

# TELLING, SHOWING, DOING:

The Modern Communication of Luxury Brands

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# SETTING THE SCENE: Modern Luxury in Transition

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In 2025, American consumers are looking for more from their luxury brands. In a time when more people are politically informed and socially responsible, and purchases are heavily influenced by an unstable economy, consumers are requiring brands to offer aspirational appeal while aligning with their values. Brands that focus on craftsmanship, product longevity, and the emotional significance of not only their products and services but also their identity provide consumers with more reasons to invest in the brand. It is important for luxury brands operating in this time and environment to balance transparency and desirability; Exclusivity and inclusion can coexist when tradition is as influential to the brand as innovation.

While the focus is on the U.S. luxury market, this report also examines how global influences shape how luxury brands communicate. European brands like

Celine significantly shape the American consumer's expectations. The level of prestige and heritage, while maintaining a minimalist interpretation of contemporary luxury, is compelling to a heavily influenced capitalist market. Whereas Ralph Lauren is firmly embedded in American luxury culture, it still demonstrates how domestic brands can preserve a national identity while learning and developing from global influences.

This report examines how Ralph Lauren and Celine articulate their brand values through three emerging trends influencing the luxury sector in 2025: Living Heritage, New Age Conversational Commerce, and the Cult of Care. Collectively, these trends indicate that the future of luxury is defined by emotional resonance, transparency, and enduring consumer relationships.

B r a n d

*Communication*

& Marketing

*Trends*

# The New Age of Conversational Commerce



Following years of static e-commerce, luxury brands are embracing AI-driven dialogue to recreate the personal touch once found in boutiques. This shift reflects consumers' desire for digital intimacy and the same level of care they expect from in-person service.

Shoppers now look for websites that feel immersive rather than transactional. Luxury should feel luxurious, even online. According to McKinsey & Company (2024), the future of retail depends on creating personalised, human-like interactions that build loyalty and trust.

Dior and Manolo Blahnik lead in turning digital spaces into emotional experiences through "Dior Beauty Live" and "The Manolo Blahnik Archives: The Craft Room". Technology is no longer just a tool for efficiency; it has become a channel for genuine connection and care.



