ISSN 2601-8659 (Print)
ISSN 2601-8667 (Online)
European Journal of
Marketing and Economics
December 2025
Volume 8, Issue 4

 [redacted]

Submitted: 15/10/2025 - Accepted: 19/11/2025 - Published: 28/12/2025

Luxury Marketing: A Case Study of Cartier

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DOI: 10.26417/8qk8h740

Abstract

This paper, proposed within the scope of the Commercial Management and Marketing course of the Master's Degree in Business Management, aims to analyse the concept of luxury marketing through a case study of Cartier. Its objective is to understand the creation of symbolic value, consumer behaviour and the relationship between the brand and its customers. Luxury marketing integrates emotional, social and symbolic factors for customers, associated with the exclusivity, prestige and experience that the brand possesses. It is clear that different types of consumers and certain financial, functional, individual and social aspects influence the consumption of luxury goods. The customer experience is fundamental to customer loyalty as well as to building lasting relationships, personalising, using storytelling and managing the consumer journey. The company chosen to conduct this study was Cartier, which confirms these assumptions. This highlights a brand positioned at an intermediate level of the luxury pyramid, combining traditional craftsmanship with contemporary communication. When making a purchase, consumers associate a moment of emotion with meaning, which reinforces the idea of the symbolic value of the products. Cartier has a relational strategy based on the balance between proximity and exclusivity, through personalised services and an omnichannel approach. Finally, the theoretical contribution of this work concludes that Cartier's success results from a combination of tradition, innovation and focus on experience. It also concludes that luxury today is based mainly on meaning, relationship and the feeling of belonging provided to the customer.

Keywords: Luxury marketing; Consumer behaviour; Customer experience; Cartier

Introduction

Although luxury brands have traditionally been associated with exclusivity, craftsmanship, and high symbolic value, there has been a progressive adaptation of their strategies in response to changing consumer expectations, technological advances, and the evolution of sociocultural dynamics. In this context, it becomes particularly relevant to understand how luxury value is created, perceived, and consumed by consumers.

Therefore, luxury consumption is no longer merely a functional act, but rather a complex phenomenon influenced by symbolic meanings, emotional motivations, and social dynamics. Luxury marketing focuses on the creation of symbolic value and the generation of desire for the acquisition of premium products or services, in which consumers value exclusivity, superior quality, personalized experiences, and emotional connection. Beyond the product or service itself, luxury brands sell dreams, status, and a sense of belonging to a community.

Accordingly, the present study aims to analyze luxury marketing through a case study of Cartier, an indisputable reference in the luxury sector that occupies a singular position in the world of jewelry. Founded in 1847, the brand embodies a tradition of excellence that goes beyond a historical legacy and is reflected in a strong commitment to the quality of its creations, its know-how, the customer service provided, and the activities developed by Cartier (Cartier, 2026).

Thus, this study begins with a theoretical framework on luxury marketing, including the definition of the concept, an explanation of the luxury pyramid, the characterization of luxury consumers and their behaviors, the analysis of customer experience, and the main current challenges and trends in the sector. Based on this literature review, a case study of Cartier is conducted, analyzing consumer behavior, the brand's relationship with its customers, and the challenges it faces in reaching its target audience.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Luxury Marketing

From a marketing perspective, Vickers and Jonathan (2003) (as cited in Costa et al., 2019) identify three fundamental dimensions that differentiate luxury goods from non-luxury goods. The first concerns functionality, understood as the product's ability to satisfy a specific need, standing out for its high quality and durability, which reduces the need for replacement over time. The second dimension corresponds to empiricism, which encompasses attributes capable of providing sensory pleasure to the consumer, such as design and elegance. Finally, symbolism refers to the intangible elements associated with luxury, including brand awareness, style, and easily recognizable design, with the consumption of these goods often related to the search for social status or acceptance by a particular group.

