

A Review of Changes in Consumer Perceptions of PGC and UGC Visual Marketing for Luxury Brands with AIGC Intervention

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Abstract

The rapid popularization of artificial intelligence-generated content (AIGC) is reshaping the communication of social visual content for luxury brands. This paper takes professionally generated content (PGC) and user-generated content (UGC) as research objects and explores changes in consumer perceptions of luxury brand visual marketing before and after AIGC intervention. Based on consumer perception theory and luxury marketing theory, the paper defines core concepts such as luxury brand visual marketing, PGC, UGC, AIGC, perceived luxury, perceived craftsmanship, and perceived trust. Taking existing studies on human-produced PGC and human-produced UGC before the popularization of AIGC as a reference, it analyzes the mechanisms and practical limitations of traditional official materials and native user content in three perceptual dimensions, and further discusses the perceptual changes brought by AIGC-assisted brand PGC, AIGC-involved user UGC, and AIGC-led visual marketing materials. The study finds that the influence of AIGC has a dual nature. It improves content production efficiency and visual expressiveness, while also affecting the human craftsmanship narrative and brand authenticity of luxury goods. Its underlying logic follows the mechanism of “production mode-value perception isomorphism” and perceptual spillover: de-humanization on the production side is regarded by consumers as a signal for judging brand value, and this signal spills over from the communication stage to the product level. While empowering communication, it continuously dilutes perceptions of the human craftsmanship value and authenticity of luxury goods. This paper clarifies the logic of perceptual evolution in luxury brand visual marketing under the AIGC environment and provides theoretical reference for brand digital communication practice and subsequent academic research.

Keywords

AIGC, PGC, UGC, luxury brands, consumer perception, visual marketing

1. Introduction

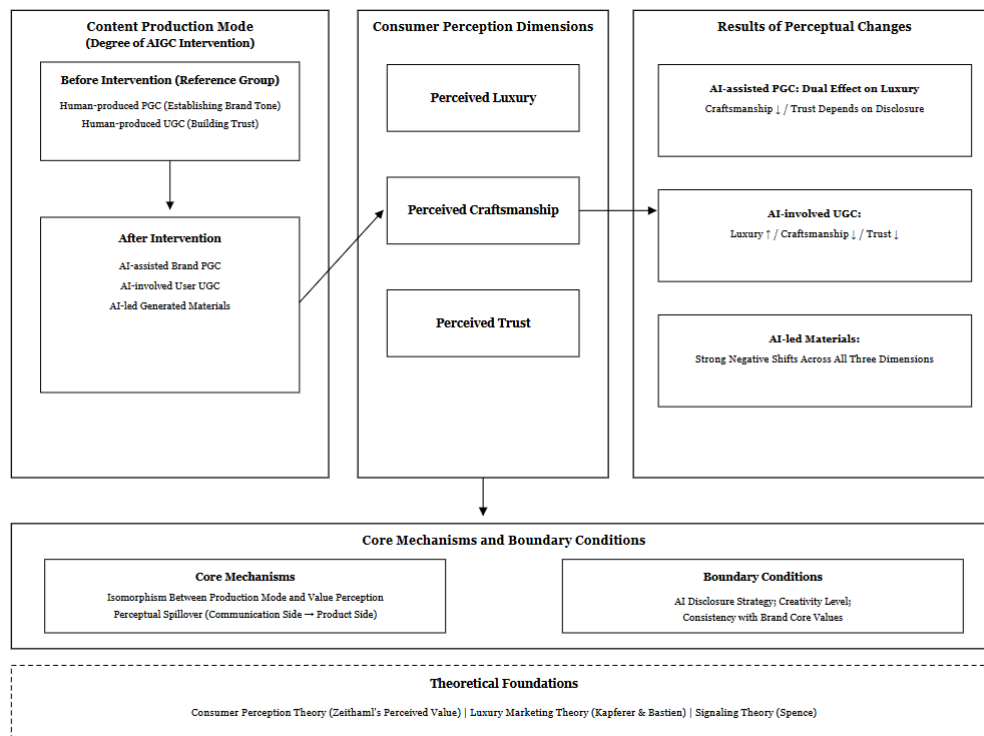
Social media have become a core field for luxury brand visual marketing. Platforms such as Instagram, Xiaohongshu, and Douyin are all important carriers dominated by visual content, and they also provide luxury brands with important channels to reach broader audiences. According to industry statistics, more than 78% of luxury brands have included Instagram influencer cooperation in their marketing strategies, and about 36% of luxury brands regard user-generated content (UGC) as a key component of their social strategies [1]. However, since 2022, the rapid development of artificial intelligence-generated content (AIGC) technology has begun to

change the production mode of visual content. From text-to-image generation to synthetic video, from virtual models to AI creative directors, AIGC has not only brought unprecedented efficiency and possibilities to brand content production, but also created a profound impact on the original human craftsmanship value and brand authenticity of the luxury industry.

