

Research on Marketing Strategies and Trends of Art Co-Branding in the Contemporary Fashion Industry

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Abstract: Art co-branding is an increasingly huge fashion industry trend with great potential and unknown risks. In this paper, marketing strategies and trends are the main focuses in terms of the art co-branding of fashion brands. The method used includes literature research and two case studies of Louis Vuitton collaborating with Yayoi Kusama and Dior Lady Art, examining their marketing strategies and performances. Increase in product value, maintenance of scarcity, and construction of in-depth customer relationships are the three main reasons contributing to the win-win outcome of art co-branding in the fashion industry. As a result, it is shown that art co-branding can contribute to highlighting the core of fashion brands and greatly increase brand awareness by choosing an artist with a matching concept through various marketing strategies. Art co-branding has the high potential to become widely used by fashion brands and act as an effective method to benefit all fashion brands in the future.

Keywords: fashion industry, art co-branding, marketing strategies

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

In today's world, brands seek innovative tactics to strengthen their brand awareness and profitability. At the same time, customers pay more attention to the aesthetics and cultural value of all goods, hoping to express their tastes and identity. As a unique medium, art can be called a very perceptual universal "language". Today, brands in various industries utilize art as an infectious way to shape and spread culture, enabling them to connect with customers on an emotional level. As a result, for consumers who pay more and more attention to the humanistic spirit and aesthetic connotation, art undoubtedly brings new opportunities for the development of all brands.

Co-branding is when two or more businesses collaborate to create and promote a new product or service [1]. Co-branding is a powerful method for businesses to pool their resources, frequently resulting in higher brand visibility and revenues and lower individual expenses and risk. This approach is widely used by businesses to develop worthwhile items and tap into new consumer markets.

In this case, the artistic co-branding perfectly meets customers' demands in the fashion industry. As a result, an increasing number of artists have entered the fashion industry, and their cooperation manners have developed not only limited to launching clothing collections but have more diversified

and valuable innovations. Similarly, the co-branding strategy has become an approach frequently used by fashion brands to boost their sales and diversify their product portfolio by joining forces with other artistic figures.

1.1.1. Brief History

In fact, art collaborations within the fashion industry can be traced back a long time. In the 1930s, the most famous collaboration was between Elsa Schiaparelli, the famous Spanish artist Salvador Dali, and a group of Surrealists around him. The result and honor of this collaboration are two of Schiaparelli's iconic garments: the Organza Dress (1937) and the Tears Dress (1938). This collaborative case was usually cited as a milestone of a hybrid of art and fashion [2].

1.1.2. Current Market Observation

There have been many successful cases of fashion brands collaborating with artists on the market. For instance, on Chinese social media Weibo, the number of views of the hashtag topic #Uniqlo co-branded collection was robbed # about American artist Kaws' partnership with Uniqlo has reached 470 million, which also brought Uniqlo a recovery in its share price up 4.58% as of June 5, 2019 [3].

However, nowadays, it cannot be denied that consumers' attitudes towards homogenized cross-border co-branding are inevitably fatigued in today's markets of increasing numbers of co-branded brands. How to become popular and create a partnership with long-term efficiencies and benefits and satisfying consumer experience and revenue growth has become an urgent problem for brands to solve. In order to improve and succeed, marketing strategy, the plan a business uses to promote and sell its goods or services and attract and keep customers, plays a significant role here for all brands.

1.2. Literature Review

On CNKI, there are about 15 related articles. Wang proposed that collaborations need to focus on commercial value, pay attention to public requirements, and be socially responsible [4]. Song found that fashion brands need to select artists with a strong correlation with the spiritual and cultural connotation of the brand, expand and rebuild the way of co-design, and utilize the influence of the current symbol consumption to achieve a win-win effect [5]. From the joint name of Uniqlo and Kaws, Hong and Zhang recommended that the fashion art co-brand launch multiple product series, diversify purchase channels, and enrich the publicity content [6]. For clothing brand joint marketing, Bai and Wang discovered the problem of a lack of attraction toward customers and a lack of innovations and design efforts [7]. Focusing on Louis Vuitton and Supreme co-branding, Jia and Ran analyzed the motivation, the form of expression, and the marketing strategies, concluding with a new direction for future development in the fashion market [8].

