

**Are Luxury Fashion Brands Successfully
Incorporating Social Media Influencers On
Instagram To Create A Positive Influence On
Millennials' Purchasing Patterns? An Irish
Consumer Study**

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Abstract

Although millennials are the largest spending population of luxury fashion brands, so far, only a limited amount of studies have explored the interrelation between luxury fashion brands incorporating social media influencers on Instagram and their effects on the luxury purchasing patterns of millennials. Therefore, the main goal of this study is threefold: first, to discuss and explore the evolution of luxury between the 16th and 21st century; second, to examine the role of Instagram influencers and their use by luxury fashion brands; and third, to understand if influencer marketing is creating a positive influence on the purchasing patterns of millennials in Ireland. A convenience random sampling survey method was employed to collect firsthand data from Irish millennials on the research topic. The findings show that a very high percentage of millennials in Ireland do take into consideration what luxury fashion influencers are wearing and promoting in their Instagram pictures and stories. This is one of the very few studies that focuses on millennial luxury purchasing patterns and how luxury fashion brands are able to attract millennials online while maintaining their own unique identity.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	3
Abstract	4
Chapter I: Introduction	10
1.1 Background	10
1.2 Research Aims	13
1.3 Research Question.....	14
1.4 Research Hypothesis.....	14
Chapter II: Literature Review	16
2.1 Introduction	16
Part I	16
2.2 History of Luxury Fashion Brands.....	16
Part II.....	18
2.3 Luxury Fashion Brands and Social Media	18
2.4 Millennials' Purchase Patterns and The Marketing of Luxury Brands.....	19
2.5 Millennials and Instagram.....	21
2.6 Importance of Instagram for Luxury Fashion Brands.....	22
2.7 Creation of Luxury Brand Awareness Amongst Millennials	24
2.8 Instagram Influencers.....	26
2.9 Instagram Influencers and Millennials	27
2.10 Luxury Fashion Brands, Instagram Influencers and Millennials.....	28
2.11 Influencer Marketing Challenges and Conclusion	34
Chapter III: Methodology	35
3.1 Introduction	35
3.2 Research Question.....	35
3.3 Philosophical Assumptions	36
3.4 Data Collection	37
3.5 Interpretive Data Analysis.....	39
3.6 Limitations.....	40
3.7 Ethical Considerations	40
Chapter IV: Analysis and Findings	41
4.1 Introduction	41
4.2 Survey Findings and Analysis	41
4.3 Discussion	51
Chapter V: Research Limitations and Recommendations	54

5.1 Limitations and Future Research Scope.....	54
Chapter VI: Conclusion	55
6.1 Final Conclusion	55
Bibliography.....	56
Appendices.....	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
Appendix 1: Survey Request Email	65
Appendix 2: Survey Consent and Information Form	66
Appendix 3: Survey Questions.....	67

List of Images

<i>Image 1</i>	25
<i>Image 2</i>	26
<i>Image 3</i>	30
<i>Image 4</i>	32
<i>Image 5</i>	33

List of Figures

<i>Graphical Representation of Survey Question 1.....</i>	<i>41</i>
<i>Graphical Representation of Survey Question 2.....</i>	<i>42</i>
<i>Graphical Representation of Survey Question 3.....</i>	<i>43</i>
<i>Graphical Representation of Survey Question 4.....</i>	<i>44</i>
<i>Graphical Representation of Survey Question 5.....</i>	<i>45</i>
<i>Graphical Representation of Survey Question 6.....</i>	<i>46</i>
<i>Graphical Representation of Survey Question 7.....</i>	<i>47</i>
<i>Graphical Representation of Survey Question 8.....</i>	<i>48</i>
<i>Graphical Representation of Survey Question 9.....</i>	<i>49</i>
<i>Graphical Representation of Survey Question 10.....</i>	<i>50</i>

List of Tables

<i>Tabular Representation of Survey Question 1.....</i>	<i>42</i>
<i>Tabular Representation of Survey Question 2.....</i>	<i>42</i>
<i>Tabular Representation of Survey Question 3.....</i>	<i>43</i>
<i>Tabular Representation of Survey Question 4.....</i>	<i>44</i>
<i>Tabular Representation of Survey Question 5.....</i>	<i>45</i>
<i>Tabular Representation of Survey Question 6.....</i>	<i>46</i>
<i>Tabular Representation of Survey Question 7.....</i>	<i>47</i>
<i>Tabular Representation of Survey Question 8.....</i>	<i>48</i>
<i>Tabular Representation of Survey Question 9.....</i>	<i>49</i>
<i>Tabular Representation of Survey Question 10.....</i>	<i>50</i>

Chapter I: Introduction

1.1 Background

We live in an era where more than 90% of millennials actively use social media and on average spend at least 3 hours daily using these platforms (Mohsin, 2020). Millennials also are known to be the largest spenders on luxury brands and chauffeured almost 90% of the luxury fashion sector's growth in 2017 alone (van Elven, 2018). Consequently, many corporations including luxury fashion brands have found social media as their new way of reaching their potential millennial customers, boosting their image and bolstering their relevance. Social media has become a prime element in today's marketing mix (Arnold, 2017). Instagram, Facebook and Snapchat are examples of social media domains that have billions of daily active users. Social tendencies and advances in technology have preceded the inescapable use of social media and further growth is anticipated. In terms of the number of users and the overall time spent on social media, the usage rate has undeviatingly increased in the last decade. Approximately, 3.79 billion people worldwide now use social media each month and around 95% of them access their preferred platform on mobile devices (Breves *et al.*, 2019). As of 2020, the most heavily used social media platform amongst millennials is Instagram (Chen, 2020).

In observing these tendencies, the majority of the luxury fashion brand marketers have now started turning their backs on traditional media marketing and are spending significantly less on print and magazine advertisements (White and Denis, 2019). They have fully embraced social media marketing and brand publishing on social media websites, largely Instagram, as their key strategy to increase consumer engagement and pander to millennial customers (Krepapa, Regkourou and Beratis, 2016). In the past, luxury fashion brands such as Gucci, Fendi and many more, have held their longevity and extravagant status using various marketing strategies to appeal to their potential customers in the ever-changing fashion environment. Starting from the late 19th century, luxury brands used intricate designs and sophisticated craftsmanship to attract and cater to their opulent clientele. Halfway

through the 20th century, these brands opened stores all around the world, in the most 'influential' areas in order to associate themselves with royalties, aristocrats and celebrities. This led to a surge in the prestige and clientele of these luxury brands in the 1960's and they became international emblems of luxury. This sensation was called the jet-setters era and brands such as Gucci and Prada became synonyms for it (Davis, 2020).

At the turn of the 20th century, due to the technological advancements, fashion trends transformed into photographs and a push in the social classes provided luxury fashion brands with more of a view and platform, in print and in lifestyle (Sarkar, 2018). The 1970's saw a rise in the popularity of fashion photography and the 1980's were defined as the era of the high-end fashion magazines (Davis, 2020). The fashion vogue, reports and shout-outs from writers and fashion editors influenced and directed the purchasing patterns of the luxury consumers. This further led the luxury fashion brands to incorporate magazine advertisements into their marketing mix and spend millions to buy advert spaces in these high-end fashion magazines to continue to connect with their potential customers (Sarkar, 2018). This also suggests that luxury fashion brands could be considered pioneers of marketing their goods, not only do they lead the way in fashion, but they also look to modern techniques in marketing.

Today, Instagram, a photo and video sharing application, has replaced high-end magazines as the prime way people discover luxury fashion. Instagram is rapidly becoming the substructure on which the luxury industry is building everything, from new fashion lines to a multi-billion-euro influencer economy (Sherman, 2018b). Today's millennial luxury consumers are excessively influenced by the choices of their peers, social media influencers and celebrities (Arnold, 2017). Thus, in recent years, a newfangled way of social media marketing has gained towering popularity. The use of social media influencers has clinched traction and the opportunities to incorporate brands and their products and services through social media channels appear immense. A survey conducted in 2017, showed that almost 90% of the luxury brand marketers prefer using social media influencer endorsements to advertise their brand and brand products, particularly on Instagram (Breves *et al.*, 2019). This is due to the

fact that influencers are stipulated as 'opinion leaders' by millennials in the social media world. They can connect with an unknown size of audience online and are considered as 'trusted trendsetters' in one or a handful of niches. Furthermore, since 2016, Instagram has also been seen as the most paramount social media platform for influencer marketing (ibid).

So, why are a majority of the luxury fashion brands desperately trying to connect with millennials? Studies suggest that by the year 2035, millennials will become the largest spending generation in history (Perino by Woolyarns, 2018). In 2018, The Pearl Source undertook a survey to understand the luxury spending tendencies of millennials in the United States. It revealed that more than 50% of American millennials prefer spending their disposable income on high-end products, especially on luxury clothing, sneakers and accessories, as well as on high-end experiences. The results also showed that 49.9% of millennials on average spend €450 every month on luxury fashion goods and a little more than 50% confessed to purchasing them on credit, knowing that they weren't able to afford them readily (Taylor, 2018). Millennials are also rapidly overtaking every other generation in spending power on luxury fashion retailers. T-shirts, hoodies and sneakers are amongst the distinctive categories for the luxury fashion brands that millennials are inclined to purchase and are growing by approximately 25%, 15% and 10% respectively every year since 2018. Therefore, this makes millennials strikingly alluring to any luxury fashion brand marketing a product (ibid).

According to reports, in 2018, Gucci, spent almost 50% of its annual online marketing budget on influencer endorsements on Instagram to attract millennials. To top it, Louis Vuitton, direct competitor of Gucci, spent almost €800 million, predominantly on Instagram in influencers' posts and promotions to connect with their millennial consumers (White and Denis, 2019). Reports by Reuters also suggest, trendsetter luxury fashion brand Chanel spent up to a billion euros chiefly on influencer posts for their brand on the Instagram platform in 2018 alone (TFL, 2018). Moreover, spending by the luxury fashion brands on magazine adverts has also taken a significant plunge in the past decade and is displaying no signs of rebounding in the near future.

As of 2019, Louis Vuitton's expenditure on magazine adverts is down to €196.8 million. While, Gucci has reduced its spending on print advertising down to €88.5 million and Chanel down to just €60 million. Brands such as Fendi and Prada have started to desert fashion magazines and Diane von Furstenberg didn't run any print ads last season (Williams, 2019a). According to Gallagher (2018), luxury fashion brands are likely to spend more than €5 billion on influencer promotions on Instagram by 2022 to pander millennials. Thus, this makes it critical to understand the level of para-social relationship between multi-billion-euro expenditure by luxury fashion brands on influencer posts on Instagram and the effectiveness of these types of promotions on their millennial followers.

1.2 Research Aims

This research paper aims to explore if luxury fashion brands are successfully incorporating social media influencers on Instagram to create a positive influence on millennials' luxury purchasing patterns in Ireland? Successfully incorporating influencers can drive considerable user engagement for luxury fashion brands. Brands that are investing in influencer marketing and are enthusiastically building relationships with influential content creators are already garnering substantial awareness and financial rewards (Masket, 2019). In addition to providing insights into the history and marketing of luxury fashion, the main purpose of this research is to focus on the incorporation of influencers on Instagram by luxury fashion brands and their effectiveness on millennials' purchasing patterns. Building on the research conducted by Vinerean and Opreana (2019), this study argues that social media influencers on Instagram do influence the luxury purchasing patterns of millennials.

This research is in the interpretative paradigm making it subjective in nature. Therefore, this study employs surveys as the dominant method of data collection. As the focus of this research is on millennials, only the answers received from millennials are analysed. The survey findings contribute towards a greater understanding of millennials' opinion on luxury fashion brands as well as on Instagram influencer marketing.

