

*Research Paper***Social Media Usage Practices of Luxury Automobile Consumers**

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**ABSTRACT**

The dramatic rise in the use of social media tools and environments is becoming increasingly noticeable. In addition to corporate brands, consumers' usage practices are also observed. Along with the changes in economic and social conditions, the formation of new markets and different consumer groups is another key point. Exceeding geographical boundaries especially by luxury brands has led them to encounter new markets and consumers. Parallel to these changes, it is noteworthy that a new communication environment and a new generation have created differences in luxury brand usage. The association of luxury brands and social media environments at the corporate level causes them to take part in a new communication environment. At this point, the social media usage for personal means and the social media usage related to luxury brands gain a special importance. In this study, the aim is to determine the social media usage practices related to the personal means and luxury brands. For this, a survey was conducted for luxury brand users. In this way, revealing the luxury brands' communication activities in social media and determining the personal social media usage of luxury brand users are aimed. The majority of participants are using as followings, Instagram, Youtube, Twitter and Facebook, for social media. The proportion of participants using LinkedIn, Google<sup>+</sup> and Pinterest social media environments is very low. In the social media usage practices of luxury brand car users for brands, Instagram, Facebook, Youtube and Twitter applications are used more frequently, and Google<sup>+</sup>, Pinterest and LinkedIn applications are used much less. It has been concluded that social media communication tools are active and effective in the usage practices of personal and brands of luxury car users.

**Keywords:** Luxury brand; social media; luxury brand consumers

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

As a result of the changes in information and communication technologies, internet applications are also changing. Web 2.0 applications, as Internet-based applications, also draw a certain amount of attention. These applications create new environments that enable two-way communication, allowing participants to communicate and socialize at the same time and without time constraints, and thus, add new dimensions to brand communication processes. It has become a necessity for companies to use social media tools and environment such as Facebook, Youtube, Twitter in their target audiences and brand communication processes and in carrying out their marketing objectives (Barutçu & Tomaş, 2013). It is undeniable that luxury brands are involved in this new communication environment and use it to communicate with their consumers. It is known that luxury brands carry out their communication processes using a different strategy than other brand types. In the luxury brand communication process, a limited number of distribution channels and unique characteristics are at the forefront. When it is considered that offline stores are the primary channel of retailing for luxury brands, it is seen that luxury brand managers are trying to adapt to social media tools. In this process, they continue to be sensitive in maintaining their basic features such as protecting brand integrity and maintaining the uniqueness principle in social media environments (Jin, 2012). The issue of the availability of luxury brands in the social media environment, which also referred as new communication environment, comes to light. In addition to luxury users, followers also create a different target audience for luxury brands. Changing market conditions and geographies, differences and changes in luxury consumer profiles and the emergence of a new generation all influence luxury consumption habits. In the process of luxury brand communication, the ways luxury brand users join in on this new communication environment is also important. At this point, the personal social media usage of luxury brand users and their communication practices regarding their brands gain importance.

This study consists of two main parts. In the first section, related literature information is given. In the first part, the concept and scope of luxury brands and the literature

information describing luxury brand consumers in social media environments are included. In the second section, the methods and findings of the research are given. Finally, there is the conclusion section. In the conclusion section, the limitations of the study and suggestions for future studies are given.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

It can be said that the concept of luxury dates back to ancient times. As a lifestyle of luxury, people are always present in their daily life practices. For instance, archaeologists studying shows that the oldest human-worked gold ever found, from 5,000 BC in the Varna, Bulgaria. The very first gold objects were made as jewelry, not for money or weapons (Bendell & Thomas, 2013). It is also known that luxury evolved from a lifestyle to brand usage practices. It can be said that the concept of luxury brand, which has relatively different components and production systems compared to other brand types, manifests itself in this evolution process. Although each period is similar, different products are defined as luxury products. Luxury brands have their own characteristics such as different positioning in the relevant market, having production and distribution strategies, having different target audiences, and communicating with the target audience through different communication tools. In addition to these characteristics, luxury brand users have a number of different cult qualities.

In the light of the changes and developments in information and communication technologies, new media environment appears. Although the concept of internet dominates this new process, the concept of new media which has a different communication process from the traditional communication environment is seen. It is noteworthy in the development of internet-based applications in parallel with new media environments. Personal daily use practices of these environments can be seen in the brand communication process. It cannot be denied that luxury brands are also late to adapt to internet-based applications. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that they have been active in social media environments which is one of the internet-based applications. It can be said that the effectiveness of luxury brand communication with rising number of affluent online users between 18 and 35 years in the online environment is increasing day by day (Chu, Kamal & Kim, 2013). Because of providing platform by social media for luxury consumers to publicize their personal evaluations of purchased products (Chen, Fay & Wang, 2011). In this sense, it can be said that luxury

brands have increasingly adopted social media platforms (Phan, 2011, as cited in Dhaoui, 2014). At this point, it can be said that luxury brand users have recently hosted different segments. Therefore, it is seen that luxury brand consumers use social media environments in their brand communication process as well as their personal use practices.

In this study, the usage of social media tools in the communication process with the brands of luxury car brand users among the luxury brand consumers, which are within the scope of this study, is important.

