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## Repositioning luxury: Can a diamond brand use aggressive promotions without losing prestige? Case study: Saliba Jewelry's 50% sale on diamonds in Dubai, 2024

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### Abstract

Luxury branding is traditionally associated with exclusivity, heritage, and status, with high-end products, particularly diamond jewelry, often shielded from aggressive promotions that might undermine perceived prestige. This study examines Saliba Jewellery, a Lebanese luxury jeweler with a prominent Dubai Mall branch, which offered a 50% discount on its diamond collection in 2024. The research investigates whether aggressive promotions can coexist with luxury branding without eroding brand equity. Using qualitative content analysis of social media posts, engagement metrics, and competitor comparisons, the study evaluates consumer perception, market segmentation, and brand positioning. The analysis is guided by Aaker's Brand Equity Theory and Self-Congruity Theory to understand the strategic and psychological implications of price reductions on aspirational buyers. Findings suggest that, when executed within a consistent brand identity and supported by premium experiences, aggressive promotions can attract new clientele and enhance engagement without significantly diminishing luxury perception, highlighting a balance between accessibility and exclusivity in contemporary luxury marketing.

**Keywords:** Luxury branding, diamond jewelry, aggressive promotions, brand equity, consumer perception

### Introduction

Luxury branding has long been linked to exclusivity, heritage, and an impression of invulnerability. High-end products, particularly diamond jewelry, have historically been shielded from aggressive marketing campaigns that might diminish their perceived worth. In this case, price is not just a commercial decision but also a symbolic representation of prestige, workmanship, and identity. However, as the market shifts and prospective buyers redefine luxury, firms are adapting accordingly.

Saliba Jewellery, a high-end Lebanese jeweler with a prominent branch in Dubai Mall, defied expectations by giving their diamond collection a 50% discount. This unusual action raises important questions about whether luxury branding and promotions may coexist without compromising prestige. Using content analysis, brand theory, and competitor comparisons, this study examines the Saliba Jewellery case to assess the strategic effects of aggressive promotions on consumer perception, market segmentation, and brand equity.

### Research Question and Hypothesis

**Research Question:** Can Saliba Jewellery maintain its luxury image while offering a 50% discount on its diamond collection?

### Hypothesis

Aggressive promotions, when executed strategically within a consistent brand identity, can expand a luxury brand's audience particularly among aspirational consumers—without significantly devaluing its prestige.

### Literature review

The literature on luxury marketing identifies a fundamental tension between exclusivity and accessibility.

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According to the "anti-laws of marketing," luxury companies must be rare, costly, and culturally new in order to continue to be attractive (Kapferer and Bastien, 2012) <sup>[5]</sup>. Price reductions are generally viewed as harming luxury equity in accordance with these standards (Dubois & Czellar, 2002) <sup>[3]</sup>.

But contemporary ideas like "masstige" and "new luxury" challenge established norms. Middle-class consumers seek luxury experiences that highlight personal achievement and social mobility, claim Silverstein and Fiske (2003) <sup>[7]</sup>. Therefore, firms can utilize value-driven promotions to reach aspirational demand as long as brand identity is preserved.

According to Amatulli and Guido (2011) <sup>[2]</sup>, the justification for luxury consumption is influenced by emotional and symbolic values just as much as by financial resources. Their laddering method illustrates how aspirational buyers those who want to be a part of a higher social class are impacted by perceived status even when the product is on sale. This proves that Saliba Jewelry's 50% off may draw in new clientele (such as Belonger+ types) without compromising the brand's luxurious image.

To further contextualize Saliba Jewelry's campaign, Ko, Costello, and Taylor (2019) <sup>[6]</sup> provide a comprehensive definition of luxury brands that takes into account quality, tradition, symbolic significance, and customer experience. Their review of the literature highlights the importance of brand positioning and promotional strategy alignment. Even though mass-market targeting is usually linked to significant price reductions, Ko *et al.* note that in certain cultural contexts, temporary price adjustments may draw in aspirational clients without harming a company's reputation over time especially if the premium experience is preserved. Finally, studies show that internet engagement is increasingly important for premium branding. Exclusion, aspirational imagery, and authenticity all boost engagement even when promotions are used, according to research on social media interactions in luxury settings. This supports the notion that a well-thought-out social media campaign can reduce any reputational risk associated with price-based promotions.