Based on the above, the research idea of this paper is as follows: taking the relevant research conclusions on human-produced professionally generated content (PGC) and human-produced UGC before the popularization of AIGC as reference benchmarks, this paper systematically compares the patterns of change in consumer perceptions of luxury brand visual marketing after AIGC intervention, and takes AI-led finished visual products as an extended object of analysis. In terms of perceptual dimensions, this paper selects three core dimensions: perceived luxury, perceived craftsmanship, and perceived trust. These three dimensions form the key pillars of luxury consumers' perceived value, and they are also the perceptual levels most likely to shift after AIGC intervention. (As shown in Figure 1)

Judging from the current research situation, existing literature mostly discusses the role of PGC or UGC in luxury marketing separately, and rarely analyzes the influence of AIGC on the perceptual effects of the two from a perspective of change. Systematic reviews of luxury AIGC visual marketing are still relatively scarce. Although some studies have already paid attention to the influence of AI-generated content on consumer perception, they have not fully combined this issue with the special features of the luxury industry, namely scarcity, human craftsmanship narratives, brand inheritance, and other core issues. The research contributions of this paper mainly include three aspects. First, it integrates the two types of content, PGC and UGC, and carries out a review from the perspective of change, making up for the current lack of related systematic reviews. Second, by combining industry features such as luxury scarcity and craftsmanship narratives, it attempts to explain the internal logic by which AIGC changes consumer perception. Third, it distinguishes the communication differences brought by different degrees of AI intervention, providing reference for luxury brand communication practice and subsequent related research. From the perspective of art management, this paper will deeply explore the changes in consumer perceptions of luxury brand PGC and UGC visual marketing before and after AIGC intervention, with the aim of providing reference for luxury brand communication practice and subsequent academic research.

Figure 1: Analytical framework for changes in consumer perceptions of luxury brand PGC and UGC visual marketing with AIGC intervention



2. Core Concepts and Theoretical Foundations

2.1 Definition of Core Concepts

2.1.1 Luxury Brand Visual Marketing

Luxury brand visual marketing refers to marketing communication activities in which luxury brands take visual elements as the core carrier and convey brand image, product style, and cultural connotations to consumers through product display, advertising creativity, brand space design, and other forms. Different from mass consumer goods, the visual marketing of luxury brands not only undertakes the function of information transmission, but also carries the mission of continuing brand mythology, maintaining scarcity, and shaping high-end aesthetics. The visual refinement, uniqueness, and cultural connotations of luxury goods directly affect consumers' judgment of the overall brand level [2,3].

2.1.2 PGC and UGC

PGC refers to content produced by brand officials, professional institutions, or individuals with professional creative capabilities, such as professional photographers, creative directors, and contracted artists. In the context of luxury brands, PGC is usually manifested as official advertising films, brand documentaries, official fashion show videos, boutique visual displays, and other forms. It has the characteristics of a high production standard, strong brand control, and a clear commercial intention. UGC refers to content spontaneously created and shared by ordinary consumers or social platform users, including user selfies, unboxing videos, outfit sharing, and product reviews. The core features of UGC lie in the non-professional nature of its creators and the non-commercial nature of its communication motivation, so it is often regarded by consumers as a more authentic and credible source of information [4].

2.1.3 AIGC

AIGC refers to a technological paradigm that uses generative artificial intelligence technology to automatically or assistively produce multimodal content such as text, images, audio, and video. In the field of visual marketing, the application forms of AIGC include AI image generation, such as Midjourney and Stable Diffusion, AI video generation, virtual models and digital humans, and AI-assisted creative design. The essence of AIGC is a production tool rather than an independent content category. It can penetrate the production process of PGC and UGC and change the production mode, cost, and final form of content [5].

2.1.4 Perceived Luxury, Perceived Craftsmanship, and Perceived Trust

Perceived luxury is consumers' subjective judgment of the high-end attributes, scarcity, and excellent quality of a product or brand, and it is the core perception that distinguishes luxury goods from ordinary commodities. Perceived craftsmanship refers to consumers' perception and recognition of the manual skills and artisan spirit contained behind a product, and it is an important embodiment of the human value of luxury goods. Perceived trust refers to consumers' perception of brand integrity and product authenticity, and it is particularly critical in the luxury market where information asymmetry exists. Together, the three constitute the core pillars of luxury consumers' perceived value, and they are related to one another. The strengthening of perceived craftsmanship helps to improve perceived luxury, while perceived trust is the prerequisite foundation for the former two to function [6].

