

Persuasion and Manipulation in Advertising Discourse:  
A Case Study of Luxury Brands



الإقناع والتلاعب في الخطاب الإعلاني: دراسة حالة للعلامات التجارية الفاخرة

نور رحيم نعمة

مكان العمل: قسم اللغة الإنجليزية، كلية التربية، جامعة ميسان، العراق

البريد الإلكتروني Email : [nourraheem19941979@gmail.com](mailto:nourraheem19941979@gmail.com)

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** المنتجات الفاخرة، التلاعب، الإقناع، المستهلكون، الإعلانات.

**كيفية اقتباس البحث**

نعمة ، نور رحيم ، الإقناع والتلاعب في الخطاب الإعلاني: دراسة حالة للعلامات التجارية الفاخرة، مجلة مركز بابل للدراسات الانسانية، حزيران 2026، المجلد: 16، العدد: 6.

هذا البحث من نوع الوصول المفتوح مرخص بموجب رخصة المشاع الإبداعي لحقوق التأليف والنشر ( Creative Commons Attribution ) تتيح فقط للآخرين تحميل البحث ومشاركته مع الآخرين بشرط نسب العمل الأصلي للمؤلف، ودون القيام بأي تعديل أو استخدامه لأغراض تجارية.

Registered في مسجلة في  
**ROAD**

Indexed في مفهرسة في  
**IASJ**



## Persuasion and Manipulation in Advertising Discourse: A Case Study of Luxury Brands

### Persuasion and Manipulation in Advertising Discourse: A Case Study of Luxury Brands

Noor Raheem Neamah

Department of English, College of Education, University of Maysan,  
Maysan, Iraq

**Keywords** : Luxury products, manipulation, persuasion, consumers, advertisements.

#### How To Cite This Article

Neamah, Noor Raheem , Persuasion and Manipulation in Advertising Discourse: A Case Study of Luxury Brands, Journal Of Babylon Center For Humanities Studies, June 2026, Volume:16, Issue6.

This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license  
(<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>)



[This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.](#)

#### المخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تقديم تقييم نقدي لكيفية حدوث الإقناع والتلاعب في الإعلانات الخاصة بالعلامات التجارية الفاخرة، بالإضافة إلى الطرق التي تُسهم بها استراتيجيات التواصل البلاغية والبراغماتية والرمزية في تشكيل أو تعديل تصورات المستهلكين وهويتهم وسلوكهم، فضلاً عن تقييم أخلاقيات هذه الاستراتيجيات. تتكون عينة الدراسة من ستة إعلانات، تم اختيارها عمدًا من علامات تجارية فاخرة رائدة. وهي تمثل استراتيجيات إعلانية متنوعة (رقمية، مطبوعة، عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي) يستخدمها مسوّقو المنتجات الفاخرة. تستند الدراسة إلى نموذج احتمالية التفصيل، الذي طوره بيتي وكاسيو عام 1986. يصف هذا النموذج كيفية حدوث الإقناع عبر مسارين مختلفين: المسار المركزي والمسار المحيطي. أظهرت النتائج أن العلامات التجارية الفاخرة تستخدم استراتيجيات إعلانية إقناعية (نتيجةً للجاذبية العقلانية) وتلاعبية (من خلال الإشارات الرمزية لخلق هوية لدى المستهلك) عند تصميم إعلاناتها. يتجلى

الإقناع من خلال مسار "مركزي" يركز على الحرفية والتراث والجودة العالية للمنتجات الفاخرة. كما أظهرت النتائج استخدام التلاعب بالتوازي مع الإقناع، وذلك باستغلال انعدام الأمان والضغط الاجتماعي على المستهلكين لإقناعهم بأن امتلاك منتج فاخر يحدد هويتهم ويؤكد مكانتهم الاجتماعية.

### Abstract:

This study aims to provide a critical assessment of how persuasion and manipulation occur within luxury brand advertising communication, as well as the ways that rhetorical, pragmatic, and symbolic communication strategies create or modify consumer perception, identity, and behavior; as well as to evaluate the ethics of those communication strategies. The sample consists of 6 advertisements. They were used in this research purposively from top-tier luxury brands. They are representative of different advertising strategies (digital, print, social media) that luxury marketers employ. The study is based on the Elaboration Likelihood Model, and it is developed by Petty and Cacioppo in 1986. The model describes how persuasion occurs via two different paths: the central route and the peripheral route. The findings showed that luxury brands use both persuasive (as a result of rational appeal) and manipulative (through symbolic cues to create an identity for the consumer) advertising strategies when creating ads. Persuasion is demonstrated through a "central" route, emphasizing the craftsmanship, heritage, and quality of luxury products. The findings also showed that manipulation is used alongside persuasion by using the insecurity and social pressure on consumers to make them believe that having a luxury product defines who they are and establishes their level of status.

