


Louis Vuitton's Strategies for Enhancing Customers' Engagement on Instagram and Weibo

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 <https://doi.org/10.22034/MIC.2023.176922>

Keywords

collectivism,
individualism,
Instagram, Louis
Vuitton, social media,
social-mediated public,
Weibo

Submitted:
20 June 2023

Accepted:
04 September 2023

Published Online:
30 September 2023

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Abstract

Social media platforms, especially Instagram and X (former Twitter), play an indispensable role in disseminating information all over the world. This research article aims to figure out the strategies adopted by Louis Vuitton on Instagram and Weibo to improve its brand publicity and brand awareness among its customers. Content analysis is utilized to give a comprehensive picture and objective implications. The contents posted from 1-30 May 2023, are chosen to gather first-hand information. Four types of publics and three social-mediated publics are illustrated to facilitate the reader's understanding of social network analysis. Furthermore, the findings revealed different approaches adopted by Instagram and Weibo to cater to local traditions and cultures to make more profits and occupy a larger market share. Collectivism and individualism are favored by Weibo and Instagram, respectively, which is in line with Eastern and Western preferences.

To cite the article:

W, X. (2023). Louis Vuitton's strategies for enhancing customers' engagement on Instagram and Weibo. *Media and Intercultural Communication: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 1(2), 61-73. <https://doi.org/10.22034/MIC.2023.176922>

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1. Introduction

Social media are playing an essential role in daily life for both individuals and organizations, as they can provide a precious opportunity to share their information and interact with each other to achieve their purposes. There are several theories to analyze social media, one of the most popular of which is 'social penetration theory'. Altman and Taylor (1973) coined the term to indicate the process from being distant to being intimate via the online social network. According to this theory, developing a relationship is gradual, systematic, and predictable (Sheldon, 2015). Altman and Taylor (1973) utilized the example of the onion to illustrate this theory. At the very beginning of forming a relationship, only extremely superficial information, such as music, food, and weather, would be shared. When the two parties are getting familiar with each other, more important information, such as sexual preference and age would be talked about. The innermost information would only be known by only a few people and entails strong personal feelings, opinions, and political stances (Altman & Taylor, 1973).

The penetration can be achieved through two dimensions: breadth and depth. Breadth indicates the number of topics discussed, while depth implies how deep and meaningful a topic can be (Sheldon, 2015, p. 7). Jin (2013) conducted an analysis focused on private disclosure on social media (X, former Twitter). The results revealed five dimensions of self-disclosure: (1) daily life, (2) social identity and activity, (3) competence, (4) social status, and (5) health. The present study analyzes the strategies and approaches of the luxury brand Louis Vuitton to improve customers' connectedness and loyalty. Content analysis is utilized to reach a solid and comprehensive conclusion. The five dimensions are also incorporated in terms of the content analyzed.

Other research focused on utilizing content analysis to explore and analyze a specific social phenomenon, such as the analysis of Islamic extremist propaganda on Instagram (Clever et al., 2023). Previous similar studies mainly focus on Facebook (e.g., Lin et al., 2017), ignoring other social media sites, such as X (former Twitter) and Instagram. This study is significant because findings from Facebook cannot be generalized to other social media sites (Bonsón & Bednárová, 2013). Two research questions were outlined in this study:

1. How does Louis Vuitton propagate its products on Instagram and Weibo, respectively?
2. What does Louis Vuitton resort to regarding collectivism and individualism on Instagram and Weibo?

2. Review of literature

2.1. Social media

Social media can and do play a prominent role in people's everyday lives, and they also facilitate the propagation of the values and identities of corporations and brands worldwide due to their inherent flexibility and convenience. Meikle (2016) utilizes social media to describe various emerging internet phenomena, including blogs, platforms for user-generated content, and other applications. Nevertheless, not all things appearing on the internet are instances of social media; for instance, Wikipedia is an online website where everyone can access an account to edit content. However, it is

not labeled as social media because there are no connections between different editors. In light of this, Meikle (2016, p. 6) defines social media as “networked database platforms that combine public with personal communication”.

