

Management for Professionals

Diana Derval

# Designing Luxury Brands

The Art and Science of Creating  
Game-Changers

*Second Edition*



Springer

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# Management for Professionals

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“Once again, I am very impressed with Diana Derval’s new book. Through lively case studies, powerful marketing tools, and inspiring neuroscientific findings, she manages to explain the whys behind luxury mysteries. Designing luxury brands is a must read for both industry leaders and learners.”

—**Philip Kotler**, *S. C. Johnson & Son Professor of International Marketing, Kellogg School of Management*

“As a fashion learner, I’ve already read a lot of books on fashion and luxury, but none of them are as vivid and detailed as this one, which uses many business cases and, at the same time, scientific methods to interpret the status quo and the development of luxury brands. It is an excellent book on luxury.”

—**Lena Sun**, *Innovation Team, H&M*

“As a commercial trainer for a high-end home entertainment brand, I need to understand customers’ lifestyle and purchasing behavior. This book from Prof. Diana Derval helped me to see what customers see, and understand the unique selling point of the brand I am working for. I need now to deliver this knowledge to our sales ambassadors!”

—**Zoe He**, *Commercial Trainer, Bang & Olufsen*

“A unique and inspiring approach to the Luxury Marketing world. By giving readers concrete explanations, real-life examples, and presenting them with renowned personalities, this book makes them feel closer to the industry, not to say entirely part of it.”

—**Anthony Guérin**, *Press Public Relations, Lanvin*

“Create, revamp, and develop luxury brands learning from the best like Chanel and BMW. The book is packed with vivid cases and powerful tools—worth referring to.”

—**Jadey Chen**, *Senior Manager, Christian Dior Couture*

“Diana Derval is bringing a fresh and bold qualitative perspective on luxury brand adaptation through local sensorial profiling that will make all marketers out there question their thinking process!”

—**Jean-Baptiste Andreani**, *Managing Director, IFA Paris International Fashion Academy*

“Diana Derval’s sharp analysis and relevant case studies make total sense in the world of business and particularly luxury: understanding, shaking, amazing in order to create and grow. In one word, this book is inspiring.”

—**Géraldine Michel**, *Marketing and Branding Professor, Sorbonne Business School Paris*

“All brands are looking for the answer on how to guarantee a sustainable development in the luxury market. Here Prof. Diana makes her appearance. First, she is elegant, perhaps because she is French, second, her experience of studying at ESSEC makes her have special views on luxury goods. In this book, she always manages to discover the secret weapon behind the marketing triumph of each brand. This book on luxury marketing doesn’t instill the readers with marketing tools like other

books. It provides the results of Prof. Diana's research on physiology and behavior, also some successful cases to inspire readers, so that they can unlock for themselves the mystery of the luxury market. Whether you are the elite of this industry or a freshman with interests in luxury, you will gain a lot with this book."

—**Tyki** *International Economy and Trade student, Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications*

"Prof. Derval applies marketing, psychology, brand management, and surprisingly, biology. She seeks the real answers, starting from human research. Meanwhile, she also develops some tools that make me find everything fresh and new. It's a huge innovation and a major breakthrough in the industry. It's the key that can help enter the customers' hearts."

—**Fuli Zhang**, *CEO of Aiken Jeans*

"Professor Derval's analysis of the luxury marketing and consumer types is very sharp. This book will really help people understand what kind of person will consume what kind of luxury."

—**Tony Ding**, *Grand Club Lounge Manager, Grand Hyatt*

"Author Diana tells a secret—why do people think that luxury items are the most precious masterpieces? Taking the exquisite angle of design, style, color, and other relevant persona preferences, she provides the most powerful explanation on several luxury brands' successes."

—**Jack Guo**, *Director, Innovation Management Training Center of College of Continuing Studies, Shanghai Jiaotong University*

*To Johan, my missing link*



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## Foreword

Luxury is almost a concept as old as humanity. Since the first sedentary societies settled and were starting to organize themselves, all had a power scheme that implied a few people could rule the others. The rulers of course had possessions and a lifestyle of their own.

