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### **Artification in Luxury Fashion: Enhancing Brand Identity and Engaging Young Generations**

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**Purpose:** This study explores the role of artification in shaping brand identity within the luxury fashion industry, with a particular focus on its impact on Millennial and Gen Z consumers. It investigates how the integration of art and sustainable practices influences consumer willingness to pay premium prices, enhances brand differentiation, cultural positioning, and fosters deeper consumer engagement.

**Methodology:** The research employs a mixed-method approach, combining a comprehensive literature review on artification in luxury fashion with a quantitative analysis. The quantitative component involves a survey administered to Millennial and Gen Z consumers to assess their perceptions of artification, sustainability of processes and raw materials, and their willingness to pay premium prices for luxury fashion products that embody these attributes.

**Findings:** The findings indicate that artification significantly enhances luxury brands' cultural cachet and differentiation in a saturated market. The integration of art and sustainable practices into brand identity resonates strongly with Millennial and Gen Z consumers, who value authenticity, cultural engagement, and environmental responsibility. These consumers exhibit a higher willingness to pay premium prices for products that not only offer aesthetic and functional value but also align with their ethical and cultural values. The study underscores artification, combined with sustainability efforts, as a vital strategy for luxury brands aiming to engage younger demographics and maintain long-term relevance.

**Limitations:** The research is limited by its focus on a specific consumer segment, which may not reflect the perceptions of older demographics. The quantitative analysis relies on self-reported data, which may be subject to biases such as social desirability bias. Additionally, the study concentrates on the luxury fashion industry, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other sectors.

**Originality:** This study contributes to the existing literature by integrating the concepts of artification and sustainability within the context of luxury fashion branding and consumer behavior among Millennial and Gen Z. It provides empirical evidence on the effectiveness of artification as a strategic tool for enhancing brand identity and consumer engagement, highlighting its significance in influencing the willingness of younger consumers to pay premium prices in the luxury fashion industry.

**Keywords:** Artification; Luxury Fashion; Brand Identity; Sustainability; Young Generations

## Introduction

The luxury fashion industry has increasingly embraced *artification* as a strategic approach to create value, and maintain brand relevance, in a competitive market. Specifically, artification is the process by which luxury brands seek to distinguish themselves (Kapferer, 2020; Shapiro & Heinich, 2012) in the highly competitive arena in which they are immersed, by integrating artistic elements into their managerial practices, to enhance brand prestige and reinforce their corporate heritage. So, artification is the process by which non-artistic brands or products (art infusion) acquire artistic qualities, elevating them to the realm of art (Massi & Turrini, 2020). In the context of luxury fashion, this transformation enhances the perceived value of products, imbuing them with cultural significance that extends beyond their functional utility. By enriching brand narratives and deepening consumer engagement, artification merges high culture with consumer goods, positioning fashion items as expressions of cultural and artistic narratives rather than mere commodities (Massi & Turrini, 2020).

Within the luxury sector, artification has revitalized brand images by establishing brands as cultural entities and reinforcing their exclusivity. Effective brand management practices in the luxury fashion industry consider brand purpose essential for achieving a competitive advantage and superior financial performance (Balossini Volpe, 2023). Additionally, with the rising purchasing power of Generation Z consumers, who are more inclined to seek brands that align with their values and offer unique experiences, artification becomes a vital strategy (Fromm & Read, 2018). These younger demographics are willing to pay premium prices for brands that demonstrate authenticity, cultural relevance, social responsibility, and sustainability (McKinsey & Company, 2019).

Sustainability, encompassing both environmentally responsible processes and the use of sustainable raw materials, has become a critical concern in the luxury fashion industry (Joy et al., 2012). With the rising purchasing power of Generation Z consumers, who are inclined to seek brands that align with their values and offer unique experiences, artification becomes a vital strategy (Fromm & Read, 2018). These younger demographics are willing to pay premium prices for brands that demonstrate authenticity, cultural relevance, social responsibility, and sustainability (McKinsey & Company, 2019).

This paper explores the role of artification in brand identity and its interconnection with brand purpose, sustainability, and consumer engagement, particularly in attracting Gen Z consumers.

