Craft of India: Luxury context

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Abstract
India has always been famous for its rich tradition and crafts worldwide. This was the reason why even most of the invaders were attracted towards India. Nowadays tourists travel to India getting allured with the myriads of Arts and crafts practises present here. With exports rising every year, today, Indian Handicrafts have shown a great potential in the domestic as well as international market. But this rise in the demand of ‘Handcrafted Indian Products’ at the global level has also opened doors for many threats that may result in the exploitation of artisans and the craft itself (As happened in case of ‘Chandua of Pipili’). As such, it becomes quite important that crafts must have a higher perceived value, globally, to satisfy the needs of the artisans and the entire craft industry itself, it must turn into luxury. This Paper takes this argument forward and tries to explain the reasons why it is important to turn craft into luxury.

Keywords: luxury, handicrafts, Chandua of Pipili

Introduction
When Pixel-perfect fails to state the level of intricacy and benchmarks do not suffice to quantify the quality standards, this is the level of manual dexterity that is involved in the manifestation of Indian Handicrafts. Be it hunting tigers and Stags from the wild
imagination onto the canvas of gold, from ‘Thewa’ or highly intricate patterns embroidered with fine wires of gold and silver, from ‘Zardozi’, Indian handicrafts have always left people perplexed. But this is not just about manual dexterity, because such level of detail and intricacy can only be achieved with extreme dedication and diligence and thus craftsmanship cannot be defined as a mere skill to manipulate material & form, rather it is an operation involving the complete coordination of mind and soul, that works in absolute synchronization and results in the expression of the artisans emotions and spirit into the material form, making the craft and craft products exceptionally exclusive which cannot be replicated easily. Such high order of craftsmanship and the equally rich culture has helped preserve India’s rich legacy and heritage throughout the centuries and brought respect and recognition from all over the world.

All Indian states embody their own style and origins of craft, building an extraordinary treasure trove of unique craftsmanship. In fact, the rich and exotic appeal of high-quality handicraft goods produced by communities and tribes across cultures - be it through the bold use of colour, patterns, texture or design - is widespread, spanning the remote interiors of the country. This has not only successfully attracted demand for them from the domestic market, but has also enabled this sector to carve a niche in the global market, making India the world’s major exporter and supplier of handicrafts. According to an ASSOCHAM study, India's handicrafts exports are likely to cross the Rs 17,000 crore mark by the end of the current fiscal year 2015-16. It is further expected to cross Rs 24,000 crore by FY 2020-21.

Lot of entrepreneurs have entered this sector. Most of them aim at providing employment opportunities to the artisans and reviving the traditional crafts of India. Few of them have been successful in creating a worldwide demand for Indian Handicraft Products. But this rise in demand has also opened doors for many threats that may result in the exploitation of artisans and the craft itself.

**Evolving Design phenomena: Case Study**
Consider the case of ‘Chandua of pipili’. The Applique work like Chandua of Pipili, in Puri district of Orissa is an internationally well-known craft. Broadly stated, the appliqué work refers to the cut out decoration or ornament fastened to a larger piece of material or surface. It is a technique by which the decorative effect is obtained by superposing patches of coloured fabrics on a basic fabric. The appliqué units manufacture a variety of items, such as, Chandua (canopy), decorative umbrella, bed cover, window screen, vanity bag and different wall hangings. These articles are made using simple types of raw materials like, coloured cloth, glasses, threads etc. the skilled artisan fashion many attractive designs including different animals and birds like elephants, lions, parrots, swans, peacocks etc. Most of the designs are highly artistic and traditional in nature. But these days some of the modern designs are also being experimented, to suit the tastes and the preferences of the foreign tourists keeping an eye over the market.

The process of making Chandua remained largely unchanged for the past few centuries but during the last two three decades these have undergone tremendous changes. The Chandua makers attribute two reasons for such change in the appliqué work; the first reason is the changing taste of the customers and the second is the commercialization of the products. They believe ‘when the survival of the appliqué work owes it to the tourists, it is the choice of the tourists that has effected a change on the products and its making style. Customers want the products to be cheaper and attractive. Artisans go for more profit, at times ignoring the quality. The traditional products like Chhati (large umbrella used during religious ceremonies), Batua (special type small bag to carry betel leaf and other accessories), Bana (flag) etc are fast disappearing from the appliqué market and instead wall hangs, garden umbrellas, lamp sheds, cushion covers and letter bags are now prepared as they are very much in demand by the tourists. Besides, in accordance with the demands of the consumers, attractive motifs like coloured Surya Mukhi Parrot, Dancing Peacock, Elephants are gradually getting withdrawn and more and more of Monochrome and patch work are in use.

