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AGE-RELATED DIFFERENCES IN INSTAGRAM USAGE AND LUXURY BRAND PERCEPTION: A STUDY IN CROATIA

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Abstract: *The study investigates Instagram usage frequency, reasons among various age groups, and potential age-related differences in customers' perceptions of luxury brands and purchase intentions. Additionally, literature on Instagram's influence on customer perception, brand image, luxury brand perception, and generational trends in digital consumer behavior was analyzed. Conducted in Croatia, the study utilized a non-random convenience sample of 192 respondents. The questionnaire comprised 32 questions split into two sections: the first gathered demographic data to profile the sample, while the second assessed social media use and participants' perceptions of the influence of Instagram marketing activities on brand image and buying intentions. Descriptive and multivariate analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS software version 22 to evaluate the hypotheses. The study found a higher participation of women than men, with an average age of 28, which aligns with previous research in the field. Significant disparities in media utilization were observed between younger (average age 22.34) and older (average age 34.75) participants. Instagram is primarily used by women and younger age groups, with 95% of younger participants accessing it daily. The study confirmed that younger users are more interested in friends' activities, sharing their own activities, and viewing appealing images, while older users follow brands/celebrities and seek personal content, which supports the hypothesis that reasons for using Instagram vary by age. Younger participants believe Instagram significantly influences luxury brand image and their buying intentions. Both age groups reported that a positive brand image influences purchase intent similarly, partially supporting the hypothesis that age affects luxury brand perception and buying intention on Instagram. The study highlights the importance of age diversity in creating effective marketing strategies on Instagram, influencing consumer behavior and purchase decisions, and enhancing understanding of Instagram's influence on luxury*

brand perceptions and purchasing behavior across various generations in Croatia.

Keywords: *Instagram, luxury brands, customer perceptions, age groups, Croatia.*

JEL Classification: *M10, M31, D12, C83.*

INTRODUCTION

The media has seen a substantial change in the last ten years, and the popularity of social media has seen a significant increase in recent years (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Social media is transforming how luxury brands connect with stakeholders and market their products, enhancing the likelihood of turning potential customers into paying customers and enhancing the online purchasing process. Instagram was proclaimed the dominant social media platform (Uzunian, 2013), yet many studies still primarily concentrate on social media, overlooking Instagram's significant marketing possibilities. However, researchers and brand managers do not entirely understand how social media communication affects customer views of brands (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2015). The rising importance of Instagram and its expanding use by leading luxury brands indicates a desire to comprehend its impact on customer behavior. Brands that consistently curate visually appealing content and images on Instagram are more likely to generate favorable feedback and establish a more favorable perception among their current and prospective customers. The same is true for luxury brands. The higher the perception, the bigger the chances customers will buy certain luxury products and are ready to pay more.

This study examines Instagram's possible influence on customers' perceptions and brand images of luxury products. It strives to analyze how various customer generations engage with Instagram and whether the platform influences their purchasing intentions toward luxury brands. Furthermore, the study aims to explore the motivations driving Instagram engagement and confirm if users follow luxury companies. It also aims to investigate perceptions of luxury brands and their influence on purchase intentions while examining potential age-related changes in consumer behavior. Additionally, the study focuses on Instagram's role in influencing consumer purchasing decisions for luxury products. Understanding how consumer age groups impact decision-making processes based on Instagram's influence is given special attention. The objective is to assess the extent to which Instagram directly impacts decision-making among different age demographics and to help companies develop better marketing communication activities on social networks, primarily on Instagram.

The following text contains chapters that present data and research related to Instagram in general, followed by a discussion on the connection and impact of Instagram on customer perception and brand image. After that, the impact of Instagram on luxury brand perception is examined in more detail, followed by a review of research related to the age and generations that use Instagram the most. Based on these studies, hypotheses have been formulated and presented in the research methodology section, followed by the presentation of results and discussion. In the conclusion at the end of the paper, the limitations of the research and recommendations for its practical application are also provided.

