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Social Power Effects in the Luxury Brand Commerce

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to examine the effects of social power of streamers and social capital on purchase intention in the luxury brand commerce context. **Research design, data and methodology:** A survey was used to explore key questions about the relationships between social power of streamers, social capital, attitude, and intention to purchase luxury brands in the luxury brand commerce. Through a comprehensive examination of social power of streamers—including expert, legitimate, referent, and reward dimensions—and social capital, this research reveals how these factors influence consumer attitudes and purchase intentions in the context of luxury brand commerce. **Results:** The findings indicate that social power significantly enhances social capital, which in turn affects consumers' positive attitudes toward luxury brands and their intentions to purchase in the luxury brand commerce context. The study uncovers that both social power and social capital are essential in influencing attitude and driving purchase behavior in the context of the luxury brand commerce, particularly for luxury brands. The study's results offer valuable insights for luxury brand managers, highlighting the importance of selecting influencers in the luxury brand commerce who not only own strong social power but also have cultivated considerable social capital. **Conclusions:** This research contributes to the theoretical foundation of luxury brand commerce and provides practical implications for enhancing luxury brand strategies in the digital marketplace.

Keywords : Luxury brand, Luxury brand commerce, Social Power, Social Capital

JEL Classification Code: M30, M31, M37

1. Introduction

Luxury brand commerce currently involves the provision of transactions activities via a live streaming platform that offers real-time interaction, entertainment, social activities, and commerce (Yingqing et al., 2024). E-commerce in the live streaming context will generate an estimated USD11 billion in revenue in the US in 2021

(Enberg, 2021), and is expected to net USD25 billion in sales in the US by 2023 (Kalim, 2021).

Luxury brand commerce in the live streaming context has emerged rapidly around the world and shows great potential as a novel advertising strategy that provides dynamic real-time interaction between advertisers and consumers, offers exact information and social features to fascinate luxury brand consumers to treat in luxury shopping processes (Yingqing et al., 2024). Luxury brand commerce

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provides exact graphic figures of luxury brands in the live streaming context and enables to building social relations with streamers, and allows enjoyable times (Xu et al., 2020).

While many studies have investigated Luxury brand commerce as one of several forms of Internet advertising (Jeong & Lee 2013), luxury brand commerce is getting increasing attention from advertisers, because luxury brand commerce has incorporated live streaming commerce, social actions, and entertaining aspects. Such social activities and hedonic factors may offer new opportunities for contactless marketing and management. This study focuses on luxury brands and how social power and social capital influence attitude and purchase intention in a luxury brand commerce context. The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of social power on social capital, and social capital on attitude and purchase intention via luxury brand commerce, and to reveal the implications for marketing and management.

2. Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses Development

2.1. Social Power of Streamers in Luxury Brand Commerce

Social power is defined as a type of power that can be employed to exert influence on others (French & Raven, 1959). The luxury brand platform creates a virtual space for streamers to stream, and gives viewers a channel through which they can watch and interact with a streamer by offering integrated commerce, social activities, and hedonic factors. Social power influences consumers' interactions. Luxury brand commerce enables to posting consumer's feedbacks and others' remarks or watch the luxury brand contents in the live streaming context.

Social power of streamers is categorized into expert power, legitimate power, referent power, and reward power regarding perceived influence (French & Raven, 1959; Kim et al., 2020). Expert power includes someone who is identified to be a professional, to have professional information, or to own exceptional knowledge. Luxury brand commerce streamers with information and expertise can recommend resolutions, and make a decision. Such streamers gain the respect and trust of consumers, who will listen to what they say. Legitimate power is related to someone who is identified to have a valid entitlement to enforce behavior constraints. Referent power involves someone who is individually acknowledged. Referent power is related to individual liking, respecting, and identifying with luxury brand commerce streamers. Luxury brand commerce streamers tend to have referent power; thus they can impact luxury brand consumers' purchase decision.

Reward power involves someone who is identified to have reward capability. Luxury brand streamers can provide recompenses including gifts, compliments and promotions.