**Analysis of the prevailing factors and conditions:**
Such an intervention into craft where using the substitutes for the original raw material, speeding up the process & changing the motifs and designs, that hinders the originality and heritage of the craft, possess a major threat to the Indian Handicrafts sector, which is being one of the negative impacts of the globalization. Also other factors like exploitation of the artisans by the middlemen, turning their skills into mere labour, persuade artisans to think of choosing other professions over pursing craft. What most of the entrepreneurs are doing is that they are trying to cater to the mass market by trying to make the products affordable and feasible, which is constantly dragging artisans towards the bottom of the value chain.

Craft has always been a basic activity in human society; articles of everyday use were made with the perfect blend of utility and aesthetics. Though it started to cater to the local society, crafts eventually evolved to become intricate and exclusive to ensure (1) certain standard of quality in the products meant for special occasions (rituals), and (2) to provide the finest of products to the patrons and to the other influential people in the society without affecting the making of craft products for daily use.

But now, most of the utility products of everyday life are mass-produced, made by machines. And we should accept the fact that craft products, made with hands, cannot compete with mass-produced products in terms of affordability and availability. In practice of doing so, we might end up creating pressure over the craftsman to discontinue the craft or deteriorate the craft itself in terms of material, process or design. Though it is also equally true that crafts can never be divorced from utility and artisan’s (and its community) daily life, but this just couldn’t provide value to the artisan. Therefore, it becomes quite important that crafts must have a higher perceived value, globally, to satisfy the needs of the artisans and the entire craft industry itself, it must turn into luxury.

**Luxury and Perception: Case Study**

Luxury depends on the perceived value of a product/experience. Higher the perceived value of something, more are the chances to consider it to be luxurious. Luxury is
nothing but a perception towards something that we call luxurious, and this perception depends on the person’s personality and the context. If a desired combination of this personality and context can be discovered or created, we might create or provide a perception to see an object/service as luxurious/luxury. And this very perception can turn craft products into items of luxury, and may result in the identification of the true value of crafts and recognition, respect & benefits to the craftsmen and more.
This is exactly what happened in the case of Swiss watches. Watchmaking was a craft that now has turned into luxury.

Watchmaking began in Switzerland after the Huguenot refugees brought the manufacture of portable timepieces to Geneva in the second half of the 16th century. At that time, Geneva, the city of Calvin, was a veritable boom town. In the 19th century, Côte-aux-Fayes and its neighbouring villages would have been entirely cut off. And that, they say, is one of the factors that enabled the development of the Swiss watch industry. The original inhabitants of the Jura were mostly farmers, who tended their crops or their cattle throughout the warm months of the year. But when winter closed in, they were forced indoors. Staunch Protestants, they were allergic to idleness. And so while the women sat by the fireside making lace, the men constructed wooden puzzles and toys, and then complex clockwork mechanisms – and finally timepieces, which they would travel into town to sell as soon as the snow thawed.

There is a further explanation, also linked to Protestantism – or rather, to Calvinism. Under the church reforms implemented by theologian John Calvin in 1541, the wearing of jewels and finery was banned. This forced Swiss goldsmiths and jewellers to turn their hands to another trade: watchmaking. The Watchmakers’ Guild of Geneva was established in 1601. Soon the city became so crowded with watchmakers that newcomers established themselves in the calm of the Jura, an area already known for its talented craftsmen. According to the Federation of the Swiss Watch Industry (http://www.fhc.ch), by 1790 Geneva was exporting 60,000 watches a year.
Switzerland was threatened by the makers of quartz and LED watches in the United States and Japan in the 1970s. Mechanical watches involve supreme craftsmanship to ensure that timepiece is working just fine. It’s like a universe in itself. It takes about 163 parts to get even the simplest of automotive movement right which can further extend to 200 to 300 parts for including features like day, moon phases etc. On the other hand Quartz and LED watches are very much easier and faster to make, also they do not require any special expertise that only certain specific workers can do, like in case of mechanical watches, in fact quartz and LED watches can be mass produced. Though Swiss watch industry might have lost its importance or identity against affordable and easily available Quartz and LED alternatives. But it fought back by insisting on authenticity, craftsmanship – and luxury.

