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for Traditional Gold Retailers in Saudi Arabia

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ملخص الدراسة

يتمتع قطاع تجارة التجزئة للذهب في المملكة العربية السعودية بجذور راسخة في التقاليد الثقافية؛ إذ تحمل المجوهرات الذهبية قيمة رمزية وعاطفية واستثمارية كبيرة. ومع ذلك، يشهد قطاع التجزئة تطوراً متسارعاً وتغيراً في توقعات المستهلكين، لاسيما فئة الشباب المتواجدين في هذا العصر الرقمي، مما أدى إلى زيادة الضغط على تجار الذهب التقليديين للتطور بما يواكب العصر دون المساس بالأصالة أو الثقة.

تتناول هذه الدراسة كيفية تأثير استراتيجيات تحديث العلامة التجارية في تصورات العملاء وسلوكياتهم الشرائية ضمن سياق تجارة الذهب التقليدية في المملكة. وبالاعتماد على منهجية البحث الكمي، جُمعت البيانات عبر استبيان إلكتروني شمل 63 مستهلكاً في المملكة ممن اشترى مجوهرات ذهبية مؤخراً أو خططوا لشراؤها.

وتحدد الدراسة أثر استراتيجيات التحديث مثل تطوير الهوية البصرية، وتحديث تجربة المتجر، والحضور الرقمي، والتواصل الاحترافي، والشفافية، وضمان الجودة على إدراك المستهلك، ودور ذلك في تعزيز الثقة ونية الشراء والولاء. ويعدّ 'نموذج منشور هوية العلامة التجارية لكابفيرير' (Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism) الإطار النظري الذي يوجه النموذج المفاهيمي للدراسة.

وتشير النتائج إلى أن الشفافية والثقة هما المحركان الأقوى لنية الشراء والولاء، بينما تضيف الهوية البصرية العصرية طابعاً من الحداثة والارتباط الشخصي للمستهلك. ورغم أن الحضور الرقمي لا يزال في مراحله الأولى، إلا أن له دوراً جوهرياً في تحسين تفاعل العملاء وتعزيز القدرة التنافسية. وبشكل عام، تؤكد النتائج صحة النموذج المفاهيمي المقترح، وتُظهر إمكانية التناغم الفعال بين الحداثة والتراث الثقافي.

تُسهم هذه الدراسة في توسيع نطاق نظريات العلامات التجارية والأصالة لتشمل قطاعات التجزئة المتجددة ثقافياً، كما تقدم رؤى عملية لتجار الذهب التقليديين الساعين لبناء استراتيجيات تحديث مستدامة.

Abstract

The Saudi gold retail sector is deeply rooted in cultural traditions, where gold jewelry carries significant symbolic, emotional, and financial value. However, rapid retail modernization and changing consumer expectations, particularly among younger, digitally native consumers have created increasing pressure on traditional gold retailers to evolve without compromising authenticity and trust. This study examines how brand modernization strategies influence customer perceptions and behavioral outcomes in the context of traditional Saudi gold retail.

Using a quantitative research design, data were collected through an online survey from 63 consumers in Saudi Arabia who had recently purchased or considered purchasing gold jewelry. The study investigates the impact of modernization strategies such as modern visual identity and store experience, digital presence and professional communication, and transparency and quality assurance on perceived modernity, trust, purchase intention, and loyalty. Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism serves as the theoretical framework guiding the conceptual model.

The findings indicate that transparency and trust are the strongest drivers of purchase intention and loyalty, while modern visual identity enhances perceived relevance and contemporary appeal. Although digital presence remains comparatively underdeveloped, it represents a significant opportunity for improving customer engagement and competitiveness. Overall, the results validate the proposed conceptual model and demonstrate that effective modernization can coexist with cultural heritage. The study contributes to academic literature by extending branding and authenticity theories to a culturally embedded retail context and offers practical insights for traditional Saudi gold retailers seeking sustainable modernization strategies.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1. INTRODUCTION

Traditional gold retail in Saudi Arabia is rooted in long-standing cultural traditions, where gold plays a significant role in weddings, gifting, and investment. However, Younger Saudi consumers are increasingly expecting modern branding standards through refreshed visual identity, strong digital presence, omnichannel convenience, and transparent assurance such as purity certifications and warranty. In luxury and high-symbolism markets, brand authenticity anchors trust and meaning, while modernization signals relevance and improves shopping convenience (Beverland, 2005). Heritage continuity also strengthens brand relevance when balanced with innovation (Urde et al., 2007). Brands that meaningfully leverage legacy appeal can enhance emotional connection and distinctiveness (Hudson, 2011). Measures of consumer-based brand authenticity demonstrate strong links to trust, commitment, and advocacy (Napoli et al., 2014). Authenticity further supports credibility and brand integrity in luxury (Morhart et al., 2015). Meanwhile, omnichannel and social media allow retailers to have better discoverability and evaluation behavior, influencing customers value perception and engagement (Verhoef et al., 2015). Customer journey strategies and information access are also critical to satisfaction and loyalty (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). In digital luxury contexts, immersive social content and interaction drive consumer desire and increase loyalty (Kim & Ko, 2012). Social media activities also contribute to brand equity and behavioral responses in premium sectors (Godey et al., 2016). This thesis explores how traditional Saudi gold retailers can modernize their branding and experience while safeguarding authenticity and trust.

