



Investigating the Driving Forces of the Formation of International Premium Hot Products

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Abstract: Through cross-case study of 4 high-end brand hot products, this paper explores the characteristics of high-end brand hot products to reveal their driving forces and the mechanism of their creation. The study indicates that the driving factors for the creation of high-end brand hot products are ultimate product power, unique brand culture and spirit, and successful marketing communication and promotion.

Keywords: Driving forces, international hot premium products

1. INTRODUCTION

Hot products first emerged in the mass consumer goods industry, where a hot product means a consumer product that can meet the consumption needs of the public in daily life in terms of attributes or functions, and that can quickly ignite the market by taking users as the core and creating a state of the art product. However, in recent years, the international high-end brand industry began to lay emphasis on creating its “hot products”. International high-end brands refer to brands with high-end positioning, including high-end luxury brands, high-end brands, high-end light luxury brands, etc. These brands are generally characterized by positioning at high-end consumer markets, high product prices, high premiums, and certain scarcity, highlighting dreams, brand stories and super strong brand DNA spirit. It can be seen that while high-end brands feature high prices and high-end positioning, they have also started to imitate the operation of FMCG in recent years, in terms of marketing, product stories, designs and packaging, word-of-mouth promotion and other operations, and are also trying to create single hot products of their high-end brands.

So, what are the characteristics of high-end brand hot products? What are the underlying driving factors for their creation? Answers to these questions can help gain understanding of and insights into the reasons for the emergence of high-end brand hot products and the key factors for their success, so as to explore the way of their growth and development. It is of great significance and reference value for the theoretical research of the marketing of high-end brand products and for the operation and brand management of practitioners engaged in high-end brand marketing.

A review of the literature on the research of hot products reveals that relevant academic studies are very limited. Most studies have been published in review magazines and newspapers, with few academic studies providing theoretical value. And most studies on hot products are about fast-moving consumer goods, leaving a gap in the exploration on the creation of hot products of high-end brands. Therefore, this paper will focus on international high-end brands, with a view to revealing the mechanism, that is, the driving forces, of the creation of high-end brands, which will play a key role in supporting the theory and practical operation of high-end brands.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. International High-end Brands

International high-end brands are the general term of luxury goods. A generally accepted academic definition of luxury goods is: valuable consumer products beyond the basic survival and development needs of people, which are unique, scarce and highly inaccessible (Dubois B,1996). They are not necessities of life. As for the scope of high-end brands, the current opinion in the industry is that all

ranks of luxury goods constitute high-end brands. Rambourg (2014) created a luxury brand pyramid with comprehensive evaluation of brand influence and occupancy. In this pyramid, he subdivided luxury goods into 6 ranks from bottom to top according to 2 dimensions: number of points of sale and price. The international high-end brands studied in this paper include the non-catering luxury goods priced at higher than US \$100 in the pyramid. Core luxury goods and above are traditional luxury goods; those below them are also collectively referred to as light luxury brands by many industry researchers. Rambourg (2014) classifies luxury goods into the following 7 ranks as shown in the figure:

