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THE EXAMPLE OF LEXUS, A SUCCESSFUL BRAND MANAGEMENT APPLICATION IN THE AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY

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Abstract

Launched in 1989 as Toyota's premium segment and first luxury sedan, Lexus has quickly gained an important place in the luxury car market. Lexus has distinguished itself in the automobile world not only with its high sales figures, but also with its engineering and design vision that aims perfection at every stage of production, and a management that prioritises customer experience. The brand has redefined the standards in the sector by successfully combining Toyota's extensive experience in engineering and design with the expectations of the luxury segment.

The automobile, like a piece of clothing, is a means of expression that reflects both aesthetics and personal image. In this context, the automobile industry, like the fashion industry, offers designs that emphasise prestige. Lexus cars, with their elegant designs and superior engineering, embody this philosophy and clearly demonstrate the brand's place in the fashion world.

This paper aims to analyse the brand equity of the Lexus brand within David A. Aaker's (1991) brand equity framework and to examine the relationship between fashion and brand equity. In the study where descriptive method based on literature review is used, it is explained how and in which titles Lexus successfully competes in the luxury field while maintaining the identity of Toyota, to which Lexus is affiliated.

The data of the study consists of written, audio, visual, printed and online publications, interviews, statistical reports, etc. sources. In the findings, design, aesthetics, comfort, shared technology, performance qualities, global competitive positioning, pricing, marketing-based sales rates and the balances between them, which reveal the brand identity of Lexus in its transformation into a work of art that offers a unique experience to its drivers, are discussed. As a result, it has been observed that Lexus has made a significant progress towards becoming a prestige vehicle in the luxury segment of the automotive industry.

Keywords: Lexus, Toyota, Luxury Car, Brand Management, Akio Toyoda, customer experience, automobile industry, brand identity.

Jel Codes: 41602, 112717



INTRODUCTION

Automobiles have found a place in fashion since the day they were released with both their designs and brands. The automobile industry has always been in great competition, and it has been emphasized that those who want to stand out in this competition should have a strong brand value.

Brand equity refers to how a brand is perceived by consumers and other stakeholders, as well as the economic implications of that perception (Keller, 2013). Especially in the automobile industry, brand equity provides a competitive advantage by increasing the prestige and customer loyalty of the brand (Aaker, 1996). Based on this approach, brands prefer to produce prestige models or brands as well as products that appeal to every audience.

Introduced to the market in 1989 by the Japanese automaker Toyota with the philosophy of producing the best cars in the world, Lexus is known for its high quality, excellent customer service and a strong brand identity (Tybout & Calkins, 2005). Lexus' brand value has achieved a strong and leading luxury brand position in the global market thanks to the effective management of its constituent elements. "The brand was successful in its home country of Japan with its launch strategies in 2005 and has a high return on investment and market impact" (Boisvert & Ashill, 2018).

According to the information on the brand's corporate website; from sports cars to SUVs in its range; Lexus, which ranges from luxury sedans to luxury sedans and is sold in nearly 90 countries around the world, continues to grow steadily in all markets today (Lexus Corporate Website, 2024).

The combination of the automobile industry and the fashion industry is an intersection of engineering and art. The automotive industry is not just a means of transportation, and the fashion industry is not just clothes. "Over the years, the world of automobiles has been at the forefront of innovations in speed, design and technology. Similarly, the fashion industry is constantly evolving, reflecting creativity and societal changes. When these two fields come together, the result offers a unique blend of form and function, style and substance" (Myers, 2024).

The aim of this study is to examine the brand value of Lexus, which is produced in the luxury segment of Toyota Motor Corporation (TMC) within the framework of the brand value of David A. Aaker (1991), and to evaluate it with a fashion design approach.

In the study, firstly, the basic elements of brand value will be discussed, and then how Lexus applies these elements for success and the path it travels will be explained.

The sub-objectives of the research were determined as follows:

What is the status of the Lexus brand according to the elements that make up the brand value?

How has the image of Lexus been shaped by the fashion design approach?

1. METHODOLOGY

In the study, which aims to examine the brand value of Lexus in the automobile market, a descriptive case study method based on literature review was preferred. The main subject of the study was Lexus, so it required purposeful sampling. Data were collected from written, audio, visual, printed and online sources. Lexus' values have been tried to be explained by David Aaker's (1991) brand value elements: brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand associations and perceived quality.

