

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

How fashion brands can craft an effective glocalization strategy

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Finding the right balance of manying global strategy and local cultural context is vital for the success of brands in China. Image credit: Valentino

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The China market can be hard to understand and navigate from a local and global perspective.

Cultural sensitivities when it comes to brand storytelling, the very quick changes in consumer demands and difficulties in **choosing the right ambassador** can all lead to challenges in picking the right marketing strategies.

Additionally, the unforeseeable and ongoing COVID-19 lockdown measures in the region are shifting consumer consumption patterns, with a growing focus on sustainability and digitalization.

Live-streaming ecommerce, for example, doubled in popularity in 2020 and has only grown more popular ever since.

Despite these changes, many international companies that are trying to break into the Chinese market are still using dated marketing tactics.

China is set to become the largest luxury market by 2025. And for many luxury names, **the Chinese market accounts for 40 or 50 percent in shares of revenue**. Therefore, brands now need to specialize their strategies in order to resonate with their Chinese consumers and drive business locally.

Here, I look at what the four components are that make the perfect match when it comes to nuanced, value-based marketing.

Diversity and inclusion matter

Like in the West, diversity and inclusion have become predominant messages to deliver in marketing strategies.

Making sure that everyone has a seat at the table is not only key for the people working for the company itself but also for the ambassadors that are representing the brand.

Recently, established luxury players such as Valentino as well as names including Pandora and adidas have all looked toward executives with prior Asia Pacific experience, indicating the **trend of China-fluent hires** stepping up a

gear in 2022.

This is noticeable in more diverse celebrity and ambassador appointments, too.

Louis Vuitton leveraged Chinese Olympic Gold-medalist [Eileen Gu](#) for its December 2021 Twist campaign. She inspired the younger generation through her performance on the world stage.

Meanwhile, Alexander Wang collaborated with Liang Xiaoqing best known as China's most popular "auntie" model even though she is only in her thirties to connect with middle-aged or elderly women.

Gen Z as the next motor of domestic economic growth

Born between 1997 and 2011, Gen Z makes up about 15 percent of China's population, but its influence goes far beyond this percentage. It has the fastest spending growth, set to rise fourfold to 16 trillion yuan (\$2.4 trillion) by 2035, according to China Renaissance.

That being said, Gen Z is also the most informed, demanding and impulsive demographic, which can make it difficult to understand as a consumer group.

Because of their growing economic power, many luxury brands have taken concerted action to reach out to Gen Z shoppers. The most common examples of this are collaborations between luxury brands and young Chinese celebrities or influencers, such as [Valentino's](#) 520 campaign with brand ambassador Lay Zhang and singer Jessica Jung.

Moreover, as Gen Zers place more value on self-expression through creative cultural products, understanding the "China Chic" trend is important.

A studio founded by designer [Feng Shixiong in Sanxingdui](#), which designs new products based off the Sanxingdui ruins, is a prime example of promoting traditional culture.

An authentic, green footprint

The pandemic has increased concerns around sustainability, shifting Chinese consumers' perspective and priorities on the issue.

[According to a study by Credit Suisse Research](#) Institute in February 2022, Gen Z and millennial consumers in emerging economies are more environmentally conscious, more likely to buy sustainable products, and are willing to pay more to ensure a sustainable process for these products.

In my opinion, the younger generation has proven to be more loyal than their elders, meaning C-suite leaders need to understand what they want to retain them in the long term: tangible development and commitment when it comes to sustainability, ethics and real transparency.

A notable example of this is [Icicle](#), a Chinese fashion brand whose sustainable philosophy is deeply rooted in Chinese culture. A symbiotic relationship with the natural environment has been guiding the brand's approach to fashion since 1997. It is this commitment to sustainability, transparency and local culture that has laid a solid foundation for the label.

Finally, it is not just enough to talk it

Today's consumers do their research when purchasing items and pay special attention to a company's manufacturing process and sustainability.

[According to a report](#) on China's sustainable consumption of clothes, up to 83 percent of responders chose environmentally friendly fabric when buying clothes.

Unlike in the West, the Asia-Pacific region is putting technical product marketing creating, maintaining and enabling sales on competitive content at the forefront.

With this in mind, domestic names are winning the race as the rise of Guochao sparks a new interest for homegrown products that use local ingredients.

Hangzhou-based beauty brand Florasis is doing a great job at using local elements, turning to ancient Chinese recipes of flower essences and herbal extracts for its cosmetics.

Ultimately, this region does not follow a one-fits-all marketing approach. Brands must first understand what Chinese consumers need to resonate with them and drive business locally.

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