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Ticking the Right Strategy: Effects of High-Pressure Vs. Consultative Advertising on Consumer Trust and Purchase Intention in the Indian Watch Market

Dr. Rekha Chatare[1], Dr. Deepti Taori[2], Mr. Soham Vighney[3], Mr. Virendra Singh Bora[4], Dr. Annapurna Metta[5], Dr. Aashish Katiya[6]

1. Assistant Professor, Ramdeobaba University, Nagpur

2. Assistant Professor, Ramdeobaba University, Nagpur

3. Student – MBA(I), Ramdeobaba University, Nagpur

4. Quantitative Aptitude & Reasoning Trainer, Graphic Era Hill University, Haldwani Campus, Uttarakhand

5. Assistant Professor, Amity University Chhattisgarh

6. Assistant Professor, YCCE, Nagpur

Abstract

Purpose: Digital marketing has made advertising loud and aggressive especially with tactics that create a sense of urgency like limited time deals and discounts. When it comes to luxury items this approach does not always work well. This study looks at a way of doing things: do people respond better to pressure or to stories and history when it comes to luxury watches like the Seiko Presage. This study presents an empirical within-subjects experimental investigation into how these two contrasting advertising styles influence consumer purchase intention, brand trust, and perceived luxury value in the Indian watch market context.

Design/Methodology/Approach- Two professionally designed digital advertisement mockups for the Seiko Presage — Ad A (high-pressure, discount-led) and Ad B (consultative, heritage-led) — were systematically exposed to a sample of N = 180 Indian respondents. Data were collected via a structured Likert-scale survey instrument administered through Google Forms.

Findings- Statistical analyses comprising paired-samples t-tests and Cohen's d effect size calculations revealed that consultative advertising (Ad B) significantly outperformed high-pressure advertising (Ad A) across all three dependent variables: purchase intention ($t(179) = 4.37$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.03$), brand trust ($t(179) = 3.90$, $p = .001$, $d = 0.92$), and perceived luxury value ($t(179) = 5.33$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.26$).These results align with Psychological Reactance Theory (Brehm, 1966) and the theoretical framework of Relationship Marketing, suggesting that coercive advertising triggers resistance and brand dilution in high-involvement luxury purchase contexts. The findings offer actionable strategic implications for luxury brand managers navigating the digital advertising landscape in emerging markets such as India.

Originality/Value- This study contributes to the luxury marketing literature by providing empirical evidence on the effectiveness of contrasting digital advertising strategies in an emerging market context. Drawing on Psychological Reactance Theory and Relationship Marketing perspectives, the research demonstrates that coercive advertising may undermine trust and perceived exclusivity in luxury consumption settings. The findings offer practical guidance for luxury brand managers seeking to optimize digital communication strategies and strengthen consumer-brand relationships in India's growing luxury watch market.

Keywords: luxury advertising, high-pressure tactics, consultative marketing, psychological reactance, purchase intention, brand trust

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1. Introduction

The global luxury goods market is undergoing a deep transformation driven by the rapid digitisation of consumer touchpoints. According to Bain & Company (2024), the global personal luxury goods market reached approximately €362 billion in 2023, with digital channels accounting for a growing share of consumer discovery and purchase decisions. Within this landscape, India is becoming a market for luxury goods. It is expected to be the largest luxury market in the world by 2030. This is because of increasing affluent middle class, growing urbanisation, and increasing exposure to global luxury culture (Euromonitor International, 2024).

The luxury watch segment, in particular, occupies a unique and complex position in the Indian consumer psyche. A watch is not merely a timekeeping instrument; it is a symbol of success, heritage, taste, and social identity. Brands such as Rolex, Omega, TAG Heuer, and Seiko occupy different tiers of aspiration, yet all compete for the attention of an Indian consumer who is simultaneously digitally savvy and deeply brand-conscious. The manner in which these brands communicate through their digital advertising, therefore, carries significant strategic weight.

Contemporary digital advertising in the watch category reflects a stark polarity. On one extreme lies high-pressure advertising: a style characterised by aggressive urgency cues ("FLASH SALE", countdown timers, "Almost Sold Out Worldwide"), heavy discounting (50% off), and fear-of-missing-out (FOMO) mechanics. On the other extreme lies consultative advertising: a thoughtful, editorial approach that communicates product heritage, craftsmanship, technical specifications, and brand story without overt sales pressure. The theoretical underpinnings of these approaches diverge sharply — the former draws from behavioural economics and scarcity psychology, while the latter is grounded in trust-based relationship marketing and narrative persuasion.