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LITERATURE OVERVIEW
Conceptual background on Instagram

The impact of social media on society is remarkable, and its emergence has provided marketers with an alternative way to engage with customers more directly and naturally (Glucksman, 2017). Whiting & Williams have identified various motivations for utilizing social media, including but not limited to „social interaction, information seeking, entertainment, relaxation, convenience, expression of opinion, information sharing, surveillance, and knowledge about others" (Whiting & Williams, 2013). Social media platforms have the highest engagement rates based on comments and likes per post and are among the fastest-growing networks by active users (Phua, Jin, & Kim, 2017). In addition, the increasing number of social media platforms—Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Instagram—has contributed to the growth of influencer marketing on social media, with the phenomenon of influencers being widely linked to Instagram as a social network (Gross & von Wangenheim, 2022). Scientific sources agree that the subject of consumer behavior research is the study of how individuals and households make decisions to satisfy their needs and how they spend their resources (money, time, and energy) on consumption. It is mainly about researching what consumers buy, why and how do they buy it and when, where, and how often do they buy it. However, the most important questions are how and why consumers decide to buy products (Kollárová, Koliščáková, & Trnka, 2023).

Instagram, a cost-free smartphone app for sharing photographs and videos online, was launched in October 2010 and now boasts 500 million daily active users and 1.3 billion monthly active users worldwide (Smith, Instagram Statistics and User Count for 2024, 2024). Currently, with 2 billion monthly active users according to a Statista report, Instagram is one of the most popular social networks worldwide, with its primary demographic being individuals aged 18-29, especially women (Statista, 2024). Its success is largely due to its focus on visuals over text, and it has recently evolved to promote more "Reels" and content sharing among users. Instagram is considered a marketing platform with different communication trends, and with the explosion of Internet users, it has become a new channel for companies to implement their sales promotion activities (Rochman & Iskandar, 2015). Users may follow others and stay informed about their favorite companies, interests, and latest trends, which is crucial for marketing (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, & Gremler, 2002), making Instagram a key player in social media for managing businesses across different industries.

Social media platforms for sharing photographs, such as Instagram, provide businesses with a cost-effective and high-quality marketing environment that is highly targeted at consumers and advantageous from a competitive standpoint (Safko, 2012). Today, 25 million businesses have Instagram profiles, with over 50% being active and producing a story (Smith, Instagram Statistics and User Count for 2024, 2024). Brands may implement Instagram marketing in several ways, such as banner advertising and hashtags (#) in consumer posts. Brands can establish their own brand pages to share information about their latest items with their fans (Johnston, 2017).

Traditional brand and marketing communication has undergone significant changes during the past decade, as the growth of social media is reshaping behavior, perception, and cognition. Increasing online social platforms encourages users to develop digital skills, shifting from passive to active engagement and empowering

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them in new ways (Sharma & Verma, 2018). Despite its marketing potential, there is a shortage of studies specifically on Instagram. Limited information exists on its use across customer segments, its impact on brand perception, and its role in online purchases. Most social media studies are general, with few focusing on Instagram's potential. Casalo et al. categorized previous research on Instagram into three groups (Casalo, Flavian, & Ibanez-Sanchez, 2017). The first focuses on analyzing user-generated content (UGC), particularly photos with friends and selfies (Hu, Manikonda, & Kambhampati, 2014). The second group examines the link between Instagram and users' emotions, suggesting that the platform can enhance happiness and reduce loneliness (Pittman & Reich, 2016). The third group investigates motivations and satisfaction with Instagram use (Phua, Jin, & Kim, 2017). Recent research also explores the optimal timing for posting and engagement on Instagram (Singh, Jaiswal, & Singh, 2023). Although there has been a rise in empirical studies on social media, there is not enough knowledge about how social media content impacts customer views of companies and consumer actions (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2015). While some studies focus on Instagram's influence on customer perception and image, others focus on customer engagement (Liu, Shin, & Burns, 2021). Considering the fact that customer perception of companies and products that use Instagram to connect with customers is closely linked to brand image, that is, how customers perceive the quality, values, and personality of the brand, in the following section of the paper, we will analyze in more detail the studies written on topics in these important areas.

Impact of Instagram on Customer Perception and Brand Image

This chapter outlines previous research on customer perception linked to Instagram. It explores how customers interpret a brand based on its presence and activities on the platform, focusing on aspects such as brand image, consumer perception of authenticity, relevance, and trendiness. Additionally, it discusses brands' engagement and interaction with consumers, customer reviews and feedback, and collaborations with influencers on Instagram, highlighting their significant impact on customer perception.

