



温州肯恩大学
WENZHOU-KEAN UNIVERSITY

Validating the criticality of online promotion for luxury brand

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by

ZHU Shiyi

1026041

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ABSTRACT

There have been several researches on the global marketing of luxury brand, but relatively few studies have empirically explored if social media marketing can help to increase the sales of luxury goods in this era. This research aims to investigate the respective roles of social media platforms promotion and the relationships with purchase intention for luxury brands. It's interesting because it's a trend in today's marketing industry, social media is a very popular method to do promotion, but few companies understand how to do online marketing and is it viable to do online promotion in China. For the time and destination limitation, an online survey was distributed by Wechat and Weibo. This paper finds a relationship between the social media marketing and brand trust, brand loyalty. Finally, the findings show that there is a positive relationship between social media marketing and the brand trust, loyalty. It indicates that it is viable and it's a proper time for luxury brand to do online marketing in China. Luxury retailers are interest in this topic because online marketing becomes more and more popular in China. It is a very nice online marketing era for company, because there is a marketing blue sea for luxury good's online marketing in China.

Keywords: social media promotion, luxury brands, purchase intention, brand trust, brand loyalty

INTRODUCTION

Recent social media developments have revealed that it is more and more important to realize the power of social media in marketing. At the same time, it's well known that the increasing trend of luxury sales is becoming slower these days.

One primary problem with the sales of luxury sales is the way to make effective marketing strategy. Traditional marketing strategy is too old to support luxury sales. Therefore, is it necessary for luxury brands to expand market on social media is now becoming a problem. Only a few studies have shown that social media promoting can help the sales, however, there are few studies about the online marketing for luxury brands. In addition, there are some studies proved that Twitter and Facebook are now very popular for almost every luxury brand, however, Chinese people can not use Twitter and Facebook. It's still an unsolved problem that is online marketing a good channel for luxury brands to do online marketing in China.

For this study, it was important to investigate the viability for luxury brands to do online marketing. In detail, it's imperative to understand the acceptance of advertisement online for customers. The acceptance of advertisement will be reflected by the combination of brand trust and brand loyalty.

This paper seeks to investigate the necessity of luxury brands to promote products in China through social media platform (such as Tiktok, Wechat and so on). Later this paper will find the relationship between the luxury brands purchase intention and brand trust, brand loyalty. Luxury retailers will interest in this topic because online marketing becomes more and more popular in China. It is a very nice online marketing era and a marketing blue sea for luxury good's online marketing.

LITERATURE REVIEW - BACKGROUND

Social media promotion

Social media marketing has proven to be an effective, low-cost tool for the three luxury retailers, with payoff well justifying the effort, and that different social media networks may be effectively used in different ways by luxury retailers.

"Both ends" users refer to two small groups that's young and old consumers. People born in 90's have been 29 years old, and those people who born after 90's are the main consumer of today's luxury market; those people who is younger than 20, also began to have the ability to consume luxury goods independently. At the other end, consumers born in the 1960s were at least 50 years old. They have the power to consume; the children in the family are independent, so these old consumers have a lot shared time to spend, and they are also proficient in using mobile phones, spending a lot of time on social media, and e-commerce website.

Grasping these two parts of the user, they capture the money bag at home. These two types of users are the most vulnerable to social influence, and the socialization of sales trends mentioned will have a huge impact on these two groups.

There is a research explores how can social media promotion affecting the purchase behavior by analyzing pioneering brands in the luxury sector (Burberry, Dior, Gucci, Hermès, and Louis Vuitton). This research finds that SMMEs have a strong positive relationship with brand trust and brand loyalty (Godey, B., Manthiou, A., Pederzoli, D., Rokka, J., Aiello, G., Donvito, R., & Singh, R. 2016).

Brand awareness was found to have influence on consumers' attitudes toward online advertising, which will affect their purchase behavior also (Chu, S. C., Kamal, S., & Kim, Y., 2013). To survive from the recent dilemma of intense competition, luxury brands chose to do online marketing using social media. Social media promotion is a method to allow users to

interact with other like-minded partners online to share their thoughts. Using of social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook have already been a very popular for almost every luxury brand and been evaluated as a new energetic channel to do promotion (Kim, A. J., & Ko, E., 2010).