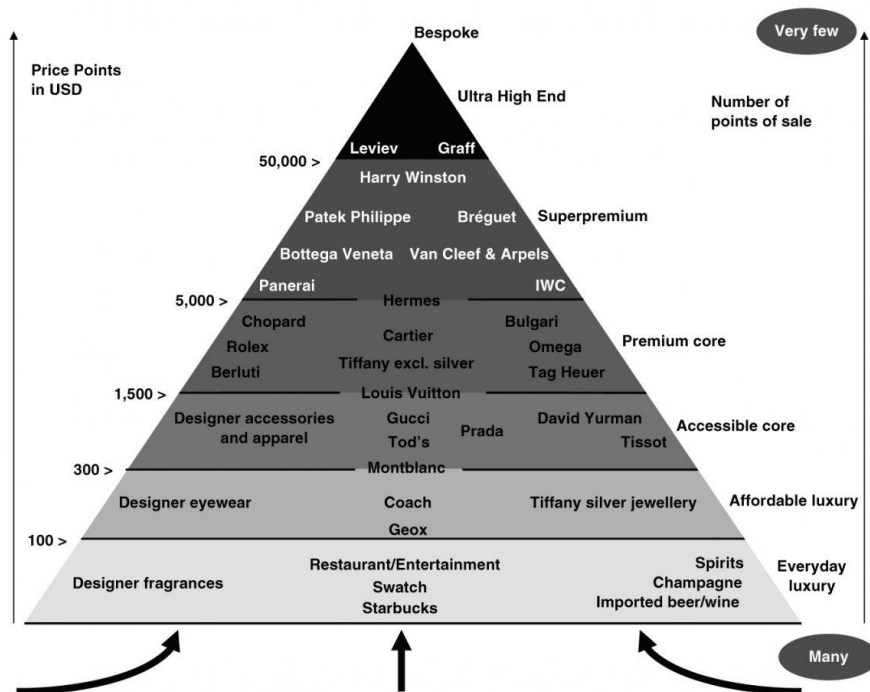


Figure1. *Luxury Brands Power Ranking (Brand Pyramid) Created by Rambourg*

Xie Jinghui (2017) proposes that international high-end brands have 5 characteristic effects: maintenance of value, halo effect, aureole effect, magnetic field effect and multiplier effect, which explain the reasons why international high-end brands have won a huge market share in China. He also points out that high-end brands are mostly established through decades or even hundreds of years of experience and growth, so the high prices are a reasonable return for the monopoly advantage formed by the historical accumulation of brand spirit and cultural inheritance.

Lu Changbao (2013) proposes that high-end brands give the consumers a sense of comfort and joy, and a sense of dignity that is hard to obtain, which can bring more esteem in addition to the functional value of the products. They improve the consumers’ satisfaction in terms of social and psychological needs, indicating that the consumers are willing to improve their quality of life, and to seek symbolic products and services beyond their real needs.

2.2. Hot Products

Hot products refer to the products whose popularity, reputation or share of sales in the market and industry are far higher than those of other competitive products within a period of time. In the era of traditional marketing, products needed to enhance their awareness by consumers’ word of mouth from person to person and product promotion. However, in the current era of “Internet +” with rapid increase of traffic, the Internet has empowered product promotion, and good products can become quickly visible. Their dissemination can be amplified overnight, rapidly igniting the entire market.

Yi Yang (2018) points out that the concept of hot products came first from e-commerce, which refers to a certain or a class of consumer goods with very large sales. Hot products are also a kind of products that can quickly attract high traffic and many purchasers with low unit price, huge sales volume, strong applicability, low gross profit and other characteristics. Finally, they drive and promote the sales of and attention to other related commodities by their advantages in traffic attraction as hot products.

JinCuodao (2016) puts forward in his book *Hot Product Strategies* that hot products are products with good word of mouth that ignite the market, and that even an individual product can become a hot product. Hot product strategies mean making products good enough based on the biggest pain point of users, and concentrating all energy and resources to quickly ignite the users' word of mouth, so as to achieve a single point breakthrough and win the favor of the market.

Zhu Haiqin, founder and CEO of Mystic South-Yunnan Ethnic Cuisine, a highly popular food and beverage brand, proposes that a hot product is a product whose single product sales account for more than 25%, the click rate of which on the table is more than 70%, which drives the turnover growth of more than 30%, and which has a high re-purchase rate and a NPS rating of over 85%.

Hu Zuming (2017) holds that a hot product is a star product that is sought after by consumers and whose sales far exceeds that of ordinary products in a short period of time by adopting a series of appropriate marketing strategies on condition that the business has formulated the scheme for the hot product in advance.

Deng Yuwei (2018) made a detailed analysis of hot products. She defines a hot product as one that starts from the target customer groups, meets customer needs, directly addresses customers' pain points, brings ultimate customer experience, generates explosive sales and word-of-mouth effects, and causes chain reaction. A "hot product" is one that can quickly identify the market positioning, pain points and core users in a limited period of time, so as to quickly ignite the market, trigger scream of the users and quickly enhance word of mouth by virtue of efficient communication via the Internet.

It can be seen that the research on hot products began with the rapid development of e-commerce, and the rapid rise and development of Tiktok, Xiaohongshu, Bilibili and other platforms in China.

The hot products of high-end brands have 2 features: exclusivity and popularity. Exclusivity is the intrinsic attribute of luxury goods. The strong brand assets, brand stories and dreams and high prices of high-end brands give them characteristics of scarcity, luxury, artistry, etc., and create unique brand values, that is, exclusivity. Popularity is a characteristic similar to that of ordinary consumer goods. It refers to a series of factors such as word-of-mouth, sales volume, classic styles and high visibility over the Internet, which give a product high public awareness and high purchase rate and rapidly ignite the market. Examples in the mass consumer goods include Xiaomi hoverboard, Perfect Diary domestic beauty products, Mixue Ice Cream & Tea, etc.(Chen, Yang and Wang 2019). While ordinary consumer goods can become hot products, they might have a short life cycle and will soon enter a recession period. On the other hand, a certain "hot product" of high-end brands can continue to be popular for decades and even longer. For example, Chanel N°5 Fragrance has been popular for 100 years. Therefore, the "hot products" of international high-end brands studied in this paper refer to the products of international high-end brands, such as luxury goods and light luxury goods, which are characterized by exclusivity and popularity.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

3.1. Case Study Method

Many scholars familiar with qualitative studies and scholars in international marketing have proposed that the multiple case study method is a very good research method for empirical testing of existing theories or for establishing new theories on the basis of new phenomena. Unlike single case study, which is more like a story, multiple case study can create good theoretical constructs. According to the suggestions of scholars, the best number of cases in a multiple case study is 3-6.

