The Role and Innovative Approaches of Social Media in Brand and Style Shaping in the "Old Money" Fashion Trend

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Abstract: This study explores the transformative role of social media and innovative approaches to brand identity and style, with a particular focus on the 'old money' fashion trend of Instagram and Xiaohongshu. In a context of economic recession and declining consumer purchasing power, the rise of the 'old money' aesthetic signals a shift towards sustainable and classic fashion choices in which consumers emulate the restrained, high-quality style associated with stable wealth. By reviewing the relevant literature, this study provides insights into how social media content strategies contribute to brand identity and style, in particular through user-generated content and company-led advertising. The literature reveals a nuanced interaction between social media advertising content and consumer engagement, identifying key factors such as identity alignment and experiential value as crucial drivers of brand advocacy. This review provides a comprehensive overview of recent theoretical developments and empirical findings, highlighting current gaps and future research potential in the area of sustainable style distribution through social platforms. So social media plays a key role in building the brand identity.

Keywords: Social Media, Instagram, Xiaohongshu, old money

1.Introduction

Consumer behavior has changed as a result of these factors, which is marked by inflation, economic downtown, instability of the economy, with purchasers now prioritizing longevity and quality over fads. The ‚old money' aesthetic is characterized by timeless aesthetics and investment items, which customers tend to choose in uncertain economic times.The trend for „quiet luxury" is a reflection of the general public's want to abandon rapid, throwaway fashion. Customers want ecological and ethical purchases that prioritize durability, workmanship, and tradition. Such principles are embodied by brands that support a ‚old money' style, providing continuity and stability in a market that is otherwise unstable.

Thus, the „old money" trend is growing rapidly due to the trends on social media and the economic

downtown.As for social media, Instagram and Xiaohongshu, both have significantly boost the spread of the „old money" outfit.These apps let those luxury brands share images and stories which matches their target audience's values.

And Instagram and Xiaohongshu are ideal for showing the „old money" aesthetic. Brands communicate the quality like elegance and refinement through carefully designed feeds and collaborations with influencers. This visually and narratively engages consumers, creating an aspirational image that resonates with those who aspire to an „old money" lifestyle.

That's the reason why the old money style has became much more popular compared with few years ago ,and now people look for ideas for a simple, sophisticated lifestyle. Social media is spreading these trends and making „old money" style look awesome.

As for the aesthetic of old money style, which is characterised by restrained elegance and a deliberate focus on quality rather than quantity. It evokes a classic, sophisticated luxury embodied by timeless objects, neutral palettes and high-quality fabrics. This aesthetic contrasts sharply with ,new money' or ,modern' styles, which may favour glitz and overt displays of wealth.The ,old money' style's allure is associated with virtues like exclusivity, refinement, and heritage.This style is based on tradition and represents a lifestyle of refined taste, in comparison with fashion that follows trends. It is especially alluring because it entails making long-lasting investments rather than relying on gaudy logos or brand identifiers, regardless of the pass of time.

2.Main body

2.1 Brand Identity and Self-Verification Through Social Media

2.1.1 Social media platforms

The study written by Jung & Heo(2022)focuses on social media platforms[1]. For example, visual ones like Instagram. Especially on how do they allow fashion designers to continuously construct and construct their brand identities. Designers reinforce a consistent feature by regularly updating posts, which conveys authenticity, the key point for the "old money" style.Application to the "Old Money" Aesthetic: The "old money" aesthetic leans on timeless elegance and discretion, elements that align with high-quality, brand-consistent imagery. Fashion designers who use muted color palettes, classic cuts, and understated luxury effectively signal alignment with "old money" values, drawing in consumers who view these as markers of

prestige. In contract to Velar(2021) , which focuses more on storytelling[2], Jung & Heo's emphasis on self-verification provides insight into how brands can foster deeper, identity-based loyalty. This loyalty is not just about consumer preference but about building long-term affiliation with the brand's ethos.

2.1.2 Brand Equity Formation:

Algharabat(2023) and his colleagues dive into the importance of social media marketing, especially in building and maintaining brand value for luxury industry[3]. There's a key element of customer loyalty and sustained engagement, because the brand equity is based on customers' connections with a brand's values of exclusivity, authenticity, and legacy, which is not just dependent on brand awareness or exposure. Building durable brand partnerships requires brand equity in a competitive luxury market where customers always looking for items which could represent an aspirational lifestyle, in addition to meet the demands. Social media enhances this section by giving the platform to communicate these ideals through visual storytelling, and direct interaction with followers.