For Asia market, especially China which can not access to Twitter and Facebook, the situation is slightly different because of the destination. According to the additional 2017 Chinese Luxury E-Commerce Whitebook report from Secoo (Nasdaq: SECO), Asia's largest high-end e-commerce platform, and Tencent, the largest data company in China, Chinese millennials and Generation Z are set to become the dominant driver of luxury consumption over the next decade.

Luxury brands in China

Coexisting with opportunities is fierce competition. Many luxury brands have been deeply involved in the Chinese market for many years and have won the trust of consumers. China has always been the most strategic marketing market in the global market.

The continued development of infrastructure, the improvement of national income levels, and the high penetration rate of mobile Internet have given rise to a huge luxury marketing soil. More and more luxury brands are using mobile marketing to join the battle for China's market share.

A global study conducted by NetBase reveals that major luxury-goods makers have suffered a severe decline since 2014, and China has experienced financial repercussions as a result of the recession (Jiang, L., & Shan, J, 2018).

In the downturn of the market, luxury brands have put down their arms and embraced e-commerce as an important marketing and sales channel for luxury brands. Public datum shows that online luxury sales market share will double to 12% by 2020, and by 2025 this percentage will rise to 18%.

Consumers of Luxury brands in China are very rich people; the affluent and the middle class (Chevalier, 2009). Compared to USA, a study examines the effects of characteristic and brand awareness on U.S. and Chinese customer's purchase intention for luxury brands. A total of 394 respondents were investigated in the survey. Using structural equation modeling (SEM), the study figures out that U.S. and Chinese consumers' brand awareness positively affects their attitudes toward luxury brands. Attitudes toward luxury brands will positively affect consumers' purchase intention. Brand awareness plays a vital role for purchase intentions of Chinese and U.S. clients (Bian, Q., & Forsythe, S., 2012).

Luxury brands purchase intention

The global economic trend has gradually slowed down, but the development of China's luxury goods market continues to be unabated. Chinese consumers who are pursuing a better life continue to show strength and strong purchasing power in the luxury goods sector. Luxury brands are filled with opportunities in China.

On April 26th, McKinsey China released the “2019 China Luxury Consumption Report”, which shows that in the context of China's economic slowdown, the growth of the luxury goods market in 2018 is strong (McKinsey, 2019).

Depending on Bain's “2018 China Luxury Market Research”, the overall sales of China's luxury goods market in 2018 continued its record-breaking growth in 2017, with a growth rate of 20% for two consecutive years (Bain, 2018).

In fact, not only last year, in 2012-2018, more than half of the global luxury goods market increased from China. Such a strong purchasing power and high-speed growth tendency make the Chinese market a must for all major brands.

According to the “2019 China Luxury Consumption Report” data, the 80s have supported the half-day of the Chinese luxury goods market (McKinsey, 2019).

In 2018, to 23.9 million Chinese consumers will buy luxury goods, of which 43% of the post-80s consumers contributed 56% of their consumption. From the point of view of per capita expenditure, the cost of luxury goods is 41,000 yuan per year after 80 years of peak business and income.

The consumption power after the 90s should therefore not be underestimated. In 2018 Chinese luxury consumers, 28% of the 90% contributed 23% of the consumption.

Today's Chinese luxury goods market can be described as the limelight, no one would have thought that twenty years ago, luxury goods for Chinese consumers, only a few wealthy people can access.

The luxury consumption potential of ordinary Chinese clients was released in the 21st century. Before the 1990s, the international luxury goods market grew at a rate of 10%-20% per year. The global market share during the heyday exceeded US\$250 billion (about RMB1,719 billion).

However, after 2000, the development momentum of the world luxury goods market is clearly insufficient. Especially in 2000~2003, the demand for luxury goods in Europe and the United States has been decreasing year by year. Sales of the world luxury goods market are from 170 billion US dollars (about 11725 billion yuan). The price plummeted to 65 billion US dollars (about 448.3 billion yuan), a drop of 62%.