## **2.1 Luxury brands**

The existence of brands can be said to be as old as the beginning of human history. The luxury brand, which is a different classification in brand types, also has a very old history. There are various definitions for luxury brands that are different from other brands by nature. According to the most general definition, Tynan et al. (2010) mentions that luxury goods exist at one end of a continuum with ordinary goods. In terms of word meaning; “Luxuria” is a luxury, exaggeration and wealth (UBC SunSITE, 2019). In addition, that, luxury means a high level of comfort, convenience, no need, expensive, unfamiliar and unattainable situation or conditions (Merriam-Webster, 2019). The meaning of luxury varies according to time and place. One is a relaxing / pleasure product, while the other refers to the product used as a daily need (Nwankwo, Hamelin & Khaled, 2014). Examples of the products covered by luxury include flowers, designer clothes, luxury watches, chocolate, music, sports cars. In addition, utilitarian products include toilet paper, detergents, microwaves, home protection systems and individual computers (Steinhart, Ayalon & Puterman, 2013). Freire (2014) stresses on his study about luxury values. These are originality, heritage, beauty and rarity, long life, respect for the brand, values such as customer loyalty. It can be said that luxury brands have similar characteristics in the definition of luxury. The features of luxury brands are as follows: The excellence of the product, the traditional preservation, international reputation, the beauty of the product, has a long historical background, high-priced, fascinating, the feeling of difference, the brand can have a small audience, is unique, is not in the form of fashion (Torlak & Uz Kurt, 1999).

In parallel with the changing social and economic conditions, the meaning of luxury brands differs. Today, brands in the luxury sector are actually selling symbolic and magic power to the masses. In these circumstances, today’s marketplace, some brands

have become associated with luxury by highest-priced and highest-quality in any product or service category. They try to provide the consumer with an elite experience or sense of prestige as luxury (Bendell & Thomas, 2013). In this sense, there is a difference between consumers and also geography of luxury. For instance, Asian consumers feel safer buying prestigious Western brands with which individuals around them are familiar. Luxury as an absolute concept which can be signified like the 'ordinary of extraordinary people' (Kapferer, 2012). In addition to these, in parallel with the changing conditions of luxury, two concepts related to luxurious brands are noteworthy. These are: "affordable" and "luxury", are two terms that do not conform to luxury goods literature. It can be said that luxury is now more accessible and affordable with luxury consumption habits, market changes and new media environment. In their work Mundel et al. (2017), try to determine whether millennial consumers differentiate between the terms "luxury" and "affordable luxury". Therefore, nowadays, it is an important reality that the luxury brands exceed their different geographical boundaries and reach different users. With these changes, classifications made about luxury brands also changes. According to the global luxury market tracked by Bain & Company there are nine segments of the luxury goods. They include personal luxury goods, luxury cars, luxury hospitality, luxury cruises, designer furniture, fine food, fine wines and spirits, private jets and yachts, and fine art (D'Arpizio, Levato, Kamel & Montgolfier, 2017). There are many different variables and dynamics in luxury brands. Therefore, despite the luxury sector being one of the most profitable marketing segments worldwide, it is hardly possible to make definite and unchanging definitions for luxury brands. It can be said that it is shaped according to the conditions of culture and time (Joy, Wang, Chan, Sherry & Cui, 2014). Luxury automobile brands can be accepted as an important type of luxury brands. Luxury automobile can be defined as long, roomy, a big V8 or even V12, lots of electronics like Mercedes E or S Class, the BMW 7 Series, the Audi 8 or big Lexus or Cadillac or even a Lincoln Town Car. But that's an old definition. Nowadays, luxury may be a smaller Mercedes C Class or BMW 3 Series or Cadillac CTS with highest price (Flint, 2017). Besides that, current model luxury automobiles capture both the principles of classical automotive design and the potential of computerized electronic advancements by luxury notion (Warren, 2014). In this sense, while many brands seem as luxury brands for instance, Audi, Bentley, BMW, Jaguar, Lexus, Mercedes, Porsche, Rolls-Royce by one third of industrial opinion. In luxury brands,

some major brands like Audi, BMW, Mercedes, Rolls-Royce can be considered luxury brands by the perception of public majority (Jakraban, 2002). In general, luxury automobiles can be defined as four-wheeled vehicles with an unloaded gross weight of 6,000 pounds or less, are noticed that more stringent depreciation limitations (Warner, 2018).

## **2.2 Social media and luxury brand consumers**

The dramatic rise of social media in every field is remarkable. In this new communication environment, social media is becoming both more convenient and more important. Social media applications lead many companies to use them in stakeholder communication, marketing activities, customer and brand management and organizational communication activities (Seo & Park, 2018:). There are different studies on social media usage practices. According to the *Digital in 2017 Global Overview* report from We Are Social and Hootsuite, 2.80 billion global social media users in 2017, equaling 37% penetration, beside that 2.56 billion global mobile social media users in 2017, equaling 34% penetration. Social media usage has grown 21% compared to last year. Five countries accounted for more than half of this growth: China posted 134 million new social media users over the past 12 months, followed by India (+55 million), Indonesia (+27 million), the USA (+22 million), and Brazil (+19 million) (Kemp, 2017). Social media platforms give a chance both organizations and consumers to interact with each other and it can be said that, the communication ways had been changed in online platforms. In related search shows that during the interaction between organizations and consumers, social media applications make a bridge among them to proactive in their consumer communications and interactions. These interactions reflect communication activities such as, product information, customer service issues, engaging consumers with content relevant to the brand, providing timely information regarding promotions and new product launches, and also including consumer-generated comments (Rohm, Kaltcheva & Milne, 2013).

