



When luxury brands meet China: The effect of localized celebrity endorsements in social media marketing

Shubin Yu, Yangjuan Hu^{*}

^a Peking University, HSBC Business School, University Town, Nanshan, Shenzhen, 518055, China

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ABSTRACT

In social media marketing, celebrity endorsement is a widely used strategy. Luxury brands use their social media accounts to post pictures of celebrities using their products. However, they would be confronted with the dilemma of whether to standardize or localize their celebrity endorsers for different markets. This dilemma of whether to standardize or adapt their advertisements to the local market has been haunting luxury brands for a long time. This paper examines the effectiveness of localized celebrity endorsements for luxury brands on Chinese social media. We analyze whether Chinese celebrity endorsers could trigger more social media interactions and enhance perceived brand luxury than Western celebrity endorsers, based on an analysis of online big data and two experiments. We also explore when localized celebrity endorsement is most effective, focusing on the moderating role of patriotism. The results suggest that localized (vs. standardized) celebrity endorsements lead to more social media interactions. Using localized (standardized) celebrity endorsements enhance the perceived brand luxury for people with high (low) patriotism.

In social media marketing, celebrity endorsement is a widely used strategy (McCormick, 2016). Luxury brands use their social media accounts to post pictures of celebrities using their products. However, they are confronted with the dilemma of whether to standardize or localize their celebrity endorsers for different markets. This dilemma of whether to adapt their advertisements to local market has been haunting luxury brands for a long time. Some researchers suggest that standardized advertising could help to maintain a uniform and consistent brand image (Duncan and Ramaprasad, 1995), and create a strong global brand identity, which is often associated with the perception of prestige and leads to higher purchase intention (de Pelsmacker et al. 2018); other studies find that considerable adaptation is required for brands to meet local needs and tastes (Gilmore, 2003; Okazaki et al., 2006), because cultural norms and values are powerful forces shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors (Nwankwo et al., 2014).

Before the social media age, most luxury brands tend to stick to a standardized strategy when they advertise in mass media (e.g., magazines) in culturally different markets like China (Chen, 2008). Luxury brands with Western origins use much more standardized Western celebrity endorsers than localized non-Western celebrity endorsers in their magazine advertisements (Strebinger and Rusetski, 2016; Strebinger et al., 2018). However, in recent years, luxury brands use more

frequently local celebrities in social media marketing. For example, Dior shows regularly Chinese celebrities (e.g., Huang Xuan, Zhao Liying) in its Weibo page. Is showing local celebrity endorsers in social media more effective for luxury brands? Are there any other factors determining the effectiveness? This is an important question for luxury brands because social media has become the key touchpoint for them to engage their consumers online (Heine and Berghaus, 2014) and celebrity endorsement is one of the most important strategies for social media marketing (Yuan et al., 2016).

This paper aims to investigate the effect of localized vs. standardized celebrity endorsements on social media interaction and perceived luxuriousness for luxury brands in Chinese social media. We conducted three studies. The first study was a multi-level analysis of social media data, in which we explored whether celebrity endorsements can increase the level of social media interactions. However, social media interaction is not the only meaningful indicator of the success of social media marketing. Consumers' brand perception influenced by social media marketing could be even more important for luxury brands. As perceived brand luxury is difficult to be measured using descriptive social media data, we conducted an experimental study (Study 2) to examine how localized celebrity endorsements influence consumers' perceived brand luxury. Furthermore, we explored the moderating effect of individuals'

^{*} Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: Shubin.Yu@phbs.pku.edu.cn (S. Yu), huyangjuan@phbs.pku.edu.cn (Y. Hu).

level of patriotism, a construct that is often overlooked in prior research. In the second study, we used fictitious luxury brands and fake celebrities to rule out the influence of consumers' existing brand and celebrity knowledge. In order to enhance the internal and external validity of our experiment, we replicated the experiment using real luxury brand and real celebrities in the third study (see Table 1 for an overview of the three studies).

Our study has found that localized celebrity endorsements could trigger more social media interaction for luxury brands than standardized celebrity endorsements. However, using local celebrities in social media does not necessarily increase the perceived brand luxury. The effect of localized (vs. standardized) celebrity endorsements depends greatly on the patriotism of an individual. The moderating effect of patriotism has rarely been discussed in marketing and luxury literature before. Although standardized strategy and localized strategy both have their advocates in previous marketing literature (Duncan and Ramaprasad, 1995; Gilmore, 2003; Okazaki et al., 2006; de Pelsmacker et al. 2018), their effectiveness has not been fully examined in the social media context. Especially for luxury brands, previous studies contain mixed results. The findings of the present study fill a void in the literature and thus contribute to academic research on social media marketing for luxury brands in emerging markets. This study could also provide more meaningful insights for the luxury industry and help them choose their social media marketing strategy for emerging markets which have a growing appetite for luxury products.

1. Literature review

1.1. Standardization and localization for luxury brands in Print media and social media

Luxury brands tend to adopt a standardized strategy to strictly control brand perception (Kapferer and Bastien, 2009). Previous studies suggest that luxury brands frequently use Caucasian models in their advertising campaigns worldwide (Strebinger and Rusetski, 2016; Strebinger et al., 2018). Luxury brands use Western endorsers to accentuate the perception of their European origins and maintain a certain distance from the consumer since luxury brands are expected to play a leading role (Kapferer and Bastien, 2012). However, in Chinese social media, luxury brands commonly employ Chinese celebrities to increase brand awareness (Liu et al., 2016; Chevalier and Lu, 2010). A possible reason could be that the social media context is quite different from the contexts examined previously. Compared to mass media such as magazines, social media is a highly open and dynamic environment which allows individuals to interact and exchange their opinions freely. It is unlikely and also inappropriate for luxury brands to keep a lofty face and maintain a distance from consumers in social media. Brands have to

Table 1
A summary of the three studies.

Study	Method	Sampling	Stimuli	Purpose of the study
1	Social media data	Contents posed by 34 luxury brands in social media	n/a	The effect of localized celebrity endorsements on social media interactions
2	Between-subject experiment	Panel	Fictitious celebrities, a fictitious luxury brand	The effect of localized celebrity endorsements on perceived brand luxury and the moderating role of patriotism
3	Between-subject experiment	Snowball sampling (young luxury consumers)	Existing celebrities, an existing luxury brand	Replication of Study 2 using existing celebrities and brands

adapt their marketing strategy to social media.

By using Chinese celebrity endorsers, luxury brands could engage Chinese social media users and build a closer relationship with them. Previous research (Yin and Poon, 2016) demonstrates that luxury advertising using Chinese (vs. international) endorsers enhances the level of self-reference for Chinese luxury consumers. Chinese consumers may implicate themselves in the ad. Yin and Poon (2016) did not reveal the mechanism underlying such effect. However, this phenomenon can be well explained by the theory of social identity theory. Tajfel et al. (1979) proposed that social identity can be constructed based on one's group membership. When consumers see a social media message with a celebrity from the same ethnic group, they tend to consider him/her as the ingroup member. Ryu et al. (2006) suggest for hedonic products, people tend to evaluate the product more positive when the endorser's ethnicity is similar to their own. Ryu et al. (2006) argue that it is the same ethnic-group membership that serves as a heuristic cue for the evaluation. Social media is a platform to build social identity where people might be more easily influenced by similar others. Social media users may interact more with celebrities of the same ethnic-group membership to construct their social identity.