To make matters worse, after a series of events such as the "911" incident, the Afghanistan War (2001), SARS (2002), and the Iraq War (2003), the number of tourists from the world has also begun to decrease drastically. It has shrunk.

But at that time, China, Brazil, India, Russia and other emerging markets, due to the growth of the local economy, the desire to consume households, the demand for luxury goods is rising year by year, and there is a tendency to become a luxury consumer center.

It is also at this time that the center of the international luxury goods market has begun to shift from developed countries such as Europe and the United States to developing countries such as Asia and Latin America.

At that time, China's rapid economic development made the national income level rise sharply, and a number of high-income affluent people emerged. The consumption power of Chinese consumers gradually appeared.

According to Bain's luxury survey report, the luxury goods market in the global financial crisis of 2008-09, the special period of consumer drama, the transaction volume fell by 8%, but the Chinese luxury goods market is still hot, Increased by 16% (Bain, 2018).

Today, after more than a decade, China's luxury consumer market is still a blue ocean, and the development momentum is only increasing, which is mainly due to the advantages of time and place.

Bain believes that the Chinese government has lowered the import tariffs on luxury goods, the regulatory authorities have increased control over the gray market, and the major luxury brands have continuously adjusted the domestic and international market price gaps, which are three important factors driving the rapid growth of the domestic luxury goods market (Bain, 2018). More and more Chinese consumers are choosing to buy luxury goods in the mainland market, instead of going abroad for consumption in order to purchase lower-priced products.

Relationship between brand trust, loyalty and luxury brands purchase intention

It is seen that the effectiveness of satisfaction and commitment on purchase intention is weak while trust and loyalty have important effect in the creation of consumer's repurchase intention (Erciş, A.,2012). One study said: Future purchases are no longer influenced by either single way of brand knowledge; rather, brand knowledge affects future purchases through a brand relationship path that includes brand trust and brand loyalty. Therefore,

offline promotion is not sufficient enough in the future for luxury brands, online marketing to enhance the brand trust and brand loyalty must be considered as well (Esch, F. R., Langner, T., Schmitt, B. H., & Geus, P., 2016).

There is another model indicates that 1 unit increases in brand loyalty will increase the purchase intentions by 0.56 units. Value of purchase intentions will be 1.72 when brand loyalty decreased to zero. The results above shows that brand loyalty have a strong positive relationship with purchase intention. Therefore, it can be conducted that purchase intentions can be enhanced by valuing the brand loyalty (Malik, M. E., Ghafoor, M. M., Hafiz, K. I., Riaz, U., Hassan, N. U., Mustafa, M., & Shahbaz, S., 2013).

STATEMENT OF HYPOTHESIS

According to the previous articles and reports, it's obvious that it's a good chance for luxury brands to do online marketing now. However, few studies deep ploughing in the Chinese market. The Chinese market is a market that with big consuming potential, because little international luxury brands have special counter or office in China. So, it's a problem is it viable for luxury brands to invest in China through online marketing.

Online marketing always includes social medial accounts operating, at this time, the quality of online marketing will be defined by the active using of social media tools and the online interaction.

Through the existing body of knowledge, brand trust and brand loyalty will directly affect the purchasing behavior of a customer (Erciş, A., Ünal, S., Candan, F. B., & Yıldırım, H., 2012). In order to investigate the viability of luxury brands to do online marketing in China, finding the relationship between online marketing operation and brand trust and loyalty of Chinese consumers is important.

Based on the existing body of knowledge reported above, the following hypotheses are derived.

Research Question (RQ):

Does social media marketing of a luxury brands have a positive effect on brand trust and brand loyalty?

H1: Social media marketing of a luxury brand has a positive effect on brand trust.

1a - Active and updated social media tools has a positive effect on brand trust.

1b - Online interactivity has a positive effect on brand trust.

1c - Collaboration with other useful websites has a positive effect on brand trust.

H2: Social media marketing of a luxury brand has a positive effect on brand loyalty.

