

MARKETING CAMPAIGNS FOCUS ON CHINESE TRAVELERS



According to the predictions of many experts, the 21st century will see the rise of the Chinese empire. Only recently the media company IHS predicted that the Chinese economy will overtake that of the USA in 2024, to become the world's largest economy. While such predictions have not always been correct in the past, there is no doubt that China will play a very huge role in political and economic arenas of the world in the coming decades.

The continued growth in the importance of the Chinese economy has seen an increase in its significance as a source of tourism. **Currently, China is one of the world's largest sources of tourism market, with Chinese people spending over \$102 billion on international trips.** The destinations range from Europe to the Pacific, North Africa, the Americas and the Middle East. As a result, travel businesses and National Tourist Organizations (NTOs) have started targeting Chinese tourists, in a bid to get a share of the country's huge spending in the global tourism market. For example, Eurostar, a European train service, is currently targeting Chinese tourists through a campaign of Weibo, a rather popular social media website in China that has an average of 150 million users a month.

This campaign is one of the growing trends where travel businesses around the world are encouraging the interactions of customers with their brands using social media platforms. The Eurostar campaign mainly targets the Chinese students residing in Europe, and it is centered on three main destinations of the train service: Paris, Brussels and London.

Currently, China is experiencing a growth in its middle-class, leading to an increase in the number of well off citizens with disposable income. This has led to numerous destinations in the world reaching out to Chinese travelers - especially in Europe.

Just recently, the European Union lowered the criteria for East Asian nations' travelers, in an attempt to woo more Asians into Europe. However, Britain is one of the best examples of how European destinations are embracing Chinese travelers. In the spring of 2014, the NTO representing the UK launched a campaign dubbed "China Welcome", in an initiative to attract more Chinese tourists to the British Isles.

While travel companies around the world might be tempted to rush and tap into this lucrative market, it is important they understand that Chinese trends are different from those of the western countries. For example, China's social media platforms are different from those of the west, with Weibo, WeChat and QQ being the most popular social media in China. Using tools such as Twitter and Facebook might thus fail to produce the required results.

Consequently, tourist boards around the world are using social medial platforms such as Weibo to target Chinese tourists. One particular example is the Visit California tourism promotion, which recently recruited Gao Yuanyuan, a Chinese actress, to be its ambassador. The actress has at least 21 million fans on Weibo, and she has posted photographs of her visit to California on the social site, a trip that was organized by Visit California promotion.

With 1.3 billion Chinese citizens, travel businesses and destinations around the world that are able to attract Chinese tourist can get access to a very vast tourism market.

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