Following such suggestions and based on the case selection criteria, we finally determined 6 cases in our study. In order to make the cases more typical and representative, the cases selected in this paper are the French brands the Lady Dior handbag and the Van Cleef & Arpels Alhambra necklace, the UK brand Dyson hair dryer, and the SK-II "Fairy Water" Facial Treatment Essence of the US brand Unilever.

3.2 Case Introduction

To more comprehensively analyze the characteristics of "hot products" of international high-end brands, this paper selects classic "hot product" cases that have been tested by the market and consumers respectively, and classifies them according to 2 dimensions: (1) whether the brand or

product is a luxury or a light luxury, and (2) whether the product is a consumable or durable product. The selected cases are placed into a matrix, and the hot products of the 4 typical cases are in different quadrants of the product classification matrix.

Among them, durable consumer goods refer to consumer goods that can be reused, have a long life circle, and need to be updated after long-term use. They are low-frequency goods. Consumable goods are commodities with high frequency of use, short product life cycle and high frequency of repeated consumption. The classification can help with comparative analysis of high-end brand products with different characteristics in this paper; it provides a certain degree of inspiration for international high-end brands with similar attributes. A perceptual map is drawn as follows:

In the map, the Cleef & Arpels Alhambra jewelry collection belongs to luxury durable goods, the Lady Dior handbag belongs to luxury consumable goods, the Dyson hair dryer belongs to light luxury / high-end durable goods, and the SK-II “Fairy Water” Facial Treatment Essence belongs to light luxury / high-end consumable goods.

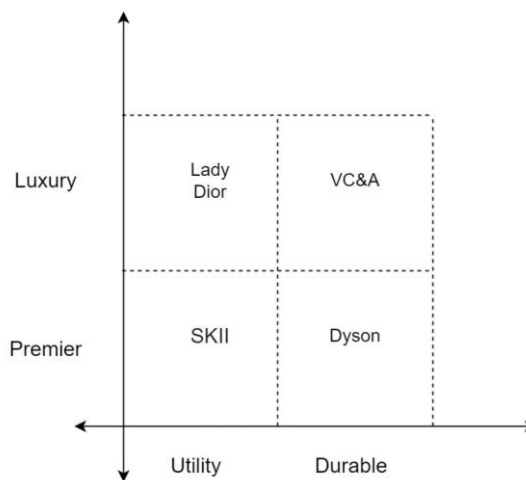


Figure2. The 2*2 Matrix of International Premier Explosive Brand

3.2.1. Lady Dior Handbag

Dior is an internationally renowned luxury brand headquartered in Paris, founded in 1946 by the French fashion designer Mr. Christian Dior. The Dior brand operates a rich product line, including women’s clothing, men’s clothing, jewelry, fragrance and cosmetics. Mr. Dior, the founder, was very innovative. He proposed the New Look collection, which established the noble and elegant taste of the 1950s and broke the monopoly of the popular Chanel fashion. New Look was not only popular in Europe but also in the United States. He constantly innovated new products to lead the fashion trend.

Of Dior’s numerous classic products, the most eye-catching one is the Lady Dior handbag that has been popular for decades. In 1995, Princess Diana visited France. After careful consideration, the French president’s wife decided to give the princess a gift: a Dior bag, the most exquisite and historical product representing France. The black bag presented by the president’s wife to the princess was deeply loved by Diana. The versatile and elegant appearance made the bag an accessory worn by Princess Diana on many public occasions. Therefore, with the consent of the princess, Dior named the bag Lady Dior.

One of the features of the Lady Dior handbag is its cannage pattern. The inspiration came from a chair made from the 18th century furniture technology in France, which had the pattern weaved with cane. Mr. Dior loved the design of this chair very much and applied this element to the bag design, which became a visual symbol of this product. The Lady Dior handbag is the most popular bag of Dior collection and one of the unshakable classic products in the fashion industry. Later, with the continuous innovation of the design style of Dior bags, more colors, size ratios and leather materials were used for the Lady Dior handbag. However, the classic model of Lady Dior handbag that is popular all over the world has been successful to this day, and is one of the main long-lasting “hot products” in the product matrix of Dior.