Despite the increasing popularity of art co-branding in the contemporary fashion industry, there is a lack of comprehensive research specifically focusing on the marketing strategies and trends associated with these collaborations. Previous studies have mainly examined the general concept of co-branding or have explored collaborations in other industries, such as sports or entertainment. Thus, there is a research gap regarding the specific marketing strategies and trends employed in the art co-branding partnerships within the fashion industry. This paper aims to fill the gap by investigating the unique marketing strategies and emerging trends that drive successful art co-branding initiatives in the contemporary fashion industry.

1.3. Research Framework

This framework will guide the research process and help organize the study to address the research objectives and explore the marketing strategies and trends of art co-branding in the contemporary fashion industry. The research will first conduct a comprehensive literature review to establish a theoretical foundation and gain insights into existing theories and models of co-branding and marketing strategies. The next step will dive deeper into case studies of collaborations between artists and fashion brands. The analysis from multiple perspectives will be fully interpreted, employing content analysis techniques to identify key themes, patterns, and trends in art co-branding strategies. Finally, the findings will be presented and discussed, providing a comprehensive overview of the fashion industry's marketing strategies and future trends of art co-branding.

2. Method

2.1. Literature Research

The literature research method gathers and analyzes existing academic literature, published articles, industry reports, and relevant sources [9]. This paper will broadly use the internet to carry out literature research. This method will provide a theoretical foundation for understanding the various approaches, challenges, and opportunities associated with art co-branding in the fashion industry by analyzing and synthesizing the literature. On the one hand, it helps to understand the history and current situation of art co-branding in the fashion industry; on the other hand, it explores various marketing methods and factors and helps predict future trends. The internet contains many documents with different information, which can supplement the paper and answer questions for research from multiple perspectives.

2.2. Case Study

The case study is a research methodology that gains insights and draws conclusions from real-life issues, programs, or organizations through investigation, according to information from *myperfectwords*. In this paper, the case study method will be employed to examine and illustrate empirical evidence, especially focusing on marketing strategies. Multiple case studies of fashion brands collaborating with artists will be selected, and relevant data will be collected through other sources, such as company reports. The analysis of these case studies will enable a deeper understanding of the marketing strategies used and a further generation of the anticipation of future trends employed in art co-branding partnerships and provide practical insights for fashion brands and industry practitioners. The current situation and development of the industry can be seen through the study of existing case studies, and more powerful and well-founded suggestions, conclusions, and predictions can be generated.

3. Result

3.1. Case 1: Louis Vuitton and Yayoi Kusama

3.1.1. Brief Description

The collaboration between Louis Vuitton and Yayoi Kusama was a well-planned artistic partnership that brought together fashion and contemporary art. Kusama, known for her vibrant polka dot patterns and avant-garde style, perfectly complemented Louis Vuitton's emphasis on luxury and innovation. In the second collaboration after the first collaboration in 2012, the first products were released in China and Japan on January 1, 2023, deemed a pre-launch. On January 6, they were available in all

460 Louis Vuitton boutiques worldwide. This collaboration aimed to create a limited-edition collection of bags, shoes, and accessories that reflected Kusama's distinctive artistry, leveraging Louis Vuitton's brand visibility and expertise in the fashion industry. According to LVMH's report, the Fashion & Leather Goods business group gained an 18% revenue growth in Quarter 1, 2023, which part of the records can be attributed to this big-scale collaboration [10].

3.1.2. Brand Image Enhancement

This collaboration allowed Louis Vuitton to associate itself with artistic expression and creativity, reinforcing its position as an innovative luxury brand. By partnering with Kusama, known for her unique artistic style and avant-garde approach, Louis Vuitton showcased itself as a daring, bold, and forward-thinking brand. This helped the brand stand out by encompassing more than 450 individual products.

