

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

## Will Chinese consumers forgive Dior?

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*Perhaps the most important aspect of Dior's bounce-back strategy was a component that was not specific to the crisis alone, but dependent on the brand's long term commitment to the Chinese market. Image credit: Shutterstock*

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Everything was going well.

Dior's spring 2020 fashion show in Shanghai, on Oct. 19, with its nature-based, tree-lined catwalk was an inviting extension of what it presented in Paris this past September.

The looks were well received by Chinese fashionistas in attendance, as well as the approximately 28.9 million viewers who watched via a live stream on Dior's official social accounts.

It was at the after-party, however, where things took a turn.

As attendees wandered around the Grand Hall of the [Shanghai](#) Exhibition Center, trees dripping with fairy lights, drinks in hand, that an oddly familiar and seemingly out of place tune filled the room the classic Chinese patriotic song, "My Motherland and Me."

The attendees found the choice of "My Motherland and Me" an amusing addition to the night's events, from a classic runway show to an unambiguous demonstration of the brand's support of Chinese nationalism.

This comes at a timely moment, following the brand's recent misstep at a college workshop, which involved a map of China that [omitted Taiwan](#).

Immediately after the event, videos of the "My Motherland and Me" at the after-party went viral on Chinese social media, generating polarized reactions from netizens.

While Dior did not explicitly say why this song was played, many in the Chinese community took it to be an extension of their recent apology.

Some netizen thought the song choice was forced, stating that it was a simply a gimmick to appease Chinese consumers.

One netizen on Weibo commented sarcastically, saying "I don't know who the song was played for, the French?"

Others argued that they would have been more forgiving of Dior if its original apology felt less like a standard PR

crisis release and was more sincere.

More forgiving netizens, meanwhile, took Dior's act as an example of a foreign brand "trying too hard" to survive in China.

Another Chinese netizen commented below the video, "Dior's desire to survive [in China] is full of the screen."

Nevertheless, many acknowledged Dior's efforts to save itself from a catastrophe among Chinese consumers, as another netizen commented, "Even though the song does not make sense in the atmosphere at least Dior is sincere."

Given this, what did Dior do right? Could it have done anything better?

Here, we share some key takeaways from Dior's bounce-back strategy and how Chinese netizens reacted.

### 1. Act fast, but keep tone in mind

Within an hour of its Chinese map incident, Dior issued an apology on social media channels including WeChat and Weibo.

The prompt official response to the public played an important role in preventing the backlash from spreading more widely.

However, a large population of netizens deemed the apology insincere and regarded it as a standard reaction, as they believed Dior has learned from previous brands' missteps to come up with a prompt official response to combat the clashes among netizens.

One netizen (HVanish) commented, "We do not accept this type of meaningless crisis PR" under Dior's initial statement on Weibo.

In addition, some Chinese netizens believed an apology limited within only Chinese social media is not enough to communicate the brand's heartfelt regret in its wrongdoing, but rather a pretentious show only for the Chinese.

The most-liked comment from Lumique, which received more than 60,000 likes, under Dior's statement on Weibo saying, "Warning: previous fallen-out brands who only posted on Weibo but not Instagram all went through a very bad time in China."

### 2. Keep brand ambassadors on board, at any cost

Unlike previous luxury brand missteps, where brand ambassadors were decidedly quick to sever relationships with the brand, Dior managed to maintain its relationship with influencers and celebrities.

No major Dior ambassadors publicly denounced or boycotted the brand, nor did they abandon the scheduled runway show in Shanghai.

Nevertheless, the collective silence from ambassadors and influencers comes at a price, too.

Netizens blame Dior's ambassadors for tolerating a brand that does not respect China and abandoning their integrity for money.

One netizen commented, "None of Dior's brand ambassador raised their voice regarding this misstep," and received more than 200 likes. This helped Dior as the controversy pointed more toward the ambassadors than the brand.

### 3. Overcompensate before under-compensating

The timing of Dior's map mistake on Oct. 16 was unfortunate for Dior, given its proximity to the brand's runway show in Shanghai.

A tight window for the two events gave the brand a limited time frame to decide how to move forward. And, yet, Dior seemingly turned the runway show into an opportunity to further exhibit its attitude on the previous wrongdoing beyond the initial standardized statement.

Even though playing Chinese patriotic song looks clumsy and out-of-context for an iconic French brand, and was taken largely as a joke by netizens and influencers who were at the show, Dior's desire to survive in China and its fear of losing the lucrative Chinese market was well received among Chinese consumers.

Such an exaggerated choice of action, however, was much better received than undercompensating, as overreacting demonstrated Dior's resolution and fear, which soothed the outrage of some Chinese consumers.

One netizen commented, "It is dumb but it is working." Dior's "trying too hard," in fact, helped the brand in bring back some of the consumer's favor for this brand.

#### 4. Build a foundation of authenticity

Perhaps the most important aspect of Dior's bounce-back strategy was a component that was not specific to the crisis alone, but dependent on the brand's long-term commitment to the Chinese market.

The Spring 2020 runway show in Shanghai showcased 14 exclusive looks for China by the brand's creative director, Maria Grazia Chiuri.

Given the two-day window between the scandal and the show, the looks had clearly been designed long before the incident.

Added to this was the brand's larger decision to frequently bring fashion shows to Shanghai.

Moreover, Dior received the highest Jing Daily Fashion Week Score among brands in Paris through engaging social content, well-balanced choice of celebrity ambassadors and localized communication channels such as Tencent's live-streaming platform.

IT WOULD GREATLY benefit Western luxury brands to understand the Chinese market and its consumers much better, remembering that prevention is the best cure for a crisis.

Even though a large part of the netizens that roasted Dior on Chinese social media may never actually buy a Dior product, it is important for Dior, and other Western luxury brands, to be aware of the culture among Chinese online community, and the importance of maintaining a longstanding, loyal and authentic image in the eyes of Chinese consumers.

If not, many Chinese may forget, but many will also never fully forgive.