Figure2. *The Christian Dior Lady Dior Handbag*

Source: *Official website of Christian Dior*

3.2.2. *Van Cleef & Arpels Alhambra Necklace*

In 1895, Estelle Arpels, the daughter of a French family dealing in gems, and Alfred Van Cleef, the son of a diamond dealer, fell in love with each other due to their similar hobbies and family backgrounds. After they were married, they jointly founded the Van Cleef & Arpels brand in 1906, with their surnames as the brand name. The symbol & in the trademark symbolizes eternal connection, the inspiration gained from the aristocratic families by the lovers, and a presentation of sweet love.

Since the establishment of the Van Cleef & Arpels brand, the couple always adhered to the original design concepts and unique styles, and the brand has always been a luxury jewelry brand loved by celebrities and dignitaries in the world. At first, Van Cleef & Arpels made customized jewelry for the royal families and nobles. A jewelry brand usually has a classic design element that conforms to brand characteristics. The main popular elements of luxury jewelry in the world include Cartier's "screw" shape, Bvlgari's "spring" shape, and Tiffany's "key". The most famous design of Van Cleef & Arpels is the four-leaf clover-inspired Alhambra design. The Alhambra collection products use high-quality materials selected according to strict quality standards. They are first carved with gems, then polished, and finally made into round beads, which are then processed with handcraft. Each work goes through 15 continuous processes with exquisite workmanship.



Figure3. *Van Cleef & Arpels*

Source: *Official website of VC&A*

3.2.3. *Dyson Hair Dryer*

Dyson is a UK brand founded by industrial designer James Dyson. Known as the king of design by the UK media, James is one of the most respected innovative entrepreneurs in UK. Founded in 1983, Dyson has an invention team consisting of thousands of engineers and scientists. It is committed to digital engine research and development and technical innovation of household appliances. Dyson is an international company of engineering and technology innovation. Dyson is also an international high-end brand specializing in research and development of household appliances, with its product line mainly including vacuum cleaners, air purification appliances, etc. Dyson officially entered the Chinese market in 2012. With its ultimate product design, gorgeous design style, and successful marketing and publicity strategies, Dyson has recorded successful sales in China. All the products launched by Dyson have received wide attention from consumers in a very short time. In 2012, Dyson's sales in the Chinese market accounted for 96% of Dyson's annual sales. It is like a "reaper" with a powerful engine, constantly leveraging the consumption power of the Chinese middle class and wealthy people.

Dyson's hot product with a fast success was its Supersonic hair dryer, which became famous and ignited the market overnight with its fastest speed, no damage to hair quality and no noise. After that, it continued to launch innovative products, and received favorable comments. In 2018, the Airwrap styler released by Dyson was sold out in 3 minutes on Tmall, and in only 15 seconds at JD.com.

The core concept of Dyson brand is to simplify human life and free users from the instruction-like products. Therefore, its design of many products is based on demand analysis on the pain points that disappoint the consumers in their use, so as to break through the inherent product use habits with technology and innovation and bring people eye-catching and extremely useful products. This is the core reason why Dyson hair dryer has become a product that "makes you scream".



Figure4. *Dyson hair dryer*

3.2.4. SKII Fairy Water

SK-II is a high-end skin care product series of P&G. SK-II was originally a Japanese regional brand, which entered the Chinese mainland market in 1999 after being acquired by P&G.

Targeting at high-end customers, it is especially suitable for Asian women's skin, attracting a large number of fans. The brand spirit focuses on awakening the natural beauty of people, rather than the delicate beauty of makeup brand products. The focus on natural beauty conforms to the fashion trend of modern women calling for independence and self-confidence. The brand packaging and visual image show a simple style, mild color matching, and elegant temperament; wine red is the main color of the brand.

SK-II's hot product "Fairy Water" has led the sales all the way, creating a miracle of a single skin care product in the Chinese market. Priced at more than CNY 1000, SK-II Fairy water is a high-end product. As a hot product, however, it has become a fast-moving consumer product among high-end brands. This is because Fairy Water contains the magic ingredients that can give women beautiful skin. When SK-II brand scientists once came to the sake brewery by chance, they saw that while the old winemakers' faces were covered with wrinkles, their hands had delicate skin. After the scientists returned to their laboratory, they discovered the secret of the winemakers' hands, that is, the PITERA in the liquid yeast that the hands touch every day, which is rich in amino acids, vitamins, mineral elements and carbohydrate mucus. This magical component is the secret that makes the skin so delicate, and it has become the core selling point of the brand.