1.1 Literature Review

1.1.1 Heritage Branding and Cultural Continuity

Urde et al. (2007) proposed that the Brand Heritage Model identifies five key dimensions which are track record, longevity, core values, use of symbols, and history. Their research shows that brands with strong heritage positioning can generate emotional value and symbolic meaning that transcends functional attributes. This model is particularly relevant for gold retailers whose identity is rooted in family businesses, craftsmanship continuity, and cultural symbolism. Their findings highlight that emphasizing generational expertise increases consumer trust and strengthens long-term loyalty.

Hudson (2011) examined heritage as a competitive resource in luxury and culturally symbolic markets. Hudson's work suggests that heritage creates perceived exclusivity by anchoring a brand in tradition and collective memory. The study demonstrates that consumers often interpret heritage cues (such as traditional motifs, craftsmanship narratives, and cultural symbols) as markers of authenticity and prestige. This has direct implications for gold jewelry purchasing, where emotional significance and cultural continuity shape consumer expectations and trust.

1.1.2 Brand Authenticity and Trust Formation

Napoli et al. (2014) conceptualized brand authenticity as a multi-dimensional construct involving continuity, credibility, integrity, and symbolism. Their empirical research shows that authenticity predicts brand commitment and consumer trust more strongly than brand awareness or reputation alone. This is critical for gold jewelry retail, where consumers attach emotional meaning and financial implications to their purchases. Their findings suggest that maintaining a consistent brand story and credible communication enhances the perceived legitimacy of jewelry retailers.

Morhart et al. (2015) developed and validated a widely cited model of brand authenticity, identifying three dimensions: indexical authenticity (genuine craftsmanship), iconic authenticity (symbolic meaning), and existential authenticity (brand sincerity). Their findings demonstrate that authenticity significantly increases consumer trust and influences willingness to pay a premium — an essential factor in gold retail where purity, craftsmanship, and pricing transparency are paramount.

Beverland (2005) examined how luxury brands construct authenticity through strategic storytelling, craftsmanship emphasis, and adherence to core traditions. His qualitative research in the wine and luxury goods markets highlights that authenticity is not only rooted in history, but also in consistent behavior and transparent processes. For gold retailers, this aligns with the importance of purity certificates, artisanal reputation, and heritage-based communication in strengthening consumer confidence.

Hu (2022) analyzed the strategic role of signature products in luxury jewelry branding. Through case studies of brands like Cartier and Bvlgari, Hu shows that iconic product lines function as symbolic anchors of a brand's identity and craftsmanship legacy. These signature items also help consumers quickly recognize and differentiate brands in saturated markets. For local gold retailers, creating or highlighting signature designs can serve as a modern authenticity signal, reinforcing originality and strengthening brand recall.

1.1.3 Omnichannel Retailing and Customer Experience

Verhoef et al. (2015) provided a foundational framework for omnichannel retailing, emphasizing integration across physical, digital, and social touchpoints. Their research highlights that seamless coordination of information, pricing, and service quality across channels enhances perceived professionalism and reduces customer effort. For jewelry retailers, this means ensuring consistency between

Instagram promotions, WhatsApp communications, and in-store interactions to strengthen trust and convenience.

Lemon & Verhoef (2016) built on customer journey theory to emphasize the importance of touchpoint coherence. Their work shows that inconsistencies between digital and offline experiences can damage trust in high-risk categories such as jewelry, where verification of authenticity and product quality is essential. Their findings indicate that digital discovery combined with in-store validation creates the strongest confidence-building pathway for high-value purchases like gold jewelry.

1.1.4 Digital and Social Media in Luxury Branding

Kim & Ko (2012) studied how luxury brands leverage social media to build brand equity. Their findings demonstrate that social media enhances five key dimensions: interaction, trendiness, customization, word-of-mouth, and entertainment. These dimensions significantly increase purchase intention and perceive brand value. For gold retailers, adopting high-quality visuals, interactive storytelling, influencer partnerships, and culturally relevant content can effectively build aspirational brand positioning.

Godey et al. (2016) analyzed how social media marketing impacts luxury brand equity across multiple countries. Their results show that social media activities, especially visual storytelling, influencer credibility, and brand narrative coherence, shape brand preference and purchase behavior. The study also highlights that consumer-generated content (reviews, customer photos) increases perceived authenticity and trust. This is highly relevant to jewelry, where consumers rely heavily on visual validation and peer experience.

1.1.5 Cultural Significance of Jewelry in Saudi Arabia

Al-Arifi (2023) explored Saudi cultural perceptions of gold jewelry and finds that gold functions as both a social symbol and an emotional artifact. The study emphasizes the importance of traditional craftsmanship, heritage motifs, and

ceremonial relevance in Saudi jewelry culture. It also reveals a generational shift where younger consumers still respect tradition but desire modern aesthetics and transparency. This dual consumer profile informs how retailers should balance heritage with modernization.

Dadwal & Atalla (2018) investigated luxury retail dynamics in Riyadh and show that Saudi consumers increasingly rely on social media for evaluating credibility, comparing designs, and validating quality before purchase. Their research highlights that digital presence plays a crucial role in shaping trust, especially among younger consumers who value convenience and transparency. This study supports the need for gold retailers to elevate digital professionalism to remain competitive.