As a result, the outgroup Western celebrities may have less of an impact on the consumer's social media behavior because Chinese consumers have weaker connections with them (Ramchandani and Coste-Manière 2012). Thus, in the context of Chinese social media, being the ingroup member, a local celebrity is more socially powerful than a standardized celebrity in referent power, i.e., "the power or ability of individuals to attract others and build loyalty" (French and Raven, 1959, p. 256). Social influence occurs when celebrities influence audiences' emotions, opinion, and behaviors. Kelman (1958) identifies three varieties of social influence, namely compliance (i.e., when people appear to agree with others but actually keep their dissenting opinions private), identification (i.e., when people are influenced by someone who is liked and respected) and internalization (when people accept a belief or behavior and agree both publicly and privately). While compliance cannot be observed directly, identification and internalization can be seen in the context of social media interaction. For example, identification and internalization can be expressed by "commenting", "liking" and "reposting" a post. When an individual is influenced by celebrities and accept their beliefs, they tend to actively show their appreciation (liking), participate in the discussion (commenting), and share with other people (reposting). Social media interaction consists of these three elements and is a key indicator to identify social media influencers (Arora et al., 2019). As such, we expect that a localized celebrity has higher referent power and a greater tendency to socially influence the audience to like, repost and comment on the post.

H1. Localized (vs. standardized) celebrity endorsements lead to more social media interactions.

1.2. Perceived brand luxury

A high level of engagement in social media can lead to lower luxurious perception (i.e., social value, uniqueness, quality) for luxury brands because it reduced the psychological distance between consumers and the brand (Park et al., 2018). Unlike generic brands, luxury brands need to maintain the dream value diluted by the sales (Kapferer and Bastien, 2012). Therefore, brand luxury is an important performance indicator of social media activities for luxury brands. Many scholars investigate how certain marketing strategies influence the perceived brand luxury (e.g., Beuckels and Hudders, 2016). The concept of perceived brand luxury is proposed, developed and revised by many scholars (e.g., Vigneron and Johnson, 1999; Kapferer, 1998; Dubois et al., 2001; Vigneron and Johnson, 2004). Vigneron and Johnson (2004) develop the Brand Luxury index to measure the perceived luxuriousness of a brand. This brand-luxury scale treats luxury as a matter of degree, residing on a continuum from "very little" to "a great

deal" (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004). The amount of luxury contained in a brand is one of the key performance indices to evaluate the success of a luxury brand. When luxury brands communicate online, it is important for them to retain the features of brand luxury, such as perceived exclusivity, uniqueness and quality. According to the Brand Luxury Index, there are two main dimensions of brand luxury: non-personal-oriented perception and personal-oriented perception. Each dimension contains sub-dimensions. Conspicuousness, uniqueness, and quality belong to the non-personal-oriented perception while hedonism and extended self are under the personal-oriented perception.

Using localized celebrity endorsements may have a positive impact on social media interactions. However, localized celebrity endorsements may also produce adverse effects on the perceived brand luxury because local endorsers may reduce the perceived brand globalness, and perceived globalness is positively related to perceived brand luxury (Hassan et al., 2015). In fact, perceived globalness is one of the key dimensions of luxury brands (Chevalier and Mazzalovo, 2015). Perceived brand globalness enhances perceived brand quality and prestige as well as the willingness to pay (Steenkamp et al., 2003; Davvetas et al., 2015). A content analysis by Strebinger and Rusetski (2016) has suggested that luxury brand websites frequently show references to the country of origin (COO) and relatedness to developed Western countries. Luxury brands adopt a divergent communication approach to emphasize their country of origin and maintain their original cultural identity. A qualitative study conducted by Liu et al. (2016) includes interviews with 22 luxury retailers and suggests that highly localized strategies may confuse the Chinese consumers' perception of the brand identity and COO. For most Chinese consumers, the Western or European identity of a luxury brand signifies quality and status. Using local celebrities may reduce the relatedness to Western countries and the country of origin effect, which may reduce the perceived brand luxury. Zhu et al. (2019) have suggested that for luxury brands, using Western celebrity endorsers leads to a more positive attitude toward the brand among Chinese consumers. However, prior studies conducted by Ryu et al. (2006) suggest that for hedonic products (e.g., luxury products), consumers show more positive responses to an ad showing an endorser who has the same ethnicity as them because consumers tend to believe endorsers from the same ethnic group share the same attitudes, preferences, and values as them. The mixed findings from previous studies may be due to the neglect of an important boundary condition determining the effect of standardized vs. localized celebrity endorsements, that is, group membership. Not all Chinese consumers have the same level of the perceived group membership of local celebrities. The perceived group membership can be influenced by individuals' national identity.

1.3. The moderating role of patriotism

Many studies have investigated the relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and attitude toward international advertisements (e.g., Moon and Jain, 2001; Moon and Jain, 2002). Consumer ethnocentrism derives from ethnocentrism. People with a higher level of ethnocentrism tend to identify themselves as the ingroup and have unfavorable feelings toward the outgroup (Sumner, 1906). Shimp and Sharma (1987) apply ethnocentrism to the field of marketing and consumer studies. Ethnocentrism contains two dimensions: ingroup favoritism and an unfavorable attitude toward the outgroup (Sumner, 1906). Thus, ethnocentric consumers tend to have a positive attitude toward domestic products and negative attitude toward foreign products (Sharma et al., 1994). Previous studies rely heavily on ethnocentrism. However, this is apparently not the case for luxury brands in China because almost all luxury brands are not from China. Chinese consumers do not hold an unfavorable attitude toward foreign luxury brands. However, instead of ethnocentrism, patriotism may influence Chinese consumers' feelings toward local and Western celebrities. Patriotism refers to "strong feelings of attachment and loyalty to one's country without the

corresponding hostility towards other nations" (Balabanis et al., 2001, p. 160). Unlike ethnocentrism, people with high patriotism do not hold hostile attitudes toward the outgroup. Ingroup favoritism refers to the tendency that people easily associate positive characteristics with their ingroups than outgroups (Dasgupta, 2004). For people with low patriotism, they may have a relatively low identity with the ingroup. Therefore, ingroup favoritism is not prominent for them. In contrast, patriotic Chinese consumers are confident of the economy, society, culture and political system in China. They are more likely to attach positive associations to the Chinese celebrity than people with low patriotism. People with high patriotism level may admire local celebrities more and transfer their feelings to the brand. They will perceive the brand to have better quality and prestige. Ingroup favoritism may mitigate the negative effect of localized celebrity endorsements on the determinants of perceived luxuriousness. The perceived globalness and relatedness to Western countries will not appeal to Chinese consumers with high patriotism, but only to those with low patriotism. In this case, showing local celebrities may even have a positive effect on the brand luxury for patriotic Chinese consumers. As such, we expect that patriotism will moderate the effect of celebrity endorsements on perceived brand luxury (Fig. 1).

H2. Patriotism moderates the effect of localized celebrity endorsements on perceived brand luxury: localized (standardized) celebrity endorsements are more effective for people with higher (lower) patriotism.

2. Study 1

2.1. Method

Procedure. Data were collected from Weibo (Chinese version of Twitter) using a Python script. The collected data were processed and coded using a self-developed program in R. Finally, we used MLwiN 2.30 to analyze the data.

Samples. We developed a Python script that stored the content and the number of reposts, comments, and likes. We collected all Weibo posts of 34 luxury brands from its establishment to November 2017. In total, we collected 42,121 posts from 32 brands (see appendix; two brands, i.e., Hermès and Goyard, were excluded because they did not use celebrity endorsements in any of their posts).