In line with the thoughts of previous authors, Heine (2012) states that luxury is everything that is desirable and goes beyond what is necessary and common, and

Cascais (2012) reinforces that luxury enhances emotional pleasure for its consumer and triggers a sociological dimension, namely social stratification (Cascais, 2012).

Haurani (2016), based on his review of the literature, found that luxury can be divided into three layers that form the pyramid of luxury: inaccessible luxury, intermediate luxury, and accessible luxury. The top of the pyramid, inaccessible luxury, is occupied by old and traditional companies that work in an artisanal way; the tradition of these brands, the excellence in their manufacturing processes, and their great international recognition reinforce their value; their communication is subtle and selective. The middle level of the pyramid corresponds to brands of excellent quality, but more accessible than the previous ones; their communication is selective, but has a wider reach than that seen at the top of the pyramid. The base of the pyramid houses affordable luxury, which includes newer and less traditional companies; their distribution remains selective, but their products are manufactured in greater numbers and at lower costs.

2.2 Types of Luxury Consumers and Their Behavior

According to Dubois et al. (2005), three segments of luxury consumers can be identified: elitist, democratic, and distant.

On the one hand, based on a traditional view that regards luxury as something targeted at a small elite, the “elitist” segment stands out. This group is characterized by the belief that it is justifiable for only a limited number of people to have access to luxury goods, as luxury is perceived to be reserved for individuals who are refined and possess the education required to appreciate such products and services, given that luxury enables differentiation and implies good taste. In addition, elitist consumers believe that luxury goods, besides not being available in supermarkets, should not be mass-produced.

In contrast, adopting a more modern and open perspective on luxury, the “democratic” segment argues that luxury can be extended to a broader audience and that everyone should have access to it, as a special education is not considered essential to fully appreciate luxury. Democratic consumers do not perceive luxury as restricted, excessively expensive, or synonymous with “good taste”; therefore, it does not constitute a factor of social differentiation in relation to non-consumers. Furthermore, for this segment, luxury goods may be mass-produced and should be available in supermarkets.

Finally, the “distant” segment is characterized by consumers who believe that luxury is a world to which they do not belong and by a lack of personal attraction to it. As a result, they hold a more negative view of luxury, considering it useless and overly expensive. Consequently, they are not oriented toward purchasing such goods and instead tend to choose replicas, which they regard as being as good as the original products. Thus, distant consumers do not feel comfortable in luxury stores and remain detached from this world, having limited knowledge about it.

In turn, in the study by Wiedmann et al. (2007), the authors identify four latent dimensions of luxury value perception that, although distinct, are strongly interrelated: individual, social, financial, and functional.

First, the financial dimension stands out, referring to the monetary value of the product as well as what is given up or sacrificed in order to gain access to a particular product. This dimension encompasses direct financial aspects, including price, resale value, discounts, and investment.

Next, the functional dimension relates to the core benefits and basic utilities of the product, such as quality, uniqueness, usability, reliability, and durability, which guide consumer-based luxury value (Sheth et al., 1991).

The individual dimension, in turn, is centered on the consumer's personal orientation toward luxury consumption. In addition, it identifies factors such as materialism, hedonic value, and self-identity value as personal aspects that influence this dimension.

Finally, given that the consumption of luxury products fulfills a strong social function, the last dimension highlighted by the authors is the social dimension, which focuses on the utility derived by individuals from consuming products or services that are recognized within the social groups to which they belong, such as conspicuousness and prestige value. These factors can significantly influence both the evaluation and the propensity to purchase or consume luxury brands.

Thus, it becomes evident that the perception of luxury value and its consumption at an international level are significantly influenced by these four dimensions. Consequently, the multidimensional and variable nature of luxury gives rise to different reactions among consumers.

2.3 Customer Experience and Relationship

Customer Experience, abbreviated as "CX", is becoming increasingly important in companies' strategic marketing plans. (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016) Nowadays, organisations cannot limit themselves to offering a quality product and/or service at a good price to achieve competitive advantage. It is essential to attract customers' attention and retaining them is a huge challenge that involves understanding consumer behaviour. (Augusti, 2023)

For Augusti (2023), CX has gained relevance, not only in academia, but also in the business ecosystem. Its concept refers to the importance of emotional factors in the fields of behavioural studies and marketing on the purchasing decision-making process and on attracting and retaining customers during the customer journey. The consumer experience is perceived by the consumer during the purchasing journey, generating emotions and feelings.