The Swiss watch makers sought more excellence in terms of movements and processes and newness and rarity in the materials. They considered design and technological intervention to improve the process and product to make them exceptional and even followed various marketing strategies like high prices, advertising, branding etc. to position themselves as Luxury Brand. Today, with mobile phones in trend, when watches are not even considered to tell time anymore, when Quartz and LED watches are struggling, authentic Swiss mechanical watches like Rolex, Rado etc. are still ruling the international market.

Crafting Luxury

Talking about Luxury, as per dictionary meaning, it can be defined as a state of great comfort or elegance, especially when involving great expense or an inessential, desirable item which is expensive or difficult to obtain or a pleasure obtained only rarely.

It may be well quoted that luxury is a basic human need – a way of winning something back against the cruelty of life. The urge appears to have been there from the beginning. In his 1992 book Histoire du Luxe en France, Jean Castarède mentions a 30,000-year-old ivory figurine known as the ‘Venus of Brassenpouy’. He notes that she has braided hair. ‘As bizarre as it might seem, one of the first concerns of man (or woman) was not
clothing or protection, but seduction.’ Ornamentation predates clothes and weaponry, he argues. Castarède also points out that early man shared another of our basic urges, which is to dream. Dreams and longings provoke not only self-expression through art, but also the impulse ‘to single oneself out through ornamentation, make a mark through monuments, seduce others by acquiring or giving rare objects, and finally to better enjoy life by improving one’s food and surroundings. Voilà le luxe.’ In other words, man has aspired to better things since he first glimpsed the stars.

The primitive impulses behind our desire for luxury also nudge us towards a clearer definition of this slippery word. As Castarède suggests, luxury is often associated with the realm of the senses: voluptuous images, tastes, odours and sensations. Indeed, sensuality is a key component of many luxury brands. Christopher J Berry offers further clues in his book The Idea of Luxury (1994). He writes that luxury is often, erroneously, perceived as all that is superfluous. But ‘if it takes six screws to secure a shelf then more than that number are redundant. [and] a seventh screw is not a “refined” luxury good.’ Instead, Berry submits the idea that a luxury is a refinement on something that already exists. It is not superfluous, but it is substitutable. In other words, any second-hand jalopy will get you from A to B, but driving a Bentley provides an additional sensual pleasure. Berry remarks that luxuries generally have a wide appeal, even though they remain out of reach of the majority. Antiquarian books and rare stamps may be extremely precious to niche groups of collectors, but despite their value they are not considered luxuries. All of us, however, can imagine enjoying a weekend at a five-star hotel. For Berry, luxury falls into distinct categories: food and drink, clothing and accessories, shelter and leisure. These are areas where the basics are available to most of us, but where luxurious substitutes are available to a few.
Conclusion:

Concluding all that, Luxury is something that is extreme in its quality and exclusive in its identity, something that cannot be easily recreated, and something that stands out amidst all its accessible and affordable counterparts. Now if we look back to Indian handicrafts, it has got everything that makes it a luxury in itself. With finest of the processes involved and best & rarest of the raw materials used, Indian handicrafts present utmost level of exclusivity along with the insight to rich cultural heritage of the country, making it a pleasure obtained only rarely. Recreation or creating replica of craft products is almost impossible without the expertise that can only be achieved with years of dedication and diligence. With its mass produced counterparts, craft products become inessential yet desirable.

The only thing which is sad, to qualify to be a luxury, the thing that craft is lacking is that it does not involve any great expenses; it is not that difficult to obtain. People desire for it, they very easily get it; they are being purchased rather being achieved. We are constantly trying to make craft products available and affordable, which are taking away this huge potential from Indian crafts to turn into luxury and the rule the international luxury market to provide the artisan respect and right value for his magnificent work.