Coding. We designed an R program to identify the type of celebrity endorsements (No celebrity, Western celebrity, Chinese celebrity, and a mix of Western and Chinese celebrity). The program worked by matching the celebrity in the post with two celebrity databases ("C" database, containing only Chinese celebrities and "W" database, containing Western celebrities). If there was no celebrity information in the post, it was coded as "0". If the celebrity was identified in the "W" database, "C" database, or in both, the post was coded as "1", "2" or "3", respectively. In the end, the "mixed" celebrities (coded "3") were deleted from the database, as the total number of posts was very small, and this type was not the focus of this study.

Measurement. Similar to the study by Dhaoui (2014) that examined the effectiveness of certain luxury brand marketing strategies in driving consumer engagement on Facebook, the social media interaction level was measured by the consumer endorsement rate (like), the consumer feedback rate (comment), and the consumer recommendation rate (repost). "Like" is a user's response to a post by clicking the like button below it. "Comment" refers to the action of commenting to a post. "Repost" refers to the action of sharing a post with one's followers. As the raw data were extremely skewed and followed a log-normal distribution, we used a log-transformation to reduce the skewness. In the end, the social media interaction index was calculated by using the mean of the log-transformed scores of the numbers of likes, reposts, and comments ($\alpha = .87$).

Data analysis and modeling. The data were analyzed using MLwiN, a

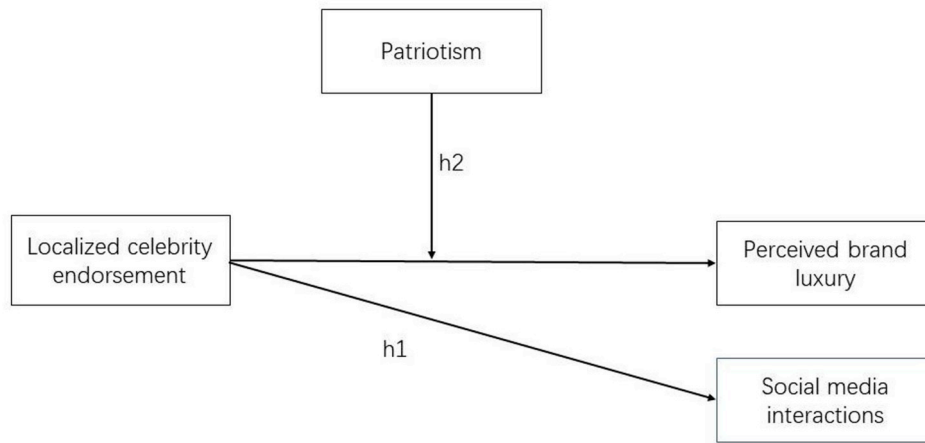


Fig. 1. The conceptual framework.

statistical package designed especially for multi-level analysis. As the level of online social interactions was nested with the brand, a simple *t*-test may enhance the chance of type I error. In this case, a hierarchical analysis is more appropriate. The model had two levels. The first was the post, and the second was the brand. The independent variable was the type of celebrity endorsements (no celebrity, Western celebrity, Local celebrity). We used contrast coding to deal with the categorical predictor. The group “Western celebrity” was used as the reference group (0). Two dummy variables were therefore created (No celebrity and local celebrity). The equation was formulated as follows:

Level 1:¹

$$Social\ Media\ Interactions_{ij} = \beta_{0ij} + \beta_{1ij} No\ Celebrity_{ij} + \beta_{2ij} Local_{ij}$$

Level 2:

$$\beta_{0ij} = \beta_0 + \mu_{0j} + \epsilon_{0ij}$$

$$\beta_{1ij} = \beta_1 + \mu_{1j}$$

$$\beta_{2ij} = \beta_2 + \mu_{2j}$$

2.2. Results

To analyze the data, we first compared three models, labeled 1, 2 and 3 (Table 2). Model 1 is a random intercept model without a random slope on level 2. Model 2 is a model with a random slope for one predictor (local celebrity). Model 3 is the full random slope model for both predictors. We used the IGLS estimation method.

The difference in the deviance statistics between the first and second model $\chi^2 = D_{R1} - D_{RS,1} = 1878$, which showed that predicting the social media interaction using a multilevel model was a significantly better fit to the data than predicting it with a one level model that removed the influence of the brand ($df = 2, p < .001$). Next, we compared model 2 with model 3. The difference in the deviance statistics suggested that model 3 was better than model 2 ($\chi^2 = D_{RS,1} - D_{RS,2} = 73, df = 2, p < .001$). Therefore, model 3 was selected. Please refer to the combined model:

¹ *Social Media Interaction_{ij}* is the level of social media interaction for the *i*-th post ($i = 1 \dots I$) in the *j*-th brand ($j = 1 \dots J$). β_{0ij} is the intercept for post *i* in brand *j*. It can be divided into a fix (overall) intercept, a brand-specific part and the residual error term for *i* post in *j* brand. β_{1ij} is the effect of no celebrity (vs. standardized celebrity endorsement) for post *i* in brand *j*. β_1 is the fix part and μ_{1j} is the brand-specific part. β_{2ij} is the effect of localized (vs. standardized) celebrity endorsement for post *i* in brand *j*. β_2 is the fix part and μ_{2j} is the brand-specific part.

Table 2 Model comparison.

	Model 1 (Random intercept)		Model 2 (Random slope_local)		Model 3 (Random slope_full)	
	Par.	S.E.	Par.	S.E.	Par.	S.E.
Fixed effects						
Intercept	2.351	.178	2.367	.174	2.364	.169
No celebrity	.143	.017	.121	.017	.128	.037
Local	2.011	.022	1.985	.156	1.987	.165
Model fit statistics						
Deviance (loglikelihood)	132839		130961		130888	

$$Social\ Media\ Interactions_{ij} = 2.364 + (0.128 + \mu_{1j}) No\ Celebrity_{ij} + (1.987 + \mu_{2j}) Local_{ij}$$

The inter-class correlation (ICC) was .410, suggesting the level of social media interaction modestly depends on the brand. The results further revealed that, in general, compared to standardized celebrity endorsements (Western endorsers), localized celebrity endorsements triggered significantly more social media interactions (Table 3). Furthermore, standardized celebrity endorsements (vs. no celebrity endorsement) decreased social media interactions. Fig. 2 showed the effect of different types of celebrity endorsement on social media interactions. Compared to Western celebrity endorsers, Chinese celebrity endorsers led to a higher level of social media interaction across all brands.

2.3. Discussion

This study suggests that localized celebrity endorsements in Chinese

Table 3 Model parameter estimates.