2a - Active and updated social media tools has a positive effect on brand loyalty.

2b - Online interactivity has a positive effect on brand loyalty.

2c - Collaboration with other useful websites has a positive effect on brand loyalty.

H3: Brand trust has a positive effect on brand loyalty.

METHODOLOGY

Quantitative Method

In order to identify the main target customers for luxury brands online, a quantitative study will be applied. Around 300 people will be investigated through online survey, sampling the target population would help improve accuracy.

Data Collection Method

In order to identify the trend of luxury brands in China, a data collection method will be implemented. Reports from different social media organizations will be investigated to find the tendency.

A cross-sectional survey method was used for collecting data. Online structured surveys were shared on Wechat accounts (WeChat: A social media app that combines the functions of multiple and widely used apps in the US such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Venmo, Skype, and Twitter). A filter question was asked and the surveys were filled by people who purchased luxury brands products at least once.

The data was collected in October. Sampling method was applied and 216 valid surveys were collected. 5 Likert Scale type was used in the current study and the statements were adapted from existing literature. Some sentences of the previous scales were slightly changed adapt the research context because the original scales were for Hotel purchasing.

To organize and analyze supporting data, reference will be made to relevant books, journals, and online resources. In addition, other forms of Internet communication are recommended for this process because they are cost-effective and have little potential for bias. Following questions are from Social Media Usage Practices of Luxury Brands.

1. Survey Question on Active and updated social media tools

4 options were presented as possible responses for the question

- Luxury Brand's social media accounts are active
- Luxury Brand's social media accounts have attractive content
- Luxury Brand's social media accounts include brands' promotions
- Luxury Brand's social media accounts include campaigns

2. Survey Question on Online Interactivity

3 alternatives were provided to measure

- On Luxury Brand's social media accounts, I can talk to others
- On Luxury Brand's social media accounts, I can share my opinions
- On Luxury Brand's social media accounts, I can learn others' opinions

3. *Survey Question on Brand Trust*

3 alternatives were provided to measure

- I trust this Luxury brand
- This Luxury brand is trustworthy
- This Luxury brand's design works for my happiness

4. *Survey Question on Brand Loyalty*

2 options were presented as possible responses for the question

- It is clear what to expect from this Luxury brand
- I prefer the same brands when I buy similar goods again

RESULTS

A total of 216 online survey surveys responses were collected.