We need to understand that craft products need to be authentic over attractive, difficult to obtain (must involve greater expense) over easily available. We should target the
niche rather the masses for marketing the craft products yet exposure and awareness must be widespread (In terms of branding and advertising). Pricing should be based on skimming over penetration. Once we will be able to position the craft products perfectly (providing the right context to the right target consumers), then only people will be able to realize the true value of crafts. And this will collectively empower the artisan, craft and the country itself.

References:

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Craft: A contemporary narrative

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Abstract

Commonly, craft is envisaged as a process. ‘Craft only exists in motion. It is a way of
doing things, not a classification of objects, institution, or people’ (Adamson, 2007)
In India, during the 5000 years of urban evolution since the Harappan period, the articles
were produced for local consumption and, to a lesser extent for use in trade or barter. All
the articles were utilitarian, be it for everyday use or for ritual purpose, and concern of
the community as a whole. Its original function became extinct once the artifact had
served its purpose and the religious ceremony had been performed. The artist-craftsman
was intimately bound up with the caste and trade he was born in with seemingly no
religious restriction in professional activities. He has always fulfilled the needs of the
entire community as well as worked for patrons on ambitious artistic court and temple
projects, where his work would reflect the desired aesthetic sensibility.

Post-independence, machine made alternatives gave more options to choose from; hence
the craftsmen’s exclusive masterpiece took a back seat. On the other hand, many
rural/tribal level social structures collapsed or got absorbed into modern industrial
society. This led to the alienation of various crafts products/practices from the society.
Hence future generations of the craft community with restricted opportunity to practice them, lost their technical and artistic skills.

In India, during the latter half of the twentieth century, rapid changes in the society and lifestyle led to the formation of new psychographic zones. These major changes in the lifestyle of the average Indian were also observed internationally, which can be summed up in the statement by Margaret Thatcher during an interview in Women's Own magazine that “…there is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families…” (Keay, 1987). In the Indian society, earlier every product had specific cultural connotations, which were understood within the regional communities. The new cultural institutions have stripped away the age old meaning and purpose associated with each product. Now the product is individualistic with emotive connotations and global in its application. These connotations appeal to the psychographics extending to an individual’s own persona and surroundings and have risen from cross cultural interactions across the globe. For instance, gifting a rose to express one’s love and amorous feelings for the other is not mentioned in Indian culture anywhere, but its connotations are now well understood within Indian communities.

For the new and highly individualistic product, a new skill set was required which was made possible with the varied use of technology. Technology became craft; the way it is applied and the will and the idea behind it paved the way for a new generation of techno-craftsmen. This paper would focus on innovative application of technology to create an exclusive product for an individual vis-à-vis a community.

**Key words:** Expression, Persona, Individualist

**Introduction:**
The concept of craft is perceived across the world as a process; it is any work done by hand and requires a certain skill set. ‘Craft only exists in motion. It is a way of doing things, not a classification of objects, institution, or people’ (Adamson, 2007). Whereas, in India, till independence and in many sectors even today, each product created has
been the concern of the community as a whole. Since the Harappan period, through five thousand years of urban evolution, traditional practices and knowledge have been handed down from one generation to the next within the community. Each product, be it for utilitarian or for ritual purpose contained in itself community specific meanings, symbolism and aesthetics. It was hand-crafted by the artist-craftsman, to always fulfil the needs of the entire community and his work would reflect the desired aesthetic sensibility as well as community specific cultural connotations.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, major and rapid lifestyle changes noted globally, reflect the formation of new psychographic zones and consumer segments. This is substantiated in the statement given by Margaret Thatcher during an interview with Women's Own magazine that, there is no such thing as society, there are individual men and women, and there are families (Keay, 1987). Similar changes are reflected in the Indian society post-independence, when the country worked towards industrial development and looked to synch global sensibilities.

Across the world Indian lifestyle is known through its rich cultural heritage and handicrafts. With modernization, the craftsmen’s community specific yet exclusive masterpiece took a back seat. Many rural/tribal level social structures collapsed or got absorbed into modern industrial society, which led to alienation of various crafts products/practices from the society. Future generations of the craft community with restricted opportunity to practice them, lost their technical and artistic skills. On the other hand, with its innovative applications technology became craft, and paved way for a new generation of techno-craftsmen.