In addition to the personal usage practices of social media tools and environments, corporate brand managers and brand users actively use social media for brand communication processes. Here, social media provides marketers with expansive and different new tools that enable them to reach consumers directly and on time (Lee & Watkins, 2016). For this reason, on a corporate level, managers cannot afford to ignore social media, which actively expands the brand's reach and engagement with consumers

in two ways (Sitta, Faulkner & Stern, 2018). In this two-way communication, marketers/corporations have a new way of connecting with consumers. One side here is the brand, and the other side the consumer. Consumers produce content or control the brand's messages, and because of this, the interest of corporations in understanding the social media usage practices of consumers' increased their need to organize an effective social media brand strategy (Bailey, Bonifield & Arias, 2018). In this sense, during luxury brand communication, luxury brands have mention the meaning and notion of luxury such as high quality, rarity, personality and placement, as well as using public relations, celebrities to drive consumer engagement (Dhaoui, 2014). The luxury automobile brands which take a place under the luxury brand umbrella, uses in an effectively social media platforms during luxury communication period. In the related area of the study, the results showed that male participants perceived a man who displayed conspicuous consumption of a luxury car more as a rival. In the conspicuous luxury car circumstances, male participants rated the male target model higher on all mate value attributes such as attractiveness, sexual willingness, intelligence, ambition, and status (Hennighausen, Hudders, Lange & Fink, 2016). On the other hand, when the Japanese car manufacturers targeted the luxury car market in the UK, for example, they already knew one critical feature of luxury cars. In this sense, British motor car manufacturers have tried to reduce sound levels in luxury cars and found the task inherently difficult (Omar, 1997).

It is noteworthy that luxury car brands use social media tools in brand communication processes. There are some examples of the practices of luxury car brands in using social media tools. In this respect, when the relevant examples are examined; there is a smooth transition to make a connection with willing audience. luxury car brands have been able to 'rest on their laurels' when it comes to automotive social media. In their content, they try to create their brochures to life through some well-worn techniques of shooting the cars themselves in social media platforms (Wilmot, 2018). For instance, Mercedes-Benz is one of the brands that prefer social media as a means of communication. In this sense, especially, it processes a communication campaigns with influencers in Youtube & Instagram platforms. For YouTube, social media star Casey Neistat created a series of behind-the-scenes videos to document his antics while filming a sponsored YouTube commercial for Mercedes. In addition, on Instagram, it partners with important Instagrammers to execute "hashtag-able" marketing campaigns.

Mercedes created Instagram influencer marketing campaigns with top travel and adventure Instagrammers (Mediakix, 2019). It is noticed that, luxury automobiles are seen on the social media platform to process their communication activities, engage with their target audience/followers. For instance, Mercedes-Benz, with an average of 34 posts per day and 19.8k engagements per post, more than any of its competitors. In addition, BMW broke the record for the most posts a day: 37 on average, which is 28 more than the industry average. BMW only posts once or twice a day on its main Twitter and Facebook accounts which include such like a @BMWUSA, @BMW\_UK, and @BMWGroup (Walgrove, 2017). On the other hand, one of the other luxury automobile which is Audi is noticed. Audi uses several digital channels including its website to connect with fans and followers and to keep them engaged. Audi's U.S.A. page has the highest number of followers at 11 million followed by Audi Sports page at 7.1 million and the India page of Audi also has more than 3 million followers. Audi uses its Facebook account mainly for brand promotion to build awareness on diverse topics and create the image of a responsible vehicle brand by posting videos, images and other forms of promotional content Audi's Instagram account has 13 million followers and a very high level of engagement and Audi also uses its social media accounts for promotions (Pratap, 2019). Another example is Porsche which is honored its 5 million Facebook fans by letting them collaborate to design a 911 Carrera 4S vehicle. It launched an interactive campaign on a Facebook application where fans voted on the characteristics of a 911 Carrera 4S. In addition, Land Rover celebrated its more than 1 million Facebook fans with a social video that pays homage to their customers. In the 76-second video, the automaker showcases its vehicles in a variety of settings and thanks fans for making the brand a part of their lives (Mobilemarketer, 2019).

Different geographies and different consumer qualities are emerging in the growing and changing luxury market. According to current researches about the luxury market, it can be said that the market grew by 5% to an estimated €1.2 trillion globally in 2017 (D'Arpizio et al., 2017). It can be said that social media is used in luxury brand communication. When we consider the changing consumer profile, luxury brand marketers and managers have turned their attention to the customer-driven social media during luxury brand communication on social media applications. Some important elements here include involvement, interaction, behavioral intention and consumer



engagement for luxury brands (Martín-Consuegra, Díaz, Gómez & Molina, 2018). In this sense, it seems that luxury brands – from Rolls-Royce and Ferrari to Louis Vuitton and Prada, to Tiffany and Cartier – face the important aspects that focus on how to maintain and present the image of their brand and sustain a personal link with customers (Baker, Ashill, Amer & Dia, 2108: p. 37). The important thing for luxury brands is to create a sustainable relationship with their own consumers on social media. Luxury brands need to develop more unique brand identities and offer exclusive brand relationships. In this sense, it can be said that luxury brands can take full advantage of social media applications like brand communities to create sustainable brand relationships (Kim & Lee, 2017).

On the other hand, in the new communication platform, the profiles of both the luxury consumers and the generations have changed. Regarding them, it can be said that their demand works with the connectivity and the access to the luxury brand. Also, their expectations are higher, their behavior is non-linear and they are purpose-driven. When we look at online platforms for luxury brands, major luxury brands are working to create a perfect online experience for the consumer, using visuals, sounds, movements, scents and flavors to reevaluate the five senses (Castillan, Chheang, Denoux, Ferrenbach, Gérard, Hua, Holt & Manièr, 2017).