Figure 2



Figure 5

PERSONALISED



Figure 3

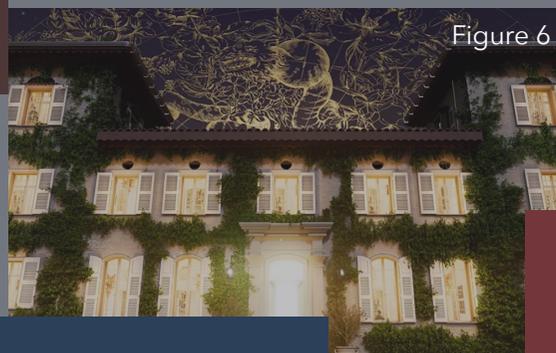


Figure 6

DIGITAL

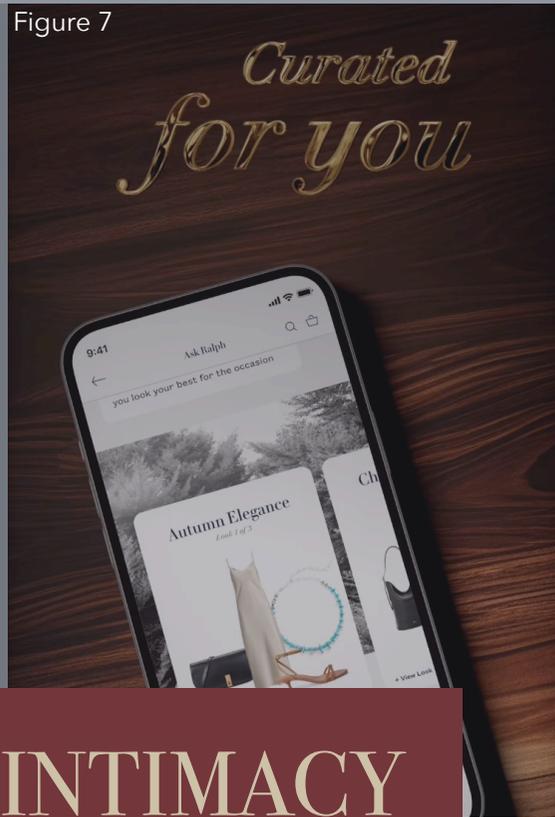


Figure 7

INTIMACY



Figure 4

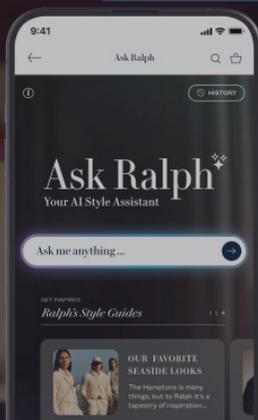
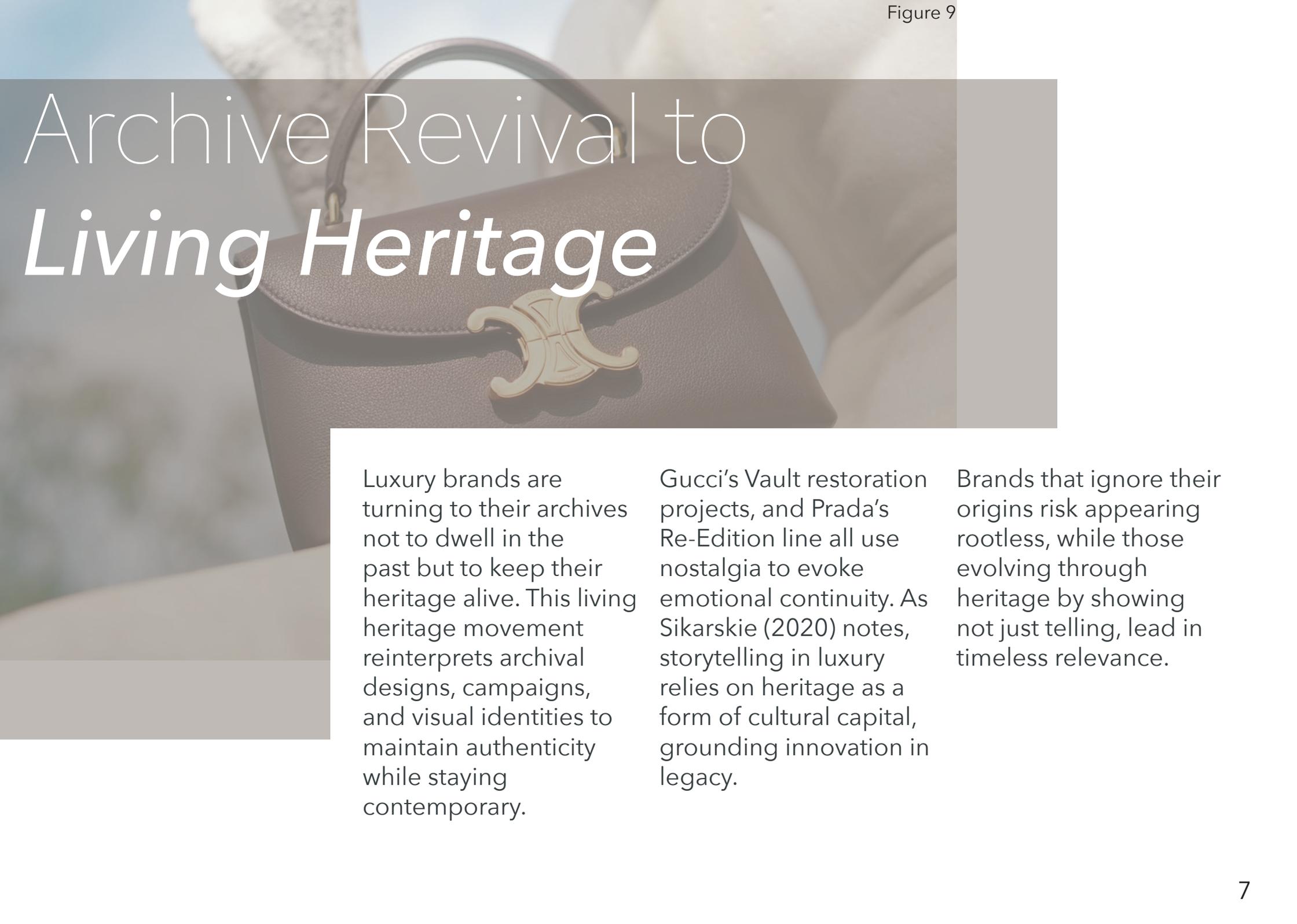


Figure 8



# Archive Revival to *Living Heritage*

Luxury brands are turning to their archives not to dwell in the past but to keep their heritage alive. This living heritage movement reinterprets archival designs, campaigns, and visual identities to maintain authenticity while staying contemporary.

Gucci's Vault restoration projects, and Prada's Re-Edition line all use nostalgia to evoke emotional continuity. As Sikarskie (2020) notes, storytelling in luxury relies on heritage as a form of cultural capital, grounding innovation in legacy.

Brands that ignore their origins risk appearing rootless, while those evolving through heritage by showing not just telling, lead in timeless relevance.



Figure 10



Figure 13



Figure 17

Figure 11

# IDENTITY



Figure 14

# AUTHENTICITY



Figure 12



Figure 15



Figure 16



Figure 18



# Cult of Care

Care is reshaping the meaning of luxury by emphasizing the relationship between owner and object. Luxury today is less about constant purchasing and more about preservation and devotion to one's products. Hermès leads with its Bag Spa, transforming repair into ritual, while Chanel and

Cartier elevate refilling and servicing into acts of loyalty and care.

As Okonkwo (2007) highlights, luxury flourishes through emotional connection and craftsmanship. This trend reframes sustainability as sophistication, encouraging consumers

to see maintenance as a privilege. Brands that adopt this mindset strengthen trust and value, while those that ignore it risk appearing disposable.

Figure 20



### REQUEST A SERVICE

Cartier puts all its expertise at your service to personalise, maintain or repair your creation.

[Find out more](#)

### FOLLOW MY SERVICE'S PROGRESS

The Maison will keep you informed of the progress of your request. Contact us Follow my service's progress The Maison will keep you informed of the progress of your request.

[FOLLOW THE PROGRESS OF YOUR REQUEST](#)

### BOOK AN APPOINTMENT

To find out more about a specific creation, our Maison or our services.

[Make an appointment](#)

### EXTENDING MY WARRANTY

When you sign up for Cartier Care, you benefit from exclusive services, including an extended 8-year warranty.