Through consistent, high-quality content, luxury brands on platforms like Instagram and Xiaohongshu can communicate a narrative that resonates with an audience looking for more than transient trends. By highlighting qualities associated with legacy and craftsmanship, these brands connect with consumers who value stability, tradition, and a sense of enduring worth—qualities that are hallmarks of the "old money" aesthetic. Social media allows these brands to shape a distinct brand personality that users can align with, thereby reinforcing brand loyalty and deepening consumer trust.

2.2 Visual Storytelling and Brand Engagement

2.2.1 how brands can create immersive, cohesive stories through visual content

Velar's chapter on Instagram storytelling discusses how brands can create immersive, cohesive stories through visual content[2]. Visual storytelling allows brands to craft a narrative of timeless quality, closely aligning with "old money" attributes such as discretion, quality, and tradition. Influence on Consumer Engagement: Storytelling that emphasizes the artisanal quality of clothing, the heritage of fabrics, or classic design elements taps into the "old money" trend's ethos. According to Velar, these brand histories may encourage customers to interact on a more emotional level, hence boosting consumer engagement and brand affinity. Brands convey an air of exclusivity and elegance by linking their products to traditional tales.Compared to other themes, Velar places a greater emphasis on narrative

that actively shapes consumers' perceptions of brands, whilst Jung & Heo concentrate on brand identity building[1]. Thus, this narrative primarily explains the pieces, especially for social media influencers who are drawn to the "old money" look.

2.2.2 Visual familiarity and complexity

This study demonstrates those visual components—complexity, familiarity, and simplicity, and how they influence to social media-dependent consumers while viewing premium goods. Perceived as more "timeless" are brands with a simple yet superior, visually consistent design. Compliance with the aesthetics of "Old Money": In the context of the fashion of "Old Money", simplicity and familiarity are critical. "Old money" brands often avoid overly complex or modern designs, opting instead for underrated visuals that signal continuity and legacy. For example, black and white images or underrated product photos can lead to an idea of an established, well-established brand. Analysis: This study suggests that unlike more complex visuals used in "new money" or in a modern way, the aesthetics of "old money" are based on a classic, pared-back style that underscores the values of sophistication and heritage. In this way, Lee et al.(2021) raises awareness of how simplicity in visual presentation on social media affects consumers' perception of luxury[4].

2.3 Sustainability and Ethical Consumer Behavior

2.3.1 Eco-Fashion Advocacy through Social Media

In Muñoz Domínguez(2021)'s research, he focus on how social media might be used to promote eco-friendly fashion practices[5]. According to his research, social media platforms are essential for fostering in customers a sense of environmental responsibility. The ideals of sustainable fashion are well aligned with the values of the "old money" aesthetic, especially its emphasis on durability and quality. The "old money" approach is a suitable ally in the shift toward sustainability since it naturally encourages eco-conscious choices by placing an emphasis on classic elegance and longevity.

2.3.2 Consumer Attitudes toward Sustainability

Nowadays, consumers become to appreciate the sustainability, leading the market produce more durable and high-quality products. Furthermore, those thoughtful and responsible choices are closely related to the "old money" aesthetic, which emphasis on the enduring quality rather than the number of production. The durative is one of the core brand traits, and this feature could be further reinforced by social media advertisements that highlight product longevity and ethical manufacturing practices. And the old money style could be popularized and promoted.

2.3.3 Strengthening Brand Loyalty through Sustainable initiatives

Brands of "old money" aesthetic, are mainly positioned to foster deeper consumer loyalty by promoting slow fashion and reducing waste. This action strongly resonates with consumers who prioritize sustainability and long-term investments over short-lived fashion trends, and encourages loyalty based on shared responsibility and ethical. According to Munoz Domingos, organic fashion provides both ethical and economic benefits, which is especially important in economically cautious times[5].

By integrating sustainability into the brand's message, companies can connect with an increasing number of market segments that see eco-friendly fashion not only as a moral choice but also as an economically wise choice. People would prefer choosing brands that offer lasting quality and value, considering this more sustainable than the short-term satisfaction of fast fashion.As a result, environmentally conscious practices could well deepen the brand's loyalty by lasting value and eco-friendly production , perfectly matching with the spirit of the "old money" aesthetic.

2.3.4 The Role of Social Influence in Promoting Sustainability

The study made by Olwoch, Sonnenberg, and Taljaard-Swart (2023) delves into the impact of social influence on sustainable fashion choices, revealing how peer networks and influencer endorsements on social media significantly drive eco-conscious behavior[6]. In an era where sustainable practices are increasingly prioritized, the "old money" aesthetic's emphasis on quality over quantity aligns seamlessly with this shift. Within the realm of social media, influencers and communities advocating for sustainability play an indispensable role in reinforcing these values.