Aaker (1991), brand value; It defines it as "a combination of elements such as brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand associations, and perceived quality". These elements make up the sum of both active and passive factors that increase the value of a product or service. Successful brands increase their value by creating positive associations and emotions in their target audiences (Falkenberg, 1996). Brands offer not only existing product value, but also additional value. For this reason, marketing strategies and budgets generally focus on goals to increase the consumer's perception and value towards the brand (Baş, 2015: 87).

Brand equity consists of the combination of brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand associations, and perceived quality elements defined by Aaker (1991). Perception maps are used in marketing research to effectively manage and improve these elements.

Hair et al. (1992) describe these maps as a method that visualizes participants' perceptions of two or more dimensions/features. Wilkie (1994) states that these maps visualize the perceptions formed in the minds of consumers about competing products and services to a certain extent. Dibb, Simkin and Bradley (1996) state that perception maps are the placement of consumer perceptions of products and brands on a certain plane with the data obtained as a result of quantitative and qualitative analysis. These approaches offer different perspectives for understanding how perception maps are used to develop marketing strategies.

They identify brands' strengths and weaknesses, identify potential gaps, and develop effective positioning strategies. Businesses that want to increase their brand value and expand their market share shape their strategic decisions by supporting their perception maps with scientific data and enriching them with an artistic interpretation (Baş, 2004).

Figure 1 reveals the perception map of the automobile industry and the relationship between brand value and consumer perception. This map shows the competitive positions and strategic differences of car brands within the industry.



Figure 1. Perception Map of the Automobile Industry (Baş, 2015: 160).

Looking at the detection map in Figure 1, the following assessments can be made for the four categories:

Low Design and High Cost Category; It covers cars with low initial costs but relatively higher fuel consumption and maintenance costs than the previous group. From an economic point of view, these tools can be costly in the long run. Today's hybrid cars and small SUVs can also be included in this group. Examples are Buick, Continental, Cadillac cars.

In the Low Design and Low Cost Category; There are cars with low and medium cost vehicle purchase, maintenance, repair, etc. Affordable second-hand cars can also be included in this group. Ford Escort, Hyundai, Geo, Lumina, VW Golf cars are examples of these.

High Design (Sporty Looks) and High Cost (Expensive) Category; It includes cars with high cost of purchase, as well as high maintenance, repair, insurance and fuel costs. Cars such as Corvette and Jaguar are among the examples.

High Design (Sporty Look) and Low Cost (Economical) Category; They are cars that offer a reasonable starting value, maintenance, repair, insurance costs. Examples: Camaro, Firebird, Monte Carlo, Sable models. The sporty appearance increases the perception of luxury cars. Thus, it is more dynamic, powerful and a reference to wealth.

The value of a brand is based on the association of customers who are usually attached to the brand (Aaker, 1991: 30). For example, Jeff Stork, the marketing manager of General Motors, aimed to connect the automobile world with the fashion world by defining cars as "fashion on wheels", and this approach made a significant contribution to the advancement of the industry (Zenlea, 2011).

From a sociological point of view, automobiles are considered as indicators of power, status and wealth. From a psychological point of view, car ownership is associated with youth and wealth. From the perspective of political science, automobiles are seen as symbols of freedom and personal privacy (ODD, 2009: 325).

1.1. LEXUS BRAND OVERVIEW

The story of Lexus dates back to the early 1980s, when Toyota Motor Corporation (TMC), one of the world's largest automakers, decided to enter the luxury vehicle market. At that time, Toyota wanted to expand its portfolio and offer a higher-end product that could compete with well-established luxury brands such as Mercedes-Benz and BMW, while being known for its reliable and affordable vehicles (The Brand Hopper Media, 2024).

Founded in 1989, Lexus has adopted a simple but effective strategy in the branding process. By combining the letters "L" for "Luxury", "EX" for "Export", and "US" for "United States" for "United States", a name was quickly created that became synonymous with luxury and elegance. This name has transformed not only the fate of Toyota, but also the entire luxury car market. Lexus shows how branding has the power to redefine perception and revolutionize the industry (Eivie, 2023).

Lexus' core brand strategy includes a comprehensive approach to increasing customer satisfaction and market success. With Toyota's decision to enter the luxury market in the late 1980s, Lexus analyzed the strengths of its competitors and developed its own products in the light of these analyses. One of the brand's key strategies is to offer vehicles equipped with high-quality materials and advanced technologies, with a focus on product excellence (OpenView Partners, 2023). The brand is to provide a

successful customer service experience. The company increases customer loyalty by offering the highest standards of service after the sale of vehicles through an extensive dealer network. Lexus' advertising and promotional strategies include campaigns aimed at reinforcing the brand's image of quality and luxury (OpenView Partners, 2023).

