

The influence of luxury brand selfies on luxury brand preference

Velian Zalfa¹, Popy Rufaidah²

¹*Master of Management Science Program, Faculty of Economics and Business,
Universitas Padjadjaran, Bandung, Indonesia*

²*Department of Management and Business, Faculty of Economics and Business,
Universitas Padjadjaran, Bandung, Indonesia*

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Abstract

In today's digital era, the growing phenomenon of luxury brand selfies has sparked interest in understanding their impact on consumer attitudes. This study explores how sharing selfies featuring luxury brands on social media influences consumers' preferences toward those brands. Employing a quantitative approach, data were collected through an online survey distributed to 225 respondents who had purchased luxury brands and actively shared brand-related selfies. Using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), the research tested the effect of three dimensions—narcissism, materialism, and selfie posting behavior—on luxury brand preference. The findings reveal that among the three variables, only materialism significantly affects luxury brand preference. In contrast, narcissism and selfie-posting behavior show no meaningful influence. This suggests that highly materialistic individuals are more likely to prefer luxury brands, as these brands align with their desire for symbolic status. The study provides insight into consumer-brand interaction in the digital space. It encourages future research to include additional psychological or cultural variables to better understand brand-related behavior in online environments.

Keywords: *luxury brand selfies, narcissism, materialism, luxury selfie posting behavior, luxury brand preference.*

Introduction

The urge to take selfies online has become one of the primary ways individuals build emotional closeness and create social connections in cyberspace (Raza et al., 2024). This habit then gave birth to a phenomenon called brand selfies, namely the activity of someone taking a selfie with a product, logo, name, or particular visual element and then uploading it to social media (Hartmann et al., 2021). This study is grounded in assemblage theory, which conceptualizes selfies as a composite of human and non-human elements—individuals, brands, objects, technologies, and digital spaces (Presi et al., 2016). In this context, luxury brand selfies are understood as digital expressions that integrate personal identity and brand symbolism. The theory supports the idea that digital behaviors like selfie-posting can create brand meaning and preference through these assemblages.

This literature review will critically examine the existing literature on the role of brand selfies in shaping consumer-brand relationships, particularly in the context of luxury goods. In a more specific context, the term luxury brand selfies refers to sharing self-portraits uploaded in association with luxury brands as a symbol of social status, self-expression, and representation of wealth (Sung et al., 2018). Therefore, this study is motivated by the increasing interest in understanding how social interactions in digital media shape

consumer perceptions and behaviors towards luxury brands. A study found that taking a selfie with a particular brand's product can increase a person's emotional connection to the brand, ultimately increasing brand preference and purchase intention (Hofstetter et al., 2020). The literature reveals several unanswered questions, including how the propensity to take selfies with luxury brands directly impacts consumers' brand preferences without going through complex symbolic processes. To understand the complexity of the relationship between brand selfies and brand preference, it is essential to thoroughly examine this behavior's psychological, social, and digital context dimensions. Brand preference itself refers to a person's positive attitude towards a brand, which influences purchasing decisions. (Rai & Bhattarai, 2024).

Luxury brand preference is the ability of wealthy people to recognize luxury brands in the market (Raza et al., 2024). In this case, brand preference can occur due to the perception of superiority, where even in the luxury goods segment, all brands consider themselves superior (Ligaraba et al., 2024). The importance of this research lies in its contribution to a new understanding of the relationship between digital consumption behavior, such as brand selfies, and the formation of preferential attitudes towards luxury brands. The luxury goods industry not only sells exclusivity and quality and symbolic value closely linked to social status (Ostovan & Khalili Nasr, 2022). Therefore, preference for a luxury brand is not only based on product features but also the social recognition and emotional experiences accompanying it, primarily through brand selfies (Raza et al., 2024). Although selfies with luxury goods are increasingly common on social media, understanding their specific influence on luxury brand preferences is still limited, especially in Indonesia. Based on previous research, academics are also interested in studying how brand selfies influence brand preference.

