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Chinese organizers cancel NBA fan event amid free speech row



Inside C2

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What slowdown? China's riding to the rescue of luxury brands



FILE PHOTO: A man walks past a store of luxury goods retailer Hermes one day before the opening session of the National People's Congress (NPC) in Beijing, China March 4, 2019. REUTERS/Thomas Peter/File Photo

BEIJING/LONDON (Reuters) - When Tiffany & Co said this month it was sending its priciest jewelry to mainland China to reach wealthy shoppers no longer jet-setting abroad, it reflected a trend helping global luxury brands weather a Chinese economic slowdown.

Well-off Chinese consumers, whose trips to fashion capitals like New York and Paris have long buttressed luxury-sector sales, are increasingly staying at home because of a weaker yuan currency which has blunted their overseas firepower. Hong Kong, another top shopping destination, has also become less appealing due to mass anti-government protests that have erupted into violence on some occasions.

However third-quarter earnings showed that, despite China's economic growth slowing to a three-decade low, shoppers are continuing to spend heavily on luxury - but they are doing it at home or online, with their wallets reinforced by savings on flights, hotels and other steep holiday costs.

Several large U.S. and European luxury brands reported strong demand for their goods in China, even as Beijing and Washington remain embroiled in a trade war.

Lisa, a finance worker in her late 20s, is among Chinese shoppers who are increasingly turning their eyes away from foreign shores.

"I don't feel like there is such a big gap anymore between prices overseas and at home, so when I feel like making a purchase I usually just go straight to the store these days," she told Reuters outside a Hermes outlet in Shanghai.

Hermes, known for its leather goods, printed silk scarves and Birkin bags that cost \$10,000 or more, said its stores in mainland China had outstanding results that helped fuel a 19% sales gain in the wider region.

The French company opened its 26th boutique in China in July in Xiamen and continues to build out its e-commerce site for Chinese customers, hermes.cn, launched a year ago. Italy's Moncler is meanwhile studying expanding the size of its stores in big cities like Beijing and Shanghai.

"The whole economy is slowing down and salary growth is also slowing. So consumers who originally bought when they traveled will now buy domestically," said Iris Pang, Greater China economist at ING.

She added a cut to sales taxes this year which prompted some luxury brands to lower their prices in China could also be an attraction.

HONG KONG PROTESTS

The strength in China has helped insulate luxury companies from a major financial hit from months of pro-democracy demonstrations in Hong Kong that have forced them to temporarily close shops and which have kept

tourists away.

Kering's Gucci fashion label, for example, said it has managed to make up for lost business in the former Brit-

ish colony due to spending shifting back to mainland China. The turmoil is far from over, however, with protests in Hong Kong descending into clashes between demonstrators and police this week. In the United States, meanwhile, Tiffany boss Alessandro Bogliolo told Reuters this month the company was pursuing Chinese buyers who were staying at home, saying it needed to "follow customers where they shop".

He has sent high-end jewelry including diamond necklaces costing \$1 million or more to its stores in mainland China from New York.

The demand for luxury in China may even be aiding more mass-market players like personal care products maker Procter & Gamble Co, which raised its global sales forecasts on the back of premium beauty brands such as China Olay.

Emma Zhang, a 32-year-old investment analyst in Shanghai, said she was indulging more in what she said were little luxuries.

"I used to be the type to buy many cheap items, and would change them frequently," she said. "My shopping habits have changed and I've been buying things that are better quality."



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S&P 500 approaches record high on U.S.-China trade progress

NEW YORK (Reuters) - The S&P 500 rose on Friday, briefly surpassing its record closing high, after Washington said it was close to finalizing parts of a trade pact with Beijing.

Traders work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) in New York City, NY, U.S. May 18, 2017. REUTERS/Brendan McDermid

The benchmark index .SPX hit a session high of 3,027.39, reaching above its closing record of 3,025.86 on July 26. It came within a point of overtaking its all-time high of 3,027.98 set during the July 26 session.

U.S. stocks added to marginal gains early in the session after the U.S. Trade Representative's office said that deputy-level trade talks would continue. President Donald Trump also struck a hopeful tone, saying that China wanted "to make a deal very badly."

The developments rounded off a strong week for equity markets, which were boosted by a clutch of better-than-expected third-quarter earnings reports. The S&P 500 and the Nasdaq were both set for their biggest weekly percentage gain in seven weeks.

Intel Corp's (INTC.O) quarterly report added to Friday's upbeat sentiment. The chipmaker's shares jumped 7.6%, on track for their largest daily percentage gain since January 2018, after the company beat Wall Street revenue and profit estimates and raised its full-year revenue forecast.

The gain in Intel shares helped propel the Philadelphia SE Semiconductor index .SOX to a record high. Trade optimism and Intel's gains outweighed losses in shares of Amazon.com Inc (AMZN.O), which fell after the e-commerce giant forecast revenue and profit for the crucial holiday quarter below estimates. Amazon shares were last down 1.7%, off their session low.

"The market reaction to Amazon wasn't as bad as people thought, which created a positive atmosphere," said Michael O'Rourke, chief market strategist at Jones Trading in Greenwich, Connecticut. "Then the trade headlines - I think the market liked that as well."