Customer perception is considered a key competitive advantage (Pirić, Martinović, & Barac, 2018). Statt emphasizes that customers' perception of a product or service impacts their behavior more than any objective attribute (Statt, 1997). Several studies indicate that social media marketing positively affects customers' perceptions of brands that engage in such marketing activities (Beneke, Blampied, Miszczak, & Parker, 2014); (De Vries, Gensler, & Leeflang, 2012). Social media offer different values to corporations, such as improved brand popularity (De Vries, Gensler, & Leeflang, 2012) or increased sales (Agnihotri, Kothandaraman, Kashyap, & Singh, 2012) and have significantly challenged today's advertising style (Silvira & R., 2024). Social media currently plays a crucial role in brand building (Jeswani, 2023). There is a strong relationship between brand trust and brand image, with brand impact positively affecting brand trust (Aslam, 2024). Empirical research indicates that brand effect enhances trust during online purchases (Lin & Lee, 2012). Branding is directly linked to brand equity, which affects consumer decision-making (Sallam, 2016). Brand equity and attitude positively impact purchase intention (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2015). Positive brand attitude and image impact customer behavior, including brand contemplation, purchase intention, purchase behavior, and brand choice (Schivinski &

Dabrowski, 2015). Instagram significantly influences customers' brand choices, highlighting the need to integrate it into marketing strategies to boost brand exposure and reach a broader audience. UGC on Instagram has a substantial influence on brand valuation, according to Forrester's report (Forrester, 2014). These platforms enable customer interactions, diminishing corporations' exclusivity as the primary source of brand communication (Li & Bernoff, 2011). Brand interaction through UGC, comments, likes, and direct messages enhances customers' perception of the brand as accessible, responsive, and customer focused. Today, consumers rely on the Internet for guidance (Bilgihan, Kandampully, & Zhang, 2016).

Marketing scientists and practitioners have researched a range of topics, such as online reviews (Karakaya & Barnes, 2010), virtual brand communities (Algesheimer, Dholakia, & Herrmann, 2005), brand fun pages, advertising, and UGC (De Vries, Gensler, & Leeflang, 2012). Traditional brand communications, which were previously overseen by brand and marketing managers, are receiving a growing amount of consumer influence (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2015). Beneke et al. found that the brand's capacity for interactivity significantly impacts positive brand perceptions (Beneke, Blampied, Miszczak, & Parker, 2014). Finally, the potential for a positive brand-consumer relationship has been enhanced, according to Duffy, by the two-way communication that social media platforms enable (Duffy, 2013). The impact on brand credibility and authentic perception can also be influenced by engaging with social media influencers, individuals with a large following, and compensating them for promoting a product (Long, 2016). All of this also applies to luxury brands, which are the focus of this paper and will be analyzed in more detail in the next chapter.

Impact of Instagram on Luxury Brand Perception and Consumer Behavior

When it comes to luxury brands, Instagram is considered very effective in developing a unique brand personality and strengthening the brand image (Vaynerchuk, 2013). Additionally, luxury brands play a risk-reduction role in customer buying decisions by providing psychological benefits (Berthon, Pitt, Parent, & Berthon, 2009) and are important in online marketing. Luxury brand customers often experience satisfaction, pride, and fulfillment (Sung, Choi, Ahn, & Song, 2015). Moreover, luxury brand images achieve higher customer engagement rates on Instagram (Yoo, 2023). This raises many questions about the relevance and adequacy of their online presence. The presence of luxury brands online, especially on platforms like Instagram, further emphasizes the need to preserve the strength of a brand's image.

Some studies explore customers' motivation to engage with luxury brands on social media (Bazi, Filieri, & Gorton, 2020) and their behavior (Hsu, 2024). Luxury brands require a certain level of elitism and exclusivity, and there were concerns that these features might be lost in the online world. However, several authors have examined the inter-relationship of luxury brands, trust in luxury brands, their image, and perception in the online sphere. Research has shown that there are no obstacles for luxury brands using Instagram and similar platforms (Krepapa, Regkoukou, & Beratis, 2016). Recent developments indicate that Instagram is a very effective tool for building trust in brands and enhancing brand image, including luxury brands, and this is reflected in online purchasing decisions. Given the general use of new technologies,

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certain differences relate to the customer's age, so the following text analyzes research in this area, specifically related to Instagram.