Most luxury brands use social media to advertise their products and increase brand awareness since such platforms could provide channels for the rapid dissemination of information. The world’s top 100 luxury companies have amassed a total of \$247 billion in 2019, demonstrating a 10.8% annual growth (Deloitte, 2019). Moreover, most luxury brands utilize social media to engage with their potential customers to conduct business activities, such as announcing new products and occupying market share (Choi et al., 2020). Despite the connected nature of social media, customer communication is anything but straightforward (Wang et al., 2020). Robson and Banerjee (2023) develop four dimensions that would influence on the post’s popularity on social media, which are presentation, engagement, brand awareness, and temporal characteristics, respectively.

Presentation characteristics refer to the ways in which the contents of the posts are presented and delivered (Robson & Banerjee, 2023). Druckman (2001) develops the theory of framing to guide the principles of presentation. In this theory, framing means an effect that happens when a communicator purposefully delivers a message with strategies that attract potential audiences’ attention. For instance, Instagram and Weibo might deliver messages in a vivid and colorful approach, attracting as many customers as possible, to increase the brand’s publicity and popularity.

Engagement characteristics refer to the strategies and properties that enable brands to have interactions with customers (Robson & Banerjee, 2023). Attachment theory, developed by Hinson et al. (2019), is utilized to increase brands’ popularity. This theory believes that to engage with a brand, customers need to feel a sense of attachment to the brand (Wallendorf & Arnould, 1988). Hinson et al. (2019) find that Facebook users’ attachment to a certain brand makes them to be engaged with Facebook page. Therefore, inspired by the attachment theory, the interactions between brands and their followers, which are facilitated via posts, should increase the brand’s popularity to some extent (Hinson et al., 2019).

Brand awareness characteristics refer to certain properties of posts that can increase brands’ publicity and online presence (Robson & Banerjee, 2023). Aaker (2004) considers branding strategy as the principle explaining the impact of brand awareness on brand popularity. Each brand has its unique characters and advantages, helping it to develop a brand equity, and further to establish a well-known and widely recognized brand among users (Robson & Banerjee, 2023). An indispensable component of brand equity is achieved through brand awareness (Robson & Banerjee, 2023), which increases the visibility and familiarity of the brands among the end users (Aaker, 2004). When a brand promotes itself and posts something through social media, this can contribute to brand awareness, which increases the possibility for the posts to be popular (Swani & Milne, 2017).

Temporal characteristics contain properties related to timely posts (Robson & Banerjee, 2023), which is guided by social impact theory. This theory suggests that impacts depend on immediacy (Latané, 1981). Immediacy refers to the proximity in time between senders and receivers (Robson & Banerjee, 2023), in this context, the brands’ posts and followers. If a brand has its active online activities, such as sending posts, then it has opportunity to utilize the posts to attract its followers’ attention due to the

fact that followers have only a device away from a brand (Robson & Banerjee, 2023), and hence the immediate interactions between brand and followers might increase a brand's popularity.

All in all, brands could utilize social media as a useful tool to propagate their products and enhance customers' engagement and brands' popularity. This research article intends to analyze Louis Vuitton's strategies utilized by Instagram and Weibo, respectively. Weibo is commonly utilized in China, the second largest luxury market, while X (former Twitter) is readily available in Western countries and Japan (Wang et al., 2020). The strategies to demonstrate their products on these social media vary depending on high- and low-context cultures. Brands should post more text-based information in low-context cultures, while image-based formats are more preferred in high-context cultures (Wang et al., 2020).

2.2. High- and low-context theory

Hall (1989) observes that meaning and context are inter-influenced and intertwined. Different contexts have various interpretations of meaning. "A high-context (HC) communication or message is one in which most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message" (Hall, 1989, p. 91). High-context (HC) cultures are more likely to be picture-oriented (Hall, 1989). By contrast, he also mentions that low-context (LC) communication relies heavily on explicit codes. Generally speaking, Western societies are deemed low-context, whereas Asian communities are usually reckoned as high-context (De Mooij, 2021; Liao et al., 2008). As a result, luxury brands on Weibo, which represents the HC society in China, adopt more picture-based and multimodal strategies. Instagram, which incorporates more cultures and dimensions, is more text oriented. Previous studies have demonstrated that cross-border organizations usually illustrate more vivid pictures, emotions, and metaphors in HC cultures like China while producing primarily text-based products in LC cultures (An, 2007; Okazaki & Alonso, 2003). This phenomenon also applies to social media (Wang et al., 2020). Weibo, a representative social media in China, often encompasses many celebrities' pictures, emojis, metaphors, and other irrelevant information that have nothing related to what it wants to propagate (Tsai & Men, 2017).