Although the existing literature highlights several mediating variables and symbolic approaches to investigate the relationship between luxury brand selfies and luxury brand preference, this study will extend it by exploring how the dimensions of narcissism, materialism, and luxury selfie posting behavior directly contribute to the formation of luxury brand preference. A study by Raza et al. (2023) added brand signature as a mediating variable. Then, a study by Raza et al. (2024) proposes luxury brand currency as an additional mediating variable that bridges the influence of luxury signature on luxury brand preference in the context of luxury brand selfies. However, the concept used in previous studies did not emphasize the direct influence between luxury brand selfie activities and luxury brand preference. Previous researchers have argued that existing frameworks in the literature oversimplify the socio-psychological dynamics that occur in sharing brand selfies. This behavior often contains social meaning, status, and a rich symbolic representation of identity.

Previous studies have explored symbolic and mediated path ways between social media behavior and brand preferences. Narcissism and materialism have been shown to influence luxury-related behavior on digital platforms, including brand selfie-posting and luxury consumption motives (Cisek et al., 2014; Sung et al., 2018). However, few have empirically examined the direct influence of narcissism, materialism, and selfie-posting behavior within single, unified model—particularly in emerging markets like Indonesia. Recent studies in simila Southeast Asian context have begun to address these links but often include mediating constructs or focus on online purchase behavior rather than preference

formation (Raza et al., 2023; Somthawinpongsai et al., 2022). This study addresses that research gap by proposing a direct-effects framework grounded in assemblage theory to assess how digital psychological traits influence luxury brand preference.

Therefore, by investigating the phenomenon of luxury brand selfies, this study attempts to address the gap by simplifying the approach and focusing on the direct influence of luxury brand selfies on luxury brand preference. By analyzing the direct effects, this study offers a clearer and more actionable understanding of how day-to-day social media activities, such as a posting selfies with luxury brands, can independently shape brand preference without the need for symbolic or mediating variables. The research questions guiding this investigation were designed to explore how each dimension of luxury brand selfies—narcissism, materialism, and luxury selfie posting behavior—may directly influence brand preference. Based on the gaps identified in the literature, this study will address the following questions: Do luxury brand selfies directly influence the formation of consumer attitudes towards luxury brands without the need for complex symbolic construction? The main objective of this study is to see how strong the impact of everyday digital activities, such as uploading selfies with brands, is on the formation of consumer preferences for a brand. It is also hoped that this simpler model can open up space for a more concrete understanding, especially in Indonesia, where there has not been much research into this kind of study.

Methods

This study adopts a quantitative approach that aims to generate new insights into the influence of luxury brand selfies on luxury brand preference. The reason behind choosing the quantitative method as the main approach in this research is based on its relevance to the research objective, which is to measure the influence between constructs objectively and measurably. The online survey method was used as the primary data collection technique to meet the research objectives because it can efficiently reach respondents with relevant characteristics. The research model is shown in Figure 1. Following the research objectives mentioned above, the quantitative research design used for this study is explanatory research with a survey approach that allows the identification of the influence between variables.

