

CHINESE TRAVELERS GO DIGITAL



What the 900 million e-commerce consumers in China like to eat, what they want to drive, where they want to live, and how they want to work are just a few of the things that are in flux as a new generation of tech-savvy consumers makes its presence felt. Nowhere is this sentiment change as apparent as in the way Chinese travel.

Chinese travelers are no longer tourists or visitors to foreign lands; they have become digital wanderers searching for authentic experiences, using social media platforms as their ad hoc travel agencies. **Tradition no longer shapes the itinerary; online influencers do.**

New reports from China Trading Desk track real-time changing consumer preferences in China and reveal some interesting trends:

The demographic profile of Chinese travelers is changing significantly. Young urban professionals from top Chinese cities still make up the majority of travelers, but there has been a notable increase in female travelers. This shift requires a change in marketing strategies. According to a recent survey, 59% of outbound travelers are female, with a significant portion being young, with 64.2% aged between 18 and 29.

Chinese travelers increasingly use digital channels for quick and spontaneous booking, with 68% preferring to book less than one month in advance. This represents a shift from past travel planning habits.

Social media platforms and travel apps have become essential tools for young digital nomads. Xiaohongshu and Douyin (TikTok) are leading the way and have become popular sources for travel inspiration and planning. An impressive 72% of 18- to 29-year-olds prefer Xiaohongshu, indicating that the platform is not just a collection of travel stories but also a platform for creating and planning immersive, culturally rich travel experiences. These digital platforms offer a mix of peer reviews, instant bookings, and visual storytelling, enabling Chinese tourists to design itineraries that align with their desire for authenticity and adventure.

The survey has highlighted an interesting trend in travel planning: a shift towards personalization and spontaneity. Chinese travelers seek unique experiences that offer a deeper connection with their destination instead of simply visiting famous landmarks for photo opportunities.

This desire for authentic experiences is supported by travel apps that provide tailored recommendations based on user preferences and last-minute deals that cater to the traveler's impulse for spontaneity.

Destination preferences have evolved to prioritize culturally rich experiences, with countries like Singapore, South Korea, and Europe being top choices. Younger travelers in China often prefer in-country trips, which provide a change of scenery without the planning and budgeting required for trips abroad.

Travel options within China can be fun for younger Chinese travelers, marking a departure from past norms.

This shift towards immersive cultural encounters shapes a more nuanced approach to

travel promotion and engagement. Marketers need to understand the travelers they are targeting and tailor messages they will be receptive to.

China will likely always represent a massive and exciting market, albeit one that can be difficult to monitor. Success begins with understanding changing patterns and tastes.

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