### Introduction

Persuasion within advertising discourse has been generally understood as using the strategic application of language, imagery, and narratives to develop consumer views and actions. Manipulation is the ability to quietly or covertly utilize psychological and social vulnerabilities to produce consumption. In addition to being related forms of communication used by Luxury Brands, they represent two different types of methods. Advertising Persuasion is described as the intentional method of developing consumer opinions and behaviors through an advertisement's rhetorical appeal, frame of reference, and level of cognitive interaction. According to Huang et al. (2018), narratives and metaphorical methods create strong levels of emotional connection and brand identification. As a result, it represents a highly successful strategy



## Persuasion and Manipulation in Advertising Discourse: A Case Study of Luxury Brands



for creating long-lasting customer loyalty. Al-Shboul et al. (2024) indicate that persuasion occurs when consumers are attracted to, evaluate, and act upon an advertisement. Advertisers employ a variety of strategies, including differentiation, solidarity, and authority, to influence consumer decisions. Therefore, these authors' descriptions of persuasion illustrate persuasion as an overt and typically logical process based upon ethos, pathos, and logos, which ultimately intend to link consumer values to the identity of the brand. The use of Manipulation in Advertising Discourse represents the covert or unethical approaches utilized by advertisers that target the insecurities of consumers, their desires, or societal pressures. Recent research illustrates that manipulation is most frequently realized through overstatement, omission, or artificially created scarcity. Vij (2026) highlights that although metaphorical persuasion is a viable approach, utilizing too many metaphors or those that do not resonate with a particular culture may also lead to communicative malfeasance. Al-Shboul et al. (2024) identify hyperbole and glorification as typical manipulative approaches that fabricate reality to elicit conformity among consumers. Since manipulation relies on psychologically coercive strategies, whereas persuasion relies on overt appeals to ethos, pathos, and logos, persuasion and manipulation should be viewed as existing at opposite ends of a continuum in terms of advertising discourse. The recent scholarly consensus indicates that persuasion and manipulation are not mutually exclusive but exist at both extremes of a continuum in advertising discourse. Persuasion attempts to convince consumers via credibility and emotional resonance; however, manipulation compels them via distorted representations and societal pressure. Mokshin's (2021) research demonstrates an ethical contradiction in the way that current advertising utilizes persuasive marketing strategies through AI-based personalization. In other words, persuasive advertising can become manipulative. Sahakyan's (2020) study also describes the same type of ethically contradictory idea by describing how a pragmatic approach can be used as either an unethical or manipulative form of persuasion, depending on the advertising environment. The two researchers support the need for distinguishing between the use of persuasion versus coercion when evaluating luxury brand advertisements. Persuasion occurs in advertising discourse when brands explicitly utilize rhetorical and narrative strategies to link their brand identity with the consumer's value system. Manipulation, however, is the utilization of social pressure, fear of missing out, etc., to cause consumption. Both forms of advertising are common in advertising for luxury brands. Therefore, they require consideration regarding ethics and pragmatics.

## Research Problem

Luxury brand advertising has a tendency to confuse what is considered "persuasion" and what is simply considered "manipulation." The use of rhetorical strategies (i.e., pathos, ethos, logos) and symbolic imagery that luxury brands utilize can create an atmosphere of persuasion; however, the manipulation of consumers through fear of losing status or social pressure due to perceived artificial scarcity may lead to compulsive buying behaviors. Persuasive appeals attempt to mirror the values of the consumer with the values of the luxury brand; however, manipulative techniques are designed to capitalize upon the fears, anxieties, and desires of consumers. Therefore, this research will explore the ways in which both persuasion and manipulation coexist within luxury branding rhetoric and discuss the potential consequences for the development of the identities of consumers.

## Research Objective and Question

This study intends to offer a comprehensive critique of how persuasion and manipulation in luxury brand advertising communications work, as well as how rhetorical, pragmatic, and symbolic communication strategies produce or affect consumers' perceptions, identities, and behaviors, and to assess the ethics of these communication strategies. The primary research question is: What kinds of persuasive and manipulative forms of discourse strategy do luxury brands use in relation to changing consumer identity (self-concept) and status, which can ultimately influence their purchasing behavior?

## Significance of Research

This research will be significant because it demonstrates that both manipulation and persuasion exist in luxury brand advertisements and provides further insight into the rhetorical and pragmatic methods used by them. By providing this insight, this research supports the theoretical disciplines of advertising discourse analysis, consumer psychology, and debates about marketing ethics. This research also provides practical applications for advertisers, regulatory bodies, and scholars who seek to find a suitable balance between the persuasive ability of advertising communications and ethical performance when conducting global advertising communications across all forms of luxury markets.

## Literature Review

### Theoretical Framework

The study draws upon Petty and Cacioppo's (1986) Elaboration Likelihood Model. According to this model, there are two ways through which persuasion can occur. These are the peripheral and central routes. In the case of the central route of persuasion, an individual assesses the