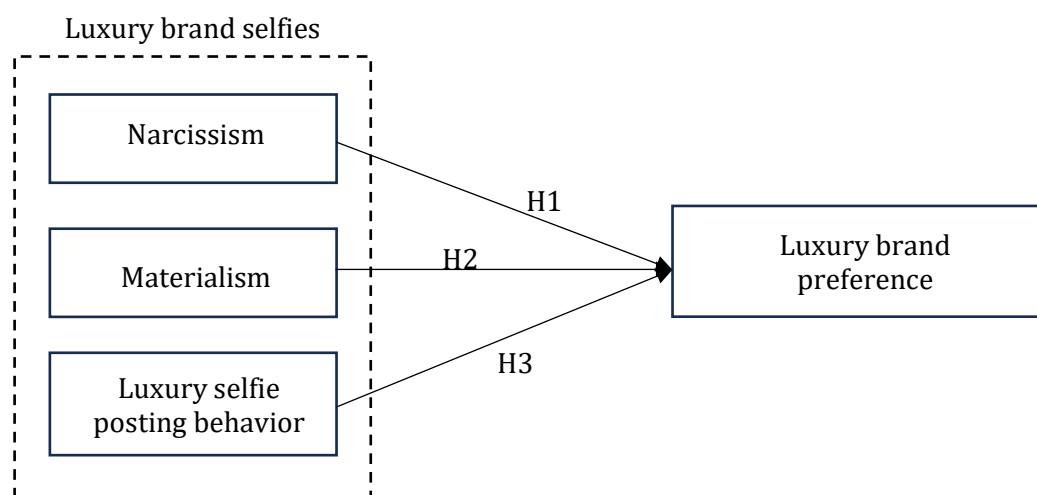


Figure 1. Research Framework

Respondent were selected using purposive sampling based on clear screening criteria: (1) They have purchased at least one luxury brand item, and (2) They have have posted at least one selfie with a luxury brand product on social media. Before filling out the questionnaire, participants were also asked some screening questions to confirm these criteria. This approach ensures that all respondents have relevant experiential knowledge, aligning with the research objectives.

The questionnaire was distributed through social media platforms, including X, Instagram, and WhatsApp. It was aimed at Indonesian citizens, especially those who have purchased luxury brands and like to share their selfies on social media. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, where, in this study, the sample selection method was based on specific characteristics and criteria (Casteel & Bridier, 2021). The total number of respondents in this study was 225. The sample size followed the rule of thumb by using a minimum of 5-10 times the number of indicators (Hair et al., 2019). The total number of indicators applied in this study was 37. For this reason, the sample size used was five times larger than the indicators, so 225 respondents had met the minimum sample size.

Each questionnaire item is evaluated on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree. This study adopted 37 items taken from previous studies. Luxury brand selfies were measured using three dimensions, namely narcissism, materialism, and luxury selfie posting behavior (Raza et al., 2024; Sung et al., 2018). Where narcissism is measured with 13 items adapted from Gentile et al. (2013), materialism is measured with 18 items adapted from Richins and Dawson (1992), while luxury selfie posting behavior is measured with a source adapted from (Sung et al., 2018). Meanwhile, luxury brand preference is a one-dimensional construct measured using a four-item scale from (Chang & Liu 2009).

The collected data were then analyzed using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach with the help of SmartPLS4 software. The evaluation conducted in this study includes the measurement model (outer model) and the structural model (inner model). The outer model includes convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability tests.

Results and Discussions

Most respondents, or 60.4% in this study, were female. Most were aged between 18 – 35 years, and no respondents were 55 years or older. Regarding education level, most respondents have a bachelor's degree, which is 45.8% (103 people). In terms of employment, most respondents work as entrepreneurs (34.2%), employees (28.9%), and freelancers (20.9%). Geographically, the majority of respondents live on Java Island, and most earn between IDR 5,000,000 and IDR 20,000,000.

To ensure the data's relevance to the research topic, all respondents in this study have had experience purchasing luxury brand products. In addition, they are active on social media, where the majority spend between one and six hours. All respondents have also uploaded selfies featuring luxury brand products or logos, indicating visual engagement appropriate to this study's context. Regarding upload frequency, 43.6% of respondents do so several times a month.