Fixed effects	Coefficient	S.E.	z	P > z
Intercept	2.364	.169	195.5	<.001
No celebrity	.128	.037	11.8	<.001
Local celebrity	1.987	.165	144.6	<.001
Covariance structure				
μ_{0j}	.901(.229)			
μ_{1j}	.017(.036)	.030(.011)		
μ_{2j}	.056(.158)	.071(.038)	.848 (.218)	
ϵ_{0ij}	1.297 (.009)			

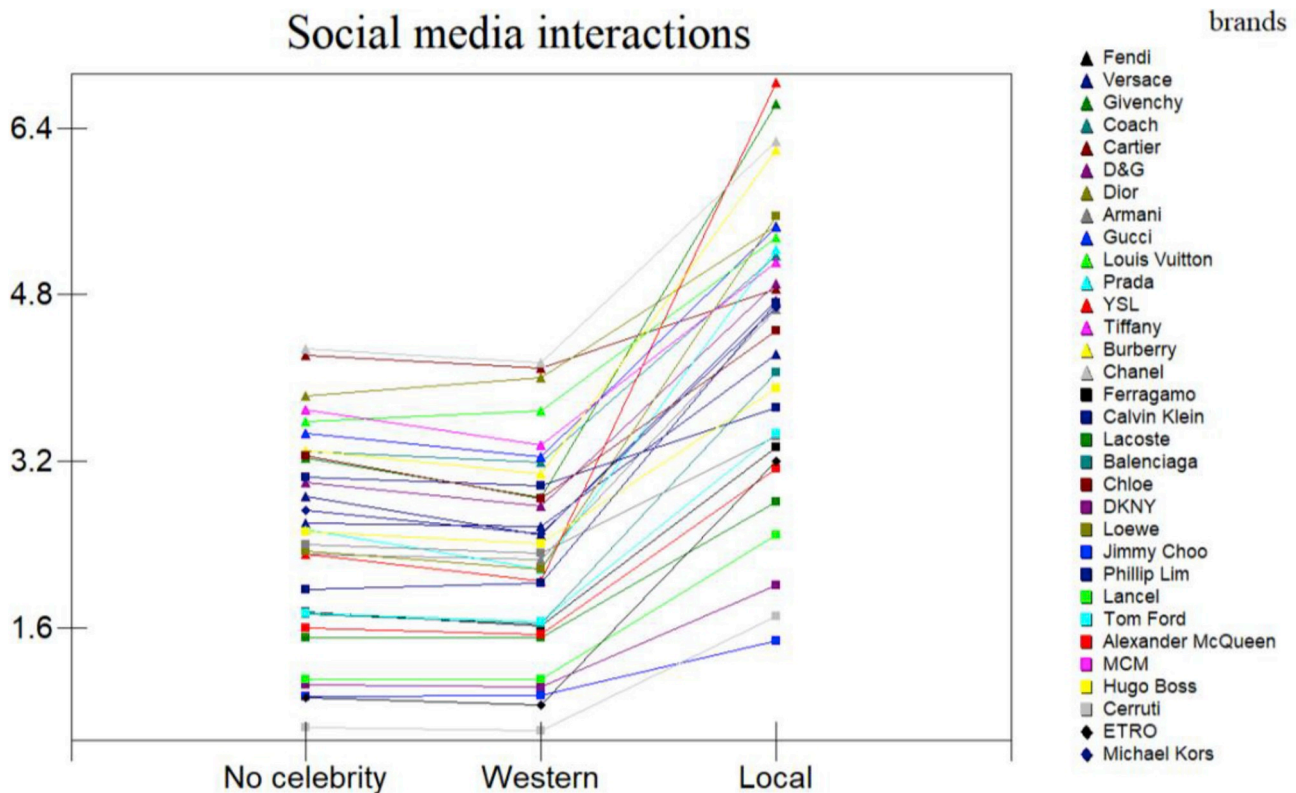


Fig. 2. The effect of localized (vs. Standardized) celebrity endorsement on social media interactions across 32 luxury brands on weibo.

social media can trigger more social media interactions. Its results are consistent with our expectation regarding [Hypothesis 1](#). Chinese consumers may interact more with a brand in social media if localized celebrity endorsements are used. Localized celebrities can start a dialogue between the consumer and the brand, which can motivate the consumer to comment, repost or like the post. Besides social media interactions, what will be the effect of localized celebrity endorsements on the perceived brand luxury of the brand? The second study aims to answer this question.

3. Study 2

3.1. Method

Experimental design. The first experiment employed a two-factor between-subjects design (types of celebrity endorsements, patriotism), with patriotism as a measured continuous variable and types of celebrity endorsements manipulated (standardization vs. localization of celebrity endorsements).

Stimulus Material and Procedure. Participants completed a short survey about a luxury brand called Dulcet. Dulcet is a fictitious brand that has been used in other studies (e.g., [Yu et al., 2018](#)). The description read: “Dulcet is a luxury brand from France. Dulcet is renowned for its leather goods, ready-to-wear, and shoes. Its products are available through its exclusive stores located in Paris, London, New York, Tokyo, Hongkong, and Dubai. Dulcet entered China in 2013 ... Dulcet’s products are generally very expensive. The price of a handbag is around 10,000 to 20,000 Yuan ...”. After reading the description, participants were asked to read a post from Dulcet on Weibo.

We manipulated the types of celebrity endorsement by selecting a Western and a Chinese model. We first collected a number of pictures from [MODELS.com](#). After comparing the background, the facial expression, the clothes, and the color, two pictures were finally selected because of their similarity. We conducted a pre-test to check if the two

models were similar in attractiveness and different in perceived origin. Forty-two respondents (mean age: 27.2, SD: 5.3, 78.6% female) participated in this pre-test and the results showed that the two models were perceived to be equally attractive ($M_{\text{standard}} = 5.13$, $M_{\text{local}} = 4.68$, $t(40) = 1.31$, $p = .20$). In addition, the Western model was perceived to be more Western and international than the Chinese model ($M_{\text{standard}} = 6.13$, $M_{\text{local}} = 2.86$, $t(40) = 8.65$, $p < .001$). In this experiment, we selected new models who are not very famous because we would like to control the respondents’ familiarity with the celebrity. Next, a fictitious Weibo post was shown with the text “#Dulcet Stars# Supermodel Nathalia Novaes (or Luping Wang) will join the photoshoot of the Spring/Summer collection”. The picture of the Western (or Chinese) model was placed below the text. Afterward viewing the post, participants answered several questions. The description, text, and question were translated by native speakers into Chinese and back-translated into English to guarantee appropriate translation.

Participants. One hundred and sixty respondents (53.8% female) were recruited using an online panel from Baidu Survey Center. The mean age was 29.7 (SD: 6.5). Around 87.5% of respondents held a bachelor’s degree. More than 66% of participants reported purchasing luxury products in the past six months.

Measurement. All scales are measured using a seven-point Likert scale. The scale to measure the perceived brand luxury was from the Brand Luxury Index ([Vigneron and Johnson, 2004](#)). The Brand Luxury Index ($\alpha = .94$) included 20 items and measured two perceptions (i.e., non-personal and personal oriented perceptions) and five dimensions of the perceived brand luxury, namely conspicuousness, uniqueness, quality, hedonism, and extended self. For the manipulation check, we measured the manipulation of the standardized vs. localized celebrity endorsement (perception of the celebrity’s origin, $\alpha = .68$). To access participants’ level of patriotism, we used the sub-scale (patriotism) in the scale of world-mindedness ($\alpha = .70$, [Sampson and Smith, 1957](#)). The perceived attractiveness of the model ($\alpha = .85$) was measured using the scale developed by [Ohanian \(1990\)](#).

3.2. Results

Manipulation Checks. The results suggested that the Western model was perceived to be more Western and international than the Chinese model ($M_{\text{standard}} = 5.89, M_{\text{local}} = 4.83, t(158) = -6.77, p < .001$). Therefore, the manipulation was successful.

Hypothesis Test. After performing an ANCOVA controlling the perceived attractiveness of the model, we did not observe a significant main effect of celebrity endorsement type on perceived brand luxury ($M_{\text{standard}} = 5.11, M_{\text{local}} = 4.92, F(1, 157) = 2.17, p = .146$). Next, we performed a moderation analysis using Model 1 in SPSS macro PROCESS (Hayes, 2013) controlling for perceived attractiveness of the celebrity. As we expected, we found an interaction effect of celebrity type and patriotism on perceived brand luxury (Fig. 3) ($b = .45, se = .21, t(155) = 2.17, p = .03$). The results of a floodlight analysis using the Johnson–Neyman technique are provided in Table 4. When patriotism was lower than 3.0, localized celebrity endorsements led to lower perceived brand luxury. Only when the patriotism level was above 5.0 did the use of localized celebrity endorsements have a marginally significant positive effect on perceived brand luxury. Therefore, hypothesis 2 was confirmed.