## Persuasion and Manipulation in Advertising Discourse: A Case Study of Luxury Brands



information presented in a persuasive appeal carefully. Luxury branding examples of central route persuasion include heritage, craftsmanship, and quality. An example of peripheral route persuasion in luxury branding could be advertisements containing images of exclusivity or emotional appeals. Petty et al. (1983) demonstrate that the level of involvement consumers has with a product determines which of the two routes is most utilized. Therefore, according to Petty et al. (1983), ELM would be a suitable framework for examining how luxury brands use both rational persuasion and manipulation. Recent studies have further reinforced the ability of ELM to be applied to the analysis of advertising. Rohach and Rohach (2021) suggested that metaphors and narratives within advertisements can increase the effectiveness of persuasion but also potentially manipulate consumers through their exploitation of cultural or psychological weaknesses. Sher (2011) emphasized that pragmatic approaches to advertising, such as "glorifying", "exaggerating", and "omitting" details, can contribute to the ambiguity surrounding what constitutes persuasion and what constitutes manipulation. These researchers' work supports using ELM as a conceptual framework to assess the ways in which luxury brand advertising uses both credible and emotionally appealing content to persuade consumers while also utilizing exclusive and socially pressured elements to manipulate them. Because luxury brands' advertising efforts are associated with a higher degree of authenticity from the consumer perspective. Thus, when luxury brands reveal to their consumers that they utilize Artificial Intelligence to create advertisements, those consumers perceive the advertisement as being less representative of the brand, which leads to more negative reactions to the advertisement. Zhang and Hur (2025) indicate that luxury brands could reduce the adverse effects of disclosing the use of generative AI in creating advertisements for the brand by utilizing the technology to generate extremely creative and unique ad images rather than merely average and uncreative ad images. Lee et al. (2025) argue that unethical advertiser behaviors can be a stimulus for manipulating consumers through advertising. As well as raising issues about the use of persuasive tactics in advertising, this raises questions about the role of ethics. The ethics of marketing involves determining whether or not a marketer's behavior, decision-making, and practice meet the standards of good conduct. To assist marketers in assessing the moral implications of their actions and in deciding where to draw the line regarding ethics, there should exist a set of ethical standards governing advertising practices. The research on the subject identifies three prominent ethics guidelines

for advertising that include: obeying the law, acting in one's own best interest, and abiding by ethics.

### **Empirical Studies**

Here are some empirical studies that aim to clarify this topic. To et al. (2025) conducted a study to identify the possible harmful effects of using AI-generated images in luxury marketing campaigns. Through three studies (lab and field), To et al. show that, when luxury marketing campaigns employ only AI-generated ads, if they include the disclosure of the use of AI-generated images in their advertisement, then consumers will have a negative response to the advertisement. The researchers were able to uncover the reasoning behind this negative consumer reaction by finding that consumers perceive AI-generated ads as having been created with less effort, therefore, resulting in those same AI-generated luxury ads being viewed as less authentic to the luxury brand. Lastly, the researchers found that the negative effect of AI-generated luxury ads can be mitigated when luxury marketers use generative AI to create highly creative ad images versus standard ad images. In conclusion, the findings from To et al. demonstrate how luxury marketers can strategically utilize AI within their advertising strategies and how there is significant managerial value in using generative AI in brands' advertising efforts. Rohach and Rohach (2021) carried out a study on manipulation and persuasion in business advertising. It discusses manipulation, advertising as persuasion, and how businesses apply various forms of manipulation using different persuasive devices. Historically, advertising evolved from simply telling consumers about the advertised product to asking, and even persuading, consumers to purchase the product. The ultimate goal of every advertiser is to get consumers to view a mental picture of the advertised product. This mental picture should be viewed consciously so the consumer will eventually purchase the product without conscious effort. Manipulation refers to the process of influencing or controlling people's behavior and perceptions through the use of psychological and social influences. This form of psychological influence is used to subtly affect people's social awareness. Some examples of the most effective forms of persuasion include the lexical (colored words, emotive and inclusive vocabulary, associations and connotations, subtext, anecdote); rhetorical and stylistic (rhetoric questions, argumentation, logic, exaggerations, hyperbole, repetition, simile, irony) and visual (graphs, iconic signs, tables etc.) forms of persuasion. When combined, these forms of persuasion can result in creating advertisements that are visually appealing, memorable, informative, provocative, persuasive, and





## Persuasion and Manipulation in Advertising Discourse: A Case Study of Luxury Brands



manipulative. Using elements of psychology when creating advertisements has proven to be very effective. In today's society, advertising is both an integral part of our everyday lives and a means of mass media communication that uses many practical and tactical tools and techniques based upon modern psychology and psycholinguistic principles to manipulate people into purchasing certain products or services. As such, advertisers employ a variety of creative ways to communicate with consumers using a specific language that creates feelings of anxiety or fear that if the consumer does not take advantage of a particular opportunity, they may miss a "chance" or "sale". Huang and Kim (2018) examined the impact of social media communication as an advertising method of luxury brands using a narrative persuasion point-of-view. More specifically, the authors sought to analyze the way attributes of both the sender (comprehension fluency, imagery fluency) and recipient (transportability, need for affect) of messages can be used to increase the degree of narrative persuasion. A total of 193 usable surveys were collected from SNS users through an online survey conducted by Amazon MTurk. The Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) methodology was utilized to evaluate the model proposed in this study. The results indicated that comprehension fluency, imagery fluency as the attribute of the message sender, and transportability as the attribute of the message recipient, each had a positive effect on the level of narrative transportation. Further analysis also revealed that narrative transportation mediated the effect of comprehension fluency on affect, and the visit intentions to a brand's SNS; and it also found that narrative transportation mediated the effect of transportability on positive affect toward a brand's SNS; positive attitude toward a brand's SNS; and visit intention. Danciu's (2014) research indicated that advertising as a means of manipulating the public has become commonplace for many people. Marketing should be about satisfying the customer. However, through manipulation of advertising, the company is creating an uneven distribution of power between itself and the consumer. The majority of the advertising used to manipulate consumers is very hard to prove due to the controversy over both the nature and the content of the advertising. This research examines how companies utilize stimuli, methods, and tools of advertising to influence consumers. It also suggests ways to reduce this type of manipulation. Whether or not these solutions work will depend on whether or not the companies follow certain basic principles that enable them and the consumer to identify mutual interests.

