

Burberry's Marketing Activities in the UK and China: An Analysis Based on Cultural and Psychological Differences

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Abstract: Burberry is a well-known British brand established in 1856. And over a long period of time to expand and to develop domestic and overseas, China is now one of the most major and significant market for the brand as current research reveals. To successfully market their products in such two different cultures in the UK and China, a lot of researches have been done to adjust the brand to suit and to be accepted by consumers holding different culture backgrounds. This report will take a deep research in Burberry's marketing strategy include positioning strategy, pricing strategy and promotion strategy based on the cultural background and the psychological factors that may affect consumers' purchasing behaviour. Secondary research is widely used during the research including internal reports and external studies. To get a deep understanding of how cultural and psychological differences affect customers' purchasing behaviour of luxury goods, Hofstede's culture model can offer a clear instruction. Opportunity always comes with threat. Due to the huge cultural difference between Britain and China. It also brings challenges to the marketing activities arranged for Chinese markets. According to Hofstede Insights showing in figure 2, the United Kingdom has low power distance, high individualism level, medium to high masculinity, low uncertainty avoidance, medium level of long term orientation and high indulgence. China has high power distance, low individualism level, medium to high masculinity, low uncertainty avoidance, medium long term orientation and high indulgence. As a result, the differences between power distance, individualism and indulgence all have influence on consumers' psychological behavior based on the analysis of the cross-cultural framework of two countries. United Kingdom tends to be more individualism and have less power distance and high indulgence level while China is more collectivist and high power distance and lower indulgence. Although these two counties have far cultural distance, there are still some shared value that can be took advantage of by the company. The need of conformity, exclusivity and hedonism affect consumers' acceptance of luxury brands and purchasing intentions. To reposition the brand, it is important to change consumers' perception from functional to fashion and luxury. Different methods have been applied depending on the cultural and regulative factors in the two countries.

1. Introduction

Burberry is a luxury brand carrying a distinctly British heritage established in 1856 [1] with over 431 directly operated stores around the world. Burberry ranks at 96th in the Interbrand Best Global Brands 2019 [2] which has 5205 \$m of its brand value with a 4% increase from 2018. It also ranks 7th in the 10 most valuable luxury brands worldwide in 2019 [3]. According to Burberry PLC [4], Accessories, Women's, Men's and children's wear and beauty products are the main product range.

According to its 2018/2019 Annual Report, Burberry has 194 stores in Asia Pacific area and 142 in Emeia area. These two area also account for the majority of the revenue which are 1104 million pounds in Asia Pacific area and 958 million pounds in Emeia as the Figure 1 shows. Greater China led the comparable sales growth with doubledigit in 2013 [5]. And the chief operating and financial officer of the firm, Julie Brown, said that Chinese consumers account for around 40% of sales which makes China one of the most major and significant market for the brand [6]. Therefore, this essay will focus on Burberry's marketing activities in the UK and China. Firstly, this essay will start with the analysis and comparison of culture background of the UK and China. After that it will reveal how it is connected to psychological difference. Then, after analysing how culture is important to Burberry,

this essay will discuss about specific marketing activities that Burberry have applied. Moreover, positioning strategy, pricing strategy and promotion strategy will be illustrated by comparison of the similarities and differences in cultures in the two different countries.

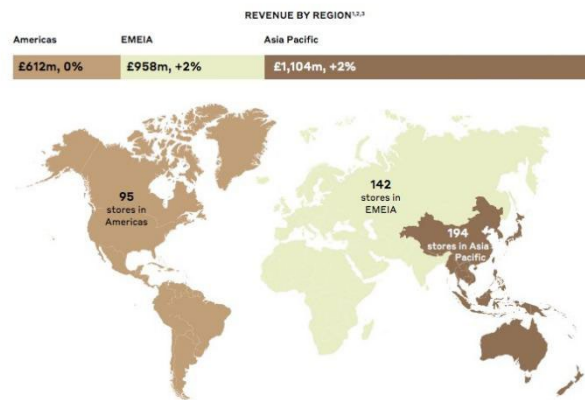


Figure 1 Revenue by Region

2. Research Methods and Model Selection

2.1. Research Methods

This analysis mainly depends on secondary research, also as known as the desk research. The information will be collected through both internal and external sources including the organization bodies, books, government statistics, consulting companies and internet. The main objective is to help create a deep understanding of Burberry’s current marketing activities and the potential development for the future plans.