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

In this study, the aim is to determine the social media usage practices related to the personal means and luxury brands. For this, a survey was conducted for luxury brand users. In this way, revealing the luxury brands' communication activities in social media and determining the personal social media usage of luxury brand users are aimed. In the quantitative process of the study, a survey was conducted to demonstrate the social media usage practices of luxury brand car users regarding their personal and brand-related usage. The questionnaire application, which has a widespread use, in particular among the quantitative data collection techniques, was favored as when it is supported by expert opinions on the topic, designed appropriately for the purpose of the research and applied impartially to the selected sample group, its results can be reliable (Ural & Kilic, 2013). In the first part of the questionnaire created as a data collection tool, there are questions about the age, sex, education and personal income levels of luxury brand car consumers to obtain their demographic information. In the other part

of the questionnaire used as a data collection tool, there are questions to evaluate the usage practices, especially social media usage practices, of social media accounts of luxury brands used by luxury brand car consumers. Here, easy sampling method will be applied as a non-random sampling method for the quantitative part of the research. The questions that aimed to determine the social media usage practices of luxury consumers were created using Duvenci’s doctoral dissertation study, "Analysis of Social Media Effect on Internet Usage of Network Generation by Social Deviance Approach" (Duvenci, 2012). The questionnaire form was applied to the consumers of luxury car brands using a face-to-face interview method. Considering the users of the brands included in the survey, the possibility of these brands being used and the possibility of reaching the target group, it was decided that the questionnaire be applied throughout Istanbul. The research in question was performed considering the luxury brands listed in the luxury brands research report, prepared by Luxurysociety.com, which is called “Best Global Luxury Brands”, by surveying throughout the world for the year 2014 and which contained all product groups. The luxury brands were selected from this list according to a common criterion, which was having official social media applications in Turkey. All the specified brands were car brands and can be listed as: Mercedes-Benz, BMW, Audi, Porsche and Land Rover. A survey was conducted with the customers of these luxury brands specified in the research. The survey form was implemented between March-May, 2017 for 407 luxury car users.

#### 4. FINDINGS

The findings of the descriptive analyzes carried out within the research are given in Table 1 below.

Group	Sub-Group	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>	Female	115	28.6
	Male	287	71.4
	Total	402	100.0
<b>Age</b>	20 – 26	10	2.5
	27–35	92	22.9
	36-45	224	55.7
	46-55	74	18.4
	55-and older	2	.5
	Total	402	100.0

<b>Monthly Income (Turkish Lira)</b>	between 2000 – 5000	9	2.2
	between 5.001-10.000	63	15.7
	between 10.001 – 15.000	170	42.3
	between 15,001–20,000	142	35.3
	20,001 and higher	18	4.5
	Total	402	100.0
<b>Educational Background</b>	High School	11	2.7
	University	312	77.6
	Postgraduate	79	19.7
	Total	402	100.0
<b>Occupation</b>	Self employed	39	9.7
	Civil Servant	17	4.2
	Academician	215	53.5
	Private sector	126	31.3
	Other	5	1.2
	Total	402	100.0

**Table 1 - Distribution of Participants According to Demographic Features**

According to Table 1, the proportion of women participating in the survey was 28.6% and the proportion of men was 71.4%. When the participants were examined by age groups, the proportion of participants in the 20-26 age group was 2.5%, the proportion of the participants in the 27-35 age group was 22.9%, the proportion of the participants in the 36-45 age group was 55.7%, the proportion of the participants in the 46-55 age group was 18.4%, and the proportion of participants in the 55-year age group was 0.5%. The proportion of the participants in the 2000-5000 income level was 2.2%, the proportion of the participants in the income level between 5,001-10,000 was 15.7%, the proportion of the participants in the income level between 10,001-15,000 was 42.3%, the proportion of the participants in the income level between 15,001-20,000 was 35.3% and the proportion of the participants in the income level higher than 20,001 was 4.5%. The proportion of high school graduates is 2.7%, the proportion of university graduates is 77.6%, and the proportion of participants graduated from postgraduate education is 19.7%. The proportion of self-employed participants was 9.7%, the proportion of civil servants was 4.2%, the proportion of academics was 53.5% and the proportion of private sector workers was 4.5%.

The data for the social media environments used by the participants in the survey are

shown in Table 2.

		Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
<b>Which social media environments are you using?</b>	<b>Facebook</b>	227	56.5
	<b>Twitter</b>	235	58.5
	<b>Youtube</b>	235	58.5
	<b>Instagram</b>	272	67.7
	<b>Pinterest</b>	31	7.7
	<b>Google<sup>+</sup></b>	18	4.5
	<b>Linkedin</b>	4	1.0

**Table 2** - Examination of Social Media Environments Used by Participants

According to Table 2, most participants used Instagram (67.7%), YouTube (58.5%), Twitter (58.5%) and Facebook (56.5%) for social media. The proportion of participants using LinkedIn (1%), Google<sup>+</sup> (4.5%) and Pinterest (7.7%) was very low. The data on participants' daily use of social media environments are shown in Table 3.

