

# In the Eyes of Consumers: Perceptions and Attitudes towards Louis Vuitton and Their Brand Ambassadors

Victor Mechai Siharath<sup>a</sup>, Papaporn Chaihanchanchai<sup>b\*</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Rangsit University International College, Thailand, <sup>b</sup>Chulalongkorn University, Thailand

## ABSTRACT

This study was qualitative in nature aiming to gain more understanding on consumers' perceptions towards Louis Vuitton and their attitudes toward Louis Vuitton's brand ambassador, BTS, a K-Pop boy band. A purposive sampling technique was used to collect data from eight participants through an online focus group discussion. All participants were consumers of Louis Vuitton, aged between 22-28 years old. The luxury value perception framework by Weidmann, Hennigs, and Siebels (2007) was used to explore consumers' attitudes towards Louis Vuitton and the VisCAP model by Percy and Rossiter (1980) was used to evaluate the source characteristics of BTS as Louis Vuitton's brand ambassador. The findings showed that the participants perceived Louis Vuitton to be a brand of good quality and functionality, however, a brand for older consumers. BTS were also evaluated BTS to have limited visibility and not credible as Louis Vuitton's brand ambassador. This study has raised important questions about the congruency between a brand and its ambassador, especially for luxury brands.

### Article Info

Received December 15, 2021

Revised April 1, 2022

Accepted April 18, 2022

**Keywords:** Source characteristics, Luxury value perception, VisCAP model, Brand ambassador, Louis Vuitton

## Introduction

One of the most effective marketing strategies for brands, including luxury brands, is the implementation of celebrity endorsement. Brands selectively choose their endorsers as a source of communication to attract consumers, with the hope that it can enhance the credibility of the brand (Nelson & Deborah, 2017).

Luxury fashion brands remain "luxurious" due to the luxury value that is perceived by consumers. In other words, consumers' luxury value perception is the essence of how the luxury fashion industry exists (Harris & de Chernatony, 2001). Celebrities who are credible worldwide have been employed to endorse brands (Nelson & Deborah, 2017). When celebrities encompass the qualities and characteristics that reflect the ethos of

a brand, that brand may choose to sign the celebrity to be a brand ambassador (Lazarevic, 2011).

Similar to brand endorsers, brand ambassadors enhance brand awareness and brand exposure, strengthen and distinguish brand image, as well as, allowing brands to differentiate themselves from their competitors (Westberg, Stavros, & Wilson, 2010). Brand ambassadors are described as credible sources and key opinion leaders who authenticate the validity of products and brands through testimonials, promote and testify the brand through various media platforms, and stimulate the word-of-mouth effect. A brand ambassador has the potential to reach and influence certain target groups that a product/brand would normally be unable to (Andersson & Ekman, 2009).

## CONTACT

Victor Mechai Siharath (M.A., Chulalongkorn University, Thailand) is Lecturer, Faculty of Communication Arts, Rangsit University International College, Thailand.

Papaporn Chaihanchanchai (Ph.D., Chulalongkorn University, Thailand) is Assistant Professor, Faculty of Communication Arts, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand.

\*Corresponding author's email: [papaporn.c@chula.ac.th](mailto:papaporn.c@chula.ac.th)

When a celebrity becomes a brand ambassador, their perceived behavior, performance, and reputation is also assigned to that brand which, in turn, perceived and evaluated by consumers (Klopper & North, 2011). For example, a study by Knittel and Stango (2014) showed a substantial plummet in the market value of Tiger Woods' sponsors after the news release about his sex scandal broke out to the public.

In the early 2000s, Hollywood stars such as Kiera Knightley, George Clooney, and Leonardo DiCaprio were selected by many luxury brands to endorse their products, and eventually become their brand ambassadors. However, there has been a shift in selecting

brand ambassadors. Asian celebrities and pop stars are now the most sought-after ambassadors for luxury fashion brands. With an impressive lineup of stars already signed to leading luxury fashion houses such as Lisa Manoban - Korean pop star (brand ambassador for Celine & Bulgari), Roseanne Park - Korean pop star (brand ambassador for Yves Saint Laurent), and Jennie Kim - Korean pop star (brand ambassador for Chanel).

Louis Vuitton, a French luxury fashion brand founded in 1854, is renowned as one of the leading fashion houses in the international luxury fashion industry (Kasztalska, 2018). Louis Vuitton is an extension of the conglomerate brand LVMH which has over 75 brands under its label. Louis Vuitton is most famously known for its luxury travel crates and iconic monogram embellished across a multitude of fashion products (Haber, 2005). According to Forbes, Louis Vuitton was ranked as the most valuable luxury fashion brand in 2020 with an estimated brand value of US\$47.2B. Louis Vuitton has one of the highest profit margins north of 30% and is renowned as one of the front-runners in the luxury fashion industry (Swant, 2020). In Thailand, Louis Vuitton is considered one of the top luxury brands due to its high brand awareness amongst Thai consumers (Euromonitor International, 2016).