3.3. Discussion

In line with our expectation, individuals’ level of patriotism moderated the effect of localized (vs. standardized) celebrity endorsements on perceived brand luxury. In this study, to strictly control the experimental condition, we used a fictitious luxury brand and less-known celebrities as the stimuli. These conditions may limit the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, we conducted a third study using an existing luxury brand and well-known celebrities. Furthermore, we measured the level of patriotism through two scales to make sure patriotism was measured appropriately.

4. Study 3

4.1. Method

Pre-test. We conducted a pilot study to select appropriate celebrities from the West and China for the stimuli. Similar to the approach of Madzharov et al. (2015), we first selected three well-known local celebrities in China and used to endorse many luxury brands. Six pictures of the celebrities were pre-tested by 48 Chinese respondents. We measured the likability of each celebrity by using a five-point Likert scale (Choi and Rifon, 2012). Respondents rated the question: how do you like the celebrity? The answer ranged from “I don’t like the celebrity at all” (1 point) to “I like the celebrity very much” (5 points). Based on the mean difference of the likability (Table 5), we selected one celebrity (Nicole Kidman) from the West and one (Zhang Ziyi) from China. The scores for each did not differ significantly ($t(83) = .350, p = .727$).

Experimental Design. To test the hypotheses, we conducted an experimental study using a two-factor between-subjects factorial design by using Qualtrics software. Respondents from China were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions (localized vs. standardized celebrity endorsement). Patriotism was manipulated using self-report measurements.

Stimulus Material. Experimental materials were developed using Adobe Photoshop. A Chinese version of the post was made so that respondents were able to read the ad and the scenario description in their mother tongue. Materials were translated by a native speaker and back-translated by another native speaker. Celebrity endorsement (localized vs. standardized celebrity endorsement) conditions were manipulated by adapting the picture of the celebrity while keeping all other elements (brand, font, style) constant. The post contained both a text message and a picture. In the localization condition, we used a picture of Zhang Ziyi and the text read: Ziyi Zhang shines in exquisite custom-made Louis Vuitton dress for #Louis Vuitton 2016 Fall/Winter Fashion Show#, while in the standardization condition, the picture of Nicole Kidman was used with the description: Nicole Kidman shines in exquisite custom-

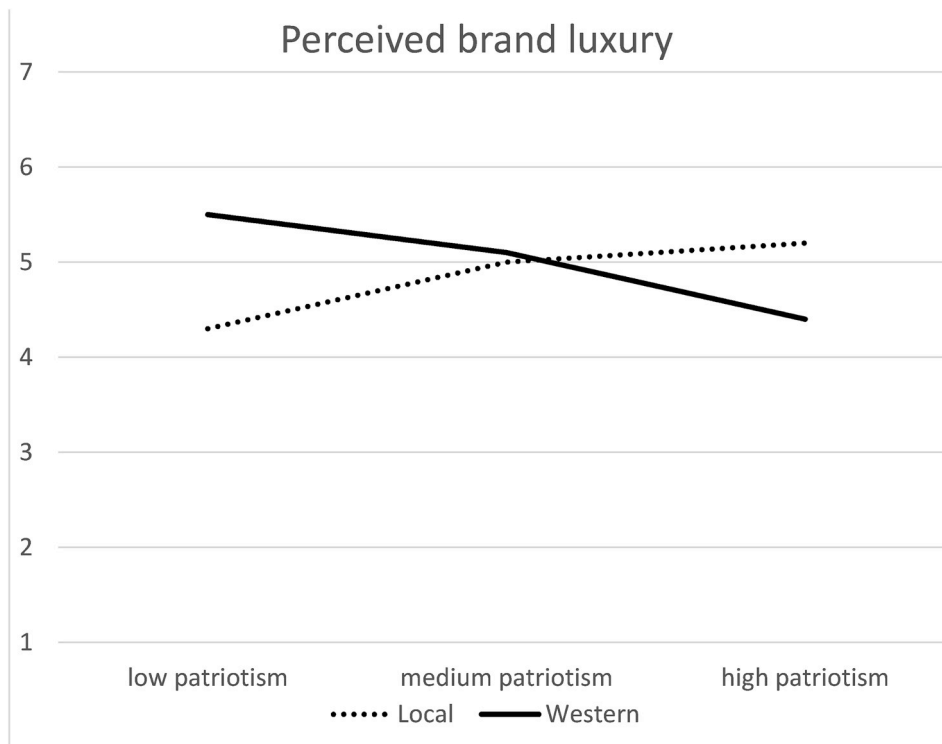


Fig. 3. The interaction effect of type of celebrity endorsement and patriotism (study 2).

Table 4
Conditional effect of celebrity type on perceived brand luxury at different values of patriotism.

Patriotism (Raw)	Patriotism (Standardized)	Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
.4000*	-2.9138	-1.4539	.6216	-2.3390	.0206	-2.6817	-.2260
.6600*	-2.6538	-1.3363	.5684	-2.3507	.0200	-2.4592	-.2134
.9200*	-2.3938	-1.2187	.5156	-2.3638	.0193	-2.2371	-.2002
1.1800*	-2.1338	-1.1011	.4630	-2.3782	.0186	-2.0156	-.1865
1.4400*	-1.8738	-.9835	.4108	-2.3938	.0179	-1.7950	-.1719
1.7000*	-1.6138	-.8659	.3593	-2.4098	.0171	-1.5757	-.1561
1.9600*	-1.3538	-.7483	.3087	-2.4238	.0165	-1.3581	-.1384
2.2200*	-1.0938	-.6307	.2596	-2.4294	.0163	-1.1435	-.1179
2.4800*	-.8338	-.5131	.2130	-2.4089	.0172	-.9338	-.0923
2.7400*	-.5738	-.3955	.1709	-2.3135	.0220	-.7332	-.0578
3.0000*	-.3138	-.2779	.1377	-2.0180	.0453	-.5499	-.0059
3.0229*	-.2908	-.2675	.1354	-1.9754	.0500	-.5350	.0000
3.2600	-.0538	-.1603	.1208	-1.3272	.1864	-.3989	.0783
3.5200	.2063	-.0427	.1269	-.3365	.7370	-.2933	.2079
3.7800	.4663	.0749	.1533	.4888	.6257	-.2278	.3776
4.0400	.7263	.1925	.1917	1.0040	.3169	-.1863	.5713
4.3000	.9863	.3101	.2365	1.3113	.1917	-.1570	.7772
4.5600	1.2463	.4277	.2846	1.5031	.1349	-.1344	.9898
4.8200	1.5063	.5453	.3345	1.6301	.1051	-.1155	1.2061
5.0800 +	1.7663	.6629	.3856	1.7190	.0876	-.0989	1.4247
5.3400 +	2.0263	.7805	.4375	1.7840	.0764	-.0837	1.6447
5.6000 +	2.2863	.8981	.4899	1.8333	.0687	-.0696	1.8658

Note: +: $p < .10$, *: $p < .05$, **: $p < .01$, ***: $p < .001$.

Table 5
The mean score of each celebrity.

Western	Mean	SD	Chinese	Mean	SD
Nicole Kidman	3.14	.630	Bingbing Fan	3.06	1.019
Anne Hathaway	4.15	.751	Ziyi Zhang	3.08	.710
Emma Watson	4.26	.736	Fei Wang	3.58	.846

made Louis Vuitton dress for #Louis Vuitton 2016 Fall/Winter Fashion Show#.