2.3. Collectivism and individualism

In addition to the different propaganda strategies adopted by Instagram and Weibo, there are other differences between the two social media, including the cultural dimensions. A culture's system will more or less influence an individual's perception of the world and subsequent behaviors (Hofstede, 1985). Based on Hofstede's theory (2011), there are six dimensions of national cultures: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, long-term versus short-term orientation, and indulgence versus restraint. The big difference between the two social media is that Weibo is located in China, where collectivism is prevalent, while Instagram is utilized chiefly by Western countries, where individualism is preferred (Hofstede, 2011).

Hofstede (1985) defines individualism as a "loosely knit social framework in society" in which people typically do not have a close relationship with each other (p. 348). They are self-centered. By contrast, collectivism is a "tightly knit social framework" (Hofstede, 1985, p. 348). People in a collectivist

society are more likely to help others and form friendly relationships with each other. Some scholars have conducted relevant research on traditional advertising about the two choices: individualism or collectivism (Cheng & Schweitzer, 1996; Lin, 2001; Morling & Lamoreaux, 2008).

Just like the high- and low-context theory (Hall, 1989), Wang et al. (2020) found that Asian countries prefer collectivism, whereas Western countries tend to be more individualistic. To answer the second research question, the intentions of customers' purchasing behaviors need to be considered and analyzed. Those in collective societies are more likely to be connected with shared values and social norms such as patriotism (Etzioni, 1968). As a result, these consumers in collective societies might have a way to make their personalities blurred or ignored (Turner et al., 1987). In other words, customers in a collective society tend to have more self-monitoring and self-presentation to show their personalities and social standings (Bian & Forsythe, 2012). By comparison, people from individualist societies emphasize self-consciousness and emotional independence (Hofstede, 1984).

Knowing the difference and points of emphasis might be helpful for cross-border companies to propagate their products and services purposefully. In addition, Instagram, representing the individualistic society (Silva et al., 2023), might need to deliver posts in a text-based and personality-oriented approach. In contrast, Weibo's content might be more multimodal and collective to meet Asia's HC cultures and collectivism. Social media play an essential role in disseminating different forms of cultures and values. Hence, various strategies are adopted to propagate international organizations' products and improve their brand awareness. In this way, their business values can be maximized with the help of social media.

2.4. Content analysis

Content analysis is defined as "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use" (Krippendorff, 2019, p. 2). Shen and Bissell (2013) conducted a research about how beauty brands adopt Facebook to increase brand awareness, occupy a larger market share, and strengthen brand loyalty by focusing on six brands: Estee Lauder, MAC cosmetics, Clinique, L'Oreal, Maybelline, and CoverGirl. They sought to check what kinds of social media tools are utilized by these brands to connect with their users. Moreover, service-centered research regarding brand value (e.g., Tynan et al., 2010) reveals a shift from a product-centered viewpoint to a view that treasures personalized experiences. With the help of social media networks, customers can choose the content they want to receive based on their preferences (Shen & Bissell, 2013).

The most recent scholarly development in the field of social media content analysis is the combination of several approaches to examine a recently discovered, little-studied phenomenon. For instance, Ma and Zhang (2022) conducted a social network analysis (SNA) and content analysis about the #MeToo Movement in China. On 1 January 2018, a female PhD student posted on Weibo, claiming that she was sexually assaulted by her then-supervisor. On the same day, Weibo reported that an investigation was on the way to check the authenticity of this claim. With this announcement, several similar cases were reported all over the world, triggering a heated discussion about sexual harassment and gender inequalities, which was labeled as the #MeToo Movement in China.