## 2. The Role of Artification in Brand Identity: A Literature Review

Artification significantly influences the shaping and reinforcement of luxury brand identity. By intertwining with the art world, luxury brands elevate their cultural cachet and distinguish themselves in a saturated marketplace. This integration goes beyond superficial artistic embellishments; it involves a deliberate and cohesive infusion of art into the brand's core ethos. Luxury brands often engage in collaborations with contemporary artists, host curated exhibitions and incorporate art-inspired designs into their collections. These initiatives position brands not merely as luxury goods producers but as patrons and promoters of the arts (Joy & Belk, 2022; Kapferer, 2020).

As a strategic tool, artification enables luxury brands to engage with consumers on a deeper level and sustain their market position. Aligning with the art world allows brands to tap into new consumer segments that value cultural and intellectual experiences. This alignment also helps brands remain relevant in a rapidly evolving market where consumers increasingly seek authenticity, meaningful connections, and sustainability (Grassi, 2020; Wang et al., 2023). Additionally, artification responds to the growing demand for sustainability and social responsibility within the luxury fashion industry. By championing art and culture, and by

incorporating sustainable practices and raw materials into their processes, luxury brands position themselves as custodians of cultural heritage and advocates of creative expression and environmental stewardship (Joy, 2022), aligning with consumers who prefer brands that reflect their values and contribute positively to society.

### *2.1 Differentiation in a Competitive Market*

In an overcrowded market, differentiation is imperative for luxury brands. Artification offers a unique avenue for brands to set themselves apart from competitors. By embedding artistic elements into their brand identity and adopting sustainable practices, luxury brands cultivate a distinctive persona that resonates with cultural, intellectual, and environmental values. This differentiation appeals to a discerning clientele appreciative of the fusion between fashion, art, and sustainability, thereby carving out a niche market segment (Massi & Turrini, 2020).

Moreover, Generation Z consumers are increasingly influential in the luxury market. These demographics prioritize experiences, authenticity, cultural engagement, and sustainability over mere ownership of goods (Fromm & Read, 2018). Artification allows luxury brands to connect with these consumers by offering products that embody artistic value, cultural significance, and environmental responsibility, encouraging them to pay premium prices for items that reflect their personal identities and values (Eastman et al., 2021).

### *2.2 Cultural Positioning, Prestige, and Sustainability*

Aligning with art enhances a brand's cultural positioning and prestige. Brands that successfully incorporate art and sustainable practices into their identity are perceived as culturally sophisticated, intellectually stimulating, and ethically responsible. This association transcends the commercial aspect, transforming the brand into a cultural contributor and environmental steward within the broader artistic and societal discourse (Bargenda, 2020). The prestige derived from artification and sustainability allows brands to engage with expansive cultural narratives, attracting consumers who value cultural engagement and seek brands that mirror their intellectual, cultural, and ethical interests (Joy & Belk, 2022).

For Gen Z, who are often described as global citizens with a strong sense of social and environmental consciousness, brands that demonstrate cultural relevance and commit to sustainable practices are particularly appealing (Kang & Sung, 2022). These consumers are willing to invest in brands that not only offer high-quality products but also enhance their personal brand and social capital through cultural affiliation and ethical consumption (Atkinson & Kang, 2022).

### *2.3 Consumer Engagement, Emotional Connection, and Ethical Alignment*

Artification deepens consumer engagement by fostering emotional connections between the brand and its audience. Integrating art and sustainable practices into brand identity taps into the emotional, cultural, and ethical resonances that art and sustainability naturally evoke. Consumers with an appreciation for art and concern for the environment are more likely to develop a strong affinity for brands that reflect their cultural values and ethical standards, leading to enhanced brand loyalty and more meaningful relationships (Djafarova & Fouts, 2022; Osburg et al., 2021; Grassi, 2020). The experiential nature of artification—through art-inspired events, exhibitions, and collaborations—combined with transparent communication about sustainable processes and raw materials, extends beyond traditional retail experiences, transforming consumers into advocates for the brand's cultural, artistic, and environmental vision (Baumgarth, 2018).

This is particularly significant for Gen Z consumers, who value experiences, emotional connections, and ethical alignment with brands (Djafarova & Fouts, 2022). They are attracted to brands that offer immersive experiences and demonstrate a commitment to sustainability. Artification strategies that include interactive exhibitions, collaborations with artists, and art-inspired events, alongside sustainable practices, cater to these desires, enhancing consumer

engagement and willingness to pay premium prices for products that offer more than functional value (Joy et al., 2012).