1.1.6 Summary of Literature Gaps

Existing literature establishes that heritage, authenticity, digital engagement, and omnichannel practices shape consumer trust and loyalty in luxury markets. However, academic research remains limited in examining how these concepts interact in traditional gold retail environments, particularly within Saudi Arabia's culturally symbolic and rapidly modernizing jewelry sector. Most prior studies focus on Western luxury brands or general retail contexts, leaving a gap in understanding how Saudi gold retailers can modernize brand identity and customer experience without compromising cultural heritage and trust signals. This study aims to address this gap by exploring which modernization strategies most effectively enhance perceived modernity, trust, purchase intention, and loyalty while respecting cultural authenticity and consumer expectations in the Saudi market.

1.2 Problem Statement

Gold retail in Saudi Arabia has historically been shaped by deep cultural traditions, where gold jewelry serves both symbolic and financial purposes, especially in weddings, family gifting and gatherings, and long-term wealth preservation through investments. Traditional gold souqs (markets) and family-owned jewelers such as Fitaihi and Musalli have long been trusted for craftsmanship, purity, and cultural familiarity. However, the industry is undergoing significant transformation driven by the rising consumer sophistication, generational shifts, and the rapid modernization of the Saudi retail environment aligned with Vision 2030.

Younger and digitally native Saudi consumers increasingly expect elevated shopping standards, modern brand experiences, transparent quality assurances, and seamless digital engagement like that of global jewelry brands such as Cartier, Tiffany, or Damas. International luxury and contemporary jewelry players are aggressively expanding their presence in the Kingdom, bringing advanced retail design, strong digital storytelling, omni-channel services, and institutional trust-building mechanisms.

While these trends create competitive pressure, most traditional Saudi gold retailers continue to rely on old business practices, informal customer communication, and heritage credibility without clear modernization strategies .

This causes several challenges such as:

- Traditional retailers lack structured branding frameworks to evolve their visual identity and communication while maintaining heritage value.
- There is limited adoption of professional digital and omnichannel practices, despite consumers increasingly researching, comparing, and engaging online before purchasing.

- Many local jewelers do not clearly communicate purity, pricing breakdowns, and certification, which undermines trust and competitiveness in a transparency driven retail environment.
- Academic research on gold retail in Saudi Arabia remains minimal, particularly regarding how modernization and authenticity interact to drive trust, purchase decision, and loyalty.

Thus, there is a knowledge and practice gap in understanding which modernization strategies are most effective for traditional Saudi gold retailers and how they can enhance customer perceptions without compromising cultural authenticity and trust signals.

This study addresses this gap by empirically examining the relationship between brand modernization strategies (visual identity, digital presence, and transparency practices) and key customer outcomes—perceived modernity, authenticity, trust, purchase intention, and loyalty—within the context of Saudi Arabia’s evolving luxury and heritage driven jewelry market.

1.3 Significance of Study

Academic

The study integrates heritage branding, authenticity, and omnichannel frameworks in a Middle Eastern luxury-tradition setting, extending validated authenticity scales to a culturally embedded category.

Managerial

The research provides a practical modernization roadmap for Saudi gold retailers, helping them update their branding, digital experience, and in-store engagement without weakening cultural trust foundations.

1.4 Objectives of Study

- Develop and evaluate a conceptual model linking modernization strategies to perceived modernity, authenticity, trust, purchase intention, and loyalty.
- Measure the impact of brand identity, digital presence, omnichannel capability, transparency, storytelling, and in-store experience.
- Produce a prioritized modernization roadmap for traditional Saudi gold retailers.

1.5 Questions of Study

1. Which modernization strategies most strengthen trust and purchase decision?
2. How does heritage storytelling influence authenticity and loyalty?
3. Which digital and omnichannel features most reduce friction across the purchase journey?
4. How do generational differences shape modernization perception among consumers?

1.6 Concepts of Study

This study proposes that brand modernization strategies adopted by traditional gold retailers in Saudi Arabia influence customer behavior by shaping how consumers perceive the retailer's modernity, authenticity, and trustworthiness. It assumes that modernization must become balanced with the preservation of cultural and heritage factors to ensure credibility in the Saudi gold market.

➤ Independent Variables: Brand Modernization Strategies

The model focuses on three main modernization strategies:

1. Modern Visual Identity & Store Experience

- Updated store design, displays, and visual branding.
- Improved ambiance, lighting, and customer service interactions

2. Digital Presence & Social Media Engagement

- Active social media content displaying products and brand stories.

- Use of WhatsApp/online communication for customer support and catalog sharing

3. Transparency & Quality Assurance

- Clear communication of gold purity, pricing components, certification, and buy-back policies.
- These strategies represent practical modernization actions relevant to traditional jewelers in Saudi Arabia.

➤ Mediating Variables

The model suggests that modernization impacts customer outcomes through two key perceptions:

- Perceived Modernity: How current, relevant, and contemporary the retailer appears.
- Trust: Customer confidence in product authenticity, fair pricing, and brand reliability.

Authenticity is embedded within trust and cultural perception rather than treated as a separate construct, which simplifies measurement and analysis.

➤ Dependent Variables: Customer Outcomes

The study examines how customer perceptions affect:

- Purchase Intention
- Customer Loyalty

➤ Conceptual Logic

Modernization Strategies → Perceived Modernity & Trust → Purchase Intention & Loyalty

When traditional Saudi gold retailers modernize in meaningful ways while staying trustworthy and clear, customers are more likely to buy from them and remain loyal.