As for Louis Vuitton ambassador, BTS, a famous K-Pop boy band was selected as the global brand ambassador in April 2021. Since their debut in 2013, the popularity of BTS has rapidly grew across the globe. BTS has gained international recognition through many music awards and media presence (Parc & Kim, 2020). BTS were the most tweeted celebrities in 2017 (Aniftos, 2017) and listed as the world's highest-paid boyband in 2019 by Forbes (Voytko, 2020). Thus, BTS were chosen in this study due to the recency as the newly signed global brand ambassador of Louis Vuitton. This phenomenon has generated a widespread discussion through social media about the congruence of BTS as Louis Vuitton's brand ambassador (Okwodu, 2021). Furthermore, the vast majority of studies on

source characteristics have been quantitative (Bergkvist & Rossiter, 2007; Bergkvist, Hjalmarson, & Mägi, 2016; Farhati & Khan, 2011); Deshbhag & Mohan, 2020; Ohanian, 1990; Dholakia & Stemthal, 1977; Kamins, 1990; Ulkhaq, Nurdianti, Kartika, & Astharina, 2016; Wadhwa & Chiahanchanchai, 2021).

Therefore, this study aimed to understand consumers' luxury value perceptions towards Louis Vuitton, and to understand consumers' attitudes towards BTS as Louis Vuitton's brand ambassador. This study can provide insights into consumer's perception towards a luxury brand and its brand ambassador. This study can also add to the growing body of research that indicates the impact of brand endorser/ambassador on consumer's perception and attitude.

This paper has been divided into four parts. The first part gives a brief overview of luxury value perception and VisCAP model. The second part deals with methodology, while the third part is concerned with the results of focus group discussion. The fourth part begins by discussing the results, then implications, and limitations of this study.

## Luxury Value Perception

Perception refers to a process in which individuals select, organize and interpret sensations that are gaged through the five human senses, which consist of sight, taste, smell, sound, and touch (Solomon, 2019). Luxury, a term used in an everyday context pertaining to the idea of expensive and limited products, services, and opulent lifestyle. The description may seem simplistic, but the concept of luxury is more in-depth than perceived (Weidmann et al., 2007). Luxury is more than just about having luxury items; the items themselves are perceived as having extra pleasure and enhancing all senses at once ((Hudders, 2012; Kapferer, 1997).

In terms of luxury value perception, it was coined by Weidmann et al. (2007). It seeks to explain consumer's perception and motives for purchasing luxury products. The luxury value perception includes four dimensions.

First, financial dimension, the focus of this dimension is on price value. It refers to the direct monetary aspect of luxury, such as price, discount, investment. Setting a high price adds perceptual value to the quality, status, and service of a luxury brand. The dimension also delves into the idea of what has been sacrificed to obtain a product.

Second, functional dimension pertains to the basic functionality, utility, and core benefits. In other words, this dimension deals with usability value, quality value, and uniqueness value. Usability value refers to the core benefit and usability of the product to satisfy the needs of the consumer. A study by Gentry, Sanjay, Clifford, and

Commuri (2001) discovered that one of the main reasons why consumers purchase luxury brands is due to the superior quality reflected by the brand name. Uniqueness value derives from the concept of uniqueness, which is the perceived assumption of exclusivity and rareness of a limited product that enhances the desire of the consumer or preference towards a brand (Weidmann et al., 2007).

Third, the individual dimension deals with consumer's personal orientations on luxury consumption. Such orientations are self-identity, hedonistic, and materialistic values. Self-identity value refers to how the individual perceives him/herself. The concept of self-image congruence with luxury products explains the phenomenon of attaching symbolic meanings from products to one's identity. Hedonic values refer to emotional value and intrinsic enjoyment that emerges from using a certain product or service. Research into the concept of luxury has identified a relationship between luxury consumption and emotional responses such as sensory pleasure and gratification (Weidmann et al., 2007). Materialistic value pertains to the concept of materialism which is described as the degree that a person principally finds possessions to have a central role in one's life. The more materialistic a consumer is the more likely he/she is to acquire possessions and give them priority (Belk, 1985).

Lastly, the social dimension refers to the value consumers acquire from consuming products or services that are strongly recognized within their social circles. Such values are conspicuousness and prestige value which can affect the tendency to purchase luxury brands. Conspicuousness value asserts social status and representation; luxury brands become important to individuals who seek to elevate status and conform to certain social groups. Prestige value explains the conformity to build social relationships. In other words, consumers desire to possess luxury brands to serve as a symbolic sign of group membership (Weidmann et al., 2007).

A recent study by Petravičiūtė, Seinauskiene, Rūtelionė, and Krukowski (2021) used the concept of luxury value perception to explore the dimensions of luxury value in relation to consumers' brand attachment and purchase intention. The results indicated that luxury value perception has a positive effect on purchase intention and brand attachment. Higher levels of perceived luxury value also enforced positive perceptions towards luxury brands (Jansom & Pongsakornrungsilp, 2021). Furthermore, the concept of luxury value perception has proven to correlate with consumers' attitudes towards luxury brands.