Fast forward and the concept of Luxury is by and large the same: not for everyone. With the evolution of our societies and living standards, it has become something much broader, and Luxury is one of the most used—and also probably the most misused—words of the last decade. Therefore, it somehow lost its meaningfulness.

As the Vice President of the Fondation Haute Horlogerie—a not-for-profit established in 2005 by Audemars Piguet, Girard-Perregaux, and the Richemont Group—my mission is to contribute to the international influence of watchmaking culture. I would probably best describe Luxury as an object—or an experience—that is mostly useless, yet rewarding, comforting, and exclusive. Sometimes different too, as the differentiation factor is an element of exclusivity.

Sometimes, this exclusivity factor can be achieved through rarity (real or not), sometimes through innovation, or even disruption. Anticipating trends, having a vision, knowing what your customer will want in the future.

Exclusivity can also be achieved through more subtle factors, involving not only raw desirability for the product or experience in question, but also by taking customers through a sensory journey. Because when we are talking about luxury, we are not merely talking about benefits and value for money.

We are talking about subtlety, desirability involving all the five human senses: Sight, Sound, Smell, Taste, and Touch.

Some brands have lately achieved to differentiate themselves through one or more senses so that the perception of their offering is enhanced in a more subtle way.

As perception is reality, as we are living in a world increasingly complex where information is everywhere, solicitations endless and marketing overly present, I firmly believe that understanding how our senses are part of our decision process when buying luxury and recognizing the importance of perception will be key for luxury brands in the future.

In this book, Prof. Diana Derval is taking us on a sensory journey, explaining the mechanisms of the physiology of luxury and detailing how some big players of the luxury scenes have been game-changers.

I wish you an enlightening read!

Fondation Haute Horlogerie  
Geneva, Switzerland

Pascal Ravessoud

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## Preface

Why do some people buy a golden iPhone or Louboutin shoes? Why do some people “need” the latest LV bag or Hermès belt? What makes them spend over budget on luxury cars or cosmetics? In this book, you will find all the answers and finally understand what makes luxury brands so fascinating and successful. Throughout the chapters, we will explore the arcana of luxury—a world packed with competition, status-seeking, envy, and an incredible drive—and visualize how our body and brain is programmed (or not) to crave luxury products. The art and science of creating game-changers will be decoded through the analysis of 40+ case studies featuring leading but also emerging luxury brands like Tesla, Hermès, Tiffany & Co., JACQUEMUS, Louboutin, Baccarat, Swarovski, Liliun, Jaeger-LeCoultre, The KaDeWe Group, Raffles Dubai, MUD Jeans, Taylor Swift, Beyoncé, Maxim's, DS Automobiles, BMW, Stella McCartney, Harley Davidson, Michael Kors, Chanel, Carl Zeiss, Ermenegildo Zegna, ÕURA ring, Jaguar, FENG J, Apple iPhone, Lancôme, Kate Spade, Le Printemps, Dyson, Rémy Cointreau, NEOM, Moutai, Flower by Kenzo, Y3, Porsche, L'Oréal, NASA, Roberto Cavalli, Montblanc, and Moncler, from Paris to Dubai, and we turned all this knowledge into 10+ powerful marketing frameworks to help you design, revamp, or expand your own luxury brand, learning from the best.

