

The Impact of Emotional Branding Practices by Indian Luxury Fashion Brands on Consumer Perceptions, Engagement, and Purchasing Behaviour

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ABSTRACT

The Indian luxury fashion industry driven by rising disposable incomes, evolving consumer lifestyles, and increased exposure to global fashion trends has experienced remarkable growth over the past two decades. They are creating distinctive brand identities through cultural narratives, craftsmanship, visual storytelling, and immersive digital experiences. Emotional branding in this context has emerged as a key strategy for building deeper consumer engagement. The present study examines the emotional branding practices adopted by Indian luxury fashion brands such as Sabyasachi, Raw Mango, Anita Dongre, Rahul Mishra, Amit Aggarwal, Tarun Tahiliani, Torani, and analyses their impact on consumer perceptions, engagement, and purchasing behaviour. The study also explores how they employ storytelling, cultural symbolism, heritage communication, and digital content to strengthen brand-consumer relationships. The study further investigates the emotions evoked by these branding efforts and their influence on consumer loyalty and brand preference.

A mixed-method research approach was adopted and to supplement the qualitative findings, a consumer survey was conducted to provide quantitative insights. The findings of this study reveal that emotional branding significantly influences consumer attitudes towards Indian luxury fashion brands. Brands that effectively communicate their heritage, craftsmanship, and values through digital platforms are more likely to foster stronger consumer attachment and engagement. The study also indicates that emotional branding positively impacts brand recall, purchase intention, and long-term loyalty. The study contributes to the existing literature on luxury branding and provides practical insights for marketers, advertisers, and fashion brands seeking to enhance consumer relationships through emotional engagement.

Keywords: Emotional Branding, Consumer Perception, Digital Content, Purchasing Behaviour

INTRODUCTION

Emotional branding creates meaningful connections between brands and consumers through emotions, values, experiences, and shared beliefs. Consumers in contemporary marketing, often seek brands that reflect their values, aspirations, lifestyles, and personal identities. The luxury fashion industry often associated with symbolic value, exclusivity, prestige, self-expression, and social identity, provides a unique context for understanding the role of emotions in branding. The widespread adoption of social media platforms, digital content ecosystems, influencer culture, and online communities has enabled brands to interact with consumers in more direct and personalized ways. Luxury fashion brands frequently communicate emotions such as aspiration, confidence, belonging, nostalgia, pride,

individuality, and self-expression. Storytelling and visual communication contribute significantly to emotional branding.

Despite the growing popularity and commercial success of Indian luxury fashion brands, limited scholarly research exists regarding the emotional branding strategies employed by these brands within digital environments. Much of the existing literature focuses on global luxury brands, while comparatively little attention has been devoted to Indian luxury fashion houses and their branding approaches. Consequently, there remains a significant gap in understanding how Indian luxury brands leverage emotional appeals to engage consumers and strengthen brand relationships. The effectiveness of digital marketing initiatives in shaping consumer perceptions and purchasing behaviour remains insufficiently explored. Furthermore, contemporary luxury consumers, particularly millennial and Generation Z, seek emotional fulfillment, authenticity, and personal meaning from brands. They are more likely to engage with brands that align with their beliefs, cultural identities, and self-expression needs.

The problem addressed by this study therefore lies in the limited understanding of how emotional branding strategies are implemented by Indian luxury fashion brands in digital spaces and how consumers perceive, interpret, and respond to these branding efforts. This research by examining the intersection of emotional branding, digital communication, and consumer behaviour, aims to fill an important gap in luxury fashion marketing literature and provide insights relevant to both academics and industry practitioners. The research is based on a limited sample of respondents, which may restrict the generalization of the findings. Consumer perceptions and emotional responses may vary across different demographic and cultural groups. Emotions and brand perceptions are subjective in nature and can differ significantly from one consumer to another, making them difficult to measure with complete accuracy.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature highlights the growing role of digital platforms, influencer marketing, and visual storytelling in facilitating emotional engagement and collectively suggests that emotional branding is a critical component of luxury fashion marketing. This indicates that emotional branding in Indian luxury fashion brands is driven primarily by storytelling, nostalgia, aspiration, and exclusivity. Storytelling emerged as the most frequently discussed emotional branding strategy across the reviewed studies. Heritage communication, aspiration, and craftsmanship were also identified as significant drivers of emotional engagement. The studies by Gobe, M. (2019) - in *Emotional Branding: The New Paradigm for Connecting Brands and Consumers*, focuses on emotional experiences and sensory engagement while Albert and Merunka (2013), in *Brand Love: Toward Emotional Attachment in Luxury Branding*, emphasise emotional attachment and brand love. Keller, K. L. (2012) – in *Strategic Brand Building and Emotional Associations*, explains how emotional associations contribute to brand equity. Kapferer and Bastien (2012), Wiedmann and Hennigs (2013), Ko et al. (2016), and Singh (2021) all emphasise that consumers seek identity expression, emotional fulfillment, prestige, and aspiration through luxury purchases. The studies conducted by Hagtvedt and Patrick (2014), Kim and Sullivan (2019), Verma, S. (2022), and