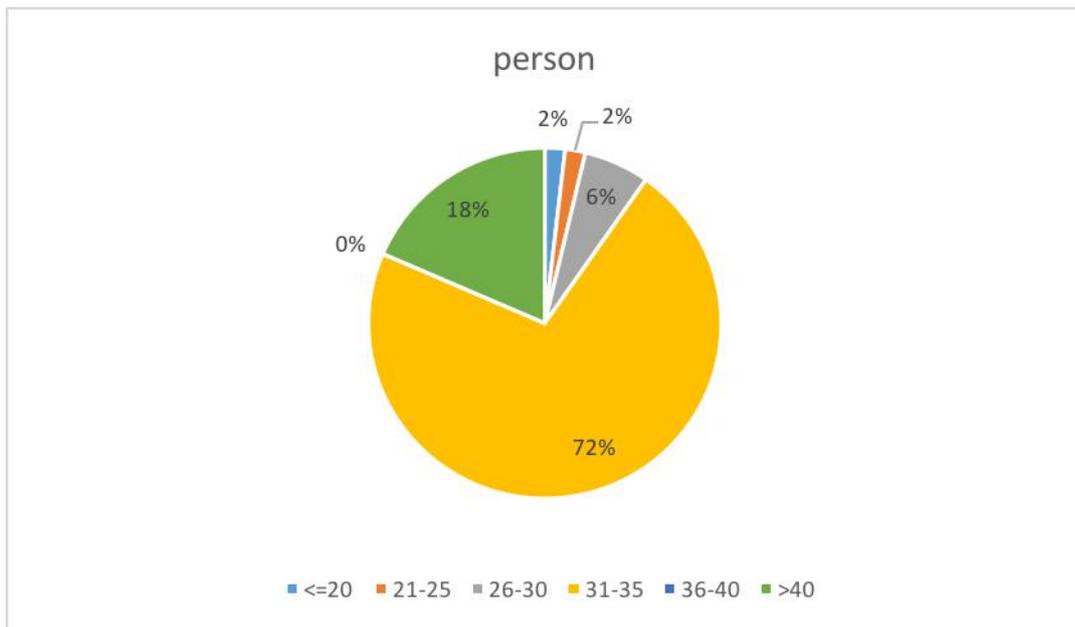


Table 1

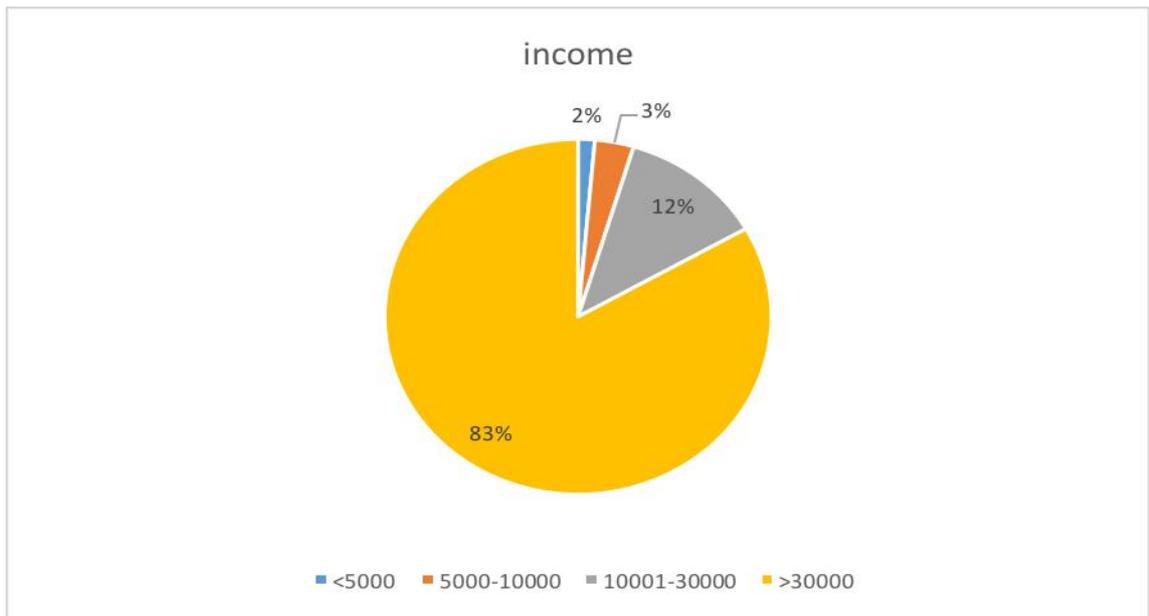


Table 2

Demographic profile of respondents for age ranges from 0 to 40+. Almost 72 % of the respondents are in age between 31 and 35 in table 1, with males making up 69.9 percent of the sample (n=216). 83% of the respondents have income lower than 5000 every month in table 2.

Correlation between Gender and Brand Loyalty.

		gender
gender	Pearson's r	—
	p-value	—
This Luxury brand's design works for my happiness.	Pearson's r	0.209**
	p-value	0.002
I prefer the same brands when I buy similar goods again.	Pearson's r	0.185**
	p-value	0.006

Note. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Table 3

It's clear that from the table 3, the correlation between gender and Brand Loyalty is moderately significant. It means the gender of the people who purchase luxury brands' products will infect the loyalty of the brands. Therefore, Luxury brands can make some specific activities for different gender on their social media account to attract customers.