Table 1. Respondent Profile

	Profile	F	%
Gender	Male	89	39,6%
	Famale	136	60.4%
Age	18 – 25 years old	98	43.6%
	26 – 35 years old	96	42.7%
	36 – 45 years old	23	10.2%
	46 – 55 years old	8	3.6%
	>55 years old		
Education	Senior High School	45	20%
	Associate Degree (D3/D4)	48	21.3%
	Bachelor's Degree (S1)	103	45.8%
	Master's Degree (S2)	27	12%
	Doctoral Degree (S3)	2	0.9%
Occupation	High School Student	1	0.4%
	College Student	33	14.7%
	Employee	65	28.9%
	Freelance	47	20.9%
	Entrepreneur	77	34.2%
	Unemployed	2	0.9%
Domicile	West Java	29	12.9%
	East Java	34	15.1%
	Centre of Java	33	14.7%
	DKI Jakarta	53	23.6%
	DI Yogyakarta	29	12.9%
	Banten	24	10.7%
	Outside Java Island	23	10.2%
Income (per month)	<Rp 2,000,000	2	0.9%
	Rp 2,000,000 - Rp 5,000,000	10	4.4%
	Rp 5,000,000 - Rp 10,000,000	67	29.8%
	Rp 10,000,000 - Rp 15,000,000	83	36.9%
	Rp 15,000,000 - Rp 20,000,000	47	20.9%
	>Rp 20,000,000	16	7.1%
Have you ever purchased a luxury brand??	Yes	225	1
	No		
Frequency of social media use in a day	<1 hour	28	12.4%
	1 – 3 hours	91	40.4%
	4 – 6 hours	88	39.1%
	> 6 hours	18	8%
Have you ever uploaded a selfie with a Luxury Brand product or logo?	Yes	225	1
	No		
If yes, how often do you do it?	Everyday	27	12%
	Several times a week	52	23.1%
	Several times a month	98	43.6%
	Rarely/Never	48	21.3%

Note: F = Frequency

Table 2. Construct Validity and Reliability Measurement

Items	Outer Loadings
Luxury Brand Selfies (X):	
Narcissism (X.1) $\alpha = 0.953$, CR = 0.955, AVE = 0.641	
BSN2 — I have a strong willpower.	0.830
BSN3 — People always seem to recognize my authority.	0.838
BSN4 — I am a born influencer and a leader.	0.803
BSN5 — I know that I am the best because everybody keeps telling me so.	0.811
BSN6 — I like to show myself off.	0.805
BSN7 — I like to look at myself.	0.817
BSN8 — I will usually show off if I get the chance.	0.733
BSN9 — I like to look at myself in the mirror often.	0.820
BSN10 — I find it easy to manipulate people.	0.767
BSN11 — I insist upon getting the respect that I deserve.	0.860
BSN12 — I expect a great deal from other people.	0.784
BSN13 — I will never be satisfied until I get all that I deserve.	0.728
Materialism (X.2) $\alpha = 0.938$, CR = 0.948, AVE = 0.669	
BM2 — Some of the most important achievements in life include acquiring material possessions.	0.825
BM6 — I don't pay much attention to the material objects other people own.	0.778
BM7 — I usually buy only the things I need.	0.785
BM8 — I try to keep my life luxurious in regard to possessions.	0.833
BM9 — The things I own aren't all that important to me.	0.832
BM10 — I enjoy spending money on things that aren't practical.	0.822
BM13 — I put less emphasis on material things than most people I know.	0.834
BM16 — I would be any happier if I owned nicer things.	0.830
BM17 — I'd be happier if I could afford to buy more things.	0.821
Luxury Selfie Posting Behavior (X.3) $\alpha = 0.781$, CR = 0.901, AVE = 0.820	
LSPN1 — I like to post my selfies with brands in order to provide honest reviews to my followers and friends.	0.912
LSPN2 — I believe that information shared on social media is credible.	0.900
Luxury Brand Preference (Y) $\alpha = 0.844$, CR = 0.928, AVE = 0.865	
BP1 — I think this luxury brand is superior to other brands.	0.930
BP3 — This brand is surely my first choice if I were to buy a luxury product.	0.930

PLS-SEM evaluation is generally carried out in two separate steps: the measurement model (outer model) and the structural model (inner model). The main objective of the outer model is to obtain valid and reliable constructs. Validity is obtained through convergent validity measurements by looking at the outer loadings and AVE values shown in Table 2. According to the rule of thumb, the ideal outer loading value should be >0.70 and the AVE value >0.50 (Hair et al., 2022). After eliminating some irrelevant and highly correlated factors, the items extracted from the construct, as described in detail in Table 2, are: narcissism (12 items), materialism (9 items), luxury selfie posting behavior (2 items), and luxury brand preference (2 items). Meanwhile, discriminant validity is seen from the

Fornell-Larcker results shown in Table 3. The results show that the Fornell-Larcker criteria have been met. Namely, the square root of AVE is higher than the highest correlation of the other constructs (Hair et al., 2022).