2.2 Relevant Theoretical Foundations

2.2.1 Consumer Perception Theory

Consumer perception theory originates from cognitive psychology and holds that consumers' responses to products or brands are not based on objective reality, but on their subjective perceptions. The perceived value theory proposed by Valarie A. Zeithaml (1988) points out that consumer perceived value is consumers' overall evaluation based on the trade-off between perceived benefits and perceived costs [7]. In the context of luxury goods, perceived value has multiple structures, including functional value, social value, emotional value, and cognitive value. Klaus-Peter Wiedmann et al. (2009) further constructed a model of luxury consumers' perceived value, emphasizing the comprehensive role of four dimensions: financial, functional, individual, and

social [8]. Consumer perception theory provides the core theoretical framework for this paper of changes in consumer perceptions of luxury brand visual marketing before and after AIGC intervention.

2.2.2 Luxury Marketing Theory

Luxury marketing theory is built on the unique market logic of luxury goods. Different from traditional marketing, which takes market penetration and scale maximization as its goals, luxury marketing emphasizes maintaining brand exclusivity and premium capacity through scarcity, brand narratives, and high-end experience. The luxury marketing framework proposed by Jean-Noel Kapferer and Vincent Bastien (2009) points out that the core assets of luxury brands lie in their historical inheritance, craftsmanship traditions, and cultural symbols, and that the core task of marketing activities is to maintain and strengthen these intangible assets [9]. At the level of visual communication, luxury marketing theory emphasizes the refinement and cultural depth of visual materials, and holds that any communication behavior that may weaken a brand's high-end image may cause long-term damage to brand equity [10]. In addition, signaling theory has important explanatory power in luxury marketing. Because information asymmetry exists between consumers and brands, brands transmit quality information to consumers through signals such as price, visual presentation, and craftsmanship display, while AIGC intervention may change the credibility and effectiveness of these signals [11].

3. Consumer Perceptions of Human-Produced PGC and UGC Before AIGC Intervention

3.1 Traditional Human-Produced PGC Visual Content

3.1.1 Academic Research Conclusions

Before the popularization of AIGC, the PGC visual content of luxury brands mainly relied on human production by professional creative teams, including photographers, stylists, retouchers, and other roles working together. Academic research generally holds that human-produced PGC has irreplaceable advantages in shaping perceived luxury and perceived craftsmanship.

First, high-standard official visual materials transmit the high-end positioning and excellent quality of brands to consumers through refined composition, carefully designed light and shadow, and high-quality print or digital presentation, effectively strengthening perceived luxury [12]. Research shows that official video content from luxury brands can trigger consumers' immediate emotional responses, and the comment areas often present short, enthusiastic, and positive responses, indicating that official PGC has a significant effect in stimulating brand aspiration [4].

Second, human-produced PGC is the core carrier through which luxury brands transmit perceived craftsmanship. Through official documentaries, close-up videos of craftsmanship, artisan interviews, and other forms, brands visualize the manual skills, time input, and artisan spirit behind products, enabling consumers to perceive the human value of the products. Research points out that craftsmanship experience is a strategic asset for luxury experience management. Artisans are key points in the creation process of luxury goods, and the communication of their images and stories has a significant positive influence on consumers' luxury experience [13].

However, the advertising attribute of human-produced PGC has a dual influence on perceived trust. On the one hand, the authority and professionalism of brand official content help to establish consumers' basic trust in the brand. On the other hand, because consumers are clearly aware of the commercial intention of official content, they often hold reservations about the authenticity of information in PGC. Research shows that consumers' trust in brand official content is significantly lower than their trust in user-generated content, and about 79% of consumers believe that UGC is more influential than PGC [1]. This effect of "advertising skepticism" also exists in the luxury field. Consumers tend to regard official visual materials as a means of brand self-presentation rather than as a source of objective information.

3.1.2 Industry Reality Features

From the perspective of industry reality, traditional human-produced PGC has significant advantages and inherent limitations. Its advantages are as follows. First, the brand has complete control over the content and can ensure the consistency of visual style and the accurate expression of brand tone. Second, the high

production cost itself constitutes a signal of brand strength and reinforces consumers' cognition of the brand's high-end positioning. Third, the creative ability and artistic standard of professional teams can produce visual works with aesthetic height and cultural depth, accumulating long-term cultural heritage for the brand.