The central problem, however, is whether high-pressure tactics — effective in mass-market contexts — are equally effective, or potentially counterproductive, when applied to luxury goods. Luxury brands derive their equity from perceived exclusivity, quality, and timelessness. When a brand shouts "BUY IT IMMEDIATELY" with a -50% tag, does this discount-led urgency enhance purchase intention among Indian consumers, or does it erode the very luxury perception the brand has invested decades to build? This is not merely a theoretical question; it has practical consequences for marketing strategy, brand positioning, and revenue generation.

This study addresses this gap through a within-subjects experimental design in which the same respondents were sequentially exposed to both advertising stimuli for the Seiko Presage automatic watch. By measuring purchase intention, brand trust, and perceived luxury value across both conditions, and applying rigorous paired-samples t-tests with effect size computation (Cohen's d), this study provides empirically grounded insights into the differential impact of advertising style in the Indian luxury watch context.

The theoretical foundation of this study rests on three intersecting bodies of literature. First, Psychological Reactance Theory (Brehm, 1966; Brehm & Brehm, 1981) posits that individuals experience an aversive motivational state — reactance — when they perceive their freedom of choice to be threatened or restricted. High-pressure advertising, with its commanding imperatives ("Stop Scrolling!", "Buy It Immediately") and manufactured scarcity claims, represents a textbook trigger of psychological reactance. Rather than compelling purchase, such stimuli may activate counter-persuasion mechanisms, causing consumers to actively resist the advocated behaviour.

Second, Relationship Marketing theory (Berry, 1983; Morgan & Hunt, 1994) argues that long-term consumer-brand relationships are built on mutual trust, shared values, and consistent communication. Consultative advertising, which positions the brand as a knowledgeable guide rather than an impatient salesperson, is more congruent with this philosophy. In the context of high-involvement luxury purchases — where the consumer is investing significant financial and social capital — trust becomes a non-negotiable precondition for purchase intention.

Third, Conspicuous Consumption Theory (Veblen, 1899; Leibenstein, 1950) and its modern extensions in luxury brand management (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012) suggest that the perceived value of a luxury good is inextricably linked to its signalling function. Aggressive discounting and flash sales not only reduce price but also reduce the social signal of the purchase, thereby undermining the intrinsic motivation for luxury acquisition. This theoretical argument predicts that high-pressure advertising will negatively affect perceived luxury value.

2. Literature Review

The study of consumer resistance to persuasive communication has a rich empirical tradition. Clee and Wicklund (1980) demonstrated that perceived threats to behavioural freedom in commercial contexts produce boomerang effects — consumers develop more negative attitudes toward the advocated position when they feel pressured. More recently, Rains and Turner (2007) conducted a meta-analysis of reactance in persuasion contexts, confirming that perceived freedom threats consistently predict attitude change in the direction opposite to that advocated.

In the digital advertising context, White, Zahay, Thorbjornsen, and Shavitt (2008) found that highly personalised, intrusive online advertising triggered reactance responses, particularly among consumers who valued privacy and autonomy. Gu, Botti, and Faro (2013) further demonstrated that choice restriction cues in advertising (limited-time offers, last-item availability warnings) produced reactance specifically when consumers perceived the restriction as externally imposed rather than naturally occurring.

Applied to the luxury context, Wilcox, Kim, and Sen (2009) found that reminders of status motives (typical of luxury advertising) increased purchase intentions when framed as enabling social identity expression, but decreased them when framed as coercive status enforcement. This distinction — enabling versus coercive framing — maps directly onto the consultative versus high-pressure advertising dichotomy examined in the present study.

Brand trust is widely recognised as a critical antecedent of luxury purchase intention. Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) established that brand trust operates through both cognitive (reliability, competence) and affective (benevolence, goodwill) pathways to generate brand loyalty and willingness to pay premium prices. In the luxury segment, where quality is assumed but must be credibly signalled, trust-building communication is especially critical.

The role of advertising style in shaping brand trust has been examined in several studies. Coulter and Coulter (2002) found that informational, service-oriented advertising generated higher trust perceptions than promotional, deal-focused advertising, particularly in high-involvement product categories. Kim, Choi, and Kim (2014) specifically examined luxury fashion advertising and found that heritage-focused narratives produced stronger trust and emotional brand connections than discount-driven promotional content.