When combined, these sources show Saliba Jewelry's case as part of a broader trend in luxury branding that redefines luxury for new audiences by fusing psychological understanding, cultural distinctiveness, and market segmentation.

### Theoretical framework

The Self-Congruity Theory and Aaker's Brand Equity Theory are two significant marketing theories that provide vital context for Saliba Jewelry's unconventional use of aggressive promotion in the high-end jewelry sector. We may examine the strategic and psychological effects of the brand's 50% discount on its diamond collection thanks to these frameworks.

#### 1. Aaker's Brand Equity Theory

Aaker's Brand Equity Theory (1991) <sup>[1]</sup> provides the foundation for understanding how marketing strategies impact customer perception and long-term brand value. According to Aaker, the primary components of brand equity are perceived quality, brand associations, brand loyalty, brand recognition, and other proprietary brand assets. Because consumers are investing in a symbolic experience associated with exclusivity and status rather than

merely a product, perceived quality and connotations are more important in luxury markets.

This point of view holds that offering diamond jewelry at a 50% discount can initially appear to compromise the perceived quality and rarity that are crucial to Saliba's brand image. However, Saliba's continuous expenditures on luxurious in-store experiences, premium packaging, and well-chosen retail placement including its location in the Dubai Mall help sustain these connections.

In fact, the campaign may enhance brand awareness and attract new client segments, which may result in a rise in long-term loyalty. Therefore, whereas price reductions usually carry the danger of eroding brand equity in luxury settings, Saliba Jewelry's comprehensive branding strategy appears to maintain balance across Aaker's dimensions.

This methodology measures brand strength using perceived quality, brand associations, awareness, and loyalty. This helps determine if the 50% promotion increased customer loyalty by making the store more accessible or by changing the store's perceived status when applied to Saliba Jewellery or by simply appealing to a new audience.

#### 2. The Self-Congruity Theory

The Self-Congruity Theory was developed by Sirgy in 1982 <sup>[8]</sup> and emphasizes the psychological alignment between consumers' perceptions of a brand and their self-concept. Consumers tend to choose brands that reflect or enhance their identities. Aspirational consumers, particularly those categorized as Belonger+ in the VALS segmentation framework, are drawn to Saliba Jewelry's 50% promotion because they wish to project an image of achievement and taste, even if they don't fully fit into the traditional elite class that luxury brands frequently target.

Harmony between personal identity and brand image is crucial. Instead of simply lowering the price of the product, these buyers see the offer as a gateway to a lifestyle they desire. The sense of "smart luxury" or accessible status reinforces their belief that they are upwardly mobile individuals who deserve upmarket experiences, although at a lower cost. This frame of view helps to explain the campaign's positive social media response, as participants often expressed gratitude, ambition, and excitement rather than skepticism about the brand's value.

This theory holds that people are motivated to buy products that reinforce or embody their sense of self. This is especially crucial for prospective purchasers who wish to associate with high-end brands in luxury settings. Customers who desire to "look like achievers" but identify as "Belonger+" may find connection in Saliba's campaign.

These frameworks, when combined, provide a powerful perspective through which we can examine the campaign and explain the goal of the strategy as well as the reaction of the target audience.

Together, these theories provide insight into how Saliba Jewellery uses aggressive marketing techniques to uphold its reputation for luxury.

While Aaker's strategy ensures that the core components of brand equity are preserved or even strengthened, Self-Congruity Theory explains how consumer psychology can turn a potential brand risk into a compelling incentive for purchase and loyalty. Saliba successfully achieves a delicate balance between exclusivity and accessibility by accomplishing this, a challenge that is becoming increasingly relevant in today's fast-paced luxury industry.

### Methodology

This study uses qualitative content analysis to evaluate how Saliba Jewellery's 50% discount strategy affects audience engagement and brand image. Data was collected from the brand's Instagram account during the promotional period (9 to 30 November).