Pascal Ruch, Vice President, Lexus Europe, stated that Lexus will push the boundaries in the luxury automotive sector. It states that innovations in the field of software will allow vehicles to be personalized and luxury to become a personal experience. The company aims to become a 100% electric vehicle brand globally by 2035 and plans to achieve this goal sooner in Europe. The next generation of electric battery vehicles (BEVs) will improve Lexus performance by designing them with modular structures and advanced technologies (Lexus, 2024).

The LF-ZC and LF-ZL concepts represent a sedan and a luxury electric SUV to be launched in 2026, respectively. Both models are shaped by the design theme of "provocative simplicity" (Lexus, 2024).

Below is the brand value of Lexus.

1.2. LEXUS BRAND VALUE

Brand is an important psychological factor in the decision to purchase products, and many people find brand image more valuable than product quality. Luxury brands are preferred because they provide social status and image to consumers. For example, brands such as Hermès bags or Brioni clothing create a perception of high quality and craftsmanship, and this perception provides a significant advantage over similar brands (Çeğindir & Çakmak, 2018: 42). Saaksjarvi and Samiee (2011) define brand identity as the set of unique brand associations that companies want to create or maintain. Brand identity is a reflection of the company's value promise to customers and is defined by how customers perceive the brand.

Roy and Banerjee (2007) state that a strong brand should have an identity that aligns with its brand image. Brand identity refers to what a company stands for and has meanings beyond that. Consumer behavior refers to the mental and emotional processes and observable behavior of consumers. This encompasses the research, purchase, and post-consumption stages of a product or service. The goal is to understand what, how, when, and why people buy (Clotey, Gyampoh, Anaba, Adeniji, 2023: 52).

The products are produced with different identities according to the specifications determined by the brand management. A brand consists of two types of identity: Self-identity refers to the elements that remain constant in existing products and new markets; the extended identity includes other connected elements of the brand (Aaker, 2009: 84).

The colors, patterns, form, and details used in product design play an important role in shaping the brand's personality. These elements can be used effectively to create the desired perception in customers (Çeğindir & Çakmak, 2018: 41).

In all advertisements, the brand identity is presented to the customer through the product and customers are expected to experience it (Çeğindir & Çakmak, 2018: 38). Thus, brand equity emerges when the customer has a high level of familiarity with the brand, creating strong, positive and unique brand associations in their memory (Keller, 2013).

While marketing and branding strategies rely on artistic productions to excite consumers and encourage them to buy, industrial designers of car brands also work with fashion inspiration for new

model launches. An automobile, just like a fashion garment, envelops its owner in an outer shell that is both protective and aesthetic (Roumeliotis, 2015).

The automotive and fashion industry work in coordination to create a brand culture. For example; "The influence of automobiles on fashion is evident, with examples such as leather jackets inspired by biker culture or stylish sunglasses that reflect a gloomy journey along the coast" (Myers, 2024). *Thus, it increases the value of automotive brands in the fashion phenomenon and contributes to the creation of a stronger identity in the global market.*

In a study published by Toyota Motor Corporation in 2004, Lexus' brand value; It is stated that it consists of four basic elements as essence, word, functional benefits and personality. Of these;

Essence is the basic concept of the brand and is a universal concept that does not change over time. The concept is a criterion that determines the quality of all products and services of the brand.

The promise expresses the brand's expectations regarding the experience it offers to consumers. Lexus promises to offer its customers the contemporary standard of luxury.

Functional benefits include brand benefits that Lexus owners enjoy in everyday life.

Personality is the sales and marketing and product personality that manifests itself in the brand's style. Sales and marketing elements are defined as: "confident, interested, inspiring". Every Lexus vehicle is designed to reflect its own product personality traits. Despite their unique character, the vehicles share the Lexus I.D.E.A.L. product personality, which is built within the framework of the L-finesse design philosophy. The product elements of the brand consist of: Impressive, Dynamic, Elegant, Advanced and Permanent.

Lexus' personality is expressed through sales and marketing and product experience, as seen in **Figure 2**, and reflects the brand's essence, words, and functional benefits. These elements make up Lexus' brand equity and shape the brand's overall experience with consumers (Toyota Motor Corporation, 2004).



Figure 2. Lexus Personality (Toyota Motor Corporation, August 2004: 16).

