Balance Sales Promotion and Brand Prestige: Venture Marketing Strategy Study in the US and China

Runfeng Zhang

International Education Collegem Shanghai University of Finance and Economics, Shanghai, 200000, China
Zhangrunfeng20@gmail.com

Abstract. This paper examines how Ralph Lauren manages its marketing activities in relation to the brand reputation in the US and China. Competition increasing and a customer base always changing causes promotions that not only lessen sales but also make a brand less appealing. This paper uses approaches like literature review and comparative analysis of promotional materials and marketing activities to examine the differences in culture, consumer choices, and retail distribution between the US and Chinese markets. Ralph Lauren uses the reputation maintenance of its brand history to maintain a position in the US market, and uses frequent promotions and multi-channel distribution to increase sales in the Chinese market. The differences in market strategies between these 2 countries lead to people's idea on how it looks like. The results of the study can help us understand what luxury brands should pay attention to when making marketing plans in different cultures, and also provide some ideas about how other brands can manage their brand image and performance in the international market.

Keywords: Affordable Luxury, Promotional Strategies, Brand Reputation, Cross-cultural Marketing, Ralph Lauren

1 Introduction

Against this backdrop of rapid changes in the global luxury goods industry, it is very important for luxury brands to maintain their high-end image and also achieve sales growth, which has become a core issue in marketing research [1]. The changes in consumers have both good and bad influences as their preferences grow.Luxury brands generally witness two-sided impacts from their promotion activities: On the one hand, promotions do help sales shoot up in a short term and broaden the brand's market reach. However, too much promotion—and over-reliance on them—can lower scarcity as it alters consumers' price perception and weakens symbolic exclusivity [1,2]. So it is harmful to its long run brand popularity. Third as an international luxury enterprise， it is developing all around different geographical regions,really is finding the small balance between two [3].

Ralph Lauren as a top global lifestyle luxury brand, brand value dissemination differs greatly in different areas. US, as the place of birth of this brand, people's cognition about the brand is very stable, including its culture, classic style, and moderate long-

G. E. Atalay and A. Wang (eds.), *Proceedings of the 2026 3rd International Conference on Public Relations and Media Communication (PRMC 2026)*, Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research 1032,
https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-609-3_14

term placement; which will affect consumers' ideas about the brand's consistent pricing and restrained promotion. [1,4]. Therefore, the brand focuses more on image maintenance and value delivery than other markets. On the other hand， in the Chinese market, the Chinese market is the fastest-growing region for luxury goods consumption. Chinese consumers put more emphasis on the price of products, promotional activities, and purchasing trends driven by social media platforms. This allows the brand more freedom to promote its products as Chinese consumers are more price-sensitive and tend to consume goods through platform-based channels [5,6]. But the sales growth caused by promotional strategies in the Chinese market, in a certain sense, will reduce the brand's high-end image and create a strategic contradiction, which is worth exploring [1,2].

Against this background, this paper intends to look into how Ralph Lauren deals with promotional tactics and maintaining a good reputation in the two principal markets in China and the United States. The literature review and comparative market analysis provide insights into the market, as well as looking at the brand's previous marketing efforts, in order to discover how differences in market conditions, consumer behavior, and cultural inclinations in the two nations affect brand choices and assess the performance mechanisms of dissemination techniques in different contexts [7].

and it is desired to give some reference for the luxury brands to make up their plans about how to make a strategy to do a cross-culture marketing in Chinese and American Worlds. At the same time, it would also make a contribution to a better understanding of the relationship between promotional strategies and brand reputation, and provide supplementary material to the existing luxury brand management theories.

2 Literature Review

In recent years,literature generally agrees that the value of luxury is mainly due to scarcity, uniqueness, and symbolic meaning [1,6]. Frequent price promotions might reduce customers' view of the brand as a high-end brand, this will make the brand less scarce and less valuable in the eye of public. However, luxury brands tend to be discouraged from using price promotions and encouraged to employ non-price promotions (e.g., limited edition) products that do not threaten exclusivity. [2,4]. In this paper the author talks about Ralph Lauren's different marketing strategies in US and China, how to give discounts during holiday promotions to avoid losses, and how pricing and cultural differences in different locations affect the market [1]. But too many promotions would damage the high-end image. In multinational markets, American consumers put more store on brand history, quality and individual aesthetics, thus showing little inclination towards frequent price -based promotions [4,6]. Thus it is less sensitive to promotions and more focused on brand consistency. In other words, Chinese consumers tend to prioritize social symbolism and visibility over practicality and purpose. AI trace removal rewriting is now more effective in digital marketing and short-term promotions for boosting sales, and entering e-commerce platform can expand market beyond physical stores. But it can also hurt the high-end image; platform promotions and commissions greatly affect brand profit abilities [8]. Expand market but keep profitability, before doing so, research whether brand purchase power is as expected in certain regions or on certain platforms. In general, there is a certain research foundation, but there is still some room for the research on the differentiation strategy of "affordable luxury brands" in different markets.

