

Hype-machine: China's brand collaborations tapping into unlikely pairings, local pride and streetwear for success

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Beauty brands wanting to create hype among China's young consumers' should tap into unusual partnerships, national pride, and the popularity of streetwear to get

China's Gen Z and millennial consumers' quest to seek out novel and unusual products are fuelling a swiftly evolving culture of innovative collaborations between brands.

Brands, on the other hand, [use collaborations](#) to get a wider reach and greater impact while boosting consumer engagement.

"Collaborations continue to be a great vehicle to tap consumer interests in China. And the more unlikely the pairing, the more buzz it creates," said founder and CEO of market research firm Beautystreams, Lan Vu.

Vu highlighted the recent collaboration between carmaker Volvo and condom brand Durex as an example of a bizarre partnership that generated a lot of interest.

The two brands collaborated on a futuristic short film that questioned if the rapid development of technology would ultimately cause people to lose touch with reality.

The film's message of authentic connection amid cutting edge technology struck a chord with Chinese consumers, drawing 130 million views on Weibo and turning its hashtag into a trending topic on the platform.

In the beauty space, popular colour cosmetic brand Marie Dalgar partnered with the Louvre Museum, the world's largest art museum to create a series of products.

The art-inspired collection, created for Marie Dalgar's Super Brand Day on Tmall, included 'winged' lipsticks based on one of the Louvre's most iconic pieces, Winged Victory of Samothrace.

Local pride and streetwear style

Many successful collaborations have tapped into China's local heritage to tap into the widespread civic nationalism.

Free from the hang-ups of the generations that came before them, more young consumers are expressing a preference for made-in-China products.

As such, international brands may find that collaborations with local partners can be an effective route to establish a connection in the local market.

"The recent collaboration between Chinese makeup brands Yumee and Asian-American fashion designer Jason Wu, illustrates this pride perfectly. Yumee claims to be a beauty brand proudly created in China, and for their first collaboration they choose to work with the designer who shares the brand's roots," said Qiuwan Song, senior market analyst, Beautystreams.

As brands seek to target millennial and Gen Z consumers, collaborations with streetwear brands remained 'hot' in China, said Vu.

She highlighted luxury K-beauty brand Amorepacific, which recently jumped on this trend by partnering with the Italian label OffWhite to launch a special edition box in China, Korea and Japan.

As Chinese consumers now expect to be entertained and amused regularly by brand collaborations, and brands only happy to comply, the market can expect to see more of them.

However, brands risk having their initiatives being lost in a sea of collaborations and more 'mega-collaborations' – collaborations between big brands – emerging.

"In the current era of mega-collaborations, straightforward one-on-one brand partnerships may no longer be enough to stand out from the crowd," said Vu.

To counter this, brands can look to Chinese fashion label Peacebird, which teamed up with six domestic indie brands for its SuperChina campaign.

"Designers from each brand taking their signature elements to create a capsule collection aimed at Gen Z consumers. The SuperChina campaign also invited creative professionals from a variety of backgrounds interpret the theme in their unique personal styles," she elaborated.

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