The stated personality elements reinforce the brand identity and value of every Lexus vehicle. However, product personality alone does not define Lexus' overall personality. Lexus' sales, marketing

and service staff also need to show their own personality. To this end, customer satisfaction depends on the contribution of each Lexus employee and partner, as well as product-related factors (Toyota Motor Corporation, August 2004).

Examinations from the stated target statements and four basic elements that make up the brand value of D. Aaker (1991) are given below;

Brand Awareness: Refers to the level of recognition and recall of a brand by consumers. Recognition of a brand is a prerequisite for the brand's other marketing efforts to be effective. If the consumer is not aware of the existence of the brand, they will not be able to develop a positive attitude towards the brand, which will prevent the formation of purchase intention (Rossiter & Percy, 1987; Rossiter et al., 1991). The level of recognition and recall of the brand by the consumer contributes to the strong perception of the brand (Baş, 2015: 117). Based on these statements;

In the case of Lexus, awareness is reinforced through the concept of "The essence of luxury". Lexus offers customers the experience of purchasing and after-sales service in a hospitable environment with its high-quality products. Hospitality is a typical Japanese trait. This is what makes Lexus stand out by combining it with world-class technological capabilities for excellence and exceptional manufacturing capabilities (Toyota, 2008).

L-finesse, on the other hand, is described as the art of Lexus design. L-finesse, which means "pioneering edge with subtlety", is interpreted by Lexus designers as an aesthetic that expresses the understanding of "sharp simplicity" and "intriguing elegance". In the design, the aesthetics created by the combination of clean lines and contrasting themes, free from extraneous elements, creates a "perfect expectation" with elements that invite the driver to the car ready for the journey. In this way, brand awareness is ensured (Lexus Australia, 2008).

Brand Loyalty: Brand loyalty refers to the loyalty and commitment that consumers feel towards a particular brand. This commitment provides an advantage to the brand by reducing the sensitivity of consumers to price changes (Baş, 2015: 102). Brand loyalty reduces risk by giving confidence and leads to the consumer recommending the brand to those around them and reducing their sensitivity to price changes (Çeğindir and Çakmak, 2018).

Lexus promotes brand loyalty through high quality and customer satisfaction. Consumers tend to re-orient to the brand, and the high pricing strategy reinforces the brand's elite position (Giddens, 2002). Lexus is known not only for its motto "In pursuit of excellence", but also for its core brand principle of emphasizing the pursuit of excellence and continuous innovation in accordance with this principle (Road Travel, 2008).

Brand Connotations: Brand associations are the images and thoughts formed in the consumer's mind about the brand (Aaker, 1991: 110). For customers, it is important that the product carries the identity of a certain brand and finds this identity suitable for them (Çeğindir and Çakmak, 2018). Unique, strong and superior brand associations are among the factors that most affect the formation of brand value (Tek and Özgül, 2005).

Lexus' premium features and innovative design cause consumers to perceive the brand in a strong and positive way, and these associations strengthen the brand's position in the market (Tomczak, Reinecke & Kuss, 2018). Lexus is defined as a differentiated and innovative brand dedicated to its business.



Lexus' main market is the United States. Therefore, the phrase 'a premium brand is strong in its home market' emphasizes Lexus' premium position (Rosengarten & Stuemer, 2006).

Perceived Quality: Perceived quality refers to the customer's abstract perception of the overall value of the products offered by a brand. This perception determines how the brand is evaluated compared to its competitors and the market position of the brand (Aaker, 2009: 106). High production standards and quality materials increase the perceived quality of the brand, contributing to the brand's strong position in the market (Baş, 2015: 151).

Lexus' sophisticated manufacturing techniques support the brand's high standards of performance and reliability. Lexus cars are manufactured at the high-tech Toyota Tahara factory in Japan (Christine, 2004). This production facility, unlike other models of Toyota, applies special quality control methods and standards. Consumers prefer the brand based on Lexus' superior performance and reliability, which strengthens the brand's market position (Tomczak, Reinecke & Kuss, 2018).

Lexus' success in the automobile industry is based on a strong brand management approach shaped by a comprehensive 4P strategy. Lexus' marketing strategy can be analyzed within the framework of the four key elements of product, price, distribution and promotion (4Ps):

Product: Lexus offers a wide range of products to meet the various needs of the premium car market. This range ranges from sedans to SUVs, from hybrid vehicles to high-performance models.