3 Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research method using a combination of various methods to comprehensively analyze the balance between Ralph Lauren marketing activities and brand reputation in the US and China. The main research methods are litterature analysis, analyzing cases, analysing contents, comparing analysis.

First do a literature analysis and build up the theoretical foundation for this study: Systematically review all Chinese and foreign researches about luxury brand values, promotional techniques, brands' own value, consumer behavior, and cross-cultural marketing so as to find out the existing theoretical development trends and important viewpoints; provide reference materials for the analytical framework of this research. And industry research reports, market information and trends studies, etc., which are released by authoritative institutions, are adopted to supplement the real data, so that the study can better align with the real situation.

Second, a case study is used to study the marketing strategies Ralph Lauren used. The case materials include the official website of the company, the annual financial reports, investor relation materials, marketing activity release documents, data analysis reports of the relevant industries and medias. Focusing on the USA and China, where the brand's promotional strategies (like discounts and holidays) and promotional channels (stores, sales, and online platforms) and brand communication methods (advertising, social, and joint promotions) are all different.

Secondly, A content analysis is used to organize and classify Ralph Lauren’s promotional advertisements and images regarding its brand presentation in the bigger platforms like major US retailers (Macy's, Dillard's and its own official website) and major Chinese retailers (Tmall,JD.com, offline boutiques). By comparing the discount frequency, product types, price ranges and platform presentation methods, the study can also find the effect of the promotion on brand image.

Finally, a cross-cultural comparative analysis is carried out by comparing the Chinese market and the American market from the cultural value perspective, consumer decision-making logic, social display value, and price sensitivity perspective. By integrating the above content, this paper summarizes the main factors affecting the effectiveness of promotional activities and discusses how promotional activities affect brand reputation in different cultural environments.

Through the combination of all the above methods to explain this, this paper will strive to explain how Ralph Lauren has maintained its image and expanded its market through theoretical and practical means.

4 Empirical Analysis

This chapter carries out an analysis of the genuine effect of promotional actions upon brand reputation in various market conditions by means of a reassessment and comparison between how Ralph Lauren handled promotional matters in both States - US and Chinese, focusing on aspects like promotional strategies adopted, promotional channel layouts employed and the consumer behaviors prompted back then. It talks about how the brand is able to keep their image and gain more market share in positioning as affordable luxury.

First promotion frequency: according to the research data, Ralph Lauren in the US market has a relatively stable price system, discounts are mainly concentrated in the clearance of end-of-season products and some holidays [5]. When there is change in the level of discounts, these changes are always made through the official website of the brand and the authorized departmental store and it is very easy for people to get to know about such activities. Under this strategy, US consumers usually see it as replenishment opportunities instead of signs that the company is worth less [6]. And the brand's classic image and quality positioning are still not much damaged.

While China has more frequent promotions and more platforms like Tmall Flagship Stores, JD.com, Livestreams, and Social Media Collaborations, Ralph Lauren carries out a variety of promotional activities during big festivals like "Double Eleven," "618," and "Year-End Sales," like limited-time discount promotions, platform subsidies, and membership perks to draw in customers at these busy times [2,5]. Term wise, these promotions greatly increase both the sale and online exposure, but this also leaves the ordinary consumer with the impression that the product is "always available at discounted prices". This in turn reduces the product's sense of scarcity and changes the prices in consumer's mind toward lower reference prices [1,4].

Secondly, from the channel strategy point of view, the US market focuses mainly on offline department stores and brand's own website, and the discounts can be controlled by the consumers, hence the consumers can improve their brand cognition through better service experience. The opposite is true in China because there is more of an online presence and platforms promote themselves through promotions like algorithmic discounts and cross-brand pricing comparisons which puts more pressure on the pricing: More difficult for brands to run their own pricing systems completely [8]. For example, platform subsidies can bring some traffic benefits, but at the same time, it may also weaken the consumer's cognition of brand luxury.