Daily Use Time								
		0-30 min.	31-59 min.	1 hr	2 hrs	3 hrs.	4 hrs.	6 hrs.
<b>Facebook</b>	N	17	36	134	33	5	1	1
	%	4.2	9.0	33.3	8.2	1.2	.2	.2
<b>Twitter</b>	N	117	98	107	16	9	1	1
	%	29.1	24.4	26.6	4.0	2.2	.2	.2
<b>Youtube</b>	N	73	73	94	8	1	1	
	%	18.2	18.2	23.4	2.0	0.2	.2	
<b>Instagram</b>	N	79	111	98	22	3	1	
	%	19.7	27.6	24.4	5.5	0.7	.2	
<b>Pinterest</b>	N	55	24	24	3	4	3	
	%	13.7	6.0	6.0	0.7	1.0	.7	
<b>Google<sup>+</sup></b>	N	117	72	91	15	2		
	%	29.1	17.9	22.6	3.7	0.5		
<b>LinkedIn</b>	N	61	22	25				
	%	15.2	5.5	6.2				

**Table 3** - Examination of Participants' Social Media Environments According to Daily Use Time

According to Table 3, a large proportion of the participants used Facebook for 1 hour

(33.3%), Twitter for 0-30 minutes (29.1%), 31-59 minutes (24.4%) and 1 hour (26.6%), YouTube for 0-30 minutes (18.2%), 31-59 minutes (18.2%) and 1 hour (23.4%), Instagram for 0-30 minutes (19.7%), 31-59 minutes (27.6%) and 1 hour (24.4%), Pinterest for 0-30 minutes (13.7%), Google<sup>+</sup>daily for 0-30 minutes (29.1%), 31-59 minutes (17.9%) and 1 hour (22.6%) and LinkedIn for 0-30 minutes (15.2%).

Table 4 gives the data on the weekly evaluation of the social media usage time of the participants of the study.

The Weekly Usage Time								
		1 Day	2 Days	3 Days	4 Days	5 Days	6 Days	7 Days
<b>Facebook</b>	n	8	19	28	34	61	57	20
	%	1.99	4.7	7.0	8.5	15.2	14.2	5.0
<b>Twitter</b>	n	65	33	49	69	72	50	11
	%	16.17	8.2	12.2	17.2	17.9	12.4	2.7
<b>Youtube</b>	n	33	27	22	33	73	50	12
	%	8.21	6.7	5.5	8.2	18.2	12.4	3.0
<b>Instagram</b>	n	35	41	42	53	68	59	16
	%	8.71	10.2	10.4	13.2	16.9	14.7	4.0
<b>Pinterest</b>	n	31	11	13	18	26	13	1
	%	7.71	2.7	3.2	4.5	6.5	3.2	.2
<b>Google<sup>+</sup></b>	n	77	32	26	46	51	57	8
	%	19.15	8.0	6.5	11.4	12.7	14.2	2.0
<b>LinkedIn</b>	n	30	12	14	21	19	9	3
	%	7.46	3.0	3.5	5.2	4.7	2.2	.7

**Table 4** - Examination of Participants' Social Media Environments According to Weekly Usage Time

According to Table 4, a large proportion of the participants used Facebook for 5 days (15.2%), Twitter for 4 days (17.2%), 5 days (26.6%) and 1 day (16.17%), YouTube for 5 days (18.2%) and 6 days (12.4%), Instagram for 4 days (13.2%), 5 days (16.9%) and 6 days (14.7%), Pinterest for 1 day (7.71%) and 5 days (6.5%), Google<sup>+</sup>for 1 day (19.15%), 5 days (12.7%) and 6 days (14.2%) and LinkedIn for 1 day (7.46%). Table 5 shows the data on participants' aim in using the social media.

Social Media Usage Practices of Luxury Automobile Consumers

Purpose of use	Level	Facebook	Twitter	Youtube	Instagram	Pinterest	Google <sup>+</sup>	Linkedin
		N %	N %	N %	N %	N %	N %	N %
Wondering about the posts and lives of others	1	6 1.5	18 4.5	18 4.5	19 4.7	10 2.5	22 5.5	13 3.2
	2	23 5.7	94 23.4	54 13.4	55 13.7	46 11.4	44 10.9	41 10.2
	3	45 11.2	69 17.2	53 13.2	66 16.4	28 7.0	54 13.4	27 6.7
	4	40 10.0	25 6.2	22 5.5	23 5.7	7 1.7	23 5.7	8 2.0
	5	43 10.7	36 9.0	40 10.0	36 9.0	10 2.5	42 10.4	8 2.0
	6	24 6.0	33 8.2	19 4.7	29 7.2	4 1.0	34 8.5	5 1.2
	7	46 11.4	74 18.4	44 10.9	85 21.1	8 2.0	76 18.9	6 1.5
Sharing about myself	1	1 0.2	1 0.2	3 0.7	1 0.2	2 0.5	2 0.5	2 0.5
	2	23 5.7	51 12.7	26 6.5	44 10.9	23 5.7	46 11.4	22 5.5
	3	19 4.7	34 8.5	31 7.7	27 6.7	11 2.7	24 6.0	10 2.5
	4	37 9.2	42 10.4	33 8.2	44 10.9	12 3.0	35 8.7	8 2.0
	5	31 7.7	67 16.7	43 10.7	54 13.4	23 5.7	50 12.4	25 6.2
	6	84 20.9	96 23.9	57 14.2	73 18.2	29 7.2	71 17.7	27 6.7
	7	32 8.0	58 14.4	57 14.2	70 17.4	15 3.2	69 17.2	14 3.5
Communicating with my friends	1	8 2.0	16 4.0	5 1.2	7 1.7	2 0.5	7 1.7	3 0.7
	2	22 5.5	48 11.9	23 5.7	25 6.2	16 4.0	44 10.9	19 4.7
	3	14 3.5	31 7.7	28 7.0	39 9.7	19 4.7	37 9.2	18 4.5
	4	46 11.4	82 20.4	52 12.9	65 16.2	26 6.5	64 15.9	22 5.5
	5	40 10.0	56 13.9	42 10.4	56 13.9	19 4.7	39 9.7	17 4.2
	6	55 13.7	53 13.2	53 13.2	57 14.2	21 5.2	52 12.9	17 4.2
	7	42 10.4	61 15.2	47 11.7	65 16.2	10 2.5	54 13.4	12 3.0
To make new friends	1	8 2.0	19 4.7	10 2.5	9 2.2	9 2.2	8 2.0	5 1.2
	2	26 6.5	29 7.2	17 4.2	28 7.0	12 3.0	34 8.5	12 3.0
	3	38 9.5	48 1.9	26 6.5	46 11.4	9 2.2	39 9.7	12 3.0
	4	42 10.4	70 17.4	62 15.4	60 14.9	33 8.2	65 16.2	28 7.0
	5	44 10.9	75 18.7	64 15.9	65 16.2	22 5.5	58 14.4	28 7.0
	6	38 9.5	49 12.2	38 9.5	47 11.7	17 4.2	44 10.9	14 3.5
	7	30 7.5	58 14.4	33 8.2	57 14.2	11 2.7	48 11.9	9 2.2
To follow the issues / brands I am interested in	1	10 2.5	7 1.7	8 2.0	12 3.0	1 0.2	8 2.0	1 0.2
	2	27 6.7	44 10.9	26 6.5	44 10.9	13 3.2	34 8.5	15 3.7
	3	55 13.7	65 16.2	42 10.4	44 10.9	23 5.7	53 13.2	15 3.7
	4	40 10.0	53 13.2	42 10.4	46 11.4	22 5.5	43 10.7	25 6.7
	5	40 10.0	54 13.4	36 9.0	53 13.2	14 3.5	51 12.7	11 2.7
	6	25 6.2	52 12.2	44 10.9	60 14.9	23 5.7	45 11.2	24 6.0
	7	28 7.0	54 13.4	38 9.5	36 9.0	15 3.7	44 10.9	17 4.2
To share posts about the brands I follow / like	1	13 3.2	20 5.0	13 3.2	17 4.2	4 1.0	18 4.5	3 0.7
	2	65 15.7	67 16.7	60 14.9	78 19.4	14 3.5	61 15.2	9 2.2
	3	37 9.2	35 8.7	33 8.2	46 11.4	6 1.5	44 10.9	12 3.0
	4	25 6.2	21 5.2	11 2.7	29 7.2	4 1.0	23 5.7	1 0.2
	5	19 4.7	17 4.2	12 3.0	18 4.5	11 2.7	20 5.0	10 2.5
	6	15 3.7	23 5.7	13 3.2	15 3.7	3 0.7	18 4.5	11 2.7
	7	51 12.7	34.8	88 1.9	87 21.6	69 17.2	90 22.4	61 15.2