However, its limitations are also obvious. First, the production cycle is long and the cost is high, making it difficult to adapt to the high-frequency content update requirements of social media. Second, brand official content is mostly one-way promotional material and mainly adopts a "top-down" mode of instilling communication. It lacks space for two-way interaction on social platforms, gives users a weak sense of participation, and is not likely to trigger spontaneous reposting, sharing, or secondary creation. Third, under the trend in which consumers increasingly pursue "authenticity" and "de-advertising" content, overly refined official materials may instead trigger psychological distance and aesthetic fatigue among consumers. Industry data show that although PGC often occupies a dominant position in terms of interactions, for example in the social media communication of beauty brands, PGC contributes most interactions with only about 11.73% of voice share [14], in the luxury field, high-net-worth consumers' trust in and engagement with official content are showing a downward trend. This has led UGC, originally a supplement to communication, to rise gradually, and has also provided room for AIGC intervention.

3.2 Traditional Human-Produced UGC Visual Content

3.2.1 Academic Research Conclusions

Traditional human-produced UGC is disseminated through social platforms and takes users' real use experiences and personalized expression as its core features. Academic research shows that UGC has advantages in perceived trust that PGC is difficult to match. Because the creators of UGC are ordinary consumers and their creation motivation is usually non-commercial, consumers tend to consider UGC more authentic and credible, and believe that it can provide more objective product information. Research points out that users' comments on influencer-posted content are often longer, more complex, and more moderate in emotion, indicating that consumers take more consideration toward non-official content and have higher trust in it [4].

However, human-produced UGC has inherent limitations in transmitting perceived luxury and perceived craftsmanship. First, because ordinary users usually lack professional photographic equipment, composition skills, and post-production ability, the visual quality of UGC often varies greatly, making it difficult to fully present the refined details of luxury goods. Second, content from the user perspective usually focuses on personal use scenarios and rarely involves the craftsmanship traditions and brand inheritance behind products, so it is difficult to effectively transmit perceived craftsmanship. Research shows that in the luxury context, there is an inherent conflict between the casualness of UGC and the high-end nature of luxury goods, and unplanned user content may weaken perceptions of a brand's high-end positioning.

3.2.2 Industry Reality Features

From the perspective of industry practice, the advantages of traditional human-produced UGC are as follows. First, it has high authenticity and credibility and can effectively reduce consumers' purchase decision risks. Especially for high-involvement products such as luxury goods, other consumers' sharing of real experiences has important reference value [15]. Second, the communication cost is low and the coverage is wide. Users' spontaneous content creation and sharing provide brands with a large amount of free exposure. Third, UGC has stronger social interactivity and circle penetration, helping brands reach groups that traditional official communication has difficulty covering [16]. Gucci's Gucci Model Challenge once attracted more than 2 million user participations worldwide, fully demonstrating the strong communication power of UGC [17].

However, human-produced UGC faces significant difficulties at the level of artistic expression. First, content quality is uncontrollable, and low-quality user content may have a negative influence on brand image. Second, brands lack control over UGC and cannot ensure the consistency between content and brand characteristics. Third, UGC often has difficulty carrying complex luxury brand narratives and cultural connotations, and it can easily simplify luxury goods into mere symbols of "conspicuous consumption" [18]. Therefore, luxury brands generally adopt a "selection and curation" approach in their UGC strategies, that is, they select high-quality content that conforms to the brand tone from massive user content for secondary communication, rather than completely allowing UGC to grow freely [19]. Data show that luxury brands

publish only about 9.9 paid influencer notes per month on average, far lower than the 152.6 notes of mass consumer goods, which indicates that luxury goods attach more importance to “quality” than “quantity” in content strategy [20].

4. After AIGC Intervention: Visual Content Ecology and Changes in Consumer Perception

4.1 Brand PGC Assisted by AIGC

4.1.1 Literature and Reality Analysis

The transformation of brand PGC by AIGC is first reflected in the improvement of production efficiency and visual expressiveness [21]. Brands can use AI tools to quickly generate creative sketches, simulate product presentation effects in different scenarios, and produce multiple versions of visual materials in batches, thereby greatly shortening the content production cycle and reducing production costs [22]. Research shows that generative AI can help brands improve visibility through dynamic content creation and use fantasy-style visual materials to increase interaction rates on social platforms [23]. In the dimension of perceived luxury, the surreal visual effects generated by AI can create a dreamlike atmosphere beyond reality, and in some cases instead strengthen consumers’ perceptions of brand uniqueness and creative frontier attributes [24,25].