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

Figure 22



Figure 24

## CRAFTSMANSHIP

## PRESERVATION

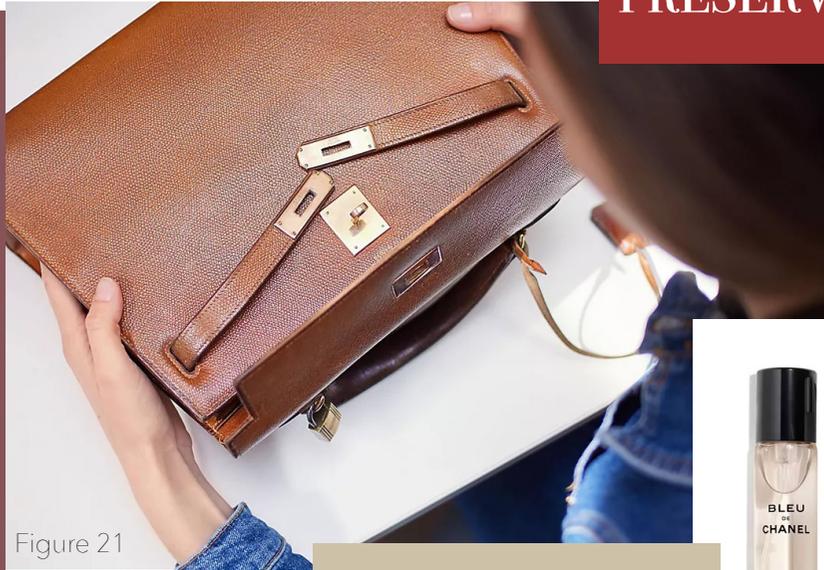


Figure 21

## RITUAL



Figure 23



## PRIVILEGE



Figure 25



Brand  
Selection  
*Rationale*

# CELINE Contemporary French Minimalism:

A brand defined by quiet power and visual precision, Celine conveys emotion through restraint. Under Michael Rider, it continues to evolve French minimalism into something deeply modern, fusing art, culture, and craftsmanship into narratives that feel both intimate and timeless. Its storytelling offers a study in contemporary heritage and creative continuity.



Figure 26



Figure 28

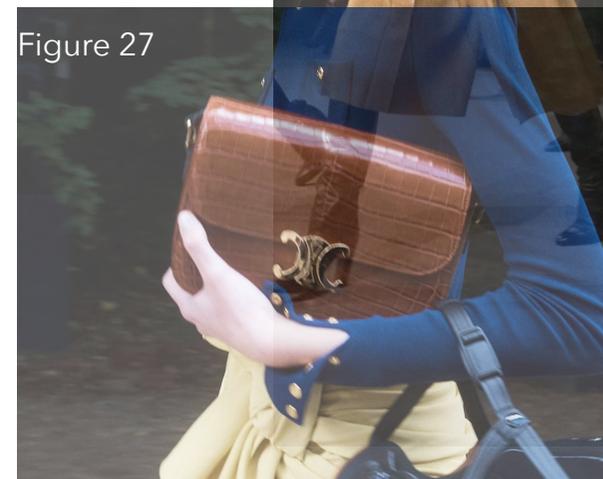


Figure 27

*“Celine doesn’t sell clothes—  
it sells an attitude of quiet  
confidence.” – Vogue, 2024*

# RALPH LAUREN *Timeless American Style:*

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Figure 29



Figure 30

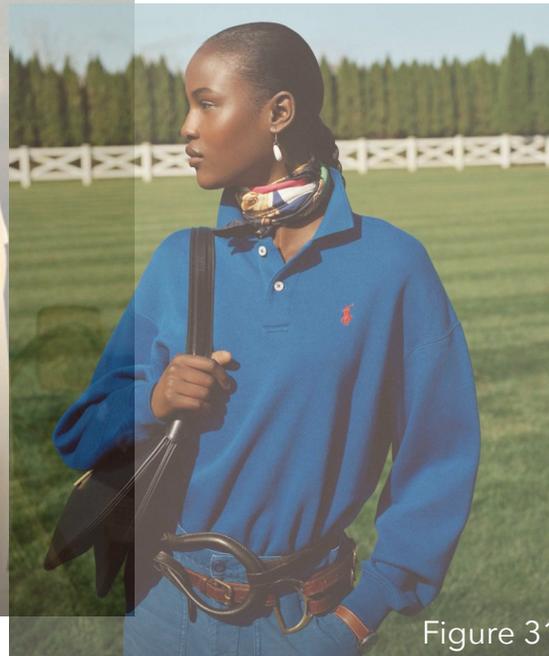


Figure 31

Embodying the spirit of American luxury, Ralph Lauren merges heritage with innovation, transforming classic storytelling into aspirational lifestyle experiences. Through emerging technologies and AI-driven personalisation, it balances nostalgia with modernity, maintaining relevance in a fast-changing luxury landscape.

*“Ralph Lauren didn’t just design fashion; he designed the American dream.” – The New York Times, 2023*

Brand

*C r i t i q u e*  
*C o m p a r i s o n*

&



Figure 32

This section critically evaluates Celine and Ralph Lauren through an integrated application of PESTEL, CBBE, Porter's Five Forces, and SWOT frameworks to explore how each brand communicates luxury in 2025. It examines how both respond to evolving consumer expectations through three key communication trends, The New Age of Conversational Commerce, Living Heritage, and the Cult of Care; revealing how emotional value, storytelling, and digital intimacy are redefining the modern luxury relationship.

While Celine exemplifies preservation through Living Heritage and the Cult of Care, Ralph Lauren demonstrates innovation in Conversational Commerce and emotional service. Together, they illustrate how timelessness and technology can coexist as parallel expressions of contemporary luxury.

# Navigating the External Environment

The 2025 luxury market operates within sociocultural and technological forces that prioritise emotional authenticity, craftsmanship, and sustainability reframed as care. Consumers increasingly value experience over accumulation, expecting brands to offer meaning and continuity rather than novelty (Johnson et al., 2017). Celine aligns with these shifts through the aesthetic of “quiet luxury,” using simplicity and archival homage to express stability amid cultural saturation. Michael Rider collaboration with photographer Dan Martensen for the 2025 still-photography campaign revives Phoebe minimalist legacy, transforming nostalgia into Living Heritage (Celine, 2025). Conversely, Ralph Lauren engages the same market through technological empathy. Its AI-driven tool, Ask Ralph, reimagines clienteling in digital form – translating human warmth into Philo’s legacy, turning transactional browsing into dialogue (Ralph Lauren, 2025). Both brands reveal how sociocultural and technological evolution converge: luxury communication now relies less on aspiration and more on relational depth.