**Table 5 - Examination of Participants' Use of Social Media Environments**

According to Table 5, the participants used Twitter (23.4%) the most, followed by

Instagram (21.1%), Google<sup>+</sup> (18.9%) and Facebook (11.4%) because "they were curious about the lives of others". The participants used Twitter the most (23.9%), followed by Facebook (20.9%), Instagram (18.2%), Google<sup>+</sup>(17.7%) and YouTube (% 14.2) to "share about themselves". They used Twitter (20.4%) the most, followed by Instagram (16.2%), Google<sup>+</sup>(15.9%), YouTube (13.2%) and Facebook (11.4%) to "connect with their friends". They used Twitter (18.7%) the most, followed by Instagram (16.2%), Google<sup>+</sup>(16.2%), YouTube (15.9%) and Facebook (10.9%) to "make new friends". They used Twitter (16.2%) the most, followed by Instagram (14.9%), Google<sup>+</sup>(13.7%) and Facebook (13.7%) to "follow the topics/brands they were interested in". They used Twitter (34.8%) the most, followed by Google<sup>+</sup>(22.4%), YouTube (21.9%), Instagram (21.6%), Pinterest (17.2%), Facebook (15.7%) and LinkedIn (15.2%) to "share posts about the brands they liked/followed".

The usage ratios of of the luxury brand cars that belong to the participants in the sample of the study are given in Table 6.

<b>The Brand of the Car the Participant Uses</b>	<b>Frequency (N)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Mercedes-Benz</b>	81	20.1
<b>BMW</b>	125	31.1
<b>AUDI</b>	81	20.1
<b>Porsche</b>	64	15.9
<b>Land Rover</b>	51	12.7

**Table 6 - The Ratio of Participants' Use of Luxury Brand Cars**

According to Table 6, the proportion of participants using Mercedes-Benz brand cars was 20.1%, the proportion of BMW brand car users was 31.1%, the proportion of AUDI brand car users was 20.1%, the proportion of Porsche brand car users was 15.9%, and the proportion of Land Rover brand car users was 12.7%.

Table 7 shows the distribution of communication channels used by participants when they want to communicate with the brand they use.

	Communication Channel	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
<b>When you want to communicate with the brand that you use, which communication channel do you prefer first?</b>	Corporate web page	55	13.7
	E-mail	235	58.5
	Official social media accounts	65	16.2
	Social media fan page	43	10.7
	Other	4	1.0

**Table 7** - Communication Channels Used by Participants to Communicate with the Brands They Use

According to Table 7, to communicate with the brands they were using, the participants used e-mail (58.5%) the most, followed by official social media accounts (16.2%), corporate web page (13.7%), social media fan page (10.7%) and other communication channels (1%). Table 8 provides descriptive information on the communication activities of the participants in the official social media environments of the brand.

According to Table 8, participants were more satisfied with Instagram (66.2%), followed by YouTube (55.2%), Facebook (50.7%) and Twitter (44%) regarding the content for their brands. Participants stated that they shared most of their content on Facebook (26.1%), followed by Instagram (24.1%), YouTube (18.7%) and Twitter (22.1%). Participants indicated that they leaved the most comments/likes on the corporate social media accounts of their brands in Instagram (24.4%), followed by Facebook (22.6%), YouTube (20.9%) and Twitter (16.4%). They stated that they were most likely to share content on YouTube (27.1%), followed by Instagram (23.9%), Facebook (20.9%) and Twitter (15.7%).