However, the negative influence of AIGC intervention on perceived craftsmanship and perceived trust is more significant. In terms of perceived craftsmanship, when consumers learn that official brand visual materials are assisted or led by AI, they may question whether the brand’s commitment to “human craftsmanship” is sincere. If even the visual presentation of brand image can be completed by artificial intelligence, is the craftsmanship value of the product itself also not high? Studies have found that disclosure of AI-generated content significantly reduces consumers’ perceptions of brand authenticity, brand attitude, and honesty, and also has a negative influence on brand trust [5]. In terms of perceived trust, the “perfectness” and “unreality” of AI-generated content may arouse consumers’ suspicion. When AI-generated images contain detail errors, such as deformed fingers or abnormal textures, they can seriously damage the brand’s professional image and credibility [26]. Surveys show that 76% of consumers regard model display images as the most important content form in purchase decisions, and when detail errors appear in AI-generated images, consumers’ purchase intention decreases greatly [27].

It is worth noting that the influence of AIGC on the perceptual effects of PGC has boundary conditions. Research shows that when AI-generated advertisements are highly creative, their negative influence can be compensated to a certain extent. Consumers are more willing to interpret the use of AI as a manifestation of brand innovation rather than as a means of cost reduction [28,29,30]. In addition, a brand’s strategy for AI use also affects consumer responses. Compared with concealment or being “seen through” by consumers, actively and honestly explaining the role of AI in content production is more conducive to maintaining brand trust [31].

4.1.2 Industry Reality

In industry practice, luxury brands show differentiated attitudes toward AI-assisted PGC production. Some brands adopt a cautious exploratory strategy, using AI as a creative assistance tool for inspiration generation, scenario simulation, and efficiency improvement, while retaining the core decision-making position of human creative directors. For example, Louis Vuitton has integrated AI technology into customer personalization and visual search processes, and Balenciaga and Ganni have also tried AI-driven immersive experiences in pop-up experience spaces [27]. Other brands embrace AI more aggressively and even directly publish AI-generated content as official promotional materials. However, judging from market feedback, official visual content completely led by AI often encounters strong consumer resistance in the luxury field, which is especially prominent in the Gucci case (see Section 3.3). Overall, the current practice of AI-assisted PGC by luxury brands is still in an exploratory stage, and the industry has not yet formed a mature application model. In the implementation process, many brands also fall into cognitive misunderstandings. They simply pursue the production efficiency brought by AI while ignoring the human texture and handmade creative core required by luxury visual communication, which can easily cause a deviation in the brand’s visual tone [32].

4.2 User UGC Assisted by AIGC

4.2.1 Literature and Reality Analysis

The transformation of user UGC by AIGC is mainly reflected in the lowering of the creation threshold and the improvement of content quality [33]. With the popularization of AI image generation tools, ordinary users no longer need professional photographic equipment or post-production skills. They only need text prompts to generate visual content with a professional standard. This means that the overall visual quality of UGC has been systematically improved, and luxury-related content created by users is closer to brand official PGC in aesthetic expression, thereby to some extent further explaining the insufficiency of traditional human-produced UGC in transmitting perceived luxury.

However, AIGC intervention in UGC also brings new perceptual problems. In the dimension of perceived trust, the proliferation of AI-generated content makes it difficult for consumers to distinguish the authentic source of content. A seemingly real luxury unboxing photo may be completely generated by AI and have no connection with the actual product. This “authenticity crisis” seriously affects the trust foundation of UGC. In terms of perceived craftsmanship, AI-generated UGC lacks real product contact and use experience, and therefore cannot transmit product craftsmanship details or use feelings. Instead, it may arouse consumers’ doubts about the actual quality of the product because of excessive beautification.

4.2.2 Industry Reality

In industry reality, the phenomenon of AI-generated content disguised as UGC on social platforms is becoming increasingly common, forming a new difficulty in the visual marketing ecology of luxury brands. Some users use AI tools to generate false luxury “unboxing,” “outfit,” or “review” content to obtain traffic and attention on social platforms. More seriously, some commercial accounts generate AI content in batches to disguise it as real user reviews, conduct hidden marketing, or smear competitors. This phenomenon not only damages the interests of ordinary consumers, but also affects the brand image and market order of luxury brands.

Facing this difficulty, social platforms and brands are exploring countermeasures [34]. Some platforms have begun to require users to label AI-generated content and develop AI content detection tools [35]. Brands have strengthened the monitoring and management of UGC on social platforms and report and remove false AI content [36]. However, because AI generation technology is iterating rapidly while detection technology lags relatively behind, the identification and governance of AI-generated content disguised as UGC remain long-term challenges for the industry. For luxury brands, how to strike a balance between encouraging authentic UGC and preventing false AI content is an important problem of brand communication management in the AIGC era.