2.2. Model Selection

According to Solomon [7], culture is defined as the shared personality of the members of an organisation or society. “It’s the accumulation of shared meanings, rituals, norms and traditions”. Cultures from different countries can be completely different. Traquandi [8] illustrates that Hofstede’s culture dimensions can provide useful insights for the enterprises to operate and to interact in different cultures. The five dimensions are power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, long term orientation and indulgence. The cultures of Britain and China will be analysed in details by using Hofstede’s culture model.

3. Results Analysis

Firstly, UK is known as a country with “cultural superpower” while London is seen as a world cultural capital [9]. In British culture, Sport is also important and many of them originated in the country such as football [10].

According to Hofstede Insights showing in Figure 2, the United Kingdom has low power distance, high individualism level, medium to high masculinity, low uncertainty avoidance, medium level of long term orientation and high indulgence. The belief of that everyone should be treated equally leads to the low power distance which means that they do not expect an unfair distribution of power in the society. It is also a highly independent social relationship between its members which scores 89 in individualism level. It also shows a big difference to China which is scoring 51 in long term orientation presenting that the British culture is not the dominant force that they take into account when dealing with challenges. Relatively high indulgence level reveals that British people are tend to express their desires and impulses and have fun rather than control their feelings.

In comparison, according to Figure 2, China has high power distance, low individualism level, medium to high masculinity, low uncertainty avoidance, medium long term orientation and high indulgence. High power distance shows that due to the historical influence, the society is more likely to accept the subordinate-superior relationship. Unlike the United Kingdom, China is a more

collectivist with a 20 score in individualism level. It is where people put the group interests before themselves and personal relationship plays an essential role in the society. China has a pragmatic culture with a high score 87 in long term orientation encouraging thrift and efforts.

Another difference between China and UK is the indulgence where China gets a low score of 24. In detail, China is perceived as a restrained society that people may feel guilt when they put too much attention to leisure time. However, there are some shared similarity in these two cultures. Masculinity level between the UK and China both score 66 which means that both countries are success oriented and driven to some extent. In addition, uncertainty avoidance level of both countries are also similar. Both Chinese and British people are more likely to accept the ambiguities in the future. Overall, the cultural distance between the UK and China is quite far. Thus, Burberry need to adopt different marketing activities to suit different cultures.

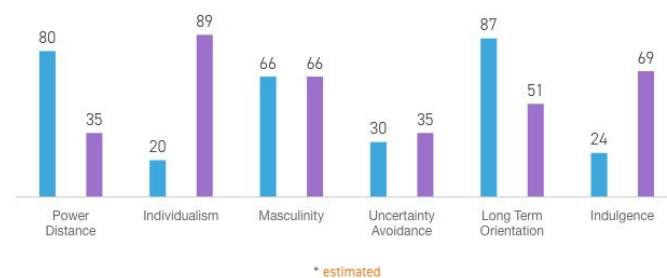
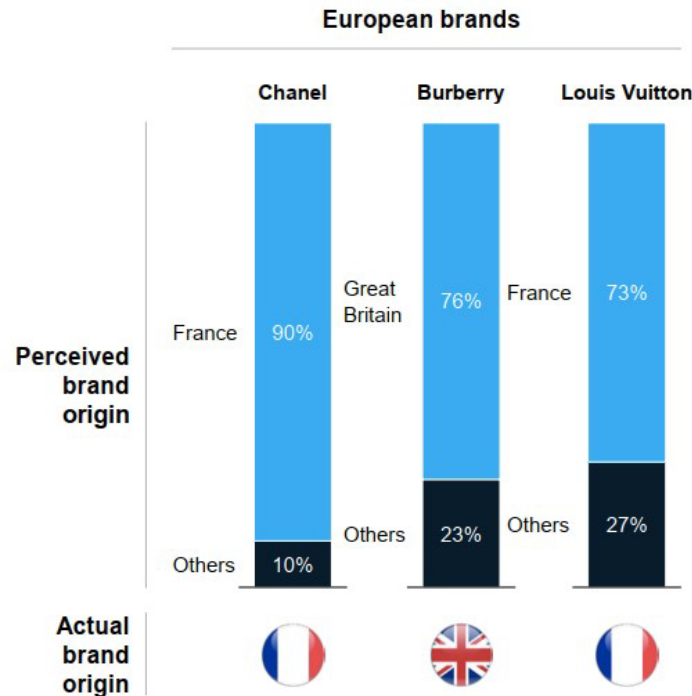