2.3.5 Application to "Old Money" and Sustainable Fashion

In the context of the "old money" aesthetic, social media influencers who promote durable, high-quality, and eco-friendly items contribute to a growing trend of sustainable fashion as a status symbol. Influencers embodying "old money" values tend to highlight items that are not only timeless in style but also sourced responsibly, using materials that stand the test of time. By choosing to showcase products that align with sustainability, these influencers communicate that eco-friendly options are both desirable and prestigious, establishing sustainable choices as markers of refined taste and responsible consumption.

2.3.6 Critical Analysis of Social Influence on Sustainable Behavior

This study reveals how social influence differs from conventional marketing by tapping into community-driven values rather than top-down brand messaging. Platforms like Instagram and Xiaohongshu facilitate a peer-led approach to sustainability, where followers not only observe but also participate in the lifestyle choices modeled by influencers. This peer influence creates a strong community that values environmental responsibility, transforming sustainability from a mere option to a communal aspiration.

Unlike traditional advertising, where messaging is primarily brand-driven, social influence fosters an environment where sustainable fashion is seen as both a desirable and achievable lifestyle. Through content that blends aspirational "old money" aesthetics with ethical practices, influencers effectively make sustainable choices both accessible and attractive, encouraging their followers to embrace a lifestyle that prioritizes longevity, heritage, and environmental consciousness. In this way, the "old money" trend is continually reinforced as a model of aspirational yet attainable sustainability, cultivating an enduring appeal that speaks to both contemporary and timeless values.

2.4 Digital Storytelling and Influencer-Led Sustainability Initiatives

2.4.1 Influencer Impact on Sustainable Fashion:

In their study, McNeill and Venter (2023)investigate the powerful role of social media influencers in promoting sustainable fashion. Influencers, particularly those who align with the "old money" aesthetic, subtly advocate for ethical consumption by presenting high-quality, durable fashion pieces that exemplify sustainability without being overtly promotional[7]. Rather than focusing on trends, these influencers highlight products designed to last, steering their followers toward responsible consumerism. By emphasizing quality and timelessness, influencers in this niche effectively frame sustainable choices as integral to a refined and sophisticated lifestyle, reinforcing the idea that these purchases are investments rather than temporary indulgences.

2.4.2 Building a Sustainable Persona:

Influencers who embody the "old money" style create a persona that underscores the longevity and value of sustainable fashion. They strategically select and promote clothing that symbolizes durability and class, catering to consumers who prioritize eco-friendly choices but still seek elegance and exclusivity. This approach naturally integrates sustainability into the "old money" lifestyle, positioning high-quality, ethically sourced products as essential wardrobe staples. By doing so, influencers help shift consumer perception, framing eco-fashion not merely as a trend but as an enduring lifestyle choice that aligns with values of integrity and thoughtful consumption.

2.4.3 Communicating Sustainability in Fashion:

Díaz-Soloaga(2021) examines how brands use social media to effectively communicate their commitment to sustainability. For brands associated with the "old money" trend, this often involves transparent discussions around ethical practices, such as fair labor conditions, sustainable sourcing, and eco-conscious production processes[8]. These messages resonate with consumers who expect brands not only to provide high-quality goods but also to adhere to moral and ethical standards in their operations. This transparency aligns with the values of the "old money" aesthetic, which prides itself on quality and integrity over superficial appeal.

2.4.4 Impact on Consumer Trust:

By using social media as a platform for transparency, brands can build a strong foundation of trust with their consumers. Openly sharing sustainable practices and details about product sourcing reinforces authenticity, a value that "old money" brands are keen to uphold. For consumers, this level of openness fosters confidence in the brand's commitment to responsible practices, strengthening loyalty and establishing the brand as both credible and principled.

2.4.5 Role in Brand Positioning:

Díaz-Soloaga highlights the strategic importance of sustainability in brand positioning, particularly for luxury brands that align with the "old money" aesthetic[8]. By promoting a dual identity that combines exclusivity with ethical responsibility, brands can appeal to a consumer base that values both prestige and environmental consciousness. This positioning sets "old money" brands apart, as they are seen not only as purveyors of luxury but also as leaders in eco-conscious practices. Through thoughtful storytelling on social media, brands can reinforce this identity, demonstrating that luxury and sustainability are compatible and appealing to a market that expects more than just a premium label.

3.Case study:Ralph Lauren

Ralph Lauren, the world-renowned fashion brand named after its founder, is loved by consumers for its quality, classic and innovative products. In terms of business model, Ralph Lauren's success can be attributed to its savvy brand positioning, diversified product line, broad distri-

bution strategy, strong brand image and commitment to sustainability.