Procedure. Participants received a link to the questionnaire in their mailbox or Weibo messenger as part of a message in which they were asked to participate in a short study. When clicking on the link, participants were automatically directed to the Qualtrics questionnaire. Respondents first had to indicate some socio-demographic information: gender, age, family income, and nationality. Then, respondents were exposed to one of the stimuli. They were asked to look carefully at the content and evaluate it afterward. Next, respondents had to complete various ad effectiveness measures, and questions aimed at the manipulation check variables and some mediating variables. In the end, participants were thanked for their participation in the study.

Participants. In total, we collected 118 valid respondents via a snowball sampling method. The respondents were asked to recommend a friend who has experiences in luxury consumption. Given the fact that we aimed to test the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements in social media, we specifically targeted well-educated young luxury consumers, who had at least a bachelor degree. The age of respondents varied from 18-30 years. The mean age of the respondents was 25.6, the standard deviation is 4.14. With a number of 83, female respondents accounted for 70.3 of all the respondents. There were 35 male respondents (29.7%). More than 67.8% of the respondent had a monthly household income (net) of more than 1000 euro. Respondents were mainly from the south of China, including cities such as Foshan, Guangzhou, Hong Kong, Wuhan, and Yibin. More than 59.5% of the respondents spent more than 100 euro per year on luxury products (e.g., handbags, perfume, and cosmetic products). Nearly all the respondents (94.1%) held a bachelor degree from a university. More than 38.1% of the respondents had a master's or higher degree.

Measurement. The scales used in this study were the same as those in the previous study, including the perceived brand luxury ($\alpha = .95$) and perception of the celebrity's origin ($\alpha = .73$). We also measured the

attitude towards the celebrity ($\alpha = .96$, Spears and Singh, 2004), the perceived congruence between celebrity endorsers and the brand ($\alpha = .96$, Kamins and Gupta, 1994; Till and Busler, 2000) and familiarity with the celebrity to control consumers' pre-existing knowledge about the celebrity (Choi and Rifon, 2012). To measure patriotism, we used two different scales. The first scale was the same as that in the first study, the patriotism dimension of the scale "world-mindedness" ($\alpha = .71$). The other one ($\alpha = .83$) was adopted from the study by Davidov (2009), consisting of three items. We used two different scales to make a sure reliable measurement of patriotism.

4.2. Results

Manipulation Checks. To check whether the manipulation in this study was successful, we performed a *t*-test in SPSS. Results revealed that respondents perceived the standardized celebrity much more Western and international than the localized celebrity ($M_{\text{standard}} = 5.73$, $se = .18$, $M_{\text{local}} = 3.68$, $se = .20$, $t(116) = 7.50$, $p < .001$). In addition, we did not observe a significant difference between the two celebrities on perceived fit with the brand ($M_{\text{standard}} = 4.69$, $se = .18$, $M_{\text{local}} = 4.82$, $se = .18$, $t(116) = -.50$, $p = .61$) and attitude toward the celebrity ($M_{\text{standard}} = 4.88$, $se = .14$, $M_{\text{local}} = 4.82$, $se = .16$, $t(116) = .28$, $p = .78$). However, we observed a difference between two celebrities on perceived familiarity ($M_{\text{standard}} = 3.69$, $se = .29$, $M_{\text{local}} = 4.87$, $se = .29$, $t(116) = -2.87$, $p = .005$). We conducted a one-way ANCOVA controlling for respondents' attitude toward the celebrity, the perceived congruence, and familiarity with the celebrity. The results showed that the type of celebrity endorsements did not affect perceived brand luxury ($M_{\text{standard}} = 4.87$, $sd = .82$, $M_{\text{local}} = 5.03$, $sd = 1.01$, $F(1, 113) = .53$, $p = .47$). Furthermore, perceived congruence ($F(1, 113) = 3.26$, $p = .07$) and attitude toward the celebrity ($F(1, 113) = 3.26$, $p = .07$) influenced the perceived brand luxury. However, familiarity did not have a significant effect on brand luxury ($F(1, 113) = .53$, $p = .46$). According to Field (2013), we should control for the attitude toward the celebrity and perceived congruence in the further analysis.

Hypothesis Tests. Next, we performed moderation analyses with the condition (standardized vs. localized celebrities), patriotism, and the interaction between condition and patriotism as the predictors of the dependent variables and controlling for the attitude toward the celebrity and perceived congruence. By using model 1 of the SPSS macro PROCESS (Hayes, 2013, bootstrap: 5000), the results revealed that consistent

with the first study, the dimension “patriotism” of world-mindedness moderated the effect of standardized (localized) celebrity endorsements (Fig. 4) ($b = .72, se = .25, t(112) = 2.86, p = .005$). Consistent with the first study, for individuals with higher patriotism (above 3.38), localized celebrity endorsements led to higher perceived brand luxury than a standardized celebrity (Table 6). However, for individuals with a lower level of patriotism (below 1.61), localized celebrity endorsements led to lower perceived brand luxury. When using the other measurement of patriotism, the results remained similar ($b = .36, se = .13, t(112) = 2.86, p = .005$, Table 7, Fig. 5). As such, the third hypothesis was supported.

4.3. Discussion

Consistent with the results of the second study, we did not observe a significant main effect of localized celebrity endorsements on perceived brand luxury. Additionally, in accordance with the second study, we found that there was an interaction effect of celebrity endorsement type and patriotism on perceived brand luxury. Localized celebrity endorsements produced positive effects for individuals with a high level of patriotism and induced negative effects for people with a low level of patriotism.

5. General discussion and implications

With the growth of luxury consumption in emerging markets such as China, luxury brands are putting more effort into various means of marketing to local consumers. Localized celebrity endorsements have been one of their frequently used strategies, especially when luxury brands advertise on social media platforms, though its effect has not yet been fully tested.

To determine whether localized celebrity endorsements can trigger more social media interactions than standardized celebrity endorsements of luxury brands, we analyzed the amount of social media interactions (reposts, comments, and likes) triggered by 42,121 posts which were posted by 32 luxury brands on the Chinese social media platform Weibo. We found that, in general, luxury brands received more

social media interactions from localized celebrity endorsements (i.e., those using Chinese celebrities) than standardized celebrity endorsements (i.e., those using Western celebrities). The reason might be the difference in referent power between Chinese and Western celebrities in Chinese social media. Chinese celebrities are from the same ethnic group as Chinese consumers. In the context of social media, Chinese celebrities have more referent power to involve Chinese consumers in direct interactions.

Despite higher social media interaction, our experimental studies reveal that localized (vs. standardized) celebrity endorsements in social media do not necessarily lead to higher or lower perceived brand luxury. The effect of standardized vs. localized celebrity endorsements depends on individuals’ patriotism level. Standardized (localized) celebrity endorsements are more effective in enhancing perceived brand luxury only among consumers with a low (high) level of patriotism.

The current work sheds light on the boundary condition to determine the effectiveness of standardized vs. localized celebrity endorsements. Previous studies do not reach an agreement on whether luxury brands should standardize or localize their celebrity endorsements. Mixed findings are observed in the literature (e.g., Ryu et al., 2006; Yin and Poon, 2016; Zhu et al., 2019). This study provides an answer to the mixed findings. Previous studies may neglect the influence of patriotism on the preference for different types of celebrity endorsements. In fact, individuals’ level of patriotism determines the effectiveness of luxury brands’ localization and standardization strategies. The present research shows the importance of taking consumers’ patriotism level into consideration.

