase decision. However, no matter how enlightened they tend to be on who is sporting what brand and that this will inevitably influence people, hardly anyone admits to being influenced by this themselves, it only influences others: “I think that celebrities strongly influence what a consumer purchases on a daily basis, from food to clothes to even automobiles. Unfortunately we live in a society that lets itself be influenced by what other people buy. Sometimes brands go up in price because a celebrity wore the item. It can get ridiculous.” (online interview, female respondent, 27 years old)

It is clearly stated that brand endorsement, no matter in what form, does affect but it is always someone else who is affected, younger people, older people, girls, woman, men: “I think that when people see a celebrity wearing a certain brand or item of clothing, or carrying a certain brand of purse etc. that it makes that item a ‘hot’ item to purchase. I also feel that the actor/singer etc. has to be in ‘good’ standing with the public to influence their decisions as well. If a celebrity is not as well liked as another, their ‘style’ will be less likely to be mimicked.” (face-to-face interview, female respondent, 32 years old)

Further asking on brand endorsement and if there in fact is anyone, particular person or type of person that the respondents would not like to see wearing the brand that they themselves favor the answers from the email interviews focus around that “everyone is free to purchase what they like”. The instant messaging and

face-to-face interviews show a tendency towards being more open on the issue of potentially wanting to exclude some people from carrying certain brands. In these interviews it is much more openly stated that there are in fact persons that they absolutely do not like to see wearing the same brand as they. Who these people are vary from person to person but generally it is someone who is believed to 'cheapen' the image of the brand or someone described as completely different in all aspects from the respondents themselves.

Some of the interviews show a slight hesitation in expressing who is a 'bad' endorser of a brand, celebrity or not, this is seen in the email interviews but not in the instant messaging interviews. In these interviews it is clearly stated that there are certain types of persons who they would absolutely not like to see wearing the same brand or good as themselves. The 'types of persons' that they would not like to see wearing the same brand are more than often described as people who cannot really afford the luxury brand in question. Those having counterfeit merchandise or those who are believed to be wearing a luxury brand are frowned upon. The conspicuous wearing of either counterfeit luxury or luxury that cannot really be afforded (more accurately, believed to be afforded) is seen as not only wrong but also ridiculous and appalling.

4. Discussion

Brand endorsement is not always instigated directly by the company and instead comes in different forms and a proposed classification of endorsers is: (1) Agents: endorsers explicitly employed by the company (i.e. a celebrity in an advertisement for the brand); (2) Semi-agents: endorsers in the form of celebrities that are 'sponsored' by the brand (i.e. products are sent out to celebrities who are deemed appropriate, hoping that they will be seen using them); (3) Amazons: endorsers in the form of celebrities who are not sponsored (i.e. a celebrity is wearing a brand but has not gotten the merchandise as part of a promotion strategy), this form of endorsement can be both beneficial and a liability, depending on if the celebrity has an image that is favorable for the brand, it is also from a consumer view difficult to distinguish between this type of endorser and type 2 the semi-agents; (4) Free movers: these are endorsers in the form of peers (e.g. someone at the work place, at a restaurant, in the street and so on) this type of endorser can be basically anyone, but this type has a greater impact when seen in certain contexts. This endorser can be beneficial or a liability for the luxury brand. If this person has an unfavorable image (e.g. a homeless person wearing an Armani suit) this collides with the consumers' image of the brand and can thus discourage the person from purchase; (5) Hi-jackers: these are the trouble makers, they can be in the form of both celebrities and non-celebrities. Characteristic for this type of endorser is that he or she has an image that is a total opposite of both the luxury brand identity and desired image, but also the image consumers have of the brand. The luxury brand can control these endorsers only by using the classical luxury brand barriers in the form of for instance selective distribution or high price. If a luxury good is being endorsed by a person with an image that is 'wrong' and/or 'inconsistent' with the image the consumer has of the good and the brand this could affect the brand by consumers choosing not to purchase it. If the 'exclusive' segment is suddenly represented by a person who is considered not to belong, who isn't 'one of the boys', this could greatly affect brand image. The wearing of a certain luxury brand in this case no longer excludes groups (see Simmel, 1904) but includes. It is important to make a distinction between 'unintended' and 'unwanted' luxury brand endorsement.

Is there really anything the company can do to ensure that 'bad endorsement' will not occur? While brand personality is controlled by the company, brand image is not and today the 'noise' (see Kapferer, 1997) that can interfere with what is communicated by the company is traveling faster. Reputations start and get around with the use of the Internet, affecting both brand image and sales for luxury brands. On the other hand word-of-mouth also travels faster with the use of the Internet and trends start and can give companies a 'boost'. The potential risks of endorsement from an 'unintended' endorser is much greater today with the entrance of the Internet. The empirical evidence gathered through online communities and CMC based data sources shows that the information sharing on first and foremost celebrity endorsers is great. Pictures of celebrities wearing a particular brand are found on numerous sites being both a possibility as well as a liability for the brand.

"There are some items that are custom made, but not all items. There was a rap artist that wore a [insert brand name] suit to a televised event. The suit was actually counterfeit! ...Yes, you'd be amazed. But [insert brand name] will not always make everything that everyone wants. They are selective in deciding what they will put their logo on" (Amy, sales representative at a major luxury brand retailer, online interview 2004-11-24).

5. Conclusions and implications

To be endorsed 'unwillingly' is something that is out of the hands of the luxury brand and luxury fashion brands must thus be very careful in controlling their own marketing communication when endorsers are involved, i.e. who they choose as a spokesperson but also very important who they choose to send merchandise to hoping that

they will use it, or who they custom make goods for. Since this is the only part the luxury brand can fully control in form of what they send out this must be in line with the luxury brand identity. Kapferer (1997) states that historians and sociologists have pointed out some of the basic principles of luxury brand management, these are for instance: the necessity of protecting clients from non-clients, by creating a distance, a no-mix area, and entrance barriers for those who are not invited. This 'no-mix area' is today even more important but harder to maintain and the major implication for luxury brands is to be restrictive when it is possible to be in order to make sure that the associations that the luxury brand is sending out are congruent with the brand identity.

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