In conclusion, the luxury value perception developed by Weidmann et al. (2007) provides an analytical framework to explain the dimensions of luxury value in a global context. Thus, this study employed this concept to gain more understanding on consumers' perception towards Louis Vuitton.

## Source Characteristics and The VisCAP Model

Source characteristics can enhance or detract from the potential of a message to instigate a change in attitude or belief. The source characteristics pertain to internal and external qualities which the source possesses (Wilson & Sherrell, 1993). Source of the message or the message vessel plays a pivotal role in changing consumers' attitude and purchase behavior (Dholakia & Sternthal, 1977; Gunawan & Huarang, 2015; Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953; Solomon, 2019). Thus, selecting a brand ambassador as a source of communication is essential. Criteria for brand ambassador selection are subjective and can vary according to the requirement and nature of the brand (Lazarevic, 2011).

Scholars have studied source characteristics in terms of consumers' attitudes towards the characteristics such as source credibility (Ohanian, 1990; Wu & Wang, 2011), source attractiveness (McGuire, 1985; Solomon, 2019), including the VisCAP model (Percy & Rossiter, 1980). The VisCAP model provides a set of attributes for celebrity selection to be a brand ambassador and/or celebrity endorser. Since this study looked at BTS as a brand ambassador of Louis Vuitton, the VisCAP model was employed as a framework (Bergkvist & Rossiter, 2007; Bergkvist et al., 2016) to evaluate the source characteristics of BTS.

The four attributes in the VisCAP model include visibility, credibility, attractiveness, and power (Royan, 2005). Visibility pertains to the exposure a celebrity has through the retrospect of endorsement and popularity. The visibility of a celebrity is the accumulation of how much the individual is seen. Visibility also refers to the fandom of the celebrity; those following the celebrity will naturally gravitate to the endorsed brand and have favorable attitudes (Royan, 2005).

Credibility refers to the extent to of trustworthiness and expertise of the ambassador. The celebrity selected to be a brand ambassador must have adequate expertise or sufficient knowledge, and objectivity in relation to the brand and product category. Next, attractiveness refers to the ambassador's physical appearance, personality, and similarity. Lastly, power refers to the charisma of the brand ambassador. Factors such as popularity, public opinion, and personal affiliation may fluctuate the power of varying brand ambassadors (Royan, 2005).

## Methodology

A total of eight participants were selected, the number of participants was considered optimal for non-commercial focus group research (Dilshad & Latif, 2013) and acceptable for a focus group discussion (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). A purposive sampling technique was used to ensure that participants are qualified to partake in the focus group discussion. To ensure the data collected is rich and diverse, the researcher selected participants according to the following criteria (Dilshad & Latif, 2013). All participants must be between the ages of 18 - 34 years old as they were the main target of Louis Vuitton (Kitner, 2014). They must have used Louis Vuitton products or had experience the store service within the past 6 months as those who are customers or have direct experience are more likely to have perceptions than non-customers (Romaniuk & Huang, 2020).

Based on the criteria above, the profiles of the respondents were pre-determined:

1. Two participants were a part of BTS' fandom group (Army).
2. Two participants were Louis Vuitton consumers.
3. Two participants knew of BTS and were consumers of Louis Vuitton, aged between 18 - 25 years old.
4. Two participants knew of BTS and were consumers of Louis Vuitton, aged between 26 - 34 years old.

The focus group discussion was conducted approximately 120 minutes for maximum efficiency (Rice & Ezzy, 1999) via the *Zoom Cloud Meetings* platform. The focus group discussion was held on the 1st of November 2021. Data were noted and recorded to allow further comprehension by the researcher (Dilshad & Latif, 2013). After the session, data were analyzed immediately so that the

information obtained were still clear in the researcher's memory (Malhotra, 2019). Validity was ensured in terms of true value; participant's views and perspectives were accurately and clearly transcribed. The gathered data also excluded personal view and experience bias. Reliability was checked in terms of trustworthiness; the researcher remained transparent and the decisions made were clear of any subjectivity and bias (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

## Findings

In terms of the demographic profile of the eight participants, they were between 22-28 years of age, six of them were female and two were male. Three participants were Master's degree students, one was a recent bachelor's degree graduate, one was a marketing researcher for a beverage company and a former sales assistant for Louis Vuitton. One was the country manager for the Wish Rewards Program, another was a sales marketer for an industrial company.

Data were analyzed based on the thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), consisting of open coding and axial coding (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). To serve the objectives of this study, the findings were presented in terms of consumers' luxury value perceptions towards Louis Vuitton and consumers' attitudes towards BTS as Louis Vuitton's brand ambassador.