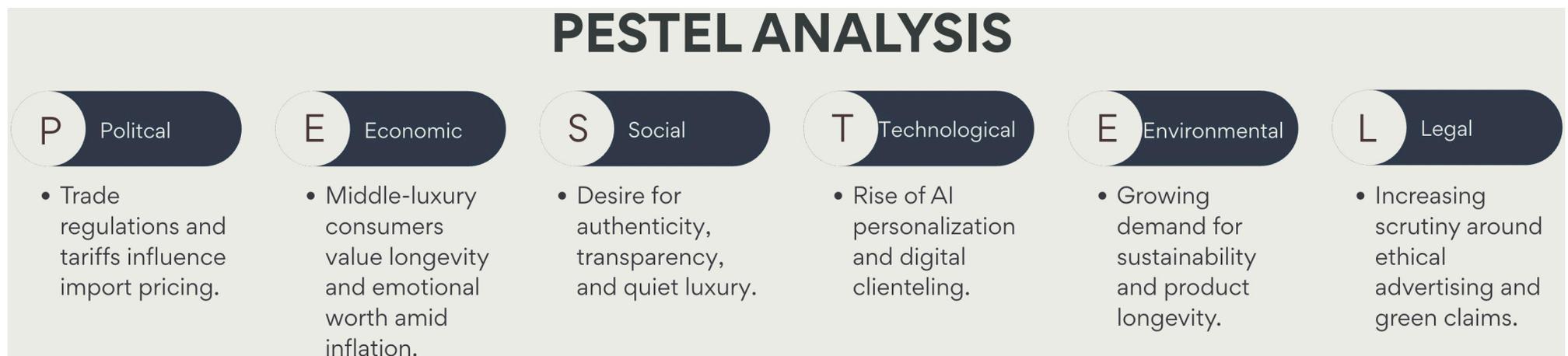


Figure 33 - PESTEL Framework applied to the Contemporary Luxury Fashion Industry (2025)  
 (Source: Adapted from Aguilar, 1967)

# The Power of Narrative Identity



Applying Keller's (2001) Customer-Based Brand Equity model highlights how both brands construct meaning through emotional storytelling. For Celine, resonance emerges from restraint. The brand's identity relies on visual silence, still imagery, tactile craftsmanship, and narrative minimalism. This allows consumers to project their own emotion onto the brand.

Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity

This approach reinforces Living Heritage, where heritage is not archived but reactivated through design, and aligns with the Cult of Care, where repair, longevity, and preservation become luxury rituals (Okonkwo, 2007). Each campaign communicates the brand's promise of timelessness through continuity, not change.

Figure 34 - Key Layers of Keller's (2001) Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) Model applied to Celine's 2025 Brand Communication Strategy

(Source: Adapted from Keller, 2001)

Ralph Lauren, by contrast, builds resonance through inclusive storytelling and digital hospitality. Its multi-sensory brand world, from cinematic campaigns to virtual shopping assistants, all extend the American Dream tradition into a new technological age. Ask Ralph transforms its longstanding service ethos into an AI-enhanced conversation, reflecting the trend of The New Age of Conversational Commerce (Ralph Lauren, 2025). This cultivates brand salience and loyalty by making the consumer feel recognised and emotionally guided through every touchpoint. In both cases, storytelling serves as emotional infrastructure: for Celine, it preserves meaning; for Ralph Lauren, it personalises it.