1.3 Research Question

The bedrock of this research is steered by the ambient question: 'Are luxury fashion brands successfully incorporating social media influencers on Instagram to create a positive influence on millennials' luxury purchasing patterns?' The question integrates comprehension of the terms 'luxury fashion brands' and 'Instagram influencer marketing'. Therefore, it is essential that the origin and evolution of these terms are explained before analyzing their effectiveness on millennials' purchasing patterns. Although luxury brands use several different types of marketing strategies to attract potential customers, the majority of the luxury fashion brands have understood the power of influencers and are now incorporating them into their online marketing strategies (Krepapa *et al.*, 2016). Moreover, there is a strong interrelation between influencers' marketing and millennials' purchase behaviour. Hence, it is important to identify if luxury fashion brands are successfully incorporating social media influencers on Instagram to attract millennials (Breves *et al.*, 2019).

1.4 Research Hypothesis

This study argues that incorporation of social media influencers on Instagram by luxury fashion brands positively influences millennials' luxury purchasing patterns. Influencers are generally the most successful content creators for luxury fashion brands and the verity that makes their content powerful is that it is to a great extent 'organic'. Fashion influencers routinely 'tag' their preferred fashion brands in their 'outfit of the day' (OOTD) posts on Instagram which illustrates genuine brand affinity that connects with their millennial followers (Masket, 2019). Moreover, while luxury fashion brands can yield advantage from such 'organic' posts, the brands that positively boost their relations with these influencers and enhance them with added opportunities for poignant and effective content creation are often the ones that reach the pinnacle (ibid). However, some luxury fashion brands such as Hermès believe otherwise. Bali Berret, artistic director at Hermès, said in an interview, "*You know, we don't do marketing. It's about emotions and sensitivity, but not being too serious.*"

The 'anti-marketing' approach of Hermès does tick many boxes of traditional marketing strategies but also makes it less clinical and exempt from the benefits of the online influencer strategies (Sherman, 2018a).

Chapter II: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part discusses the history and evolution of luxury and how the perception of luxury has changed between the 16th and 21st century. The second part discusses areas such as the role of social media influencers, their use by luxury fashion brands and the effectiveness of the use of social media influencers in terms of reaching millennials and influencing millennial purchase behaviour.

Part I

2.2 History of Luxury Fashion Brands

The word “luxury” stems from the Latin word “luxus”, whose etymology stands for aberration, difference or digression. When purchasing luxury goods, customers discern themselves from the general public through the emotional value of obtaining exclusive, exceptional and scant products. Although, different consumers perceive different products as luxury, it is difficult to agree on a single definition of luxury as such perceptions are highly subjective. For example, a standard product such as water, could be perceived as a luxury or necessity item by different people in different circumstances. Hence, it could be concluded that luxury brands aren’t intrinsically luxurious but are perceived as such by individuals and groups (Krepapa *et al.*, 2016).

This study centres on luxury fashion brands within the fashion industry such as Gucci, Fendi, Balenciaga and numerous others that have eclipsed product categorization. These brands now act as tokens that link consumers to a distinctive and exclusive high social class lifestyle. In addition to charging high prices for their exemplary quality goods and services, these brands also provide various psychological benefits to their customers (Krepapa *et al.*, 2016). Owning such luxury products make their consumers experience a sense of achievement, fulfilment and gratification. These

experiences could be traced back to the early 16th century, where the sumptuary laws set out what each bourgeoisie class was granted and prohibited to wear, together with the utmost price an apparel could cost. For example, grooms were not allowed to wear attire that was more than two shillings and knights could wear clothing up to six shillings but were prohibited from sporting jewellery (Han, Nunes and Drèze, 2010). The philosophy behind that was to lay aside particular materials, jewellery and accessories for certain social classes to tell them apart and uphold ordinance within the social hierarchy. A case in point would be Queen Elizabeth I's (1533–1603) exorbitant wardrobe which dispersed clear evidence of her sanctity and marked her special place in the society. Even though by the end of 18th century, the partitions between the social classes blurred which led to the demise of all sumptuary laws, the use of personal effects as markers of high status still persists in the 21st century (Han *et al.*, 2010).

Today, anyone from any social class can own a handbag, jewellery or a pair of sneakers, but particular brands of handbags, jewellery and sneakers are the demarcating attributes for certain social classes of consumers (Han *et al.*, 2010). For instance, a woman who is sporting a Louis Vuitton (LV) "Capucines BB" handbag (€23,900.00) (Louis Vuitton, 2020) demonstrates something more exclusive about her social standing than a woman carrying an Armani "Borgonuove" handbag (€2,350.00) (Armani, 2020). The brand, flaunted eminently on both the handbags, says it all. Armani, known for originating "semi-luxury" or "accessible luxury" to the public, does not match up in the majority of people's minds in both cost and status when compared with the French fashion house Louis Vuitton (Han *et al.*, 2010). Therefore, consumption of such high-end luxury brands allows their customers to satisfy their yearning for social recognition, status and furthermore their proclivity to acquire goods that are scant, one-off and exclusive (Krepapa *et al.*, 2016).

Part II

2.3 Luxury Fashion Brands and Social Media

A luxury fashion brand generally represents an exceptional quality, high-priced and inessential good that looks scant, distinctive, glamorous and exclusive. It is also something that offers a high level of mnemonic and emotive values. As luxury fashion brands are considered status symbols, their consumption holds deep-rooted emotional esteem, not just for buyers but also for onlookers. By wearing luxury fashion brands, consumers illustrate affluence as these brands elevate their social class by making reference to that of their aspirational groups. Therefore, even though the luxury fashion items are sumptuous, their excellent product quality still cannot justify the exorbitant prices (Kusumasondjaja, 2019).

In the fashion business, a number of specialists and researchers demarcate luxury from fashion. This is due to the fact that fashion sells seasonal items which change routinely and rigorously depending on the contemporary popular trends, and that the masses are actively motivated to buy before the end of the season. While, luxury is something that is analogous with long lasting items which tend to be immortal in design and aren't sold extensively to the general masses (Kusumasondjaja, 2019). Based on this viewpoint, for years, luxury fashion corporations have been cynical about social media marketing. It is important for luxury brands to carry their key hallmarks – uniqueness and exclusivity through exceptional quality, a hefty price tag, limited supply and highly administered marketing. Constrained advert composition, congested pages and low-quality content on social media platforms prevented these brands from employing them as a means to connect with potential customers (ibid). Furthermore, the luxury fashion marketers once regarded social media platforms as a risk to their brand image, as social media insinuate mass appeal and mass access to information which isn't suited with the values of the luxury brands. It was believed that social media's benefaction of boundless interrelations between consumers and brands may pose a risk to the exclusive status of these brands due to brand over popularization. Thus, luxury brands associated social media platforms with a threat of losing control over their brand's image, ethics and morals (Kusumasondjaja, 2019).

However, this has changed in the last couple of years. At present, Instagram, a social media platform, has become the new 'face' of promoting luxury fashion (Instagram Business, 2017). According to Moatti and Abecassis-Moedas (2018), unlike previous generations, today's millennial luxury consumers have a very unique relationship with brands. When purchasing luxury fashion products, they place more significance on possession, exclusivity and the popularity of the brand's image than on actual use. Research conducted by Direct Line suggests that nowadays, millions of millennials buy luxury fashion brands to 'show-off' in front of their family, friends and online. Thus, Instagram's clear focus on high quality imagery and storytelling has made it the perfect platform for millennials to share their distinctive, exclusive and luxurious lifestyles online with their peers and for marketers to promote their luxury brands and brand products (Hannah, 2017).

2.4 Millennials' Purchase Patterns and The Marketing of Luxury Brands

According to Goldman Sachs, millennials are all the individuals born between the years 1980 to 2000. In the United States alone, millennials account for almost 25% of the population and spend more than €150 billion each year, creating a stream of marketing campaigns to attract them. Not only do millennials have enormous purchasing power (Perino by Woolyarns, 2018) but according to Krepapa *et al.* (2016) they also seek experiences, online as well as offline, that confront and succour them to elucidate who they are in their own eyes and those of others. This means many millennials buy luxury brands to exclude themselves from the general masses and signal high social standing not just in person to peers but also on social media domains to an unknown pool of audience to satisfy their longing for social recognition. A study conducted by Luxe Digital suggests that millennials have become the largest and flourishing segment of the luxury fashion customer base. Millennials make up for more than 40% of all the luxury expenditure and generated 100% of the global luxury sector growth in 2019 (Beauloye, 2020). Bain & Company has estimated that millennials will account for at least half of total luxury sales by 2025, bringing the global luxury sector valuation up to almost €300 billion (D'Arpizio *et al.*, 2017).

Sinha, Ahuja and Medury (2011) instituted that when a millennial's awareness about a brand proliferates through a social media platform, so does the emotional affection towards the brand. Based on their research, Schade *et al.* (2016) further investigated the impact of attitude functional marketing on luxury brand expenditure of millennials. Their study principally involved two attitude functions, social-adjustive and value-expressive. "*Social-adjustive function of an attitude is the role an attitude can play in facilitating social interaction and enhancing cohesion among members of a social group*" (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2020a). This means luxury fashion brands use marketing strategies that attract customers towards their brand, fashion styles and dressing types as a channel of gaining acceptance in 'their' created societal image. For example, the consumer being exclusive from the rest of the world if they consume their products (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2020a). While, "*value-expressive function of an attitude is the role an attitude can play in the expression of core values*" (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2020b). Luxury brands use this marketing strategy to convince their customers to embrace a positive attitude towards their brand, as their logo is associated with paramount values such as high social status and exclusivity (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2020b).

Schade *et al.* (2016) reviewed responses from 297 survey participants, aged between 16 to 59, using structural equation modelling to decipher the consumption patterns of luxury brands in different age categories. Their results showed that social-adjustive functional marketing on social media strongly influences luxury brand buying behaviour of young adults (16-25 year olds), while value-expressive marketing only enhances luxury expenditure of adults (26-39 year olds). At the same time, neither social nor value functions induce the possession of luxury brands by older adults (40-59 year olds). After looking at the results, it can be speculated that it is essential for luxury brands to use social functional marketing on social media platforms to attract young millennials and value functional marketing to retain them until middle age. Successfully achieving the previously mentioned can help establish loyalty in the minds of older millennials towards their brand, which they can further pass onto their family

and friends, leading to the enhancement of their brand equity and value in the long run (Schade *et al.*, 2016).

2.5 Millennials and Instagram

Beauloye (2020) suggests that millennials only value and purchase luxury brands that commemorate individuality and exclusivity in a way that can be visually shared on social media platforms, particularly Instagram. Studies have also shown that the most preferred social media platform by millennials is Instagram. Instagram Business (2017) reports more than 40% of millennials share pictures of their luxury purchases on Instagram and more than 50% of millennials follow influencers and celebrities to see the latest luxury brands they are sporting.

Launched in 2010, Instagram is known to be one of the expeditiously growing social networks of the past decade (Chaffey, 2020). It allows its users to take and upload photos and minute long videos, apply various 'filters' to restyle their looks and forthwith share with their friends, privately or publicly, on their application. Uploads are called 'posts' and usually have an option of including a brief description and numerous hashtags (Schade *et al.*, 2016). As of 2019, Instagram has more than a billion active users (Clement, 2019) with almost 96% of their users being millennials. Nearly, 75% of the billion Instagram users are between the age of 18 and 24 with about 90% of users being under the age of 35 (Smith, 2019). Since 2013, Instagram has seen a considerable rise in user engagement, especially in the luxury fashion category, compared to any other social network (Schade *et al.*, 2016). According to a report published by Forrester, Instagram is 58 and 120 times more engagement friendly than Facebook and Twitter respectively (Elliott, 2014). Therefore, to connect with millennials, the majority of luxury fashion brands are now incorporating the Instagram platform, influencers and celebrities into their key marketing strategies.