### Consumers' Luxury Value Perceptions towards Louis Vuitton

The participants were asked to discuss how they perceived the particular values of Louis Vuitton pertained to the luxury value dimensions by Weidmann et al. (2007). The emerged themes and codes are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1** Luxury Value Perception Thematic Analysis

Dimensions	Themes	Keywords and Phrases
Financial	- Worth the price	“Reasonable” “History of the brand” “The price is worth it” “Expect from luxury brand” “Standard” “It feels expensive” “Oud is expensive”
Functional	- Good quality and durability	“Good quality” “Still in good quality after all these years” “Belts is great” “Durable” “Good shape”
Individual	- No symbolic meaning - Unappealing to young consumers	“Don’t really think about how I feel” “I feel nothing” “Don’t think too much into it” “Don’t really care” “Doesn’t do anything” “Old” “Feel old” “Older people” “I would rather wear Balenciaga, it’s trendier”
Social	- Better treatment - Enhanced credibility	“Better treatment” “Get better treat” “Look more credible” “Become more reliable”

Under the **financial dimension**, participants expressed that Louis Vuitton products are worth the price due to the quality of materials used. Furthermore, the participants deemed Louis Vuitton expensive, but reasonable considering the brand's history. One prominent theme emerged from the discussion: *Worth the price*.

For the **functional dimension**, the consensus amongst the participants denoted that Louis Vuitton products are of good quality, especially the stitching on various products. Participants also discussed the durability of Louis Vuitton products in terms of use and time. One outstanding theme arose from the analysis: *Good quality with durability*. Some examples of the participants' expressions were shown below.

“*The quality is really good, the stitching on LV is better than Chanel*”

(Participant 6)

“*The stitching and straps are still in good quality after all these years*”

(Participant 7)

In terms of the **individual dimension**, the participants expressed that they did not think about how they felt when using Louis Vuitton products and some felt nothing. As the discussion progressed,

a meaning of being old was echoed. Furthermore, a participant mentioned how she perceived Louis Vuitton to be cheap due to a plethora of counterfeit products, leading to two emerged themes: *No symbolic meaning* and *Unappealing to young consumers*.

Under the **social dimension**, the participants explained that when wearing or using Louis Vuitton products in public areas, such as shopping malls, bars, and clubs, they tended to get better treatment from staff or workers. This notion was amplified further by the notion that Louis Vuitton can enhance one's credibility if worn or used in a particular situation. Two prominent themes emerged from the discussion: *Better treatment* and *Enhanced credibility*.

Some examples of the participants' expressions were shown below.

“*It depends on the occasion, if someone was working in real estate and wore Louis Vuitton, it would make them look more credible*”

(Participant 1)

“*I feel like people trust me more when I wear LV, it's as if I become more reliable*”

(Participant 7)

In a nutshell, Louis Vuitton was perceived as worth the price and high-quality in terms of financial and functional value, but associated with old consumers and no symbolic meaning. Thus, the luxury value perception of Louis Vuitton was both positive and negative.

**Table 2** Attitudes towards BTS Thematic Analysis

Attributes	Themes	Keywords and Phrases
Visibility	- Limited exposure	“Have never seen them” “Never seen BTS in LV” “Constantly see” “BTS wearing LV during events”
	- Constant exposure	
Credibility	- Not credible as Louis Vuitton’s brand ambassador	“Honestly don’t think BTS are credible” “Wouldn’t believe in their credibility” “Wouldn’t say they are credible either” “Don’t think they are that trustworthy” “Just doing their job” “Don’t think they suit luxury brands”
Attractiveness	- Attractive as Louis Vuitton’s brand ambassador	“Look so good in LV black suit” “Everything looks so good” “Jungkook in a suit looks amazing” “Totally fangirled over that”
Power	- Visibility impacts power	“The power that Lisa has with CELINE is much more” “Need more social media exposure” “More influence as LV’s brand ambassador” “More appearance on social media to notice LV”

Under the **visibility**, the participants discussed the exposure of BTS as Louis Vuitton’s brand ambassador. Most of them had never been exposed to BTS as Louis Vuitton’s brand ambassador, not even with social media posts or news pertaining to the ambassadorship. Some examples of the participants’ expressions were shown below.

*“Now come to think of it I’ve never seen BTS in LV”*  
(Participant 8)

*“I often see BTS on social media but I have never seen them wearing Louis Vuitton products”*  
(Participant 7)

However, another two who were BTS’s fan had constantly seen BTS wearing Louis Vuitton clothing and products during public events.

### Consumers’ Attitudes toward BTS as Louis Vuitton’s Brand Ambassador

The participants were asked about BTS’s characteristics as Louis Vuitton’s brand ambassador based on the VisCAP model. The four attributes pertained to visibility, credibility, attractiveness, and power. The emerged themes and codes are shown in Table 2.

*“I constantly see BTS wearing LV during events, like public events and appearances. Have you seen them in a suit? They look sublime”*

(Participant 2)

*“I have to disagree, I think BTS’ visibility will contribute to sales from fans. It is crazy what fans will do for their idols; we spend so much money”*

(Participant 3)

From the findings, two themes emerged: *Limited exposure* and *Constant exposure*.