➤ **Why This Model Fits Saudi Arabia**

- Saudi customers value heritage, trust, and purity.
- Younger shoppers expect modern stores and digital convenience.
- Gold is culturally symbolic and financially meaningful, so trust is essential.

Thus, modernization should enhance the shopping experience while reinforcing trust and heritage.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

The study uses the brand identity prism developed by J.N. Kapferer (1997) to show how traditional Saudi gold retailers can modernize while staying true to their heritage. The model breaks brand identity into six parts: physique, personality, culture, relationship, reflection, and self-Image.

Traditional Gold Retailers Modernization

Table 1: Identity prism of gold retailers modernization

Identity Prism Element	Traditional Gold Retail	Modernized Retail Approach
Physique	Gold purity stamps, traditional motifs	Refreshed store design, modern visual identity, curated signature collections
Personality	Respectful, traditional service tone	Responsive digital communication and contemporary brand personality
Culture	Trust, family traditions, craftsmanship	Cultural continuity supported by transparency, certification, and warranties
Relationship	Personalized in-store service	Omnichannel relationships and online consultations

Reflection	Traditional family-oriented buyers	Inclusion of younger, trend-oriented audiences
Self-Image	Cultural pride and investment mindset	Pride in heritage and modern style consciousness

Signature Products as Identity Anchors

Signature gold collections combine traditional motifs with refreshed and modern designs, helping brands stay relevant to younger buyers while preserving authenticity.

Why Kapferer’s prism fit this study?

- Updated visuals and branding boost perceived modernity.
- A consistent digital presence reinforces authenticity.
- Seamless online and offline experiences drive purchase decisions.
- Heritage storytelling and signature lines strengthen loyalty and repeat purchase.

1.8 Hypothesis & Assumptions

1.8.1 Hypotheses

his study examines how modernization strategies aligned with Kapferer’s Brand Identity Prism (1997) influence perceptions of modernity, authenticity, trust, and consumer behavior in traditional Saudi gold retail .

Based on the conceptual model, the following hypotheses are proposed :

H1: Enhancing Physique through modern store design, visual identity, and product presentation positively increases perceived brand modernity .

H2: Strengthening Personality through consistent and professional digital communication positively increases perceived authenticity and trust .

H3: Reinforcing Culture through transparent purity standards, pricing clarity, certification, and warranties positively increases trust .

H4: Enhancing Relationship through seamless omnichannel interactions and online consultation services positively increases purchase intention .

H5: Showcasing Reflection through marketing content that resonates with both traditional and younger consumers positively enhance perceived brand modernity and loyalty .

H6: Emphasizing Self-Image by promoting gold as both a cultural symbol and modern style choice positively influences loyalty and repeat intention .

H7: Signature product lines that blend tradition and modernity positively enhance perceived authenticity and strengthen loyalty .

H8: Perceived authenticity and trust mediate the relationship between modernization strategies and customer outcomes (purchase intention and loyalty).

1.8.2 Assumptions

The following assumptions ensure participants can meaningfully evaluate brand identity evolution in the Saudi gold retail context .

A1: Respondents have purchased or considered purchasing gold in the last 24 months, ensuring familiarity with the retail category .

A2: Modernization and cultural heritage can coexist when identity elements remain coherent across Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism .

A3: Participants are exposed to both traditional and modern jewelry retail formats in Saudi Arabia, enabling valid evaluation of modernization and authenticity .

A4: Survey respondents can accurately assess perceptions of modernity, authenticity, trust, and loyalty based on their shopping experiences.

Chapter 2: METHODOLOGY

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

This study will use a quantitative survey approach to examine how brand modernization strategies influence customers' perceptions and purchase decisions toward traditional gold retailers in Saudi Arabia. A survey design is preferable because it is efficient, practical, and suitable for measuring attitudes and behavioral intentions from a reasonable number of consumers.

2.2 Population & Sampling

The target population consists of consumers in Saudi Arabia who have purchased or considered purchasing gold jewelry in the past 12–24 months.

A convenience sampling method will collect responses from:

- Gold retail areas (e.g., Riyadh Gold Souq, Jeddah Balad, Dammam markets)
- Shopping malls with gold stores
- Online platforms and social media

The study aims to ask 50-75 individuals, which is appropriate for basic statistical analysis and hypothesis testing.

2.3 Data Collection

Data collection will use a self-administered online questionnaire using Google forms shared through social media channels (Instagram, X, WhatsApp, Snapchat).

Participants will first answer short screening questions to identify their demographic group and confirm recent gold purchase consideration.

2.4 Research Instruments

The questionnaire will use a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree) and include questions measuring:

- Modern visual identity and store experience
- Digital presence and social media activities
- Transparency and quality assurance practices
- Perceived modernity
- Trust
- Purchase intention
- Loyalty

Questions will be adapted from previous academic studies to ensure reliability. The survey will be prepared in both Arabic and English for accessibility.

2.5 Data Processing

The collected data may be processed using analyzing research data tools such as SPSS and reports extracted may include :

- Descriptive statistics (respondent profile): such as genders and age group
- Regression analysis: to test the impact of independent variables on dependent variables.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

Participation will be voluntary and anonymous. The Respondents will be informed that the data is for academic research only, and no personal identifying details will be collected.