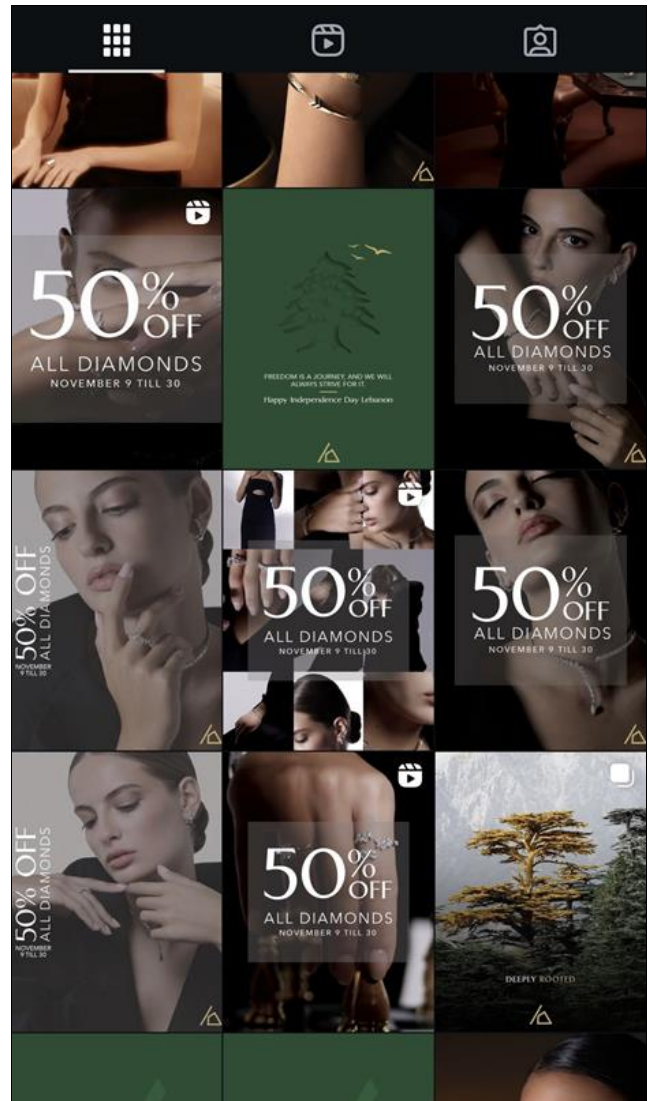
The content analysis focused on the following areas:

- The language, tone, and imagery used in promotional postings;
- Engagement indicators, such as likes, shares, and comments;
- The tone of the remarks (positive, skeptical, critical, and aspirational);
- Inferred demographic differences between posts concerning inexpensive diamonds and those regarding ordinary gold pieces.

To contextualize these findings, comparable regional luxury brands that maintain traditional non-discounted price patterns Mouawad and L'Azurde in particular were compared. The study also looked at consistency across Saliba's brand touchpoints, particularly their posh Dubai Mall location, to ascertain how offline and online elements work together to preserve the impression of luxury.