#### *2.4 Longevity, Relevance, and Sustainable Innovation*

By ensuring that brand identity evolves with cultural, artistic, and environmental trends, artification combined with sustainability contributes to a brand's longevity and sustained relevance. Brands that weave art and sustainable practices into their identity are better positioned to adapt to cultural shifts and changing consumer preferences. This adaptability is crucial for long-term relevance, as it enables brands to stay connected with contemporary cultural movements and environmental concerns while preserving their historical and artistic legacies (Wang et al., 2023). Effective artification and sustainability allow brands to transcend commercial boundaries, resonate with consumers on a profound level, and command premium prices for their products. When products are perceived as art pieces created through sustainable processes and raw materials, they are valued not only for their craftsmanship but also for their rarity, uniqueness, cultural significance, and ethical integrity (Chailan, 2018; Gurzki & Gurzki, 2020).

Gen Z are known for their rapidly evolving tastes and their desire for brands that are culturally relevant, forward-thinking, and environmentally responsible (Deloitte, 2019; Joy et al., 2012). By continuously integrating contemporary art, cultural elements, and sustainable innovations into their brand identity, luxury brands can maintain their appeal to these younger consumers. This ongoing relevance encourages Gen Z to remain loyal to the brand and justifies their willingness to pay higher prices for products that they perceive as both fashionable, culturally significant, and ethically produced (Kapferer & Valette-Florence, 2021; 2019).

#### *2.5 Challenges and Considerations*

Despite its advantages, artification and sustainability present challenges. If consumers perceive the integration of art and sustainable practices into a brand's identity as forced, inauthentic, or merely a marketing tactic, it can lead to skepticism and harm the brand's reputation. This risk is heightened among Gen Z, who are particularly sensitive to authenticity and quick to call out brands they perceive as disingenuous (Athwal et al., 2019). Therefore, brands must carefully curate their artistic collaborations and genuinely commit to sustainable processes and raw materials, ensuring that these elements are authentically integrated into their identity rather than used superficially (Massi & Turrini, 2020; Joy, 2022).

Additionally, striking a balance between tradition, innovation, and sustainability is essential. Luxury brands must navigate honoring their heritage while embracing new artistic influences and sustainable practices to remain relevant to both existing and emerging customers (et al., 2023). This balance is crucial in appealing to Gen Z, who respect brand heritage but also expect innovation, contemporary relevance, and ethical responsibility (Joy et al., 2012).

### **3. The research**

To further explore the views of Generation Z, a study was conducted on the perceptions of the younger generation regarding art infusion, the influence of artworks on perceptions and product evaluations of luxury fashion brands with which artworks are associated. Art infusion represents a form of artification.

#### *Data Collection and Sampling*

Data were gathered via a web survey distributed through email, student communities, and social networks (primarily WhatsApp) in June 2024. Participants were recruited using a convenience sampling technique, leveraging the relationship networks of the researchers and their referral contacts (Patton, 2002). While this non-probabilistic method does not ensure the representativeness of the entire population, it is useful for large and unknown populations, allowing for the identification of homogeneous population members according to the researchers' criteria (Etikan, 2016). The final sample comprised 302 participants. The

questionnaire was administered in Italian to ensure clear understanding of the questions and the research context by the respondent.

### *Measures*

The questionnaire included the following measures:

1. Awareness: Participants were asked a single direct question (yes/no) regarding their awareness of the concept of artification.
2. Importance of ethic and sustainability dimensions in art infusion: the relevance was measured by asking participants to rate the importance of these dimensions when thinking to luxury fashion products. Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much).
3. Art infusion uniqueness and authenticity perception. Participants were asked to rate the two dimensions considering also the artistic collaboration.
4. Purchasing behavior. Participants were asked the frequency they buy art-infused fashion luxury products. Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (often).
5. Willingness to pay. Participants were asked how likely they were to pay a premium price for Art infused luxury fashion products.
6. Socio-demographic Variables: Additional information was collected on gender, age.

### *Data Analysis*

Frequencies, means, and standard deviations were calculated for all variables. The statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS version 29.

