

**LUXURY BRAND COMMUNICATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA: A
QUALITATIVE STUDY OF THE CHINESE MARKET**

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ABSTRACT

In the current digital word, social media represent a relevant tool for marketing and communications strategies, which create new opportunities for firms to engage with their customers (Leeftang, Verhoef, Dahlström, & Freundt, 2013; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Libai et al., 2010). Among the sectors that leverage on social media in their communications, the luxury industry represents a main one. As previous research has mainly analyzed the consumer-side (Godey et al., 2016; Jin, 2012; Kim & Ko, 2012) overlooking the firm-side, the aim of this study is to investigate the cross-cultural issues faced by foreign luxury brands in implementing their social media strategies in China by carrying out a qualitative inquiry. China is the setting of analysis as it represents an increasingly relevant luxury market, characterized by the role of digital media as main communications and sales channel. Data collected consist of semi-structured interviews with managers from foreign luxury brands operating in China in order to understand the issues faced and the strategies implemented. Moreover, an analysis of their social media presence on Chinese platforms such as WeChat and Weibo is conducted by considering the type of response activated among users. As pointed out by Belk (2017), qualitative advertising research can provide a better understanding of consumer response to advertising also in the rapidly growing field of social media, which have been mainly unexplored by qualitative approaches (Hadija, Barnes, & Hair, 2012). Moreover, an analysis on the firm-side will fill a gap in the existing literature and provide relevant managerial implications for international firms that operate in China.

Keywords: China, digital marketing, e-commerce, internationalization

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