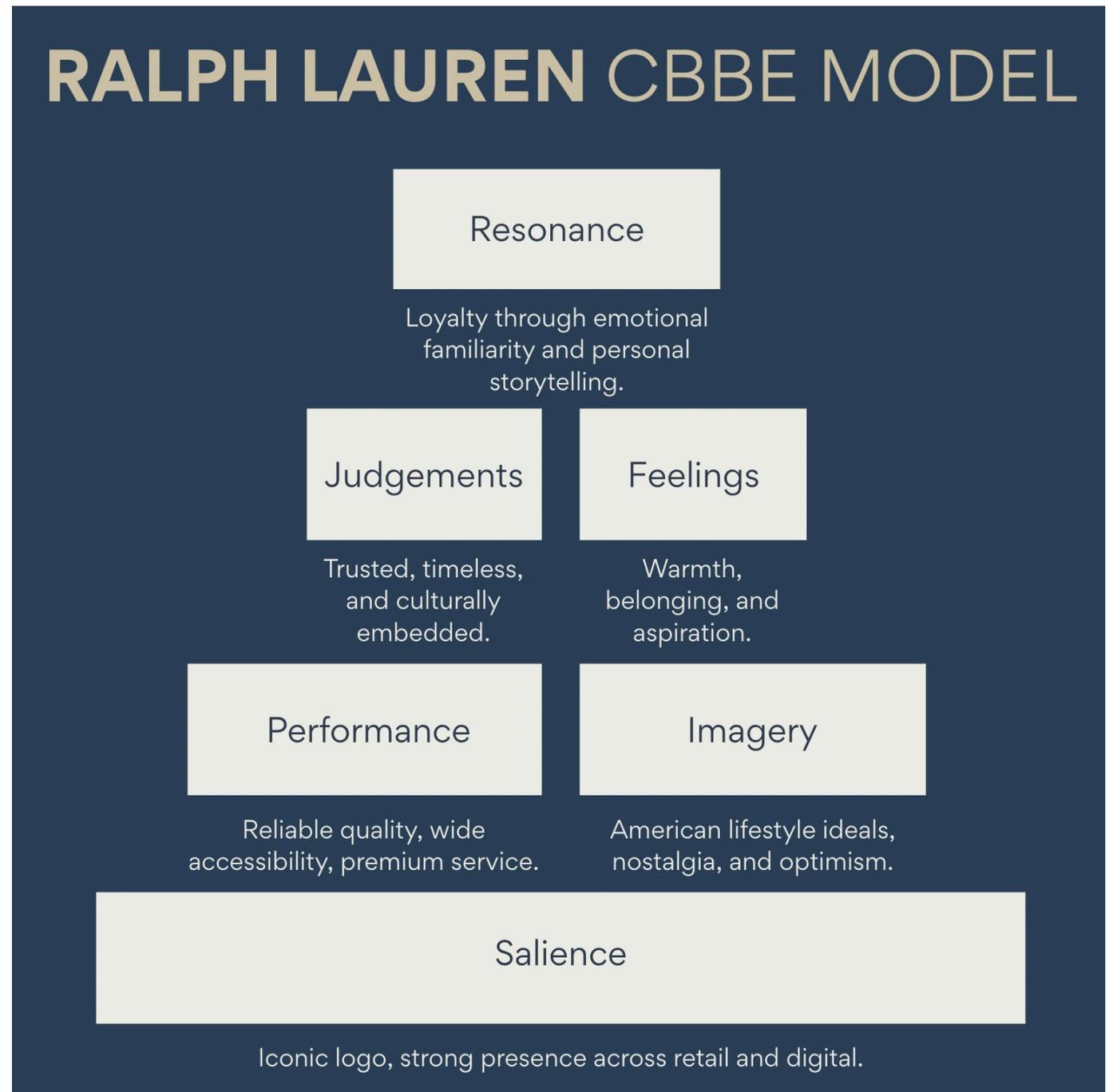


Figure 35 - Key Layers of Keller's (2001) Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) Model applied to Ralph Lauren's 2025 Brand Communication Strategy (Source: Adapted from Keller, 2001)

# Competitive Advantage and Brand Distinction

In an increasingly crowded luxury market defined by high buyer power and rapid innovation (Porter, 2008), emotional differentiation has become essential. Celine mitigates rivalry through creative control and artistic coherence, defending against imitation by treating heritage as a strategic barrier.

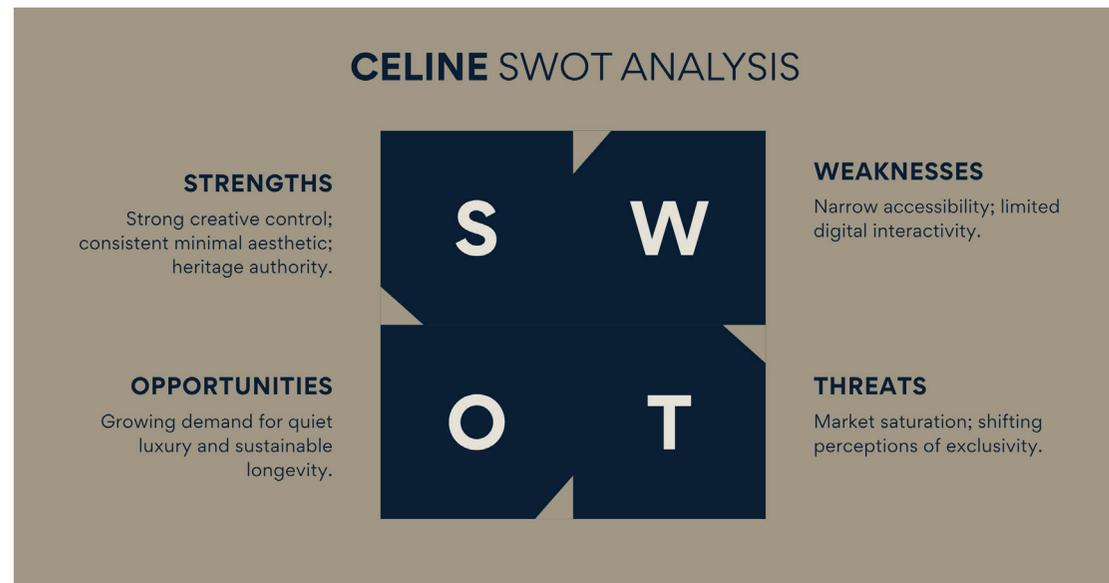
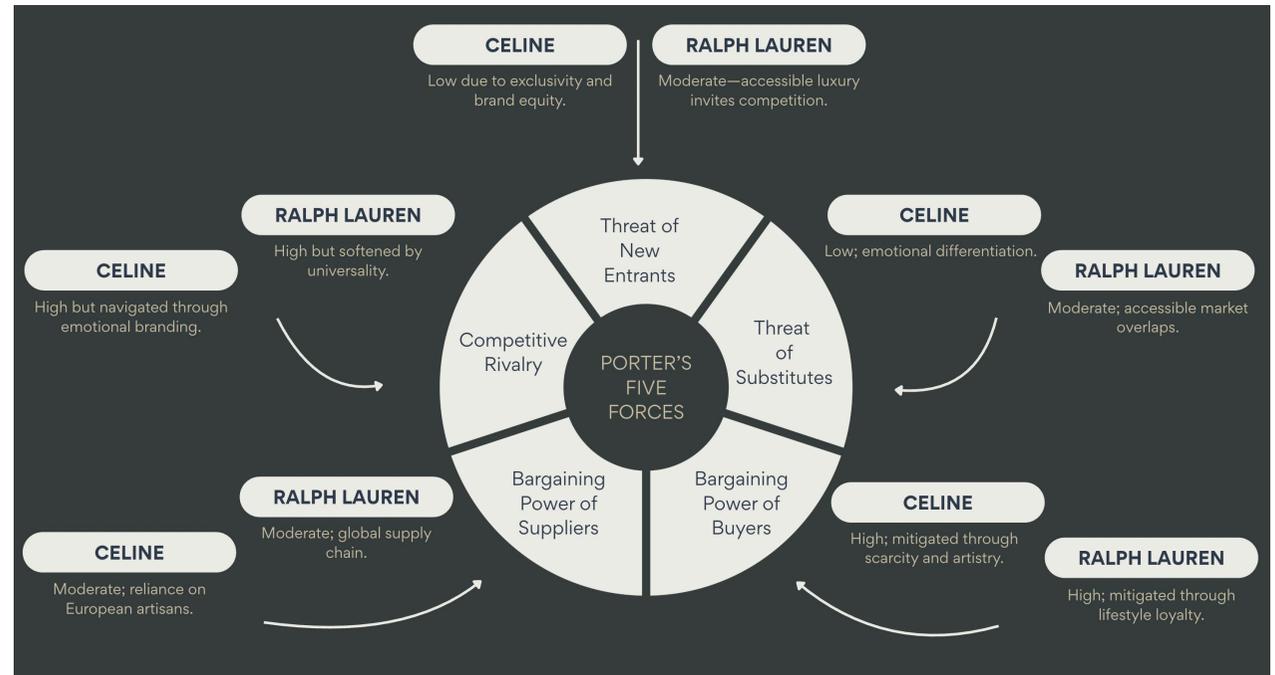


Figure 36 - Porter's (1979) Five Forces Model applied to Celine and Ralph Lauren within the Luxury Fashion Sector (2025)  
(Source: Adapted from Porter, 1979)

Its strength lies in scarcity, craftsmanship, and aesthetic authority, yet its exclusivity also limits reach, a key weakness within its SWOT profile.