Chattopadhyay, A. (2021) collectively highlight how narratives, imagery, craftsmanship, and artistic expression create emotional meaning.

The findings of studies undertaken by Atwal and Williams (2009), Euromonitor International (2020), Deloitte (2020), and Pentina, I., and Guilloux, V. (2020) all highlight the growing importance of storytelling, experiential communication, influencer engagement, and digital interaction. These studies suggest that emotional branding has become increasingly important within digital environments, where consumers expect authentic, personalised, and emotionally engaging experiences from luxury fashion brands.

Despite the extensive body of literature on emotional branding and luxury consumption, several gaps remain. There is a significant proportion of existing research has been conducted within Western luxury markets. The existing literature often focuses on consumer attitudes towards luxury brands in general, rather than examining how specific emotional branding techniques influence consumer perceptions and behaviour within digital environments. There is limited research which has examined how consumers interpret and respond to emotional branding strategies employed by Indian luxury fashion brands. So, the present study seeks to address these gaps by examining the emotional branding strategies adopted by Indian luxury fashion brands in the digital age and analysing their influence on consumer perceptions, emotional engagement, and purchase behaviour.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aims to examine the role of emotional branding in the digital communication strategies of Indian luxury fashion brands. The specific objectives are:

1. To identify the emotional branding strategies employed by Indian luxury fashion brands across digital platforms.
2. To examine the emotional themes commonly associated with Indian luxury fashion brands.
3. To understand consumer perceptions and responses towards emotional branding efforts.
4. To explore the role of digital media in facilitating emotional engagement between brands and consumers.
5. To analyse the influence of emotional branding on consumer engagement, brand perception, and purchase intention.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a qualitative research method using in-depth interviews as the primary data collection technique. Emotional branding involves subjective experiences, emotions, and personal interpretations that require detailed exploration. So, a semi-structured interview format was employed to allow respondents to share their experiences, opinions, and perceptions freely while ensuring consistency across interviews. The interview approach enabled the researcher to gain deeper insights into consumer attitudes towards luxury fashion brands and their emotional branding practices within digital environments.

SAMPLING METHOD

The study uses purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique in which participants are selected based on their relevance to the research objectives. Respondents were chosen on the basis of their familiarity with Indian luxury fashion brands and their engagement with fashion-related digital content. This approach ensured that participants could provide informed and meaningful insights regarding emotional branding and consumer behaviour. The study consists of ten respondents from varied professional and educational backgrounds, including fashion professionals, corporate employees, entrepreneurs, and students selected through purposive sampling. As the research follows a qualitative and exploratory approach, the emphasis is placed on obtaining rich and detailed insights rather than achieving statistical representation. The selected sample provided sufficient depth to understand consumer perceptions, emotional responses, and engagement with Indian luxury fashion brands.

TOOLS OF DATA COLLECTION

Primary data for the present study was collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted with selected respondents. The interviews focused on perceptions of luxury fashion, emotional engagement with brands, digital media interactions, and purchase behaviour. Secondary data was collected from academic journals, books, research papers, industry reports, dissertations, and credible online sources related to emotional branding, luxury marketing, consumer behaviour, and digital communication. The use of both primary and secondary data enabled a comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the study have been organized according to the key themes include perceptions of fashion, the role of fashion in daily life, consumer associations with Indian luxury fashion brands, emotional responses to luxury purchases, shopping behaviour, and reactions to digital advertising. The analysis highlights recurring patterns, emotional triggers, and consumer attitudes that are relevant to the objectives of the study. The findings indicate that fashion is perceived as a multidimensional concept that combines self-expression, identity construction, and cultural communication. The emphasis placed on individuality and emotional expression suggests that consumers engage with fashion on a psychological level rather than purely for functional purposes. Respondents under this study reveal that brands such as Sabyasachi, Raw Mango, Torani, Rahul Mishra, Anita Dongre, and Amit Aggarwal celebrate Indian craftsmanship and evoke emotions because they tell stories that extend beyond fashion products.