Lastly, participants stated that they used the Instagram accounts of their brands (32.3%) the most, followed by Facebook (25.1%), YouTube (18.2%) and Twitter (10.2%) accounts.



<b>Communication activities on the social media</b>		<b>Facebook</b>	<b>Twitter</b>	<b>Youtube</b>	<b>Instagram</b>	<b>Pinterest</b>	<b>Google+</b>	<b>LinkedIn</b>
Which social media applications of your brand are you satisfied with?	N	204	177	222	266	34	33	5
	%	50.7	44.0	55.2	66.2	8.5	8.2	1.2
Which social media apps of your brand you share content from?	N	105	66	84	97	24	20	6
	%	26.1	16.4	20.9	24.1	6.0	5.0	1.5
Which social media applications of your brand has content that you comment on/like on the corporate social media account?	N	91	89	75	98	19	27	3
	%	22.6	22.1	18.7	24.4	4.7	6.7	0.7
Which social media apps of your brand you share content from?	N	84	63	109	96	19	22	9
	%	20.9	15.7	27.1	23.9	4.7	5.5	2.2
Which social media applications of your brand do you use?	N	101	41	73	130	22	29	6
	%	25.1	10.2	18.2	32.3	5.5	7.2	1.5

**Table 8** - Examination of Communication Activities of the Participants on Social Media Related to Brand They Use

Table 8a gives the data on the purpose of using the social media accounts of the brands used by the participants.

According to Table 8a, the purpose of participants using the Mercedes-Benz brand were: to gather advice/comments about the product (20.15%), to follow brand news (18.66%), to follow advertisements (16.17%) and to learn about sales campaigns (15.92%).

Participants using the Audi brand used the brand's social media accounts for: gathering advice/comments about the product (22.39%), following their ads (21.64%), following events (17.91%) and following brand news (17.91%).

Participants using the BMW brand were using the brand's social media accounts for: gathering advice/comments about the product (29.60%), following brand news (29.35%), following advertisements (28.61%) and following events (28.11%).

The purpose of using the social media accounts	Mercedes-Benz		BMW		Audi		Porsche		Land-Rover	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Following new products	35	8.71	41	10.20	41	10.20	20	4.98	27	6.72
To learn about sales campaigns	64	15.92	72	17.91	61	15.17	42	10.45	48	11.94
Following the ads	65	16.17	115	28.61	87	21.64	52	12.94	48	11.94
Find advice/comments about the product	81	20.15	119	29.60	90	22.39	65	16.17	76	18.91
Follow brand news	75	18.66	118	29.35	72	17.91	60	14.93	57	14.18
To follow activities	58	14.43	113	28.11	72	17.91	49	12.19	51	12.69
To follow the test drives	49	12.19	72	17.91	53	13.38	34	8.46	45	11.19
To learn the stories of brand designers	19	4.73	39	9.70	28	6.97	18	4.48	21	5.22
To learn the messages of the brand founders/managers	10	2.49	14	3.48	12	2.99	7	1.74	8	1.99

**Table 8a** - Examining the Social Media Accounts Usage Purposes of Participants

Participants using the Land Rover brand used the brand's social media accounts for: gathering advice/comments on the product (18.91%), following brand news (14.18%) and following events (12.69%).

Participants using the Porsche brand were using the brand's social media accounts for: gathering recommendations/comments about the product (16.17%), following brand news (14.93%), following ads (12.94%) and following events (12.19%).

Table 8b gives the data on the social media usage tool related to the brand used by the participants.

Social media usage tool related to the brand	Mercedes-Benz		BMW		Audi		Porsche		Land – Rover	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Sharing posts about the brand on your own page	45	11.2	52	12.9	52	12.9	34	8.5	30	7.5
Making recommendations about the brand	68	16.9	97	24.1	92	22.9	52	12.9	55	13.7
Commenting on the brand	90	22.4	121	30.1	87	21.6	67	6.7	71	17.7
Following the brand's posts	77	19.2	126	31.3	94	23.4	70	17.4	61	15.2
Following the posts on the technical infrastructure of the brand	71	17.7	113	28.1	79	19.7	55	13.7	70	17.4

<b>Following the posts on the brand's service network.</b>	44 10.9	59 14.7	43 10.7	22 5.5	35 8.7
<b>Following the sponsorship activities</b>	14 3.5	16 4.0	14 3.5	8 2.0	12 3.0

**Table 8b** - Investigating Social Media Accounts Usage Purposes of Participants

According to Table 8b, the participants using the Mercedes-Benz used the social media accounts of the brand for: commenting on the brand (22.4%), following the brand's posts (19.2%) and following their posts on the technical infrastructure of the brand (17.7%).

Participants using the Audi brand used the brand's social media accounts for: following the brand's posts (23.4%), giving recommendations about the brand (22.9%), commenting on the brand (21.6%) and following their posts on the technical infrastructure of the brand (19.7%).

Participants using the BMW brand used the brand's social media accounts for: following the brand's posts (31.1%), commenting on the brand (30.1%), following their posts on the technical infrastructure of the brand (28.1%) and making recommendations about the brand (24.1%).

Participants who used the Land Rover brand used the brand's social media accounts for: commenting on the brand (17.7%), following their posts on the technical infrastructure of the brand (17.4%), following the brand's posts (15.2%) and making recommendations about the brand (13.7%).