The public delivered their viewpoints on Weibo about this topic. The idea of the public is debated and envisioned as a collective person with a common interest (Ma & Zhang, 2022). Dewey (1927) defined the public as a collection of individuals who face the same problem, identify it, and organize to address it. Grunig (1997) described a public as a homogenous social collectivity that recognizes the same issue and works collectively to solve it. According to Grunig (1997), four types of publics were categorized: (1) all-issue publics, who are concerned about all topics and issues, (2) single-issue publics, who are only concerned with issues that are related to themselves, (3) hot-issue publics, who are extremely active in heated issues and topics, regardless of relevance to their interests, (4) apathetic publics, who show no interest in any topic or issue. Ma and Zhang (2022) utilized four dimensions of public, along with SNA and content analysis to identify different social-mediated public positions and stances in the #MeToo Movement. They identified three social-mediated publics in the #MeToo Movement on Weibo: (1) the provoking public, which is paramount in starting a discussion, (2) the bridging public, who is responsible for disseminating the information to various groups to publicize a certain topic, (3) the powerful public, who is the combination of the previous two publics and is the most powerful one.

What is more, hashtags facilitate the formation of different communities and ad hoc societies (Bruns & Burgess, 2015). Islamic extremists and other online movements, both democratic and autocratic, can unite and label their digital audiences (Awan, 2017) to achieve their purposes and ambitions. Hashtags can also bring together those with similar interests and enthusiasm to form a solid online community to promote their agendas and activities. At the time of data collection, consumers' initial impression of an Instagram post was its images. The so-called "picture superiority effect" (Paivio & Csapo, 1973) states that images typically leave deeper imprints on people's minds than texts and that the valence of these images influences later involvement (Geise et al., 2021).

The content analysis is utilized comprehensively in this research article because of its wide usage and broad application. What is different is that this research intends to analyze Instagram and Weibo, two social media that are under researched compared to Facebook; hence, a new and inspiring insight might be formed to enrich the scholar of content analysis.

3. Method

This part intends to collect first-hand information posted by Louis Vuitton's official accounts on Instagram and Weibo. The data collection and data analysis are expected to provide insights on the strategies adopted by Louis Vuitton to propagate its products on Instagram and Weibo. Furthermore, by conducting a content analysis, we try to shed light on how collectivism and individualism are utilized on Instagram and Weibo, respectively.

3.1. Data collection

The data were collected from Louis Vuitton's official Instagram and Weibo accounts from May 1st, 2023, to May 30th, 2023, and a content analysis was conducted to analyze how these two social media can help manufacturers propagate their products and improve their relationship with clients. All kinds of data, including images, art, sounds, and the number of 'likes' and 'comments' were gathered to arrive at a comprehensive conclusion regarding the time, strategies, and adopted approaches.

3.2. Data analysis

The basic information to analyze entails the post time and the number of ‘likes’, ‘comments’, and ‘shares’ (Shen & Bissell, 2013). Three kinds of time slots are defined: if a post is sent between 9 am to 5 pm on weekdays, it is deemed as the office hour post; if it is sent outside the 9 am to 5 pm period, it is labeled as non-office hour post; and if it is sent on Saturday and Sunday, it is considered a weekend post (Shen & Bissell, 2013).

4. Results

4.1. Weibo’s posting strategy

The first research question aims to delve into the strategies adopted by Louis Vuitton to propagate its products. When it comes to the number of posts, Louis Vuitton adopted a slightly different strategy on Instagram and Weibo. It delivered 106 posts on Instagram between May 1st and May 30th, while the number of posts on Weibo during the same period is only 42. It is understandable because Instagram is utilized by most Westerners and Weibo’s users are mainly Chinese and other Easterners, and Louis Vuitton's headquarters are located in a Western country: France (Silva et al., 2023). In addition to the number of posts, there is also a variance of post time. Among the 42 posts on Weibo, only 7 were posted during the weekend, and the remaining posts were all delivered during the weekday. Among the 35 weekday posts, 18 posts were delivered during office hours, whereas 17 posts were posted during non-office hours, accounting for 51.5% and 48.5% of all the weekday posts, respectively. The following chart demonstrates the date, time, ‘likes’, ‘comments’, and ‘sharing’ from 1st May to 30th May on Weibo.