Under the **credibility**, the general evaluation amongst the participants was predominantly negative. The majority of participants stated that they did not find BTS credible as a brand ambassador for Louis Vuitton. It was interesting that many of them said that brand ambassadors in luxury fashion do not have to be credible. One prominent theme emerged: *Not credible as Louis Vuitton’s brand ambassador*. Some examples of the participants’ expressions were shown below.

*"I honestly don't think BTS are credible, I think they are just doing their job"*  
 (Participant 5)

*"I don't think BTS are suitable. I mean their representation just doesn't click; I wouldn't believe in their credibility"*  
 (Participant 6)

*"To be honest, I don't think BTS suits luxury fashion brands"*  
 (Participant 1)

Under the **attractiveness**, BTS were deemed to be attractive as Louis Vuitton's brand ambassador, especially for the participants who were BTS's fans. Thus, one prominent theme emerged: *Attractive as Louis Vuitton's brand ambassador*.

For the **power**, the participants expressed that due to the popularity of BTS, the power that BTS has as Louis Vuitton's brand ambassador has great potential. However, they raised the issue of limited exposure once again; BTS' power as Louis Vuitton's brand ambassador has been hindered because of less social media presence. They all agreed that if BTS as Louis Vuitton's brand ambassador had more exposure, BTS might have been as influential as Lisa for Celine. Thus, one prominent theme was uncovered which was *Visibility impacts power*.

Thus, it can be concluded that the participants' attitudes toward BTS' visibility, credibility, and power as Louis Vuitton's brand ambassador were unfavorable, while their attitudes toward BTS's attractiveness were favorable. This reflects that though BTS are selected to attract younger consumers, the ambassadorship is somewhat unsuccessful.

## Discussion

In terms of luxury value perception, the most interesting finding was that Louis Vuitton was associated with older consumers and lacked symbolic meaning, which pertains to the individual dimension. A plausible explanation could be the incongruity between consumer's self-image and Louis Vuitton's brand image. That is, consumers tend to acquire products from brands that represent their self-image (Ye, Liu, & Shi, 2015). Consumers also actively consume products that they perceive represent them (Wee, 2004). Since half of the participants were Generation Z and the other half were young adults who are prone to consuming products that are trendy, stylish, and exclusive (Jain, Vatsa, & Jagani, 2014), they did not associate with Louis Vuitton, a brand that has heritage and possesses

the image of sophistication and elegance (Thomas, 2021). This is also the case for this study, the participants made reference to Balenciaga being a brand that represents their self-image. Thus, using Louis Vuitton may not perpetuate feelings because the brand does not have symbolic meaning to them (Bachmann, Walsh, & Hammes, 2019; Solomon, 2019).

Another interesting finding involved the social dimension pertaining to the perceived utility consumers may acquire when consuming luxury products or services that are recognized amongst their social circles (Weidmann et al., 2007). Using Louis Vuitton products may infer better treatment from external entities such as sales assistance, bartenders, and waiters, and enhance credibility in certain situations. A plausible explanation is that luxury products can reflect a meaning of the user's wealth and social status (Hudders, Pandalere, & Vyncke, 2013). As denoted by Porath (2018), it is prominent that those with wealth and high social status receive better treatment from those lower on the hierarchy. In Thai society, class issues are still noticeable, thereby, the participants received better treatment and more credibility when using Louis Vuitton products. This is consistent with a study by Nelissen and Meijers (2011), which identified that people who wear brand-labeled clothing are more likely to be perceived as trustworthy. In their experiment, two women applying for a job as a lab assistant were compared. The woman wearing a Tommy Hilfiger blouse was perceived to be more capable for the position than the woman wearing a blouse from a non-label brand.

With regard to consumers' attitudes towards BTS as Louis Vuitton's brand ambassador based on the VisCAP model. The most interesting finding was that BTS were evaluated as not credible. A plausible explanation could be because of the brand and endorser congruency. Celebrity congruence with a brand is vital in establishing credibility for both brand and brand ambassadors (Min, Chang, Jai, & Ziegler, 2019). The participants perceived Louis Vuitton as a brand for old consumers, whereas, BTS' members are aged between 23-28 years old (Field, 2021). Thus, image of Louis Vuitton and BTS are incongruent. This finding reflects the vampire effect coined by Erdogan and Baker (2000). It explains the phenomenon occurs when a celebrity's image is not congruent with the endorsed brand. The consumers then struggle to construct meanings between the brand and the celebrity.

In addition, the participants also felt that BTS are just doing their job as an ambassador. They did not believe BTS actually use and advocate for Louis Vuitton products, despite the

fact that BTS have worn Louis Vuitton clothing to various events, performances, and have posted on their social media profiles. Occasions that BTS wore Louis Vuitton products include at the airport amidst traveling, performing on Saturday Night Live, at a photoshoot for PAPER magazine, and at the 2021 Grammy Awards (Donbavand, 2021). This finding may also be explained by the fact that BTS endorse many brands. Overexposure of a celebrity across various brands and product categories could weaken the association with a specific brand. By which, consumers may question if the celebrity indeed advocates and uses the brand/product (Mowen & Brown, 1981; Solomon, 2019).

