

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Tod's taps WeChat's ecommerce capabilities to launch influencer collection

June 27, 2018



Tod's digital pop-up combines editorial content and shopping. Image credit: Tod's

By DANNY PARISI

Italian fashion label Tod's is partnering with Chinese social network WeChat and influencer Mr. Bags for a new digital pop-up shop.

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The pop-up combines editorial content with shopping, allowing customers to learn more about the products and their creation before making the purchase directly through WeChat. The collaboration emphasizes not only the importance of ecommerce but also the continued crossover between European luxury and China.

"Digital pop-up shops are following in the footsteps of physical pop-up shops that are currently a hot retail trend," said Jeffrey Neville, senior vice president and practice lead at [Boston Retail Partners](#), Boston. "Pop-ups appeal to consumers because they offer access to limited-run merchandise that continually changes.

"From a brand perspective, digital pop-ups expose customers that don't normally shop a brand to their product, create a sense of urgency to buy before it's gone' and present an opportunity for retailers to move slow-moving or over-inventoried products."

Digital pop-up

Tao Liang is one of China's most popular influencers. More commonly known as Mr. Bags, his deep knowledge of luxury goods has made him a household name for luxury in China.

Now, Mr. Bags is working with Tod's and WeChat to help educate consumers even more about luxury goods. Additionally, the pop-up will mark the debut of a new Tod's bag, marking the first time a blogger-created luxury product has been launched through WeChat.

The digital pop-up, called a Baoshop, is a WeChat mini program. It was created specifically for Mr. Bags' 4 million followers, many of whom are affluent consumers geared to make high-end purchases.

MR.BAGS



Baoshop. Image credit: WeChat

While Mr. Bags sells products through his own personal Web site, users have occasionally complained about the slowness of shopping through an HTML Web page.

The Baoshop solves this problem by letting consumers browse through the lightning fast experience of using a mobile application to both read about products and purchase them. Customers can buy the products using WeChat Pay, the platform's popular mobile payment service.

By working with Mr. Bags and WeChat, Tod's is expanding the reach of its own luxury goods into the lucrative Chinese luxury market, an incredibly valuable arena for luxury brands today.

"Retailers need to move beyond worrying about Amazon to finding creative ways to leverage platforms and/or partnerships that quickly expose their products to more customers while creating brand loyalty to drive incremental revenues," Boston Retail Partners' Mr. Neville said. "Tod's use of WeChat's Mini Program is a smart strategy to extend the reach of the limited-time, exclusive pop-up shop and make the purchase frictionless with WeChat Pay.

"The WeChat Mini Program is a logical extension to WeChat's globally dominant platform, with more than 1 billion active users, that combines chat, social media and payments."

Baoshop

Pop-up shops are a great way for brands and retailers to give customers a unique new experience without having to invest in a permanent new addition to their efforts.

But in China, ecommerce is far more popular than it is on other countries. Ecommerce has such a huge share of

overall sales in China that Tod's and WeChat's digital pop-up shop makes perfect sense.

China has increasingly become one of the most important markets in the world for retailers.

According to a new report from Frost & Sullivan, more than 80 percent of retailers in the United States and elsewhere believe that China is a lucrative market to explore. However, many of those retailers feel overwhelmed with the prospect of doing business in China due to the extreme difference in culture and law between western nations and China.



Cross-border retail. Image credit: Frost & Sullivan

Only 20 percent of Frost & Sullivan's surveyed retailers said they feel confident in their capability to succeed in China's ecommerce market ([see story](#)).

But Tod's is one brand that has been navigating China deftly over the last few years. Recently, Tod's has continued its trend of bringing influencers from China to star in European-themed advertising campaigns with the unveiling of Italian Holidays starring Liu Shishi.

Italian Holidays sees Ms. Liu wandering through the Italian countryside, taking in the Mediterranean air and wearing Tod's clothing. The international crossover is one of many Tod's has done with prominent influencers and celebrities from China ([see story](#)).

"Consumers expect personalized shopping experiences and curated assortments," Mr. Neville said. "Pop-up shops help consumers identify with brands that resonate with them.

"Luxury brands that offer curated products in online pop-up shops that are promoted to individuals based on customer context will have the greatest success," he said.