4. CASE ANALYSIS

Jin Cuodao (2016) proposes that a prerequisite for a hot product is a core competitiveness, that is, its ultimate product power. The core product power means that the product design or function must accurately meet at least one very important demand of the customers, or solve a major pain point. Ultimate products can have many dimensions. A product can become hot if any dimension differentiates itself as an ultimate feature, such as the brand's positioning of the product, the refinement of the function, the design of the appearance, etc. Any of the features (the function, design or quality) of the product can fundamentally solve the problems of or greatly improve satisfaction of the consumers. Therefore, the ultimate product is the key to a transition from 0 to 1, and the basis of all hot products. Therefore, the proposition below is proposed:

4.1. Proposition 1

A high-end brand product becomes a hot one in a short period of time because it has great product power which addresses the important demands or pain points of the customers.

4.1.1. *Lady Dior Handbag*

The consumers' pain point that the Lady Dior handbag addresses is the unique high-end design. The unique cannage pattern features very elegant process. The product has composed of 12 crisscrosses of dense stitches. The distance between each line must be extremely accurate. A slight difference will lead to the failure of the suture interfaces between the front, rear, left and right stitches, and the waste of the previous work. From the process of quilting, the Lady Dior handbag is made by handwork. The basic style of the bag takes more than 72 hours and 96 processes. 144 parts are used to complete the making of the whole bag. If it is made of special leather, the production time must be prolonged. The raised part in the middle of the unique cannage pattern highlights the luster and texture of the leather. The cannage pattern of the Lady Dior handbag was inspired by a chair of Napoleon III. In 1947, Mr. Christian Dior entertained his guests with this chair at his fashion show, winning their high praise. Since then, Mr. Dior tried to apply this element to the bag product line.

Thanks to the complicated process and exquisite workmanship, the cannage pattern brings to the Lady Dior handbag the lines and profile of French architectural aesthetics, highlighting the brand's commitment to the advanced custom-made processes. Therefore, the unique elegant design and scarce production process help the Lady Dior handbag quickly catch the eye of the consumers. Its elegant, decent design and versatile style have become an ultimate product power.

4.1.2. *Van Cleef & Arpels*

The ultimate product power of Van Cleef & Arpels is its four leaf clover design. The design was created by Jacques Arpels in 1968. It was inspired by the Alhambra Palace, where there is a four leaf clover-shaped fountain in the garden. Jacques said that only with a wish for good luck can one become a lucky person. The four leaves represent loyalty, hope, love and the most precious element - good luck. The implied meaning of good luck, or auspicious and lucky omens, is very popular among the public. The purchase of many consumers is not only motivated by beautiful appearance, superior fabric and outstanding design. Today's high-end brand consumers also attach great importance to the implied meaning of the brand. The popularity of Van Cleef & Arpels Alhambra collection in the Chinese market is mainly due to its implied meaning of good luck and auspicious omens. Chinese consumers often pay for good implied meaning. They value and are willing to pay for auspicious elements such as gourds, gold ingots and Ruyi. The auspicious elements of four leaf clover bring good implied meaning to the products, and is the super product power that makes them hot.

4.1.3. *Dyson*

The Dyson hair dryer has the ultimate product design of high aesthetics and artistry, which is the pain point of the customers. In addition, safe and noiseless hair drying are also important selling points.

Dyson spent 4 years and about £ 50 million on research and development to design more than 600 prototypes. They manufactured the 9th generation digital pneumatic motor, which weighs less than 50 grams and rotates at 110000 rpm. By placing the motor in the handle, the volume of the dryer is reduced and the appearance is enhanced. At the same time, the wind speed of the blades is increased to the maximum extent, so that the users can dry their hair at quiet high speed and low temperature. This experience is undoubtedly a great enjoyment integrating comfort, safety and health. It can be seen that Dyson, similar to Apple in the spirit of pursuing perfection, relies on the ultimate design of the latest products to obtain core competitiveness.

The extremely high technical barrier makes it very difficult to forge a Dyson hair dryer, both in terms of imitating its appearance and reproducing the same industry technologies and user experience. By removing the unimportant functions, Dyson focuses on giving full play to the maximum potential of the hair dryer itself, making the best of the simple functions and creating the ultimate product. All this represents the founder's pursuit of the ultimate product and the brand's craftsman spirit that the consumers admire and believe in.

4.1.4. SK-II

90% of the content of SK-II's hot product Fairy Water is the patented ingredient PITERA. The brand takes PITERA as the core ingredient of the product, and focuses on publicizing its anti-oxidation and repair effects on the skin. At the beginning of its design, SK-II Fairy Water grasped the long-term market needs of consumers: their pursuit of skin repair and skin quality. With the rise of generation Z, young people's pursuit of skin quality further stimulates the vitality of the market. In the subsequent product marketing, SK-II often uses the posters of plain faced female stars with "crystal clear skin" as the core point to publicize the classic repair effect of the Fairy Water to deepen the memory of consumers. PITERA is the ultimate design of the product, which is a solution to the important pain points of the consumers.