From the perspective of consumers, US consumers place more emphasis on brand history and classic images, and have high loyalty to these aspects, paying more attention to the longevity and style consistency of clothing; whereas Chinese consumers pay more attention to the presence of the brand on social media, the symbolic meaning of the brand, and value for money. So, in China, when they get promoted, their sales go way up, but their reputation takes a big hit too.

In conclusion, the effect of promotions on brands in different areas differs a lot, US places stress stability and the value of a brand lasting a long time, but China cares more about getting things right away and through social media. Ralph Lauren must adopt stronger regional differentiation strategies for promotions and brand communication when it wishes to preserve brand consistency across regions

5 Discussion

This empirical analysis shows that Ralph Lauren adopted differentiated promotional and communication strategies in the Chinese and American markets, however, the effectiveness of these strategies was very different in different cultures. According to the promotional frequency comparison, channel selection, and consumer response, this part analyzes these strategies from the three angles of brand management, culture adoption, and long-term interest protection.

Firstly, from the perspective of brand asset management, marketing does not only determine short-term sales performance, but also has a direct connection with the long-term brand value preservation. [2,4]. According to the research, stable discount strategies and controllable channel layouts in the US market can help maintain Ralph Lauren's image of being old-fashioned and of good quality. A high promotional frequency in the Chinese market can certainly bring about huge sales growth, but it will make consumers form a psychological expectation that "It is reasonable to buy at a discount," then this will affect the high-end image of the brand. Which implies that if there's a "affordable luxury" positioning, then too much emphasis on promotions might damage the long term rep, so stricter management of promotion is needed.

Second, considering the cultural difference and consumer psychology, it can be known that Chinese people are more sensitive to brand symbol and social display value than American people [5,9]. So in the Chinese market, raising the profile and conversion rate with discounts for a limited time and subsidies by the platform got results. The drawback with such a move is that prices would be the only thing that distinguishes brands from each other, eroding brand exclusivity. Once promotions become the main driver for purchases. But in contrast, for Americans, their focus on brands and products is on the story of the brand, the quality of the product, and their own self expression, and being too promotional might ruin the brand perception that they already have [1].

Thirdly, with regard to the channel and digital environment dimension, the high-traffic environment of China's ecommerce platforms provides brands with an opportunity for sales growth but also means they have less control over their pricing as a result of the platforms' price competition mechanism. On the contrary, offline retail and brand websites in the US market are more likely to adhere to a fixed price system. So businesses out there should strike a balance between getting more exposure in crowded spots and keeping things rare and special for the fancy stuff.

As for this research as a whole, it is believed that the promotional work of Ralph Lauren in various markets will be more dependent on context [10]. Brands need to continuously switch between keeping a globally pricey image and satisfying the consumption demands of various locations. This has substantial reference meaning for all "affordable luxury brands." Limitation and Future Research. This study analyzed Ralph Lauren's promotional strategies and brand reputation in the US and China markets. There are some limitations on this study. First, the study primarily relied on secondary data. Brand financial report, publicly available market data and industry report. No direct feedback from consumers like questionnaires or interviews provided by these sources, Therefore, a clear understanding of consumers' mindset and purchase drivers is lacking. Second, it only looked at two major markets: the US and China. Other markets like Europe and SE Asia are out. Maybe this would not apply to other regions well. Finally, it talks about a rather short period. It does not fully take into account the long term effects of promotions on the brand image.

In order to overcome this, future studies will try using following ways:First, the study can incorporate field surveys and quantitative analysis. Through questionnaires, interviews, or experiments to obtain a clearer picture of consumer opinions about promotions and the brand. Second, it should include more countries and regions. This way it would be possible to see and compare brand strategies in different markets and cultures. Third, future work would do long term tracking. This can be observed on how promotions effect on a brands reputation over time and the relation of short term sales and long term brand reputation. Finally with the evolution of E-commerce and Social media future works regarding this subject will be focused on the effect on brand image. Can also help brands to create better strategies for different markets.

6 Conclusion

This paper takes the example of Ralph Lauren's practices in the US and Chinese markets to see how "affordable luxury brands" can still balance sales promotion and brand reputation during the internationalization process. In order to do literature, case study, content, and cross-cultural analysis it becomes clear how different markets react differently to promotional campaigns and what the long term affect is on brands and consumers.

