

MARKETING

How Western brands can find the app in China that reaches their perfect audience

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With a growing number of Chinese apps emerging daily, it has become increasingly difficult to figure out which app will work best for your brand. Image credit: Gucci

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Global brands that want to succeed in China need to invest in a strong mobile strategy, but that is easier said than done.

With a growing number of Chinese apps emerging daily, it has become increasingly difficult to figure out which app will work best for your brand.

In a dynamic market like China's, it is no longer enough to run innovative campaigns with smart digital storytelling.

Today, brands also need to stay relevant and connected to their audience base, so their selected digital marketing tools have to communicate the brand's message engagingly and effectively.

Only the perfect multi-platform **digital marketing** strategy can harness the power of mobile apps to thrill consumers and instill brand loyalty.

Below are some of the important benchmarks for brands when selecting an online platform.

User demographics are crucial to a brand's success

We have heard it a thousand times before: knowing your target audience is crucial to a brand's success. But far too often, marketers confuse target markets with demographics.

Simply segmenting markets will not do the trick anymore, mainly because there are significant developments inside each market that make consumers act in diverse ways.

For example, Chinese millennials are different from U.S. millennials because of their different cultural backgrounds, political contexts and social settings. And even the **Chinese millennial** group is not a universal demographic where all individuals have the same desires and objectives.

Thus, marketers will register some differences because of age segments (older millennials versus younger millennials), social class or geographic location (tier-1 versus small-town consumers).

A limited understanding of these groups could alienate some consumers and make a brand's digital marketing strategy pointless and ineffective.

In China, no one seems to understand the power of data and analytics better than Alibaba.

Even PepsiCo chose to partner with the Chinese **ecommerce** giant "to leverage the latter's data in order to enhance its customer experience and drive growth in China," according to *Forbes*.

And in 2018, Mars collaborated with Alibaba to create **a chili-infused Snickers bar** designed exclusively for Chinese consumers. Mars made the product based on the analysis of consumer data collected from Alibaba's users.

"Via the Internet, businesses can see the potential needs of customers by studying consumer behavior data and then design, market, sell and serve in order to satisfy customers," said **Alibaba** Group CEO Daniel Zhang.

These types of partnerships allow global brands to use Alibaba's data and insights to maximize their local offers.

The points of differentiation and the focus on specific audience groups

Without knowing your audience and what makes them tick, you cannot differentiate among specific consumer groups.

Types of **social media** activity depend on age group, occupation, income, lifestyle and even political affiliations, so knowing these points of differentiation is crucial when selecting the best mobile apps.

To give an example, in the first quarter of 2020, Tencent's **WeChat** had over 1.2 billion monthly active users, according to data from Statista. That transformed WeChat into one of the leading social networks in the world.

For any brand reason, this would be enough to incorporate the platform into their digital marketing strategy. However, an engaging WeChat campaign will also consider the points of differentiation within this audience.

In 2019, only 4.3 percent of WeChat users were more than 46 years old, so the platform is not for brands that want to reach baby boomers.

Moreover, 28.3 percent of WeChat users in China were between 25 and 30 years old (**millennials**), so WeChat is a great tool to reach that generation.

Additionally, **76 percent of its users have a college degree**, and **83 percent of WeChat users are on the app for work**.

This data clearly shows that brands trying to reach highly educated, city-dwelling millennials should advertise on WeChat.

Additional data like who is into gamification elements also gives brands an important trajectory for their strategies.

In 2018, **China Internet Watch** reported that 81 percent of WeChat users played mini-games. Consequently, brands can incorporate gamification elements in their digital marketing strategies to make the marketing experience more engaging and fun.

Metrics matter

Monitoring social media metrics such as follower volume, reach, influence and online engagement helps brands produce content that will resonate with their base.

A good example is the beauty brand **Perfect Diary** , which built a cult following through **savvy digital marketing strategies that generated high levels of engagement**.

Perfect Diary teamed up with the Discovery Channel on an eyeshadow collection that featured **seven different eye palettes inspired by the eyes of cute animals**, and it was an instant success. But this is hardly surprising if we consider that Perfect Diary has championed social listening.

Metrics are a secret weapon that the company uses to understand consumers, promote new products, and launch recent collections. Informed decision-making is written into this brand's DNA.

Brands that cannot interpret and verify consumer data themselves can partner with the three data analysis giants in China: Baidu, Alibaba or **Tencent**. Each uses advanced analytics to capture insights that are helpful to their partners.

An example of this direction is the partnership between the French hospitality giant Accor and the Alibaba Group, which helped the brand develop apps and loyalty programs to attract Chinese consumers.

According to **Skift**, Alibaba is helping with the official launch of Accor's new loyalty program Accor Live Limitless

by offering digital marketing capabilities.

With China's booming app numbers, the process of finding the right one has become endlessly complicated.

Nevertheless, metrics, user demographics and reliable Chinese partners can help Western brands make better-informed decisions.

In the end, smart tactics are what help brands dominate China's massive social media landscape.

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