Figure 2 Hofstede culture compared: United Kingdom VS China

Secondly, according to Featherstone [11], consumer culture builds relationships between consumers and the services or goods they purchase. Rajagopal [12] proposes that culture values becomes one of the most essential issue for the brand to market globally, especially in the fashion industry. As a luxury brand in this industry, Burberry need to investigate in consumer culture and explore how it affects consumptions. Firstly, under the guides of culture, Burberry took actions through adding meaning to their products. One of Burberry's most classic and iconic product, the trench coat, was designed for the soldiers with pervasiveness and endurance during World War 1 by Thomas Burberry which is used more functionally and practically [13]. After creating check pattern in liner, trench coat was linked with high quality cloths. And when A.E. Clouston and Betty Kirby-Green break the records to create the fastest time of flight to South Africa, both of them wore

Burberry's aviation garments which added meaning to Burberry as a British heritage. Although there are many different designs and colours of the trench coat, Burberry still retains 'the Kensington' trench coat to maintain the relationship with British heritage [14]. In 2016, Burberry launched a festive film called the tale of Thomas Burberry telling the real and emotional story about its founder [15]. By doing so, Burberry enhanced its corporate identities and what it represented letting people understand its British history and heritages. Besides making Burberry more meaningful with British heritage, the country-of-origin is also important to the brand. Holtbrügge and Zeier [16] propose that consumers do pay attention to the national background of firms even though the industry has become increasingly global. 'Made in UK' is more likely to be related with high quality and classic fashion. However, Wang [17] suggests that in the luxury industry in the UK, the manufacturing country is not that influential on people's purchasing intention. Nielsen Global Brand Origin Survey [18] also reveals that 56 percent of British people think brand origin is not one of the important factors to consider when choosing brands for clothing and shoes. By comparison, country-of-origin matters more to the Chinese customer, especially in the luxury market [19]. Figure 3 shows that European brands are more appealing and recognisable to Chinese consumers while 76% of consumers are correct about the brand origin. Although the country-of-origin affects two countries differently, the brand still makes a lot effort to advertise itself related with London, UK. For example, the brand tried to emphasize the origin by changing its logo with a new tag, 'Burberry London England' purposing by Shayon [20]. The comparison of the old and the new logo is showed in Figure 4 which emphasise the origin of British heritage in England, London. However, the reasons of applying such marketing activity are different. Towards the UK, the reason is that more than a half of UK respondents state

that they will support the local brands because it will help the local economy as well. As for China, it is mainly because of Chinese negative perception on domestic products and the trustworthiness on British design and quality. The appealing to British heritage not only adding meaning to its products but also positively suits the British customer's shopping behaviour and the country-of-origin effect on Chinese consumers.



Note: Figures may not sum to 100%, because of rounding.

Figure 3 Perceived country of origin vs actual country of origin [19]



Figure 4 The old and the new Burberry's logos [20]

Furthermore, after analyzing the cross-cultural framework of two countries, it is proved that the differences between power distance, individualism and indulgence will also have influence on consumers' psychological behavior [21]. The need of conformity, exclusivity and hedonism affect consumers' acceptance of luxury brands and purchasing intentions. As the previous research shows, China has a low level of indulgence which could lead to a low acceptance of hedonism which is reverse in the UK. It is assumed that Chinese consumers will put more attention towards sustainable luxury products over general luxury products to avoid the guilt. While British consumers, with high level of indulgence, tend to reveal themselves when enjoying life.

Moreover, there are many other marketing activities that are tailored to different countries such as Burberry's repositioning strategy and pricing strategy. According to Law [22], a perceptual map can be helpful to explain marketing segments, potential strength and weakness in the market and how consumer perceive the brand. BAM Burberry [23] proposes a perceptual map of Burberry in Figure 5 by ranking from continuity to fashion and from high end to luxury. As Figure 5 shows, Burberry has been perceived as a high continuity brand with middle position between high end and luxury brand. It reveals that due to its functional design and usage when it established left a deep perception rather than be seen as a fashion brand. Marco Gobetti, Burberry's chief executive, believes that the fashion and newness are the most important factors to shoppers in the luxury market. It is because that consumers have increasing demands for fashion-forward and innovative products, especially under the situation that younger consumers are contributing to the growth in the luxury market. Therefore, Burberry need to move towards more fashionable and luxury on the perceptual map [24]. Riccardo Tisci, the new chief creative officer of Burberry, redesigned Burberry's logo and created a new monogram inspired by Burberry's founder Thomas Burberry with his initials in September, 2018. The new logo, as Figure 4 shows The launch of the new monogram and the B series both in the UK and in China are huge successes.