## **Research Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This study is qualitative, and it was conducted based on the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986). It is provided a conceptual structure that enables researchers to distinguish between the two primary modes of persuasion, namely central route persuasion and peripheral route persuasion. The former mode refers to consumers' deliberative processing of the information in luxury ads; whereas, the latter encompasses peripheral cues (e.g., celebrity endorsements, imagery, and symbolism) employed by luxury advertisers to facilitate an effective response from their target audience. The 6 advertisements used in this research were sampled purposively from top-tier luxury brands. They are representative of different advertising strategies (digital, print, social media) that luxury marketers employ. In addition to employing a qualitative research methodology to examine these ads as texts, both discourse and pragmatics frameworks were applied during data analysis. Specifically, all persuasive strategies (i.e., ethos, pathos, logos) were coded along with manipulative techniques (i.e., exclusivity, scarcity framing, exaggeration) identified in each advertisement. Furthermore, an interpretative framework provided by ELM guided the researcher's interpretations of the findings. More specifically, ELM enabled the researcher to position each of the six examples either within the context of the central route or the peripheral route. Consequently, comparisons could be made concerning whether luxury advertisers rely primarily upon cognitive evaluation or whether they appeal to consumers using more affective stimuli. Thus, this approach has facilitated a high degree of methodological rigor while also providing a highly detailed understanding of how persuasion and deception occur in the discourse of luxury brand advertising.

### **Data Collection**

This study uses 6 purposefully chosen international advertisements from luxury brands, Rolex, Chanel No. 5, Louis Vuitton, Gucci, Dior, and Hermès, to show a variety of different types of persuasive and manipulative strategies used by the advertisers. The advertisements were also chosen because they are representative of various themes such as prestige, emotional seduction, identity, irony, elegance, and exclusivity. The advertisements were obtained through print media, digital media, and social media to provide an example of how today's luxury brand





## Persuasion and Manipulation in Advertising Discourse: A Case Study of Luxury Brands

messaging represents their advertising efforts. The advertisements were also chosen based upon relevance to the research focus on persuasion and manipulation, as well as being prominent enough in influencing consumer perceptions. Each advertisement acts as its own individual case study, so that there can be an examination of both textual and visual data using qualitative methods.

### Data Analysis

Qualitative analysis was completed for this study using a discourse-pragmatic model based on Petty and Cacioppo's (1986) Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), which is a model for explaining how people process messages. Three areas were analyzed for each advertisement: (1) Speech Act Descriptions: This area identified whether the speech act included assertive language (e.g., claims), expressive language (e.g., feelings), or directive language (e.g., telling someone what to do); (2) Persuasion Strategies: This area analyzed whether the advertisement included appeals to ethos (i.e., credibility), pathos (i.e., emotion), and/or logos (i.e., logic) along with the route of processing that would be most likely to occur by the receiver (either central or peripheral); and (3) Manipulation Strategies: This area analyzed whether the advertisement included some form of status-framing, scarcity, exaggeration, or exclusivity. After completing coding of the textual and visual elements into the previously mentioned categories, there was an interpretation stage where how persuasion and manipulation intersected in luxury advertising was explored. There was comparative insight gained when examining all 6 advertisements that highlighted common rhetorical patterns and varying degrees of context among them. In addition, comparative insight allowed researchers to better understand how luxury brand advertisements create desire among consumers while negotiating the line between persuasive appeal and manipulative communication. The 6 luxury brand advertisements analyzed for this study use the following six persuasive and/or manipulative strategies, which are examined using a detailed description of speech acts, persuasion strategies, and manipulation strategies.

### 1. Rolex – Timeless Prestige example:

Speech Acts: In its advertisement, Rolex performs assertive speech acts such as making claims about the brand's heritage and craftsmanship; making assertions about Rolex being "timeless"; and performing



expressive speech acts by celebrating prestige and success. Through these speech acts, Rolex constructs itself as both a factual authority (through assertive speech acts) and as an emotional icon (by means of expressive speech acts). Persuasion Strategies: With regard to ethos, Rolex identifies itself as credible and prestigious due to its history of excellence and tradition. The persuasive language used in the advertisement appeals to rational trust in the quality of the brand and to its long-standing reputation. Manipulation Strategies: The advertisement does not directly state that wearing a Rolex confers prestige, but it implies so. As such, this is an example of status-framing. The advertisement uses the technique of loss aversion, creating a sense of loss, such as social inferiority, for people who do not have a Rolex. Therefore, it is implied that if you don't get a Rolex, you will lose your position/status or be left out of exclusive social circles. This creates a symbolic relationship between purchasing a Rolex and gaining status/prestige. Therefore, the advertisement is emotionally manipulating the consumer into thinking that his desire for recognition/admiration can be achieved through purchasing a Rolex.