Table 1. Sample key characteristics

Characteristics	%
Gender	
Female	91
Male	9
Age	
19-22	84
23-36	10
27-30	3
31-34	3
35-41	0
Awareness of	
No	74
Yes	26

Primary Data. N= 302

Table 2. Importance of Ethic and Sustainability in Artinfusion

Age Group	Very important %	Fairly important %	Neutral %	Slightly Important %	Not important at all %
19-22	44	39	13	2	1
23-26	16	71	10	3	0
27-30	60	30	0	0	10
31-34	83	17	0	0	0
35-41	0	100	0	0	0

Primary Data. N= 302

Table 3. Art infusion uniqueness and authenticity perception

Age Group	depend on artistic collaboration %	makes it less authentic %	makes no difference %	definitely %
19-22	63	0	4	33
23-26	77	3	6	13
27-30	70	0	20	10
31-34	50	17	0	33
35-41	0	0	0	100

Primary Data. N= 302

Table 4: Behavior: Frequency of purchasing art-infused fashion luxury products

Age Group	Never %	Sometime %	Rarely %	Always %	Often %
19-22	18	28	48	1	5
23-26	32	22	358	0	10
27-30	20	40	40	0	0
31-34	33	0	50	0	17
39-41	0.00	0	100	0	0

Primary Data. N= 302

Table 5. Behavior: Art infusion effect on Willingness to pay

Age Group	Willing to pay over 50% more	Willing to pay 26-50% more	Willing to pay 11-25% more	Willing to pay up to 10% more	Not willing to pay more
19-22	0	14	50	24	11
23-26	0	10	39	32	19
27-30	0	0	50	40	10
31-34	0	33	17	17	33
35-41	0	0	0	0	0

Primary Data. N= 302

## Results

The data provides empirical support for the role of art infusion – the integration of art into products – as a strategy for enhancing brand identity and consumer engagement in the luxury

fashion industry. This is in accordance with existing literature on the subject, which emphasises the capacity of artification to transform consumer perceptions, augment cultural capital and establish emotional connections with brands. As evidenced in the literature, the process of artification serves to enhance brand identity by virtue of the cultural and symbolic value that it adds to products. In particular, luxury brands benefit from associations with high culture and creativity, which serve to position them as culturally sophisticated and intellectually appealing. The results presented in the table on authenticity and uniqueness demonstrate that a significant proportion of consumers, particularly those aged 19–22 and 39–41, perceive art-infused products as more authentic and unique, thereby reinforcing the brand's cultural capital. Luxury brands differentiate themselves from mass-market competitors by engaging in artistic collaborations, appealing to consumers who value creativity and exclusivity as markers of status and identity. The data indicates that 63% to 77% of consumers aged 19–30 perceive the success of artification to be contingent upon the quality of the collaboration, underscoring the necessity for meticulously selected partnerships to maintain the brand's artistic credibility.

In terms of brand identity, the findings indicate that products imbued with artistic elements are perceived as more authentic and distinctive, particularly by younger consumers. Approximately 33% of the 19–22 age group and 100% of the 39–41 age group concur that art significantly enhances authenticity, thereby reinforcing the brand's cultural relevance and exclusivity. With regard to consumer engagement, artification has been observed to engender sporadic yet meaningful engagement, particularly among younger audiences. For example, 28.74% of the 19–22 age group and 40% of the 27–30 age group indicate that they purchase art-infused items "sometimes," which reflects a moderate level of interest and engagement with art-focused luxury products. Moreover, younger consumers are prepared to pay a premium of 11–25% for luxury products with an artistic component, with 50% of the 19–22 and 27–30 age groups indicating this willingness. This evidence suggests that the incorporation of art into products increases their perceived value, thereby enabling brands to command higher prices.

## Discussion

The data provides robust empirical support for the role of art infusion – the integration of art into products – as a strategy to enhance brand identity, deepen consumer engagement and command premium pricing in the luxury fashion industry. This is in accordance with existing literature which emphasises the transformative impact of artification on consumer perceptions, whereby cultural capital is added and emotional connections with brands are fostered.