Figure 37 - SWOT Analysis of Celine (2025)  
(Source: Adapted from Humphrey, 1960s, cited in Panagiotou, 2003)

# RALPH LAUREN SWOT ANALYSIS

## STRENGTHS

Established lifestyle identity; global recognition; early adoption of AI (Ask Ralph).

## OPPORTUNITIES

Expanding digital personalization and experiential retail.

S

W

O

T

## WEAKNESSES

Risk of brand dilution; heavy reliance on nostalgia.

## THREATS

Fast-moving competitors; economic pressure on mid-luxury.

Figure 38 - SWOT Analysis of Ralph Lauren (2025)  
(Source: Adapted from Humphrey, 1960s, cited in Panagiotou, 2003)

Ralph Lauren, on the other hand, leverages diversification and digital adaptation to maintain accessibility without losing aspiration. By integrating AI and omnichannel service, it reasserts its heritage

of hospitality while modernising its delivery. This agility strengthens competitive positioning but risks overexposure and brand dilution if technological novelty outweighs luxury codes.

Both brands exemplify the shift from competing on product superiority to competing on emotional experience.

# Insights and Implications for the Luxury Consumer



Figure 39

Through contrasting strategies, Celine and Ralph Lauren reveal how luxury in 2025 has become less about ownership and more about emotional continuity. Celine's Living Heritage cultivates quiet loyalty rooted in preservation and identity. Ralph Lauren's New Age Conversational Commerce transforms digital spaces into sites of intimacy and belonging. Both express the Cult of Care through personalised, empathetic communication that values relationship over reach. Together, they show that the new frontier of exclusivity lies not in price or scarcity, but in their ability to make consumers feel a part of a brand's evolving story.

C o n c l u s i o n :

*Reflecting* on the  
*Future of Luxury*

As the fashion world continues to shift under social, political, and ecological pressures, luxury brands remain guiding foundations within the industry. Their continued success will depend on how well they evolve alongside changing consumer values and cultural expectations. Trends may come and go, growing more specific or re-emerging from the past, but the core of luxury communication still rests on storytelling, emotion, and innovation. What changes is the way brands activate these ideas.

Celine demonstrates how Living Heritage and the Cult of Care can merge to create a quieter, more emotional form of luxury. Through still-life campaigns that honour past creative eras while embracing modern craftsmanship, the brand transforms heritage into something alive and felt, not archived. Ralph Lauren, shows how

New Age Conversational Commerce can humanize technology. With initiatives like "Ask Ralph," the brand integrates digital intimacy into its legacy of service and warmth, ensuring innovation never feels detached from authenticity.

Both brands prove that luxury today is less about the object itself and more about the emotional experience of belonging. The most enduring labels will be those that build long-term relationships through personalization and cultural sensitivity, inviting consumers not just to buy into a product, but to feel part of a shared story. Beyond 2025, these trends may evolve into even deeper forms of emotional branding, where heritage and technology merge to create experiences that feel both timeless and entirely personal.

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Figure 34 - Collier, S. (2025) Author's own framework: Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) Model – Celine. Featured in Brand Communication Report, MA International Luxury Business, Vogue College of Fashion, London (unpublished).

Figure 35 - Collier, S. (2025) Author's own framework: Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) Model – Ralph Lauren. Featured in Brand Communication Report, MA International Luxury Business, Vogue College of Fashion, London (unpublished).

Figure 36 - Collier, S. (2025) Author's own framework: Porter's Five Forces Evaluation of the Luxury Market. Featured in Brand Communication Report, MA International Luxury Business, Vogue College of Fashion, London (unpublished).

Figure 37 - Collier, S. (2025) Author's own framework: SWOT Analysis – Celine. Featured in Brand Communication Report, MA International Luxury Business, Vogue College of Fashion, London (unpublished).

Figure 38 - Collier, S. (2025) Author's own framework: SWOT Analysis – Ralph Lauren. Featured in Brand Communication Report, MA International Luxury Business, Vogue College of Fashion, London (unpublished).

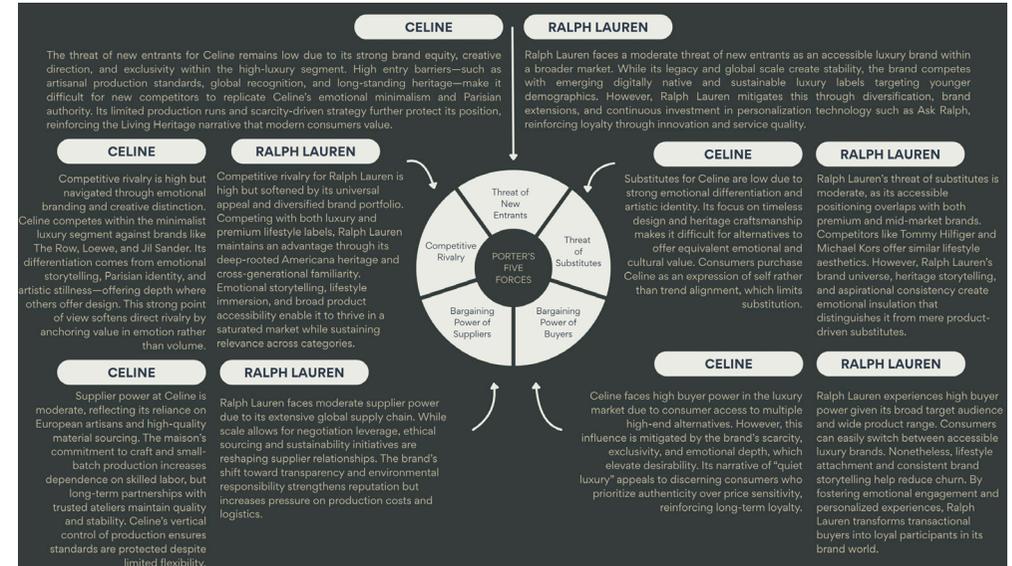
Figure 39 - Forbes (2025) How Ralph Lauren's Oak Bluffs line nails modern consumer engagement [Online image]. Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/soniathompson/2025/07/31/how-ralph-laurens-oak-bluffs-line-nails-modern-consumer-engagement/> (Accessed: 28 October 2025).

