

Brand Cross-Border Co-Branding Breakthrough: Taking Supreme and Louis Vuitton as Examples of Brand Breakthrough Research

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Abstract. This report studies the case of brand co-branding cooperation between the supreme brand and the luxury brand (Louis Vuitton), and explores how the cross-border co-branding cooperation between the two can help niche brands achieve "breaking the circle". The significance of the research is that it provides a reference for brand management, especially in terms of brand culture shaping. In 2017, supreme co-branded with Louis Vuitton. The research report adopted the methods of content analysis and case analysis. From the three perspectives of brand story, product design and topic, it conducts an overall analysis of relevant media reports and social discussions, while analyzing co-branded products and phase. The research results show that the cultural conflicts and topic creation in the co-branding will not only trigger different attitudes and discussions between supreme and Louis Vuitton consumer groups, but also increase the exposure of supreme in the mainstream fashion circle. In particular, the media's reports on conflict elements and consumers' interactions on social media have become important factors in promoting niche brands to break the circle. The research conclusion shows that through the cross-border co-branding strategy, niche brands can use the resources and symbols of luxury brands to boost their brand image, while triggering social topics and enhancing brand influence. This study provides a new basis for the brand co-branding strategy and its impact on consumer culture.

Keywords: Co-branding marketing, niche brand, brand breaking the circle, Supreme, Louis Vuitton.

1. Introduction

Niche brands serve specific cultural circles, and their products and brand image audiences are niche cultures. However, with the intensification of brand competition in the market, niche brands need to realize the transformation of the circle, which will also face many challenges. The "breaking the circle" of the brand not only means the increase in market share, but also the reshaping of brand identity and cultural symbols. Therefore, it is of great significance for research and practice to explore how niche brands can achieve cross-border cooperation through co-branding strategies.

According to existing research, brand co-branding is a strategy in the market that can improve brand awareness and build consumer trust through the complementarity and sharing of resources. Luxury goods have long used co-branding strategies to expand their brand value. For example, Louis Vuitton has cooperated with Stephen Sprouse, Murakami, Yayoi Kusama and other artists to strengthen brand symbolism and scarcity through artistic elements. , realize the so-called "ratification" strategy [1]. At the same time, the study also found that not only with artists but also with art institutions, which can significantly improve brand assets and cultural identity [2]. The above research shows that co-branding is not only a marketing tool, but also a tool for the expansion and value shaping of brand culture, creating unique cultural symbols and identity values for brands. However, there are certain limitations in the existing literature. More studies regard co-branding as a simple marketing tool, more inclined to high sales and brand complementarity, and less attention to the conflict of co-branding at the cultural level and the impact of brand identity reshaping. In particular, there is a lack of recognition of the transformation of brand identity and culture caused by style differences, cultural collisions and social discussions. Secondly, it is consumers' personal understanding of cultural conflicts, and the study of how the media explains the story of co-branding

is insufficient. This study will analyze the conflict co-branding from many aspects to promote the "breaking of the circle" of niche brands.

Discuss how Supreme can achieve a strategy of breaking the circle from street brands to mainstream fashion brands through co-branding with Louis Vuitton. The study is a typical cross-border conflict co-branding, and the co-branding of its two brands has attracted a lot of attention from the media and consumers. Through cooperation, Supreme has upgraded from a street fashion brand to a participant in mainstream fashion. At the same time, Louis Vuitton has attracted more young consumers with the help of its street culture elements and achieved the expansion of its brand identity. Research helps niche brands achieve market expansion and cultural reshaping with co-branding [3].

The research adopts content analysis and text analysis and combines multiple data for analysis. First of all, analyze the content officially released by the brand, study the text and visual presentation of the co-branding of Supreme and Louis Vuitton on social media, official websites and promotional materials, and explore how brands can build brand stories through symbolic connections and cultural ways. Second, analyze the reports of BOF and other mainstream media on co-branding events, and explore how the media framework shapes the public's understanding and recognition of the meaning of co-branding [4]. Third, collect resale data from second-hand markets such as StockX to check whether the value of co-branded goods has been amplified. Fourth, analyze consumers' comments, photo postings and creative content on social platforms such as Instagram, and collect users' brand effect dissemination. Finally, in combination with public data and media reports, analyze the effect of co-branded cooperation on brand market expansion and revenue growth.

Therefore, this article takes the co-branding case of Supreme and Louis Vuitton as the research object. It mainly analyzes the visual and cultural tension of the symbol fusion in the conflicting co-branding to form a "conflict but harmonious" and explores the impact of media coverage and user participation on the process of breaking the brand's circle, and advances Step by step to examine the important role of secondary market value amplification in promoting the co-branding effect. In terms of research methods, this article adopts content analysis and case analysis methods, comprehensively using brand publicity text, media reports, social media user-generated content and secondary market transaction data, from the three directions of symbol, communication and market Carry out research to fully reveal the operation mode of conflicting co-branded cultural symbols. This research not only enriches the understanding of brand cross-border and cultural conflicts at the theoretical level but also provides specific experience and strategic suggestions for the cross-border cooperation between niche brands and mainstream brands at the practical level.