2.2. Social Capital in Luxury Brand Commerce

Social capital is defined as resources set in a social structure that are organized in purposive action (Lin, 2001). Social capital is inherent in the basis of relationships between individuals and in individuals' connections with their networks and communities, whereas other forms of capital are based on assets or individuals (Putnam, 1995). Luxury brand commerce includes social activities and their associated norms of reciprocity (Putnam, 2000), indicating both the social activities and outcome of the social activities. In luxury brand commerce, social capital is related to the relationship between delivering access to resources owned by streamers and other viewers and the quality and quantity of the resources.

Social capital incorporates bonding and bridging capital by reflecting relational resources from social networks (Putnam, 2000). Social capital involves 'the degree of tie strength' and 'resource types' (Putnam, 2000; Kim et al., 2020). Bonding capital is defined as resources from strong ties that are described as higher levels of trust and intimacy (Kim et al., 2020). Luxury brand consumers tend to gain care and support from bonding capital. Bridging capital is defined as resources from weak ties that link distinctive groups within a network (Kim et al., 2020). Weak ties in bridging capital help connect relationships in different clusters, and generate a path to link underlying gaps between two originally unconnected groups (Burt, 1992). Bridging capital might allow flexible access and diffusion of information in the luxury brand commerce.

2.3. Relationship Between Social Power and Social Capital in Luxury Brand Commerce

The relationship between social power of streamers and social capital in luxury brand commerce is more and more important in the digital economy, especially in South Korea. Social power in this situation involves the ability of influencers, brands, and platforms to influence the perceptions and behaviors of consumers (Goodrich & Mangleburg, 2010). Social power often affects consumers' social capital, which includes the networks, reputation and trust they have built over time (Putnam, 2000). As luxury brand commerce becomes more prevalent, the relationship between social power and social capital becomes a vital aspect in enhancing consumer engagement and sales in a luxury brand commerce.

Social capital in luxury brand commerce can be identified as the totality of resources available to individuals

through their social networks (Putnam, 2000). Social capital includes not only the size of the consumers but also the quality of the connections (Putnam, 2000), such as the level of engagement that audiences have with the streamer in the luxury brand commerce context. High social capital enables streamers to wield more social power, as their recommendations and endorsements are more likely to be engaged upon by their viewers. In the competitive landscape of the luxury brand commerce, those with greater social capital can drive more significant outcomes, from higher sales volumes to increased brand recognition.

Social capital types refer to bonding capital and bridging capital based on the degree of tie strength and type of resource. Bonding capital is defined as resources from strong ties including high trust and closeness (Burt, 1992; Putnam, 2000). Family members and close friends can be described as bonding capital groups with small-scale interactions. Bridging capital is defined as resources from weak ties that link different groups within a network (Burt, 1992; Putnam, 2000). Social contacts can be described as bridging capital groups with a communal interest but low closeness. Weak ties of bridging capital allow access to information and the dispersion of information.

Social power in luxury brand commerce is an indicator of the influence that a streamer or brand can utilize over their audience that can be intensified by the interactive nature of luxury brand commerce (Goodrich & Mangleburg, 2010), where real-time engagement allows for more active and influential communication. The relationship between social power and social capital is manifest in the strategies employed by successful luxury brand commerce streamers because social power is closely tied to the ongoing cultivation of social capital. By leveraging the social power, luxury brand commerce streamers boost their social capital, bonding capital and bridging capital, building a virtuous cycle that benefits both the streamer and the brands they represent (Putnam, 2000) that attain better sales outcomes during the luxury brand commerce. The relationship between social power and social capital, bonding capital and bridging capital, is grounds to success in the luxury brand commerce. Based on the theoretical frameworks of social power and social capital, this study investigates how social power influence bonding capital and bridging capital in the luxury brand commerce. Thus, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

H1: Social power positively influences bonding social capital in the luxury brand commerce.

H2: Social power positively influences bridging social capital in the luxury brand commerce.

2.4. Social Capital, Attitude, and Purchase Intention in the Luxury Brand Commerce

Attitude toward the brand is a good indicator of purchase intention (Batra & Ray, 1986; MacKenzie et al., 1986; Petty et al., 1983). Social capital is associated with positive attitude, which then influences purchase intention (Bian & Forsythe, 2012).