## **2. Chanel No. 5 – Emotional Seduction example**

Speech acts analysis: The advertisement has expressives (elegance celebration); commissives (promising transformation through Chanel). It claims about fashion choices being an expression of personal choice rather than simply making a choice. Persuasion techniques: Sensory appeals using images/celebrities that create desire for physical closeness/intimacy/admiration. The persuasive mechanism is that purchasing Chanel means achieving emotional satisfaction and feminine aspiration. Techniques of manipulation: It creates dependence where consumers believe they cannot achieve “feminine elegance” or “true femininity” without Chanel. Therefore, creates insecurity, which provides an opportunity to be dependent on Chanel as the only way to access sophistication. Advertising also creates the illusion that if you purchase Chanel, you will be admired/desired due to the promise of elegance. Negative face threat implication of inadequacy when individuals do not choose to wear Chanel subtly forces conformity to societal expectations of feminine identity. By symbolically representing the perfume as an aspect of identity, the advertisement encourages consumers to present themselves consistently with those expectations. While the advertising uses persuasion (celebrities/sensory appeal), it also uses techniques of manipulation (presenting products as unique) to influence both desires and social pressures.



### 3. Louis Vuitton – Travel and Identity

The speech act description shows how the campaign performs assertive acts (claims to be cultured, adventurous, and have a global lifestyle) as well as expressive acts (fosters individuality and belonging), thus it is creating Louis Vuitton as a factual authority for travel culture and an emotional symbol of identity. Persuasion Strategy: It uses an aspirational lifestyle as a way to appeal to consumers and connects the product to concepts such as adventure, cosmopolitanism, and sophistication. Persuasion operates through depicting Louis Vuitton products as rational companions during travelers' experiences of cultural exploration, while simultaneously developing the logos and ethos associated with the brand. Manipulation Strategy: It develops a relationship where the bag represents identity and belonging, and suggests that self-esteem and social status can only be gained through consumption. Through its manipulative language, the campaign is pressuring consumers to associate their personal identities with what they consume, and to use Louis Vuitton's brand as a means of demonstrating how desirable they feel to others. In terms of protecting the consumers' desire to be seen as cultured and worldly, the campaign uses Louis Vuitton's association with sophistication as a means of protecting the consumers' identity and promoting the idea that there will be consequences (e.g., exclusion or loss of identity) should they fail to purchase Louis Vuitton. By using identity dependency as a form of manipulation, the campaign is applying subtle coercion for consumers to conform to the elite consumer values promoted by Louis Vuitton. Therefore, this analysis demonstrates how the campaigns developed by Louis Vuitton utilize persuasive techniques (travel, adventure, sophistication) along with manipulative techniques (dependency on consuming), thereby establishing tension between consumers' aspirational desires and the social pressure placed upon them.

### 4. Gucci – Irony and Edge

Speech Act Description: The campaign expresses actions (the celebration of boldness, irony, and individualism) and directive actions (urging consumers to live Gucci as a rebellious way of life). The campaign positions Gucci as a cultural provoker as well as a guide to self-expression. Strategy of Persuasion: Pathos and Ethos. The bold imagery and irony will attract young people seeking an authentic and unique identity. Gucci's ability to be perceived as a legitimate example of avant-garde fashion and personal liberation is how it persuades its



audience. Manipulation Strategy: It occurs through the normalization of excess, where it is framed as rebellion. Consumers are thus manipulated into believing their desire for uniqueness can be fulfilled through the purchase of Gucci products. Additionally, the desire to appear unique and "edgy" is protected by linking Gucci with individuality. In terms of the negative face threat, it is implied that being non-conformant or lacking authenticity is the result if you do not accept Gucci's extreme style. As such, there is pressure on consumers to invest in the brand. Ultimately, the discourse transforms Gucci from simply a fashion label to a symbolic representation of cultural resistance and social identity, defining how consumers express themselves socially. Persuasion (as demonstrated by humor, boldness, individuality) is used in conjunction with manipulation (the framing of excess as rebellion), creating tension between actual self-expression and reliance on consumer goods.

### **5. Dior – Elegance and Authority**

Speech Act Description: The persuasive campaign in this advertisement is also using both ethos and logos. Ethos relates to credibility, and logos relates to rational justifications. Persuasion Strategy: The persuasiveness of the campaign is being presented based on the fact that the advertisements are projecting a sense of credibility, refinement, and rational justification for Dior's prestige. The logic behind this type of persuasion is to create an image of Dior as the best option for elegance. Manipulation Strategy: The manipulative nature of the campaign suggests that beauty and power can only be obtained through purchasing products at Dior. Therefore, there will always be some type of insecurity associated with appearance or social standing, which would cause a consumer to feel pressure to believe that without Dior, he/she has no refinement or influence. Dior is protecting the consumer's desire to be admired and/or respected by promising elegance and authority. There is a negative face threat concerning the fact that Dior is implying that a person lacks refinement or diminished status if they do not accept what Dior is offering. Dior is attempting to coerce conformity to elite beauty norms by making people want to look good or have the status of looking like they belong in the elite class. The language used within the campaign is creating a form of tension between admiration and coercion. In summary, the campaigns are combining persuasion (the ideas of authority, refinement, etc.) with manipulation (making consumers dependent upon Dior for beauty/powers), creating a form of conflict between admiration and coercion.