For example, the sedan lineup includes the IS, ES, ES Hybrid, GS F and LS models; The SUV range includes NX, LA, GX, RX, RX Hybrid and NX Hybrid (Tomczak, Reinecke & Kuss, 2018). This diversity allows to meet the needs of different consumer segments and offer a suitable model for each segment. This strategy of Lexus contributes to the brand's strong position in the global market (MBA Skool Team, 2023).

Price: It is considered as a critical factor in ensuring the impact and sustainability of the brand on the market. Lexus develops a comprehensive pricing strategy based on value analysis and offers high production value.

Lexus sedans and SUVs are offered at high prices because they are built with high-quality and high-performance materials. This pricing positively affects demand by creating a feeling of scarcity in products. Lexus' price strategy reflects its position in the luxury segment; prices range from \$35,000 to \$90,000, while the high-performance F models are more expensive. Prices are adjusted according to quality and features, supporting the luxury image of the brand. (MBA Skool Team, 2023).

Promotion: Lexus attaches great importance to effective marketing strategies in new model launches. Initially experiencing low market awareness and limited consumer references, this premium brand aims to reach a wider consumer base by investing in advertising, targeting, and branding strategies during launch periods. Lexus' strong reputation and inspiring story ensure that new models are quickly accepted in terms of quality and reliability. The brand's promotion strategy has been enriched with advertising campaigns and event sponsorships that emphasize its luxury and quality image. Their sponsorship of sporting events and charity organizations increases the perceived value of the brand and strengthens customer loyalty (MBA Skool Team, 2023).

Distribution: Lexus uses reliable distribution channels to gain market advantage during launch periods. In addition to physical stores, it creates user-friendly online platforms. Advertising and promotional

strategies for new consumers encourage access to online portals. Lexus establishes an efficient supply chain that ensures that products reach buyers within specified times. In this way, it offers a more effective delivery process compared to its competitors (Shah, 2018).

With approximately 170 sales points worldwide, Lexus is expanding its global reach with showrooms and exhibition centers. The distribution strategy also encompasses providing sales staff and support services with high standards to enhance the customer experience (MBA Skool Team, 2023).

In summary, Lexus' marketing mix comprehensively brings together product, price, distribution and promotion strategies. Its product strategy aims to meet customer expectations by offering luxury vehicles that combine high performance and comfort. The price strategy, on the other hand, is based on the premium pricing model, which reinforces the brand's perception of luxury. The distribution strategy increases the brand's reach through select outlets globally. Promotion strategies include effective advertising campaigns and brand sponsorships (The Brand Hopper Media, 2024).

Below are Lexus' recent sales reports.

1.3. LEXUS SALES REPORTS

According to reports from market research companies such as Statista, J.D. Power, and IHS Markit, premium automaker Lexus sold over 760,000 vehicles worldwide in 2021. This amount of sales represents a 6 percent increase from the previous year (Statista, 2021; J.D. Power, 2021; IHS Markit, 2021).

Regional analyses show that Lexus achieved a 12 percent increase in North America with 332 thousand units, a 1 percent increase in China with 227 thousand units, and a 2 percent increase in Europe with 72 thousand units (Markit, 2021). Sales of 51,000 units in Japan, 30,000 units in East Asia and 28,000 units in the Middle East were sold. In Turkey, sales increased by 62 percent compared to the previous year, reaching the highest level in its history (Statista, 2021).

On a model basis, Lexus' electric vehicles achieved record sales with 260 thousand units, an increase of 10 percent (J.D. Power, 2021). The RX SUV is the best-selling model with 221 thousand units, followed by the ES Sedan with 189 thousand units and the NX SUV with 145 thousand units.

With the introduction of the new NX model in 2022, Lexus plans to continue its growth targets. The company aims to increase its worldwide sales volume to 1 million units by 2030; In Western Europe, North America and China, it aims to provide all of its sales from electric vehicles only (IHS Markit, 2022). In addition, the company plans to have one hundred percent electric vehicles of all its global sales by 2035 (Markit, Power, 2024).

According to a report by Reuters on October 25, 2023, the LF-ZC concept car, which was unveiled at the Japan Mobility Show, can reach twice the range of conventional electric vehicles, about 1,000 kilometers, using "prismatic, high-performance" batteries. The world's best-selling automaker has announced a plan to increase the number of battery electric vehicles, including "the introduction of a new generation of lithium-ion batteries that provide longer range and faster charging" (Reuters, 2023). The LF-ZC electric vehicle has a spacious cockpit and advanced artificial intelligence technology called "Butler". In addition, Toyota has committed to making global sales of the Lexus brand entirely battery-electric vehicles by 2035 (T.R. Ministry of Commerce, 2023).

