



Anti-Laws of Luxury Fashion Marketing

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Luxury brands such as Louis Vuitton, Chanel, Prada, and Hermès embrace unique elements such as creative vision, symbolic power, heritage, rarity, and exclusivity on the basis of marketing strategies. While traditional marketing strategies may not be suited for luxury products, Kapferer and Bastien (2012) address 24 anti-laws the luxury sector maintains for its pricing power and profitability. These anti-laws reject conventional marketing practices such as target marketing, positioning, market research, celebrity endorsement, promotion, volume growth, and selling on the Internet. For example, the anti-law “Forget about positioning because luxury is not comparative” suggests that while positioning a brand within the target market and the main competitor is a norm for traditional marketing strategy, luxury brands cannot be positioned because they strive for uniqueness, individuality, and timeliness. Another anti-law example, “Do not respond to rising demand,” means that contrary to normal business practices in which demand rises and companies produce more supply to fill it, luxury brands should not respond to rising demand. For luxury brands, responding to the demand of the market diminishes the brand’s image and value. A key insight regarding luxury brands is that many more people should know and dream about the brand than should be able to actually acquire the product. To help students attain a concrete understanding of the 24 anti-laws of luxury marketing and an ability to apply them to luxury fashion brands, a group project (a group of two) was developed in the upper-level luxury fashion brand management course in the Fashion Merchandising and Design program.

This project consisted of two parts: Part 1 Visiting brick-and-mortar luxury brand stores, and Part 2 Exploring online luxury fashion sites. In Part 1, each student team identified 12 examples in store environments (e.g., displays, products, and employees) that illustrated specific anti-laws of luxury marketing and took pictures of them. Specific requirements for Part 1 included the following:

- students must visit a minimum of six different brick-and-mortar luxury fashion stores;
- all team members must be in each photo;
- each photo must present a distinct anti-law of luxury marketing;
- students must include a total of 12 different anti-laws of luxury marketing.

In Part 2, students explored a variety of online luxury fashion brand sites (e.g., brand Web site, Facebook) and captured images from the sites that best explained specific anti-laws of luxury marketing not covered in Part 1. The requirements of Part 2 stated that:

- students must visit a minimum of six different online luxury fashion brand Web sites;
- each screen capture of the site should present a distinct anti-law of luxury marketing;
- students should include a total of 12 different anti-laws of luxury marketing.

Students presented all of the images collected from Parts 1 and 2 on a Pinterest board. For each image, students wrote a description about (a) the source of the image (the name of the brand and store location or URL) and (b) how the example presents a specific anti-law of luxury marketing.

The effectiveness of the student project was assessed based on students' agreement on the four different learning aspects of the project with the 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 5 being strongly agree to 1 being strongly disagree (N = 26). Students found the anti-laws of luxury fashion marketing project relevant (M = 4.65), a good learning experience (M = 3.96), engaging (M = 4.27), and fun (M = 3.85). Students rated their learning value of this project highly, with an average learning value of 3.96 based on the 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 5 being very high to 1 being very low. Positive student comments on this project included "Good exposure to the real luxury brands; talking to sales associates was the most interesting" and "It was good to go to the stores and see in person how the laws play out. I never realized that they actually follow laws like these. I learned more seeing it in person than just [reading about it] in a book." It was also noted, however, that the 2.5-hour driving time from campus to luxury retail sites made visiting them challenging and time-consuming for the majority of students because they needed to schedule in advance with their group members. Many students suggested that this part of the project be arranged as a day field trip activity for the entire class.

In conclusion, college students, typically not luxury customers at their life stage, lacked actual experience with both brick-and-mortar and online luxury-brand stores. Therefore, this project provided a great opportunity for them to have hands-on experiences with luxury fashion brands and further substantiated the uniqueness of luxury brands and their distinctive marketing strategies. Anti-laws of luxury marketing can be further utilized in other learning settings such as a scavenger hunt activity in a field trip and an activity to analyze the differences between mass fashion and luxury fashion brands.

Reference

Kapferer, J. N., & Bastien, V. (2012). *The luxury strategy: Break the rules of marketing to build luxury brands*. London, United Kingdom: Kogan Page.