## 6. Hermès – Exclusivity and Scarcity

Speech Act Description: The campaign uses assertive actions such as promoting quality and craftsmanship through emphasis on "artisan" aspects, and declarative statements such as presenting Hermes as the gatekeeper to exclusivity, that represent Hermes' role as an authoritative voice on quality and as a cultural authority on access. Persuasive strategy: Rationalizes products using logos, provides logical reasoning from the skill level of artisans who produce it, the durability of materials, and the low volume of production. The value of Hermès goods is positioned as an investment in long-lasting quality. Manipulative strategy: Utilize psychological manipulation on consumers through rare, prestigious; creates a feeling of urgency to buy quickly due to perceived limited supply; promotes competition for ownership. Maintains consumer need for approval through elite positioning. Condemns those who do not have a Hermès item as being less than others. Suggestively compels consumers to want to be part of the elite group. Positions Hermès as a product that symbolically conveys exclusivity and social distinction, therefore defining the consumer's identity through limitations. Represents the interweaving of persuasiveness (quality, craftsmanship) and manipulation (control over access) to create internal conflict between rational appreciation and external social pressure. Here is a comparative table showing manipulation versus persuasion strategies across the 6 luxury brand advertisements that are already analyzed above:

**Table 1:** Brand comparison between persuasion and manipulation

Brand	Persuasion Strategies	Manipulation Strategies
Rolex – Timeless Prestige	According to ethos (craftsmanship, heritage), logos (precision, durability), and pathos (timeless success).	Status framing: Ownership = Prestige, Non-Ownership = No Elite Identity.
Chanel No. 5 – Emotional Seduction	The use of sensory imagery to evoke emotions and tell a story emotionally is pathos. The	Chanel is using your insecurity of being desirable to say that beauty and intimacy are both dependent



**Persuasion and Manipulation in Advertising Discourse:  
A Case Study of Luxury Brands**



	credibility of an iconic brand is its ethos.	upon owning a Chanel product.
Louis Vuitton – Travel and Identity	Ethos (the cosmopolitan sophistication) and logos (a functional travel companion), in addition to expressive speech acts.	Identity Dependency: You value yourself by the brand you own (i.e. "I am a certain person because I have this brand"); Subtle Coercion ("You'll be part of our exclusive club if you buy our stuff").
Gucci – Irony and Edge	The appeal used for Pathos (individuality, rebellion), Ethos (fashion authority), and Irony as a Rhetorical Device.	Normalizing Extravagance = Authenticity, Pressuring Consumers into Equating Consumption w/ Uniqueness.
Dior – Elegance and Authority	Ethos (refinement, authority), Logos (rational justification of prestige), Declarative Speech Acts.	Dior is using your insecurity of having power to imply that there's something wrong with you unless Dior gives their approval.
Hermès – Exclusivity and Scarcity	Logos (artisanal quality, craftsmanship), Ethos (tradition, heritage), Appeals to Rarity.	Limited Availability = Artificial Scarcity = Social Pressure to Get Your Hands on It.





## Research Result

The research question is: How does luxury brand advertising use both persuasive and manipulative forms of discourse strategy in relation to influencing the identity of consumers (i.e., their self-concept), their social standing (status), and ultimately their purchase behavior? Luxury branding uses persuasive language to appeal to the self-concept and goals of consumers. Luxury ads use two routes of persuasion at once. The central route of persuasion emphasizes features like craftsmanship, history, and other tangible characteristics of a product to make consumers think about their choices. The central route of persuasion can be illustrated by several examples from luxury brands. For example, Rolex emphasizes its watches' precision while Hermès emphasizes the artisanal quality of its products. At the same time, these luxury ads also appeal to emotions and perceptions through the peripheral route. This includes using symbols that represent certain values or ideas (for example, Chanel's sensual imagery for its perfume). Celebrity endorsements are another way that luxury brands create a sense of aspiration for their customers. Once again, this creates an aspirational identity for consumers and positions luxury goods as symbols of individuality, class, or style. At the same time, luxury brands often engage in manipulative discourse. Manipulative discourse is used to influence people's thoughts and actions without them even realizing it. In many cases, luxury brands manipulate their customers into associating their social status and worth with specific luxury brands. Luxury brands do this in many ways, including, but not limited to, status framing (as when a luxury brand uses phrases like "Rolex" to symbolize wealth); identity dependence (as when Louis Vuitton makes you feel dependent on your LV handbag to express who you are); and artificial scarcity (when Hermès makes you believe there will never be enough Hermès bags made). Thus, the combination of manipulation and persuasion in luxury marketing creates a cycle in which consumers begin to view luxury goods as a means to achieve higher levels of social status and internalize the brand's symbolism as a part of their own self-concept.