Understanding Generational Trends in Digital Consumer Behavior and Instagram Influence

Generational theory suggests that individuals of similar age share common cultural experiences, influencing their future consumer behavior and distinguishing them from other age groups. Researchers and practitioners have examined consumer differentiation by generational affiliation, observing similarities and differences in platform usage, such as Instagram (Hood, Thoney-Barletta, & Rothenberg, 2024). Consumers are often divided by generational affiliation into Gen X (born 1961-1981), Gen Y (born 1982-1991), and Gen Z (born 1992-2000) (Twenge, 2015). The challenge arises from the lack of precise agreement on the exact boundaries separating the mentioned generations (Ruiz-Equihua, Casaló, & Romero, 2021). Regardless, it is crucial to note that utilizing generational theory in practice can serve as a valuable foundation for market segmentation (Ruiz-Equihua, Casaló, & Romero, 2021), especially concerning digital communication media, channels, and platforms like Instagram. Most Generation Y, also known as Millennials, consists of young adults (Aquino, 2012). Being the first generation to grow up with the Internet, Generation Y places high value on social media and mobile phones in daily interactions (Aquino, 2012). Young people increasingly use Instagram for news (Newman, Fletcher, Eddy, Robertson, & Nielsen, 2023), reflecting their status as digital natives and significantly influencing their online activity. InSite Consulting's Global Social Media Study from 2010 reported that more than 70% of individuals aged 15-24 had created a profile on social networks (Bergh & Behrer, 2013).

Companies face the challenge of building brands among highly educated young people who predominantly consume online media rather than traditional outlets like TV or radio (Gronbach, 2008). Generation Y, also known as Millennials, has learned to use social media to express ideas and communicate with companies, valuing uniqueness, and brand personality (Bergh & Behrer, 2013); (Aquino, 2012). According to Bergh and Behrer, a study revealed that 83% of Millennials are so attached to their phones that they even sleep with them, highlighting the significance of mobile technology (Bergh & Behrer, 2013). Instagram, being the preferred platform for Millennials, attracts over 70% of individuals aged 12 to 24 globally (Huang & Su, 2018). With 42% of its users visiting daily, and 60% aged between 18 and 29, Instagram offers vast opportunities for engaging this demographic (Dublino, 2024). While Generation X also engages with social media, the focus remains primarily on Generation Y due to their influence on consumer behavior (Bromowich, 2017). Social media usage decreases significantly after age 50, indicating changing consumer lifestyles and technological reliance (Bromowich, 2017). Additionally, there are also studies focused on Generation Z, examining the extent to which they use social networks (Pasztor & Bak, 2020). It is essential to point out that members of Generation Z, who simultaneously have profiles on different social networks, represent a very suitable segment of the population that uses Instagram. Members of Generation Z are also readily sharing their posts on social networks, including Instagram (Pasztor & Bak, 2020), and in this context, they can be considered attractive for developing the image of luxury brands.

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All the previously mentioned research served as the basis for formulating the hypotheses, which are presented below along with a description of the research methodology.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Studies on Instagram's impact on customer perception, brand image, luxury brand perception, consumer behavior, and generational trends in digital behavior have led us to the following research questions: What is the frequency of Instagram use and what are the reasons for its use among members of different age groups?; and Do customers' perceptions of luxury brands and their intention to buy differ based on the age of Instagram users?

Based on these research questions, we have formulated and tested the following hypotheses:

H1: The frequency of Instagram use depends on the age of respondents.

H2: Reasons for using Instagram differ depending on age.

H3: Customers' perceptions of luxury brands and their intention to buy, as influenced by branding on Instagram, depending on the age of the respondents.