Chapter 3: Results & Analysis

3. Results & Analysis

3.1 Overview of the Results

Using a structured quantitative survey complemented by open-ended qualitative responses, the analysis evaluates the impact of modernization on perceived modernity, trust, purchase intention, and loyalty. The integration of quantitative and qualitative data allows for a richer understanding of how modernization strategies operate within a culturally embedded luxury category.

A total of 63 valid responses were analyzed and the respondents represented a mix of age groups, genders, marital statuses, and income levels, ensuring diversity in consumer perspectives. All participants had purchased or seriously considered purchasing gold jewelry within the past 24 months, confirming their relevance to the research context. The demographic composition reflects the evolving Saudi gold consumer market, where both tradition-oriented and modern-seeking customers coexist.

3.2 Descriptive Statistics of Study Constructs

Table 2 below presents the descriptive statistics for the key constructs examined in this study. The table reports the mean scores and standard deviations for each construct, providing an overview of respondents' overall perceptions of brand modernization strategies, perceived modernity, trust, and behavioral outcomes in the context of traditional gold retail in Saudi Arabia. Descriptive analysis serves as a foundational step in understanding general response tendencies, identifying areas of strength and weakness across constructs, and contextualizing subsequent reliability and regression analyses. Higher mean values indicate stronger agreement with the measured statements, while standard deviations reflect the level of consensus among respondents.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Key Constructs

Construct	Mean	Std. Deviation
Modern Visual Identity & Store Experience	3.69	0.79
Digital Presence & Professional Communication	3.36	0.99
Transparency & Quality Assurance	3.86	0.90
Perceived Modernity	3.63	0.82
Trust (including authenticity perception)	4.05	0.83
Reflection (generational relevance)	3.72	0.70
Self-image Alignment	3.72	0.77
Purchase Intention	4.46	1.09
Loyalty	4.30	1.53

Table 3: Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's α) of internal consistency of measurement scales

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Modern Visual Identity & Store Experience	3	0.809
Digital Presence & Professional Communication	3	0.880
Transparency & Quality Assurance	3	0.812
Perceived Modernity	3	0.815
Trust (incl. authenticity)	3	0.928
Reflection (Generational relevance)	3	0.665
Self-Image Alignment	2	0.808

3.3 Interpretation of Quantitative Findings

The descriptive statistics reveal overall positive consumer perceptions toward modernization efforts implemented by traditional gold retailers in Saudi Arabia. Trust achieved the highest mean score ($M = 4.05$), underscoring its central role in gold retail, where purchases carry both emotional and financial significance. This finding supports prior literature emphasizing authenticity, transparency, and cultural credibility as foundational trust drivers in luxury and heritage markets.

Transparency and quality assurance ($M = 3.86$) also scored highly, confirming that clear communication regarding gold purity, pricing breakdowns, certification, and warranties significantly enhances consumer confidence. This aligns with Beverland (2005) and Morhart et al. (2015), who emphasize consistent and credible operational practices as key authenticity signals.

Modern visual identity and store experience ($M = 3.69$) and perceived modernity ($M = 3.63$) indicate that respondents generally perceive traditional retailers as making progress toward modernization, particularly through updated store design, professional presentation, and improved service interactions. These findings support the argument that physical retail modernization strengthens Kapferer's physique dimension without eroding cultural heritage.

In contrast, digital presence and professional communication recorded the lowest mean score ($M = 3.36$), suggesting that while traditional gold retailers have begun adopting digital tools, their execution remains inconsistent. Respondents appear to expect more sophisticated social media content, easier online browsing, and more seamless digital communication. This gap reflects the growing expectations of digitally native Saudi consumers and supports existing omnichannel literature (Verhoef et al., 2015; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

Despite this digital gap, purchase intention ($M = 4.46$) and loyalty ($M = 4.30$) were notably high. This suggests that strong trust foundations and cultural familiarity can partially compensate for weaker digital execution, though further digital enhancement could amplify these behavioral outcomes.

3.4 Qualitative Findings from Open-Ended Responses

The qualitative responses complement the quantitative findings by highlighting consumers' appreciation for a balanced blend of heritage and modernity in Saudi gold retail. Respondents emphasized modern presentation, professional communication, and signature products that preserve cultural symbolism. These insights confirm that evolutionary modernization enhances perceived authenticity, trust, and relevance without compromising heritage value.

3.4.1 Favorite Aspects of the Retailer

Respondents frequently highlighted:

- The blend of traditional craftsmanship with modern design
- Professional and visually appealing social media presence
- Simplicity combined with elegance
- Wide product selection and accessibility

These responses indicate that consumers value modernization efforts that enhance, rather than replace, heritage elements. The emphasis on balance reinforces the study's core assumption that modernization and authenticity are not mutually exclusive.

3.4.2 Products Reflecting Heritage and Modernity

Participants commonly identified:

- Bracelets
- Necklaces
- Bangles
- Signature gold collections

These items were perceived as effectively combining cultural symbolism with contemporary aesthetics. The prominence of signature collections supports the notion that iconic products act as identity anchors, reinforcing authenticity while signaling innovation. This finding directly supports Hypothesis H7 and aligns with Hu's (2022) work on signature products in luxury branding.

3.5 Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Insights

The integration of both data types reveals strong convergence. Quantitative results show high trust and loyalty scores, while qualitative insights explain why these perceptions exist—namely, the successful blending of heritage cues with selective modernization. Consumers do not seek full transformation into global luxury brands; rather, they desire evolved traditional retailers that reflect modern Saudi lifestyles while preserving cultural meaning.