2. Case Analysis

Founded in New York in 1994, Supreme began with skateboarding culture and gradually developed into a trendy brand of youth subculture. The cultural symbol marked BOX LOGO. However, unlike the luxury brand Louis Vuitton, Louis Vuitton was founded in 1854. The brand is famous for its French luxury industry, and the Monogram pattern is the representative of its identity.

In 2017, Kim Jones, the art director of Louis Vuitton men's clothing, released a co-branded collection with Supreme at Paris Fashion Week, including a variety of clothing, bags, accessories. Its products combine Supreme's BOX LOGO with Louis Vuitton's Monogram pattern, bringing a visual impact. It directly led to the rapid popularity of co-branding in multimedia and becoming a hot topic on social media and consumer groups.

After the release of the co-branded series, according to the brand's official posts on Instagram, the total number of likes and comments in a single post exceeded 490,000, with an average interaction rate of 10.11%. According to Fashionista, the co-branded products of Louis Vuitton and Supreme brought in revenue of 19.7 billion euros in 2017, an increase of 15% year-on-year [5]. Secondly, due to the limited release, the demand for co-branded products is higher than expected, causing many buyers to set their sights on the second-hand market. The data of the resale platform represented by StockX shows that the average transaction price of Box Logo sweatshirts is \$4,594.5, which is much

higher than the sale price. This has made Supreme gain a reputation in the mainstream fashion circle and has also allowed Louis Vuitton to successfully open the door to young consumers.

3. Brand Co-Branding Strategy Analysis

3.1. The Integration of Cultural Conflicts and Symbols

There is a significant cultural contrast between Supreme's street rebellious spirit and Louis Vuitton's French luxury. The two achieve cultural collision through the integration of symbols, and the combination of Supreme's Box Logo and Louis Vuitton's Monogram forms a strong visual impact. This contrast on the symbol not only creates a sense of freshness but also gives co-branded products a unique communication power. Many consumers said that they did not expect the two to cooperate. This kind of "spoof" itself constitutes the value of communication, which in turn forms a way of bringing traffic into mass communication. This cultural contrast has therefore become an important driving force for brands to break the circle, moving Supreme from street niche culture to the mainstream vision, and also allowing Louis Vuitton to attract the attention of young people.

3.2. The Value of the Secondary Market

The scarcity of co-branded products has made the secondary market an important value amplification. Take Box Logo sweatshirts as an example, the selling price in the secondary market is twice that of the retail price, which even leads to queueing and speculation. Resale and speculation not only increase the topic, but also further strengthen the meaning of the "identity symbol" of the product. What consumers buy is not only goods, but also a "symbol of identity". Consumers buy not only goods, but also a visible social symbol, symbolizing scarcity and belonging to the circle. The high premium effect of the secondary market, in turn, enhances the mystery and topic of brand co-branding, and the secondary market has become an important way for brands to break the circle.

3.3. Consumer Discussion and the Dissemination of Social Media

Social media platforms such as Instagram and YouTube have played a central role in communication. Consumers constantly re-publicize the meaning of the brand through photos, unboxing videos, secondary creations and comment interactions. This kind of user participation is not only the re-dissemination of communication, but also an important link in the reshaping of brand culture. Fans' arguments and opposition opinions have also become a resource, promoting Supreme to gradually transform from a niche trend circle to a mainstream identity symbol. At the same time, topic tags (such as #SupremeLV) have formed a common effect on social platforms, so that co-branded products can spread exponentially and become a global topic event across regions and cultures.

3.4. Cross-Case Comparison

In contrast, compared with co-branding such as Gucci and Adidas, the uniqueness of Supreme and LV is that their cultural contrast is stronger [6]. The former emphasizes style integration and market expansion, while the latter achieves topicality through creating conflicts and arguments. This shows that the advantages of conflictive co-branding in social communication and brand breaking the circle are more prominent.

In terms of effect, the co-branding has achieved great social influence around the world: it has not only created considerable sales but also made Supreme a typical case of entering the luxury field, and Louis Vuitton has successfully entered the young market. However, the problem is also prominent: on the one hand, although cultural contrast brings topicality, excessive conflicts may weaken the original image of the brand and cause the dissatisfaction of some regular customers; on the other hand, the overheating hype of the secondary market is also easy to inflate the value of the product and increase the fluctuation risk of brand tone.