The book also reveals and explains the science behind 20+ incredible facts about luxury shoppers:

1. The need for luxury is physiological
2. The main competitor of Porsche is not a car
3. Louboutin shoes are attractive because of light polarization
4. Women buy the latest luxury bags to compete with other women
5. Emirati are more into luxury than Norwegians, and it is linked to dopamine and testosterone
6. Men wear big luxury items to dissuade other men
7. Females use ornaments ranging from jewelry to surgery to show their value
8. Fundamentally, there are only three types of luxury shoppers, and we can point them out on a map
9. Wearing gold makes people more attractive as it mimicks carotenoid, a biomarker of health
10. The sense of motion is driving the luxury industry

11. The microbiome has an influence on human behavior and preferences, including risk-taking patterns
12. Chanel N°5 is a fragrance for competitive and powerful women, the only ones who can stand its strong chemical scent
13. Chocolate contains three addictive components making it an ideal luxury gift
14. Luxury shoppers are sensitive to magnetic fields
15. Cosmetics preferences are dictated by the level of Beauty OCD
16. Tiffany & Co. turns blue into gold
17. People buy Tesla because it is made of SpaceX elements, and conquering Mars is now the ultimate way to expanding one's territory quest
18. Fashion victims love black and white with a pop of color, and it is linked to their preference for contrast over colors
19. Chinese billionaires are more likely to be born in the Year of the Rabbit, the Dragon, and the Snake
20. Space travel and space travel retail is the future of luxury
21. Bedazzling genAI luxury campaigns still require a human artistic touch
22. eVTOLs might make air travel sustainable, and respectable again
23. Luxury is all about superpowers like mind reading, influencing genes, and defying the elements

In this second edition, we explore new luxury territories, from beauty OCD to space travel, and we decipher luxury customers' aspirations and aesthetics to craft impactful customer experiences and game-changers from Riyadh to Mumbai.

In Chap. 1, we discover, through the iPhone and Jaeger-LeCoultre cases, how reading the mind of luxury shoppers is key, and how hormones, male-to-male competition, and the sense of vibration have an impact on the whole industry. We will also see how to attract local and global luxury shoppers with KaDeWe.

In Chap. 2, we find out, through the Tesla and the Zegna cases, that luxury is a vibrating industry. We also discuss how to profile luxury shoppers using an enriched Persona framework and analyze the success stories of BMW and Harley in emerging markets.

In Chap. 3, we investigate the neuroscience behind status-seeking, and the different reactions toward luxury from one country to another. With the Superyacht, the ŌURA ring, and the Liliium eVTOL cases, we see how to apply this knowledge to identify profitable markets.

In Chap. 4, we investigate the luxury lifestyle and the sense of motion via the Moncler, the Moutai, and the Stella McCartney cases. Taking the Dyson example, we apply the Benefits framework to predict and address luxury shoppers' most hidden demands.

In Chap. 5, with the designer bag case, we dig into the physiology of female-to-female competition and explain why some luxury products are must-haves worth over-budget spending. We discuss the notion of sustainable luxury with the story of MUD Jeans and see how JACQUEMUS created game-changing collections and campaigns.

In Chap. 6, with the Porsche and Nespresso cases, we spot the true competitors and best place to be in the luxury market using the Positioning map. We rediscover the sense of colors and apply the findings with the Carl Zeiss Vision Care case.

In Chap. 7, inspired by the Swarovski and the FENG J cases, we analyze the role of shiny and artistry in hard luxury. We reflect upon the mechanisms of mate selection and the epigenetics of success.

In Chap. 8, we unveil the magnetic sense and its influence on luxury purchases, illustrated by the Christian Louboutin, Tiffany, and L'Oréal cases. With Michael Kors, we learn how to design unique and appealing luxury items using the Brands codes and consider affordable as well as secondhand luxury.

In Chap. 9, we address with Baccarat the challenges associated with expanding a luxury brand internationally and grasp the physiological importance of territory in luxury. We explore with NASA the opportunities offered by space travel.

In Chap. 10, we explore the sense of time, looking at DS Automobiles and Roberto Cavalli success stories. In the Jaguar case, we use the Wait Marketing 6Ms to engage luxury shoppers at the right moment, at the right place.

In Chap. 11, we study with Gucci how to turn trends into classics. We observe how luxury brands make the most of the human biochemical urge to imitate successful individuals and delve into the Taylor Swift perfume case.

In Chap. 12, we dissect the sense of smell and see how brands like Chanel and Maxim's de Paris involve celebrities and KOLs. With the Montblanc case, we use the Influencers' map to find the right brand ambassadors.



