

Research on the Role of Social Media in Brand Marketing under the Digital Background

- Taking Luxury Brands as Examples

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Abstract: The development of the digital economy has prompted the global luxury goods industry to show different development trends. The strategy of using traditional media for brand marketing can no longer meet the changes in consumer demand or cope with fierce market competition. On the contrary, the vivid and interactive information dissemination provided by social media has made it the core way of brand marketing. Therefore, this paper takes luxury brands as cases to explore the marketing strategies of enterprises on social media platforms, and then determine the communication effect on brand image. The social media marketing theory and marketing mix model will be used to analyze this research topic. This study applies relevant literature and marketing cases of luxury brands in the Chinese market to evaluate the impact of social media on brand operations. The results show that luxury brands are actively using social media to pursue innovative marketing strategies in the digital field and using digital traffic attraction to penetrate a wider consumer base. Especially in terms of online dissemination and offline communication, this provides a strong media competition channel for the marketing development of luxury brands.

Keywords: Social media, brand marketing, luxury brands, marketing mix.

1. Introduction

The development of the Internet and digitalization has made social media a key carrier in the field of information dissemination and has penetrated into all aspects of daily life. By 2023, the total number of social media users in the world reached 5.16 billion [1]. Among them, the number of Internet users in China has reached 1.067 billion, accounting for approximately 20% of the total number of global users [2]. The development of social media has not only changed people's lives and consumption habits, but also provided businesses with a variety of marketing channels [3]. This allows luxury brands to communicate with target customer groups through social media, thereby invisibly affecting customer stickiness and brand awareness. In the Chinese market, various luxury brands have begun to use social media as a medium to launch online marketing concepts, such as WeChat public accounts, official flagship stores, and Douyin video accounts.

Therefore, this study dialectically evaluates the marketing methods set by luxury brands using social media through case analysis, and then explores the impact of digital development on brand

marketing. This can not only evaluate the integration effect of social media on traditional marketing models in a targeted manner, but also provide constructive suggestions for the market layout and marketing promotion of other brands.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Social Media Marketing Theory

Social media, which is dominated by Internet technology, has changed users' communication methods and purchasing habits, which has forced companies to make adaptive paradigm changes in their marketing strategies. Li, Larimo & Leonidou pointed out the influence of social media on information dissemination, consumer purchasing decisions and marketing focus [4]. As a carrier that replaces traditional marketing methods, social media is a communication tool that integrates brands and consumers, which is conducive to achieving joint value creation [5]. From this perspective, this theory not only emphasizes the central position of consumers in marketing activities, but also combines sales, communication, social relationships and strategic practices.

Similarly, Li, Larimo & Leonidou demonstrated the strategic value of social media marketing. This provides the customer relationship management platform for brands, thereby expanding the promotion channels of brand value [6]. In this process, consumers are not only recipients of brand information, but also disseminators of information. Peng et al. proposed the important influence of word-of-mouth in the social media marketing process. In social media marketing theory, brand reputation and brand image have a decisive impact on consumer perception. For luxury brands, information posted on social media is the key to enhancing brand awareness [7]. Although the quantity, frequency and quality of social media information release cannot be absolutely guaranteed, under the condition of repeated bombardment of information, consumer participation will obviously be better than the traditional marketing model.

2.2. Marketing Mix

In brand marketing strategy, the marketing mix is the link between the enterprise and the market. According to R. K. Wichmann et al., the marketing mix is a matching sales approach implemented by the brand based on key insights into the target customer group. The purpose is to use limited organizational resources to achieve expected sales targets. Typically, the 4Ps (Product, Price, Distribution and Promotion) are the channels through which an organization delivers its sales philosophy [8]. In addition, Datta, Ailawadi & van Heerde confirmed that the marketing mix can help brands quickly adapt to the rapidly changing market environment and integrate substantial marketing evolution to match the core benefits of the target customer group. From this perspective, this is still a consumer-centric strategic operation model. While consumers pay attention to the value of the product itself, they perceive that it caters to their personal needs, which in turn stimulates their purchasing interest [9].

R. K. Wichmann et al. stated that, in fact, the marketing mix is a dynamic framework that does not have a unified standard. This means that brands can innovatively set up differentiated marketing mix strategies based on market development needs, thereby achieving the strategic goal of increasing marginal profits. For luxury brands, how to shape the value premium of brand assets is the foothold of marketing mix innovation. The two-way interactive advantages formed by horizontal exploration create a unique luxury brand style [10]. In the absence of value matching, this is an important factor in maintaining the competitiveness of luxury goods.