## Discussion

The results of this research correlate with the theoretical components of the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). The ELM, proposed by Petty and Cacioppo (1986), identifies two separate pathways for persuasion. Central route persuasion occurs when an advertisement appeals to a person's rational evaluation of a product/brand message. The appeal is



based on elements such as craftsmanship, heritage, and quality. An example would be Rolex appealing to a person's desire for precision, or Dior appealing to a woman's sense of elegance. On the other hand, Peripheral Route Persuasion utilizes symbolic images, emotional stories, celebrity endorsements, etc., to influence a person's perception of themselves. In turn, it can also affect how they view others, thus influencing a person's sense of social belonging. Examples include Chanel's sensual seduction or Gucci's rebellious irony. These examples demonstrate the duality of the ELM, that persuasion works through rational and symbolic means. As stated by Petty et al. (1983), consumer involvement will determine whether the processing of information will occur centrally (quality) or peripherally (celebrity endorsement), which correlates directly to the advertising strategy used in luxury goods. The scholarly perspectives support the findings of this research. McQuarrie and Mick (2003) discuss the use of rhetorical devices in advertising. They state that advertising blends persuasion with manipulation, which illustrates the continuum presented in this study. Al-Sufyani (2021) states that luxury brands create symbolic value that appeals to both the rational and emotional aspects of a person. This corresponds with the dual discourse strategies identified in this study. Vij (2026) reinforces this concept, stating that there is a balance between persuasion and manipulation within advertising discourse. Specifically, in luxury markets where exclusivity and identity play key roles. Therefore, the findings from this research illustrate that luxury brand advertising represents the dual routes of persuasion presented in the ELM and raise questions regarding the ethical implications associated with the boundaries between persuasion and manipulation.

### **Conclusion**

The use of manipulative and persuasive discourse in luxury brand advertisements is ethically concerning because it undermines a consumer's freedom to make an autonomous decision when purchasing a product. Persuasive techniques using craftsmanship, heritage, and emotionally resonating with consumers are legitimate ways for luxury brands to communicate their brand message; however, manipulative methods such as artificially creating a sense of urgency or scarcity, establishing a status symbol based on an individual's purchase decisions (status framing), or making a person dependent upon your product to establish who they are (identity dependency) can take advantage of a consumer's insecurity and/or peer pressure. Luxury brands manipulate the line of persuasion to create an ambiguous area of ethics as to who is



## Persuasion and Manipulation in Advertising Discourse: A Case Study of Luxury Brands

responsible for creating a consumer's identity or status, and also how advertising affects that process.

### Research Implications

The study shows that advertising for luxury brands combines a persuasive message with manipulative language at the same time by using rational reasoning to create desire. Through craftsmanship, history, and symbolism, this creates a method of creating consumer identities through their use of products, which can be used to establish social hierarchies. The ethical issues with creating a status through purchasing certain products/services and the methodologies utilized in obtaining such status are both ethically challenged.

### Recommendations for Future Research

Both of these dual strategies have evolved at different times as a result of technological advancements and the rise of social media; therefore, future research will likely need to explore how these two dual strategies continue to evolve into digital spaces by means of influencer marketing and social media platforms' algorithms. Comparative cross-cultural research may also help determine if persuasion or manipulation is used more frequently in different cultures and/or markets.

### References (المصادر العربية المترجمة للانكليزية)

- السفياني، ن. أ. (2021). كيف يدرك المستهلك الثري العلامات التجارية الفاخرة للوجهات السياحية ويختبرها: (حالة دبي) أطروحة دكتوراه، جامعة بروني لندون.
- روهاش، أ.، وروهاش، إ. (2021). التلاعب والإقناع في الإعلان التجاري. اتجاهات البحث في اللغويات والأدب الحديث، 4، 47-61.
- سهاكيان، إ. (2020). القوة الإقناعية مقابل التلاعبية للاستعارات متعددة الوسائط في الخطاب الإعلاني. دراسات في اللسانيات وتحليل الخطاب، (5).
- شير، س. (2011). إطار لتقييم أساليب التسويق التلاعبية غير الأخلاقية. مجلة أخلاقيات الأعمال، 102(1)، 97-118.
- تو، ر. ن.، وو، ي. س.، كيانيان، ب.، وتشانغ، ز. (2025). عندما لا يبيع الذكاء الاصطناعي براداً: لماذا تؤدي الإعلانات المولدة بالذكاء الاصطناعي إلى نتائج عكسية للعلامات التجارية الفاخرة. مجلة أبحاث الإعلان، 65(2)، 202-236.
- فيج، س. (2026). سلوك المستهلك والاستجابة للسرديات المصاغة بالذكاء الاصطناعي. في: تطوير الخطاب الإعلاني والتسويقي السردية في عصر الذكاء الاصطناعي (ص ص. 207-246). دار IGI Global Scientific Publishing.