Table 3. Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker)

	BP	LSPN	BM	BSN
Luxury Brand Preference (BP)	0.930			
Luxury Selfie Posting Behavior (LSPN)	0.394	0.906		
Materialism (BM)	0.863	0.474	0.818	
Narcissism (BSN)	-0.106	0.577	-0.064	0.801

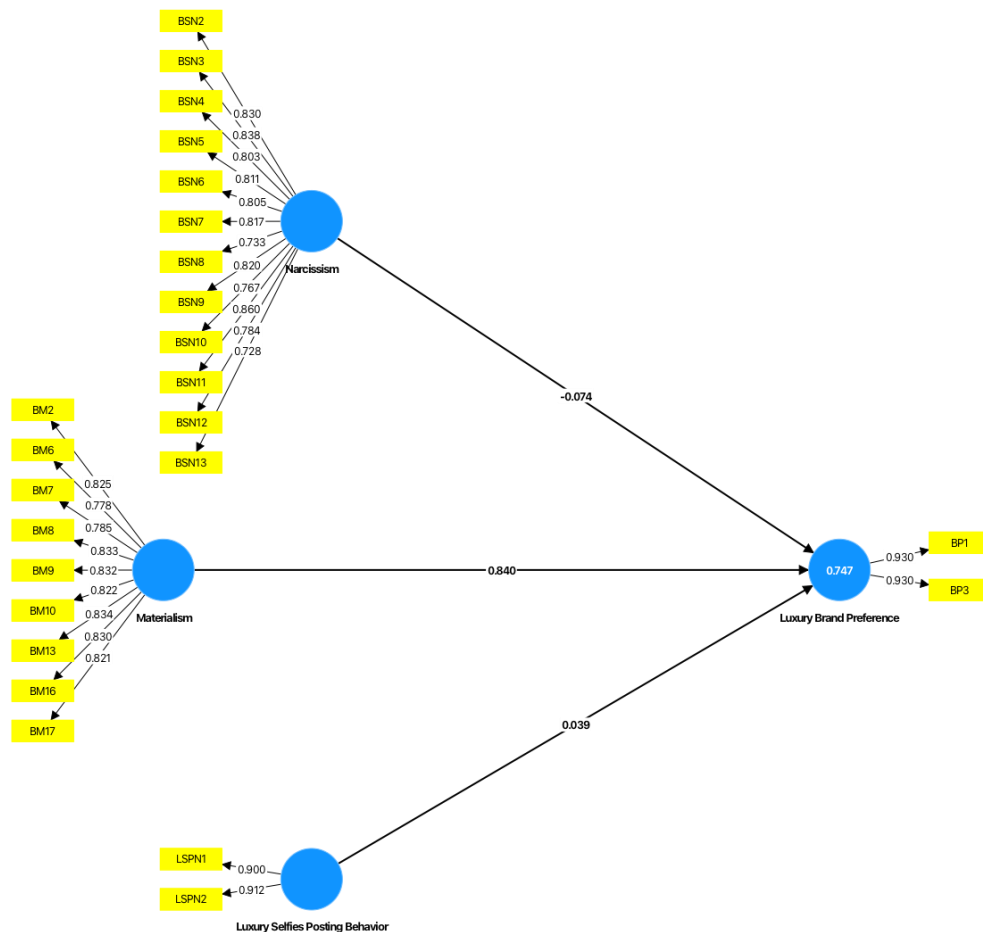


Figure 2. Outer Model & Structural Model

The next step in evaluating the PLS-SEM results is to evaluate the structural model by looking at the R^2 value, Q^2 value, and path coefficient (Hair et al., 2022). Where the coefficient of determination (R^2) value is 0.75 = strong, 0.50 = moderate, and 0.25 = weak (Hair et al., 2021), the R^2 results shown in Figure 2 are categorized as strong. Luxury brand preference (BP) has an R^2 of 0.747, close to 0.75, which means that 74.7% of the variance in preference for luxury brands can be explained by the exogenous construct in this model, namely luxury brand selfies. The predictive relevance of Q^2 is tested using a blindfolding procedure to measure the model's predictive ability. The Q^2 value must be positive or

greater than zero to indicate the model has excellent predictive ability (Hair et al., 2022). The significant value of Q^2 in this study is 0.638 for BP, which means it has excellent predictive relevance to the endogenous construct.

Table 4. Path Coefficient

Hypothesis	Path Coefficients	T- Statistics	P-Values	Decision
Narcissism -> Luxury Brand Preference	-0.074	0.940	0.347	Rejected
Materialism -> Luxury Brand Preference	0.840	19.583	0.000	Accepted
Luxury Selfie Posting Behavior -> Luxury Brand Preference	0.039	0.562	0.574	Rejected

Hypothesis testing uses path coefficient analysis involving t-statistic and p-value values, which are tested using bootstrapping (Hair et al., 2022). The results are shown in Table 4 and Figure 2, where two relationships are not significant out of three relationships. Narcissism and luxury selfie posting behavior have p-values above 0.05 and t-statistics <1.96. The hypothesis is accepted if the t-statistic value is >1.96 and the p-value is lower than the significance level (0.05) (Hair et al., 2021). This shows that the desire to show off or the frequency of sharing selfies with luxury brands on social media does not necessarily correlate with preferences for the brand. Meanwhile, the relationship between materialism and luxury brand preference has a significant effect with a p-value <0.05 and t-statistic >1.96. This finding can strengthen the understanding that individuals with materialistic tendencies tend to have higher preferences for luxury brands because they view the brand as a symbol of status and social value.