3. Social Media and Brand Marketing

3.1. Current Status of Social Media Marketing of Luxury Brands

3.1.1. GUCCI

As one of the most fashionable and influential luxury brands in the world, GUCCI is actively promoting social media marketing in the Chinese market. In 2020, GUCCI registered an official Xiaohongshu account and began to use posts to publish promotional videos and photos of brand spokespersons [11]. The purpose is to promote the Gucci x Disney Chinese New Year limited edition fashion series. In the same year, GUCCI held the first "Milan Digital Fashion Week" and presented product designs through online platforms [11]. In addition, GUCCI has released a large number of short videos on TikTok to introduce the brand's design philosophy and fashion values. This measure has also enabled GUCCI to have huge discussions and popularity on social media platforms, and has become the most popular luxury brand among millennial consumers [12]. This all demonstrates GUCCI's active exploration of media marketing in the context of digitalization.

3.1.2. Louis Vuitton

In contrast, Louis Vuitton focuses on the promotion of brand values in social media marketing. In the Chinese market, the brand uses four mainstream social media platforms, namely WeChat, Xiaohongshu, Douyin and Weibo, to promote Louis Vuitton's brand history and brand status. It promotes the brand's historical value and fashion leadership by displaying Louis Vuitton's classic works in the process of hundreds of years of fashion development [13]. This not only highlights Louis Vuitton's unremitting pursuit of fashion innovation, but also shapes the brand's classic status. At the same time, Louis Vuitton also integrated social media platforms and online channels. Viewers can jump to Louis Vuitton's online flagship store while browsing the information, thus forming a complete closed loop of purchase [13].

3.1.3. Hermès

Different from other luxury brands, Hermès' social media marketing in China is handled by Socialyse. The company is responsible for the creation and publication of Hermès' social media content in China, and monitors social media marketing strategies based on feedback data. It helps Hermès deliver precise content through WeChat Moments ads, and develop online customized interactive activities with the help of WeChat mini-program technology [14]. At the same time, Hermès also uses social media to promote the value and scarcity of its products, thereby shaping the brand's products into "financial products" with investment and value preservation [15]. The liquidity of the second-hand market also shapes the unique brand value of Hermès.

3.2. Analysis of the Marketing Role of Social Media

3.2.1. Brand Awareness and Purchase Intention

Social media users' perception of the value of luxury brands has a direct correlation with their purchase intentions. Consumers' purchasing behavior is a subjective cognitive behavior centered on satisfying consumer expectations and psychological needs [16]. In this sense, social media provides diversified communication channels for the psychological satisfaction that luxury brands can provide, thereby allowing consumers to obtain purchase channels to fulfill their psychological needs. At the same time, the social atmosphere generated by social media and the mainstream consumption trends in society have subtly influenced consumers' cognitive level and consumption motivation. Social

media with high participation and discussion volume encourages users to link their emotional needs with brand value, thereby increasing their willingness to buy [17]. In other words, this is a concrete manifestation of consumers' desire to gain social recognition. However, from the perspective of luxury brands, social media can provide multi-sensory channels to clarify brand stories and thus concretely display brand values. This reveals why luxury brands can obtain brand premiums through the social influence of brand cognition.

3.2.2. Brand Influence and User Stickiness

The shaping of brand influence determines the efficiency of luxury brands in obtaining marginal benefits. The advantage of targeted advertising on social media makes users willing to actively share information, thereby promoting the transformation of consumer behavior. Chiesa & Dekker believed that the core motivation for consumers to buy goods is to obtain the symbolic meaning contained in the brand. Brand influence determines whether it is eligible for consumer recognition. More importantly, the absolute advantage of social media platforms in information processing and dissemination speed provides a way to realize the value of luxury brands. This makes brands pay attention to the maintenance of their social media image and expect to maintain customer relationships through information interaction. In the virtual environment, consumers can perceive the unique brand value of luxury brands at close range, and then develop a strong emotional identification and trust perception [17]. This pro-social behavior makes luxury goods no longer exclusive to the rich. In this situation, user stickiness is greatly improved.

3.3. Social Media Marketing Challenges

However, social media marketing has also intensified brand competition and has been caught in the dilemma of ethical controversy. Continuously providing original and high-quality social media content is the key to maintaining high exposure. At the same time, in the social media environment of information explosion, this cannot guarantee the continuity of brand information value transmission. Uninterrupted content output allows users to receive value information from different luxury brands [18]. In other words, this lowers the brand switching costs for consumers. Therefore, if luxury brands are unable to continuously provide creative marketing content and omni-channel social discussions, they are likely to be eliminated by social trends. In addition, luxury brands' emphasis on social media marketing has also led to a rapid increase in the attention of young consumers from Generation Z and Generation Y to luxury goods [19]. Without forming correct value perceptions, young consumers are easily influenced by the value perceptions created by luxury brands. This puts them in financial trouble due to their pursuit of consumerism. Therefore, how luxury brands deal with this ethical dilemma in the process of social media marketing will also affect the sustainability of brand value.