4.3 Extended Discussion: AI-Led Visual Marketing Materials

In addition to AI-assisted PGC and AI-involved UGC, there is a more extreme form, namely visual marketing materials that are completely led by AI and released through official brand channels. In this type of content, the role of humans is limited to setting prompts and final selection, while creative execution and image generation are almost entirely completed by AI. The AI promotional materials incident during Gucci’s Milan Fashion Week in February 2026 provides a typical case for analyzing the communication effect of this type of content.

The event background is as follows. In February 2026, before the Milan debut of Gucci’s new creative director Demna Gvasalia, Gucci released a group of promotional images on social media labeled “Created with AI.” This group of images presented multiple figures in a surreal style, including an elderly Italian woman wearing a 1976 vintage look, and was released together with real images such as a real photograph of Sophia Loren walking out of a Gucci boutique in 1966 and Michelangelo’s David. However, this group of AI-generated images quickly triggered strong negative reactions from consumers. Many netizens left comments such as “cheap,” “slop,” and “horrible” in the comment area. Some mocked Gucci as being “cheaper than TJ Maxx,” and another commenter sharply pointed out: “In Milan, you can literally find real Milanese grandmothers who wore Gucci in 1976, yet Gucci chose to synthesize one. This is a depressing day.” [37]

This incident has important implications for research on luxury visual marketing. The popularization of AI visual tools has also triggered industry reflection: large-scale use of AI-generated materials will squeeze the job opportunities of fashion creative workers such as models and production teams, and dissolve the accumulated handcraft and artistry in fashion visual production [38].

First, it clearly demonstrates the serious impact of AI-led generated content on perceived craftsmanship. Gucci, as a luxury brand whose core selling point is Italian craftsmanship tradition, has a pricing logic built on “manual skills” and “human value.” When consumers discover that the brand is not even willing to hire real models and photographers for promotional images, but instead chooses to use AI to “synthesize” them, they naturally question whether the brand’s commitment to craftsmanship and human value is only marketing rhetoric. Second, the incident exposes the negative effect of AI-led content on perceived luxury. The “digital feeling” and “synthetic feeling” of AI-generated images form an internal conflict with the “real texture” and “depth of time” pursued by luxury goods. Consumers repeatedly used the word “cheap” in their comments, indicating that AI-generated content moved the brand from “high-end” to “cheap” at the perceptual level. Once this perceptual shift forms, it may cause long-term damage to brand equity. Finally, the incident also reflects the collapse of perceived trust. Although Gucci actively labeled the images as “Created with AI,” consumers’ negative reactions were not reduced. This shows that in the luxury field, transparent disclosure cannot completely eliminate the perceptual damage brought by AI use. The key lies in whether the use of AI is consistent with the brand’s core values.

5. Comprehensive Discussion

5.1 Comparative Summary of Perceptual Changes

5.1.1 Review of the Reference Group: Perceptual Effects Before AIGC Intervention

Before AIGC intervention, human-produced PGC performed well in perceived luxury and perceived craftsmanship. High-standard official visual materials effectively transmitted the high-end positioning and craftsmanship value of luxury goods through refined visual presentation and systematic brand narratives. However, it had inherent limitations in perceived trust, as consumers remained alert to the commercial intention of official content. Human-produced UGC had significant advantages in the dimension of perceived trust, and the non-commercial expression of real users gained high trust from consumers. However, it was insufficient in the dimensions of perceived luxury and perceived craftsmanship. Limited by creative ability, it had difficulty fully presenting the aesthetics and craftsmanship of luxury goods. The two formed a complementary relationship: PGC was responsible for “establishing tone,” while UGC was responsible for “building trust.”

5.1.2 Comparative Analysis: Perceptual Shifts and Internal Mechanisms After AIGC Intervention

After AIGC intervention, the three types of content forms all shifted to different degrees in the three perceptual dimensions.

First, AI-assisted PGC presents a dual effect in perceived luxury. On the one hand, AI’s surreal visual generation capability can create dreamlike scenes beyond human shooting and strengthen brand uniqueness and frontier qualities at the creative level. On the other hand, detail flaws in AI-generated images may weaken the real texture and high-end positioning of luxury goods. In perceived craftsmanship, AI-assisted PGC as a whole shows a negative shift. Consumers tend to interpret the use of AI as the brand’s disregard for human craftsmanship value. In the dimension of perceived trust, the direction of the shift depends on disclosure strategy and creative level. Transparent disclosure and highly creative AI-assisted content cause less damage to trust, while concealed or low-creativity use seriously damages trust.