In the context of the luxury brand commerce, social capital plays a vital role in shaping consumer attitudes and purchase intentions. Social capital involves the network of relationships and the related resources that individuals can use upon in the luxury brand commerce. Social capital is mainly made through reciprocity, and the sense of community cultivated between streamers and their audiences. High social capital enables streamers to influence the attitudes of their viewers positively, making them more receptive to the products being promoted thus influence their purchase intentions (Bian & Forsythe, 2012).

In the luxury brand commerce, positive attitude linked to how consumers perceive the streamer and the products being recommended is affected by social capital that a streamer has cultivated. Attitude can be influenced by the social capital provided by other viewers in the stream, such as live comments and interactions (Bian & Forsythe, 2012; Putnam, 2000). Purchase intention in luxury brand commerce is the outcome of the interplay between social capital and consumer attitudes interactions (Bian & Forsythe, 2012; Putnam, 2000). When a streamer effectively enhances their social capital to promote a positive attitude among viewers, it can considerably boost them intend to purchase the brands being recommended in the buying decision (Bian & Forsythe, 2012). Thus, social capital, bonding capital and bridging capital, can positively influence attitude toward brands, which influences purchase intention in the luxury brand commerce context. This study investigates how social capital influence attitude and intention to purchase in the luxury brand commerce. Thus, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

H3: Bonding social capital positively influences attitude toward luxury brands in the luxury brand commerce.

H4: Bridging social capital positively influences attitude toward luxury brands in the luxury brand commerce.

H5: Bonding social capital positively influences intention to purchase luxury brands in the luxury brand commerce.

H6: Bridging social capital positively influences intention to purchase luxury brands in the luxury brand commerce.

Attitude toward brands impacts behavioral intention, particularly the intention to purchase brands (Batra & Homer, 2004; Bian & Forsythe, 2012). When consumers have a positive attitude toward a brand, they have a stronger intention to purchase the brand (Bian & Forsythe, 2012; Gountas & Gountas, 2007). Thus, social capital can positively influence attitude toward luxury brands, which influences purchase intention in the luxury brand commerce context. Thus, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H7: Attitude toward luxury brands positively influences intention to purchase luxury brands in the luxury brand commerce.

3. Methods

In this study, a survey was used to explore key questions about the relationships between social power, social capital, attitude, and intention to purchase luxury brands in the luxury brand commerce. A total of 300 luxury brand commerce users were recruited in South Korea to participate in a survey. Participants were asked whether they were luxury brand commerce users who had experienced luxury brand commerce before participating in the survey. The full survey required luxury brand commerce users to respond to all the questions. The sample consisted of 125 men (41.7%) and 175 women (58.3%) aged between 19 and 39 years (mean = 28.02 years).

The social power of luxury brand commerce was measured through an existing social power scale including expert, referent, legitimate, and reward measures that elicited user responses to 14 items (Goodrich & Mangleburg, 2010). Social capital in luxury brand commerce was measured by a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree), which was adapted from an existing Internet social capital scale (Williams, 2006). Attitude toward luxury brands in luxury brand commerce was measured by using three 7-point semantic differential scales (good/bad, favorable/unfavorable, positive/negative) (MacKenzie et al., 1986). Purchase intention for luxury brand products was measured by using three 7-point semantic differential scales (likely/unlikely, probable/improbable, and possible/impossible) (MacKenzie et al., 1986) after participants were informed that they might be purchasing luxury brands via the luxury brand commerce.

4. Results

The overall goodness of fit for this structural model was acceptable (Chi-square = 990.228 (df = 436, $p < 0.001$), CFI = 0.939, TLI = 0.930, RMSEA = 0.065). The reliability

coefficients of the measures of social power, comprising expert, referent, legitimate, and reward, were 0.903, 0.827, 0.723, and 0.827, respectively. The reliability coefficients of the measures of social capital were 0.944 for the bonding factors and 0.949 for the bridging factors. The reliability coefficients of attitude and purchase intention measures were 0.911 and 0.940, respectively. The coefficients indicate acceptable reliability of the measures (see Table 1, Table 2).