2.6 Importance of Instagram for Luxury Fashion Brands

Nowadays, Instagram is where millennials associate, meet and exchange interests and likes that most influence them using the finest photos, excellent quality videos and stories. Instagram's priority on visual narrative has made it the model social media platform to share the world's most desirable goods and experiences (Instagram Business, 2017). In recent years, the majority of the luxury fashion brands have also enthusiastically embraced this platform. These luxury brands, who were once well known for their magazine advertising and print campaigns, are now communicating with their potential customers using the expressive and artistic capabilities of the domain (ibid).

“The best way for luxury brands to inspire consumers has always been through storytelling. As Instagram is a visual storytelling platform, the link is a natural fit.”

– Tennille Kopiasz, Senior V.P. of Marketing at Dior (Instagram Business, 2017)

As the sphere of fashion marketing is spirited, lively and filled with vibrant colours, Instagram's explicit focus on visual aesthetics and its reach of a billion daily users has made this platform the new favorite of luxury fashion marketers. According to a report published by Instagram Business in 2017, 58% of luxury fashion consumers use Instagram to stay informed on the contemporary fashion trends, designs, styles and to be in the know. The report also showed that 56% of luxury consumers use Instagram to see the fashion brands' latest collaborations and collections (Instagram Business, 2017).

According to Kusumasondjaja (2019), it is still important to note, at first observation, luxury brands and social media appear to be mutually exclusive. Yet, despite the concerns regarding luxury fashion marketing on social media such as brand overexposure and risk of losing control of the brand's image, Instagram particularly offers a number of strategic advantages for luxury marketers. Primarily, Instagram helps luxury fashion brands to connect with millennials. Studies have shown that both

younger and older millennials are tech and brand savvy, therefore, when they relish their involvement with brands, they are likely to express their special moments with the brand products on Instagram. This can further lead to indirect promotion of brands and their products, as today's millennial consumers are highly influenced by their peer reviews (Kusumasondjaja, 2019). Instagram also helps marketers to stimulate deeper relationships with millennials through more extensive interactivity or storytelling and not by traditional forms of advertising and monologues. It allows brands to relay marketing information in more engrossing and appealing ways using the domain's features such as stories, highlights, hashtags, videos and pictures. Utilizing these features help luxury fashion brands to increase their potential reach. In the age of digital economy, luxury fashion brands are also incentivised to develop experiential strategies to connect with their millennial buyers. Having their designs flaunted on Instagram stories and highlights may provide millennial consumers with the experience of actually being at fashion shows, which can augment the entertainment aspect of the luxury fashion experiential dimension (ibid).

Moreover, findings by 'BI Intelligence' also show that Instagram has side-lined Facebook and Twitter with regard to status and class amidst millennial users. Their survey results also indicated that 83% of wealthy American millennials use Instagram regularly (Guimarães, 2014). Therefore, due to the rising prevalence of Instagram in the luxury fashion sector, it is not astonishing that it is a part of luxury brands' 'visual' dialogue. Analysts accredit the success of this platform to its schematic interface and clear focus on visuals rather than wordings (Schade *et al.*, 2016). The last-mentioned is also supported by the work of Megehee and Woodside (2010), who suggested that for the most part millennial consumers ruminate on stories via visuals and not words. Visual messages augment the effectiveness of social media marketing in ways that are not attainable with words. On the other hand, the consequential popularity of Instagram amongst users has also resulted in increased competition for recognition amongst these luxury fashion brands. Hence, it is essential for them to upload crystalline, extemporary, pragmatist pictures and videos daily of their brand, either on their own page or by celebrities and influencers in their posts or risk becoming unimportant (Krepapa *et al.*, 2016).

2.7 Creation of Luxury Brand Awareness Amongst Millennials

There are various challenges that luxury brands have to face when trying to connect with millennial consumers. The first challenge every luxury brand marketer encounters in the creation of brand awareness is related to an inherent threefold of awareness, dream and purchase. Brand awareness fuels millennials' dreams surrounding the brand, which leads to purchase and possession of that brand's products. However, this makes their dream a reality and highly contributes to the weakening of the brand's image (Krepapa *et al.*, 2016). Moreover, as Instagram is the 'new' face of luxury promotions, the second challenge is to generate and perpetuate high levels of attractiveness and perceptions of exclusivity on the undifferentiated Instagram domain. Millennials perceive luxury products as rare artefacts that lose their grandeur character when they are easily available. Therefore, in order to safeguard and expand their equity, it is essential for luxury brands to maintain exceptional levels of control over their exclusive image on Instagram, which is used for mass communication and is open and inclusive rather than restrictive and exclusive (ibid).

To address these challenges, luxury brand marketers have now started to focus on creating and promoting a way of life approach instead of promoting separate products. They are now incorporating famous social media influencers into their marketing strategies and through them are relating their brand to the way of life constructs of the consumers to encourage a more holistic brand experience (Krepapa *et al.*, 2016). For example, Gucci collaborated with beauty and fashion influencer Jeffree Star to create and promote an 'organic' and 'consistent' Gucci inspired lifestyle on Instagram to attract millennials. In 2018, Gucci gifted Jeffree Star a number of custom-made sneakers, tracksuits, a pink luggage set and a variety of handbags, which he featured in his Instagram highlights, posts, and stories. All through 2019, Jeffree repeatedly wore and flaunted Gucci clothing and accessories in his Instagram posts and also announced several giveaways. Between January and August 2019, Jeffree Star posted 29 pictures on Instagram promoting Gucci products and according

to Tribe Dynamics those 29 pictures alone gained around €3 million in EMV (Earned Media Value) through millennials' positive word of mouth (Masket, 2019).



Image 1: Jeffree Star wearing Gucci Tracksuit in his private jet
(Source: Jeffree Star, 2018a)

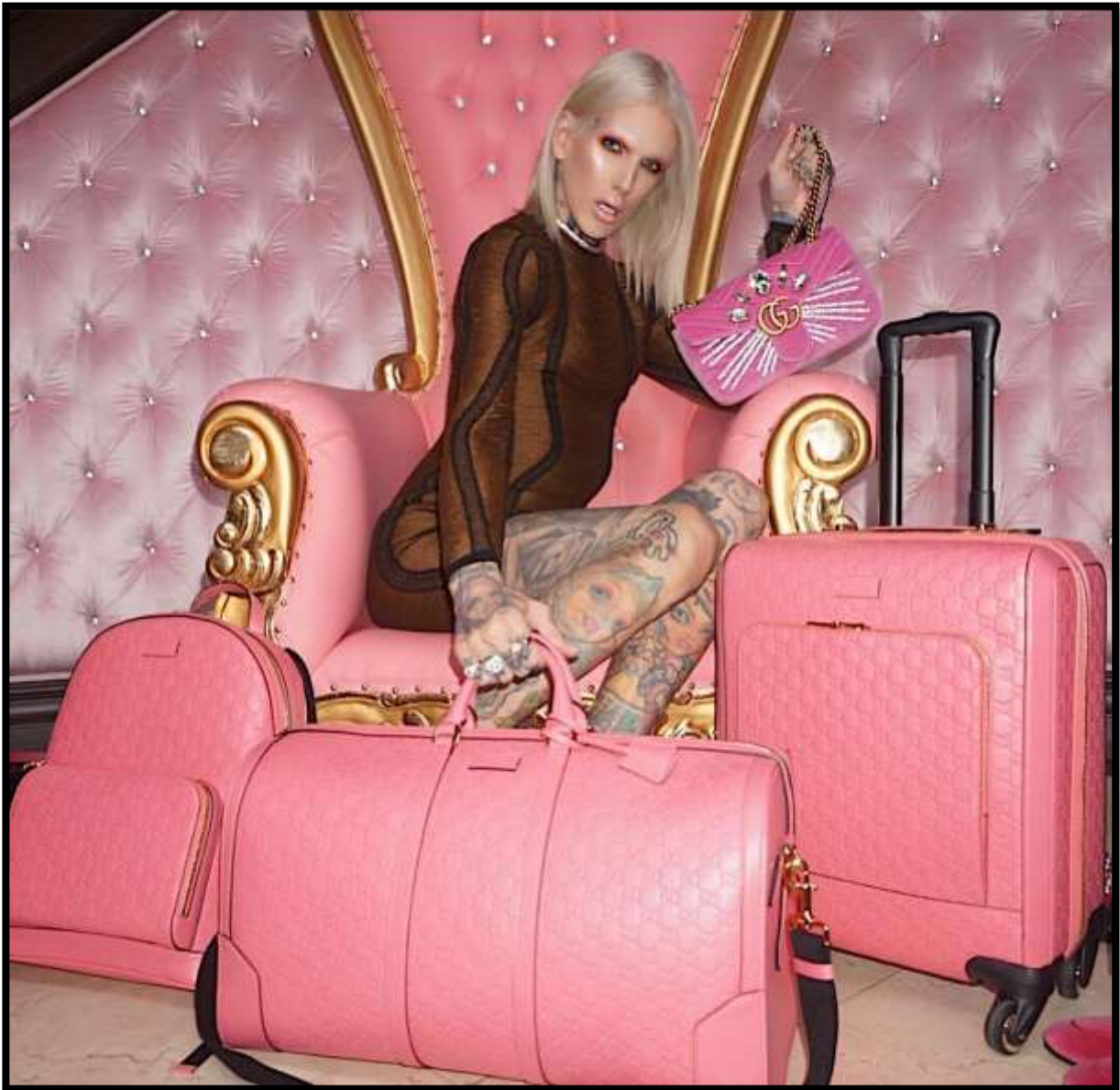


Image 2: Jeffree Star featuring his custom-made Gucci pink luggage set
(Source: Jeffree Star, 2018b)

2.8 Instagram Influencers

Instagram influencers are individuals who have built a strong standing for their experience and expertise on a distinct topic. They post frequently on their Instagram page and attract vast numbers of passionate and dedicated followers who pay close attention to their opinions. Fashion brands generally incorporate Instagram influencers into their marketing mix because they can develop new trends and can motivate their

followers to purchase their endorsed products and also due to the fact that Instagram has become the new face of fashion promotion (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2020). Various past studies have suggested that the image of the influencer is of prominent significance to the effectiveness of an advertising campaign and a poor image can swiftly damage the position of the linked brand (Campbell and Warren, 2012; Amos, Holmes and Strutton, 2008). Instagram influencers integrate brands and their products into their posts, stories, highlights, etc. and despite the fact that in many countries they are legally required to provide appropriate attestation of the compelling nature of their posts (for example: #Sponsored, #PaidPartnership, etc.), the majority of their followers unhesitatingly welcome their recommendations. Instagram influencer marketing has been described as a type of indigenous advertisement, distinctively reliable electronic word of mouth and branded entertainment, as the sponsored posts are generally entwined coherently and smoothly into the everyday narratives that the Instagram influencers share with their followers (Breves *et al.*, 2019; De Veirman Cauberghe and Hudders, 2017; Evans *et al.*, 2017).

2.9 Instagram Influencers and Millennials

According to Yang, Kim and Sun (2019), in recent years, brand mentioning by influencers on Instagram has gained considerable recognition due to the persuasive effects they can have on their massive fan base. They analysed 18,523 Instagram influencers and more than 800,000 brand mentioning posts in their study. Their research findings suggest that the majority of the famous Instagram influencers only collaborate with a few brands which makes their millennial followers have indistinguishable reactions to both endorsed and non-endorsed posts. Based on their research, Ki *et al.* (2020) further investigated the influence mechanism that influencers saddle over their followers. Since the Instagram platform was created to make personal interactions simpler and not for product or brand endorsements, their study argues that the emotional bond of millennial followers towards influencers is a significant precedent influencing the willingness of millennials to embrace the influencers' recommendations. Their study involved two different investigations, the first analysed the persona and content driven hallmarks of influencers that make

millennials feel attached to them and the second provided empirical evidence post analysing more than 300 American consumer responses. Their results indicated that influencers' positive images can positively influence millennials to purchase brands and products that they are endorsing (Ki *et al.*, 2020). However, their study focused on brands in general and not predominantly on luxury brands. Therefore, this makes it requisite to understand if luxury fashion brands are successfully incorporating influencers on Instagram to create a positive influence on the luxury purchasing patterns of millennials, as unlike other brands' goods, acquiring even a single luxury brand product is a huge investment.