Second, AI-involved UGC shows a positive shift in the dimension of perceived luxury. AI tools lower the creation threshold and improve the overall visual quality of user content, making it closer to a professional standard in aesthetic expression. However, it shows a significant negative shift in the dimensions of perceived craftsmanship and perceived trust. AI-generated UGC lacks real product contact and use experience and cannot transmit craftsmanship details. The proliferation of AI-generated content disguised as UGC also seriously erodes the authenticity of UGC, making consumers inevitably suspicious of any user content.

Third, AI-led generated visual materials show a strong negative shift in all three dimensions. The Gucci case shows that when AI completely replaces human creative execution, consumers' reactions are the most intense. Perceived luxury is replaced by a "cheap feeling," perceived craftsmanship collapses because of "synthesis" rather than "creation," and perceived trust is seriously damaged because of the inconsistency between the brand's core values and behavior. The internal reason is that the value of luxury goods is built on "human time input" and "non-replicable skills," while AI-led generation precisely denies these two premises. AI can be infinitely replicated and does not require accumulated time.

In summary, the influence of AIGC on consumer perceptions of luxury brand visual marketing is not simply "positive" or "negative." Rather, it depends on the degree of AI intervention in content production, the brand's disclosure strategy, and the consistency between content and the brand's core values. This pattern provides an important basis for the visual marketing strategies of luxury brands in the AIGC era.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Research Summary

Taking PGC and UGC as the analytical framework, this paper systematically reviews the changes in consumer perceptions of luxury brand visual marketing before and after AIGC intervention. The study shows that before AIGC intervention, human-produced PGC and human-produced UGC formed a complementary pattern in the three dimensions of perceived luxury, perceived craftsmanship, and perceived trust: PGC was often used to shape luxury and transmit craftsmanship, while UGC was often used to build trust. AIGC intervention breaks this balance and causes systematic perceptual shifts. AI-assisted PGC improves visual expressiveness while affecting perceived craftsmanship and perceived trust. AI-involved UGC improves content quality while causing an "authenticity crisis" and "trust pollution." AI-led generated visual materials show strong negative shifts in all three dimensions.

The core finding of this paper can be summarized as follows: the influence of AIGC on luxury brand visual marketing is essentially a process of "perceptual reconstruction." What AI changes is not the product itself, but the information cues and judgment basis through which consumers form brand perceptions. In the special field of luxury goods, which highly depends on human narratives and the logic of scarcity, the use of AI must remain consistent with the brand's core values; otherwise, it will cause long-term damage to brand equity.

6.2 Limitations of This Review

This review has the following objective limitations. First, the reserve of empirical literature directly addressing luxury brand AIGC visual marketing is still limited. Some analyses have to draw on research conclusions from general consumer brands or the advertising field, and their applicability in the luxury context remains to be further verified. Second, existing studies are mostly based on European and American luxury brands and Western consumer samples. Research on the Chinese market context, local luxury brands, and Chinese consumers' cultural psychology remains insufficient [39]. As China is one of the world's largest luxury markets [40], its consumers' responses to AIGC content may have unique features. Third, existing literature rarely distinguishes different luxury categories such as leather goods, watches, high jewelry, and haute couture. Different categories have significant differences in craftsmanship dependence, price sensitivity, and visual marketing logic [41], and the influence of AIGC on their consumer perceptions may also differ. These limitations constitute the boundary conditions of the conclusions of this review and also indicate directions for subsequent research.