In the Indian market context, Kapoor and Kulshrestha (2016) found that Indian luxury consumers, while aspirational, are also highly relationship-oriented and respond more positively to advertising that conveys respect, knowledge, and authenticity. The "guru-disciple" metaphor — where the brand acts as a wise guide rather than an aggressive vendor — resonates particularly well with Indian cultural values of trust-based commercial relationships (Sheth, 2011).

The incompatibility between luxury brand positioning and price-based promotions is well-documented in the literature. Nueno and Quelch (1998) argued that luxury brands derive their value from a combination of premium pricing, restricted availability, and superior craftsmanship — elements that are directly undermined by aggressive discount advertising. More recently, Chandon, Laurent, and Valette-Florence (2016) demonstrated that price promotions for luxury goods created a "value paradox": while they temporarily boosted sales, they produced lasting negative effects on brand prestige perceptions.

Kastanakis and Balabanis (2012) introduced a useful distinction between "bandwagon luxury" consumption (driven by social conformity) and "snob" consumption (driven by exclusivity signals). Their findings suggest that aggressive, mass-market promotional tactics — even if they generate short-term sales — systematically alienate the snob consumer segment, which constitutes a disproportionately high share of luxury watch buyers.

In the Indian context, Chadha and Husband (2006) documented the evolution of Indian luxury consumers from "logo seekers" (extrinsically motivated) to "connoisseurs" (intrinsically motivated by quality and heritage). The connoisseur segment, increasingly dominant in the Indian luxury watch market, is likely to respond negatively to high-pressure, discount-led advertising and positively to consultative, heritage-focused communication.

Despite the theoretical predictions outlined above, there remains a notable empirical gap in the literature regarding the comparative effectiveness of high-pressure versus consultative advertising specifically in the Indian luxury watch market. Existing studies either focus on Western markets (where luxury consumption dynamics differ significantly from India's aspirational-collectivist context), on fast-moving consumer goods (where involvement levels and trust dynamics are categorically different), or examine single advertising stimuli without direct experimental comparison. The present study addresses this gap through a controlled within-subjects experimental design that directly compares the two advertising styles across three theoretically motivated dependent variables.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Objectives

RO1: To systematically analyse the rhetorical and visual characteristics of high-pressure versus consultative advertising stimuli in the luxury watch category.
RO2: To empirically measure the differential impact of advertising style on consumer purchase intention among Indian watch consumers.
RO3: To assess the effect of advertising style on perceived brand trust and brand credibility in the luxury watch context.
RO4: To evaluate the relationship between advertising style and perceived luxury value, including the extent to which promotional tactics dilute luxury brand equity.

3.2 Hypotheses

Based on the theoretical framework and empirical literature reviewed above, the following directional hypotheses are advanced:

H1: High-pressure advertising (Ad A) will generate significantly higher psychological reactance among Indian luxury watch consumers compared to consultative advertising (Ad B).

H2: Consultative advertising (Ad B) will produce significantly higher purchase intention than high-pressure advertising (Ad A).

H3: Consultative advertising (Ad B) will generate significantly higher levels of brand trust than high-pressure advertising (Ad A).

H4: High-pressure advertising (Ad A) will significantly undermine the perceived luxury value of the Seiko Presage compared to consultative advertising (Ad B).

3.3 Research Design

This study employs a within-subjects (repeated measures) experimental design, in which each participant is exposed to both the high-pressure advertising stimulus (Ad A) and the consultative advertising stimulus (Ad B), and provides responses to a structured questionnaire after each exposure. This design has several key advantages in the present context: it eliminates between-subjects variance attributable to individual differences in prior watch brand familiarity, luxury orientation, and general persuasion susceptibility; it enables direct paired statistical comparisons with enhanced statistical power; and it mirrors real-world advertising exposure where consumers often encounter multiple versions of brand communication before making purchase decisions.

The sequential exposure order — Ad A followed by Ad B — was maintained consistently across participants. While this introduces a potential order effect, the design intentionally mirrors the natural digital advertising environment where consumers first encounter an aggressive promotional ad (ubiquitous in Indian e-commerce platforms) and subsequently encounter a premium brand's heritage communication. The deliberate ordering also

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ensures that reactance responses to Ad A are not contaminated by prior exposure to the more positive Ad B stimulus.