3.1.3. Target Customer Expansion

As the wider fashion market keeps developing and becoming saturated, all brands must constantly try to occupy a larger portion of the market [11]. Louis Vuitton's collaboration with Kusama enabled the brand to tap into a different consumer segment. Typically, Louis Vuitton's target audience is affluent individuals interested in luxury fashion. However, this collaboration helped attract a younger and more art-centric demographic, including fans of Yayoi Kusama herself. This allowed LV to diversify its customer base and leverage Kusama's art's worldwide recognition and appeal to introduce the brand to a wider audience.

3.1.4. Customer Engagement

Regarding customer engagement, Louis Vuitton has set up pop-up stores and intriguing designs and installations, exceeding the conventional collaborating collections [11]. LV has opened pop-up stores in Tokyo and New York. The interior of Tokyo's store was strongly inspired by Kusama's artwork "Infinity Mirror Rooms", and there was a giant hyperrealistic sculpture of Yayoi Kusama herself in the center of the store. With New York's pop-up, there were installations on Fifth Avenue and 57th Street, with audio-animatronic Kusama painting her polka dots on the window.

Visual merchandising is perfectly utilized in all stores. The striking pop-up stores incorporated the artist's famous polka dot design, adding an element of playfulness. The vivid colors, organic shapes, and polka dots cleverly placed brought Kusama's signature patterns and designs to life, which spoke volumes in attracting the audience. Plus, for the installations, the distinctive facial expressions, hand gestures, and following eyes made the sculptures look like the real Kusama, generating buzz on social media.

Pop-up stores and installations have succeeded in increasing consumer engagement, creating buzz, and providing a distinctive shopping experience that goes above and beyond the norm. By fostering a sense of urgency surrounding the limited-time offer, this tactic successfully grabs the attention of both devoted customers and brand-new audiences [11].

3.1.5. Omnichannel Campaign

The Louis Vuitton x Yayoi Kusama campaign involved diverse channels such as social media platforms, print media, and in-store displays. From producing behind-the-scenes content to online live broadcasts, the brands used multiple channels to increase social media followers, drive engagement, and create a buzz around their collaborations. More than 10 million people have viewed the Instagram post of the anamorphic billboard Vuitton put up in Tokyo's busy Shinjuku

neighborhood. It features Kusama looking out from a Vuitton trunk covered with animated fruit characters [12].

3.2. Case 2: Dior Lady Art

3.2.1. Brief Description

The Lady Dior bags are launched from Dior's limited edition Lady Art collections, created in association with well-known artists from across the globe. The Lady Art project's first edition was released in 2017, and there would be five more collections after that. The collection aimed to explore the colors, materials, and form themes, interpreting the iconic handbag with a unique artistic touch. All the bags produced are unique artwork, fusing Dior House's craftsmanship, heritage, and creative visions.

3.2.2. Limited Edition

The marketing strategy of the collection revolved around the concept of exclusivity. The collection was only produced in small numbers, and each handbag featured a unique design created by the collaborating artists. By limiting the availability of the collection, Dior created a demand for the product, which helped generate interest and buzz, attracting potential consumers. For its price the regular lady bag price ranges from €2900 to €5400, but the price of the Dior Lady Art #7 collection ranges from €5900 to €19000, consumed as a collectible handbag by the market.

3.2.3. Creative Partnerships

Dior's collaboration with contemporary artists was one of the key marketing strategies for the Lady Art Collection. The brand partnered with seven artists for each collection from different parts of the world, each with distinctive styles and approaches. The partnership allowed Dior to create an original product with an artistic edge and expanded the brand's reach to the vast followers of each artist involved.

3.2.4. Visual Merchandising

In promoting the Lady Art Collection, Dior implemented appropriate visual merchandising to showcase the unique designs of the handbags. Each Lady Dior Handbag was exhibited like artwork in the Dior pop-up stores worldwide. The stores' lighting, mannequin display, and color scheme were carefully curated to enhance the handbags' visibility. For instance, for the Dior Lady Art Project 2021, brand ambassador Kim Jisoo was invited to the pop-up store in Seoul, Korea, showcasing all the incredible handbags. Jisoo also posted promotional videos on her Instagram to publicize the campaign, which attracted her fans' attention towards Dior [13].