This management aims to ensure a positive and memorable experience for customers, with the goal of promoting the development of differentiation strategies in order to create value for the customer. It involves understanding their journey, from initial discovery to after-sales. (Augusti, 2023)

According to Augusti (2023), CX aims to consider all processes in the pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase phases from the customer's perspective. The purpose of the concept is to structure all relationship channels with

2.4 Current Challenges and Trends in Luxury Marketing

Luxury marketing currently faces a set of challenges and trends resulting from profound economic, technological, and sociocultural transformations. According to Marxen (2023), one of the main challenges in the sector lies in generational change and the transformation of the luxury consumer profile. Younger generations, particularly Millennials and Generation Z, display consumption patterns that differ from those of traditional consumers, placing less value on the explicit social status associated with owning luxury goods and greater importance on factors such as authenticity, brand values, purpose, and meaningful experiences. This shift requires luxury brands to rethink their marketing strategies in order to remain relevant to these new audiences without compromising the exclusivity and prestige that characterize the sector.

Another key challenge identified is the growing importance of sustainability in luxury marketing. According to Marxen (2023), sustainability has moved from being an optional differentiating factor to becoming a basic consumer expectation. However, this represents a paradox for luxury brands, as the sector has historically been associated with rarity, the use of precious raw materials, and complex production processes. Consequently, brands face the challenge of reconciling environmentally and socially responsible practices with the preservation of perceptions of exclusivity, superior quality, and artisanal heritage that define luxury.

Digitalization also emerges as one of the main trends and, simultaneously, as a strategic challenge for luxury marketing. Marxen (2023) highlights that although digital presence is now indispensable, luxury brands cannot adopt digital marketing strategies similar to those used in mass markets. The use of digital platforms, social media, and e-commerce must be carefully managed, prioritizing curated content, immersive experiences, and high levels of personalization in order to avoid brand dilution. In this context, the development of strategies that coherently integrate physical and digital channels becomes particularly relevant.

Furthermore, the strengthening of storytelling and brand heritage constitutes a fundamental trend in contemporary luxury marketing. In a highly competitive and digitalized environment, Marxen (2023) argues that luxury brands should emphasize their historical legacy, artisanal know-how, and unique identity, using storytelling as a strategic tool to create emotional connections with consumers. Communicating brand tradition in a contemporary manner allows brands to meet the demands of new consumers while preserving the authenticity and legitimacy of luxury.

Finally, the literature points to a shift in the focus of luxury marketing from simple commercial transactions to the construction of long-term relationships with customers. According to Marxen (2023), luxury brands face the challenge of developing relational marketing strategies based on personalization, the creation of exclusive experiences, and the establishment of continuous relationships with consumers. This approach strengthens brand loyalty and responds to the growing expectations for engagement and individual recognition among luxury customers.

In summary, current challenges and trends in luxury marketing focus on adapting to new generations of consumers, integrating sustainability, strategically managing digitalization, reinforcing storytelling, and building long-term customer relationships. These factors require luxury brands to demonstrate constant strategic innovation without compromising the core values that underpin their identity and exclusivity.

3. Empirical Findings: The Cartier Case

3.1 About Cartier

Founded in France in 1847, Cartier exudes tradition and excellence, values that are reflected in each of its creations, in its way of working, and in the quality of service it provides (Cartier, 2025).

An undisputed benchmark in the luxury sector, Cartier is positioned at the mid-level of the luxury pyramid, celebrating beauty and drawing inspiration from cultures around the world to create jewelry, fine jewelry, fragrances, watches, leather goods, and accessories. Each creation symbolizes the meeting of exceptional expertise and timeless character (Cartier, 2025).

