

**MATERIALISM OR MORALITY IN SOCIAL MEDIA, WHICH MATTERS THE MOST? INSIGHTS FROM MILLENNIALS LUXURY CONSUMPTION**

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**ABSTRACT**

Social media are increasingly becoming a fundamental channel for every marketing strategy, particularly in advertising. The pertinent literature stresses how Millennials - the digital born generation very inclined to web interaction - represent one of the most relevant segments of social media users. Hence, firms are more and more using social media channels to engage Millennials, especially thanks to the use of mobile apps. Although Millennials do not represent the traditional target of luxury firms, social media might represent a useful strategic tool to reach them and also transfer the luxury brands' image and value. While scholars widely investigated the relationship between social media usage and purchase intention toward the luxury brand, scant attention has been given to the underlying mechanisms. Specifically, this study proposes and empirically tests a conceptual model investigating the role of both materialism and morality, which are hypothesized as mediating variables of the aforementioned relationship. On the one hand, Millennials represent one of the most materialist and narcissistic generations; on the other hand, they also pay a lot of attention to the ethical and moral side of purchase decision making. Moreover, the proposed model hypothesizes motivation to use social media and advertising skepticism as moderating variables of these linkages. In this way, this study contributes to the social media advertising literature by better exploring Millennials' cognitive mechanisms toward luxury purchase intention. The model is tested using bootstrapping moderated-mediation analysis on a sample of 290 Millennials using social media to get information on and purchase luxury brands. Consistently with the literature, materialism significantly mediates the social media – purchase intention relationship. Counterintuitively, also morality plays a significant role as a mediating variable of such a relationship. Finally, motivation to use significantly moderated both the linkages between social media usage and materialism and morality; similarly, advertising skepticism is also a significant moderating variable in the model. Theoretical and practical implications are provided and discussed, along with suggestions for future researches.

**Keywords:** advertising, brand communication, luxury, materialism, morality, social media

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