India became independent in 1947. With its rapid industrial developments, technological advancements, cross-cultural interactions and influences from across the globe impacted the length and breadth of the country and paved the way for new lifestyles. These new lifestyles led to the rapid formation of new psychographic zones made up of the individuals Margaret Thatcher talked about. These individuals, risen from cross cultural interactions create psychographic cantered consumer segments across the globe. They crave new products with emotive connotations created for individual psychographics, persona and surroundings; products that are global in their application instead of
products with culture and community specific meaning. In the Indian context this could be well understood with an example a rose which addresses the needs of the psychographic specific consumer.

**Cultural connotations: A Valentine rose**

It is interesting to note that gifting a rose to express one’s love and amorous feelings for the other, is not mentioned in Indian culture anywhere, but its connotations are well understood in the Indian community. This is in spite of the fact that India’s association with roses goes back more than 5000 years, and is known through traditional myths, legends and folklore. A rose would typically have been used as an offering to the gods. The founders of *Ayurveda* from around first century BC used roses mainly for their medicinal properties. For its rich fragrance and its influence on the human senses, the book *AnangaRanga* written about 1172 C.E. by the poet KalyanaMalla, mentions the lavish use of rose water for amorous interludes (Burton, 1885). Two Portuguese travellers, Domingo Paes and FernazNuniz during their visit to Vijayanagar Kingdom in 1537 observed that roses were integral to the daily life of both aristocrats and commoners, who adorned themselves with roses. The king, Krishna Deva Raya, would dress in pure white silken robes embroidered with golden roses. Every morning he would shower his audience and courtiers, favorite horses and elephants with white roses (Sewell, 1980). Mughal emperor Akbar took camel loads of roses to give to the wives of his allies. There are many portraits in Mughal miniature painting traditions that feature the subject holding a rose.

**Emotive connotations of the rose:**

Rose is naturally grown, yet is as a product of consumption bearing emotive connotations worldwide. Moreover, within the family of roses all the different colour varieties have acquired different meanings through cross cultural interactions across the globe. Gifting a natural rose has very specific emotive connotations with a potential to convey a message that sometimes words cannot express. It bears a physical as well as symbolic manifestation of emotional and amorous feelings of one person towards the other. If the receiver is not sure of the feelings towards the giver, the immediate
emotional impact may be an ambiguous one. A rose is perishable and the freshness, colour and form of the flower plays a highly decisive role in conveying/perceiving the intensity of the emotion and strongly indicates the occasion and intention of the giver and relationship between the two. When the rose is sold, thorns are already removed by the florist.

Moreover, is the flower is dried and preserved in the books to keep afresh the memories associated with it, this could be perceived as an intense and positive emotional response to the gift. On the other hand, throwing away the flower once it has dried, could be considered a bad omen for the relationship; so the receiver may choose to preserve it.

The rose now serves as a memento or a souvenir of feelings experienced and moments spent together. It becomes a meaningful object in itself, taking on a special emotional value that can trigger powerful, long-lasting emotions. The gesture of gifting the rose and symbolism of the act contains these emotive connotations more than its fragrance. There has always been a desire for a non-perishable rose to cherish the very moment and for an extended experience. It further acquires new connotations when it is artificially recreated.

In modern times, the requirement of a non-perishable rose was perceived and artificial rose/flower production has progressed to a point where it is hard to visually differentiate between real and artificial. Some of the main advantages of an artificial flower are longevity, low maintenance, appearance, practicality and availability of a range of colours. However, artificial flowers available in wide range of materials and colours have not been able to reflect the connotations of a real flower, as the artificiality of the rose tends to weaken the emotional impact on the receiver. This drawback has been identified and viewed as an opportunity to address this desire to have a non-perishable rose reflecting the connotations similar to a real rose. The techno-craftsmen have evolved an innovative application of electroforming techniques, to create a rose in gold. This charts new territories of individuality, emotion and exclusivity.
Electroforming technique and its innovative application:

ASTM B 832-93 describes it simply and concisely as follows: “Electroforming is the production or reproduction of articles by electro-deposition upon a mandrel or mould that is subsequently separated from the deposit.” Technically, in the process of electroforming, a metal or conductive material is immersed in an electrolytic solution with a DC power source to deposit electroplatable metal. Nickel and copper are preferred over other metals such as silver, platinum, gold, tin, iron, etc. because of their physical and chemical properties are more suitable for electroforming.