From generation to generation, an essence of timelessness is passed on: each piece must represent a moment, an event, a story, or an emotion. Cartier is guided by the principle that all its activities must match the level of trust its customers place in it (Cartier, 2025).

3.2 Consumer Behavior of Cartier

Cartier's consumers present a demographic profile that includes individuals between thirty and fifty years of age, of both genders, predominantly from developed countries. From a socioeconomic perspective, they belong to a high social class, with above-average income levels, given that Cartier is characterized as a brand with high product prices and a strong positioning within the luxury segment. Cartier is not a brand that sells exclusively products; beyond tangible goods, it offers its consumers dreams, status, and the promise of belonging to an exclusive and premium group.

With regard to the consumer life cycle, marital status and parenthood do not appear to influence purchasing decisions, indicating that the consumption of the brand is not limited to a specific life stage. Accordingly, Cartier's consumers include both single and married individuals, as well as couples with or without children.

Studies on luxury consumer psychology reveal that Cartier's historical association with royalty contributes to the creation of perceived value that goes beyond craftsmanship and the materials used in its products, linking brand consumption to exclusivity and cultural significance. As a result, the premium prices practiced by Cartier are justified by this psychological association, which positions the brand's pieces not merely as consumer goods but as genuine investments (Arcega-Punzalan, 2025).

In parallel, the consolidation of Cartier's brand image as a status symbol is reinforced through additional factors. According to Vice President Arnaud Carrez, Cartier has adopted a more contemporary communication approach and innovated the language of its boutique network, with the aim of clarifying its identity and strengthening its image (Padilla, 2023). In this regard, the brand has been consolidating its presence in the digital environment, particularly through associations with high-profile events such as the Venice Film Festival, as well as through the development of campaigns in collaboration with international figures. Furthermore, Cartier engages in philanthropic initiatives, such as the Cartier Women's Initiative, an annual international entrepreneurship program that aims to drive change through the empowerment of women entrepreneurs (Cartier Women's Initiative, 2026).

Regarding consumer behavior toward the product, Cartier's goods are predominantly acquired in celebratory contexts, such as engagement moments, professional achievements, self-reward, and gift-giving occasions. Consequently, the act of purchase is strongly associated with emotionally significant moments, which confers a high sentimental value on the product. Additionally, Cartier's storytelling strategy reinforces this emotional orientation by emphasizing the brand's heritage and exclusivity, contributing to a purchasing experience that goes far beyond the mere acquisition of a physical product (Arcega-Punzalan, 2025). Thus, beyond functional factors, the consumption of these goods is driven by emotional and symbolic motivations.

The consumers analyzed are also characterized by practices associated with a sophisticated and culturally active lifestyle, including activities such as golf and Pilates, attendance at theaters and musicals, and a strong interest in travel.

Accordingly, Cartier is characterized by a pattern of materialistic consumers who are oriented toward appearance and fashion and who consume brands that confer status, thereby seeking social recognition. Generally, these consumers tend to be more concerned with packaging and the brand concept than with the product itself. The pattern described above demonstrates that the consumption of the brand is embedded in a set of symbolic practices associated with status and social distinction.

3.3 Cartier's Relationship with the Customer

As a luxury brand, Cartier does not just sell products. Instead, it creates experiences and engages its customers in the act of selling and after-sales service. In luxury, the customer does not just buy a product, but belonging, heritage and recognition.

Thus, the brand demonstrates sufficient proximity to generate trust, but maintains the symbolic distance necessary to preserve the prestige associated with Cartier. It bases its relationship with the customer on a long-term logic, not aiming for immediate sales, but rather the creation of lasting emotional bonds, perceptible in the importance attributed to after-sales service, maintenance and restoration of pieces. All these practices are intended to provide the customer with the idea of durability, heritage and timelessness, central elements in the positioning of luxury that prolong the relationship with the customer over time. The product becomes part of a continuous narrative of value, memory and identity, rather than just an object of immediate consumption.

