

MARKETING

## This psychological response will make or break your luxury brand

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*A common aspect of unsuccessful luxury brands is a lack of emotion, as brands too often neglect the necessity of touching people's hearts.  
Image credit: Dior*

By [Daniel Langer](#)

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In many of my publications and presentations, I describe luxury as similar to a love relationship. A female participant in one of my masterclasses once said about her [Birkin bag](#) that "fell in love with this handbag," proving how strong our bond with luxury items can be.

[Luxury brands](#) often forget over time that they are in the business of creating these strong emotions. If a brand does not create an extreme emotional response for its customers, then the brand cannot create extreme value and the luxury business is all about [extreme value creation](#).

When we analyze unsuccessful [luxury brands](#), a common aspect is a lack of emotion. Brands tend to rely too much on their history or product features and neglect the necessity of touching people's hearts.

Having a history as a luxury brand is only relevant if that history gives people a specific benefit today.

History without relevancy does not create value. Too often, companies are prisoners of their own heritage and worship it internally while missing the mark with their customers. Early warning signs are ignored because "we have always done it this way" mentalities rule these companies.

An emotional response happens when something excites us it is as simple as this. No one likes to be bored, which is why luxury brands always need to question everything they do while embracing creativity, artistry, and inspiration.

If a brand loses the ability to innovate and inspire, it cannot excite. And then it becomes irrelevant, loses its cultural importance, and starts to decline.

Because of this, execution cannot precede strategy. Too many brands merely hire and fire their creative talents, but they do not get that they can only achieve brand mastery if their brand strategies are crystal clear.

Creative execution is only the fuel for an existing strategy. Yet, our research shows that more than 90 percent of luxury brands have significant deficiencies with their brand's [positioning](#), [storytelling](#) and service delivery.

If the position is not clear enough, the creative execution will look random and, as a result, many brands weaken their brand equity with every move they make rather than strengthening it. Brands feel safe because they are remaining active, but they delude themselves while self-destructing.

Given the importance of emotion, a brand strategy needs to define exactly which specific emotion it should evoke. There must be zero uncertainty about how the brand inspires.

In many brand audits, this is a major weak point we identify over and over.

Most managers are able to place their brand into the correct category but cannot describe the precise emotional elements of their brand. Hint: an answer such as "We are selling a dream," should worry you. All luxury brands should "sell a dream." That statement does not differentiate or guide the consumer. Brands must be dramatically more precise.

As **millennials** and **Gen-Zers** become the most influential luxury consumers, they will expect brands to have purpose and meaning. Both want brands to be linked to specific emotional responses, but few brands do that well.

Any gap in emotional clarity can put a brand's long-term survival at risk. For luxury brands, this is the single greatest danger, but it also offers the most potential upside if managed well.

And lastly, a perfectly planned emotional strategy will not be relevant if it only exists on paper. After a brand defines its emotional story, it needs to plan a highly detailed customer journey, so that customers can feel these emotions.

A brand is only as strong as the excitement it creates for consumers.

So ask yourself: Is your brand evoking an emotional response? Is your brand strategy based on the psychology of luxury?

If your answer is not clear, you need to act and fast because a brand is relevant or it is not.

If a **luxury brand** does not offer pure emotion, then it is not offering any value, and if there is no value, there will not be sales. The time to wake up and act is now.

*Daniel Langer is CEO of the luxury, lifestyle and consumer brand strategy firm **quit**, and the professor of luxury strategy and extreme value creation at Pepperdine University in Malibu, California. He consults some of the leading luxury brands in the world, is the author of several luxury management books, a global keynote speaker, and holds luxury masterclasses in Europe, the USA, and Asia. Follow **@drlanger***

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