2. CONCLUSION AND EVALUATION

In this study, within the framework of the brand value of David A. Aaker (1991), the brand value of Lexus, which is produced in the luxury segment of Toyota Motor Corporation (TMC), was examined and tried to be evaluated with a fashion design approach. According to the elements that make up the M rear value, the status of the Lexus brand and how the image of Lexus is shaped by the fashion design approach are examined.

In this perspective; Lexus has a strong reputation as a global brand in the automotive industry. Toyota's solid capital base and efficient production system enable Lexus to take advantage of these advantages. In addition, having a wide distribution network around the world increases the brand's global reach and customer reach.

Lexus has been selected as the most robust, durable and quality automaker brand in the U.S. for 12 consecutive times, reinforcing the brand's superiority in quality and durability and customer satisfaction. Among the threats, the continuous change and development in the luxury car market stands out. For example, according to a report by the Statista Research Department; "Tesla is among the most valuable car brands in the world, with a value of approximately \$75.9 billion" (Statista Research Department, 2024). Tesla's high performance in its category reveals its influence and competitiveness in the global automotive market.

In 2021, Lexus' global sales grew significantly, an increase of 6% to over 760 thousand. Regional sales data highlight strong performance, especially in North America and Turkey. On a model-by-model basis, the 10% increase in electric vehicles and the introduction of the LF-ZC concept car are indicative of Lexus' strategic orientation in the electric vehicle market.

Toyota's 2030 and 2035 targets demonstrate the brand's determination to increase electric vehicle sales globally and maintain its market leadership through innovations in battery technologies. These developments are considered as an important step in terms of sustainability and technological advances in the automotive industry. At the same time, it shows that the Lexus brand is in a strong position.

Lexus can benefit from brand awareness and loyalty, especially in developed countries. However, this may be limited in other markets. In addition, the fact that competitors such as Mercedes offer affordable and fuel-efficient options can make it difficult for Lexus to differentiate (Hawkins, 2020). While technological advances provide Lexus with opportunities to expand, they also bring competition from technology-driven competitors that produce more affordable cars. Limited visibility among potential customers and changes in customer tastes and preferences may require the brand to reconsider its strategies.

Positioning strategy is an approach that determines how competition with competitors will be conducted and what differences will be created to gain an advantage in this competition (Brooksbank, 1994:10). In this context, the three basic components of the positioning strategy are: Determining the target market, analyzing competitors, and defining competitive advantages (Jain, 1993: 398). Based on these components, it can be said that the fashion and automotive industry are a harmonious pair. The shared value of the fashion and luxury car industry is that style, aesthetics and functionality are visibly at the forefront in both areas. Style refers to the aesthetic characteristics of a product and the emotional responses it generates in consumers (Smith, 2024). This increases consumers' loyalty to

brands and provides a competitive advantage in both sectors. In addition, these two areas, where design and aesthetics are at the forefront, deepen the interaction between sectors by offering innovative and creative solutions (Roumeliotis, 2015).

Design is defined as the whole of the functional features of a product for consumer needs (Baş, 2004: 92). One, the main goal of design is not only to sell the product, but also to attract the attention of the consumer and increase the value of the brand by developing innovative and attractive ideas (Çeğindir, 2020: 93). Fashion plays a critical role in determining the position of the brand and providing maximum profit by responding to the needs and expectations of the target market in the production sector (Çeğindir & Çakmak, 2018: 21). This approach should be considered as a strategic tool to strengthen the brand's prestige and market position.

For this reason, the emotional pleasure of the customer as well as the performance in both automobiles and other luxury products is directly proportional to the customer's acceptance of the price to be paid. As a matter of fact, it is debatable whether the driver is more satisfied with the visual aesthetics or driving comfort in the design of the BMW car (Özsaçmacı, 2005). A consumer may be riding in an Alfa Romeo car because he thinks it suits his personality and image (Tepeci, 1999).

Just like fashion brands, car brands position themselves as part of a lifestyle. While brands such as Ferrari, Lamborghini, Mercedes-Benz represent luxury and prestige; Brands such as BMW, Audi and Lexus stand for a sporty and dynamic lifestyle (Garage Italia, 2024). These brands stand out not only for their products, but also for the lifestyle that these products offer. In this way, cars reinforce the sense of belonging to a certain social group, like products in the fashion world. Lexus, on the one hand, stands out with its prestige advantages and stands out as a luxury car, on the other hand, it is in a process that has to cope with the pricing and positioning strategies of competitors.



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