The relationship with Cartier customers is fundamentally sustained by a high degree of personalisation, as well as by a recognition of the buyer as the bearer of a history with its own statutes, and not just an individual. Qualified human interactions are established, mainly in the boutique, where the service provided is essential to add value to the brand.

Nowadays, digital technology plays a fundamental role in the continuity of a brand and is crucial to maintaining its positioning. Thus, although there is a perceived increase in the digitisation of brands, Cartier has chosen to maintain its previously orchestrated relationship with its customers. That is why the brand has adopted an omnichannel strategy, combining digital presence with high levels of selectivity in access and communication. Digital technology does not replace the differentiation of the brand in person or its human interaction, but acts as an additional complement to the experience, reinforcing the convenience and continuity of contact without compromising the symbolic coherence of the brand or trivialising the relationship.

In this context, Cartier's relationship with its customers can be defined as a deliberate balance between proximity and distance, personalisation and exclusivity, continuity and ritualisation. This relational model is in line with the literature on luxury marketing, which argues that brand value is built not only through the product itself, but above all through the relational experience and symbolic capital that the brand accumulates and transmits over time.

On the website: Continuity and care over time

"At Cartier, we attach great importance to our relationship with you. To honour your trust and the unique bond that connects you to your creation, we are committed to accompanying you over time." Cartier thus conveys its commitment to accompanying the customer by offering preservation, personalisation, or repair services for its pieces. This reinforces the idea that the brand's relationship with the buyer does not end with the purchase, but that there is an extension of the Maison's relationship with the customer through ongoing care, a characteristic of luxury marketing. This practice makes the customer a partner in a narrative of durability and heritage.

Customisation and customer recognition

On its customer support page, it is possible to:

- Request and track services, giving customers the opportunity to directly manage their maintenance or restoration requests;
- Schedule personalised visits, anticipating a carefully prepared face-to-face relationship.

In this way, Cartier allows the customer to actively participate in the care of their piece, individualising the experience and reinforcing the trust placed in the brand.

Cartier Care

When registered on the Cartier Care platform, Cartier customers are given access to an extended warranty of up to 8 years, with personalised services and communications related to their creations. This initiative allows for the creation of an additional and continuous point of contact, strengthening a long-term relationship while maintaining the exclusivity and proximity expected of a luxury Maison.

3.4 Challenges in Reaching Cartier's Target Audience

Exclusivity and Brand Positioning

Cartier faces several challenges in effectively reaching its audience in a market context marked by rapid technological, social, and cultural transformations. According to Marxen (2023), the brand seeks to attract only consumers who genuinely value its identity, values, and products, maintaining a selective positioning consistent with the principles of luxury. In this sense, managing exclusivity is a central element of its strategy, with price increases identified as one of the most effective ways to control demand and preserve the perception of rarity associated with the brand (Marxen, 2023). At the same time, Cartier aims to balance its historical exclusivity with storytelling strategies and emotional experiences capable of strengthening its connection with an increasingly diverse global audience, while maintaining its aspirational luxury positioning in a highly competitive market (The Marketing Explainer, 2024).

Customer Experience and Relationship Marketing

Cartier also demonstrates a strong focus on customer service, stating that providing an excellent and personalized experience is one of its main priorities. This positioning is reinforced by its motto, “More than a service, an experience,” reflecting the importance attributed to the quality of customer interaction. The brand relies on extensive data collection and analysis to ensure an informed, personalized customer service aligned with the individual expectations of luxury consumers (Marxen, 2023).

In this context, the partnership established between Cartier and EHL Hospitality Business School, within programs dedicated to Luxury Experience Management, highlights the brand's recognition that value creation goes beyond the product itself, increasingly focusing on the quality of the experience delivered. Cartier's participation as an official corporate partner in the Master's in Hospitality Management reflects the importance placed on human-centered service, interaction personalization, and innovation in luxury experience management. The communication surrounding this collaboration emphasizes that, in the experience economy, consumers seek more than beauty and exclusivity, valuing meaning, emotional connection, and memorable interactions.