2.10 Luxury Fashion Brands, Instagram Influencers and Millennials

When contemplating brands that affiliate with influencers, names such as 'Daniel Wellington' and 'Gucci' spring to mind. These brands are wholly fashioned around millennial lifestyle and the biggest personalities within it. However, the waves have shifted and these days the majority of the luxury fashion brands are trying to create their own scope within the millennial influencer marketing industry. Adopting collaborations with top models and several famous social media influencers, these high-end brands are constantly looking to connect with both younger and older millennial demographics and add a newfangled face to their brand image (Richardson, 2020). Since 2017, many highly esteemed designer labels from the luxury fashion industry are lining up to collaborate with this new pool of influencer celebrities. For many, this is not considered an obvious choice as every so often luxury fashion brands appear to clench on to such exceptional power, social status and a refined image that they would only ever think about collaborating with the stellar A-grade icons (ibid). Whilst, this was the case a couple of years ago, nowadays this viewpoint has changed with even the biggest designer brands having to adapt to this growing digital-centric millennial sphere and the value it rests on social media, particularly Instagram (Richardson, 2020).

The first luxury fashion brand to take the valiant step into the influencer world was none other than Dolce and Gabbana. At their 2017 ready to wear fashion show,

they picked Instagram icons including Cameron Dallas and Marcus Butler to stride down the catwalk. From that moment on legions of celebrated luxury fashion brands have followed in the same footsteps (ibid). Samantha Gabriel, branding strategist at Underscore, when asked about why the influencer narrative is progressively becoming the new norm for luxury fashion brands, said: "Influencer marketing has changed the industry landscape and luxury brands such as fashion designers have implemented a strategy of inviting potential brand ambassadors to their shows to enhance their 'must have' credentials" (Richardson, 2020).

Below are some of the biggest luxury fashion brand and influencer collaborations that have taken place so far:

Emma Chamberlain and Louis Vuitton

Since 2014, Louis Vuitton has been going through a very visible shift in the brand's overall appeal. The patrimony focused leather organisation has undergone a seismic shift into a young and desirable brand, which has led them to work with influencers. In a move that shocked many, 17 year old American vlogger Emma Chamberlain was approached by the French luxury brand to promote its ready to wear and accessories range on her Instagram posts and stories as well as on her YouTube channel. In the past, Louis Vuitton has worked with long-established fashion bloggers in a very limited way, however this step was evidently geared towards connecting with younger millennials (Richardson, 2020).



Image 3: Emma Chamberlain at Louis Vuitton's 2019 Opening Cocktail (Source: Richardson, 2020)

As discussed in the previous sections of the literature review, Instagram is the most important platform for luxury fashion brands, it isn't surprising that such a legendary brand would work with one of the biggest icons of the platform to generate content. Although, some were confused due to her tender age of 17, many argued

that she isn't selling directly but just establishing the brand to be alluring to the younger millennial demographic. This works since Instagram influencers are today's youth icons. While previous generations looked up to movie and musical stars, millennials today idolise mainly Instagram and YouTube celebrities (Richardson, 2020).

Victoria Magrath and Dior

In recent seasons, Dior has partnered with smaller fashion influencers, opting to highlight the ideals of the brand that live and breathe style to a niche audience. Dior has chosen not to work with major names and instead has made smaller bloggers, such as Victoria Magrath, ambassadors. With a Ph.D., lecturing occupation and a sophisticated sense of fashion, Magrath is the ideal representation of Maria Grazia's new Dior women. Therefore, using her to connect the brand to the mature and older millennial demographic on Instagram was an exquisitely calculated step from the classic luxury fashion house (Richardson, 2020). The fashion blogger also wrote about the brand on her Instagram page, saying: *"It's the fashion brand that I would wear to bed, if I could. The brand that inspired me the most and that I dreamed of wearing when I was back in my teens. And now, I see myself as one of their #DiorGirls"*. This is a classic example of a luxury fashion brand implementing influencer marketing their way. Instead of developing an ambitious advertisement campaign with famous names that are associated with 'Forever 21', they have opted to bring a number of bloggers and influencers into their fold, welcoming them to fashion shows and providing them with exclusive items for their endorsed Instagram posts and stories. Dior's influencer marketing strategy is proof that influencer endorsements can be elegant and fully established option (ibid).



Image 4: Victoria Magrath in 'All Black' Dior Dress at Dior's Summer Show 2018
(Source: Gastro Chic, 2018)

Maddie Ziegler and Tiffany & Co.

Tiffany & Co. is a more Hollywood-related brand than Dance Moms, but this did not stop the luxury brand from partnering in numerous campaigns with the dancer-turned-influencer Maddie Ziegler. Bringing her on board side by side with more traditional celebrities, Tiffany & Co. has opted to blend components from social media into their conventional marketing mix, by incorporating younger influencers to their ambassador assembly, as one of the brand's faces. Ziegler is the model choice to show

that Tiffany & Co. is a brand for all groups of millennials and for all periods of life. It reflects the younger and exuberant side of the brand, whether it is an 18th birthday, an anniversary or an engagement ring (Richardson, 2020).

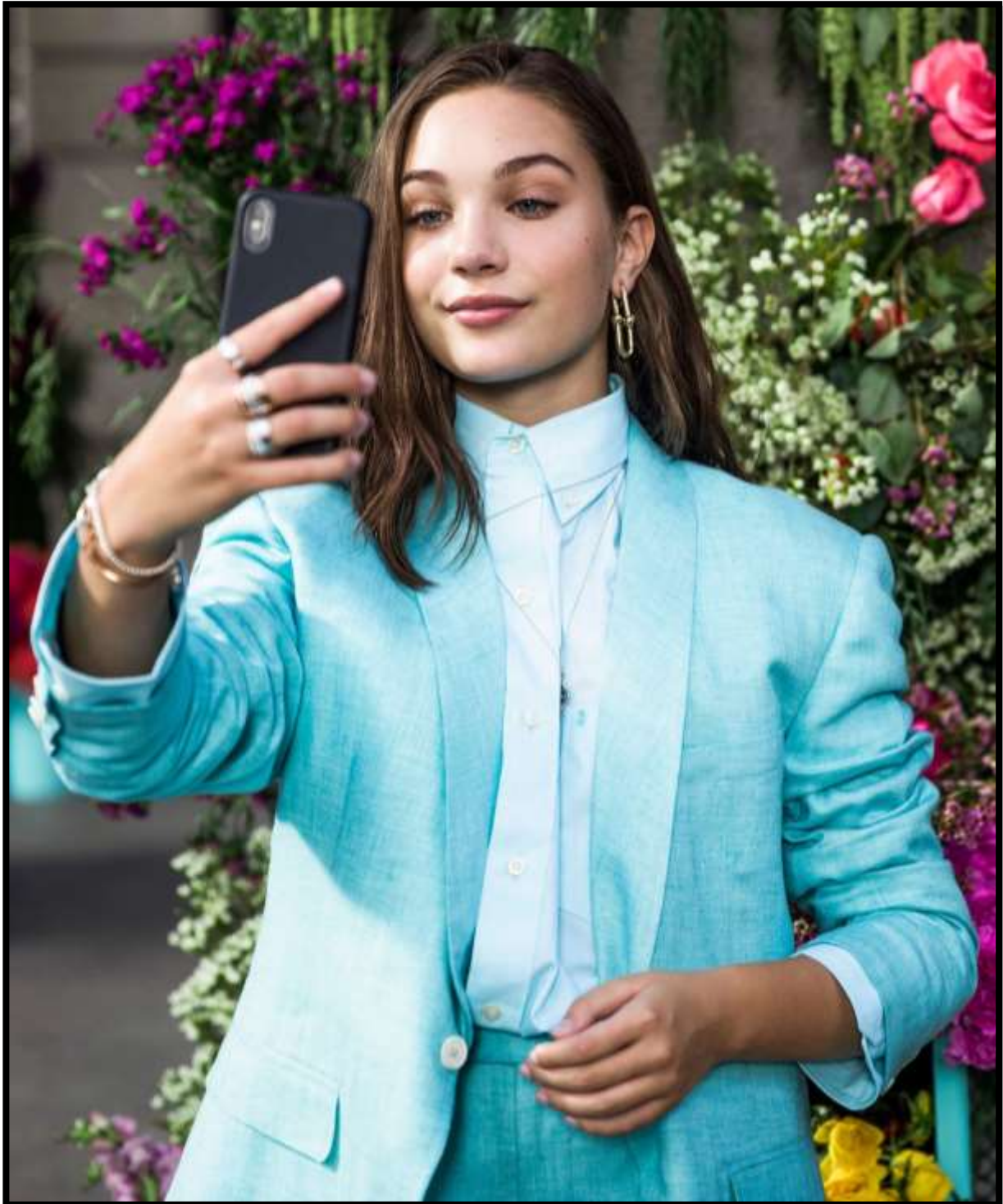


Image 5: Maddie Ziegler Shooting for Tiffany & Co.'s 2018's Millennial Spring Campaign (Source: Denton, 2018)

Hence, it is essential to understand if incorporation of influencers on Instagram by luxury fashion brands is just creating positive brand awareness in the minds of millennials or does it also positively influence millennials to purchase their products?

2.11 Influencer Marketing Challenges and Conclusion

As discussed in the chapter, in recent years, the majority of the luxury fashion brands have started incorporating influencers into their marketing mix in order to connect with millennials. Moreover, many luxury brand marketers believe that influencers on Instagram can help attract millennials as well as drive the brand's overall sales. However, a number of researchers suggest otherwise. According to Lurillo (2019), audiences on social media platforms such as Instagram have now started to interpret influencers' suggestions as 'inauthentic' or 'deceptive', which is now leading to brands and influencers, both losing integrity and originality (Lurillo, 2019). A study conducted by Bazaarvoice also reported that 62% of consumers are of the opinion that influencers profit from "impressionable" audiences and many are just "tired" of influencer endorsements on social media (Bazaarvoice, 2018). In addition, findings by Breves *et al* (2019) suggest, to avoid harming the brand's reputation, it is important for luxury brand marketers to collaborate with the right influencer. As luxury fashion brands are now targeting and trying to connect with millennials, it is vital for these brands to use someone who has a very strong relationship with their followers, due to the fact that when followers have a real parasocial interrelation with the influencer, they are less sceptical to suggestions. This further makes it crucial to understand if luxury fashion brands are successfully incorporating Instagram influencers to create a positive influence on the millennials' luxury purchasing patterns.

III: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the research methodology that is ideally suited for this study. Taking into consideration the aims of this research, the analysis methods undertaken by previous researchers will aid in discussing the philosophical assumptions of this study. The data collection method will be determined and utilized to answer the research question and consequently to understand the viewpoint Irish millennials have in regard to luxury fashion brands and Instagram influencer marketing. Moreover, taking into account the objectives of the research, the chosen sampling method and the sample size will be discussed. The data analysis method to evaluate the collected data will also be discussed. Finally, the research shortcomings that impact the study's outcome and the ethical considerations of the data collection method will be recognised in this chapter.