The Dow Jones Industrial Average .DJI rose 149.4 points, or 0.56%, to 26,954.93, the S&P 500 .SPX gained 10.93 points, or 0.36%, to 3,021.22 and the Nasdaq Composite .IXIC added 46.16 points, or 0.56%, to 8,231.96.

Boeing Co (BA.N) shares dropped 1.5% after Indonesian authorities looking into October 2018's Lion Air crash said the world's largest planemaker failed to grasp risks in the design of cockpit software on its 737 MAX jet. Shares of VF Corp (VFC.N) fell 6.7% after the apparel maker reported lower-than-expected quarterly revenue as its popular Vans and Timberland brands faced intensified competition.

Charter Communications Inc (CHTR.O) shares gained

6.9%. The cable operator posted better-than-expected quarterly results, fueled by customer growth in its broadband services business.

The next round of earnings due next week includes Apple Inc (AAPL.O), Alphabet Inc (GOOGL.O), Pfizer Inc (PFE.N) and Merck & Co Inc (MRK.N).

Advancing issues outnumbered declining ones on the NYSE by a 1.43-to-1 ratio; on Nasdaq, a 1.74-to-1 ratio favored advancers.

The S&P 500 posted 40 new 52-week highs and three new lows; the Nasdaq Composite recorded 80 new highs and 55 new lows.

2020 休斯頓黃頁



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Editor's Choice



Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson speaks to staff in the children's ward as he visits Milton Keynes University Hospital in Buckinghamshire, Britain October 25, 2019. REUTERS/Toby Melville/Pool TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY



A member of the honour guard looks at a string used to ensure that soldiers stand in a straight line, as they prepare for a welcoming ceremony at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, China, October 25, 2019. REUTERS/Jason Lee TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY



A woman fills her basket with marigold flowers, used to make garlands and offer prayers, as she plucks them before selling to the market for the Tihar festival, also called Diwali, in Kathmandu



Demonstrators disperse as Iraqi security forces use tear gas during a protest over corruption, lack of jobs, and poor services, in Baghdad



Demonstrators run from a police water cannon during a protest against Chile's state economic model in Santiago October 24, 2019. REUTERS/Edgard Garrido TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY



A handout photo shows female Chinese panda bear Meng Meng with one of the panda twins at Zoo Berlin



Democratic 2020 U.S. presidential candidate Warren takes the stage in Hanover



Maya Rockey Moore Cummings, widow of Rep. Elijah Cummings, stands at his casket in Statuary Hall at the U.S. Capitol in Washington



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The International District would like to remind everyone that Hurricane Season is upon us. We all need to be smart and plan ahead for all kinds of disasters: natural, manmade, technological and terrorist related. In Southeast Texas, however, the most likely disaster scenario is a Hurricane.

Here are a few things to do in preparation:

Before the Hurricane

- Monitor local TV or AM 740 KTRH Radio for instructions
•Check your supplies; especially water (5 gallons per person per day)
•Fuel your vehicles and generators
•Cover your windows with plywood
•Bring in all outdoor furniture, toys, tools and other objects that could be missiles
•Take pictures of property and contents for insurance purposes

Stock Emergency Supplies

- (at least 72 hours worth)
•First aid kit
•NOAA Radio and batteries
•Flashlight and batteries
•Extra eye glasses
•Bottled water & Non perishable food
•Clothing & Bedding
•Sanitation (toilet paper & personal hygiene items)
•Medications and copies of prescriptions
•Cash as well as credit cards
•Photo ID, important documents and records
•Special products for babies, elderly and medically fragile family members
•Don't Forget Your Pets
Pet disaster kits should include: medi-

cations, first aid kits, sturdy leashes and collars, carriers to transport pets safely, current photos with owner or family members, food, potable water, litter/pan, muzzle, can opener, and toys.



Make a check list of necessary pre hurricane preparations and review with your family. Review it again when there is a storm in the Gulf of Mexico. Discuss evacuation plans with your family. Check Radio 740 and local television media for updates on zones being evacuated. Make sure your home insurance policy is current and remember that standard policies may not cover flooding and wind damage.

For more information check out the Harris County Office of Emergency Management web site. Emergency Essentials Kit (HarrisReady.org) (Courtesy International Management District)

The "Ultimate" Hurricane Checklist
- Aluminum foil
- Battery-powered or hand-crank radio and an NOAA Weather Radio with tone alert and extra batteries for both

- Bleach and medicine dropper (Nine parts water to one part bleach can be used as a disinfectant.)
- Books, games, puzzles or other activities for children
- Cash or traveler's checks and change
- Carbon monoxide detector (while using generator)
- Cellphone with chargers, inverter or solar charger
- Change of clothing including a long-sleeve shirt, long pants and sturdy shoes
- Coolers
- Duct tape
- Dust mask to help filter contaminated air and plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter-in-place
- Emergency reference material, such as a first aid book
- Extension cord (for generators)
- Feminine supplies and personal hygiene items
- Financial documents