Based on the above case analysis, we find that the reason why high-end brand products become hot in a short period of time is their great product power, whether it is design power, implied meaning, scientific and technological power, or function. As long as they can really address the important needs of the customers, the products may become hot. The most important driving force for the creation of hot products is the ultimate product power.

The power of brand has been seen by academic and practitioners a lot recent years, a brand with strong power has close connection with consumers and attract consumer fans. Aaker (1991) proposed that brand awareness is a network diagram of allrelevant information formed by customers about the product brands, which represents consumers' understanding and knowledge ofthe products and brands, and reflects consumers' overall knowledge of the commodities (Aaker 1996). Keller (1993) proposed that marketing activities affect customers' brand knowledge, which promotes theconstruction of enterprise brand equity(Keller 1993). Brand story is a effective way of marketing activity that help build the brand and attract consumers, because the brand story convey the spirit and culture of the brand.

4.2. Proposition 2

A product of the high-end brand become hot in a short period of time because it has a unique and colorful brand stories, culture and spirit.

4.2.1. Lady Dior Handbag

As mentioned above, the most important reason why the Lady Dior handbag has become a hot product is the story it carries, just as the origin of its name. It was presented to Princess Diana by the French president's wife as a national gift in 1995. Princess Diana loved this bag. She collected all the models launched by Lady Dior. During a charity event, she held Lady Dior in one hand and held a child in her arms. This scene was captured by the reporter. Both Lady Dior and the child were bathed in the halo of love. Since then, the Lady Dior associated with love has become popular all over the world. This story also went popular around the world and people enjoyed talking about it. This gave the brand wings and helped it quickly win global popularity.

4.2.2. Van Cleef & Arpels Alhambra Collection

The brand Van Cleef & Arpels has numerous stories, among which the most important is the story of romantic love, and the birth of the brand was the result of a love story. Van Cleef and Arpels (from a jewelry family and a diamond family respectively) got married and started a business together, which is a brand story that can evoke a beautiful scene. The young couple had many things in common. They were young and enthusiastic, and both of them had pioneering spirit. Their love for gems led them to the palace of marriage. Van Cleef & Arpels, a brand born out of love, has also witnessed many moving and great love stories.

In addition, a large number of customers of Van Cleef & Arpels are princes and nobles, which is also a valuable brand story. The brand provides customized jewelry for the Duchess of Windsor, the queen of Monaco, the royal family of Iran, the royal family of Egypt, etc. With the imprint and endorsement of nobles and royal families, the brand becomes more noble, high-end and artistic.

Therefore, both the love stories of the founders of the brand and the Royal customers as evidence of its top design and technology are the DNA of the brand. The unforgettable stories of the brand bring profound memories to consumers and contribute to the high popularity of the products.

4.2.3. Dyson

The founding of Dyson brand is very inspirational story, showing the persistence entrepreneurship of the founder. This brand story has always touched the numerous consumers of the products. In 1978, Dyson, 31, father of three children, lived in a dusty farmhouse with his family. There was an old vacuum cleaner at his home. One day, when the vacuum cleaner broke down again, he decided to repair it by himself. After disassembling the machine, he found a simple problem that had not been solved since the vacuum cleaner was invented in 1908: when the dust bag was filled with dirt, it would block the air inlet and cut off the suction. Dyson then began his research and development. Although several hundred models were not successful, he did not give up. After 5 years, after developing 5127 models, he invented a dual cyclone vacuum cleaner without a dust bag. Later, many of Dyson products used this principle of the engine, which was the main technology of a large number of products, leading to the company's increasingly rich product portfolios and product lines.

4.2.4. SK-II

Brand stories are more than a brand introduction; they create emotional resonance between customers and brands, and convey the values and spirit of the company. Building a strong and influential brand spirit is an important driving force for the success of SK-II. For the fans of SK-II Fairy Water, rather than just buying a bottle of physical products, they are paying for their values, their self-independence, and self-identity. You are what you consume. SK-II Fairy Water attracts a large number of customers who share its values. In April 2016, a short video titled "She Finally Goes to the Blind Date Corner" became popular on WeChat. The content of the video advertisement is a little story about a girl who is finally reconciled with their parents and goes on a blind date under their urging. The proposition beyond the product that the short video wants to express is that there are many values for women, not limited by the value achieved by marriage. Women should freely choose their life and goals. Similarly, we do not have a single definition of pursuing beauty, and natural beauty is the beauty of every girl. This advertisement has won wide recognition of women. In particular, women's strong independence and the spirit of freedom and self-confidence highlighted by the product have aroused strong resonance. After the launch of the video, it was forwarded by KOLs with high traffic on social platforms such as Weibo, and was "detonated" within one day, making the Fairy Water famous overnight, which became a hot product among high-end brands.

