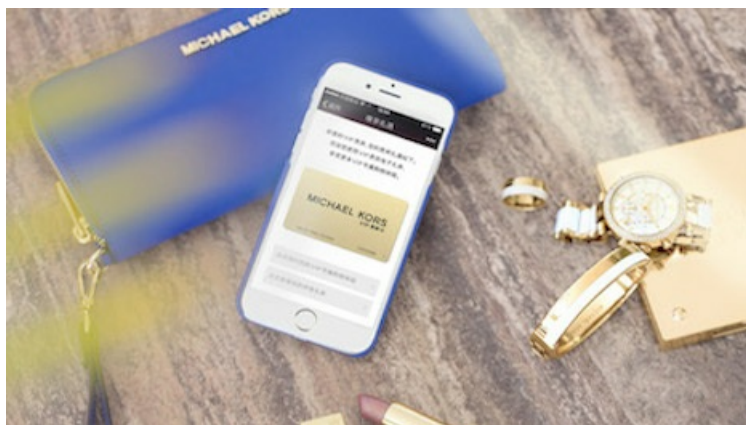


MARKETING

What marketers can learn from WeChat's pervasiveness in China

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Michael Kors WeChat

By BRIELLE JAEKEL

The majority of consumers in China are using mobile messaging application WeChat as their sole source for interaction with brands, daily tasks and communication with others, and marketers are learning how to leverage this to their advantage and recreate this tactic overseas.

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WeChat is now seeing double adoption rates within two years, according to a new report from L2, also showing that now all beauty brands, 96 percent of personal care brands and 90 percent of watch and jewelry manufacturers interact with consumers ([see story](#)). Brands in China are serving consumers' needs through the mobile messaging platform, a strategy that can be and should be recreated in the United States.

"A key strategic imperative for marketers in 2017 and beyond will be to treat messaging channels as key enablers to being of services to the individual," said Michael Becker, managing partner at **mCordis**. "They'll have to learn how to incorporate them holistically in their plans, not as discrete media silos to be mined and exploited, but rather, as a key part of their cross-channel engagement programs."

"As we enter 2017 and step into the age of the connected individual, marketers should learn to serve individuals across channels and focus on being of services to them, focus on creating value for them, not from them," he said. "This will require marketers to adopt new principles, develop new skills and adopt and hone new capabilities."

"For instance, servicing and messaging individuals, at scale, in the future will require the adoption of cross-device and channel mapping as well as machine learning powered communications, including ChatBots and modern in-app push notifications services. These services will make it possible to have real-time conversations with individuals, at scale, to monitor an individual's explicit and implicit intent and react in real-time at the micro-moments that matter with relevant and personalized service."

Messaging ubiquity

China may be well advanced ahead of United States in terms of consumer use of technically and messaging services. However, the trend is starting to spread overseas. It just may not be the same medium.

In the U.S. consumers are using platforms such as Snapchat, Facebook and iMessage significantly more than WeChat. Being already installed on the millions of iPhone owners' phones, iMessage may have the potential to be the U.S. WeChat.

imessage-apps-store-6c



iMessage app store

For instance, mobile ticketing platform Fandango took a cue from consumer behavior and transforming the digital ticketing world by integrating further with mobile messaging, since movie going is typically a social experience.

With a recent iOS update, Apple beefed up iMessage to include access to outside applications without having to leave the message. Fandango has just upped its capability by allowing users to search for movies within the message thread, pay for tickets through Apple Pay and save favorite theater locations ([see story](#)).

Personalization and convenience

This ubiquitous platform strategy may very well be the way of the future, as the conversational experience makes retail and marketing experiences more personal, as well as more convenient. Having the ability to complete a copious number of tasks in one place can make it much easier for consumers.

Another new example is online real estate marketplace Zillow, rounding out a year's worth of mobile innovation with possibly its most splashy feature yet: an update to its flagship app that features iMessage App Store support.

This new iMessage app allows users to quickly access and share photos and information about a home's key features through text messages with friends without having to leave the messaging screen, producing a user-friendly experience for online home shopping for consumers that are increasingly demanding that all ecommerce experiences do so ([see story](#)).

zillow imessage

Zillow's iMessage platform

"The developed world has gone mobile and the developing world will skip traditional computing infrastructure and go straight to mobile," Mr. Becker said. "Mobile, specifically mobile messaging, sits at the heart of the digitally connected individual.

"Messaging can be a powerful enablement platform, it is simple and a perfect vehicle for real-time services," he said. "As more people come online and adopt services powered by modern messaging platforms people and their communities will rally around multiple communications hubs, like WeChat and others.

"The moral of the story is simple, marketers must learn to wean themselves off of advertising-only driven marketing plans. This will take time. They must learn to adopt cross-channel marketing strategies that include both advertising and messaging based initiatives, initiatives that are based on the principle of creating value for and with, not from, the people they serve."