3.2 Research Question

The previous chapter introduced the research question that needs to be examined: 'Are luxury fashion brands successfully incorporating social media influencers on Instagram to create a positive influence on millennials' purchasing patterns?'. Influencer marketing, if done correctly, can help luxury fashion brands garner significant awareness and substantial financial rewards. Thus, this study will analyse if luxury fashion brands are effectively incorporating Instagram influencers into their marketing mix and do millennials take into consideration what influencers suggest in their posts before purchasing luxury brands and products. Additionally, the research also aims to identify what opinions do millennials hold about luxury fashion brands and Instagram influencer marketing to better understand how to connect with them. This research will be of managerial prominence to the luxury fashion industry, as it will further promote the comprehension and enhancement of the brands' online marketing strategies.

3.3 Philosophical Assumptions

To analyse the correlation between the key components of luxury fashion brands using Instagram influencers and luxury purchasing patterns of millennials, this study has been implemented with an interpretive paradigm, which means it is subjective in nature. The research embraces the participants' subjective interpretation of luxury fashion brands, enabling accurate observations on the subject of study. Moreover, "Although consumers may perceive a product as luxurious, researchers seem to agree that such perceptions are highly subjective and that brands differ dramatically in their degree of luxury" (Krepapa *et al.*, 2016, p. 5). This quote indicates that luxury itself is created and translated by individuals on a constant basis. Similarly, the continuously transforming interpretations of luxury brands can influence the arising reality of Instagram influencer marketing, making its relationship with millennials' purchasing patterns further complicated. Therefore, this study aims to conjure a comprehensive outlook of the research question by exploring this interrelation through elucidating the meaning that social actors put up.

According to Jain (2019), the relationship between luxury fashion brands, influencers and millennials can be better understood using a mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches. Jain (2019) also believes that using questionnaires and surveys helped her to better understand the luxury purchase intentions of Indian millennials. In the same way, Kim (2019) approached his research by utilizing survey responses to explore the level of attachment American millennials have towards luxury fashion brands. Consequently, taking into consideration the nature of this study and goals, using a survey as a method of data collection is more appropriate for this research. It allow for millennials' opinions to be gathered about luxury fashion brands and Instagram influencer marketing (Kim, 2019). In addition, in the past, numerous studies have been conducted in the luxury fashion sector that have incorporated surveys and successfully acquired valid and reliable results (Jain, 2019; Kim, 2019; Schade *et al.*, 2016; Park, Rabolt and Sook, 2007; Vigneron and Johnson, 2004; Wong and Zaichkowsky, 1999). Quantitative approaches are suitable when statistical data is needed, and qualitative approaches are well fitted when behaviour and opinions are

needed to take into consideration (McLeod, 2019). While, in this research, millennials' opinions are observed to understand their attitude towards luxury fashion brands and Instagram influencer marketing to better recognize how brands can connect with them, a mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches will suit this study. Lastly, carrying out this research while examining other studies on how luxury fashion brands can incorporate influencers to connect with millennials may kindle 'deviant elements' that will help identify true reality representation.

3.4 Data Collection

Surveys were the most frequently used approach of data collection found in numerous similar past studies (Jain, 2019; Kim, 2019; Schade *et al.*, 2016). Jain (2019) and Kim (2019) approached their research by conducting online surveys as this method helped them to collect and review various viewpoints and opinions on the area of study. Surveys allowed them to collect more accurate information about the value perception and purchase intention of luxury brands by Indian millennials (Jain, 2019) and ownership and collecting behaviour of luxury fashion goods by American millennials (Kim, 2019). Moreover, in order to determine how luxury brands can convince their millennial customers to embrace a positive attitude towards their brand name and logo, Schade *et al.* (2016) reviewed responses from 297 survey participants, aged between 16 and 59, to decipher the consumption patterns of luxury brands in different millennial age categories. The authors believe that surveys as a method of data collection complements the research's interpretive paradigm and presents the needed information on the subjective definition of luxury goods (*ibid*). After examining a variety of past literature and methodologies that most suit the area of the research, this study will build upon the method utilized by Jain (2019), Kim (2019) and Schade *et al.* (2016). Hence, the most suited method of collection data for this study is a survey as this approach offered a better comprehension of the research topic by approaching participants with a set of questions to gain individual perspective and views.

The data collected from the survey may differ or have similarities in responses. Also, as the purpose of this study is to recognize the opinions millennials have on

luxury fashion brands and Instagram influencer marketing, this research does not focus on a particular luxury brand and influencer but analyses the whole luxury fashion sector and Instagram influencer market to create an extensive view on the study area. In consequence, a convenience random sampling is most suited for this research.

"Convenience sampling is a type of nonprobability or non-random sampling where members of the target population that meet certain practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time, or the willingness to participate are included for the purpose of the study"

– Dörnyei Z. (Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., Alkassim R. S., 2015)

Therefore, millennials for this research were selected considering the level of approachability along with the limited timeframe.

This study incorporates a convenience and representative sampling method using an online survey. The population of this research consisted of millennials in Ireland between the ages 20 and 40 who regularly use the Instagram platform. Email invitations were sent out for voluntary participation to 1,597 millennials (see Appendix 1). Three screening questions were introduced at the beginning of the survey: asking the participant's age group, if they use Instagram regularly and if they follow luxury fashion influencers on Instagram. All survey questions were modified to suit the research topic and a set of examples were provided after each question to clear any emerging questions a participant may have while filling out the survey. Among 153 collected responses, 10 responses were screened out as they did not meet the criteria regarding having an Instagram account and 13 responses were eliminated due to the respondent skipping one or more questions in the survey. The final sample size for the data analysis was 131, however due to financial limitations only 100 responses were available for the final research analysis. The survey was also pilot tested using a group of business school faculty and post graduate researchers for the coherence of the language and legibility of questions.

Initially, it was decided to conduct interviews with luxury fashion marketers, however, due to unforeseen circumstances, a survey was the best and most suited alternative method of data collection for this study. An email invitation with the survey link was sent to the potential participants. The survey link included information about the survey and a consent form as well as 10 questions (see Appendix 1,2,3). The collected responses have substantially contributed towards the articulation of the empirical findings in the research area.

3.5 Interpretive Data Analysis

The interpretive data analysis of surveys suggests that they are restrictive as there is no verbal interaction with the respondents. This approach also obstructs the potential to ask transpiring questions from the provided responses that could have provided more extensive information. In view of all constraints, various analytical methods become unsuitable. For example, conducting visual analyses so as to recognize and evaluate the behaviours of survey participants becomes impossible. However, the utilization of surveys as a method of data collection was contemplated to be the best alternative. Therefore, certain techniques are essential to analyse the data collected from the survey responses (Amaresan, 2019).

The most constructive and theoretically adjustable approach to analyse the collected data is to highlight the ambient research question and accordingly segmenting survey questions and their responses to isolate the data that is relevant to the study aims. It is also essential to understand the importance of random sampling as it aids in selecting an arbitrary group of individuals from a vast population which can help produce a much more diverse set of survey responses. Moreover, the collected data may differ or be identical to the previously researched similar themes, thus it is important to connect a link between earlier discussed literature and any differences in the current research's findings (Amaresan, 2019).

3.6 Limitations

Cost is one of the main limitations of this research and it refers to not being able to access the complete set of collected data and only ask a limited number of questions in the survey due to not having access to enough finances. The limited sample size, time constraints and financial backing are the key limitations which can negatively affect the results of the study. Other limitations include reliability and quality of the information received from the participants. This research involves opinion-based responses and participants may hold unintentional preconceptions that can affect the quality of responses. In this respect, the participants will be the ones who can accurately determine the quality and reliability of the information.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

The main elements of an ethical concern that are developed in the course of this research include respecting and safeguarding individuals' interests and autonomy as well as procuring informed consent. The context, intent and essence of the research was informed to all the survey respondents. A consent and survey information form was used to register the voluntary decision of individuals to participate. This means participants were not being engaged against their will and their responses were not tampered with. Survey participants also had the choice to skip any question and terminate the survey anytime. Moreover, the right to privacy and anonymity was provided to all the participants. Finally, all the responses have been stored in a secure file until the completion of the research. Once completed, all the responses will be safely deleted from the file as well as from the device's trash can.

Chapter IV: Analysis and Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the responses collected from the research survey with the goal to answer the research question of 'Are luxury fashion brands successfully incorporating social media influencers on Instagram to create a positive influence on millennials' purchasing patterns?' From the survey findings, a variety of ideas and concepts have surfaced which will be discussed in this chapter. The findings suggest that luxury fashion brands to some extent have successfully created a positive influence on the millennials' luxury purchasing patterns using social media influencers. The collected survey data validates the research hypothesis and provides authentic and accurate information on the research topic.

4.2 Survey Findings and Analysis

Survey Question 1

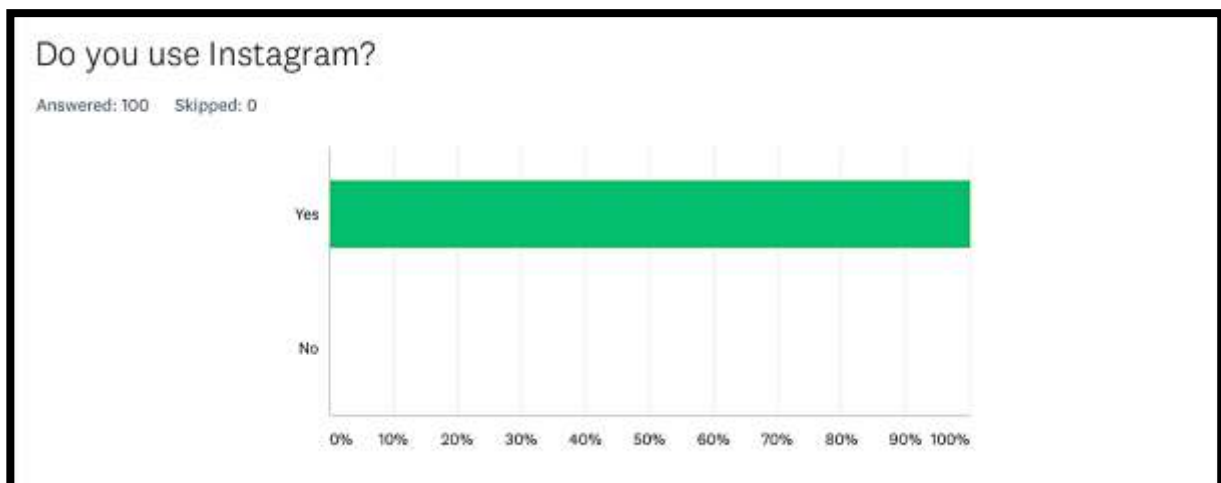


Figure 1: Graphical Representation of Responses for the 1st Question of the Survey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	100.00%	100
No	0.00%	0
TOTAL		100

Table 1: Tabular Representation of Responses for the 1st Question of the Survey

The survey results for the first question showed that 100% of the survey participants (100 participants) use the Instagram platform. The main reason for asking this question was to ensure all the participants use Instagram and their responses are reliable as the research area revolves around Instagram influencer marketing.