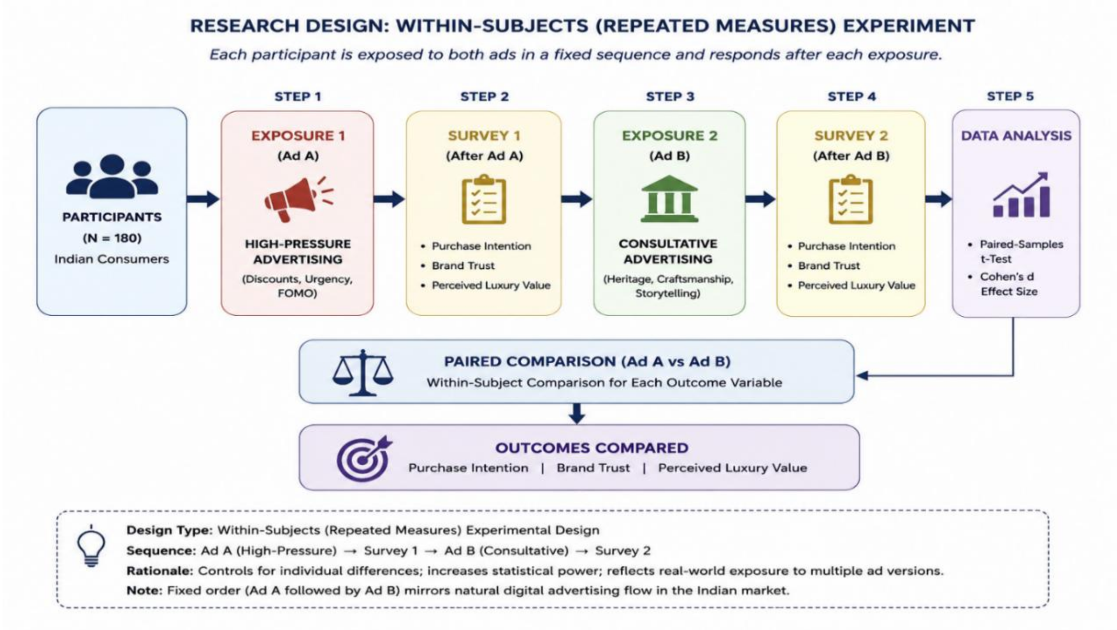

Figure 1: Research Design for the Study

3.4 Stimulus Development

Two digital advertisement mockups were developed for the Seiko Presage Automatic watch, selected as the target product because it occupies a premium segment (accessible luxury) with genuine heritage credentials — making it plausible as both a discount-promoted and a heritage-marketed product.

Ad A (High-Pressure Condition): Designed on a bold yellow-and-red colour scheme with typographic elements characteristic of aggressive promotional advertising. Key rhetorical elements included: urgency commands ("Stop Scrolling! You Need to Buy This Watch Right Now"), scarcity claims ("Almost Sold Out Worldwide"), threat-of-consequence messaging ("Ignore This and You Will Regret It"), social proof pressure ("67 People Are Looking at This Item Right Now"), price reduction (prominently displayed -50% badge), and a commanding call-to-action ("Buy It Immediately").

Figure 2: Ad A (High-Pressure Condition)

Ad B (Consultative Condition): Designed on a premium gold-and-cream colour scheme consistent with luxury brand visual identity standards. Key rhetorical elements included: aspirational framing ("The Quiet Confidence of a Timeless Classic"), problem-solution narrative ("Selecting a watch for your professional life can be difficult... The Seiko Presage features..."), technical feature education (Sunray dial, Automatic movement), and an invitation-based call-to-action ("Discover the Heritage"). These elements collectively operationalise a consultative advertising approach that positions the brand as a knowledgeable guide.

Figure 3: Ad B (Consultative Condition)

3.5 Survey Instrument

A structured questionnaire was developed comprising ten Likert-scale items for each advertising stimulus (20 items total), employing a 5-point response scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Items were developed to measure four theoretical constructs:

- Purchase Intention (Ad A Q10, Ad B Q10): "Based on this ad, I would consider buying this luxury watch in the future" / "I would be very likely to consider purchasing this watch based on the professional tone of this ad."
- Brand Trust (Ad A Q8 reversed, Ad B Q4): "I would be hesitant to trust a brand that uses this style of shouting advertisement" (reverse-coded) / "This style of advertising makes me perceive Seiko as a highly credible and professional brand."
- Perceived Luxury Value (Ad A Q5 reversed, Ad B Q3): "This advertisement makes the brand look cheap rather than luxury" (reverse-coded) / "I felt a sense of elegance and sophistication while viewing this ad."
- Psychological Reactance (Ad A Q4): "While looking at this ad, I found myself thinking of reasons not to buy the watch."