The responses also highlight the role of fashion as an evolving social phenomenon. Consumers acknowledge that trends are temporary; however, they view fashion itself as a continuous process of adaptation and reinvention. This understanding is particularly relevant to luxury fashion brands that rely on storytelling, heritage, and emotional narratives to remain culturally relevant while adapting to contemporary consumer expectations.

The findings strongly suggest that emotional branding plays a central role in shaping consumer perceptions of Indian luxury fashion brands. Respondents rarely discussed luxury brands in terms of product functionality. Their descriptions instead focused on emotional experiences, symbolic meanings, and cultural narratives. The findings indicate that consumers derive significant emotional value from luxury fashion brands, reinforcing the argument that successful luxury branding extends beyond products and creates meaningful emotional relationships with consumers.

The responses regarding the influence of fashion on daily life indicate that consumers view fashion as an extension of their personal narratives. This finding is particularly relevant to emotional branding because it demonstrates why consumers often form emotional attachments to brands that align with their values, aspirations, and self-image. The findings suggest that fashion performs both functional and emotional roles in consumers' lives and fashion serves as a medium for identity construction, confidence building, and social communication. Consumers perceive fashion as a holistic experience involving multiple product categories rather than clothing alone. Traditional and contemporary fashion categories coexist within consumer preferences, demonstrating the unique balance between heritage and modernity that characterizes Indian luxury fashion consumption. These findings support the notion that luxury fashion brands must communicate emotional value across multiple product categories.

The emotions identified in the interviews align closely with the emotional branding themes discussed in the literature review, particularly nostalgia, aspiration, cultural pride, authenticity, and identity expression. This suggests that emotional branding serves as a powerful mechanism through which Indian luxury fashion brands differentiate themselves and build lasting consumer relationships. The findings of the study also indicate that luxury purchases are strongly influenced by emotional and symbolic motivations. Consumers derive value not only from the product itself but also from the experiences, memories, and meanings attached to the purchase. This reinforces the central argument of the study that emotional branding plays a critical role in shaping luxury consumption behaviour. The findings also suggest that emotional branding plays an important role in developing long-term consumer relationships. Emotional attachment increases brand recall, positive perceptions, consumer engagement, repeat purchases, and recommendations.

Consumers are more likely to remain loyal to brands that consistently communicate authentic values and meaningful emotional experiences. Emotional engagement therefore serves as an important foundation for sustained brand loyalty. Brands that successfully communicate heritage, authenticity, and aspiration are more likely to create emotional value that influences consumer decision-making. These findings support the study's central argument that emotional engagement is a critical driver of luxury fashion consumption in the Indian market. Digital media plays a critical role in facilitating emotional branding. Platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and fashion websites enable brands to communicate stories, showcase craftsmanship, and engage consumers through immersive visual content. Digital communication has become an important mechanism for building emotional connections and maintaining brand visibility. Storytelling emerged as one of the most influential branding tools identified during the study. Stories centered on heritage, artisanship, family traditions,

identity, and aspiration generated particularly strong responses. The findings indicate that visually rich digital content, fashion films, behind-the-scenes narratives, artisan stories, and interactive campaigns generate stronger emotional responses than traditional advertising approaches.

The findings support the central premise of the study that emotional branding has become an essential component of luxury fashion communication in the digital age. Indian luxury fashion brands are increasingly competing not only through product quality and exclusivity but also through their ability to create emotional resonance and meaningful consumer experiences.

CONCLUSION

The Indian luxury fashion industry once largely driven by craftsmanship, exclusivity, and product quality, has evolved into a dynamic space where emotional experiences play an increasingly important role in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviour. Emotional branding has emerged as one of the most influential strategies employed by luxury fashion brands in the present-day society characterised by digital connectivity, social media engagement, and rapidly changing consumer expectations. The purpose of this study was to examine the emotional branding strategies used by Indian luxury fashion brands in the digital age and to understand how consumers perceive and respond to these strategies. The study through qualitative interviews and extensive review of existing literature, has explored the relationship between emotional branding, digital communication, and consumer behaviour within the context of Indian luxury fashion.