3.1 .Marketing:Brand Ambassador and influencers

Ralph Lauren owns many ambassadors, including some Korea artists, Crystal and Winter for example, and their fans are mostly the younger generation.So using these types of ambassador could helps on shaping and renewing the brand image The image, personality and values of the star can be combined with the brand to jointly shape the brand image. For enterprises seeking brand upgrading or transformation, the right star endorsement can effectively convey the brand's new image after the refresh. Also, promote sales and market break Celebrity endorsements can stimulate consumers' desire to buy, especially during promotions and holiday marketing. In addition, the star's broad fan base can also help the brand break through the original market circle and attract more potential consumers.Having fans' attention means having heat, and this popularity and heat can determine sales.

Using the star's aura to earn is also the way to realize the business goal.Additionally, there have been posts on the social platform about the old money style in recent years, and often occupy the hot list, which is to say, these posts make people have a deeper understanding of this style, and promote the consumption of related styles or brands. Ralph Lauren is synonymous with old money."Old money style" has more than 10 related topics on social media platforms.100 million + page views. Small red book topic # fashion old money wind, also from more than 20 million notes. The pursuit of the "old money style" dress on the major platforms has made Ralph Lauren's sales in the Chinese market significant

3.2 .Marketing: Propaganda on different ways

The RalphLauren Metaverse Marketing Action Ralph Lauren × Zepeto, a new collaboration aimed at global social networks and avatar simulation apps where users can immerse themselves in a fully articulated virtual world with personalized 3D avatars and socialize with other users.Also, Ralph Lauren also owns a cross-border catering industry, opening cafes, afternoon tea, in fact, Ralph Lauren has long led this trend.Since 1999, Ralph's Coffee has successively opened stores in New York, London,Paris, Hong Kong, Tokyo and other city landmarks, attracting countless hipsters to make pilgrimages. Furthermore, Ralph Lauren Smart Retail Mini Program, an immersive "consumer experience center" that unlocks personalized in-store services, event reservations, online orders, exclusive consumer advisors and other online services for con-

sumers.This kind of marketing method that is not limited to the form of a variety of linkage cooperation is the brand image of Ralph Lauren.

4.Summary

4.1 conclusions

4.1.1 .Brand Identity and „Old Money" Aesthetic:

Studies like Jung & Heo (2021)and Algharabat et al. (2023) provide insights into how social media enables brands to create and reaffirm their identities[1][3]. Brands that fit the 'Old Money' aesthetic use social media to communicate exclusivity, heritage and quality - qualities valued by consumers looking for timeless and sophisticated style. The popularity of these aesthetics is part of a wider trend towards 'self-confidence' through curated brand identities. By constantly demonstrating these qualities online, brands reinforce the classic 'old money' image, fostering consumer loyalty based on quality and heritage values.

4.1.2 .Storytelling and emotional engagement:

The role of storytelling, as highlighted by Velar (2021) and Lee, Hur and Watkins (2018), is crucial to creating engaging brand experiences that emotionally resonate with consumers[2][4]. Through stories of tradition, craft and history, brands reinforce the 'old money' values of sophistication and exclusivity.Also, storytelling not only engages consumers but also helps to differentiate brands in a saturated market. "The 'old money' aesthetic drives consumers' desire then, consumers feel connected to the brand's heritage and values, fostering an emotional connection that translates into long-term loyalty.

4.1.3 .Consumer behavior and sustainability:

The literatures written by Olwoch, Sonnenberg, and Taljaard-Swart (2023) shows how social media encourages sustainable behavior consistent with the "old money" aesthetic which means values quality has a greater impacts than quantity[6]. And the sustainability is one of the major concerns in today's climate-conscious consumer market, this relationship is especially essential.

This research indicates that consumers drawn to the 'old money' look are increasingly choosing companies that prioritize sustainability and eco-friendly manufacturing. Meanwhile, social media gives those companies the ability to openly share sustainable practices, thus providing customers a sense of inclusion in the larger ethical consumerism movement.

4.2 future direction

4.2.1 .The role of digital and virtual fashion:

As digital fashion becomes a sustainable alternative, future research should explore how virtual experiences influence consumer perceptions of luxury and sustainability. Brands that offer virtual representations of their products can reduce physical waste and reach a wider audience by upholding 'old money' values of quality and longevity.Research could also explore how virtual fashion fits in with traditional luxury values and whether consumers see digital fashion as a legitimate expression of the 'old money' aesthetic.

4.2.2 .Longitudinal studies on consumer loyalty:

Given the enduring appeal of the 'old money' aesthetic, future research could use longitudinal studies that explore how brand loyalty develops and persists over time. This would provide insights into whether the 'old money' values promoted on social media create lasting consumer relationships.Tracking consumer preferences over several years could also reveal changes in consumer attitudes towards sustainability, helping brands to adapt their messages in the light of these evolving values.

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