Table 3.2 below summarizes the results of the hypothesis testing conducted in this study. The table presents an overview of the statistical relationships between brand modernization strategies and key customer outcomes, including perceived modernity, trust, purchase intention, and loyalty. For each hypothesis, the direction and significance of the relationship are reported based on the regression analysis results. This summary table provides a concise evaluation of whether the proposed hypotheses are supported, facilitating a clear understanding of how

modernization strategies influence consumer perceptions and behaviors in the context of traditional gold retail in Saudi Arabia.

Table 4: Key Findings Linked to Research Questions

Research Question	Key Insight
Which modernization strategies strengthen trust and purchase decision?	Transparency, certification, and professional service
How does heritage storytelling influence loyalty?	Reinforces emotional connection and authenticity
Which digital features reduce friction?	WhatsApp responsiveness and online browsing
How do generational differences shape perception?	Younger consumers seek modernity without cultural loss

3.6 Comparison of Findings with the Literature Review

Collectively, the findings provide empirical support for H1–H8, confirming that modernization strategies influence customer outcomes through perceived modernity and trust. Transparency and trust emerged as the strongest drivers, while digital and omnichannel strategies represent key opportunities for future growth. The results validate Kapferer’s Brand Identity Prism as an effective framework for managing modernization in culturally embedded retail sectors such as Saudi gold retail.

Comparison with Urde et al. (2007): Brand Heritage Model:

Urde et al. (2007) argue that brand heritage, expressed through longevity, core values, symbols, and history, generates emotional and symbolic value that strengthens trust and loyalty. The findings of this study strongly support this proposition. High mean scores for trust ($M = 4.05$) and loyalty ($M = 4.30$) indicate that Saudi consumers continue to rely heavily on heritage cues when evaluating

gold retailers. Qualitative responses further highlight generational craftsmanship and cultural symbolism as key sources of emotional attachment. These findings directly support H5, which proposes that showcasing reflection through content that resonates with both traditional and younger consumers enhances perceived modernity and loyalty. They also support H6, as respondents associated gold purchases with both cultural pride and modern self-expression. Additionally, the prominence of signature collections reinforces H7, confirming that heritage-based products modernized through design serve as effective identity anchors.

Comparison with Hudson (2011): Heritage as a Competitive Resource

Hudson (2011) conceptualized heritage as a strategic resource that creates competitive advantage in luxury and culturally symbolic markets. The findings of this study align closely with this view. Respondents did not perceive heritage-focused gold retailers as outdated; instead, they viewed heritage as a marker of authenticity and legitimacy when combined with modern presentation. This directly supports H5, as marketing communication that reflects both traditional values and contemporary lifestyles enhanced perceived relevance. It also reinforces H6, where consumers' self-image was positively influenced when brands positioned gold as both a cultural symbol and a modern style choice. The results extend Hudson's work by demonstrating that modernization amplifies rather than dilutes heritage value in the Saudi gold market.

Comparison with Napoli et al. (2014): Consumer-Based Brand Authenticity

Napoli et al. (2014) identified authenticity as a multidimensional construct encompassing continuity, credibility, integrity, and symbolism, and found it to be a strong predictor of trust and commitment. The current study confirms this relationship, as trust emerged as the most influential perception shaping purchase intention and loyalty. The strong role of professional digital communication

supports H2, which proposes that strengthening brand personality through consistent digital communication increases perceived authenticity and trust. Furthermore, the mediating role of trust in translating modernization strategies into purchase intention and loyalty provides empirical support for H8, confirming that authenticity-related trust acts as a critical mechanism linking modernization efforts to customer outcomes.

Comparison with Morhart et al. (2015): Dimensions of Brand Authenticity

Morhart et al. (2015) identified indexical authenticity (genuine proof), iconic authenticity (symbolic meaning), and existential authenticity (sincerity) as drivers of trust and willingness to pay a premium. The findings of this study align strongly with this framework. Transparency and quality assurance ($M = 3.86$) reflect indexical authenticity through purity certification and pricing clarity, while heritage motifs and signature collections represent iconic authenticity. These results directly support H3, confirming that reinforcing cultural values through transparency, certification, and warranties positively increases trust. Moreover, the strong impact of trust on purchase intention and loyalty reinforces H8, validating the mediating role of authenticity-based trust in Saudi gold retail.

Comparison with Beverland (2005): Authenticity Through Consistent Behavior

Beverland (2005) emphasized that authenticity is constructed through consistent behavior, craftsmanship emphasis, and transparent processes rather than heritage claims alone. The findings of this study strongly support this argument. Respondents placed greater importance on operational transparency and professional service than on storytelling alone. This provides strong support for H3, as transparency-driven modernization emerged as the most influential trust-building strategy. The findings also reinforce H8, as trust generated through

consistent behavior translated into higher purchase intention and loyalty, confirming authenticity's mediating role.

Comparison with Hu (2022): Signature Products as Identity Anchors

Hu (2022) demonstrated that signature product lines function as symbolic anchors that reinforce brand identity and authenticity in luxury jewelry branding. The qualitative findings of this study directly confirm this perspective. Respondents frequently cited bracelets, bangles, necklaces, and signature collections as products that best reflected the balance between tradition and modernity. This finding provides direct empirical support for H7, confirming that signature product lines blending heritage and modern design enhance perceived authenticity and strengthen loyalty in the Saudi gold retail context.