A study was conducted utilizing a non-random convenience sample and the snowball approach among various age groups of active Instagram users in the Republic of Croatia. The researchers initially administered the survey by sending it to the intensive Instagram users who follow fashion brands, instructing them to gather data from their Instagram-using friends. Participation in the study was anonymous. The research started in October 2022 and concluded in late December 2022. In total, 193 (N = 193) respondents participated in the research, and 192 respondents were included in the further analysis with complete data. The research instrument was a questionnaire, with many of the questions taken and adapted from a study conducted by Uzunian (Uzunian, 2013). The questionnaire consisted of 32 questions and was divided into two sections. The first section of the questionnaire captured demographic information to describe the sample. The second section of the questionnaire was designed to measure the use of social media and participants' perception of the influence of Instagram marketing activities on brand image and customers' buying intention in Croatia. Descriptive and multivariate analysis was conducted using the IBM SPSS software version 22 to evaluate the hypotheses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The sample consisted of primarily female (74%) participants, and the average age of participants was 28 years (SD=8.67). Most of the sample were students (51.3%) and full-time workers (41.5%), whereas part-time workers (3.6%), unemployed (2.6%), and retired (1%) represented a minority in the analyzed sample. When it comes to educational level, most of the participants had a BSc level (44%), finished or finished secondary school (24.9%), or MBA level (17.6%). Only a small portion of participants were still in school (1.6%), and some put "other" as their answer (11.9%).

For the first hypothesis (H1: The frequency of Instagram use depends on the age of respondents), to differentiate if the activity on Instagram could be related to age, the use of different media has been tested, and age interdependence has been analyzed. Respondents chose among provided answers on the ordinal scale for the frequency of

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use and were asked to state if they use different media daily, two to three times per day, a couple of times during the week, rarely, or never.

As age was an open category and standard deviation showed variety in answers, the sample was split in half. The first half of the sample was represented by younger respondents (53%), and the average age was x=22.34 (SD=1.52). The other group of respondents had an average age of x=34.75 (SD=8.69). The results of the analysis of media dependent on age are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Analysis of use for different media per age

	Pearson Chi-Square	**Sig.**
How often do you use following media? [Radio]	2.885	p>0.05
How often do you use following media? [Facebook]	4.669	p>0.05
How often do you use following media? [Twitter]	7.697	p>0.05
How often do you use following media? [Snapchat]	22.665	p<0.01
How often do you use following media? [Tik Tok]	17.368	p<0.01
How often do you use following media? [Instagram]	25.052	p<0.01
How often do you use following media? [Pintarest]	5.521	p>0.05

Source: Research results

The analysis (Table 1) shows that younger and older participants differently use Snapchat (χ^2=22.665, p<0.01), TikTok (χ^2=17.368, p<0.01), and Instagram (χ^2=25.052, p<0.01). No statistically significant difference exists in radio, Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest usage. As shown in Table 2, younger participants use Instagram more often than older ones.

Table 2: Results of Instagram use per age

How often do you use the following media? [Instagram]		**AGE-two categories**		**Total**
		Younger	**Older**	
Daily	Count	97	62	159
	% within age2	95.0%	68.9%	82.8%
2/3 times per week	Count	1	11	12
	% within age2	1.0%	12.2%	6.3%
Couple of times per month	Count	0	7	7
	% within age2	0.0%	7.8%	3.6%
Rarely	Count	2	6	8
	% within age2	2.0%	6.7%	4.2%
Never	Count	2	4	6
	% within age2	2.0%	4.4%	3.1%
	Count	102	90	192
	% within age2	100%	100%	100%

Source: Research results

Among the younger participants, almost all use Instagram daily (95%), and only a small percentage never use it (2%). In the other group of participants, most use Instagram daily (68.9%) and more times a week (12.2%) or a couple of times per month (7.8%). The H1 hypothesis is confirmed.