Correlation between H1: Active and updated social media tools and H3: Brand trust

		I trust this Luxury brand.	This Luxury brand is trustworthy.	This Luxury brand's design works for my happiness.
	p-value	< .001	< .001	—
active.	Pearson's r	0.48	0.368	0.399
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001
have attractive content.	Pearson's r	0.44	0.379	0.522
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001
accounts include brands' promotions.	Pearson's r	0.5	0.399	0.467
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001
accounts include campaigns.	Pearson's r	0.324	0.291	0.301
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 4

It's clear that from the table 4, the correlation between updated social media tools and brand trust is strongly significant. It means active account will have a positive effect of the customers' brand trust. Therefore, Luxury brands should actively update their social media accounts so that they can receive the trust from their customers.

Correlation between H1: Active and updated social media tools and H4: Brand loyalty

		active.	have attractive content.	accounts include brands' promotions.	accounts include campaigns.
It is clear what to expect from this Luxury brand.	Pearson's r	0.443** *	0.429***	0.45***	0.313***
	p-value	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
I prefer the same brands when I buy similar goods again.	Pearson's r	0.33***	0.398***	0.418***	0.234***
	p-value	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 5

We can see from this table 5 that the correlation between the updated social media tools and brand loyalty is strongly significant. It means active account will have positive effect of the customers' brand loyalty and that's later will become "purchase again" behavior. Therefore, Luxury brands should actively update their social media accounts so that they can receive the loyalty from their customers.

Correlation between H2: Online interactivity and H3: Brand

		talk to others.	share my opinions.	learn others' opinions.
I trust this Luxury brand.	Pearson's r	0.466***	0.37***	0.508***
	p-value	<.001	<.001	<.001
This Luxury brand is trustworthy.	Pearson's r	0.419***	0.404***	0.529***
	p-value	<.001	<.001	<.001
This Luxury brand's design works for my happiness.	Pearson's r	0.358***	0.421***	0.517***
	p-value	<.001	<.001	<.001

trust
Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 6

Correlation between H2: Online interactivity and H4: Brand loyalty

talk to others. share my opinions. learn others' opinions.

It is clear what to expect from this Luxury brand.	Pearson's r	0.468***	0.425***	0.51***
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001
I prefer the same brands when I buy similar goods again.	Pearson's r	0.325***	0.447***	0.495***
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 7

Result shows that the significance between online interactivity and brand trust, brand loyalty is strongly significant. It indicates that there is a strong relationship between the online interaction and the satisfaction from customers. As a result, if luxury brands give enough space and provide a platform for their customers to communicate online, it will help to increase the stickiness of their customers.

CONCLUSIONS AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

With the blooming of social media as well as the advent of the 5G Internet, the importance of social media marketing is increasing, especially affecting the consuming behavior of people. For example, luxury industry is increasingly affected because they don't have any social media promotion strategy now in China. Online marketing allows consumers to easily and quickly complete the purchase process without going to enter the offline store, accelerating the process of consumers' purchasing. Moreover, creating an online platform is conducive to creating knowledge sharing channels between the official and the consumer (such as personal experience, official anti-counterfeiting strategies, etc). Therefore, it is

necessary for luxury brands to focus on marketing related to social media and observe online marketing's impact on consumer's purchasing habits.

The findings above confirm that updating official accounts from time to time is an important driver of brand trust and brand loyalty, especially in terms of plentiful content. Building trust and loyalty is essential to maintain consumer's repurchase rates and stimulating consumers' first-time shopping desires. What's more, the content of the advertisement also needs to be carefully designed and creative, which will allow people to spend more time on the site. Active accounts, engaging content, sophisticated marketing advertising and peer-competitive information can help to enhance the consumer's buying desire and the sales.

Another issue that luxury brands should focus on being collaboration with other useful brands. Luxury goods are substitutes, when selling clothes and bags, it's a good choice to sell some cosmetics. After all, for women, clothes and bags will help them to build a perfect image. Cosmetics can make their image greater. Therefore, the official account of the luxury brand can put some advertisements of their partners, so that consumers will have more choices, and they can experience the convenience of one-stop service. In addition, multi-brand collaboration is more conducive to acquire the larger flow of people and a greater amount of brands exposure. Finally, this kind of interactive recommendation will make consumers more dependent to their official accounts and only pay attention to the official account of a certain brand, which is a great help for increasing user stickiness.