Dior's 'Art n' Dior' exhibition returned to Shanghai's West Bund Art Center after two successful stops in Shenzhen and Shanghai in 2021. The event, which began on November 10 as part of the West Bund Art and Design Fair, featured artworks from all around the world to strengthen the link between Dior and China. Based on Dior's artistic passion, the exhibition invited young generation artists and displayed the Lady Art handbags. Plus, high-profile Chinese celebrities were also invited in order to increase publicity. The hashtag "Art n' Dior" has received a remarkable 700 million views and 15 million comments as of November 14, 2022 [14].

3.2.5. Social Media

Dior effectively used social media platforms to market Lady Art. The brand utilized the power of social media through various organic and paid campaigns to amplify the collection's reach. Dior engaged their followers with exclusive behind-the-scenes content, artist Q&As, and hashtags to encourage user-generated content that further created buzz and put potential consumers on top of the funnel.

4. Discussion: Benefits and Risks of Marketing Strategies

4.1. Benefit 1: Increase in Product Value

From the cases of Louis Vuitton and Dior, it is found that when a fashion item combines artistic elements, it can often weaken its commercial attributes and obtain stronger vitality under the blessing of art, that is, the ability to add value or retain value. In 2012, LV collaborated with Yayoi Kusama for the first time, and the suitcase was auctioned at Sotheby's for 239,400 euros. The popular products of this collection have obtained the ability to add value several times higher than the original selling price. In the recent 2022 partnership it was no exception to elevate the price of products with artistic co-branded design.

Art co-branding can help fashion brands increase the value of their products by differentiating from competitors and adding an emotional connection to their products. Fashion brands can create products with deeper meaning and emotional value for their customers. For instance, a designer could collaborate with an artist to create a collection inspired by a social issue, which can evoke strong customer emotions and, thus, add value. For Yayoi Kusama, she has stated that her dots acted as something that helps alleviate her anxieties and mental health problems through repetition [15]. In this case, Louis Vuitton adds connotative ideas to its product design through co-branding.

4.2. Benefit 2: Maintenance of Scarcity

Collaborating with an artist to launch limited edition or exclusive collections can help fashion brands establish a reputation for exclusivity and premium quality while investing in the artist's talent and creativity at the same time. Scarcity helps to create a sense of anticipation and desire for customers, which means they are more likely to be willing to pay a premium price for it. Therefore, art co-branding can help fashion brands increase their profits.

The artwork is scarce and contains a certain cultural connotation and era aesthetics, which can produce spiritual resonance with different viewers. As the most valuable category of commodities at present, art stands at the top of the commodity pyramid and at the commanding heights of culture. When fashion items can give more cultural meaning to themselves and be recognized by the market, like works of art, they no longer define the role of style but become cultural makers. Art co-branding can help fashion brands stand high enough to maintain their value to be invincible in continuous expansion and competition.

4.3. Benefit 3: Construction of In-depth Relationships with Customers

Like LV's installation for Kusama Yayoi and Dior's exhibition for the Lady Art series, all these visual presentations combined with art can effectively engage consumers and give them a thorough understanding of the core of the brand or collection. These offline campaigns that visualize the brands' clothing collections and concepts are able to provide customers with immersive experiences. More and more fashion brands have become keen to hold branded art exhibitions, and more in-depth and

pure art practices may give brands richer symbolic value and upgrade fashion to more advanced art, becoming a way to inject new vitality into the brand.

Philip Kotler, a professor of economics, noted in his book ‘Marketing Revolution 4.0: From Tradition to Digital’: “In an era of attention scarcity and fragmented information, brands need to create Wow Moments for consumers.” Art events or related display manners, in this case, are effective ways to focus consumers’ attention and immerse themselves in Wow Moment. They are not just an occasion to showcase a product but also a story about the craftsmanship, spirituality, and even cultural significance behind the fashion brands.