The process allows high-quality production of interesting shapes from conductive and non-conductive mandrels. Non-conductive manmade objects as well as natural objects—leaves, flowers, shells or nuts can be made conductive with the application of a layer of conducting paint.

Compared to other basic metal forming processes such as electroplating, casting, forging, stamping, deep drawing, machining and fabrication; electroforming as a technique is very effective to achieve fine surface finishes and to maintain complex interior configurations. The process addresses extremely close dimensional tolerances and complexity and helps to reproduce light weight form with extreme precision without shrinkage and distortion.

The precision offered by electroforming allows finer geometries with superior edge definition and near optical finish. It enables retention of the aspects of a rose such as delicacy and softness and permits excellent edge definition of the rose petals. Plating is controlled and kept much thinner with desired wall thickness as it grows molecule by molecule on the natural rose which eventually is not removed. The process facilitates high volume to reach the masses with low production cost, vis-à-vis mass customization at affordable prices. The fine process of depositing electroplatable metal onto a conductive patterned surface ensures no loss of metal, though it may require adjustments in chemistry, operational parameters, and methodology depending on the properties of the metal used. Due to its refined crystal structure, electroformed metal is extremely pure to the extent that electroforming is possible in karat gold ranging from 8 karat to
pure 24 karat. Gold has the strength and coherence to support itself and to perform the task for which it is designed.

Use of electroforming technique with an inherent ability to accurately capture intricate surface details has always led to innovations in the field of design, art and craft. One such innovative and inspirational endeavour is electroforming the natural rose in gold giving a new dimension to a naturally available product. The fabrication of the golden rose requires a fresh flower every time as a mandrel, it is selected with a keen eye towards a perfect desired form. A rose with even the slightest flaw is discarded.

**The exclusive rose in gold:**
The gold electroformed rose leads to the ambiguous feeling which depends on the perception of the giver and the receiver. The natural rose after being transforming into a golden rose acquires new connotations and has taken emotive expression to a different platform. With these connotations, it has become an icon. It could now be gifted to someone precious to you; your daughter, lover, wife, sister, mother. It amalgamates the emotive connotations associated with a natural rose and the connotations associated with gold as precious material. It could be flaunted, displayed, cherished instead of preserving in a book where it stays hidden. The rose in gold has acquired this value not because of the precious and expensive metal but because of its enhanced intrinsic value, because of the aesthetic appeal and emotional impact on the giver and the receiver. At once, the tangible value of the material is taken over by its intangible value.

When it is time to judge the gold electroformed rose, it is difficult to categorize it in terms of product development with enhancement or as an innovative product development. “Enhancement means to take some existing product or service and make it better. Innovation provides a completely new way of doing something, or a completely new thing to do, something that was not possible before…” (Norman, 2004). It is much easier to categorize it as an enhancement, as the existing product could definitely be perceived as improvised. At the same time it is an innovation, as in this category existed
previously to provide a similar experience. It is further established when the said product is judged at the three levels of design: visceral, behavioural and reflective.

At the visceral level the product is dealt with by the intuition and not the intellect; it is the immediate emotional impact as well as sensuous experience. “Because visceral design is about initial reactions, it can be studied quite simply by putting people in front of a design & waiting for reactions. In the best of circumstances, the visceral reaction to appearance works so well that people take one look and say “I want it”…” (Norman, 2004). At the behavioural level the product is dealt with in terms of the pleasure and effectiveness of use. Good behavioural design is full of content and tells a story. It is human centred and satisfies the needs of the people who use the product; and at the reflective level the product is dealt with by looking at the meaning or message it contains and sends to others and the culture it belongs to.

When the two different forms of a rose: the artificial available in different materials and colours and the gold electroplated rose are judged against the natural rose at the three levels of design: visceral, behavioural and reflective, the artificial rose lags behind at the behavioural level as it lacks the pleasure and effectiveness of the gesture. It lacks content and has no story to tell. Whereas, the gold electroformed rose performs well at all levels: it conveys the message (emotion) and fulfils the desired function very well. It has the potential to do the trick and leads to utmost satisfaction.