The findings clearly indicate that consumers no longer evaluate luxury fashion brands solely on the basis of product quality, design, or exclusivity rather emotional and symbolic dimensions have become increasingly important. Consumers seek brands that reflect their identities, aspirations, values, and cultural experiences. Luxury fashion products are often viewed as extensions of the self, carrying meanings that go beyond their functional purpose. One of the most significant conclusions emerging from the research is that fashion serves as a powerful medium of self-expression. Participants consistently described fashion as a means of communicating personality, confidence, lifestyle, and individuality. Clothing choices were associated with emotional experiences rather than practical needs alone. This suggests that emotional branding is particularly relevant within the fashion industry because consumers frequently use fashion to construct and communicate personal identity.

The research further demonstrates that emotional branding is especially effective when it incorporates elements of heritage, culture, and authenticity. Unlike many international luxury brands that rely primarily on prestige and exclusivity, Indian luxury fashion brands possess a unique advantage in their ability to draw upon centuries of cultural heritage, craftsmanship, and artisanal traditions. These cultural assets provide brands with rich storytelling opportunities that resonate strongly with consumers.

The study reveals that consumers experience feelings of pride, admiration, nostalgia, belonging, and cultural appreciation when engaging with luxury brands that celebrate Indian traditions and craftsmanship. Heritage communication therefore functions not only as a branding strategy but also as a means of strengthening emotional bonds between consumers and brands. Consumers consistently recalled narratives, campaigns, and emotional experiences rather than specific product features. Stories about artisans, craftsmanship, family traditions, cultural memories, and creative inspiration were found to generate stronger emotional engagement than purely promotional messages. This finding reinforces the idea that luxury branding is fundamentally about meaning creation. Successful brands do not simply sell products; they sell stories, experiences, aspirations, and identities. Storytelling transforms products into symbols that consumers can emotionally connect with, making it one of the most valuable tools in emotional branding.

The study also highlights the transformative impact of digital media on luxury fashion communication. Social media platforms have fundamentally changed the relationship between brands and consumers. Rather than relying solely on traditional advertising channels, luxury brands now engage consumers through continuous digital interaction. Consumers encounter luxury fashion content through Instagram posts, fashion films, influencer collaborations, digital campaigns, and online communities. These platforms provide opportunities for brands to create immersive and emotionally engaging experiences that were previously difficult to achieve through traditional media. The findings indicate that consumers are most responsive to digital content that feels authentic, visually compelling, and emotionally meaningful. Highly curated visual aesthetics, behind-the-scenes content, artisan stories, and culturally rooted narratives generate stronger emotional engagement than overtly promotional communication. This suggests that digital platforms are most effective when used as storytelling tools rather than simple advertising channels.

The research further confirms that emotional branding significantly influences consumer attitudes and purchase behaviour. Luxury purchases are rarely driven by practical necessity. They are motivated by emotional considerations such as aspiration, recognition, self-expression, confidence, achievement, and personal fulfillment.

The findings also suggest that emotional branding contributes directly to consumer loyalty. Consumers who develop emotional connections with brands are more likely to engage with brand content, recommend brands to others, remain loyal over time, and make repeat purchases. Emotional engagement therefore represents a valuable long-term investment for luxury fashion brands seeking sustainable growth.

The study from a theoretical perspective reinforces the relevance of Emotional Branding Theory, Brand Love Theory, Luxury Consumption Theory, and Consumer Behaviour Theory within the Indian luxury fashion context. The findings support existing literature that argues emotions play a central role in shaping consumer decision-making and brand relationships. The research from a practical perspective, offers valuable implications for luxury fashion marketers and communication professionals. Brands must move beyond product-centered communication and focus on creating meaningful emotional experiences, as digital

competition continues to increase. Consumers increasingly expect authenticity, cultural relevance, transparency, and emotional value from the brands they support.

The study therefore concludes that emotional branding is no longer an optional marketing strategy within the luxury fashion sector. It has become a strategic necessity. Brands that successfully combine storytelling, heritage, craftsmanship, visual aesthetics, and digital engagement are more likely to establish meaningful consumer relationships and sustain long-term relevance in an increasingly competitive marketplace. The success of Indian luxury fashion brands in the digital age ultimately, depends not only on what they create but also on the emotions they inspire. The strongest brands are those that move beyond products and become part of memories, aspirations, identities, and personal stories of consumers. Emotional branding enables luxury fashion brands to achieve this connection, making it one of the most powerful tools shaping the future of the Indian luxury fashion industry.

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