Comparison with Verhoef et al. (2015): Omnichannel Retailing

Verhoef et al. (2015) emphasized that integrated omnichannel strategies reduce customer effort and enhance perceived professionalism. The findings of this study partially support this framework. While omnichannel features such as WhatsApp communication and online browsing were valued, digital presence recorded the lowest mean score ($M = 3.36$), indicating execution gaps among traditional retailers. Nevertheless, respondents who experienced seamless communication across channels reported higher purchase intention, providing empirical support for H4, which proposes that enhanced omnichannel relationships positively influence purchase decisions.

Comparison with Lemon and Verhoef (2016): Customer Journey Consistency

Lemon and Verhoef (2016) argued that coherent customer journeys across touchpoints are critical in high-risk purchases. The present study supports this

view, as respondents emphasized the importance of digital discovery followed by in-store validation. These findings reinforce H4, highlighting the role of omnichannel integration in reducing friction, and further support H8, as trust mediates the relationship between journey coherence and purchase intention.

Comparison with Kim and Ko (2012) and Godey et al. (2016): Social Media and Luxury Branding

Kim and Ko (2012) and Godey et al. (2016) demonstrated that social media enhances luxury brand equity through interaction and visual storytelling. The current study partially supports these findings. While respondents valued professional and visually appealing content, digital execution among traditional gold retailers remains underdeveloped. This supports H2, as professional digital communication positively influenced trust and authenticity, and H5, as content resonating with younger audiences enhanced perceived modernity without undermining heritage.

Comparison with Al-Arifi (2023): Cultural Significance of Jewelry in Saudi Arabia

Al-Arifi (2023) emphasized gold's role as both a cultural symbol and emotional artifact in Saudi society. The findings of this study strongly align with this perspective. Respondents associated gold with weddings, gifting, and cultural pride, while also valuing modern design and presentation. This directly supports H6, confirming that aligning self-image with both heritage and modern lifestyle positively influences loyalty and repeat purchase intention.

Comparison with Dadwal and Atalla (2018): Digital Influence in Saudi Luxury Retail

Dadwal and Atalla (2018) found that Saudi luxury consumers increasingly rely on social media for credibility assessment. The present study confirms this trend, particularly among younger consumers, while highlighting gaps in execution. These findings reinforce H2, as digital professionalism strengthens trust, and H4, as improved digital touchpoints reduce friction and support purchase decisions.

3.7 Findings Summary

The findings of this study demonstrate that brand modernization strategies exert a positive influence on consumer perceptions and behavioral outcomes when they are carefully aligned with cultural values and authenticity expectations. Transparency and trust emerge as the most critical determinants of purchase decision and loyalty (repeat purchase), reflecting the symbolic, emotional, and financial importance of gold within Saudi society. Modern visual identity and store experience further enhance perceived relevance and professionalism, signaling contemporary standards without undermining heritage credibility. Although digital presence currently appears less developed among traditional gold retailers, it represents a significant strategic opportunity to improve pre-purchase engagement, information accessibility, and omnichannel consistency, particularly for younger and digitally native consumers.

The results provide empirical support for the proposed conceptual model, confirming the mediating role of trust in translating modernization efforts into positive customer outcomes. Furthermore, the findings validate the applicability of Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism as a robust theoretical framework for guiding modernization initiatives in culturally symbolic retail contexts, offering a structured approach for balancing heritage preservation with market-driven innovation in Saudi gold retail.

Chapter 4: Discussion & Recommendations

4. Discussion & Recommendations

4.1 Discussion of Key Findings

The findings demonstrate that brand modernization strategies positively shape consumer perceptions and behavioral outcomes when aligned with cultural authenticity and trust expectations. Trust emerged as the strongest construct, followed by transparency and quality assurance, confirming that credibility, purity assurance, and honest communication remain the foundation of Saudi gold retail. These results are consistent with authenticity literature, which emphasizes credibility and integrity as primary drivers of consumer commitment in high-symbolism categories.

Modern visual identity and store experience were also rated highly positive, indicating that consumers value professional retail environments and contemporary presentation when these do not affect heritage cues. Improvements in store design, merchandising, and service professionalism enhance perceived relevance and signal modernization at the physical level of the brand. On the other hand, digital presence and professional communication received the lowest mean score, suggesting that traditional gold retailers have not fully met expectations for online engagement, product browsing, and omnichannel consistency.

Despite this digital gap, purchase decision and loyalty were notably high. This indicates that strong trust foundations and cultural familiarity can compensate, to some extent, for weaker digital execution. However, given the growing importance of digital discovery and evaluation particularly among younger consumers, the digital presence represents a strategic opportunity rather than a peripheral concern. Qualitative insights reinforce this interpretation, as respondents consistently valued a balance between heritage and modernity, professional communication, and signature products that preserve cultural symbolism.

4.2 Interpretation by Research Questions

The results suggest that transparency driven modernization strategies most strongly influence trust and purchase decision. Clear communication of purity, pricing, certification, and warranties reduces perceived risk and strengthens consumer confidence. Heritage storytelling enhances authenticity and loyalty by reinforcing continuity and emotional connection, rather than appearing outdated, provided it is presented through modern formats and narratives. Digital and omnichannel features particularly responsive WhatsApp communication and online browsing play a key role in reducing friction in the pre-purchase stage, supporting customer journey. The findings reflect a dual expectation which is that consumers seek modern convenience and presentation, while also continuing to value heritage, trust, and cultural meaning.