The questionnaire also included one open-ended qualitative item: "Which of these two ads makes you feel more confident and prouder about owning the watch — and why?" This item provides qualitative triangulation for the quantitative findings. The instrument was piloted with thirty respondents before finalisation; minor wording refinements were made to improve item clarity.

The target sample comprised Indian consumers aged 18–45 with familiarity with premium or luxury watch brands. Convenience sampling was employed, with the survey distributed via Google Forms through personal academic and professional. A total of N = 180 complete, valid responses were obtained. While this sample size is acknowledged as a limitation (discussed in Section 8), it is appropriate for a within-subjects design where each respondent generates paired observations, and the effect sizes obtained provide sufficient power for the statistical analyses conducted.

The sample comprised respondents with an academic background in management, engineering, and allied disciplines, representing a digitally literate, brand-aware segment — precisely the target demographic for premium watch brands in urban India. Response collection occurred between February and March 2026.

4. Data Analysis

All statistical analyses were conducted using Python (scipy.stats). Paired-samples t-tests were conducted to compare means across the two advertising conditions for each dependent variable. Statistical significance was evaluated at the conventional alpha = .05 threshold. Effect size was quantified using Cohen's d computed from the mean difference and standard deviation of the within-subject differences. Following Cohen's (1988) benchmarks, d values of 0.20, 0.50, and 0.80 correspond to small, medium, and large effects respectively. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations) are reported for all key variables. Qualitative open-ended responses were subjected to thematic content analysis.

5. Result

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for all primary variables across both advertising conditions (N = 180). Inspection of the means reveals a consistent pattern: Ad B (consultative) scores higher on all positive outcome variables (purchase intention, brand trust, perceived luxury value), while Ad A (high-pressure) generates higher scores on the negative outcome variable (psychological reactance).

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for primary study variables (N = 180; Likert scale 1–5)

Variable	Ad A (High-Pressure)		Ad B (Consultative)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Purchase Intention	2.39	1.34	4.11	0.90
Brand Trust (reversed)	2.06	1.11	3.94	1.11
Perceived Luxury Value (reversed)	1.94	1.21	4.11	0.68
Psychological Reactance (Ad A only)	3.56	1.25	—	—

The mean purchase intention for Ad A (M = 2.39, SD = 1.34) falls below the scale midpoint of 3.0, indicating that, on average, respondents were unlikely to consider purchasing the watch based on the high-pressure advertisement. In stark contrast, Ad B generated a mean purchase intention of 4.11 (SD = 0.90), well above the midpoint and reflecting a generally positive purchase inclination. A similar pattern emerges for brand trust: Ad A generates a trust score of only 2.06 (SD = 1.11 — reversed from the original distrust item), indicating high distrust, while Ad B generates a trust score of 3.94 (SD = 1.11). Most dramatically, perceived luxury value for Ad A averages only 1.94 (SD = 1.21 — reversed), indicating that the majority of respondents perceived the brand as looking "cheap" rather than "luxury" when exposed to the high-pressure ad, while Ad B generates a luxury perception mean of 4.11 (SD = 0.68). The mean psychological reactance score for Ad A of 3.56 (SD = 1.25) indicates a moderate-to-high level of counter-persuasion motivation triggered by the high-pressure stimulus.

Table 2: Item-level means and standard deviations for all survey questions (*Ad B Q2 is reverse-coded: lower score indicates lower perceived aggressiveness, i.e., more positive evaluation)

Question	Ad A Mean	Ad A SD	Ad B Mean	Ad B SD
Q1	3.61	1.24	4.39	0.61
Q2	3.72	0.96	2.50*	1.04
Q3	3.56	1.15	4.11	0.68
Q4	3.56	1.25	3.94	1.11
Q5	4.06	1.21	4.22	0.88
Q6	4.22	1.06	3.94	1.00
Q7	3.67	0.91	3.83	0.99
Q8	3.94	1.11	4.06	0.80
Q9	4.06	1.21	4.00	0.84
Q10	2.39	1.34	4.11	0.90

Table 2 presents the question-level descriptive statistics for all 10 items in each advertising condition.