## Persuasion and Manipulation in Advertising Discourse: A Case Study of Luxury Brands



- تشانغ، ل.، وهور، ك. (2025). تأثير الصور التوليدية بالذكاء الاصطناعي على اتجاهات المستهلكين في الإعلان. *العلوم الإدارية*، 15(10)، 395.
- الشبول، أ. ك.، الخوالدة، ن. ن.، حمدان، ه. ج.، والقبيلات، ن. (2024). التحليل الكلي والجزئي لأفعال الكلام التحفيزية في خطاب بايدن السياسي. *المجلة الدولية للمجتمع والثقافة واللغة*، 12(1)، 362-373.
- دانتشيوي، ف. (2014). التسويق التلاعبي: الإقناع والتلاعب بالمستهلك من خلال الإعلان. *الاقتصاد النظري والتطبيقي*، 21(2)، 19-34.
- هوانغ، ر.، ها، س.، وكيم، س. ه. (2018). الإقناع السردي في وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي: دراسة تجريبية لإعلانات العلامات التجارية الفاخرة. *مجلة أبحاث التسويق التفاعلي*، 12(3)، 274-292.
- لي، ه.، تودري، ف.، أداموبولوس، ب.، وغوس، أ. (2025). تأثير الذكاء الاصطناعي التوليدي البصري على فعالية الإعلان. متاح على SSRN بالرقم 5638311.
- ماكوارري، إ. ف.، وميك، د. ج. (2003). إسهام المنظورات السيميائية والبلاغية في تفسير الإقناع البصري في الإعلان. في: *الصور الإقناعية* (ص ص. 191-221). روتليدج.
- موكشين، س. (2021). التلاعب في الخطاب الإعلاني: الجوانب البلاغية والأسلوبية. *التمثيلات الافتراضية*، 9(1)، 60.
- بيتي، ر. إ.، وكانتشيويو، ج. ت.، وشومان، د. (1983). المسارات المركزية والطرفية لفعالية الإعلان: الدور المعدل للمشاركة. *مجلة أبحاث المستهلك*، 10(2)، 135-146.
- بيتي، ر. إ.، وكانتشيويو، ج. ت. (1986). نموذج احتمالية التوسع في الإقناع. في: *التطورات في علم النفس الاجتماعي التجريبي* (المجلد 19، ص ص. 123-205). أكاديميك برس.

### References (المصادر الأجنبية)

- Al-Shboul, O. K., Al-Khawaldeh, N. N., Hamdan, H. J., & Alqbailat, N. (2024). Macro and micro analysis of motivational speech acts in Biden's political speech. *International Journal of Society, Culture & Language*, 12(1), 362-373.
- Al-Sufyani, N. A. (2021). How the Affluent Consumer Perceives and Experiences Hedonic Luxury Destination Brands: The Case of Dubai (Doctoral dissertation, Brunel University London).
- Danciu, V. (2014). Manipulative marketing: persuasion and manipulation of the consumer through advertising. *Theoretical and Applied Economics*, 21(2), 19-34.
- Huang, R., Ha, S., & Kim, S. H. (2018). Narrative persuasion in social media: an empirical study of luxury brand advertising. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, 12(3), 274-292.
- Lee, H., Todri, V., Adamopoulos, P., & Ghose, A. (2025). The Impact of Visual Generative AI on Advertising Effectiveness. Available at SSRN 5638311.
- McQuarrie, E. F., & Mick, D. G. (2003). The contribution of semiotic and rhetorical perspectives to the explanation of visual persuasion in advertising. In *Persuasive imagery* (pp. 191-221). Routledge.
- Mokshin, S. (2021). The manipulation of the advertising discourse: rhetoric and stylistic aspects. *Propositions representations*, 9(1), 60.



## Persuasion and Manipulation in Advertising Discourse: A Case Study of Luxury Brands



- Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, J. T. (1986). The elaboration likelihood model of persuasion. In *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 19, pp. 123-205). Academic Press.
- Petty, R. E., Cacioppo, J. T., & Schumann, D. (1983). Central and peripheral routes to advertising effectiveness: The moderating role of involvement. *Journal of consumer research*, 10(2), 135-146.
- Rohach, O., & Rohach, I. (2021). Manipulation and persuasion in business advertising. *Research trends in modern linguistics and literature*, 4, 47-61.
- Sahakyan, I. (2020). The persuasive vs. manipulative power of multimodal metaphors in advertising discourse. *ELAD-SILDA. Études de Linguistique et d'Analyse des Discours–Studies in Linguistics and Discourse Analysis*, (5).
- Sher, S. (2011). A framework for assessing immorally manipulative marketing tactics. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 102(1), 97-118.
- To, R. N., Wu, Y. C., Kianian, P., & Zhang, Z. (2025). When AI doesn't sell Prada: Why using AI-generated advertisements backfires for luxury brands. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 65(2), 202-236.
- Vij, S. (2026). Consumer Behavior and Response to AI-Crafted Narratives. In *Developing Narrative Advertising and Marketing Discourse in the AI Era* (pp. 207-246). IGI Global Scientific Publishing.
- Zhang, L., & Hur, C. (2025). The impact of generative AI images on consumer attitudes in advertising. *Administrative Sciences*, 15(10), 395.