The present research also extends the literature about maintaining luxury brands’ aura in social media. Past studies have argued that luxury brands should maintain a certain distance from the consumer, remaining quiet and exclusive (Kapferer and Bastien, 2012). An empirical study of Park et al. (2018) have confirmed the negative effect of social media engagement on the perceived luxuriousness of the luxury brand because a higher level of engagement reduces the psychological distance of the brand. In other words, the brand becomes less mysterious. This study implies that high levels of social media interaction probably will not increase the dream value of luxury brands. Although localized celebrity

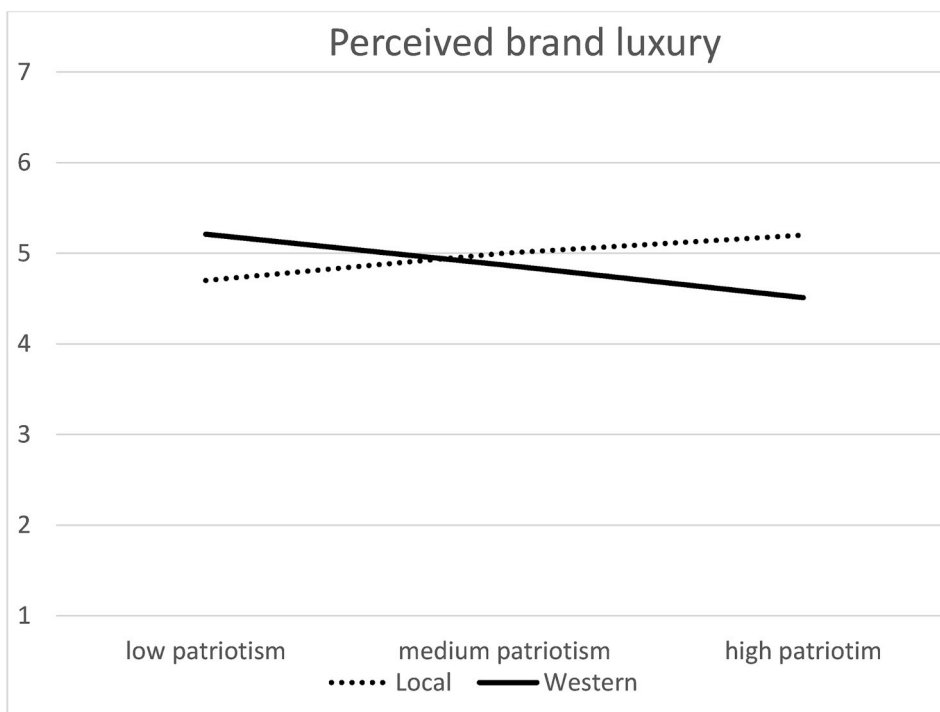


Fig. 4. The interaction effect of type of celebrity endorsement and patriotism (study 3, sub-scale of world-mindedness).

Table 6
Conditional effect of celebrity type on perceived brand luxury at different values of patriotism (subscale of world-mindedness).

Patriotism (raw)	Patriotism (Standardized)	Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
1.0000*	-1.9051	-1.2012	.5042	-2.3824	.0189	-2.2002	-.2022
1.1700*	-1.7351	-1.0790	.4637	-2.3271	.0218	-1.9977	-.1603
1.3400*	-1.5651	-.9568	.4236	-2.2588	.0258	-1.7960	-.1175
1.5100*	-1.3951	-.8346	.3841	-2.1730	.0319	-1.5956	-.0736
1.6184*	-1.2251	-.7124	.3453	-2.0628	.0414	-1.3966	-.0281
1.6800 +	-1.1236	-.6394	.3227	-1.9814	.0500	-1.2788	.0000
1.8500 +	-1.0551	-.5902	.3077	-1.9180	.0577	-1.1998	.0195
2.0200 +	-.8851	-.4680	.2716	-1.7233	.0876	-1.0060	.0701
2.1900	-.7151	-.3458	.2376	-1.4550	.1485	-.8166	.1251
2.3600	-.5451	-.2236	.2070	-1.0799	.2825	-.6337	.1866
2.5300	-.3751	-.1013	.1814	-.5588	.5774	-.4607	.2580
2.7000	-.2051	.0209	.1631	.1279	.8985	-.3023	.3440
2.8700	-.0351	.1431	.1548	.9243	.3573	-.1636	.4497
3.0400 +	.1349	.2653	.1580	1.6786	.0960	-.0479	.5784
3.2100*	.2169	.3242	.1636	1.9814	.0500	.0000	.6484
3.2312*	.3049	.3875	.1722	2.2503	.0264	.0463	.7286
3.3800*	.4749	.5097	.1949	2.6152	.0101	.1235	.8958
3.5500*	.6449	.6319	.2235	2.8266	.0056	.1890	1.0748
3.7200*	.8149	.7541	.2562	2.9437	.0039	.2465	1.2616
3.8900*	.9849	.8763	.2914	3.0069	.0033	.2989	1.4537
4.0600*	1.1549	.9985	.3285	3.0398	.0029	.3477	1.6493
4.2300*	1.3249	1.1207	.3668	3.0556	.0028	.3940	1.8474
4.4000*	1.4949	1.2429	.4059	3.0617	.0028	.4386	2.0472

Note: +: $p < .10$, *: $p < .05$.

Table 7
Conditional effect of celebrity type on perceived brand luxury at different values of patriotism (davidov's scale).

Patriotism (raw)	Patriotism (Standardized)	Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
1.0000*	-2.7458	-.8313	.3792	-2.1923	.0304	-1.5826	-.0800
1.3000*	-2.4458	-.7225	.3448	-2.0957	.0384	-1.4056	-.0394
1.6000*	-2.1654	-.6209	.3134	-1.9814	.0500	-1.2418	.0000
1.9000 +	-2.1458	-.6138	.3112	-1.9723	.0510	-1.2304	.0028
2.1227 +	-1.8458	-.5050	.2788	-1.8114	.0728	-1.0574	.0474
2.2000	-1.5458	-.3963	.2480	-1.5978	.1129	-.8877	.0951
2.5000	-1.2458	-.2875	.2195	-1.3097	.1930	-.7224	.1474
2.8000	-.9458	-.1787	.1943	-.9198	.3596	-.5638	.2063
3.1000	-.6458	-.0700	.1739	-.4025	.6881	-.4145	.2746
3.4000	-.3458	.0388	.1600	.2422	.8090	-.2783	.3559
3.7000	-.0458	.1475	.1546	.9545	.3419	-.1587	.4537
4.0000	.2542	.2563	.1583	1.6190	.1083	-.0574	.5699
4.2784*	.4523	.3281	.1656	1.9814	.0500	.0000	.6562
4.3000*	.5542	.3650	.1707	2.1389	.0346	.0269	.7032
4.6000*	.8542	.4738	.1900	2.4938	.0141	.0974	.8502
4.9000**	1.1542	.5825	.2144	2.7173	.0076	.1578	1.0073
5.2000**	1.4542	.6913	.2423	2.8527	.0052	.2111	1.1715
5.5000**	1.7542	.8001	.2727	2.9334	.0041	.2597	1.3405
5.8000**	2.0542	.9088	.3049	2.9809	.0035	.3047	1.5129
6.1000**	2.3542	1.0176	.3382	3.0084	.0032	.3474	1.6878
6.4000**	2.6542	1.1263	.3725	3.0235	.0031	.3882	1.8644
6.7000**	2.9542	1.2351	.4075	3.0311	.0030	.4277	2.0424
7.0000**	3.2542	1.3438	.4429	3.0340	.0030	.4662	2.2215

Note: +: $p < .10$, *: $p < .05$, **: $p < .01$.

endorsements increase social media interaction, such strategy does not enhance general consumers' luxury perception of the brand. While it was previously thought that Chinese consumers tend to associate Western elements (e.g. brand name in English, Caucasian models, Western origin) with good quality and luxuriousness, our results found that the effects of localized and standardized celebrity endorsements on consumers' perceived brand luxury are not significantly different.