Participants who used the Porsche brand used the brand's social media accounts for: following the brand's posts (17.4%), commenting on the brand (16.7%), following their posts on the technical infrastructure of the brand (13.7%) and making recommendations about the brand (12.9%).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In recent years, the effectiveness of social media in brand communication has become increasingly important, in almost every field, in both individual and corporate contexts. Especially in the process of luxury brand communication, social media environments that have become a new and effective medium have created different areas for brands at the corporate level. In this research, the results of a survey conducted to explain the practices of personal social media usage of luxury car brand users and their use of social

media for brands were listed. Participants in the survey were mostly using Instagram, YouTube, Twitter and Facebook, in the given order, in their personal usage of social media; LinkedIn, Google<sup>+</sup> and Pinterest were used at a very low level. In the social media usage practices of luxury brand car users, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter applications were used the most frequently, in the given order, and Google<sup>+</sup>, Pinterest and LinkedIn applications were used much less.

When the social media environments of the participants were evaluated in terms of their daily use time, it was found that a large proportion of them spent 30 minutes to two hours. It was observed that the usage times of all accounts were generally lower than two hours and over. On the other hand, when the weekly social media use time of the participants was evaluated, a large proportion stated that they used Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram for almost the same length of time every day and that they used Pinterest, Google<sup>+</sup> and LinkedIn for a shorter time.

When the personal social media use of the participants was examined, it was determined that they were using Twitter, Instagram, Google<sup>+</sup> and Facebook most frequently for the purpose of "being curious the posts and lives of others". Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Google<sup>+</sup> and YouTube were used most frequently for "sharing about themselves". Twitter, Instagram, Google<sup>+</sup>, YouTube and Facebook were mostly used for the purpose of "communicating with friends". They stated that they used Twitter, Instagram Google<sup>+</sup>, YouTube and Facebook most often to "make new friends". They used Twitter, Instagram, Google<sup>+</sup> and Facebook most frequently to "follow interested subjects/brands". Posts in other social media accounts were not considered meaningful as they were considered to be too few. The participants stated that they were using Twitter, Google<sup>+</sup>, YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest, Facebook and LinkedIn most frequently to "share posts about the followed/favorite brands".

When communication channels that they chose to communicate with the brands were examined, it was seen that they preferred e-mail, official social media accounts, corporate web pages, social media fan pages and other communication channels (1%) the most, in the given order. In the scope of the research, besides the personal social media use of luxury brand car users, the examination of the usage of social media accounts of their brands was carried out. It was observed that each luxury brand car user had different priorities for using the brand's social media account. Therefore:

- Participants using the Mercedes-Benz brand used the brand's social media

accounts most often to learn advice/comments about the product, to follow brand news, to follow their ads, to learn about sales campaigns, to follow events and to follow test drives, learning the stories of brand designers, following new products and learning the messages of brand owners/managers were less important for them.

- Participants using the Audi brand were using the brand's social media accounts most often to get advice/comments about the product, to follow their ads, to follow events, to follow brand news, to learn about sales campaigns and to follow test drives; following the new products, learning the stories of the brand designers and learning the messages of the brand founder/managers were less important for them.
- Participants using the BMW brand stated that they used the brand's social media accounts to learn advice/comments about the product, to follow brand news, to follow their ads, to follow events, to follow test drives and to learn about sales campaigns; following the new products, learning the stories of the brand designers and learning the messages of the brand founders/managers were less important for them.
- Participants using the Land Rover brand were using the brand's social media accounts most often to get advice/comments about the product, to follow brand news, to follow events, to learn about sales campaigns, to follow their ads and to follow test drives; following the new products, learning the stories of the brand designers and learning the messages of the brand founders/managers were less important for them.
- Participants using the Porsche brand were using the brand's social media accounts to get advice/comments about the product, to follow brand news, to follow their ads, to follow events and to learn about sales campaigns; following test drives, following the new products, learning the stories of the brand designers and learning the messages of the brand founders/managers were less important for them.

On the other hand, in the quantitative process of the research, according to the questionnaire survey for the users of the brands, it was determined that the users used social media actively for personal use. In addition, it can be said that they were

following, liking and communicating in social media environments belonging to the brands. It is noteworthy that when communicating with brands, they used both corporate web pages and corporate social media accounts.

This study has its own limitations that can be summarized as follows:

- Luxury brands being more limited and cautious in social media environments than other brands.
- Especially in the application process of the research, due to the nature of the luxury brands, the unreachability principle regarding reaching the sample group and their reservations regarding the questions and their answers.
- Reaching the luxury brand automobile consumers in the sampling group, time management and budget, and limitations regarding luxury brand consumers for the quantitative part can be regarded as another limitation.
- There is another limitation in calculating the number of samples that will answer the questionnaire form, because the number and distribution of all of the luxury brand automobile consumers is unknown and unattainable.

In the light of the findings obtained from this study, suggestions can be made for subsequent related studies. There are a number of recommendations for further study to shed light on future studies. The suggestions of the study can be summarized as follows:

- A more comprehensive and comparative study of different product groups can be conducted on luxury brands.
- Given the cultural characteristics, a comparative study can be conducted between the demographic characteristics of luxury brand users and luxury consumption motivations and regions where they live.
- In line with today's developing technologies and changing market conditions, considering the position of luxury, the concepts such as reaching the luxury in social media environments, becoming more democratic in luxury and new luxury are important for potential followers who do not consume luxury products. It is therefore important to consider this when determining strategies for social media environments.
- More researches of brand groups that examine the groups in social media environments of luxury brands can be undertaken.

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