6.3 Future Research Directions Worth Expanding

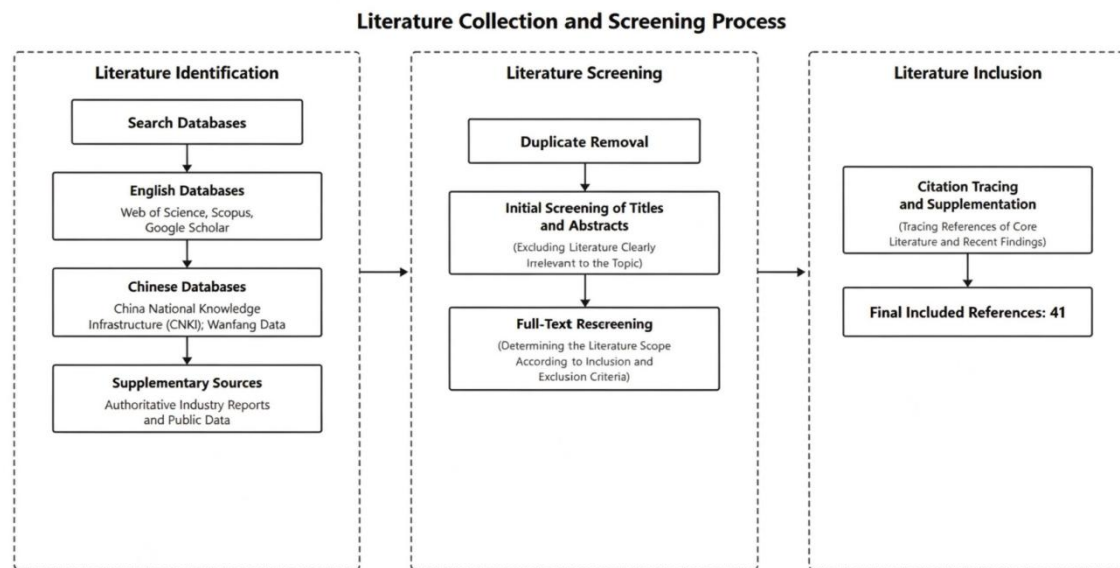
Based on the above limitations and research gaps, future research may carry out in-depth exploration in the following directions. First, empirical research on luxury brand AIGC visual marketing should be conducted. Experimental methods, questionnaire surveys, and other neuromanagement methods can be used to accurately measure changes in consumer perceptions under different degrees of AI intervention and different disclosure strategies, and to construct theoretical models with predictive power. Second, localized research in the Chinese market context should be strengthened to explore the unique response mechanisms of Chinese consumers to AI-generated luxury content, as well as the visual marketing path choices of local luxury brands in the AIGC

era. Third, cross-category comparative research should be conducted to analyze the differences in the influence of AIGC on consumer perceptions of different luxury categories, providing a basis for brands to formulate differentiated AI visual marketing strategies. Fourth, attention should be paid to new problems brought by the evolution of AIGC technology, such as AI video generation, virtual idols, AI creative directors, and other emerging forms, and their long-term influence on the visual marketing ecology of luxury goods should be examined to provide suggestions for the healthy development of the industry.

6.4 Literature Retrieval and Screening Strategy

This paper uses a method combining systematic retrieval and citation tracing to collect and analyze literature. The retrieval work was completed in September 2026. (The literature collection and screening process is shown in Figure 2)

Figure 2: Literature collection and screening process



(1) Retrieval themes and keywords. Around the core theme of “AIGC and consumer perception in luxury brand visual marketing,” the retrieval terms were divided into three groups: content-subject terms (PGC, UGC, professionally generated content, user-generated content), technology terms (AIGC, generative artificial intelligence, Generative AI, AI-generated content), and research-object terms (luxury brands, luxury marketing, visual marketing, consumer perception, brand authenticity). Multiple keyword combinations such as “luxury goods × AIGC × visual marketing / consumer perception” were used for retrieval in both Chinese and English.

(2) Retrieval databases. English literature was mainly retrieved from Web of Science, Scopus, and Google Scholar. Chinese literature was mainly retrieved from China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) and Wanfang Data. Authoritative industry reports and public data, such as PwC’s global luxury insights report, were also used to support the discussion of industry practice.

(3) Inclusion and exclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria were as follows: (1) directly related to luxury brand visual marketing, PGC or UGC, AIGC intervention, and consumer perception, including perceived luxury, perceived craftsmanship, perceived trust, and brand authenticity; (2) sources were academic journals, dissertations, conference papers, academic monographs, or authoritative research reports; and (3) Chinese or English literature. Exclusion criteria were as follows: (1) general AIGC/AI technical research unrelated to the luxury context; (2) purely technical development literature not involving consumer perception or brand communication; and (3) non-academic online materials with unclear sources. Such materials were used only as industry data with separate labels and were not counted as academic literature.

(4) Screening and supplementation. After duplicate removal, the initially retrieved literature was first screened according to titles and abstracts to exclude obviously irrelevant items. Full-text reading was then

conducted for further screening, and the literature scope was determined according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Finally, citation tracing was carried out through the reference lists of core literature to supplement foundational literature, such as Zeithaml, 1988; Kapferer & Bastien, 2009; and Spence, 1973, and to track the latest related achievements published in 2025-2026. A total of 41 references were finally included, covering basic theory and frontier research from 1973 to 2026. Brand cases, platform data, and industry reports cited in the industry practice section were used as “industry-caliber” evidence and academic literature in a layered manner and were labeled separately.

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Conflicts of Interest

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