# Appendix Frameworks

## Vogue College of Fashion (2025) Brand Framework Appendix: SWOT, PESTEL, CBBE, and Porter's Five Forces Models for Ralph Lauren and Celine. Unpublished student work, MA International Luxury Business, Vogue College of Fashion.

### PESTEL ANALYSIS

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| <p><b>Economic</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inflation &amp; Cost of Living: Rising prices and cautious spending have pushed American consumers to seek value justification in luxury purchases. Brands are challenged to communicate why their products are worth the investment.</li> <li>• Growing Wealth Gap: The U.S. shows polarization between ultra-high-net-worth consumers and aspirational middle-luxury buyers. This economic divide shapes communication tone and brand segmentation.</li> <li>• Resilient Luxury Market: Despite uncertainty, U.S. luxury spending remains strong, particularly in cities like New York, Los Angeles, and Miami, supported by tourism and digital retail.</li> </ul> <p><b>Technological</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• E-commerce Maturity: Online luxury retail in the U.S. has stabilized but continues to evolve through personalization, AI recommendations, and seamless omnichannel experiences.</li> <li>• Digital Storytelling: Social media platforms (especially TikTok and Instagram) remain vital spaces for brand engagement, requiring more interactive and narrative-driven communication.</li> <li>• Data Awareness: Consumers are increasingly conscious of data privacy and ethical use of AI in brand interactions.</li> </ul> <p><b>Legal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advertising Regulations: The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) enforces stricter rules on truth in advertising, influencer disclosures, and AI-generated content transparency.</li> <li>• Data Protection: While the U.S. lacks a single national privacy law, state-level regulations (like the California Consumer Privacy Act) require brands to disclose how consumer data is collected and used.</li> <li>• Intellectual Property: Counterfeiting and online replicas challenge luxury communication—brands must reinforce authenticity and heritage through verified storytelling.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Political</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trade &amp; International Relations: Ongoing trade tensions with China and Europe affect luxury import/export, tariffs, and brand partnerships. Many luxury goods sold in the U.S. are imported, so political stability directly impacts pricing and supply chains.</li> <li>• Regulatory Pressure &amp; Cultural Politics: Growing attention to sustainability, labor practices, and ethical sourcing at government level influences how brands communicate transparency to U.S. consumers. Shifts in political climates, debates over inclusivity, gender identity, and representation, impact how brands craft messaging and select ambassadors.</li> </ul> <p><b>Social</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural Diversity: The U.S. remains a highly multicultural market. Brands must localize communication to resonate with a wide range of ethnic, generational, and regional audiences.</li> <li>• Generational Shifts: Millennials and Gen Z drive demand for authentic storytelling and social responsibility. They expect inclusivity, transparency, and digital fluency from brands.</li> <li>• Lifestyle Evolution: Post-pandemic, consumers prioritize wellness, balance, and self-expression, shaping how brands communicate aspirational living.</li> </ul> <p><b>Environmental</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainability Expectations: American consumers expect brands to demonstrate measurable environmental responsibility—from packaging and production to shipping practices.</li> <li>• Climate Events: Increasing climate-related disasters heighten public sensitivity toward sustainability and ethical consumption.</li> <li>• Corporate Accountability: Environmental messaging must now be evidence-based to avoid accusations of greenwashing.</li> </ul> |
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Aguilar, F.J. (1967) Scanning the Business Environment. New York: Macmillan.

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# Appendix Frameworks

## RALPH LAUREN CBBE MODEL

### Resonance

True resonance is achieved through deep emotional loyalty, reinforced by the brand's ability to make consumers feel part of a continuing story. Ralph Lauren's communication fosters personal connection through storytelling, digital intimacy, and lifestyle immersion. Its heritage-driven yet evolving presence sustains long-term engagement and advocacy.

### Judgements

Consumers view Ralph Lauren as trustworthy, culturally embedded, and timeless. The brand's consistency across decades has fostered perceptions of authority and authenticity within American luxury. Innovations like Ask Ralph strengthen credibility by merging heritage storytelling with technological evolution — demonstrating both relevance and reliability.

### Feelings

Ralph Lauren evokes feelings of warmth, belonging, and aspiration. Emotional associations are rooted in nostalgia for tradition and the comfort of familiarity, balanced with the thrill of modern innovation. This emotional landscape allows consumers to project their own identity through the brand's world — a key marker of luxury resonance.

### Performance

Performance is driven by reliable quality, diverse product range (from high-end Purple Label to Polo essentials), and accessible luxury positioning. Service elements such as personalization, digital styling assistance, and premium customer care reinforce its "Cult of Care" ethos. Sustainability commitments and repair services further enhance trust in product longevity.

### Imagery

Ralph Lauren's imagery encapsulates aspirational Americana — evoking ideals of heritage, nostalgia, and optimism. Campaigns consistently celebrate lifestyle over product, portraying the brand as a symbol of belonging, timeless taste, and intergenerational values. The blending of aspirational leisure with inclusivity strengthens its emotional narrative of "The American Dream."