Survey Question 2

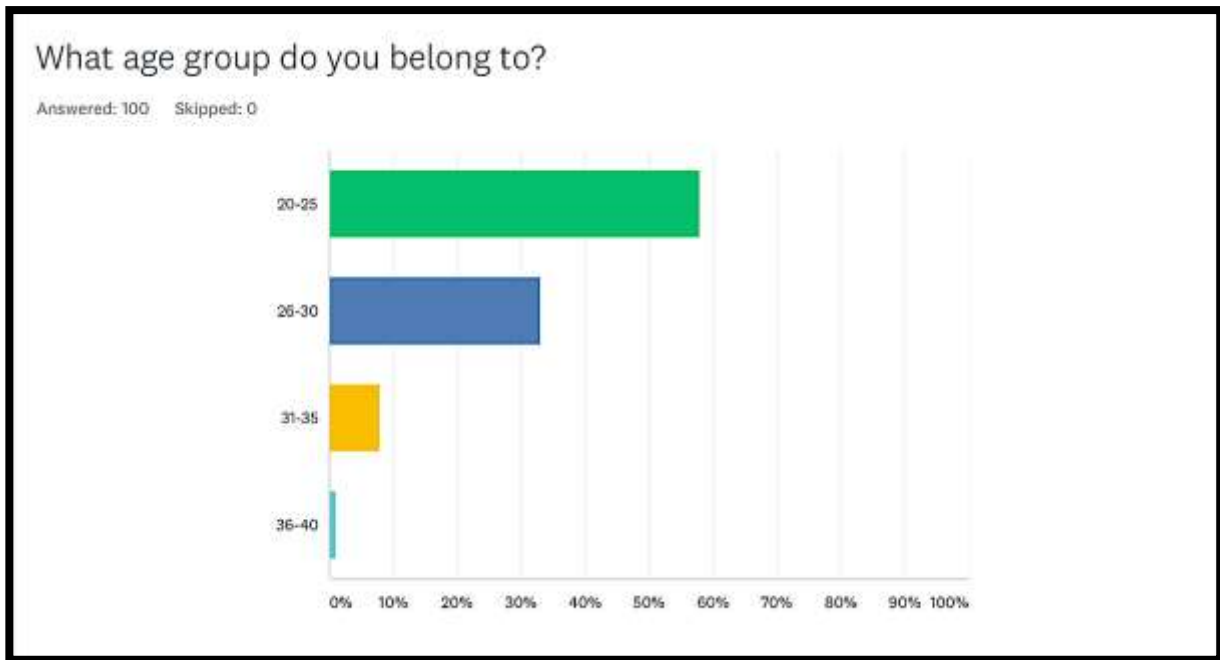


Figure 2: Graphical Representation of Responses for the 2nd Question of the Survey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
20-25	58.00%	58
26-30	33.00%	33
31-35	8.00%	8
36-40	1.00%	1
TOTAL		100

Table 2: Tabular Representation of Responses for the 2nd Question of the Survey

The survey results for the second question showed that 58% of participants (58 participants) are between the ages 20-25, while 33% of participants (33 participants) are between the ages 26-30. Furthermore, 8% of participants (8 participants) are between the ages 31-35 and only 1% of participants (1 participant) is between the age of 36-40. The main reason for asking this question was to make certain that all the survey participants are millennials as well as to understand what age category of millennials heavily use Instagram and are likely to be influenced by influencers and their luxury lifestyles.

Survey Question 3

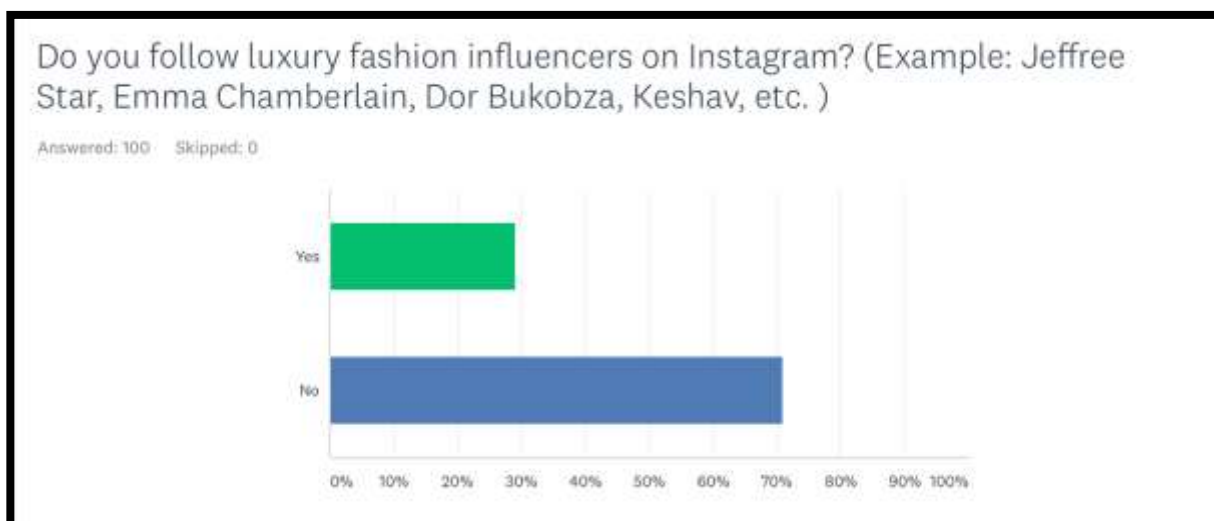


Figure 3: Graphical Representation of Responses for the 3rd Question of the Survey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	29.00%	29
No	71.00%	71
TOTAL		100

Table 3: Tabular Representation of Responses for the 3rd Question of the Survey

The third survey question relates to the luxury fashion influencers of Instagram. Out of 100 participants, 29% (29 participants) said that they do follow luxury fashion influencers such as Jeffree Star, Emma Chamberlain, etc. and 71% (71 participants)

responded saying that they do not follow any luxury fashion influencers. The main reason for asking this question was to get an idea of what percentage of millennials do follow and are probable to take into consideration what luxury fashion influencers are suggesting. The data also provided an idea of what percentage of millennials, the luxury influencers are reaching and the potential of the actual Irish millennial market.

Survey Question 4

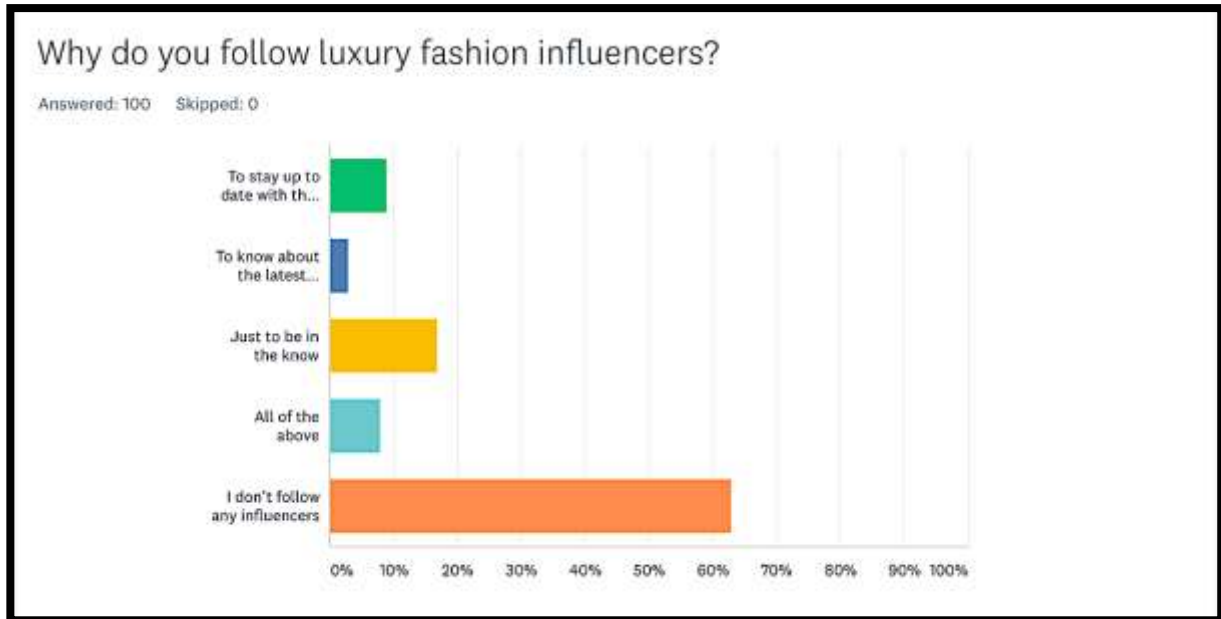


Figure 4: Graphical Representation of Responses for the 4th Question of the Survey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
To stay up to date with the latest fashion trends	9.00% 9
To know about the latest luxury fashion collaborations and collections	3.00% 3
Just to be in the know	17.00% 17
All of the above	8.00% 8
I don't follow any influencers	63.00% 63
TOTAL	100

Table 4: Tabular Representation of Responses for the 4th Question of the Survey

The fourth question was asked to understand why millennials follow luxury fashion influencers on Instagram. The collected data showed that 9% of participants follow luxury fashion influencers to stay up to date with the latest fashion trends, 8% follow luxury fashion influencers to stay up to date with the latest fashion trends, 8% follow to know about the latest luxury brand collaborations and collections, 17% follow

just to be in the know on what's new in the luxury industry and 8% follow for all the above reasons. On the other hand, 63% of participants said they do not follow any luxury fashion brand influencer on Instagram. The results from this question helped recognize the main reasons why millennials follow fashion influencers on Instagram.

Survey Question 5

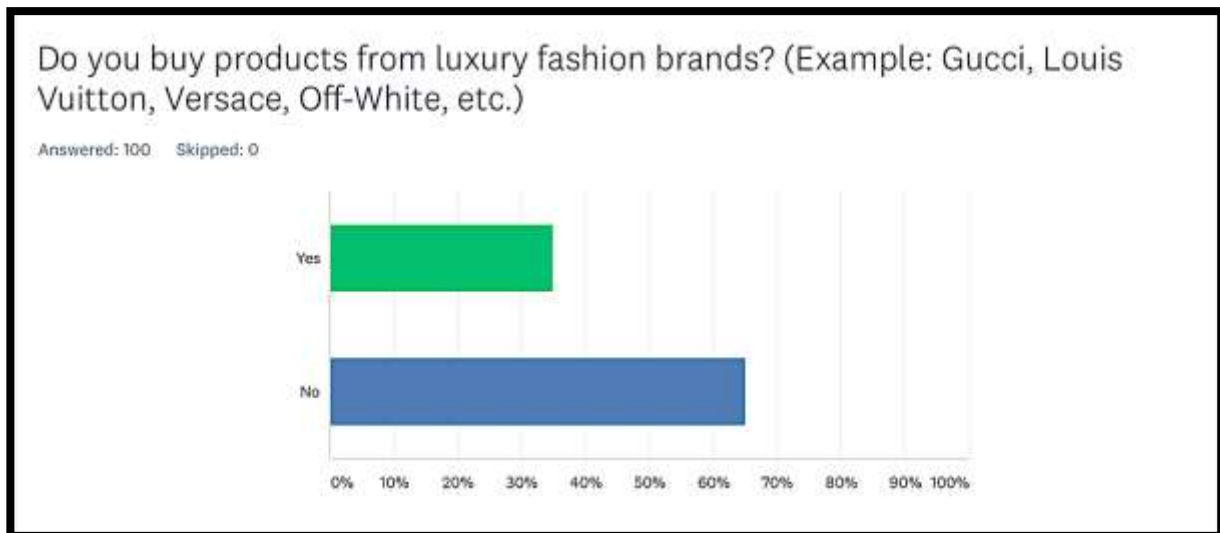


Figure 5: Graphical Representation of Responses for the 5th Question of the Survey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	35.00%	35
No	65.00%	65
TOTAL		100

Table 5: Tabular Representation of Responses for the 5th Question of the Survey

The fifth question was asked to know what percentage of millennials purchase luxury fashion brands such as Gucci, Louis Vuitton, Versace, etc. The main findings showed, 35% of participants purchase products from luxury fashion brands and 65% of participants do not purchase luxury brands products. The results imply that the majority of millennials in Ireland do not purchase luxury fashion brands which makes it essential to recognise the reasons behind Irish millennials not purchasing luxury fashion brands.