It is somewhat surprising that the visibility of BTS were explained in relation to their power. The participants evaluated the visibility of BTS as Louis Vuitton's brand ambassador as underexposed, leading to less power as a brand ambassador. However, the visibility of BTS as a K-Pop boy band was high. This inconsistency could be because BTS as a boy band overshadowed their brand ambassadorship. Consumers focused their attention on the celebrity rather than the endorsed product/brand (Erdogan & Baker, 2000). BTS seemed to have limited power compared to other brand ambassadors such as Lisa for Celine; as stated by the participants. According to Erdogan and Baker (2000), poor selection of a celebrity endorser can overshadow the endorsed brand, leading to an inability to recall the brand after being exposed to an advertisement. These findings reflect that though BTS are selected to attract younger consumers, the ambassadorship is somewhat unsuccessful. This is in line with a study of Lafferty and Goldsmith (1999), indicating that the credibility of an endorser is linked with that of the product they endorse. When a celebrity is perceived as credible, it can enhance the brand reputation. In addition, it is suggested to consider a good match between brand personality and the selected ambassador's personality (Singh, 2014). Negligent ambassador selection and ambassador management will result in the potential risk of damaging the brand. It is essential that brand ambassadors fit with the brand to ensure maximum benefit (Lazarevic, 2011).

## Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study was limited by the age range of the participants, between 22 and 27 years old and those who are loyal customers of Louis Vuitton. Future research, using a broader range of demographic and behavioral characteristics, could shed more light on understanding consumers' perception and attitudes toward a luxury brand.

The scope of this study was limited in terms of studying only one of Louis Vuitton's brand ambassadors. A natural progression of this work is to analyze more brand ambassadors under Louis Vuitton. More broadly, future research can also explore the branding of BTS.

Although the sample size of the focus group was acceptable for non-commercial purpose (Dilshad & Latif, 2013), only one focus group was conducted. To obtain richer and more diverse findings, future research needs to conduct two to three focus groups to reach the saturation point (Guest, Namey, & McKenna, 2017).

## Practical Implications

In terms of theoretical contribution, this study adds to the growing body of research that indicates the importance of brand ambassador congruency. This study also contributes to our understanding of how young adult consumers perceived and evaluated a luxury brand, and the link between their perceptions and attitudes towards a brand and its brand ambassador, Louis Vuitton in this case.

The findings will be of interest to marketers for luxury fashion brands. The quality and durability of should still be highlighted because it justifies the high price. However, to attract young adult consumers, Louis Vuitton or other luxury brands can leverage their brand equity by launching a new product line specifically for this segment, or collaborating with in-trend brands to create products that will appeal to this segment. Such collaborations could be similar to Louis Vuitton x Supreme. Furthermore, Louis Vuitton should conduct interviews or focus group discussions to obtain to gain more understanding on what they want and need.

BTS as Louis Vuitton's brand ambassadors had limited visibility and power. Therefore, marketers should increase visibility of the brand ambassador through different platform, especially online media where young adult consumers are.

Lastly, this study also indicates the prominence of brand ambassador selection. Marketers must select brand ambassadors carefully, especially for luxury fashion brands. Attention to the congruency between potential ambassadors and the brand is vital for making consumers trust the credibility of the brand ambassador which, in turn can influence the perceived image of the brand. Greater efforts are needed to ensure that a brand ambassador for luxury brands should fit the brand, and should have credibility, visibility, and power as a brand ambassador, not as a celebrity.

## ORCID ID

Papaporn Chaihanchanchai: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6809-941X>

## References

Anifto, R. (2017). *BTS is the most tweeted-about artist of 2017, plus more Twitter year-end data*. Retrieved November 1, 2021, from <https://www.billboard.com/articles/news/4700000/bts-is-the-most-tweeted-about-artist-of-2017-plus-more-twitter-year-end-data>

Andersson, M., & Ekman, P. (2009). Ambassador networks and place branding. *Journal of Place Management and Development*, 2(1), 41-51.

Bachmann, F., Walsh, G., & Hammes, E. K. (2019). Consumer perceptions of luxury brands: An owner-based perspective. *European Management Journal*, 37(3), 287-298.

Belk, R. W. (1985). Materialism: Traits aspects of living in the material world. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 12(3), 265-280.

Bergkvist, L., & Rossiter, J. R. (2007). The predictive validity of multiple-item versus single-item measures of the same constructs. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 44(2), 175-184.

Bergkvist, L., Hjalmarson, H., & Mägi, A. W. (2016). A new model of how celebrity endorsements work: Attitude toward the endorsement as a mediator of celebrity source and endorsement effects. *International Journal of Advertising*, 35(2), 171-184.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (1990). *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Deshbhag, R. R., & Mohan, B. C. (2020). Study on influential role of celebrity credibility on consumer risk perceptions. *Journal of Indian Business Research*, 12(1), 79-92.

