

THE IMPACTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON CHINA

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Executive Summary

1. Social media channels continue to grow in popularity across China. For the over 629 million active social media accounts as at January 2015, the use of social media has become a key way for individuals and businesses to communicate.
2. In addition to having the world's biggest internet user base of 649 million people (as at January 2015), China has the world's most active social media population.
3. China's population has adopted mobile internet use as well, with 557 million accessing the net via smart phones or other wireless devices according to The China Internet Network Information Centre.
4. China's social media sector is very fragmented and local. Each social media and e-commerce platform has at least two major local players: in micro blogging (微博) and in social networking. These players have different strengths, areas of focus, and, often, geographic priorities.
5. In January 2015, WeChat launched a series of brand advertisements on news feeds. It is now the new darling of social media in China. However for western brands, Weibo is still the best way to engage the Chinese social media as WeChat's official account is only available to registered companies in China.
6. In China, social media platforms are rapidly integrating native e-commerce capabilities while those established in the e-commerce space are getting into the social platform business.
7. Chinese consumers are more likely to consider buying a product if it is mentioned in the social media or recommended by a friend or acquaintance on a social media site.
8. China-based brands recognise the value of user-generated content and are embracing social influence on their e-commerce platforms. This is leading to an

increasingly aggressive battle between dominant players, such as Tencent and Alibaba, and the crossing of each other's territory.

9. China's vibrant social media scene has dramatically changed the country's media landscape but both remain tools of the Chinese Communist Party. Two instant messaging apps and three new media platforms have been launched by the Chinese government in 2014 as the latest mediums for propaganda.
10. On the other hand, the Chinese government continues to keep tight rein on both traditional and new media to avoid potential subversion of its authority. Proper management of internet contents is thus needed to guarantee the orderly spread of information online, national security and social stability.