Table 1. Three Dimensions (Likes, Sharing, and Comments) on Louis Vuitton's Official Weibo Account (1)

Table 1				
Date	Time	Likes	Sharing	Comments
5.29	22.00	62	8	27
5.29	18.30	193	126	135
5.29	17.30	115	118	3
5.29	16.30	280	134	43
5.29	15.30	3.1w	9686	4618
5.29	14.30	139	118	12
5.28	22.00	13.6w	975	15.1w
5.28	15.44	18.1w	20.4w	3088
5.27	11.00	209	117	43
5.26	20.00	164	116	12
5.26	19.00	148	117	15
5.26	17.00	1.2w	5355	1w
5.26	15.47	24.5w	30.9w	2.3w
5.25	19.30	203	124	48
5.25	08.00	3.1w	25.5w	603
5.25	00.10	1523	100	210
5.24	19.30	1499	56	190
5.22	19.30	1440	148	408
5.18	15.00	187	130	67
5.18	10.01	2972	3048	810
5.17	10.00	13w	4.3w	2.4w
5.16	15.00	13.9w	6.5w	3.4w

Table 2. Three Dimensions (Likes, Sharing and Comments) on Louis Vuitton's Official Weibo Account (2)

Table2				
Date	Time	Likes	Sharing	Comments
5.16	10.00	14.8w	5.8w	2.5w
5.15	21.30	201	119	35
5.15	19.00	196	116	23
5.13	17.00	252	131	71
5.13	14.01	252	131	51
5.11	11.00	443	123	49
5.10	16.30	428	123	33
5.10	14.00	440	124	20
5.10	12.30	417	115	18
5.08	15.40	4.5w	1.6w	1w
5.07	15.00	338	121	49
5.07	12.00	291	122	41
5.05	22.11	174	119	31
5.05	21.30	152	114	12
5.05	21.00	164	119	9
5.05	10.30	21.2w	1.7w	3180
5.02	20.00	14.9w	21.7w	2.4w
5.02	14.00	238	120	39
5.01	18.00	8.2w	9w	1.1w
5.01	17.00	15.4w	27.2w	3.6w

The content posted at 03:47 pm on May 26th (table 1) attracted the most likes, shares, and posts sent at 10 pm on May 28th received the most comments. It can be concluded that customers during office hours on weekdays are not willing to spend time commenting, and they prefer to 'like' and 'share' if they are interested in the content. However, most comments appear during non-office hours on the weekends, when customers are likely to have more free time. The content posted at 03:47 pm on May 26th is related to Victoria Song, a well-known Chinese singer, actress, and model. She is also the lead singer of the South Korean girl group f(x). The detailed content is:

A brilliant atmosphere bloomed in every gesture. Brand spokesperson @ Victoria Song appeared at the scene of the 2024# Louis Vuitton Early Spring Show # to watch the gorgeous ideas of Nicolas Ghesquière, the artistic director of women's wear. Review the whole show, and then explore the fashion inspiration. [*The translation is mine*]

Following the text, a good-looking picture of Victoria Song is attached, which attracts the most likes and comments. On the one hand, the content is extremely normal in Louis Vuitton's official Weibo account to propagate its newest products and fashion. On the other hand, audiences and customers during office hours might get tired after a long period of concentration and focus; hence, they might want to welcome any distraction. When it comes to the most comments posted at 10 pm on May 28th, it still relates to Victoria Song, along with other famous people:

2024# Louis Vuitton Early Spring Show # presents Nicolas Ghesquière, the artistic director of women's wear, with fantastic fashion ideas on Bella Island on Lake Maggiore in Italy. Brand Spokesperson @ Victoria Song, Brand Spokesperson Gu Ailing @ Frog Princess Ailing, Singer Felix, Actor Urassaya Sperbund, Singer Jaden Smith, Brand Spokesperson Emma Stone, Model Kōki, Brand Spokesperson Alicia Vikander, Singer Lous & The Yakuza, Brand spokesperson Jennifer Connelly, actor Paul Bettany, actor Thuso Mbedu, fashion blogger Chiara Ferragni, and many star friends all shared their impressions and experiences. You are invited to look back at the big show website link and return to the fashion dream. [*The translation is mine*]

After the content, a short video lasting approximately two minutes demonstrates the beautiful view of the Italian island and all kinds of famous people, including Victoria Song. When conducting a sentiment analysis in the comments, it is found that most comments are emotionally positive. For instance, Victoria Song is beautiful, Felix is handsome, and so forth.