Dholakia, R., & Stemthal, B. (1977). Highly credible source: Persuasive facilitator or persuasive liabilities. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 3(4), 223-232.

Dilshad, R. M., & Latif, M. I. (2013). Focus group interview as a tool for qualitative research: An analysis. *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences*, 33(1), 191-198.

Donbavand, K. (2021). *6 times BTS wore Louis Vuitton (and we swooned)*. Retrieved December 7, 2021, from <https://www.instyle.com>

Erdogan, B. Z. (1999). Celebrity endorsement: A literature review. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 15(4), 291-314.

Erdogan, B. Z., & Baker, M. J. (2000). Towards a practitioner-based model of selecting celebrity endorsers. *International Journal of Advertising*, 19(1), 25-42.

Euromonitor International. (2016). *Louis Vuitton (Thailand) Co Ltd in Luxury Goods (Thailand)*. Retrieved December 7, 2021, from <https://www.marketresearch.com>

Farhati, R., & Khan, M. B. (2011). Celebrity endorsement: A congruity measure of personalities. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 1(1), 30-38.

Field, S. (2021). *BTS members guide: Read BTS' profiles to become an ARMY*. Retrieved December 7, 2021, from <https://www.hypable.com/bts-member-profile-guide/>

Gentry, J. W., Sanjay, P., Clifford, S., & Commuri, S. (2001). How about Ralph Lauren? The separation of brand and product in a counterfeit culture. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 28(1), 258-265.

Gunawan, D. D. & Huarng, K. H. (2015). Viral effects of social network and media on consumers' purchase intention. *Journal of Business Research*, 68(11), 2237-2241.

Haber, H. (2005). *Vuitton garden: A maze through history*. Retrieved December 9, 2021, from <https://wwd.com/fashion-news/fashion-features/vuitton-garden-a-maze-through-history-574719/>

Harris, F., & de Chernatony, L. (2001). Corporate branding and corporate brand performance. *European Journal of Marketing*, 35(3), 441-456.

Hovland, C. I., Janis, L. I., & Kelley, H. H. (1953). *Communication and Persuasion*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Hudders, L. (2012). Why the devil wears Prada: Consumers' purchase motives for luxuries. *Journal of Brand Management*, 19(7), 609-622.

Hudders, L., Pandelaere, M., & Vyncke, P. (2013). Consumer meaning making: The meaning of luxury brands in a democratized luxury world. *International Journal of Market Research*, 55(3), 69-90.

Interbrand. (2020). *Best luxury brands - Luxury*. Retrieved December 9, 2021, from <https://www.interbrand.com/best-global-brands/?filter-brand-sector=luxury>

Jain, V., Vatsa, R., & Jagani, K. (2014). Exploring Generation Z's purchase behavior towards luxury apparel: A conceptual framework. *Romanian Journal of Marketing*, 2(1), 18-29.

Jansom, A., & Pongsakornrungsilp, S. (2021). How Instagram Influencers Affect the Value Perception of Thai Millennial Followers and Purchasing Intention of Luxury Fashion for Sustainable Marketing. *Sustainability*, 13, 1-19.

Johnson, B., & Christensen, L. (2004). *Educational research: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed approaches*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Kamins, M. A. (1990). An investigation into the 'match-up' hypothesis in celebrity advertising: When beauty may be only skin deep, *Journal of Advertising*, 19(1), 4-13.

Kapferer, J. N. (1997). Managing luxury brands. *Journal of Brand Management*, 4(4), 251-260.

Kasztalska, A. (2018). Louis Vuitton as an example of the old and modern in the same time luxury brand in the eyes of its clientele. In *CBU International Conference Proceedings*, 6, 226-230.

Kiecker, P., & Cowles, D. (2001). Interpersonal communication and personal influence on the internet: A framework for examining online word-of-mouth. *Journal of Euromarketing*, 11(2), 71-88.

Kitner, J. (2014). *Louis Vuitton: Case study*. [Marketing Strategy in Service Business, Masaryk University] Masaryk University Intellectual Repository.

Klopper, H. B., & North, E. (2011). *Brand management*. Cape Town, South Africa: Pearson.

Knittel, C. R., & Stango, V. (2014). Celebrity endorsements, firm value, and reputation risk: evidence from the tiger woods scandal. *Management Science*, 60(1), 21-37.

Krueger, R. A. (2002). *Designing and conducting focus group interviews*. Retrieved December 9, 2021, from <http://www.eiu.edu/ihec/KruegerFocusGroupInterviews.pdf>

Lafferty, B. A., & Goldsmith, R. E. (1999). Corporate credibility's role in consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions when a high versus a low credibility endorser is used in the ad. *Journal of Business Research*, 44(2), 109-116.

Lazarevic, V. (2011). Encouraging brand loyalty in fickle generation Y consumers. *Young Consumers*, 13(1), 45-61.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Malhotra, N. K. (2019). *Marketing research: An applied orientation* (7th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

McGuire, W. J. (1985). *Attitudes and attitude change*. In G. Lindzey & E. Aronson (Eds.), *Handbook of social psychology* (3rd ed., pp. 233-346.). New York: Random House.