4. Social Media Marketing Optimization Strategy

4.1. Content Innovation

For luxury brands, ensuring the innovation of marketing content on social platforms is the key to demonstrating brand appeal. This suggests that luxury brands should consider the expression of brand image in combination with digital technology, thereby providing consumers with irreplaceable brand value. At the same time, in this process, brand marketers should pay attention to the ability to influence user emotions and build close customer relationships through the guidance of emotional value [20]. Although social media platforms cannot overcome the differences in service experience caused by spatial distance, the immersive online experience provided by digital technology can create

special perceived value. In order to achieve this effect, luxury brands should also endow the brand with richer emotional connotations and humanistic values. Emotionally related content innovation can help emotionally enhance consumers' perception of the value of luxury brands, thereby obtaining rewards of loyalty and recognition [21].

4.2. Personalized Recommendations

In social media marketing strategies, personalized recommendations can ensure that brand marketing goals are highly consistent with user needs. Accurate analysis of user data and behavior patterns relies on big data technology to analyze browsing records, keyword searches, and click behaviors [22]. Based on this, luxury brands can build user portraits and behavior patterns based on consumer behavior, and combine key insights to push targeted advertisements. On the one hand, this is to help consumers improve the efficiency of their purchasing decisions, thereby improving user participation and consumption conversion rates [23]. On the other hand, luxury brands have established a stable communication channel with consumers through advertising, thereby meeting their personalized service needs. With the help of rich media forms, images and interactive methods, luxury brands have grasped the consumption habits of target customer groups, thereby creating continuous brand traffic.

4.3. Word-of-mouth Communication

Combining brand awareness and brand influence, luxury brands need to attach importance to the value of word-of-mouth communication for marketing returns. In the global market, the interest in social media platforms not only enables luxury brands to obtain convenient information dissemination channels, but also enables information exchange between unfamiliar consumers [24]. Therefore, a brand's online word-of-mouth also affects consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions towards luxury brands. In order to obtain a positive brand reputation, luxury brands not only need to encourage users to post real experiences related to their products and services on social media, but also need to monitor negative public opinions and improvement suggestions in real time. This spontaneous information dissemination method can form effective word-of-mouth communication.

However, in the process of word-of-mouth communication, luxury brands should provide positive guidance for young consumers' consumption cognition, so as to avoid falling into the public opinion dilemma of social ethics controversy. Therefore, it is suggested that luxury brands can shift the focus of social media influence to the educational significance of guiding young consumers to establish correct consumption concepts. For example, this can promote the excellent qualities of hard work, starting from scratch and perseverance, and link these qualities with the brand history. This can not only show the durability of luxury brands in historical development, but also shape a responsible brand image. In summary, this maintains the continued value of the brand.

5. Conclusion

It is undeniable that social media provides luxury brands with a variety of marketing channels. This allows them to establish brand connections with consumers through social media platforms, thereby improving user favorability and brand image. Based on this, this article explores the marketing model of luxury brands in social media. This is to explore the adaptive transformation of the industry in brand marketing against the background of digitalization. This takes GUCCI, LVMH Group and Hermès as cases to analyze the marketing changes of these brands. In the Chinese market, these brands mainly rely on social media platforms such as WeChat, Douyin and Xiaohongshu to expand marketing channels. On the positive side, this helps luxury brands establish a good brand image, increase brand awareness and strengthen emotional connections with consumers. Ultimately, these are channels for brands to increase marginal profits and market competitiveness. At the same time,

this article also reveals the impact of social media on consumer purchasing intentions and behavioral habits. All of these indirectly affect the marketing return rate of luxury brands. Therefore, for luxury brands, this confirms that they can focus on social media innovation in future marketing and enhance brand awareness through personalized communication. This can effectively optimize the value connection between media and marketing. However, this research also lacked comprehensiveness and objectivity. This only conducts a one-sided analysis of luxury brands and the Chinese market, and does not use objective data to verify the correlation between social media and marketing. This makes the research conclusions not universally applicable. Therefore, in future research, it is recommended to construct a mathematical model for statistical analysis and evaluate the relationship between social media and marketing by setting mediating variables. This is for quantitative analysis of the degree of influence between two variables.

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