**Conclusion:**
The response or emotions as well as the sensuous experience connected to a natural rose, are so constant across all societies and cultures that its connotations are perceived in a similar fashion across the globe. The technology has enhanced the elegance and sophistication of the expression creating an instinctive response, re-conjuring and validating the emotion originally connected to the natural rose. Moreover, it would be appropriate to categorize it as an innovative application of technology to create an exclusive product for an individual vis-à-vis a community that has led to new fashion which is a ‘Classic’. The golden rose is a brand in itself, it is symbolic, and it plays at
the emotional and cognitive level simultaneously. Its innovative approach, originality, simplicity, elegance and sophistication in form and material create an appreciation as well as a desire to not only possess but to feel empowered and gift it at the same time. It promises to make an ordinary action extraordinary and transform it into a special experience.

References:

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Redefining Luxury Construct

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Redefining Luxury Construct

Dictionary defines luxury as a state of great comfort or elegance, especially when involving great expense or an inessential, desirable item which is expensive or difficult to obtain or a pleasure obtained only rarely. In his 1992 book Histoire du Luxe en France, Jean Castarède mentions a 30,000-year-old ivory figurine known as the ‘Venus of Brassenpouy’. He notes that she has braided hair. ‘As bizarre as it might seem, one of the first concerns of man (or woman) was not clothing or protection, but seduction.’ Ornamentation predates clothes and weaponry, he argues. Castarède also points out that early man shared another of our basic urges, which is to dream. Dreams and longings provoke not only self-expression through art, but also the impulse ‘to single oneself out through ornamentation, make a mark through monuments, seduce others by acquiring or giving rare objects, and finally to better enjoy life by improving one’s food and surroundings. Voilà le luxe.’ In other words, man has aspired to better things since he first glimpsed the stars. The primitive impulses behind our desire for luxury also nudge us towards a clearer definition of this slippery word. As Castarède suggests, luxury is often associated with the realm of the senses: voluptuous images, tastes, odours and sensations. Indeed, sensuality is a key component of many luxury brands. Christopher J Berry offers further clues in his book The Idea of Luxury (1994). He writes that luxury is often, erroneously, perceived as all that is superfluous. But ‘if it takes six screws to secure a shelf then more than that number are redundant… [and] a seventh screw is not a “refined” luxury good.’ Instead, Berry submits the idea that a luxury is a refinement on something that already exists. It is not superfluous, but it is substitutable. In other words,
any second-hand jalopy will get you from A to B, but driving a Bentley provides an additional sensual pleasure. Berry remarks that luxuries generally have a wide appeal, even though they remain out of reach of the majority. Antiquarian books and rare stamps may be extremely precious to niche groups of collectors, but despite their value they are not considered luxuries. All of us, however, can imagine enjoying a weekend at a five-star hotel. For Berry, luxury falls into distinct categories: food and drink, clothing and accessories, shelter and leisure. These are areas where the basics are available to most of us, but where luxurious substitutes are available to a few.

Concluding all that, Luxury is something that is extreme in its quality and exclusive in its identity, something that cannot be easily recreated, and something that stand out amidst all its accessible and affordable counterparts.

Luxury is practiced by brands in various forms. But in general, any luxury brand is composed of four key factors; craftsmanship, history/story, focus and rarity.

1.1 Craftsmanship

It is the art/skill of breathing life into objects, the intimate link between the human soul and the inanimate. It is the dexterity of hands, a skill achieved after years of dedication and practice. Great Craftsmanship is characterized by the epitome of human insights, instincts and predictions that even most precise machines and computers of now can’t compete with. It is the result of an approach that involves passion, wisdom and intelligence versus productivity, compliance and qualification.

A good craftsmanship becomes the value, generating differentiation factor for a brand. Salvatore Ferragamo is one such brand which reflects on the values that have allowed them to keep their roots (of Florence’s arts and crafts traditions) intact, even throughout the difficult transition to industrial production. According to them, belief in sharing and developing skills in craftsmanship is not only about manual know-how but a mental process in which quality and continual research into materials and technology go side by side. Enormous work has been done at Ferragamo to serialize made-to-measure footwear, to the extent of producing more than 80 fittings per model. Most of the manufacturing stages are done by machine, but the machine is always guided by man’s experienced hand.

