

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

China's "Kim Kardashian" sparks controversy as Dior's new brand ambassador

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Chinese Kim Kardashian type celebrity Angelababy becomes Christian Dior's first Chinese ambassador. (Shutterstock)

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Parisian fashion powerhouse Christian Dior is being harshly criticized on social media for its appointment of Chinese actress Yang Ying, aka Angelababy, as its first brand ambassador in China.

Ms. Yang, who has been called the "Kim Kardashian of China" and spent \$31 million on her wedding, more than Ms. Kardashian spent on hers said in a video that Dior is her "favorite brand."

Almost immediately upon publication on Dior's official Weibo and WeChat accounts on April 28, the news exploded on China's social media.

By the time of this publication, the number of comments under the original Weibo post topped 50,000 and it has been reposted more than 750,000 times dwarfing Dior's average Weibo engagement.

"Shocking!" wrote "William sabixi" on Weibo. "Why did Dior decide to destroy its high-end public image?"

Another commenter, "BETTERemma," wrote: "Does Dior really believe Angelababy can boost its sales? The brand should really do more market research when making decisions like this one."

The controversy stems from claims of plastic surgery

The discontent by the Chinese online community with Ms. Yang's new role at Dior stems in part from the controversy surrounding reports that she had had plastic surgery.

In 2012, Ruili, a beauty clinic in Beijing, published an article on its Web site claiming Ms. Yang had had plastic surgery.

Ms. Yang sued the clinic for defamation and the case dragged on in court for several years, resulting in a bizarre public examination of the actress's face at a plastic surgery hospital in Beijing.

The hospital's chief claimed her looks were authentic, saying, according to the BBC, "Baby's entire head and facial

bones do not have any signs of incisions."

Critics also contend that Ms. Yang, who rose to fame in 2014 on the reality television show "Hurry Up, Brother" and who started a venture capital fund (AB Capital) for investments in women's lifestyle startups, pales in comparison to the brand's roster of previous international ambassadors, including A-list Hollywood celebrities Charlize Theron and Natalie Portman.



Dior has worked closely with another Chinese actress Liu Yifei in the past, which has aroused curiosity among Chinese people why Ms. Liu was not chosen as the brand's ambassador

Some consumers have even pledged to stop purchasing Dior products as a result of Ms. Yang's appointment.

"It's time for me to say goodbye to the brand that I've loved for more than 10 years," said one commenter.

The brand's response, or lack thereof

So far, the brand has been mum over the fierce reactions online and since that initial announcement, there have been no further posts about Ms. Yang on the official account, which has featured instead several commercials with the supermodel Bella Hadid.

The hubbub is similar to one experienced years ago by another French luxury brand, Chanel, when it appointed Hong Kong-born American singer Coco Lee as its regional ambassador.

Consumers in Hong Kong at the time thought Ms. Lee's public image was too disgraceful to represent the brand. The furor caused Chanel to finally end its relationship with Ms. Lee.

Swiss watchmaker Jaeger LeCoultre's recent collaboration with sensational online blogger Papi Jiang met with similar criticism.

But other collaborations of this kind have fared better with young Chinese audiences.

Burberry's collaboration with Chinese-born Canadian boy band star Kris Wu was popular as was singer Luhan as the face of Cartier.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT of the arrangement with Ms. Yang came just days after luxury conglomerate LVMH Mot Hennessey bought out minority shareholders at Christian Dior for \$13 billion.

Yiling (Sienna) Pan is luxury business and fashion reporter at [Jing Daily](#), the leading digital publication on luxury consumer trends in China. Reproduced with permission.