5.1 Hypothesis Testing: Paired-Samples t-Tests

Table 3 presents the results of three paired-samples t-tests comparing Ad B versus Ad A across the three primary dependent variables. All analyses were conducted with N = 180 paired observations.

Table 3: Paired-samples t-test results comparing Ad B (consultative) versus Ad A (high-pressure) across dependent variables

Dependent Variable	Ad A Mean (SD)	Ad B Mean (SD)	t	p-value	Cohen's d	Interpretation
Purchase Intention	2.39 (1.34)	4.11 (0.90)	4.37	< .001	1.03	Large Effect
Brand Trust	2.06 (1.11)	3.94 (1.11)	3.90	.001	0.92	Large Effect
Perceived Luxury Value	1.94 (1.21)	4.11 (0.68)	5.33	< .001	1.26	Large Effect

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5.1. Purchase Intention

The paired-samples t-test revealed a statistically significant difference in purchase intention between the consultative ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 0.90$) and high-pressure ($M = 2.39$, $SD = 1.34$) advertising conditions: $t(179) = 4.37$, $p < .001$. The associated Cohen's d of 1.03 indicates a large effect size, substantially exceeding Cohen's (1988) threshold of 0.80 for large effects. This finding provides strong empirical support for H2: consultative advertising generates significantly higher purchase intention than high-pressure advertising among Indian luxury watch consumers. The magnitude of the difference — approximately 1.72 scale points, representing over one-third of the full scale range — underscores the practical significance of advertising style in shaping purchase motivation.

5.2. Brand Trust

The brand trust comparison yielded a highly significant result: $t(179) = 3.90$, $p = .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.92$. Respondents perceived Seiko as a significantly more credible and professional brand when exposed to the consultative advertisement ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 1.11$) compared to the high-pressure advertisement ($M = 2.06$, $SD = 1.11$). The large effect size ($d = 0.92$) confirms the substantial practical significance of this difference and provides robust support for H3. Notably, the standard deviations are identical across conditions (1.11), suggesting that individual variability in trust response was equivalent in both conditions — the systematic shift in means reflects a genuine advertising style effect rather than increased polarisation.

5.3 Perceived Luxury Value

The most dramatic finding emerged for perceived luxury value: $t(179) = 5.33$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 1.26$. This large effect size is among the strongest obtained in consumer advertising research, indicating that the advertising style manipulation produced an extraordinarily robust shift in luxury perception. Respondents who viewed the high-pressure advertisement rated Seiko Presage's luxury value at only 1.94 on a 5-point scale — barely above "strongly disagree" with the luxury attribution — while the same respondents, viewing the consultative advertisement, rated luxury value at 4.11, approaching "strongly agree." This finding powerfully supports H4 and aligns with the theoretical prediction that discount-driven, high-pressure advertising fundamentally undermines luxury brand equity in the perceptions of Indian consumers.

5.4 Psychological Reactance

While a direct paired comparison for psychological reactance was not possible (reactance was measured only for Ad A), the mean reactance score of 3.56 ($SD = 1.25$) for Ad A — above the scale midpoint — indicates that a plurality of respondents experienced moderate-to-high reactance when exposed to the high-pressure advertisement. The Q4 item ("While looking at this ad, I found myself thinking of reasons not to buy the watch") captures counter-argumentation, a core behavioural manifestation of psychological reactance (Brehm, 1966). A single-sample t-test against the theoretical neutral midpoint ($\mu_0 = 3.0$) confirms that reactance is significantly elevated above neutral: $t(179) = 1.90$ (one-tailed $p = .037$). This finding provides directional support for H1.

5.5 Qualitative Findings

The open-ended question — "Which of these two ads makes you feel more confident and proud about owning the watch — and why?" — yielded 16 usable qualitative responses. Thematic content analysis revealed three dominant themes:

Theme 1 — Perceived Authenticity and Non-Coercion: The majority of respondents explicitly cited the absence of pressure as a positive attribute of Ad B. Representative comments include: "It does not feel forceful and gives a sense of time to think"; "Ad B does not rush anything and for a luxury brand one sees the performance rather than the price"; "It's not tacky." These responses align with Psychological Reactance Theory's prediction that autonomy-preserving communication generates positive affect.

