

SOFTWARE AND TECHNOLOGY

China restricts video game usage for minors

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The new rules state that people in China who are under 18 will be allowed to play video games one hour a day between 8 p.m. and 9 p.m. on weekends and holidays. Image credit: Alexey Savchenko

By KATIE TAMOLA

Gaming companies, brands and young people in China are responding to the new rule vastly limiting video game usage for minors.

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Under the new rule, those under the age of 18 in China will be allowed a total of three hours per week on weekends and holidays to play online video games. Chinese government officials laud the new rule as part of a continued effort to promote healthy physical and mental habits for children, while the country's gaming leaders, consumers and luxury brands are contemplating how to best adapt.

"The new rule could see games publishers attempt to try out differentiated business models that move away from a freemium model in a bid to recoup earnings," said Karinna Nobbs, co-CEO at digital fashion marketplace [The Dematerialised](#), London and affiliate professor of innovation [ESCP Europe](#).

Getting out of the game

China's National Press and Publication Administration has published new rules stating that people in China who are under 18 will be allowed to play video games one hour a day between 8 p.m. and 9 p.m. on weekends and holidays.

The restrictions apply to any devices with gaming capabilities, including phones, and gaming companies are prohibited from providing their services to minors outside of the specified hours. Gaming companies are also being asked to put verification systems in place to ensure the rules are being followed.

Minors will now go through an ID verification system that will require having only one account associated with their real name. This process will also be closely monitored by regulators.

Chinese officials are pivoting from the 2019 rules which allowed minors to play video games for up to 90 minutes a day.

Chinese technology conglomerate holding company Tencent is publicly complying with the new regulations.

"Tencent expressed its strong support and will make every effort to implement the relevant requirements of the Notice as soon as possible," the company said in a statement.

Earlier this year, in an attempt to comply with increased regulations, Tencent introduced a requirement for gamers to comply with facial recognition software to verify that they were adults.

In 2019, British fashion giant Burberry and Tencent partnered to develop social retail in China to support the store shopping experience.

The alliance meshed social media with retail to create digital and physical spaces for communities to interact, share and transact ([see story](#)).



Partnering with Tencent allowed Britain's Burberry to tap into the quickly growing social-retailing phenomenon in China. Image courtesy of Burberry

Tencent and NetEase, the second-biggest gaming company in China, have faced regulation challenges before. In 2018, China temporarily stopped approving new video game titles amid growing criticism of video games' lasting effects on children.

CNBC reported on Tuesday that shares of NetEase were down about 2.9 percent in afternoon trade in Hong Kong, while rival Tencent was down more than 3 percent earlier in the day but turned positive later in the day.

Although the new regulations are not necessarily ideal for these gaming organizations, analysts expect that the ramifications from the rules will be minimal, as the adult gaming population in China, and beyond, is still vast.

Gaming in China

Brands collaborations with gaming organizations in China do have a complex history, as regulations and ethical concerns continue to present challenges.



Honor of Kings character Yao in a skin developed exclusively by Burberry. Image credit: Burberry

Earlier this year, Burberry developed two exclusive designs for Chinese mobile game Honor of Kings, in a gamification push ([see story](#)). This would have been the game's first collaboration with a luxury brand, however, after Burberry expressed concerns over alleged forced labor practices in China's Xinjiang region, holdings company Tencent announced on Chinese social media platform Weibo that it had severed its video game partnership with Burberry ([see story](#)).

Despite regulation and ethical setbacks, brands are continuing toward gravitate to gaming partnerships, cognizant of the widespread appeal for Gen Z in China and across the world ([see story](#)).

Keeping up with the gaming trend, French fashion label Balenciaga and **Streamline Media Group** teamed up to

bridge the worlds of gaming and fashion, resulting in an interactive fashion-gaming experience, [Afterworld: The Age of Tomorrow](#).

While Balenciaga was not the first to incorporate interactive gaming into its brand, the launch marked the first time an international luxury fashion brand debuted a wholly digital in-game experience ([see story](#)).

As gaming companies adapt to continued restrictions, many remain cognizant that there are still ample opportunities and interested consumers within the gaming world.

"Rather than concentrating on other geographical markets, games publishers might focus promotional efforts on the 18 and older or [preparing] younger consumers to convert once they will have more freedom," Ms. Nobbs said.

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