### Saliency

Ralph Lauren maintains exceptionally high brand awareness through its instantly recognizable Polo logo, classic color palette, and long-standing retail presence. The brand's name and imagery are deeply embedded in American culture, representing more than just apparel but a lifestyle ideal. Its digital presence, particularly through the Ask Ralph AI styling feature, reinforces saliency in a contemporary way by offering interactive, human-like service experiences that mirror the brand's in-store personalization. This multichannel visibility ensures that Ralph Lauren remains top-of-mind within the global luxury sector.

## CELINE CBBE MODEL

### Resonance

Celine achieves resonance through intimacy and exclusivity. Loyal consumers identify with its values of independence and artistry. Emotional storytelling builds long-term trust and belonging, ensuring cultural relevance while maintaining authenticity.

### Judgements

Consumers view Celine as elite, authentic, and emotionally refined. Its restraint conveys confidence, while consistent quality and creative autonomy reinforce credibility. Celine's coherent aesthetic and minimalism appeal to consumers seeking authenticity and cultural depth within luxury fashion.

### Feelings

Celine evokes admiration, desire, and composure. Consumers connect to its quiet confidence and view it as a mirror of personal sophistication. Emotional attachment is formed through stillness and subtlety, making ownership feel like self-expression rather than display.

### Performance

Celine's performance reflects precision, craftsmanship, and sensory quality. Each collection maintains consistency in structure, fabrication, and comfort, earning consumer trust. The brand's tactile retail experience and focus on longevity reflect the Cult of Care trend — emphasizing durability, maintenance, and emotional investment over excess.

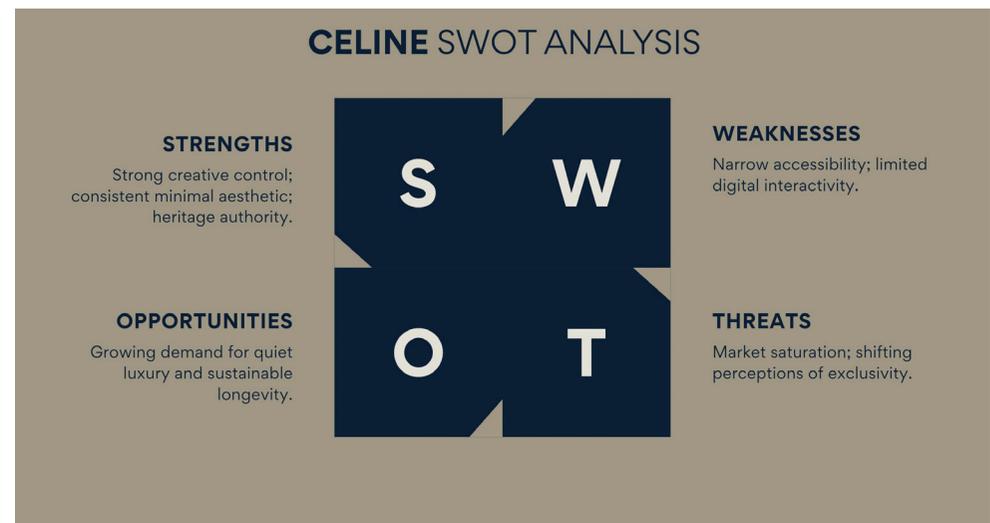
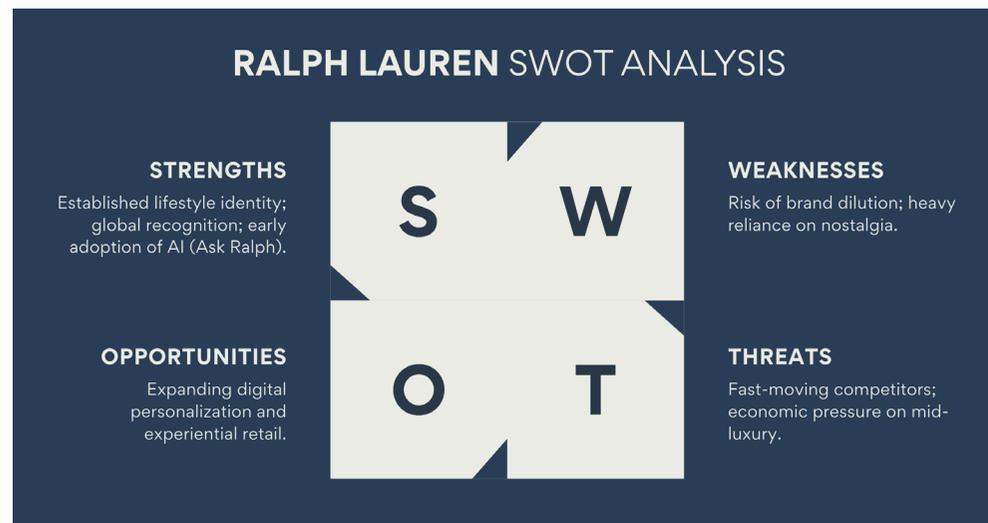
### Imagery

Celine's imagery captures Parisian artistry and introspection. Campaigns use cinematic stillness and archival references to express emotion and continuity, embodying the Living Heritage trend. Through visual storytelling rooted in art and culture, the brand cultivates depth, authenticity, and an aspirational sense of calm.

### Saliency

Celine's saliency lies in its subtlety and restraint. Rather than relying on overt branding, recognition stems from its distinct minimalist codes, sleek typography, and consistent creative direction under Hedi Slimane. The brand's presence is quiet but powerful, built through consistent visual identity, artistic photography, and scarcity-driven desirability. Celine's digital and retail environments reinforce this understated awareness, creating a sense of exclusivity that strengthens recognition among consumers who value refinement and cultural sophistication.

Aguilar, F.J. (1967) Scanning the Business Environment. New York: Macmillan.



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