

MOBILE

Montblanc increases Chinese awareness with WeChat gamification

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Montblanc's Meisterstück 90th anniversary nib

By JEN KING

Germany's Montblanc, maker of writing instruments and watches, is aiming to increase engagement among Chinese consumers through an in-application game on social network WeChat.

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Luxury Daily

With approximately 396 million active users per month, WeChat is seen as a gateway to interacting with Chinese consumers on mobile. Montblanc's game, "Daban," is being hailed as an unprecedented move by a luxury brand as it goes beyond the traditional touchpoints used on the social channel.

"On top of the messaging features, WeChat provides brands with more and more interesting ways to engage with consumers, making it a compelling mobile communication/CRM tool," said Pablo Mauron, general manager China at [Digital Luxury Group](#), Shanghai. "Contrary to Weibo, WeChat is a 'closed' social network where only users' peers can follow one's activity; thus giving Chinese netizens more privacy and allowing them to control their image.

"This explains why WeChat has become hugely popular in China and is now the go-to

place for interactions between users," he said. "The most important challenge on WeChat is to drive people's attention beyond the personal communication features such as the text/voice messaging. Brands can push messages to their followers but don't have a way to be visible directly in the social feed of WeChat called 'Moments' which is reserved to the end users.

"The game is actually an interactive module developed in WeChat to provide fun and entertainment to the community while educating it about Montblanc values. Participants get a chance to win by submitting their profile and being rated by the community, it will generate a spontaneous word-of-mouth from the users sharing their results and inviting their friends to participate, in a place where brands don't have access."

Montblanc worked with Digital Luxury Group to develop the in-app WeChat game.

Who's the boss?

With an established audience on WeChat, Montblanc launched the in-app game, Daban, on May 19.

The game promotes Montblanc's interpretation of Daban, which directly translates from Chinese to mean "big boss." In this case, the brand is promoting its ideal Daban, meaning a consumer who "behaves in line with the brand's values of elegance, sophistication and leadership," according to Montblanc.

To play, Montblanc followers must submit photographs of themselves or a friend. Once uploaded, the community of Montblanc enthusiasts will rate the photo to determine if the individual possesses the characteristics of a Daban.



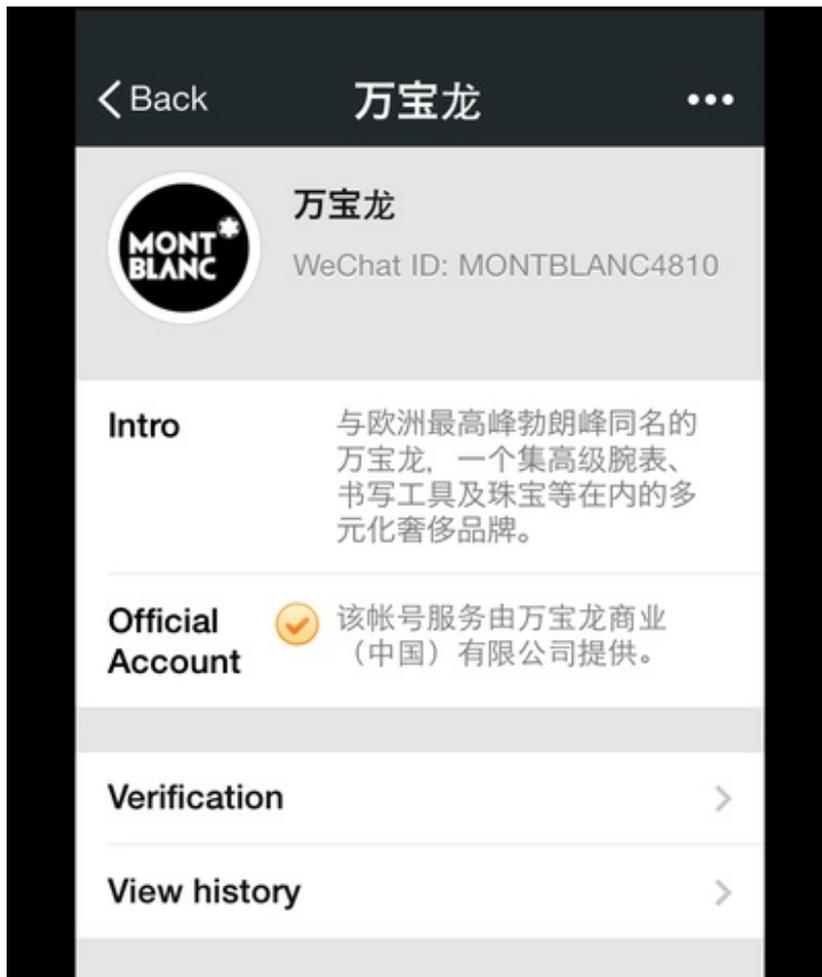
Montblanc's Daban on WeChat for iPhone

Although simple in format, the mixture of user-generated content and follower involvement is a first for a luxury brand on WeChat. Since Montblanc launched its WeChat, the brand has been sure to integrate the channel into its Chinese strategy.

Montblanc also used WeChat to interact with Chinese consumers through its 90th anniversary Meisterstück campaign (see story). The writing instrument collection is referred to as Daban in Chinese, showing cohesion between the anniversary campaign and its continuation with the in-app game.

The brand also looked to its WeChat audience when planning its Black & White exhibition

April 22 at the Shanghai Exhibition Center. Followers used WeChat to register for the event and received customized electronic invitations created by the app.



Montblanc's profile on WeChat

More than 1,000 registrations for the 4-day Black & White exhibition were generated by WeChat.

Montblanc continued to integrate WeChat into the exhibition as well. The attendees' experience was enhanced through the use of QR codes located throughout the events space where guests could access additional multimedia content via WeChat.

Chit chat

When interacting with different consumer bases, brands must look to regional social platforms to be noticed appropriately.

For example, London department store Harrods increased its exposure in China by being the first British retailer to launch a WeChat social media account that conveys its latest content and special offers to Chinese consumers.

Harrods built off the success of its Weibo blog to reach more consumers as China continues to be a power player in the luxury market. Through the use of local social media platforms, brands and retailers are able to appeal to local sensibilities ([see story](#)).

Similar to how WeChat works well with Chinese consumers, social platform VK appeals to Russians and other groups in the surrounding area.

Italian jeweler Bulgari used its London hotel and residence property to introduce its newly created account on popular Russian language social networking site VK.

As the second largest social networking site after Facebook, VK will likely drive interest in Bulgari Hotels. Although VK has three official languages, English, Russian and Ukrainian, the site also has over 70 unofficial languages that will only help to increase Bulgari Hotels' exposure and possibly bookings ([see story](#)).

Building the Daban game directly into WeChat may yield a better, more trusted, response than had Montblanc done the same with a stand-alone iOS or Android app.

"It is a bit safer because WeChat is tied to people, not random user alias," said Brian Buchwald, cofounder/CEO of [Bomod](#), New York. "WeChat is more of a one-to-one mechanism, not like a YouTube or mass broadcasting.

"[But,] we've seen that the Chinese consumer has to believe that they can actually win," he said. "Consumers are turned off if it's a bait and switch with nothing else in return and the more expensive the prize, the less likely they think it is real.

"[For] consumers that don't know the value, or are just being introduced to Montblanc, there can be questions of authenticity."

Final Take

Jen King, editorial assistant on [Luxury Daily](#), New York

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