

MARKETING

How luxury brands should navigate Chinese fonts

April 19, 2022



China regulates the use of Chinese fonts to assure orthodoxy of the characters. What do luxury brands need to be aware of when designing with them? Image credit: Dior

By [Wenzhuo Wu](#)

Subscribe to **Luxury Daily**
Plus: Just released **State of Luxury 2019** **Save \$246 ▶**

Earlier this month, China's state media, [Xinhua News Agency](#), reported that the National Press and Publication Administration and the National Radio and Television Administration jointly launched a dedicated campaign to regulate the use of Chinese characters.

According to the notice, authorities nationwide have the right to implement censorship on publications including packaging and brand campaigns and TV shows, as well as online video and radio programs.

The initiative aims to "rectify the problems of incorrect and non-standard use of Chinese characters and to eliminate ugly' and weird' font usage which contain vulgar and sloppy exaggerations and deformations in fonts, or violate the writing norms, cultural connotations and aesthetic standards of Chinese characters."

The Jing Take: With this new initiative, global brands need to pay more attention to their campaigns, packaging and ads that involve Chinese fonts.

Though characters seem to be an obvious and go-to strategy for brands to leverage in China, they are indeed one of the most difficult elements to design with, especially when it comes to commercial font choices.

Moreover, using Chinese characters appropriately as defined by Beijing can be challenging for luxury fashion houses, as what looks visually appealing may not be inline with Beijing's proper use guidelines.

Take Dior: Two years ago it launched a limited edition of its iconic Book Tote, but with an added touch of personalization Chinese characters. The typeface it used, Source Han Sans, which was invented by Adobe and Google, fell flat with netizens, stating the font looked "clunky," "weird" and "feeling like a gimmick to win local consumers."

However, there have been successful designs that have been well received.

Prada's logo for its cultural hub, [Rong Zhai](#), is one such example. The font was created by repositioning the length

and position of the strokes, which harmoniously merged both Rong Zhai's historical background and Prada's modernity that aligned well with the Italian house's cultural integrity.

To date, however, there is no reliable standard to follow, and there is a fine line between creativity, especially in luxury marketing, and being inappropriate. International brands need to recognize this and work more closely with their China counterparts to not only send the right message to their customers, but also a message that resonates with the brand. Perhaps easier said than done.

Published with permission from [Jing Daily](#). Adapted for clarity and style.

© 2022 Napean LLC. All rights reserved.

Luxury Daily is published each business day. Thank you for reading us. Your [feedback](#) is welcome.