To test the second hypothesis (H2: Reasons for using Instagram differ depending on age), participants were asked to evaluate their reasons for using Instagram. Several reasons were provided, and participants responded with Yes or No answers. The hypothesis tested that reasons would differ depending on participants' age. To test the results, the chi-square test was used, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Reasons for use of Instagram dependent on age

		AGE			
		Younger	Older	Pearson Chi-Square	Sig
See what my friends are doing.	Yes	57.2%	42.8%	4.954	p<0.05
	No	37.5%	62.5%		
Keep up with brands/celebrities.	Yes	56.0%	44.0%	0.816	p>0.05
	No	49.4%	50.6%		
Share what I am doing with others.	Yes	63.4%	36.6%	6.085	p<0.01
	No	45.5%	54.5%		
Look at nice pictures/videos.	Yes	60.2%	39.8%	7.624	p<0.01
	No	39.1%	60.9%		
To get more personal content than from other social media.	Yes	57.1%	42.9%	0.513	p>0.05
	No	51.5%	48.5%		

Source: Research results

Results (Table 3) show that younger participants in this research are more interested in what their friends are doing (χ^2=4.954, p<0.05), and they want to share with others what they are doing (χ^2=6.085, p<0.01) and they use Instagram to look at nice pictures (χ^2=7.624, p<0.01). Younger participants also confirm they use Instagram to keep up with brands and celebrities, but this difference is not statistically significant (χ^2=0.816, p>0.05). Among older participants, the primary reasons they cite for using Instagram are to keep up with brands/celebrities (44%) and get more personal content than other social media (43,9%). Still, younger individuals use Instagram more often, and it serves diverse purposes for them. The results show the different reasons for using Instagram among the two groups, and hypothesis H2 can be confirmed.

For the third hypothesis (H3: Customers' perceptions of luxury brands and their intention to buy, as influenced by branding on Instagram, depending on the age of the respondents), the interest lies in customer perception. The aim was to explore how branding on Instagram is perceived to impact the brand's image and certain purchasing intentions positively. Participants answered several attitudes claims on a 5-point Likert scale to explore the third hypothesis. Finally, several ANOVA tests have been conducted to test the third hypothesis.

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Table 4: ANOVA tests overview

	Age-two categories	N	Mean	SD	F	Sig
The presence of luxury brands on Instagram has a stronger positive influence on your perception than other social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.).	Younger	102	4.11	1.03	8.678	p<0.001
	Older	90	3.66	1.09		
	Total	192	3.90	1.08		
Positive perception of luxury brands on Instagram has a strong influence on your buying intention.	Younger	102	3.67	1.13	1.816	p>0.05
	Older	90	3.46	1.03		
	Total	192	3.57	1.09		
Positive perception of luxury brands on Instagram has a stronger influence on your buying intention in comparison with other social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.).	Younger	102	3.88	1.07	3.041	p>0.05
	Older	90	3.60	1.18		
	Total	192	3.75	1.13		
The positive perception of luxury brands on Instagram strongly influences brand image.	Younger	102	4.29	0.84	4.608	p<0.05
	Older	90	4.03	0.84		
	Total	192	4.17	0.85		
The positive brand image of luxury brands on Instagram strongly influences your buying intention.	Younger	102	3.78	1.14	2.605	p>0.05
	Older	90	3.53	1.00		
	Total	192	3.67	1.08		
A brand's trendiness on Instagram positively and directly influences brand image.	Younger	102	4.30	0.79	4.220	p<0.05
	Older	90	4.07	0.80		
	Total	192	4.19	0.81		
If the brand image is positive, I will purchase this brand.	Younger	102	3.69	1.08	1.140	p>0.05
	Older	90	3.53	0.88		
	Total	192	3.61	0.99		

Source: Research results

The results (Table 4) indicate that younger participants find the presence of luxury brands on Instagram more influential than on other media (F=8.678, p<0.001) and believe it strongly impacts brand image (F=4.608, p<0.05). They value the trendiness of brands and its effect on brand image (F=4.422, p<0.05). While younger participants see Instagram's influence as more significant, both age groups report that a positive brand image similarly influences their purchase intent, with no significant statistical difference between them.

Results also show that younger participants have a positive attitude toward buying intentions when there is a positive perception of luxury brands and they state that they would buy a product (X=3.67, SD=1.13). However, compared with older participants (X=3.57, SD=1.09), these results are not statistically significant, and further research is needed. Given the results, hypothesis H3 can only be partially confirmed.