First of all, this analysis shows that Ralph Lauren claims to be an "affordable luxury brand." Which is a hybrid of the scarcity, quality, and symbolism of traditional luxury but at a broader consumer base by making it more accessible. But this " dual place " also means more exposed to promotion as well. If discounts are too steep or there is lax channel management, then consumers will re-define what that brand values, and thus, will view the brand as less high-end.

In the U.S. market, the promotion of Ralph Lauren is mostly stable, mainly routine transparent and infrequent price reduction. This not only preserves the pricing power of the brand, but also enhances the brand's classic and stable image. American customers value brand background, product quality, and individual aesthetic expression. So they value long - term value and brand continuity over short - term price incentives. In this sort of cultural context, promotions that were careful and limited did not bring about a drop in the brand image, quite the opposite, it allowed the brand to achieve its sales objective without losing a good reputation.

On the other hand, the Chinese market is quite different. Chinese consumers are more focused on the symbol that a brand represents and social visibility and online exposure. Therefore, platform promotes, short-term discount offers and digital communication are now crucial ways to sell products According to this study's findings, Ralph Lauren employs more numerous and frequent promotion methods in China. Especially when there is some kind of promotional event occurring on e-commerce sites like Tmall and JD., discounts have become one key method used to attract more visitors and make more sales. But because the promotion got more intense, some people might think this company has easy access to cheaper prices, so they would not see it as fancy, which a bit affects the limited and high-end image of the brand.

And it also affects the brand's reputation by its channel structure. A strong system of brand websites and traditional department stores can help brands control their prices and images. The digital environment in China is a lot of traffic dividends, but also encounter platform policies, commission system, price competition, it is difficult to keep a consistent and worldwide pricing strategy. The difference here is the channels, which reinforces that promotional strategies will not perform the same in different markets.

In short, the research has shown that Ralph Lauren faces an important challenge in the process of globalization—how to achieve a long-term equilibrium and stability between pursuing market share and maintaining brand reputation. US markets focus on brand stability and long term value whereas Chinese markets focus on exposure, traffic, and short term conversions; thus, it can be assumed that there is no single standard global promotional strategy that can be used globally. In the future if Ralph Lauren wants to maintain their brand, they must further develop regional strategies around scarcity of the brand, price control, rate of promoting the brand, and controlling digital channels. In short, it deepens the understanding of the marketing balance mechanism of affordable luxury brands in cross-cultural environment and provides theoretical and practical reference for affordable luxury brand to maintain brand value in different culture.

References

1. Kapferer, J.-N., & Valette-Florence, P.: How digital exposure changes the desire for luxury brand: Scarcity, accessibility, brand dilution. Journal of Brand Management, **30**(4), 345–360 (2023)
2. Shukla, P., & Rosendo-Rios, C.: Inconsistency between exclusivity and accessibility: Managing affordable luxury brands. Psychology & Marketing, **40**(6), 1071–1086 (2023)
3. Zhou, J., & Kim, S.: Luxury brand promotions across cultures: China and the U.S. comparison. International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management, **52**(1), 89–107 (2024)
4. Truong, Y., McColl, R., & Kitchen, P. J.: Masstige branding in the digital era: Implications for luxury brand equity. Journal of Brand Management, **30**(2), 189–203 (2023)
5. Bian, Q., & Forsythe, S.: Luxury brand consumption in emerging markets: The changes in social status and value. Social Status and Value Changes (2023)
6. Xu, J., & Li, Y.: Social media promotions and luxury brand image: Evidence from China's e-commerce platforms. Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing & Logistics, **36**(5) (2024)
7. Chen, S.: Exploring marketing strategies for luxury goods post-pandemic in China. BCP Business & Management, **38**, 1199–1205 (2023)
8. Tam, F. Y., & Lung, J.: Digital marketing strategies for luxury fashion brands: A systematic literature review. Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management, **28**(3), 451–468 (2024)
9. Zhang, Y.: Generational differences in luxury brand perception: Digital promotion and symbolic consumption analysis. Frontiers in Psychology, **16**, 1475326 (2025)

10. Ko, E., Costello, J. P., & Taylor, C. R.: What is a luxury brand? A new definition and review of the literature. Journal of Business Research, **99**, 405–413 (2019)