PLS-SEM was used to test the hypotheses, applying SmartPLS. Social power is a multi-dimensional second-order index (Wilden et al., 2013). The higher-order social power construct consists of lower-order indicators. PLS-SEM with SmartPLS has the advantage of being able to analyze hierarchical constructs (Wilden et al., 2013; Karpen et al., 2015). Social power showed statistically positive effects on social capital, the bonding capital ($\beta = 0.563$, $p < 0.001$), and the bridging capital ($\beta = 0.566$, $p < 0.001$). Thus, the results support Hypothesis 1 and 2.

Bonding social capital showed no significant effects on attitude while bridging social capital showed statistically positive effects on attitude ($\beta = 0.325$, $p < 0.01$). Thus, the results support Hypothesis 4 but did not support Hypothesis 3. With regard to social capital, bonding showed statistically positive effects on purchase intention ($\beta = 0.132$, $p < 0.05$), bridging social capital showed no significant effects on purchase intention. Thus, the results support Hypothesis 5 but did not support Hypothesis 6. Attitude showed statistically positive effects on purchase intention ($\beta = 0.819$, $p < 0.001$). Thus, the results support Hypothesis 7 (see Table 3, Figure 1).

Attitude toward brand or the purchase intention can be affected by age, gender or product category. Therefore, in this research, age, gender, and product category were proposed as control variables to control for the impact on attitudes and purchase intentions. Thus, the effect of age on attitude toward brands in the luxury brand commerce was significant (-0.123 , $p < 0.05$). The results indicate that younger users tend to show a more favorable attitude toward brands in the luxury brand commerce than older users do. The effects of gender and product category on attitudes and purchase intentions were insignificant.

5. Discussion

This study clarifies social power and social capital in the context of the luxury brand commerce. The study uncovers the relationships between social power, social capital, attitude, and intention to purchase luxury brands, which contributes to the theoretical and managerial implications for luxury brand management in the luxury brand commerce. This study offers insights into the effects of social power and social capital on attitude and purchase intention within the

luxury brand commerce context, particularly for luxury brands.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics, reliability and validity indices

Factors	Measurement items	Factor loading	Cronbach' α	CR	AVE
Expert	Live commerce streamers have a lot of experience with this type of product.	0.869	0.903	0.93 2	0.774
	Live commerce streamers know best about purchasing this type of product.	0.891			
	Live commerce streamers are experts about this type of product.	0.883			
	Live commerce streamers know more about this type of product than other people do.	0.875			
Reference	Live commerce streamers can make me feel valued when I buy products they like.	0.887	0.898	0.93 6	0.831
	Live commerce streamers can make me feel approved when I buy products they like.	0.934			
	Live commerce streamers can make me feel more personally accepted when I buy products they like.	0.913			
Legitimate	Live commerce streamers have the right to influence my purchases of this type of product.	0.651	0.723	0.84 4	0.647
	I should accept my live commerce streamers' recommendations on what products to buy.	0.886			
	I should listen to live commerce streamers when they tell me what they want me to buy.	0.855			
Reward	The reason I bought this product is that my live commerce streamers might provide me with something nice in return.	0.759	0.871	0.91 3	0.725
	When I bought this product, I thought that my live commerce streamers might do something for me in return.	0.903			
	If I buy a product that my live commerce streamers like, they are more likely to be nicer to me.	0.893			
	If I buy a product that my live commerce streamers don't like, they are more likely to be mean to me.	0.841			
Bonding	There are several people live commerce I trust to help solve my problems.	0.891	0.944	0.95 5	0.781
	There is someone live commerce I can turn to for advice about making very important decisions.*	0.882			
	There is no one live commerce that I feel comfortable talking to about intimate personal problems. (reversed)*	0.873			
	When I feel lonely, there are several people live commerce I can talk to.	0.886			
	The people I interact with live commerce would be good job references for me.	0.907			
	I do not know people live commerce well enough to get them to do anything important. (reversed)	0.863			
Bridging	Interacting with people live commerce makes me interested in things that happen outside of my town.	0.884	0.949	0.95 9	0.797
	Interacting with people live commerce makes me want to try new things.	0.893			
	Interacting with people live commerce makes me interested in what people unlike me are thinking.	0.901			
	Talking with people online/offline makes me curious about other places in the world.	0.894			
	Interacting with people live commerce makes me feel like part of a larger community.	0.891			
	Interacting with people live commerce makes me feel connected to the bigger picture.	0.891			
Attitude	good/bad	0.916	.911	0.94 6	0.855
	favorable/unfavorable	0.936			
	positive/negative	0.922			
Purchase intention	likely/unlikely	0.939	0.940	0.96 2	0.781
	probable/improbable	0.953			
	possible/impossible	0.944			