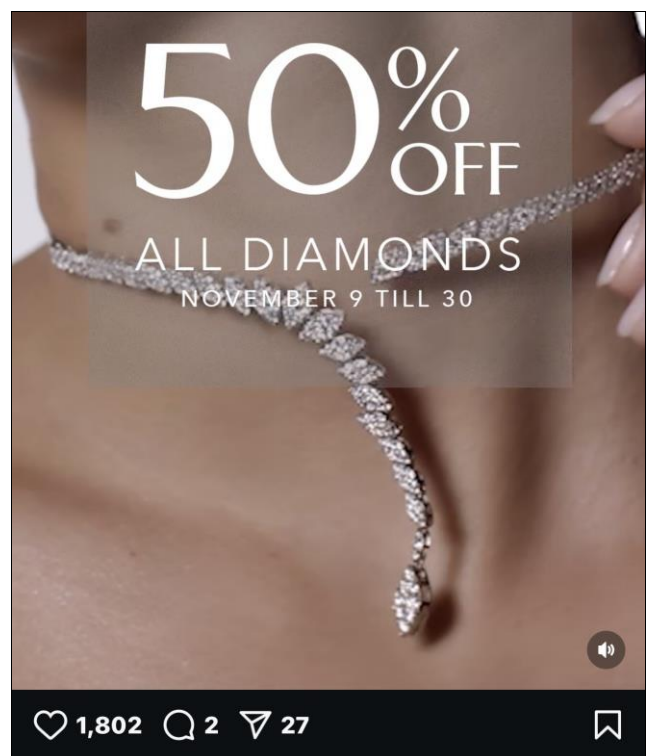
### Analysis and Findings

Saliba Jewellery's ad combined upscale imagery with inclusive themes. Even with the 50% discount, the campaign's aesthetics clean photography, gold-and-white color schemes, and plain writing remained consistent with luxury brand codes. Instead of focusing on price, phrases like "Find your favorite diamond pieces," "Shine bright with 50% off on stunning diamond pieces," and "Your perfect diamond awaits" promoted empowerment, which means that even when they promoted a sale period, they still gave the feeling that the items were still exclusive and special.



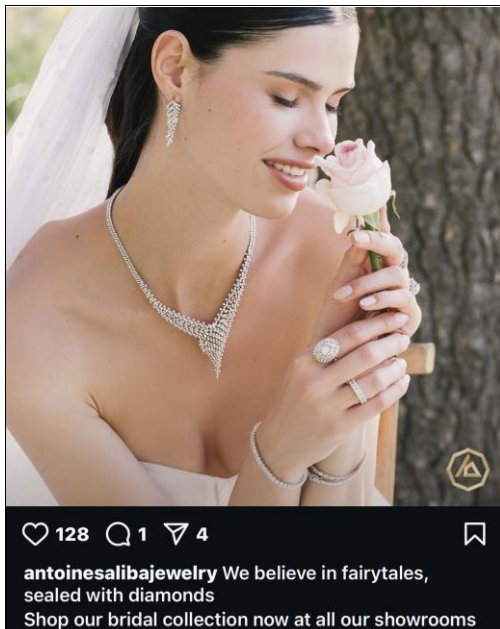
Aimé par **lynnfh.9** et d'autres personnes  
**antoinesalibajewelry** Your perfect diamond awaits, enjoy 50% off in our exclusive sale!

Aimé par **\_sal4m** et d'autres personnes  
**antoinesalibajewelry** Shine bright with 50% off on stunning diamond pieces. Don't miss out!

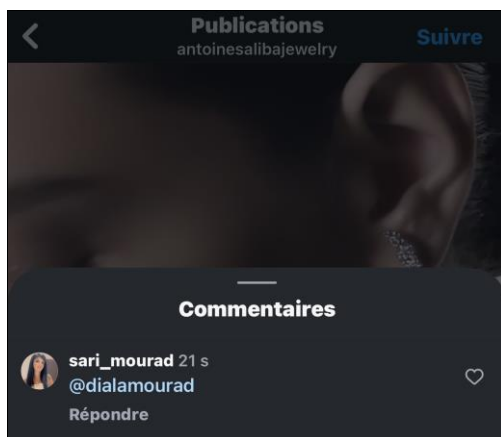


Diamond Promotion Post: 1802 likes, 27 shares

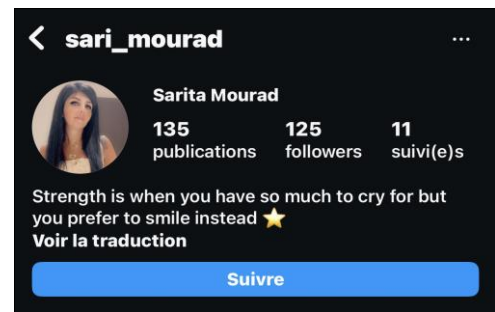
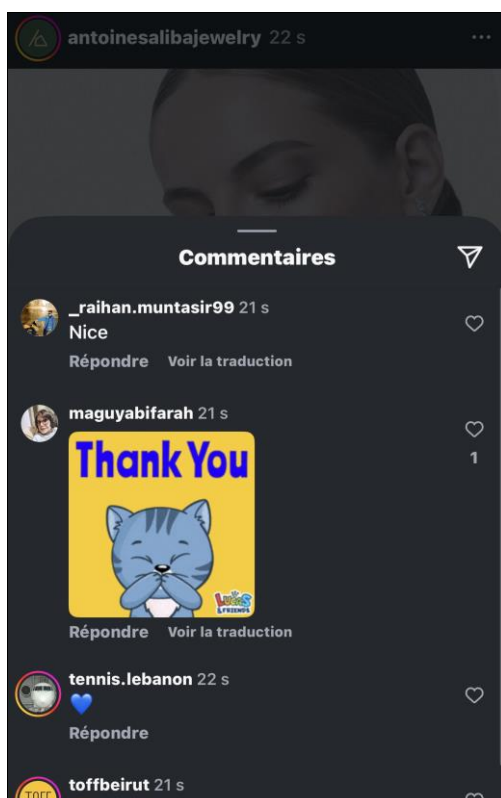