Theoretical models posit that artification not only augments symbolic and cultural value but also reposition luxury brands within the cultural elite, framing them as socially and intellectually significant (Krim, 2022; Kapferer, 2014). This study builds upon existing theoretical frameworks by presenting empirical evidence of age-specific differences in consumer perceptions of authenticity and value in art-infused products. The younger cohort (19–22 years old) displays a greater proclivity towards the symbolic and experiential dimensions, whereas the older group (39–41 years old) places greater emphasis on cultural authenticity.

The findings put forth a *Consumer Artification Value Model* that integrates the following elements:

- Symbolic authenticity: art provides symbolic meaning that resonates with younger consumers seeking cultural alignment.
- Collaborative quality: the data (63% to 77% of respondents) highlights the significance of high-quality collaborations, thereby reinforcing the necessity for brands to form partnerships with artists who possess a reputation for credibility.

- Price-value threshold: Despite a willingness to pay up to 25% more, the absence of willingness to exceed a 50% premium highlights the necessity for careful pricing strategies to maintain consumer trust.

The data indicates that the success of artification is contingent upon the interplay between artistic quality and consumer engagement. Artistic collaborations (cause) are shown to enhance cultural perception (effect), as evidenced by the strong association between high-quality partnerships and consumer willingness to pay a premium. Furthermore, the alignment of artification with ethical practices is demonstrated to significantly amplify engagement, suggesting that sustainability-driven art collaborations foster deeper brand loyalty.

In light of the available data, it is possible that younger consumers will continue to exert a dominant influence on the market for art-infused luxury products, with an increasing propensity to engage with such products if they are the result of artistic collaborations that incorporate sustainability. Consequently, brands which will place an emphasis on the cultural narrative of art-infused products will likely experience greater long-term loyalty among younger demographics.

### **Managerial implications**

Managerial implications include:

- prioritizing high-quality artistic collaborations. The significance of collaboration in the artistic domain cannot be overstated. The data indicates that between 63% and 77% of consumers aged 19–30 believe that the success of artification depends on the quality of the artistic collaboration. Brands should exercise caution when selecting artists, ensuring that their reputations align with the brand's values and target audience.
- targeting younger demographics with symbolic messaging. The younger consumer cohort (19–22 years old) displays a heightened sensitivity to the symbolic and experiential dimensions of artification. Such individuals seek cultural alignment and narratives that resonate with their personal values. It would be beneficial to develop campaigns that emphasise the symbolic and experiential value of art-infused products.
- integrating sustainability with artification. This will enhance the ethical appeal of the product. The evidence suggests that sustainability-driven art collaborations significantly enhance consumer engagement and loyalty. This is evidenced by the strong support for ethical practices among respondents aged 31–34. The above suggests the use of eco-friendly materials, the formation of partnerships with environmentally conscious artists, or the promotion of fair-trade collaborations.
- implementing strategic pricing models. Although younger consumers are prepared to pay an additional 11–25% for art-infused luxury products, the reluctance to exceed a 50% premium highlights the necessity for a balanced pricing strategy.
- building long-term engagement strategies. Data show that younger consumers (19–22) and mid-age groups (27–30) purchase art-infused items "sometimes," reflecting moderate engagement levels. It might be useful to foster deeper engagement through loyalty programs, exclusive pre-sale access, and experiential marketing events. These initiatives can convert occasional buyers into loyal advocates for the brand.

### **Research limitation**

The research is constrained by its focus on a particular Italian consumer segment, which may not be representative of the perceptions of older demographics. The quantitative analysis is based on self-reported data, which may be susceptible to biases such as social desirability bias. Furthermore, the study is centered on the luxury fashion industry, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other sectors.



## Conclusion

The study and the results are in accordance with existing literature and contribute to the theoretical understanding of artification, demonstrating its multidimensional value within the luxury fashion industry. The process of artification serves to enhance brand identity, facilitating the integration of cultural and symbolic value, fostering emotional engagement, and supporting premium pricing. The Consumer Artification Value Model offers a conceptual framework for analysing the influence of artistic collaborations on consumer perceptions and pricing dynamic Brands that strategically integrate art into their products through carefully curated collaborations and ethical practices can command higher prices while strengthening consumer trust. Combining artification with sustainability magnifies its impact, aligning luxury brands with contemporary consumer values. This positions artification as a key strategy for differentiation and competitive advantage in a culturally driven marketplace.

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