4.3. Proposition 3

A high-end brand product becomes hot in a short period of time because it successfully uses the marketing strategies that "detonate" the product, including word-of-mouth publicity and event marketing.

Explosive word-of-mouth is the key for products to become hot. JinCuodao (2016) found that "the essence of all commercial competition is competition for traffic. In the traditional era, traffic is a 'visible forest', which can be seen and touched, in forms of channels, advertisements and stores; in the era of mobile Internet, traffic is an invisible and untouchable 'dark forest', which can have exponential fission caused by users' word of mouth and interpersonal links. Therefore, if we cannot launch hot products, we will soon be submerged in endless darkness unknownly."

He stressed the importance of word-of-mouth in the Internet era for creation of hot products. Zhu Haiqin, founder of Mystic South-Yunnan Ethnic Cuisine, proposes that creating hot products is an important factor for winning in the industry. One of the important tools for creating hot products is product communication design. Product communication and promotion includes official and non-official marketing media. Official marketing tools usually include the online official accounts of the brand, such as Weibo, WeChat official account, Xiaohongshu, Tiktok, Bilibili and other Internet platforms that cover the vast majority of domestic traffic, where advertisements, short videos and copy pages can be launched to convey brand symbol stories and brand memories. There is also unofficial media content, generally UGC produced by consumers spontaneously, which is more widespread. For example, KOLs, VIPs and uploaders on social media and we-media, and sometimes consumers, also produce promotional content such as short articles, short videos and posts for soft advertising and marketing. Both of the above tools can be used to form fission and create hot products via word of mouth.

4.3.1. Lady Dior Handbag

The great popularity of the Lady Dior handbag is the best marketing case of KOL product promotion. The most successful marketing promotion of the handbag is making good use of the crucial figure, Princess Diana. After Princess Diana received the Lady Dior handbag for the first time in 1995, its versatile and elegant appearance stood high in her favor, making such bag an accessory worn by her on many public occasions. Dior also seized the important marketing opportunity, wisely, naming the bag Lady Dior with the consent of the princess in 1996. The name of the hot product, Lady Dior, comes from the princess, and nothing is able to attract traffic more than this. Such historic and successful marketing strategy makes the hot product, the Lady Dior handbag, a brand legend.

4.3.2. Dyson

The marketing strategies of Dyson in China are very eye-catching, which has been once considered to be the best classic case of “hot product” marketing of explosive growth. It is good at diverse marketing methods including event marketing, WeChat marketing, and Weibo marketing. For example, Dyson spreads “micro scenarios” on WeChat and other social media that show high-quality convenient life. And, it demonstrates the characteristics of its dryers through KOLs’ (Key Opinion Leaders’) content promotion and promotes with the narratives depicting quality life, thus introducing great marketing exposure.

By taking advantage of the convenience of information releasing on the Internet for advertising, Dyson rapidly forms its well-reputed products on the basis of the extremely strong and promising product strength of black technology. Stimulating the middle-class consumer group in China from time to time and combining it with the consumption experience of loyal users facilitate the fast spreading of the “hot product” brand.

4.3.3. Van Cleef & Arpels

Van Cleef & Arpels also creates hot products with diverse media.

It actively uses the official media of the brand for promotion by taking the lead in opening official accounts online to serve consumers on channels with high traffic such as WeChat Official Account and applet. The advertising copy used numerously guides consumers to focus on “good luck”. The most frequent sentence in the copy that “the product brings ‘good luck and happiness’” attracts Chinese consumers. The brand strategy of online marketing and communication deepens and strengthens the implied meaning of the “hot product” to satisfy the spiritual needs for the Alhambra collection of consumers. The hint of happiness and vibrant atmosphere brought by the advertising photos further reinforce the belief that wearing such adornments will bring good luck to consumers.

In addition, the brand actively explores the mass self-communication of new media and streaming media, such as inviting celebrities for endorsements, role model effect by stars and celebrities wearing products, and emerging Internet celebrity effect.

4.3.4. SK-II

SK-II adopts diverse marketing and communication strategies, among which event marketing obtains very obvious results. It initiates the statement-making “BareSkinProject” campaign in which six globally famous female celebrities are invited by SK-II to boldly face the challenge and reveal their bare skin with the long-term help of the Fairy Water, namely Tang Wei, Ni Ni, Chun Xia, Chloe Grace Moretz, Kasumi Arimura, and Mayu Matsuoka. In this way, the magic power of Fairy Water is demonstrated to the public in a manner of real records, which directly convey product benefits and brand concepts to consumers. And the female celebrities invited also comply with the brand image of nature and confidence, achieving precise positioning of the brand’s target users. It could fairly be described as a successful marketing campaign.