Survey Question 6

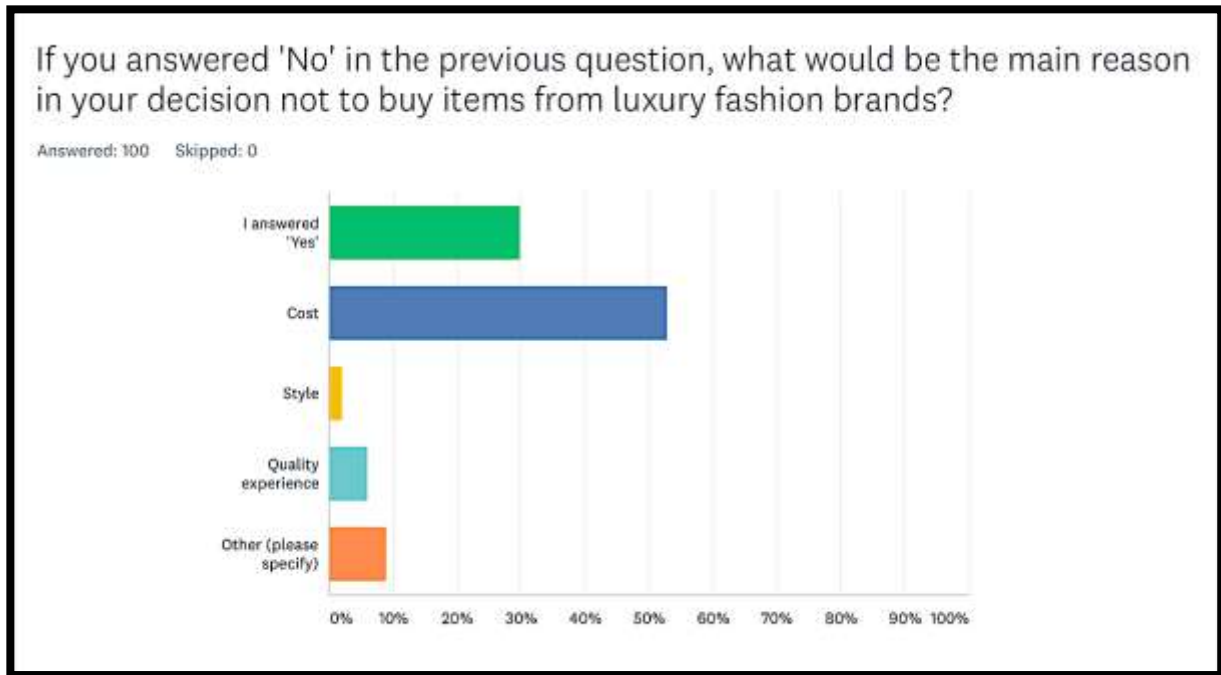


Figure 6: Graphical Representation of Responses for the 6th Question of the Survey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I answered 'Yes'	30.00%	30
Cost	53.00%	53
Style	2.00%	2
Quality experience	6.00%	6
Other (please specify)	9.00%	9
TOTAL		100

Table 6: Tabular Representation of Responses for the 6th Question of the Survey

The sixth question was asked in correspondence to the previous question to understand why millennials in Ireland do not purchase products from luxury fashion brands. The findings showed that 53% of participants chose cost as their main reason for not purchasing goods from luxury fashion brands. Out of the rest of the participants, 6% participants said 'Quality experiences' which suggests that they have purchased goods from luxury brands but don't anymore due to bad product quality or customer service. Moreover, only 2% chose 'Style' as their main reason for not purchasing luxury brands while 9% chose 'Other' and were asked to specify. The specified answers included responses such as "No interest in bourgeoisie fads", "Often

Unethical, do not adhere to animal rights”, “I am prepared to support small business which are environmentally friendly. I’ll never spend money on a millionaire branch”, “Similar quality or better quality for low price with other brands” and “Because I can use that money for something more useful like programming courses or certification or travelling”. The results from this question help recognise what opinions millennials in Ireland hold about luxury fashion brands.

Survey Question 7

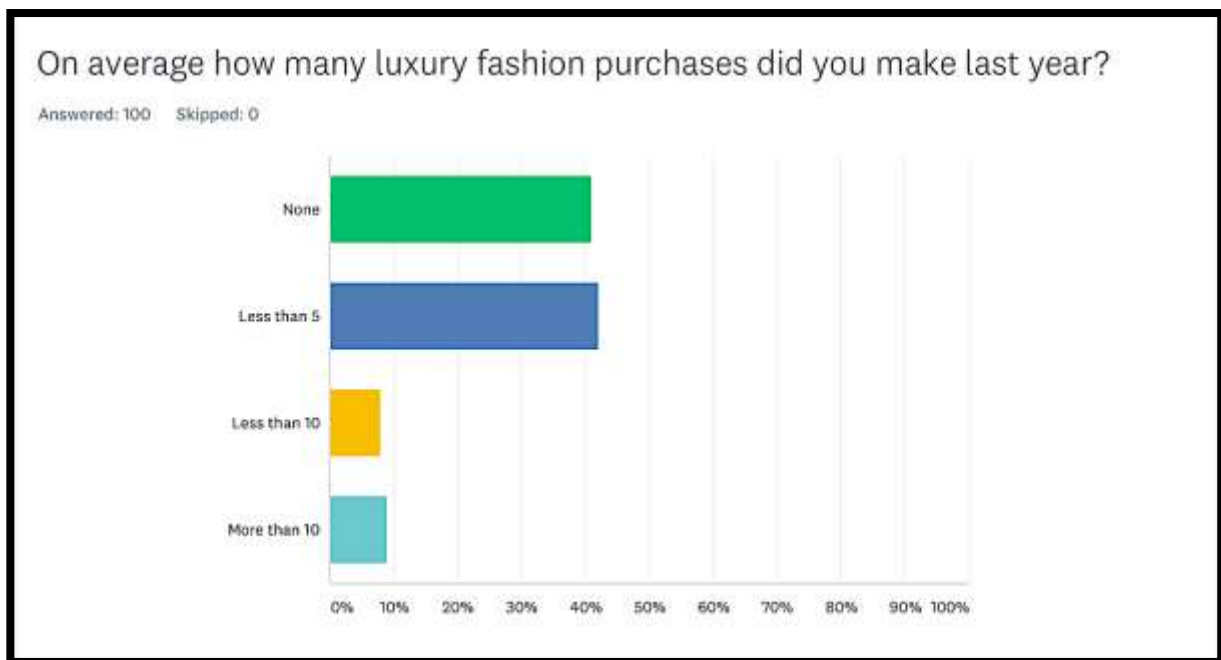


Figure 7: Graphical Representation of Responses for the 7th Question of the Survey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
None	41.00%	41
Less than 5	42.00%	42
Less than 10	8.00%	8
More than 10	9.00%	9
TOTAL		100

Table 7: Tabular Representation of Responses for the 7th Question of the Survey

For enquires about how often millennials purchase luxury fashion products and their spending power, this question was asked. The collected responses showed that 41% participants did not buy any luxury brand in the previous year. However, 42% of

participants said they have bought between 1 to 5 luxury products, while 8% of participants said they have bought less than 10 and 9% of participants said they have bought more than 10 products from luxury fashion brands in the previous year alone. The findings suggest that the majority of millennials in Ireland purchase luxury fashion brands and also have substantial buying power.

Survey Question 8

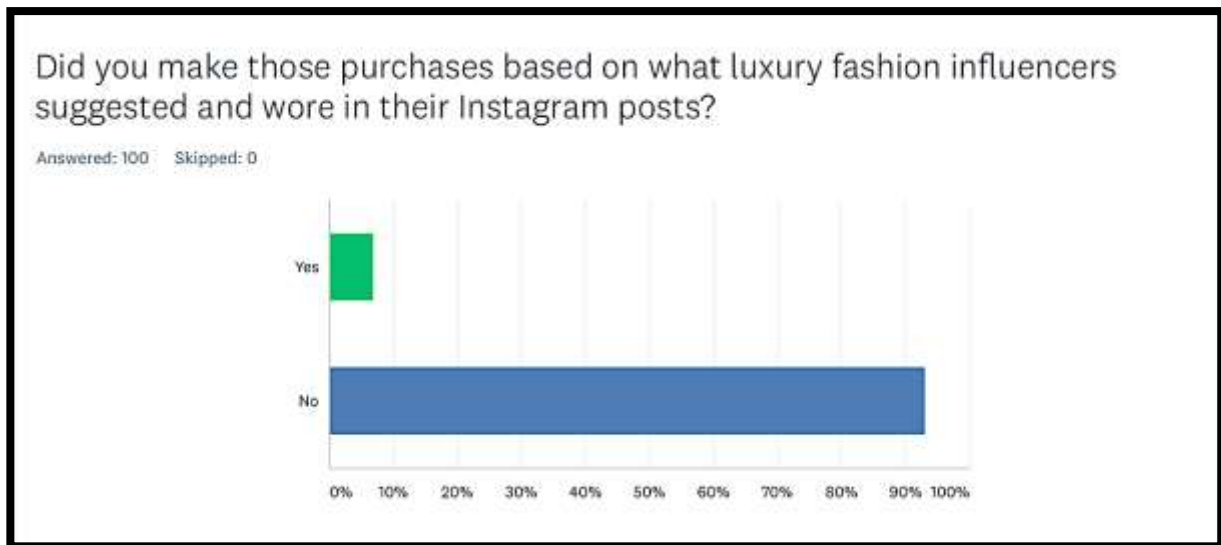


Figure 8: Graphical Representation of Responses for the 8th Question of the Survey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	7.00%	7
No	93.00%	93
TOTAL		100

Table 8: Tabular Representation of Responses for the 8th Question of the Survey

The eighth question was asked to ascertain if millennials in Ireland, in the past, when purchasing products from luxury fashion brands took into consideration what luxury fashion influencers wore and promoted in their Instagram posts. The results showed that only 7% of participants made their luxury purchases based on influencers' opinions and 93% of participants did not take into account what luxury fashion influencers suggested on Instagram. The findings suggest that the majority of Irish

millennials did not get positively influenced by luxury fashion influencer marketing in the past.

Survey Question 9



Figure 9: Graphical Representation of Responses for the 9th Question of the Survey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	38.00%	38
No	62.00%	62
TOTAL		100

Table 9: Tabular Representation of Responses for the 9th Question of the Survey

The ninth question was asked to determine if millennials in Ireland, in future, when purchasing luxury fashion brands would take into consideration what fashion influencers suggest and wear in their Instagram posts and stories. The data revealed that 38% of participants would accommodate influencers’ opinions and what they are wearing in their Instagram posts before purchasing products from luxury fashion brands. On the other hand, 62% of participants said they are uninterested in Instagram influencers’ suggestions on luxury fashion brands. The main finding from this survey question was that a high percentage of millennials in Ireland do care about

influencer suggestions and would take into consideration what they are wearing in their pictures and stories before buying products from these luxury brands.