This positioning highlights a direct challenge for Cartier: to move beyond the mere ownership of high-value products toward the creation of memorable experiences and long-term relationships with consumers. Furthermore, the brand's involvement in such educational programs demonstrates its concern with developing luxury experience management competencies not only internally but also among future industry professionals. This approach reveals the need to respond to the expectations of an increasingly diverse global audience that values tradition, personalization, and innovation simultaneously.

Digitalization, Innovation, and Social Responsibility

Expanding and consolidating its digital presence in a strategic manner is another challenge faced by Cartier, particularly in reaching younger and more technologically active consumers without compromising its premium image and the exclusivity that define the brand. To achieve this, it is essential to carefully manage digital communication, avoiding excessive massification and ensuring that content and interactions reflect values associated with luxury, such as sophistication, excellence, and rarity (StudyCorgi, 2026). The creation of immersive experiences that combine digital technology with in-person interaction emerges as a response to evolving consumer expectations, although it requires a balanced integration of technological innovation and artisanal tradition, ensuring that technology complements rather than replaces the symbolic dimension of the luxury experience (Staff Writer, 2022).

Finally, the growing importance of sustainability and social responsibility constitutes another relevant challenge for Cartier. Participation in initiatives such as the Watch & Jewellery Initiative 2030 demonstrates the brand's efforts to respond to the ethical demands of contemporary consumers, who value transparency and environmental commitment. However, Cartier faces the challenge of communicating these initiatives in a credible and consistent manner, avoiding perceptions of superficiality or greenwashing that could undermine public trust.

Conclusion

The objective of this study was to analyze luxury marketing through a case study of Cartier, seeking to understand how this brand builds symbolic value, relates to its consumers, and responds to contemporary challenges in the luxury sector. The articulation between the theoretical framework and the analysis of the practical case showed that luxury is not defined solely by functional or economic characteristics, but above all by symbolic, emotional, and social dimensions that significantly influence consumer behavior.

The literature review showed that luxury marketing differs from traditional marketing in the importance it attaches to exclusivity, experience, brand history, and the creation of desire. The luxury pyramid, the different types of consumers, and the various dimensions of perceived value demonstrate that the consumption of luxury goods is a complex phenomenon, influenced by personal, social, functional, and financial motivations. In addition, customer experience and relationship marketing play a central role in building lasting relationships and consumer loyalty.

The analysis of the Cartier case confirms these theoretical ideas. The brand positions itself at an intermediate level of the luxury pyramid, combining tradition, craftsmanship, and more modern communication. Cartier consumers are generally characterized by individuals with high purchasing power, who value the prestige of the brand and associate consumption with important moments in their lives. Thus, the purchase of a Cartier product goes beyond its practical utility, being linked to emotional, cultural, and social meanings.

In terms of customer relations, Cartier adopts a strategy based on a balance between proximity and exclusivity. Personalized customer service, a focus on after-sales service, and the creation of continuous points of contact, such as Cartier Care, show that the brand seeks to build long-term relationships based on trust and durability. At the same time, the integration of physical and digital channels reveals a careful omnichannel strategy, in which technology complements the in-store experience without replacing the symbolic dimension of luxury.

However, the study also highlights the challenges Cartier faces in a context marked by digitalization, the entry of younger consumers, and growing concern for sustainability and social responsibility. Attracting new audiences without losing exclusivity, communicating sustainable practices credibly, and managing digital presence without trivializing the brand are demanding and complex tasks.

In summary, this work demonstrates that Cartier's success in the luxury market results from a combination of tradition, the creation of symbolic value, the quality of the customer experience, and strategic innovation. The brand shows that current luxury marketing is moving away from a logic focused solely on product sales, favoring the construction of meaning, lasting relationships, and memorable experiences. It can therefore be concluded that luxury is not just a product, but also a story, an experience, and a sense of belonging, and that managing these elements is an essential factor in the success of this type of brand.

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