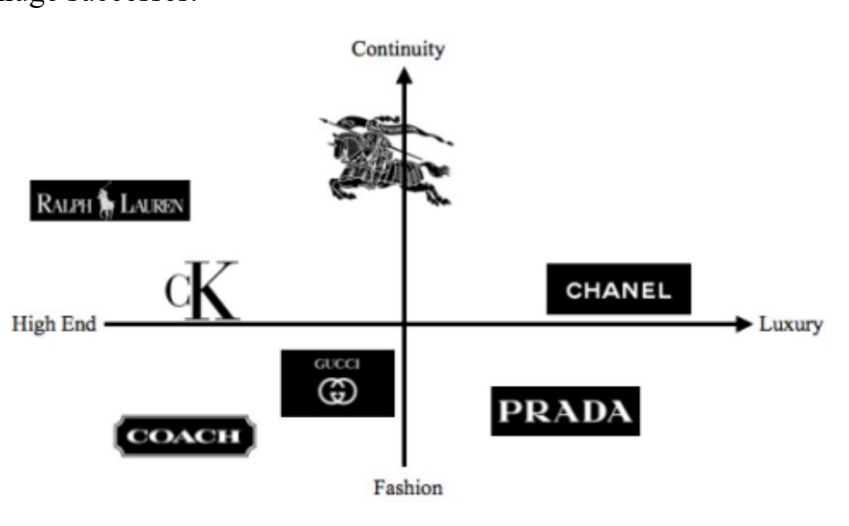


Figure 5 The perceptual map of Burberry with its main competitors [23]

After the release of new jackets and bumbags with the new logo, its market share has increased by 14% [25]. However, Britain is now under the Brexit process which may create more uncertainty in the market and the growth rate of sales tends to be more stable and even slower the pace in the UK. After considering the factors, Burberry instead of open new stores, the brand will focus more on investing in flagship stores to create luxury destinations. For example, the brand reconstructed its regent street store with new monogram and a massive scaffolding-clad called 'Sisyphus Reclined' to present the modern reality [26]. Different strategy has been applied in China consideration culture and regulation differences. The monogram design becomes increasingly popular in China. And the Chinese government has lowered down sales and import duties. Burberry sees a strong potential in the Chinese market. According to these factors, Burberry decided to open new stores in China which requires a heavy investment especially in Shanghai and Beijing where numerous sales can be gathered.

Moreover, Burberry adapted unique pricing strategy combining both globalisational and localised strategies. According to Figure 6, Burberry used three product tiers to target different customer segments which are ranging from affordable price to luxury price [27]. It could be a huge success for Burberry suiting all over the world including who just start to purchase, middle class and upper class consumers. Then, as Burberry wants to reposition the brand to a truly luxury brand, Gobetti believes if the brand position needed to be sharpen, they should start to close some outlet stores all over the world and increase some products' price to match customers' perception to be a luxury brand. For example, Burberry's simple polo shirts priced 145 pounds in 2017 needed to be increased to 275 pounds matching price of its competitors in luxury market such as Gucci and Ralph Lauren. In order

to promote the brand firmly in luxury market, pricing strategy is needed to be adjusted. Pricing can affect people’s perception of a brand and their purchasing attitudes. However, it is difficult to find a suitable pricing strategy because if the customer think the price is much higher than their perception, they may avoid buying it. And if the price is too low, they may be suspicious of the quality. It is found that for the price of luxury goods, it tends to be higher in the Asia-Pacific region including China than in the UK on average. Comparing the UK and China, the best deals of 10266 products are present in United Kingdom, while China only has 66 best deals. Burberry adopted the price discrimination strategy. For example, the Kensington heritage trench coat costs 1490 pounds in the UK and 16900 yuan in China which equals to around 1816 pounds. By implementing both positioning and pricing strategy, Burberry has made a success in transition process to a luxury fashion brand.