From a managerial perspective, our findings contribute to the understanding of how luxury brands can optimize their communications in social media. Based on the findings of this study, we propose that luxury brands should adopt a mixed approach. In other words, they should include both standardized and localized celebrity endorsements in their communication campaigns. On one hand, local celebrities can increase the social media interaction level and a higher level of social media interaction can have a positive impact on consumers' purchase intention

(McCormick, 2016). On the other hand, the dream value diluted by the social media interaction (Park et al., 2018) could be supplemented by standardized celebrity endorsements, especially for people with a low level of patriotism.

The findings of this study arouse a reflection on the outcome of social media marketing. Although localized celebrity endorsements in social media could draw a large amount of media exposure and produce satisfactory interaction data for marketers and regional departments of luxury brands, it cannot enhance consumers' perceived brand luxury. For luxury brands, what really matters in the long term is not how many social media interactions they receive but whether their social media marketing strategies can improve consumers' attitudes toward the brand and enhance their desire to buy.

The findings of this paper also suggest that marketers should be aware of local cultural nuances. Without cultural sensitivity, marketers

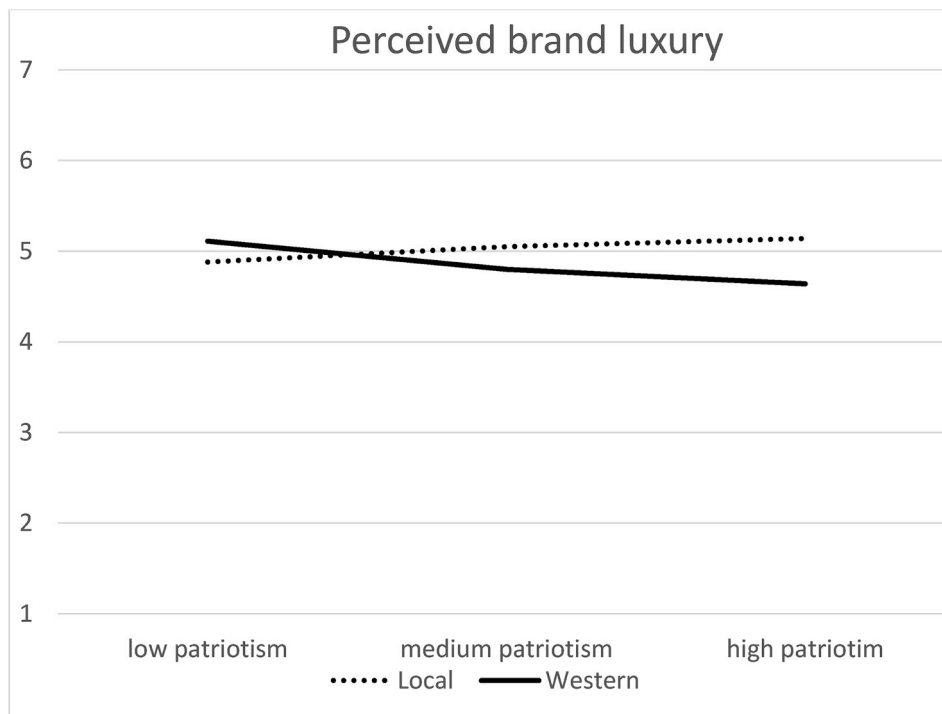


Fig. 5. The interaction effect of type of celebrity endorsement and patriotism (study 3, Davidov’s scale).

may make deadly mistakes in cross-cultural marketing. A recent example is a dispute caused by Dolce & Gabbana’s (D&G) social media advertisement posing an Asian model struggling to eat Italian food with chopsticks. Some Chinese found it “disrespectful and racist” and called for a boycott of D&G in the name of patriotism (Wiener-Bronner, 2018). This example prompts us to further ponder the influence of patriotism on the effectiveness of certain cross-cultural advertising strategy. Although they employed Chinese model and Chinese culture in this advertisement, the indelicate mix of Chinese and Italian culture still caused some Chinese consumers (especially patriotic ones) to criticize it as disrespectful and called for a boycott of D&G. This case supports our finding that patriotism could be an influential factor for the effect of cross-cultural marketing. It also implies how tricky a localized social media marketing strategy could be. It not only involves the use of local faces, but also includes how cross-cultural elements are arranged and presented.

6. Limitations and further research directions

This research helps luxury practitioners to better understand how luxury brands should choose between standardized and localized social media marketing strategies in the Chinese market. We focus on the effectiveness of localized (vs. standardized) celebrity endorsements on social media interactions and perceived brand luxury. However, in addition to celebrity endorsements, there are many other elements in

social media commercials, such as language, background, music, art style, and story-telling. All of these elements can be localized or standardized and their effectiveness has not been fully tested.

This research has only measured consumers’ perceived brand luxury as the dependent variable. Localized celebrity endorsements may also influence the likability and perceived globalness of brands as well as the intimacy, trust and purchase intention of consumers. An investigation of these mechanisms could contribute to a more comprehensive effects theory of social media marketing strategies and give luxury practitioners more clues in decision-making.

In terms of moderating variables, this research has found patriotism to be a significant moderator for consumers’ perceived luxuriousness from localized celebrity endorsements. A search for more moderators (e.g., luxury consumption experience, collectivism) could be a promising direction for future research and prove helpful for luxury brands seeking to engage in precision marketing.

This study was conducted in China. Therefore, the findings could not be directly generalized to all the luxury markets. However, our findings should be valid in culturally similar markets like South Korea and Japan. Considering the increasing luxury consumption in these countries, our findings provide insights into the luxury industry. As recently nationalism and patriotism are rising not only in China, but also all around the world, future studies may explore the moderating effect of patriotism in Western countries.

Appendix

The sample size for each brand

Brand name	Total posts	Localization	Standardization	Mix
Fendi	1647	263	335	23
Versace	1930	199	373	6
Givenchy	1320	139	400	20
Coach	1870	258	182	9

(continued on next page)

(continued)

Brand name	Total posts	Localization	Standardization	Mix
Cartier	840	109	25	7
Dolce & Gabbana	1936	310	186	12
Dior	1980	105	486	32
Armani	1767	290	313	9
Gucci	1804	302	171	2
Louis Vuitton	1670	146	300	30
Prada	637	58	177	2
YSL	176	34	29	2
Tiffany	1250	155	52	4
Burberry	1959	388	433	13
Chanel	1399	56	210	4
Salvatore Ferragamo	1180	142	234	11
Calvin Klein	1700	119	435	6
Lacoste	1835	147	30	1
Balenciaga	587	21	68	0
Chlöe	657	131	109	18
DKNY	588	40	68	0
Loewe	1163	191	38	0
Jimmy Choo	1993	641	184	6
Philip Lim	1284	129	63	0
Lancel	600	71	19	4
Tom Ford	609	48	68	2
Alexander McQueen	1359	108	228	2
MCM	1560	193	63	1
Hugo Boss	1946	260	217	5
Cerruti	200	65	6	0
ETRO	809	179	24	1
Michael Kors	1938	370	166	25
Total	42121	5667	5692	257

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