$\chi^2 = 990.228$ (df=436, p<0.001), CFI =0.939, TLI =0.930, RMSEA =0.065

For theoretical implications, by clarifying the roles of social power and social capital, this research contributes to luxury brand commerce literature reflecting how social power and social capital influence consumer attitudes and behaviors. The findings propose that both social power

and social capital are essential in shaping not only attitude toward luxury brands during live stream commerce but also in driving consumers' intention to purchase luxury brands.

Table 2: Test for discriminant validity

	Expert	Reference	Legitimate	Reward	Bonding	Bridging	Attitude	Purchase intention
Expert	0.774							
Reference	0.565 (0.319)	0.831						
Legitimate	0.600 (0.360)	0.707 (0.593)	0.647					
Reward	0.411 (0.169)	0.646 (0.417)	0.666 (0.444)	0.725				
Bonding	0.313 (0.098)	0.454 (0.206)	0.460 (0.212)	0.609 (0.009)	0.781			
Bridging	0.335 (0.112)	0.443 (0.196)	0.482 (0.263)	0.598 (0.123)	0.880 (0.774)	0.797		
Attitude	0.470 (0.221)	0.417 (0.221)	0.480 (0.147)	0.324 (0.120)	0.374 (0.295)	0.430 (0.227)	0.855	
Purchase intention	0.395 (0.156)	0.375 (0.141)	0.459 (0.157)	0.375 (0.067)	0.462 (0.307)	0.495 (0.262)	0.880 (0.774)	0.893
Mean	3.600	3.219	3.473	2.549	3.529	3.583	4.861	4.958
S.D.	0.631	0.816	0.721	0.987	0.696	0.649	1.063	1.063

The findings enlighten that social power, derived from expert, legitimate, referent, and reward dimensions, significantly affects the way consumers evaluate luxury brands in a luxury brand commerce context. Influencers in a luxury brand commerce context with high social power can enhance attitude toward luxury brands. Consumers tend to show a positive attitude toward the luxury brand, which in turn increases their purchase intention.

Social capital, which incorporates reciprocity, and community bonds between the influencer and their audience, boosts the effect of social power on purchase intention. The study highlights that social capital amplifies the persuasive impact of social power by fostering a deeper connection between the influencer and consumers during luxury brand commerce.

According to the findings, bridging social capital affects favorable attitude toward luxury brands. However, bonding social capital does not because attitude can be affected by weak ties that allow access to information and

the dispersion of information. In the study, bonding social capital affects the intention to purchase luxury brands in the luxury brand commerce. However, bridging social capital does not because purchase intention might be affected by high trust and closeness resources.

For practical implications, the findings suggest that to successfully leverage luxury brand commerce for luxury brands must carefully select influencers who not only has substantial social power but also have developed considerable social capital with their audience. Luxury brand practitioners can use these insights to improve their luxury brand commerce strategies, leading to more favorable brand evaluations and higher purchase intentions.

Luxury brand practitioners will obtain new insights that can help them build up luxury brand strategies by understanding the influence of social power and social capital on brand evaluation in the luxury brand commerce context. We applied social power to the luxury brand

commerce, including expert power, legitimate power, referent power, and reward power, which in turn positively influence social capital with stronger bonding and bridging ties. The social power of the streamers is important in luxury brand commerce compared to other mass brand commerce because the streamers allow audiences to create awareness among luxury brand users that can be the target of the luxury brand commerce. Luxury brand can develop expert power, legitimate power, referent power, and reward power of streamers in the

luxury brand commerce to enhance social capital including bonding and bridging.