4. Suggestion

4.1. Make Communication with a Sense of Contrast

When breaking through the original circle restrictions, niche brands often face the dilemma of insufficient popularity and limited social attention. In order to quickly create topics and social effects, "conflict co-branding" with mainstream brands is an effective way. This cooperation emphasizes the differences in cultural values, brand temperament and target groups between the two sides, and it is this difference that can create unexpected effects and trigger consumers' surprise and discussion [7]. For example, in the case of Supreme and Louis Vuitton's cooperation, the strong contrast between street culture and luxury culture has become the core highlight of communication, making the product itself transcend simple functionality and become a symbolic social event [8]. At the operational level, niche brands need to adhere to their own unique cultural symbols in the co-branding process, rather than being completely absorbed by mainstream brands. Otherwise, the co-branding effect may be covered up by the powerful events of mainstream brands, thus losing cultural independence. Specific practices include maintaining the integrity of the core logo in visual symbols, strengthening the "contrast" element in propaganda rhetoric, and actively guiding the public to interpret this difference through cross-media channels. In this way, niche brands can not only enter the public's vision with the help of the traffic of mainstream brands but also strengthen their cultural identity in topical communication. In other words, conflictive co-branding is an effective strategy to create topics with differences and communication with contrasts, which can help niche brands quickly break the circle.

4.2. Media and Users Communicate Together

In the process of breaking the circle of brands, media coverage and user participation are the most important driving forces of communication. Take the cooperation of Supreme × Louis Vuitton as an example. The early news reports emphasized the "accidental combination" of luxury brands and street culture, creating professional and mainstream Communication framework [2]. And the subsequent social media participation, such as postings on Instagram, evaluation videos on YouTube and user discussions on Weibo, overwhelmingly launched Facebook ads to compete for more "fans", better mobile experience and more SKUs, directly to the final realization [9]. It further expands the visibility of the event, so that the topic not only spread within the fashion circle but also enters the wider social discourse space.

Therefore, when formulating a co-branding strategy, brands should design the collaborative path between the media and users in advance. On the one hand, high-exposure professional reports can be obtained by providing exclusive information to the media and holding press conferences; on the other hand, users should also be actively guided to participate and re-create through social media challenges, UGC incentive mechanisms, which can not only amplify the brand narrative, but also enhance the brand through word-of-mouth effect. Credibility and closeness.

4.3. Opportunities and Challenges Coexist

The secondary market plays a crucial role in the value dissemination of co-branded products. Limits and scarcity often lead to a sharp increase in the price of co-branded goods in the secondary market, and this premium effect not only amplifies the social topic of the product but also strengthens its cultural attributes as an "identity symbol" [10]. Take Supreme and Louis Vuitton as an example, the resale price of some Box Logo products in the secondary market is several times higher than the retail price. This premium makes the goods themselves no longer just consumer goods, but a kind of social networking, which further promotes the brand's circle-breaking effect. However, over-reliance on the secondary market may also have negative effects. For example, overheating speculation will cause some consumers to be disgusted and even trigger criticism of the brand's "profit-oriented".

Therefore, brands need to adopt a balance strategy when using the secondary market. First of all, the scarcity of products can be maintained through limited sales, lottery purchases, etc., while avoiding the unique value of excessive dilution. Secondly, brands can take the initiative to investigate

the price trends of the secondary market, prevent prices from affecting the long-term trust of consumers, and moderately guide the secondary market, which can help brands gain attention in the short term, and also maintain the brand's sense of social identity in the long run. Specifically, niche brands can issue reasonable guiding statements about the secondary market on their official websites or social media and even supervise and control them by cooperating with secondary trading platforms. This can not only maintain the scarcity of co-branded products but also prevent excessive damage to the brand image. To sum up, the rational use of the value amplification effect of the secondary market is an important way to maintain popularity and improve brand value in the co-branding strategy.

5. Conclusion

The study verifies the idea of "breaking the circle co-branding" through the co-branding case of Supreme and Louis Vuitton. The study found that cultural contrast is the key to the success of co-branding. Media reports and users' discussions on social platforms have amplified the communication effect of co-branding. Coupled with the high-priced resale in the secondary market, these co-branded products are not only commodities but also become a cultural phenomenon. Theoretically speaking, the study breaks the traditional idea that "co-branding is just a means of marketing" and proposes that co-branding can actually be a process of cultural reshaping. Through content analysis and case analysis, people can see how the integration of symbols, the dissemination of media, the hype of the secondary market and the participation of users are pushing niche brands into the mainstream circle step by step. In practice, it is reminded that niche brands should be good at using "cultural differences" to achieve "breaking the circle", while mainstream brands should use subcultural resources to achieve rejuvenation.

Future research can be carried out from the following directions: first, the compare the differences between different types of co-branded cooperation (such as luxury and fast fashion, luxury and digital culture) in terms of brand value improvement; second, pay attention to brand cross-border in virtual fashion and metaverse environment, and explore the impact of AI technology on co-branded cooperation. Third, from the perspective of consumer psychology, study how conflicting co-branding affects identity and purchase intention. These research directions will further enrich the academic discussion of brand cross-border and cultural communication and provide new references for practice.

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