1.2 History / Story

A sense of eternity stemming from a brand’s ability to remain constantly relevant by perpetually embodying its own past and future. Storytelling is one of the very important aspects of luxury. A luxury brand always has a history/heritage associated with it. It has a personality, values and beliefs. A Luxury brand just doesn’t sell products rather it sells hopes, dreams and an aspirational lifestyle that is attached to the product. This is why, at times, how the product has come to existence, the story and background of its producer and who all consume the product becomes even more important than the product itself.
A Luxury brand needs to feel alive in order to be aspirational. It needs to have a unique presence in terms of the way it presents itself or communicate with its consumers. Unlike other brands, luxury brand is the one that sets the standard of quality rather than industry setting the standard. A luxury brand needs to be constantly relevant among different generations. It strikes a perfect balance between the heritage of past and opportunities of future. It is Classic and trendy at the same time.

The notion of time is exemplified in the Patek Philippe Museum (Geneva). The building selected to house the collection has a long history dedicated to all things horological - having housed gem cutters and jewelers such as Ponti Gennari and Piaget, and specialists in watch case and bracelets. It is a legacy of not just a name, but to an entire history of watchmaking. It is preservation of time past for today and for generations to come. The museum not only house the entire Patek Philippe collection from 1839, it also tells the story of over four centuries of watchmaking - thus displaying passion that celebrates the brand and transcends the brand.

Burberry is powerful example of a company that has understood the value of storytelling. “Art of the Trench” is a website put up by Burberry in celebration of and dedication to one of their most famous assets and achievements - their quintessential trench coat.

The origins of a brand contribute great deal to history and storytelling. ‘Made-in’ by Prada offers a great perspective on this argument. Prada’s collection launched in 2010 was sourced from the best in artisanal techniques around the world, from tartan in Scotland to embroidery in India. The labels in the garments read ‘Prada, Milano, made in Scotland’, reinforcing the quality of the brand’s origin, while celebrating the local heritage of each specialist craft.

1.3 Focus
Focus for a luxury brand can be defined as the art of knowing, doing or pursuing much of a little and not, a little of much. Luxury brands are always associated with extreme standards of quality and craftsmanship in their products. In order to achieve such high level of quality, years of dedication, understanding and passion is required. Unlike other brands that usually think of expanding their business via getting into different product lines, launching different brand extensions, a luxury brand seeks to deliver excellence within a product / service, going deeper into every aspect of it. This limitation of scope is done deliberately by luxury brands so that they can focus on constantly refining and pioneering new techniques, materials etc within a product category, thus maintaining past and building future at the same time.

Rolls Royce has consistently remained concentrated on the creation of romantically evocative cars with a characteristic design DNA, resisting the temptation to move into
other sports within the automotive market or to otherwise leverage the brand's heritage and celebrity.

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1.4 Rarity
Rarity is one of the most important aspects of luxury and becomes very crucial for the brands that want to be perceived as luxurious brands. Taking the ownership of the products that are rare and aspirational to many gives its owner a sense of accomplishment and pride. Owning rare products, materials or experiences make the owner stand out of the crowd and satisfies the innate need of a human being to stand out among others. Such products further starts to act like status symbols. Luxury Brands practice rarity in several forms. Some prefer producing limited quantity of a desirable product, others take time to achieve remarkable quality in their products which make them rare and thus even more desirable. In such cases, devotion to excellence results in the rare availability of the product. Luxury brands tend to elude and exclude over mere producing their products. Rarity in luxury is very contextual in its nature. It varies from place to place and time to time. Also the desire of people for the product also determines whether rarity will act in making that product luxurious or not.

Conclusion
The carnal /primitive characteristic of man is to dream, to desire those dreams. Therefore, we see the birth of aspiration - 'to be desirable'. Luxury, was a superfluous aspiration back in the day but it continues to stimulate the primitive emotion of man even to this day. 'Luxurious aspirations' turning into reality was a dream that could come true for the rich and the opulent and it would continue to be just aspirations for many back in the day. However, the times have changed and 'luxury' and 'luxurious objects' have become a realistic dream for many. So, how does an object of luxury survive and preserve its identity in this day and age? By boasting of its four key factors that are unique to it that sets it apart from the rest of the world - craftsmanship, history/story,
focus & rarity. Since becoming rich has become easier for the common man in this
generation, how does a person achieve the title of being the most "desirable"? How do
they set themselves apart from each other when being rich is becoming more and more
common? By possessing objects of luxury, the definition of luxury will change again
when man has new aspirations.

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