This study is limited to rely primarily on survey data from luxury brand commerce users in South Korea, which may have been affected by response biases. Thus, future research should consider more diverse data collection methods, such as experimental or long-term analytical studies, to verify the actual effects of social power on social capital that influence attitude and purchase intention of luxury brands in the luxury brand commerce context.

Table 3: Model Estimates

Path		Standardized Regression Weight	T	P Values
Social power → Bonding		0.563	14.051	***
Social power → Bridging		0.566	15.198	***
Bonding → Attitude		0.123	1.063	0.288
Bonding → Purchase intention		0.132	2.449	0.015
Bridging → Attitude		0.325	2.758	0.006
Bridging → Purchase intention		0.025	0.451	0.652
Attitude → Purchase intention		0.819	35.985	***
Control variables	Age → Attitude	-0.123	2.286	0.022
	Age → Purchase intention	-0.008	0.317	0.751
	Gender → Attitude	-0.023	0.397	0.691
	Gender → Purchase intention	0.026	1.015	0.31
	Product category → Attitude	0.011	0.267	0.79
	Product category → Purchase intention	0.001	0.042	0.967

*** p<.001
 $\chi^2 = 1081.017$ (df=445, p<0.01), CFI =0.930, TLI=0.922, RMSEA =0.069

In conclusion, this study contributes the theoretical understanding of how social power and social capital influence attitude and purchase intention in the luxury brand commerce, focused on the luxury brands. The practical implications are noteworthy for luxury brand management, as they highlight the importance of selecting

the appropriate influencers who can successfully associate their social power with strong social capital. Based on findings in this study, luxury brands can more successfully connect the potential of luxury brand commerce to drive consumer engagement, and eventually, enhance attitude and purchase intention.

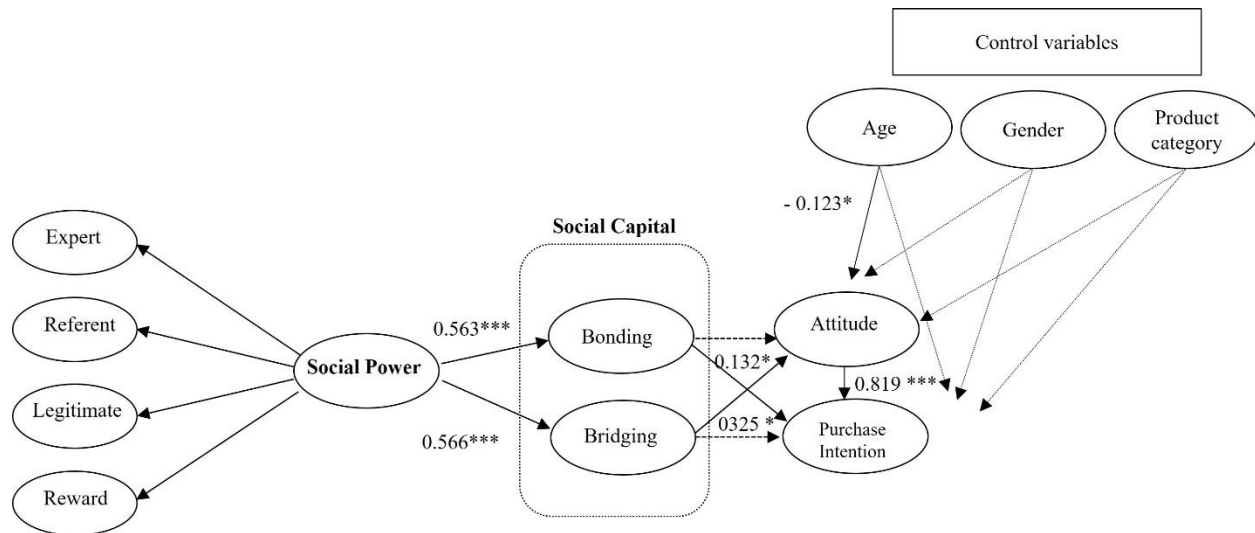


Figure 1: Social Power and Social Capital Model in the Luxury Brand Commerce

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