

Research proposal outline

MSc ITMOC 2006/2007

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Title of proposed research

Investigation into the use of e-commerce in luxury brands and the consequences on consumers behavior

Purpose, Research questions, Target audience

This research aims to fill the gap of the lack of current information on luxury brands' use of World Wide Web (WWW) by surveying luxury brand managers and consumers. The purpose of the research is to analyse the current involvement of luxury brands with the WWW and which is their managers' and their customers' perception on that. Based on this analysis this research will attempt to determine the opportunities and threats emerging for the brand managers concerning multinational strategy due to global access to the brand's website. The key questions I will attempt to answer are the following:

1. Which is the current use of the web by the luxury brands?
2. How and to what extend does the web affect the luxury brand management?
3. How and to what extend does the e-commerce affect a luxury brand's awareness and dream value?

The target audience is focused mostly on businesses since the data that will be used derive from surveying managers and consumers of luxury goods, both products and services/experiences. The results may be generalised within similar luxury industries, for example apparel and footwear, automobile and yachting, traveling and leisure. This research's information can also be used as reference for internet branding in general.

Research methods

The first research question will be addressed with literature research regarding the internet branding and consumers' behavior. Moreover, surveys will be conducted in a sample that consumed luxury products in the last 12 months and owns an internet connection, as well as interviews with managers involved in the luxury industry. This way I will manage to assess the costumers expectations from a luxury brand website compared to managers perception of the e-commerce use. The second question will be addressed mostly through literature research on internet branding scaling it down specifically for luxury brands combined with the results of the survey and the interviews. The final question will be addressed with an extensive literature research on multinational brand management and brand strategy. The goal is to link concepts such as luxury brand awareness, dream value, exposure and the "rarity principle" with use of e-commerce, especially online shops.

Timetable

Task	Time Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meeting with the supervisor, setting the course of action and methodology that will be used • library-based literature research (books, articles) on luxury branding, e-commerce, luxury brand strategy and consumers behavior in order to establish the required background on the topic 	2 months
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • questionnaires preparation, define survey parameters (sample used) • contact managers involved with luxury brands, inform them about the research and arrange interview meeting dates within the next 3 months 	1 month
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • research start: distribute questionnaires 	1 week
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • few days off 	1 week
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meet the managers and interview them, record the interview • gather survey data and interviews details and analyse them aligning them with the literature in order to extract as much information as possible out of it 	3 months
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • model survey and interview information and combine it with the literature • produce first draft 	1,5 months
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • few days off 	1 week
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meeting with the supervisor: report progress and results so far, get feedback and advice on how to continue with the research • make the appropriate adjustments • report back to the supervisor and get final feedback 	1,5 months
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • finalise thesis 	2 months
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • back up time / few days off 	1 week