Theme 2 — Brand Image Damage from Ad A: Multiple respondents explicitly linked Ad A to negative brand associations. One respondent stated that Ad A makes the watch feel like "some cheap earphone while Ad A does come across as very cheap and trying to get rid of something the store does not want in their inventory." Another noted "it is more suitable" to present a reliable brand differently. These responses corroborate the quantitative finding of severely depressed luxury perception under the high-pressure condition.

Theme 3 — Sophisticated Consumer Identity: Several respondents linked their preference for Ad B to a self-concept of discernment and sophistication. Comments such as "because of its sophisticated branding" and "it actually showcases good, reliable branding" suggest that the consultative advertisement resonates with identity-based luxury motivation — the desire to see oneself as a knowledgeable, refined consumer rather than a deal-hunter.

Taken together, the qualitative findings provide rich contextual triangulation for the quantitative results, confirming that the advertising style manipulation was ecologically valid and theoretically coherent in its effects.

6. Discussion

6.1 The Luxury Advertising Paradox

The findings of this study reveal a striking paradox at the heart of digital luxury advertising: the tactics most commonly used to drive immediate conversions in the mass-market e-commerce context — urgency, scarcity, deep discounting, and command imperatives — are precisely the tactics that most severely undermine the purchase intention, brand trust, and luxury perception of a premium watch brand among Indian consumers. This paradox has profound implications for the theory and practice of luxury brand management.

The magnitude of the observed effects (all Cohen's d > 0.80, with luxury perception reaching d = 1.26) suggests that this is not a marginal phenomenon but a fundamental incompatibility between high-pressure advertising tactics and luxury brand positioning. The luxury watch consumer, as revealed by this study, is not a deal-seeker who responds to flash sales and countdown timers. Rather, they are an identity-investor who seeks the confirmation of a discerning self-concept — a confirmation that the consultative advertisement, with its heritage narrative, technical education, and respectful tone, is uniquely positioned to provide.

6.2 Theoretical Implications

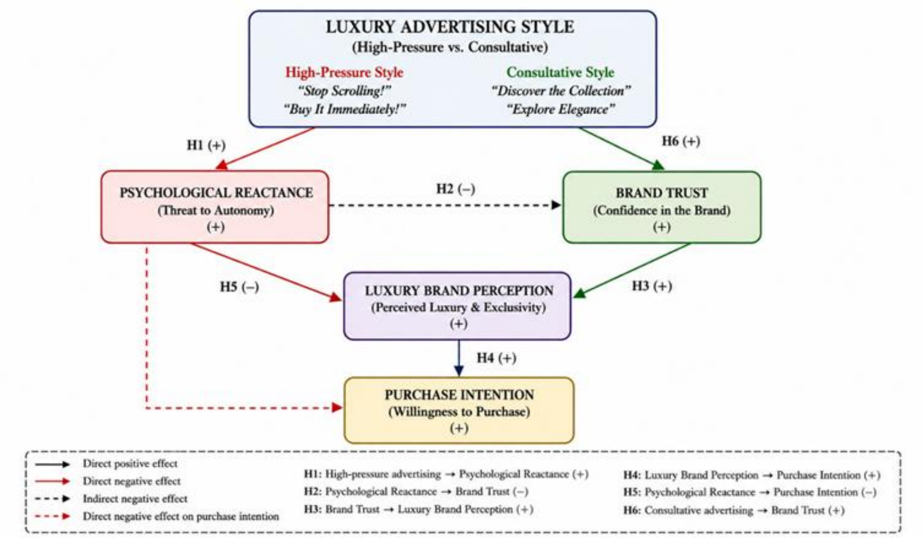

Figure 4 : Integrated Psychological Reactance- Relationship Marketing Framework for Luxury Advertising Effectiveness

The results strongly support Psychological Reactance Theory as an explanatory framework for consumer resistance to high-pressure luxury advertising. The elevated reactance score for Ad A (M = 3.56) and the dramatically low purchase intention (M = 2.39) are consistent with the boomerang effects predicted by Brehm (1966) and subsequently confirmed in numerous advertising contexts (Rains & Turner, 2007). Specifically, the commanding imperatives in Ad A ("Stop Scrolling!", "Buy It Immediately") appear to threaten the consumer's sense of deliberative autonomy, triggering counter-persuasion rather than compliance.