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CONCLUSION

In this study, there were more women than men, and the average age of participants was 28 years, which was to be expected, considering that all respondents are Instagram users. Namely, research indicates that Instagram is predominantly used by younger generations (Bergh & Behrer, 2013), particularly women (Statista, 2024). Additionally, most participants are highly educated (61.5%), which can again be correlated with findings from research conducted by Gronbach (Gronbach, 2008). Data processing answered both previously posed research questions and tested all three hypotheses. Thus, the analysis of media use across different age groups showed that younger (average age 22.34) and older (average age 34.75) participants use Snapchat, TikTok, and Instagram differently, while there is no difference in the use of Radio, Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest. Instagram is more frequently used by younger participants than older ones, as previously discussed in (Gronbach, 2008); (Bergh & Behrer, 2013); and (Statista, 2024). Results of Instagram use per age show that almost all younger participants use it daily (95%), which is consistent with previous research (Aquino, 2012); (Bergh & Behrer, 2013); (Huang & Su, 2018); (Dublino, 2024), while for older participants, this percentage is lower (68.9%), as reported by Bromowich (Bromowich, 2017). This supports hypothesis H1, which states that the frequency of Instagram use depends on the age of respondents, and found significant differences between the two groups (χ^2=25.052, p<0.01). Regarding the reasons why participants use Instagram, the results show that younger participants are more interested in what their friends are doing, sharing their own activities, and looking at nice pictures on Instagram. They also use Instagram to stay updated on brands and celebrities, as noted by various authors (Bilgihan, Kandampully, & Zhang, 2016); (Li & Bernoff, 2011). Older participants mainly follow brands/celebrities and seek personal content, while younger users use Instagram more frequently and for diverse reasons. These findings indicate different motivations for Instagram use between the two age groups (Hood, Thoney-Barletta, & Rothenberg, 2024), confirming the hypothesis H2: Reasons for using Instagram differ depending on age. The results also showed that younger participants believe Instagram presence strongly influences luxury brand image, as previously discussed by authors (Jeswani, 2023); (Beneke, Blampied, Miszczak, & Parker, 2014); (De Vries, Gensler, & Leeflang, 2012), and their own buying intentions, as also discussed by other authors (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2015); (Sallam, 2016); (Agnihotri, Kothandaraman, Kashyap, & Singh, 2012). Younger participants value the trendiness associated with brands on Instagram, which has been the subject of research (Bergh & Behrer, 2013) and (Aquino, 2012). Compared to older participants, younger participants see Instagram's influence as more significant. Although both age groups report that a positive brand image has a similar influence on their purchase intent, with no significant statistical difference between them, hypothesis H3: Customers' perceptions of luxury brands and their intention to buy, as influenced by branding on Instagram, depending on the age of the respondents, can only be partially accepted as true. Given the high frequency of Instagram use among respondents in the sample (95% of one group and 68.9% of the other group use it daily), it can be confidently stated that they are experienced users, which certainly adds significance to all the research results. Namely, well-informed users are more likely to provide precise responses and offer higher-quality feedback. However, this research has certain limitations, including the sample, so future research

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could use one based on probability that more representatively reflects the entire population. Additionally, this research was conducted specifically for the Croatian market, so it is recommended that future studies expand the research to other countries and compare the results, considering potential differences in the habits of users from various countries. Findings indicate that various generations exhibit distinct levels of activity on Instagram and vary in their motivations for using the platform. Depending on how frequently a participant uses Instagram, there are significant differences in their opinions on how the platform affects their perception of luxury companies. Furthermore, there exists a positive correlation and association between the conduct of respondents on Instagram and their perception of luxury brands in Croatia, as well as their customers' purchasing intention with respect to luxury brands. Younger participants use Instagram more often than older ones. Additionally, results show that younger participants have a positive attitude towards purchasing when there is a positive perception of luxury brands. Since these results are not statistically significant compared to older participants' answers, further research in the field is highly recommended to get more precise answers and understanding. This study aimed to advance theoretical understanding and aid marketing practitioners in designing marketing communication strategies on social networks, specifically on Instagram. The results of the study can assist companies in developing improved marketing activities and more appealing strategies tailored to age diversity, which can impact consumer purchasing decisions. Additionally, this paper contributes to a better understanding of Instagram's role in shaping perceptions and creating images of luxury brands, as well as influencing purchasing behavior and intentions across different generations in Croatia.

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