**Fig. 1** Ads (Illustration by The Square Comics, <http://instagram.com/thesquarecomics>, courtesy of The Square Comics)

After reading this book, you will be able to:

- Profile and deeply connect with luxury shoppers
- Predict and address luxury customers' most hidden demands
- Spot the true competitors and the right positioning
- Design unique and appealing luxury products and experiences
- Clarify the messaging and engage luxury shoppers at the right moment
- Find the right brand ambassadors and create classics
- Understand the deep needs and create game-changers

DervalResearch  
Tallinn, Estonia

Diana Derval

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## About the Author



Diana Derval, PhD, EMBA, Chair and Chief Investigator of DervalResearch (a certified B Corp), is a pioneer in decoding human behavior and preferences with biosciences. Member of the Society for Behavioral Neuroendocrinology, and Jury for the CES Asia Innovation Awards, Diana is the patented inventor of the Hormonal Quotient® (HQ) nominated for the Edison Awards, and the creator of the Derval Color Test® taken by 30+ million people around the world. Harvard Business Review contributor, finalist of the Berry-AMA Prize for most innovative marketing book with “The Right Sensory Mix,” recommended by Philip Kotler,

Diana turns fascinating neuroscientific breakthroughs into powerful business frameworks and helped Fortune 500 firms including LVMH, Richemont, Sofitel, and L’Oréal accelerate their development with a focus on planet and people-friendly products and experiences. Multiplying discoveries, along the way, on the variations in sensory perception among individuals and populations, Diana continuously uses the findings to advance research for a better immune system, hormonal balance, and microbiome. The clinical research Diana initiated together with NIH and OLVG Hospital on the link between taste buds and diabetes opened the way to new prevention roads to combat chronic diseases. Clinical Professor at Donghua University in Shanghai, Diana Derval is regularly featured in the media, conferences (TEDx Talks, IFA, CES), and corporate seminars and is known for delivering memorable MasterClasses even virtually—partly because of the cool purple hat and great sense of humor. Diana’s favorite topics are Senses and Sensors, Hormones and Preferences, Microbiome and Behavior, and anything that touches on Innovation.



You are welcome to connect via LinkedIn (by scanning the QR code) or by email to [diana@dervalresearch.com](mailto:diana@dervalresearch.com)

## About DervalResearch

DervalResearch is a pioneering research firm using biosciences to decode human behavior and preferences. People are rational, they just have a very different perception. Personas' decisions seem to just come down to culture and emotions but are in fact deeply rooted in their very own physiology, microbiome, sensory perception, and hormonal makeup and can therefore be anticipated and better targeted. With non-invasive yet powerful predictive tools like the Hormonal Quotient® (HQ), Sensory GeoMaps®, or the Derval Color Test®, our neurodiverse team of scientists and designers help organizations seize business opportunities, increase their innovation hit rate, and develop planet and people-friendly experiences from Paris to Shanghai. DervalResearch is a Certified B Corp, meeting high standards of verified social and environmental performance, accountability, and transparency.

You will find more information at <https://www.dervalresearch.com>





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## Acknowledgments

I have to start with un grand merci to Pascal Ravessoud, Vice President of the Fondation Haute Horlogerie, for writing such a magnificent foreword to the book.

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This book was inspired by my dearest luxury and MBA students from ESSEC, Fudan, IFA, HEC, Sorbonne Business School, MIT, Donghua, Jiao tong, Tsinghua, GEM, IESEG, ICN, and INSEEC and by my academic colleagues, in particular Jean-Baptiste Andreani, who initiated me to fashion marketing. Thank you all for your comments and ideas. I also include members and teams from the B Corp community, NMSBA, ESOMAR, AES, EPWN, Estonian e-Residency, ESSEC Alumni, ISM Alumni, CKGSB Knowledge Series, Harvard Business Review France, Harvard Business Review Arabia, and Jing Daily for their awesome support and input.

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