4.4. Risk 1 — Phenomenon of Following Suit

It could be risky for the collaborations between fashion brands and art pavilions to only cater to the public’s taste and seek to maximize profits but not respect and truly incorporate art. There is the phenomenon of some brand exhibitions that enter art galleries and museums blindly exporting brand concepts, limiting themselves to superficial sensory stimulation, and treating the audience only as “consumers” rather than “viewers” in dialogue with art, losing the artistic connotation. For the example of Uniqlo partnering with MoMA in 2013, the critic’s main arguments were that Uniqlo’s retailer cropped a lot of the original looks of artworks to cater to its merchandise. “There’s too much merchandise in the world already, and I don’t want the masterpieces at the Museum of Modern Art to be seen as just more merchandise,” art critic Deborah Solomon told WNYC in the interview.

4.5. Risk 2 — Lack of Compatibility or Synergy

“Louis Vuitton understands and appreciates the nature of my art,” Yayoi Kusama told New York magazine in 2012. “Therefore, there isn’t much difference from my fashion-making process.” On the contrary, one of the primary risks of scarcity in co-branding is the potential for a lack of compatibility or harmony when collaborating between the fashion brand and the artist. Aesthetically and culturally, brand designers and artists often vary in their perspectives, and it may take multiple tries for both parties to achieve the desired result, which consumes money simultaneously. The possible result could be a collection with a jarring and chaotic outlook that confused the customers and negatively impacted the brand’s image.

4.6. Risk 3: Excessive Reliance on Artists

Another risk is the potential for excessive reliance on the artist, which may lead to a brand losing its individual identity. A co-branding partnership between a fashion brand and an artist should ideally have a mutually beneficial relationship where both sides work together to create a unique and innovative product that celebrates the strengths of each side. In the Dior Lady Art collections, the brand took a certain number of risks by relying entirely on their chosen artists to design and interpret their iconic Lady Dior bag without any involvement from their designers. Such a partnership resulted in a collection of bags distinctively different from the original Lady Dior bag. This represents a new attempt, and consumers’ preferences for the attempt are unknown initially. The artist may not be able to retain the fashion brand’s identity by only seeing through their eyes, and it may have minimal input regarding the co-branded products they are selling, creating an inconsistency in brand messaging.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Key Findings

Art co-branding is popular in the fashion industry, with the assistance of rich marketing strategies, allowing brands to blend art with fashion and create unique designs. Although it comes with risks, art

co-branding enables brands to showcase a new aspect of their creativity, access a wider audience, foster brand loyalty, and generate increased sales and revenue. Louis Vuitton and Gucci are examples of brands that have successfully used art co-branding. The future trend appears to be moving towards collaborations with artists from different mediums and culture contexts and with a substantial following on social media. Furthermore, there is a move toward creating limited-edition collections, adding to the brand's exclusivity and creating demand from consumers who want to be part of a unique experience.

In this paper, by analyzing the two examples from Louis Vuitton and Dior, the growing trend in development, the high potential of success, and the win-win relationship of art co-branding in the fashion industry are fully proven. Moreover, this research has also revealed the importance of selecting the right artist, matching brand values, and creating strategic marketing campaigns to make an impactful collaboration. Fashion brands continue to seek innovative ways to differentiate themselves in a highly competitive industry. Art co-branding has emerged as an effective marketing tool that leverages the cultural capital of art to establish a distinct brand identity.

5.2. Research Significance

The business value of the paper lies in the insights it provides for fashion brands to make informed decisions about art co-branding collaborations. By showing the effectiveness of art co-branding in creating unique brand stories and achieving business growth, the paper serves as a practical guide for fashion brands seeking to enhance their product offering, attract new customers, and increase brand loyalty through art co-branding. However, due to the lack of primary research, the results may not be complete and precise. For future studies, it will be better to use primary data from interviews or surveys conducted directly towards the customers or the brands' managers inside the market.

5.3. Limitations and Future Study

In conclusion, this research on the marketing strategies and trends of art co-branding represents a significant contribution to understanding the dynamic relationship between art and fashion in the contemporary business environment and the business potential of using art as a marketing tool to enhance brand identity and increase sales.

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