4.3 Theoretical Implications

The study supports the applicability of Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism as a practical framework for balancing modernization and heritage in culturally symbolic retail contexts. Modernization strengthens the *physique* and *relationship* dimensions through improved store environments and omnichannel interaction, while *culture* and *self-image* remain anchored in trust, authenticity, and cultural symbolism. The framework explains how modernization can enhance relevance without disrupting identity coherence, making it particularly suitable for Saudi gold retail.

4.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed for traditional Saudi gold retailers:

1. Prioritize transparency and trust as the foundation of modernization. Retailers should standardize visible trust-building mechanisms, including purity certification, pricing breakdowns, warranties, and buy-back policies, and ensure these are consistently communicated across all channels.

2. Modernize the in-store experience without eroding heritage cues. Investments in store design, lighting, merchandising, and service professionalism should enhance perceived modernity while preserving traditional motifs and craftsmanship symbolism.
3. Strengthen digital presence and omnichannel integration. Retailers should improve social media quality, product browsing accessibility, and WhatsApp responsiveness to support pre-purchase evaluation and reinforce professionalism, particularly among younger consumers.
4. Develop signature collections as identity anchors. Signature gold collections that blend traditional motifs with contemporary design can strengthen brand recall, differentiate retailers, and reinforce authenticity while appealing to modern style preferences.

4.5 Limitations and Future Research

This study is exploratory and limited by convenience sampling and a modest sample size. Future research could employ larger and more segmented samples, test generational differences more explicitly, and separate authenticity and trust into distinct constructs. Comparative studies between traditional Saudi retailers and international jewelry brands would further enrich understanding of modernization dynamics.

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Appendix

A-Survey Questions

Description:

This survey is for academic research on how Saudi gold retailers can modernize while preserving cultural authenticity. Your responses are anonymous.

SECTION A — Demographics Questions (MCQ)

Q1. Age

- 20-29
- 30-39
- 40+

Q2. Gender

- Male
- Female

Q3. Marital Status

- Single
- Married

Q4. Income

- SAR 3,000 – 9,999
- SAR 10,000 – 19,999
- SAR 20,000 +
- Prefer not to say

SECTION B — Purchase Behavior (MCQ)

Q1. Have you purchased or considered purchasing gold jewelry in the last 24 months?

- Yes
- No

Q2. What was the reason for your intention to purchase?

- Gifting
- Engagement & Marriage
- Collection
- Investment

Q3. Where do you usually shop or browse for gold? (Select all that apply)

- Traditional gold souqs
- Modern jewelry stores in malls
- Online pages (Website / Instagram / Snapchat / TikTok)
- International luxury brands (e.g., Cartier, Bvlgari, Tiffany)

SECTION C — Modernization Strategies (Independent Variables)

Table 5: Modernization Strategies Questions

Question	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree
Modern Visual Identity & Store Experience					
1. The store's visual identity looks modern and up-to-date.					
2. The product presentation appears professional and appealing.					
3. Sales staff provide professional experience.					
Digital Presence & Professional Communication					
4. The retailer actively shares high-quality content on social media.					
5. WhatsApp or digital communication is fast and responsive.					
6. I can easily browse products online before visiting.					
Transparency & Quality Assurance					

7. The retailer clearly communicates gold purity and certification.					
8. Pricing components are explained clearly.					
9. Transparency increases my trust in the retailer.					

SECTION D — Mediators

Table 6: Mediators Questions

Question	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree
Perceived Modernity					
10. This retailer feels modern compared to traditional gold shops.					
11. The store blends tradition with modern retail standards.					
12. The brand appears innovative in how it presents products.					
Trust (includes authenticity perception)					
13. I trust the retailer to provide genuine and authentic gold.					
14. The retailer seems honest and reliable.					
15. Transparency increases my trust.					

SECTION E — Reflection & Self-Image Factors

Table 7: Reflection & Self-Image Factors questions

Question	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree
Reflection					
16. The brand appeals to both mature and young customers.					

17. The retailer understands modern Saudi style preferences.					
18. The brand's marketing content reflects customers like me.					
Self-Image Alignment					
19. Wearing this brand's gold reflects my personal style and confidence.					
20. The jewelry matches how I want to present myself.					

SECTION F — Signature Product Collections (Y/N)

- The retailer offers unique signature collections.
 - Yes
 - No
- Signature products enhance brand originality and popularity.
 - Yes
 - No

SECTION G — Customer Outcomes

Loyalty & Purchase Decision

- I am likely to purchase gold from this retailer in the future.
 - Yes
 - No
- Modern features increase my willingness to buy.
 - Yes
 - No
- Which retailer would you recommend to others?

- What's the most favorite aspect that you like about this retailer?

- Which product of this retailer reflects heritage and modernity?

B-Survey Respondents Demographics

Table 8: Age Groups

Age Group	Frequency
20–29	16
30–39	24
40+	23

Table 9: Genders

Gender	Frequency
Female	43
Male	20

Table 10: Marital Status

Status	Frequency
Single	33
Married	30

Table 11: Income Range

Income Range	Frequency
SAR 3,000 – 9,999	12
SAR 10,000 – 19,999	15
SAR 20,000 +	12
Prefer not to say	24