4.2. Instagram's posting strategy

It was impossible to find the exact time of the posting of Louis Vuitton on Instagram, but the number of likes and comments could be spotted. The post sent out on May 2nd (Table 2) received the most likes (837.000 likes). The content is a short dancing video led by the girls' group LE SSERAFIM, whose members come from South Korea and Japan. The caption is:

Women's Pre-Fall Show 2023. K-pop group #LE_SSERAFIM performed at the #LouisVuitton after-party in Seoul. Watch the full show via the link in the bio.

The likes outnumber that on Weibo, for Instagram has a wider scope of customers and followers for Louis Vuitton. What is similar to Weibo is that both social media can receive the most likes when the model and the celebrity are included in the post. Regarding the most comments, May 3rd received the most (8,599 comments); the caption of the post is as follows:

Women's Pre-Fall Show 2023. Celebrities #Felix, #Hwasa, #GongJun, and House ambassador #Taeyeon attended #LouisVuitton's first Pre-Fall show by @NicolasGhesquiere on the Jamsugyo Bridge in Seoul. Watch the full show via the link in the bio.

Likewise, several celebrities appear in this post, including Felix and Hwasa. What is different from Weibo is that the post is delivered on weekdays. Based on these categorizations, it is found that each brand has its unique pattern of the time to post (Shen & Bissell, 2013). When considering the different types of brands, it is detected that 88.6% of high-end brands like Estee Lauder, MAC Cosmetics, Clinique, and department store brands like L'Oreal, Maybelline, and CoverGirl post Facebook during office hours, 8% are delivered on weekends, and only 3.5% are posted during non-office hours (Shen & Bissell, 2013). For the department store brands, 66.8% of the posts are delivered during office hours, 19% during non-office hours, and 14.2% on the weekends (Shen & Bissell, 2013).

Similarly, 16.67% of the contents on Weibo are delivered on the weekends, while the remaining are all posted on weekdays. It can be assumed that brands and customers all have their own things to do during weekends; hence, the weekends' activity on the Weibo is less frequent than that during the weekdays. By contrast, activities on Instagram are more frequent on weekends.

5. Discussion and conclusion

One possible prospect of content analysis is that it can combine other disciplines, such as politics and religion to have a case study about certain groups, as illustrated before (see Clever et al., 2023). The contents delivered by Instagram primarily focused on brand promotion and improving brand awareness, which are consistent with the ideology of individualism (Hofstede, 2011). By contrast, Weibo is a Chinese product where collectivism is prevalent (Hofstede, 2011) and other common feelings and emotions are mentioned instead of only promoting the brand's publicity and awareness. Louis Vuitton, with the help of Weibo, calls for the attention of the traditional homeland and environmental protection, which is in line with the ideology of collectivism in Chinese society.

Social media plays a vital role in propagating a brand's name and its products. However, the strategy to be utilized needs careful consideration, for it not only concerns the success of improving brand awareness and brand reputation, but it also needs to cater to localized customers and audiences. This research article analyzes the different strategies adopted by Louis Vuitton on Instagram and Weibo, respectively, and cultural differences should be considered. As mentioned previously, Instagram is video-based, while Weibo is photo-oriented, so these two strategies are appropriate for the different lifestyles and cultures between Western customers and Eastern customers.

Content analysis may be used to perform quantitative research in an effective and efficient manner, albeit some limits are inescapable. First and foremost, this study only includes Instagram, which represents Western social media, and Weibo, which represents Chinese social media. Other social

media platforms, such as X (former Twitter) with 320 million active monthly users, can also give valuable insights and tactics. Furthermore, the data is gathered and evaluated during the International Labor Day vacation season. The vacation season may alter the sorts of posts and the frequency with which they are made (Pinto & Yagnik, 2017). Other types of postings may grow because of gift exchange and holiday greetings (Pinto & Yagnik, 2017). Additionally, dataset bias cannot be avoided because dataset bias is well-known (Shenkman et al., 2021). Datasets are a mirror that can reflect societal inequities (Condliffe, 2019). For example, white individuals outnumber other ethnicities in X (former Twitter) AI-generated teaser photographs (Lyons, 2020). Future research should avoid data bias as much as possible. Moreover, various data should be collected in multiple social media to reach a more comprehensive and systematic conclusion.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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