- Fire extinguisher
- First aid kit
- Fix-a-flat
- At least a three-day supply of non-perishable food
- Frozen gel packs
- Gas cans
- Generator
- Infant formula and diapers
- Local maps
- Manual can opener for food
- Matches in a waterproof container
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation
- Paper and pencil
- Paper cups, plates, paper towels and plastic utensils
- Pet food and extra water for your pet
- Plastic bucket with tight lid
- Prescription medications and glasses
- Rain gear and rubber boots
- Sandbags (for flooding)
- Sleeping bag or warm blanket for each person
- Toilet paper
- Trash bags
- Utility knife
- Water, one gallon of water per person per day for at least three days, for drinking and sanitation
- Whistle to signal for help
- Work gloves
- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities

(Courtesyhttps://www.chron.com/news/)



Advertisement for Southern News Group featuring '美南日報' (Southern Chinese Daily News) and '15.3 KVVU-TV'. Includes a QR code and a photo of the news building.

Advertisement for 'Ocean Palace 珍寶海鮮城' (Ocean Palace Restaurant). Features the restaurant's name in English and Chinese, a photo of the building, and details about its dining options and location.

The Veterans Affairs Department Is 'Hardwiring' Customer Service Into Every Service It Provides



Overview

The VA Is On A Mission To Improve The Veteran Experience

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

Since its inception in 1930, the Veterans Affairs Department has delivered health care and other services to tens of millions of veterans and their loved ones, caring for those who have "borne the battle" in defense of the nation.

Yet in its storied history, VA has never emphasized customer experience like it has in recent years, building on the instantiation of a Veteran Experience wing at the close of the Obama administration to—as of mid-May—literally codifying veterans experience principles into VA's core values.

In an interview May 21 with Nextgov, Dr. Lynda Davis, chief veterans experience officer at VA, described the rule as a watershed moment across the government, noting it was perhaps the first time a federal agency essentially baked customer experience into its mission.

"In order to keep the secretary's com-



mitment to customer service, we had to hardwire this customer service culture into everything we are doing," Davis said. "That means permanently that VA will be considering customer service as foundational to its operations and policy."

Policy doctrines and rules are mere words, but VA has spent the better part of four years implementing a wide range

of changes designed in direct response to veteran feedback. Davis said the agency created a human-centered design analysis of the "moments that matter" to tens of thousands of veterans across their distinct healthcare journeys, locating areas where VA performed well along with pain points for veterans.

Perhaps counterintuitively, some of VA's large-scale changes were in response to seemingly minor problems encountered by vets. For example, the VA has partnered with outside veteran organizations to provide volunteer personnel at the more than 100 VA medical centers across the country. Called the Red Coat Ambassador Program, volunteers wearing easy-to-see red coats will be the first people many veterans see upon entering VA facilities, and they "are there, ready to engage as non-employee companions to help make sure someone coming into a hospital knows how to find their way around," Davis said. The program was a result of analysis data suggesting some veterans often think VA medical centers can be confusing, daunting or stressful places to visit.



The navigation guide is a physical embodiment of VA's digital navigation improvements, which included the relaunch of va.gov in November. The website is a single point portal for every veteran service. In a similar effort, VA created the White House VA Hotline in June 2017 to connect veterans with customer service agents 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. As of May 14, agents answered more than 250,000 calls from the hotline, which Davis said will serve a model for call centers moving forward.

"It gets back to ease of navigation," Davis said. Whether it's through websites, contact centers or physically literally walking into the building."

VA has also provided "Own the Moment" training to more than 50,000 frontline Veterans Health Administration employees covering effectiveness, ease and invoking positive emotion. Davis said the training borrowed from best practices in business, industry and health care, culminating in an actual curriculum.



"What we do in Our the Moment training is make sure every single person is trained in how to do customer service, and then with the call center or website, make sure they know how to help vets get additional access to info and services," Davis said.

VA is also improving the way it solicits feedback from veterans, allowing real-time responses from veterans through its Signals program. Any vet who uses VHA outpatient services is given the option to sign up for receiving a voluntary survey through email. That feedback is then shared with relevant parties, such as hospital directors, "so we know how veterans feel in near real-time," Davis said. So far, VA has received more than 3 million feedback responses through Signals,

allowing the department new dimensions of qualitative and quantitative sentiment data. And those taking the surveys have reported elevated levels of trust, Davis said—up to 88 percent—or four times higher than the public's overall trust in government.



Meanwhile, Davis—who reports directly to VA Secretary Robert Wilkie—has maintained a modest staff size of approximately 120 employees, wide-ranging in expertise and focusing on everything from data analytics to community-based support. VA is also a close White House partner, where it is a leading agency for contact center modernization. While VA is happy to partner with outside organizations and employs numerous contractors, especially in technology, the brunt of the customer experience culture change is happening with VA employees at the helm.

"We start with, 'What does the customer want,' and we design what the customer wants and the behaviors we have to have," Davis said. "Then we design training and curriculums around the employees themselves. The 'train your trainer' model cannot be sustained if you're only using outside contractors, and we believe it is best to have employees develop content, own it, agree with it and buy into it." (Courtesy <https://www.nextgov.com>)

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