The significant influencer of materialism aligns with previous findings that materialistic consumers are more likely to engage with luxury brands to fulfil symbolic status needs and enhance their social identity (Sung et al., 2018). Conversely, while narcissism and selfie-posting behavior have been associated with increased social media activity and self-presentation tendencies Weiser et al. (2015), the non-significant effect observed in this study suggests that such traits do not necessarily translate into luxury brand preference. This may be influenced by cultural norms around modesty and self-expression in Indonesian society, highlighting the importance of context-specific analysis and the limitations of generalizing Western psychological construct (Sorokowski et al., 2015).

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that of the three independent variables that form the construct of luxury brand selfies, only materialism is proven to have a significant effect on luxury brand preference. This shows that actively displaying themselves with a luxury brand on social media will strengthen the emotional attachment and perception of value towards the luxury brand. This means that the higher the level of individual materialism, the greater their tendency to choose and like the luxury brands shown. However, this study has several limitations. Future studies could explore psychological constructs such as self-esteem, social comparison orientation, and need for

uniqueness, as these factors may influence how consumers use luxury brands to construct identity.

From an academic perspective, these results provide new theoretical insights by applying assemblage theory to digital consumer behavior, highlighting the direct impact of psychological traits—particularly materialism—on luxury brand preference without. The findings challenge traditional assumptions about narcissism and digital visibility, suggesting that context and cultural values play a crucial moderating role in determining brand outcomes. Practically, the results can guide marketers and luxury brand managers in targeting consumers who demonstrate materialistic tendencies, as they are more likely to develop brand preference through visual brand engagement. Marketing strategies should focus less on status-driven imagery and more on authentic, value-oriented messaging that resonates with consumers' desire for symbolic self-construction.

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