Min, J. H. J., Chang, H. J. J., Jai, T. M. C., & Ziegler, M. (2019). The effects of celebrity-brand congruence and publicity on consumer attitudes and buying behavior. *Fashion and Textiles*, 6(10), 1-19.

Mowen, J. C., & Brown, S. W. (1981). *On explaining and predicting the effectiveness of celebrity endorsers*. In K. B. Monroe, & A. Abor (Eds.), *Advances in Consumer Research* (8th vol., pp.437-441). Association for Consumer Research.

Nelissen, R., & Meijers, M. (2011). Social benefits of luxury brands as costly signals of wealth and status. *Evolution and Human Behavior*, 32(5), 343-355.

Nelson, O., & Deborah, A. (2017). Celebrity endorsement influence on brand credibility: A critical review of previous, *Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies*, 7(1), 15-32.

Ohanian, R. (1990). Construction and validation of a scale to measure celebrity endorser's perceived expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness. *Journal of Advertising*, 19(3), 39-52.

Okwodu, J. (2021). *BTS and Louis Vuitton's new fashion film is a game changer*. Retrieved December 9, 2021, from <https://www.vogue.com/article/bts-louis-vuitton-fall-winter-2021-film>

Parc, J., & Kim, Y. (2020). Analyzing the reasons for the global popularity of BTS: A new approach from a business perspective. *Journal of International Business and Economy*, 21(1), 15-36.

Percy, L., & Rossiter, J. R. (1980). *Advertising strategy: a communication theory approach*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Petraviciūtė, K., Seinauskiene, B., Rūtelionė, A., & Krukowski, K. (2021). Linking luxury brand perceived value, brand attachment, and purchase intention: The role of consumer vanity. *Sustainability*, 13(12), 1-21.

Porath, N. (2018). A meeting of masks: Status, power and hierarchy in Bangkok, by Sophorntavy Vorng. *Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia*, 174(2-3), 356-359.

Rice, P. L., & Ezzy, D. (1999). *Qualitative research methods: A health focus*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Rolfe, G. (2006). Validity, trustworthiness and rigor: quality and the idea of qualitative

research. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 53(3), 304-310.

Romaniuk, J., & Huang, A. (2020). Understanding consumer perceptions of luxury brands. *International Journal of Market Research*, 62(5), 546-560.

Royan, F. M. (2005). *Marketing Selebrities*. Jakarta, Indonesia: Elex Media Komputindo.

Singh, A. (2010). Brand ambassadors endorsing brands: A case study of Telecom companies In India. *Management Insight*, 6(1), 55-60.

Solomon, M. R. (2019). *Consumer behavior: Buying, having, and being* (13th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.

Swant, M. (2020). *The world's most valuable brands*. Retrieved December 9, 2021, from <https://www.forbes.com/the-worlds-most-valuable-brands/#1957de2d119c>

Thomas, S. (2021). *Louis Vuitton advertising strategy: Why is Louis Vuitton so popular?* Retrieved December 9, 2021, from <https://avada.io/resources/louis-vuitton-advertising.html>

Ulkhaq, M. M., Nurdianti, A. R., Kartika, M., & Astharina, V. (2016). A confirmatory factor analysis of the source model for celebrity endorsement. *Journal of Management, Marketing and Logistics*, 3(1), 28-37.

Voytko, L. (2020). *BTS' Jungkook breaks the Internet (again) with twitter's most-liked tweet this week*. Retrieved December 9, 2021, from <https://www.forbes.com>

Wadhwa, B., & Chiahanchanchai, P. (2021). The role of online influencer's characteristics in attitude towards a brand and purchase intention: A case study on the L'Oréal brand. *Communication and Media in Asia Pacific*, 4(2), 21-32.

Wee, T. T. T. (2004). Extending human personality to brands: the stability factor. *Journal of Brand Management*, 11(4), 317-330.

Weidmann, K. P., Hennigs, N., Siebels, A. (2007). Measuring consumers' luxury value perception: a cross-cultural framework. *Academy of Marketing Science Review*, 27(7), 1-20.

Westberg, K., Stavros, C., & Wilson, B. (2010). The impact of degenerative episodes on the sponsorship B2B relationship: Implications for brand management. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 40(1), 603-611.

Wilson, E., & Sherrell, D. (1993). Source effects in communication and persuasion research: A meta-analysis of effect size. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 21(1), 101-112.

Wu, P.C. & Wang, Y.C. (2011). The influences of electronic word-of-mouth message appeal and message source credibility on brand attitude. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing & Logistics*, 23(4), 448-472.

Ye, S. H. & Liu, X. T., & Shi, S. Y. (2015). The research of status's influence on consumers' self-brand connection with luxury brands: Moderating role of self-esteem and vanity. *Open Journal of Business and Management*, 3(1), 11-19.