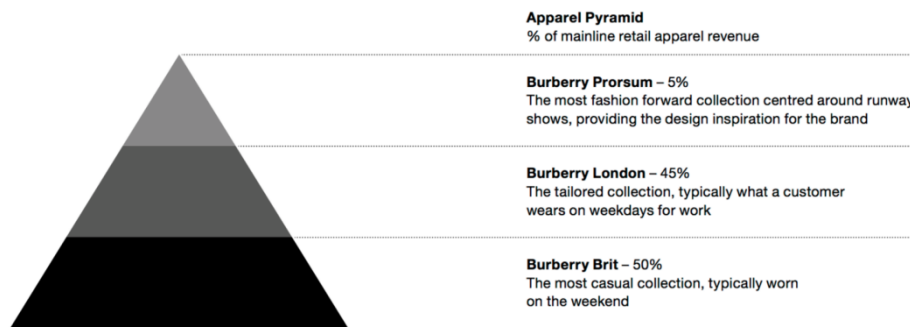


Figure 6 The Burberry’s Architecture by Product Tiers (1/2)

Finally, promotion strategy is also essential to the brand’s future development which culture play an important role in influencing it. Solomon suggests that the products may succeed in one place but fail in another because of the deeply held cultural values. That is also the main reason why Burberry also adapted different promotions in the UK and China. Firstly, in the UK, as mentioned before in Hofstede cultural dimensions, it scores very high in individualism level with 89. It means that the UK customers consider themselves as a priority and are more independent and self-centred focusing on uniqueness and self achievement [28]. Based on the understanding of the British culture, Burberry launched its 2019 Christmas all-star campaign showed in Figure 7 [29]. The campaign presented the Christmas in a fashionable, stylish and individualism way by showing how good you can look in Burberry’s outfits in a mystery atmosphere which suits the Victorian Christmas traditions. On the contrary, China scores only 20 in the individualism level which makes it is a collectivist society which values the in-group relationship, love, loyalty, harmony and happiness. It is also found that the social perception is a stronger driver than the self perception which means that Chinese luxury consumers care about how others’ opinions of their possessions [30]. Burberry made an attempt by tailoring 2019 Chinese New Year campaign shooting by Ethan James Green [31] showed in Figure 8. However, this advertisement was a failure and was described as a creepy horror movie. It showed that Burberry totally had the wrong understanding of the Chinese New Year which should be full of reunion and happiness. As a result, although the advertisement was not boycotted, it still led to huge criticism on Sina Weibo and a slowing demand in China which even caused the drop of its shares of London-listed company to some extent. Burberry did reflect to the previous failure and had an another attempt in China. In the 2019 Chinese Valentine’s Day, Burberry launched a series of films called ‘My Love, My Way’ [32]. It was a success with positive responses by exploring different ways of love not only between love partners, but also between you and your parents, idols and pets. This brought love and warmness to both people who were in a relationship and people who might even feel alone because they are single. Apart from the tailored advertisements, Burberry also seized the recent culture in common about the popularity of social media. In the UK, Burberry invest in massive social media advertisements including Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. The company started monthly product launches on Instagram leading to a great success, the new paunched were sold out within 20 minutes. However, due to the Chinese registration, those social media platforms are not allowed to be used in China mainland. Therefore, Burberry was forced to invest in local social media platforms such as

Wechat, Red and Sina Weibo. It turned out to be a brilliant move proved by that when a special edition exclusively launch of the new bag with KOL Mr. Bags was sold out within ten minutes.



Figure 7 Burberry Christmas Campaign 2019 [29]



Figure 8 Burberry's 2019 Chinese New Year Campaign [31]

4. Conclusion

To sum up, Burberry as an internationally-famous brand, representing British heritage did a lot effort to turn itself into a global company. In order to market their products in such two different cultures in the UK and China, a lot of researches have been done to adjust the brand to suit and to be accepted by consumers holding different culture backgrounds. United Kingdom tends to be more individualism and have less power distance and high indulgence level while China is more collectivist and high power distance and lower indulgence. Although these two counties have far cultural distance, there are still some shared value that can be took advantage of by the company. For the positioning strategy, Burberry is in under process of multi-year strategy. To reposition the brand, it is important to change consumers' perception from functional to fashion and luxury. Different methods have been applied depending on the cultural and regulative factors in the two countries. In addition, pricing strategy can also be helpful to the transition process by using a discrimination pricing strategy. Finally, promotion strategy has been discussed that advertisements should be designed to show the understanding to the culture, even though the advertisements are all about the festival. Misunderstanding of the festivals may make people feel offensive and thus leading to avoidance. It is recommended that the brand can also find a Chinese photographer as an assistant to help others get understand the culture better. And a potential solution for Burberry to resolve the negative influence brought by the 2019 Chinese New Year advertisements is to announce that there will be a series of

the advertisement and this is only the first launch. Then, the company can make a consistency with the previous ones and shoots more photos fitting in the festival culture as a happy ending.

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