“Face The Wild, Face The Camera” series initiated by SK-II also have good results. Such marketing events are presented by SK-II with National Geographic. Celebrities from four countries are invited to travel to some of the most extreme and beautiful no-man’s lands on earth. It advocates that female loosens the bonds of tradition and goes out and experiences nature with greater and stronger confidence, and tests the power of SK-II’s Fairy Water to make skin stays crystal clear. “Face the Wild|Face the Camera” video series attracted attention and follow-up reports from the media in many fields in the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Malaysia, and other parts of the world. More than one hundred top media, we-media, and bloggers worldwide, including WWD, Elle,

VOGUE, and @SuCen, also give their likes and support in response to the aesthetic attitude of braveness, extreme exploration, and going deep into the nature presented by such video series and SK-II, that is “what you can reach is farther than you can imagine; the extreme you can see is not your limit”. Once the videos are released in China, it is widely spread on social media such as WeChat and Weibo.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY

This paper analyzes the “hot products” of international high-end brands in depth. First of all, hot products of high-end brands are classified into four hot-product quadrants on the basis of two dimensions (1) luxury or light luxury, and (2) consumable or durable product. Thus four types are recognized, namely luxury durable products, light luxury durable goods, luxury consumables, and light luxury consumables.

Cross-case comparison study is carried out in this paper focusing on four hot products in China’s market, i.e., the French Lady Dior handbag, the Van Cleef & Arpels jewelry, the SK-II “Fairy Water” Facial Treatment Essence, and the Dyson hair dryer.

The compared cases reveal three driving forces for the creation of hot products in China by high-end brands. The first is the ultimate product power of hot products of high-end brands that drives its success. That is to say, hot products address the important and prominent demands or pain points of customers, and are extremely valuable. The second is the brand spirit of such high-end brands. Brand spirit, together with the brand’s fascinated storyline, brings enormous spiritual enjoyment to customers, attracts consumers finding an echo in brand values, and makes consumers use the brands to highlight their unique personality and style, which is also the unique driving force for exclusive high-end brands. The third is the strategy of successful marketing communication and promotion used by high-end brands to drive the formation of hot products.

As suggested by JinCuodao in his book *Hot Product Strategies*, we have entered the Internet era, so traffic means wealth. Even a good product needs good marketing and promotion. In the era of traffic, the ultimate marketing of brands and products is the key to a transition from 1 to 100. Whether marketing is able to create hot products depends on the fit with the specific market environment. For example, Dyson caters to Chinese consumers who pursue attractive product appearance and high technology, and SK-II complies with the natural aesthetic of modern females pursuing independence, self-improvement, and confidence.

The case brands use multiple platforms, online and offline, official and unofficial, KOL and influencers, such as Weibo, WeChat, Xiao Hong Shu, and Bilibili. Diverse and abundant promotion is one of the underlying reasons for their success. Besides, the case study reveals that hot products of high-end brands have always fixed an identical brand positioning, promoting with a specific value proposition. For example, the following advertising copy is frequently and highly repeated by brands in their official media in order to convey and strengthen the value of hot products, namely Dyson’s “hair dryer that does not damage hair”, SK-II “Fairy Water”’s “help you attain radiant and crystal clear skin”, Lady Dior handbag’s “timeless classic bag”, and Van Cleef & Arpels’s “lucky clover of the world”.

The study findings in this paper have good theoretical value. First, this paper enriches the study on hot products of high-end brands by recognizing their types and exploring their underlying driving forces of success. Second, this paper expands the theoretical research of hot products. It finds that there are not only hot products in FMCG with a short life cycle, but also in the field of high-value and high-end brands that sell dreams, have a high sense of worth, and feature scarcity. And it shows the characteristics of exclusivity and popularity.

The study findings in this paper have good practical value. The study findings in this paper are of great practical and reference value for practitioners engaged in the operation, marketing, and management of high-end brands. At present, the development of the Internet has ushered in the era of hot products, in which creating hot products has also become a hot spot in the marketing strategies of enterprises with international high-end brands. It is important propositions for international high-end brand operators how a product’s novelty value is kept, how hot products not only are star products creating cash flow for enterprises but also maintain a long life cycle being popular for decades. Meanwhile, they also need to discuss how to continuously expand and derive from hot products, how to launch corresponding hot products with limited sales periods to different seasons, and how to expand the vitality of hot products while retaining classic models.

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