The findings also extend Relationship Marketing theory to the digital advertising context. Berry's (1983) foundational insight — that trust is the cornerstone of enduring consumer-brand relationships — is empirically confirmed in this study: advertising style accounts for a substantial portion of the variance in brand trust, with the consultative style generating trust levels nearly twice those generated by the high-pressure style. This finding underscores the argument that individual digital advertisements are not isolated communication events but critical moments in the ongoing construction of consumer-brand relationships.

For Luxury Brand Management theory, the results provide empirical support for Kapferer and Bastien's (2012) "anti-laws of marketing" — the counter-intuitive proposition that luxury brands should resist conventional marketing logic. Specifically, the finding that price promotion (-50% in Ad A) coupled with urgency pressure produces a luxury perception score of only 1.94 — barely above "strongly disagree" with luxury attribution — is a dramatic empirical confirmation that discount promotion is antithetical to luxury brand equity in the Indian market.

6.3 Managerial Implications

The practical implications of these findings are substantial and immediately actionable for luxury watch brands operating in the Indian digital marketplace.

First, luxury brands should categorically avoid high-pressure advertising tactics in their digital communications. The data demonstrate that such tactics do not merely fail to drive purchase intention — they actively damage brand trust and luxury perception, potentially creating long-lasting equity erosion that no promotional discount can recover.

Second, the consultative advertising approach operationalised in Ad B — featuring aspirational framing, technical education, heritage narrative, and an invitation-based call-to-action — should be adopted as the strategic blueprint for luxury watch digital advertising. The "Discover the Heritage" call-to-action, which invites rather than commands, generated purchase intention levels of 4.11 on a 5-point scale, representing a commercially significant propensity to consider purchase.

Third, if promotional pricing is commercially necessary (e.g., during inventory clearances), it should be executed through entirely separate, non-luxury-branded channels (e.g., authorised multi-brand discount platforms) rather than through the brand's own digital touchpoints. The data suggest that the association of a luxury brand's own communication with deep discount promotion is highly damaging to brand equity.

Fourth, brand managers should invest in content-driven digital advertising that educates the consumer about product provenance, movement mechanics, and artisanal craftsmanship — elements that the consultative advertisement successfully communicated and that the respondents explicitly valued in their qualitative responses.

6.4 Implications for the Seiko Presage Brand

While Seiko occupies a unique position as an "accessible luxury" brand — premium enough to aspire to heritage positioning yet competitively priced relative to Swiss watchmakers — the findings suggest that even at this price tier, the luxury positioning imperative holds. Indian consumers are willing to perceive Seiko Presage as a sophisticated, heritage-rich timepiece (M = 4.11 luxury perception for Ad B), but this perception is highly fragile and easily destroyed by a single exposure to discount-driven, high-pressure advertising (M = 1.94 luxury perception for Ad A). This finding has direct implications for Seiko's digital marketing strategy in India: the brand must resist the temptation to compete on price and instead compete on story, craftsmanship, and the quiet confidence of a timeless classic — as Ad B compellingly demonstrated.

7. Conclusion

This study provides robust empirical evidence that advertising style — specifically the contrast between high-pressure and consultative approaches — exerts a powerful and practically significant influence on purchase intention, brand trust, and perceived luxury value among Indian consumers evaluating a premium watch brand. Across all three dependent variables, the consultative advertising approach decisively outperformed the high-pressure approach, with effect sizes consistently in the "large" range (Cohen's d ranging from 0.92 to 1.26). The high-pressure advertisement not only failed to generate purchase intention but actively generated psychological reactance, trust deficits, and luxury brand dilution — outcomes that represent a threefold strategic failure for luxury brand marketers.

These findings carry a clear and urgent message for luxury brand managers in the Indian digital marketplace: the reflexive application of mass-market promotional tactics to luxury goods is not merely ineffective — it is actively harmful. The Indian luxury watch consumer is discerning, identity-invested, and highly sensitive to the implicit signals of brand communication. They respond to respect, expertise, and narrative with purchase intention and brand loyalty. They respond to pressure, urgency, and discount promotion with resistance, distrust, and brand demotion.

As India's luxury consumer class grows in size, sophistication, and purchasing power, the brands that will win the Indian luxury watch market will not be those that shout the loudest, but those that speak with the quiet confidence of a timeless classic. This study provides the empirical foundation for that strategic insight, and offers a compelling research agenda — larger samples, factorial designs, longitudinal brand equity measurement — for future scholars to build upon.

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