

Social Attachment Theory and the Relationship between Satisfaction, Luxury Brand Attachment, and Influencer Attachment: A Focus on Young Chinese Online Consumers under Quarantine: An Abstract



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Abstract The rapid development of social media and influencer marketing has tremendously changed the way in which consumers collect information, make purchase decisions, and communicate with brands (Lou and Yuan 2019; Neal 2017; Scott 2015). Marketing practitioners, especially those from luxury brands, are explosively increasing their budget on influencer marketing more than ever for its payoff in sales performance (Lou and Yuan 2019). During the worldwide quarantine and social distancing due to the breakout of COVID-19 pandemic, influencer marketing has become one of the most prevailing marketing approaches.

Researchers have revealed a variety of impacts of influencer marketing on both consumer behaviors and branding performance (Blackwell et al. 2017; Hollebeek et al. 2016; Schivinski et al. 2016; Vanmeter and Grisaffe 2015). However, there is a lack of evidence to answer whether consumers develop emotional attachment and to what extent towards the influencer and the brand involved in the brand-influencer collaboration. This research, founded on social attachment theory (Mawson 2005), adopts a mixed methodology approach to investigate the relationship between consumer satisfaction derived from influencer promoted purchases, influencer attachment, and luxury brand attachment.

In the context of influencer marketing, our research reveals positive relationships between consumer satisfaction, influencer attachment and luxury brand attachment respectively; furthermore, the positive impact of consumer satisfaction on influencer attachment is stronger than on luxury brand attachment. This research also identifies a positive moderating role of brand sponsorship on the relationship between consumer satisfaction and luxury brand attachment. Although the

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COVID-19 crisis has caused severe social and business isolation, it brings some exceptional opportunities for brands to bond with their target consumers through social media and influencer marketing. Our results show that consumers more autonomously engage in behaviors that enhance the development of attachment due to the social isolation under quarantine. This finding qualifies social attachment theory (Mawson 2005) to explain the occurrence of affiliation in the context of influencer marketing and identifies influencers as attachment figures to their online communities.

Keywords Influencer marketing · Attachment theory · Satisfaction · Luxury · Online · Brands