Survey Question 10

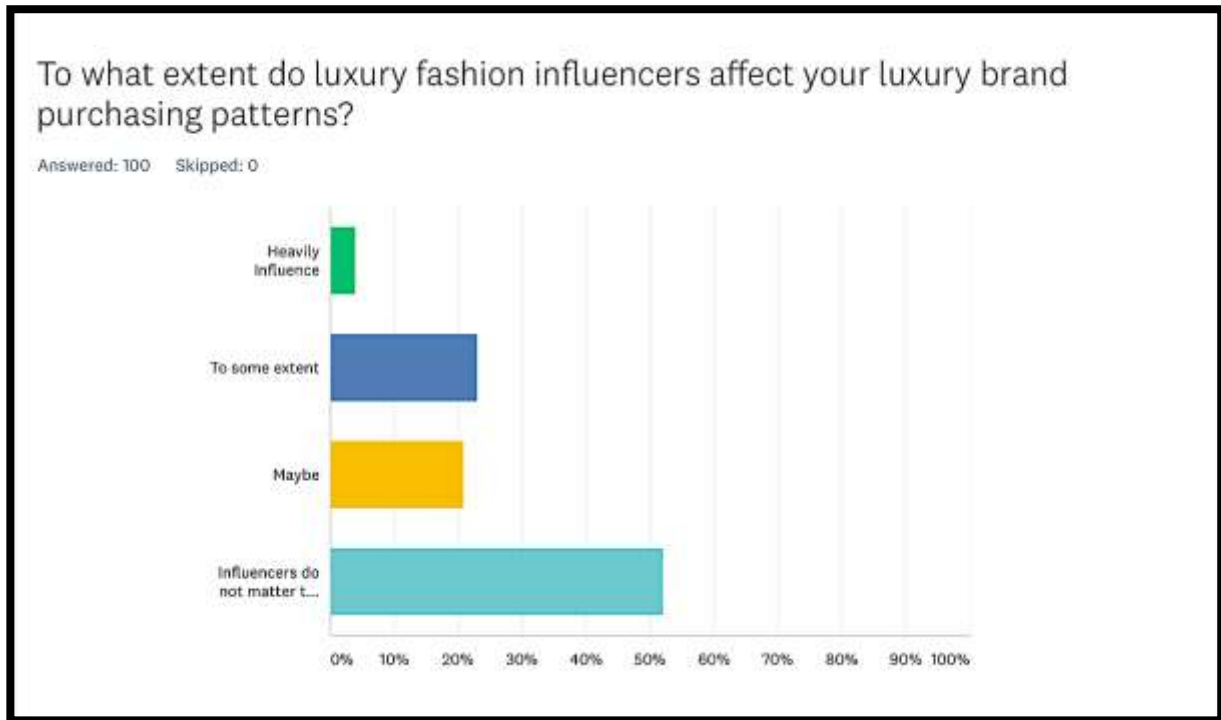


Figure 10: Graphical Representation of Responses for the 10th Question of the Survey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Heavily Influence	4.00%	4
To some extent	23.00%	23
Maybe	21.00%	21
Influencers do not matter to me	52.00%	52
TOTAL		100

Table 10: Tabular Representation of Responses for the 10th Question of the Survey

The final question was asked to deduce to what extent do luxury fashion influencers affect the luxury brand purchasing patterns of millennials in Ireland. The data collected from the survey showed that 52% of participants did not care about influencers when making luxury brand purchases, however, 21% of participants said maybe. Furthermore, 23% of participants said influencers to some extent have

impacted their luxury acquisitions and 4% of participants said Instagram luxury fashion influencers heavily influence their luxury purchasing patterns. The main findings from this question was that nearly 30% of millennials in Ireland get positively influenced by Instagram luxury fashion influencers, approximately 20% to some extent and to the remaining 50% of millennials, influencers do not matter when purchasing luxury fashion products.

4.3 Discussion

The literature review suggests that today's millennial luxury consumers have a very special brand relationship. When they purchase luxury goods, their ownership, exclusivity and prestige are more important than the actual use (Moatti and Abecassis-Moedas, 2018). Furthermore, Instagram has become the new 'face' of promoting luxury fashion (Instagram Business, 2017) and various studies have substantiated that millennials tend to willingly embrace influencers' suggestions. Therefore, the majority of the luxury fashion brands have started using this platform to connect with millennials (Krepapa *et al.*, 2016). The key social media strategy luxury brand marketers are integrating to attract millennial luxury consumers is incorporating social media influencers on Instagram. They are now leveraging well-known influencers and through them are promoting and relating their brand to the way constructs of the millennial luxury consumers to encourage a more holistic and exclusive brand experience (ibid). Thus, this research was conducted to verify if luxury fashion brands are successfully incorporating social media influencers on Instagram to create a positive influence on millennials' purchasing patterns in Ireland.

Surveys were used as a method to collect primary data on the research topic. Assuming the survey sample size is the millennial population of Ireland, the research findings suggest that nearly 30% of millennials in Ireland follow luxury fashion influencers such as Jeffree Star, Emma Chamberlain, Keshav, etc. on Instagram. Most of the millennials who follow these influencers subscribe to them to stay up to date with the latest luxury fashion trends, to know about the newest collaborations and collections as well as to be in the know. The collected data also showed that 35% of

millennials purchase luxury fashion brands such as Versace, Gucci, Fendi, etc. on a fairly regular basis. The remaining 65% of millennials do not purchase products from these brands due to reasons including affordability, non-eco-friendliness, quality, ethics in regard to not adhering to animal rights and bad customer service experiences. The findings also coincide with Perino by Woolyarns (2018) who explained how growing up with bad social and climate conditions including abuse of daily wage workers in developing and under-developed countries as well as polluting emissions and textile waste have all influenced to the way millennials consume goods and services today (Perino by Woolyarns, 2018).

'Ethics' and 'environmentally-friendly' are words that are shaping these luxury brands, as a tendency towards sustainable and cruelty free purchases continue to emerge in the minds of millennials. For millennials, it is about conscience, viewpoint, experiences and positioning with the inner need to be a good human. Thus, many luxury fashion brands who are trying to cater to the millennial demographic are trying to construct a brand heritage that aligns with the millennial values (Perino by Woolyarns, 2018). For example, in 2019 alone, Versace announced that they have discontinued the utilisation of controversial materials such as fur, Prada too pledged to source all their nylon products from recycled materials and focus on reducing ocean waste and Gucci broadcasted they will only produce from organic cotton and use only traceable leather skins (Williams, 2019b).

In addition, the collected survey data also revealed that 60% of millennials in Ireland have bought products from luxury fashion brands in the past and out of those 60%, approximately 10% buy more than 10 products from these brands in a single year. However, when asked if they made those purchases in the past based on what influencers are wearing in their Instagram stories and posts, only 7% said 'yes'. Consequently, when asked, in future, when purchasing luxury products if they would take into consideration what luxury fashion influencers are promoting, nearly 40% of millennials said 'yes' and 50% said Instagram luxury fashion influencers to a good extent positively affect their luxury purchasing patterns. Finally, it also important to take into account that the concept of influencer promotions is fairly new and emerged

in late 2014. Moreover, the majority of luxury fashion brands have only started incorporating luxury fashion influencers on Instagram post 2016, hence, 40% of millennials in Ireland accepting that they will accommodate Instagram influencers' suggestions and what they are wearing in their posts supports the hypothesis of this research. Thus, from these research findings we can say that luxury fashion brands are successfully incorporating social media influencers on Instagram and are creating a positive influence on Irish millennials' luxury purchasing patterns.

Chapter V: Research Limitations and Recommendations

5.1 Limitations and Future Research Scope

The findings of this study need to be evaluated in the light of certain limitations that can drive future research scope. Primarily, it was decided to conduct interviews with marketing strategists of several luxury fashion brands to understand why they incorporate social media influencers on Instagram into their marketing mix. Do they make a considerable difference in their net sales and how do they measure the overall ROI for them? However, due to unforeseen circumstances and limitations in accessibility with these marketing strategists, surveys were incorporated, as they were the next best alternative. To further advance this study and the growing literature on social media marketing and the interrelationship between the incorporation of influencers and luxury fashion brands on Instagram, interviews are essential. Secondly, due to financial limitations convenience random sampling was used, which has its own limitations, therefore, in the future, probability and purposive sampling could be used to gather better and more accurate results. Furthermore, this study was conducted in Ireland, other countries such as Italy, France and Belgium could also be explored to better understand millennial luxury consumers' mindset in Europe.

Chapter VI: Conclusion

6.1 Final Conclusion

This study was conducted with the goal to understand if luxury fashion brands are successfully incorporating influencers on Instagram to create a positive influence on millennials' purchasing patterns. After analysing the research findings, the research hypothesis has been substantiated which suggests that Instagram influencers do have a positive effect on the luxury consumption patterns of millennials. However, many millennials have now also started to see influencer endorsements as deceptive and inauthentic; therefore, it is important that luxury fashion brand marketers collaborate with the right influencers in order to successfully connect with millennials. The literature review and findings also indicate a variety of factors that luxury fashion brands need to critically take into consideration or it can create a negative image of the brand in the minds of millennials. The key factors are animal cruelty, eco-friendliness and sustainability. Based on the research findings, it is essential that luxury brands take these factors into account as they can have a significant effect on the overall sales as well as their brand image in the minds of millennials. Moreover, at the same time, the findings also propound that if luxury fashion brands do not collaborate with the right influencers, it can have a consequential negative impact on their brand image. Therefore, it is important for them to integrate with fashion influencers on Instagram cautiously, in order not to harm their image and values in any way.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Survey Request Email

Hi,

I'm a final year undergraduate student currently working on my dissertation. It would be really helpful if you could just participate in my research survey. The survey is completely anonymous, so any answers given will not be traced back to any one individual. This survey consists of 10 questions and takes approximately 1 minute to complete.

Survey Topic - Are Luxury Fashion Brands Successfully Incorporating Social Media Influencers On Instagram To Create A Positive Influence On Millennials' Purchasing Patterns?

** This survey is only for individuals who are between the ages 20-40. **

Survey Link - <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/6T2DJTG>

Regards

Thanks

Dhruv

Appendix 2: Survey Consent and Information Form

This research survey aims to identify the level of para-social relationship between multi-billion-euro expenditure by luxury fashion brands on influencer posts on Instagram and the effectiveness of these types of promotions on their millennial followers. Although, there are various widely accepted defining range for the millennial generation, this survey will follow the Goldman Sachs' definition of millennials. According to Goldman Sachs, millennials are all individuals who are born between the years 1980 to 2000. This research survey also aims to understand to what extent does incorporation of influencer endorsements on Instagram increase the user engagement online and do they help create a positive influence on millennials' luxury purchasing patterns. This survey is completely anonymous, so any answers given will not be traced back to any one individual. This survey consists of 10 questions and takes approximately 1 minute to complete. All participants are free to opt out at any time during the survey. Surveyor is contactable at: (x17115558@student.ncirl.ie).

Appendix 3: Survey Questions

Q1. Do you use Instagram?

- Yes
- No

Q2. What age group do you belong to?

- 20-25
- 26-30
- 31-35
- 36-40

Q3. Do you follow luxury fashion influencers on Instagram? (Example: Jeffree Star, Emma Chamberlain, Dor Bukobza, Keshav, etc.)

- Yes
- No

Q4. Why do you follow luxury fashion influencers?

- To stay up to date with the latest fashion trends
- To know about the latest luxury fashion collaborations and collections
- Just to be in the know
- All of the above
- I don't follow any influencers

Q5. Do you buy products from luxury fashion brands? (Example: Gucci, Louis Vuitton, Versace, Off-White, etc.)

- Yes
- No

Q6. If you answered 'No' in the previous question, what would be the main reason in your decision not to buy items from luxury fashion brands?

- I answered 'Yes'
- Cost
- Style
- Quality experience
- Other (please specify)

Q7. On average how many luxury fashion purchases did you make last year?

- None
- Less than 5
- Less than 10
- More than 10

Q8. Did you make those purchases based on what luxury fashion influencers suggested and wore in their Instagram posts?

- Yes
- No

Q9. In the future, if and when purchasing a luxury fashion brand, would you take into consideration what luxury fashion influencers are wearing in their posts on Instagram?

- Yes
- No

Q10. To what extent do luxury fashion influencers affect your luxury brand purchasing patterns?

- Heavily Influence
- To some extent
- Maybe
- Influencers do not matter to me