Diamond post without promotion: 128 likes, 4 shares.



Example of people tagging each other



We notice that the people engaging definitely don't look like achievers, they fit in the belongs+ category



### Engagement Analysis

Promotional posts advertising the discount had significantly higher engagement rates than non-promotional ones, particularly those containing gold. Generally speaking, posts about diamond sales got so many more likes and a greater range of comments. People tagged friends, suggested purchases for special occasions or milestones, or expressed joy at the newfound affordability. It's also important to note that the engagement on the promotional diamond posts was much higher than the diamond posts without promotions.

### Emotion Analysis

Most customers showed positive emotions such as "nice" and "thank you!" There was no compelling claim that the discount "cheapened" the brand, and there was minimal sign of brand dilution. Conversely, users thought that the brand was strong since it was more accessible for a short period of time.

### Psychographics shift

The ad was successful in drawing in Belonger+ profiles, which are people who seek emotional pleasure through the purchase of symbolic, status-enhancing things, since they seek to become achievers or look like them.

Examples of profiles of people that were tagging and were being tagged:

A shifting dynamic in the luxury markets of the Gulf and Lebanon is demonstrated by the application of the VALS framework for client segmentation. It appears that Saliba's marketing targets Belonger+ clients, who are more financially careful but still aspire to lead Achievers' lifestyles. These markets support the idea that self-congruity and psychological targeting can preserve a brand's luxury appeal even while it is being discounted, as they respond favorably to prestige cues at affordable prices.

### Brand Positioning and Competitor Comparison

Saliba grew to distinction in the local luxury market, in contrast to competitors like Mouawad or L'Azurde, who place more emphasis on history than on occasional good deals. Younger audiences are less interested in certain

brands, even if they remain exclusive. Saliba's outstanding brand evolution is demonstrated by its ability to attract new clients at all branches without compromising its luxury reputation, even with the 50% off, and this is proved by the many branches they own, especially the prestigious one in Dubai Hills Mall.

It is also important to note that the limited promotional period (9 to 30 November) kept the collection having an exclusive appeal. And this timing is right after the wedding season ended, which means that the summer wedding collection reached the end of its season, so here the 50% discount is to sell the outdated collection for the belongers + that don't mind wearing an older collection, or even a groom could purchase it as a wedding gift for his wife, and this wedding would be in the next season which is the next summer. So here, the belongers + got the older collection, and the achievers kept their exclusivity, because they have already worn the items when they were still new to the collection.

In line with Aaker's brand equity philosophy, Saliba maintained brand equity by upholding quality and emotional connection. According to Self-Congruity Theory, the 50% promotion enhanced alignment with consumers' desired identities without undermining the brand's luxury cues.

### Conclusion

The 50% diamond discount at Saliba Jewellery challenges preconceived ideas about luxury branding while providing valuable insights into shifting consumer behavior. The business has expanded its customer base without compromising its reputation by appealing to aspirational populations, particularly the Belonger+ psychographic, which associates luxury with identity rather than merely money and is seeking to become achievers or trying to look like them!

This strategy was effective because it kept the key elements of luxury quality, elegance, and exclusivity while allowing a larger audience to participate in the brand's narrative. By controlling the tone, limiting the promotion's time, and maintaining premium distribution through affluent venues like Dubai Mall, the campaign was able to avoid "massification."

Ultimately, this case demonstrates that, depending on how it is presented, luxury can be democratized without losing its value.

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