The purpose of this research is to identify the variability of social media marketing for luxury brands in China to stimulate consumer trust and loyalty. According to the research results, a platform that allows consumers to interact is a very important factor in building trust and loyalty.

Besides, luxury brands should also carefully design their image on social media platforms and choose the right social platform to build trust and loyalty. Thus, the social platform should be easy to use, prompting consumers to explore more.

Another important issue is interactivity. Social media is a better platform for creating interactions because of its Web 2.0 features. Consumers and luxury brands have the access to interact with each other in real time to ask questions and exchange ideas. This two-way communication is an important driver of brand trust and loyalty. Therefore, luxury brands should provide an interactive platform when using social media for marketing.

In order to better prevent negative rumor from being virally spread on social media, luxury brands should set up a dedicated department, this department should pay 24 hours a day to monitor social media platforms, control public opinion, solve audience problems, and then can they ensure the viewers' trust and loyalty.

It is obvious that this report provides a set of valuable content for luxury brand managers. This report reflects real responses from Chinese citizens, and it can help those brands to understand how to use social media marketing to independently make their business online.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

As limitations of the study, it can be said that the study has a place and field limit that it was held in China and applied to specific respondents like Wechat and Weibo. Also, the study has time and respondents' wealth limitations that reduce the ranges of the research in terms of sampling, research methodology.

Further researchers may add new media tools to their studies such as Tiktok, QQ, etc. and apply them to several industries related to online marketing that people want to receive.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire

- Agreement 同意程度

- Strongly Agree 强烈同意——1
- Agree 同意——2
- Undecided 不确定——3
- Disagree 不同意——4
- Strongly Disagree 强烈不同意——5

Active and updated social media tools

Luxury Brand's social media accounts are active

我觉得奢侈品品牌的社交媒体账号是活跃的

1- SA

2- A

3- Undecided

4- D

5- SD(横版排列)

Luxury Brand's social media accounts have attractive content

我觉得奢侈品品牌的社交媒体账号有吸引人的内容

6- SA

7- A

8- Undecided

9- D

SD(横版排列)

Luxury Brand's social media accounts include brands' promotions

我觉得奢侈品品牌的社交媒体账号内容包含了营销广告

10- SA

11- A

12- Undecided

13- D

SD(横版排列)

Luxury Brand's social media accounts include campaigns

我觉得奢侈品品牌的社交媒体账号会提及同行业竞争者的消息

14- SA

15- A

16- Undecided

17- D

SD(横版排列)

Online interactivity

On Luxury Brand's social media accounts, I can talk to others

在奢侈品品牌的社交媒体账号上，我可以和其他人交流

18- SA

19- A

20- Undecided

21- D

SD(横版排列)

On Luxury Brand's social media accounts, I can share my opinions

在奢侈品品牌的社交媒体账号上，我可以分享我的观点想法

22- SA

23- A

24- Undecided

25- D

SD(横版排列)

On Luxury Brand's social media accounts, I can learn others' opinions

在奢侈品品牌的社交媒体账号上，我可以从他人的观点评论中学到东西

26- SA

27- A

28- Undecided

29- D

SD(横版排列)

Brand Trust

I trust this Luxury brand

我相信这个奢侈品品牌

30- SA

31- A

32- Undecided

33- D

SD(横版排列)

This Luxury brand is trustworthy

我觉得这个奢侈品牌让人信赖

34- SA

35- A

36- Undecided

37- D

SD(横版排列)

This Luxury brand's design works for my happiness

我觉得这个奢侈品品牌的设计是符合我的喜好的

38- SA

39- A

40- Undecided

41- D

SD(横版排列)

Brand Loyalty

It is clear what to expect from this Luxury brand

我觉得我对这个奢侈品品牌的期望非常明晰

42- SA

43- A

44- Undecided

45- D

SD(横版排列)

I prefer the same brands when I buy similar goods again

我觉得在我购买相似品种商品的时候我会偏向于选择这个奢侈品品牌

46- SA

47- A

48- Undecided

49- D

SD(横版排列)