



Guide

**Capturing the chinese undergraduate
student market : strategies for
effective higher education marketing**

SUMMARY

Introduction	2
Why undergraduate students?	2
Challenges and opportunities in the Chinese higher education market.	2
Understanding the Chinese Higher Education Market	4
Overview of the current state of the Chinese higher education market	4
Analysis of the trends and factors influencing the market	4
The importance of not overlooking parents in your communication	6
The Role of social media in China Higher Education Marketing	
Overview of the importance of social media in China marketing	7
Analysis of the most popular social media platforms for promoting undergraduate programs to Chinese students	7
Case study: Rennes school of Business	8
«We want You» Lead generation campaign	9
Best practices for developing effective social media campaigns for recruiting Chinese students	
Know Your Target Audience	10
Know Their Customer Journey	10
How to leverage your Social Media to Drive Targeted Traffic in Chinese Higher Education	11
About Dekuple China	12

INTRODUCTION

Why undergraduate students?

Chinese undergraduate students represent a growing and lucrative market for higher education institutions. **As per the 2022 research data ran by KANTAR, at least 70% of the intentional study abroad population are at the undergraduate stage.**

In recent years, the competition to enrol in top universities in China has become increasingly fierce. According to data from the Ministry of Education, the enrolment rate for undergraduate programs in China was only 24.9% in 2020. Meanwhile, the number of students taking the gaokao, the national college entrance exam, has remained high, with over 10 million students taking the exam each year. This means that most students who take the gaokao will not be able to enrol in a top university in China.

In contrast, **studying abroad has become an increasingly popular option for Chinese students seeking high-quality education and career opportunities.** By studying abroad, Chinese students can gain access to a wider range of academic programs, cultural experiences, and international job opportunities, which can enhance their competitiveness in the global job market. Promoting undergraduate programs to prospective Chinese students presents both challenges and opportunities. **Digital marketing has become a popular approach to attract Chinese students.**

Challenges and opportunities in the Chinese higher education market

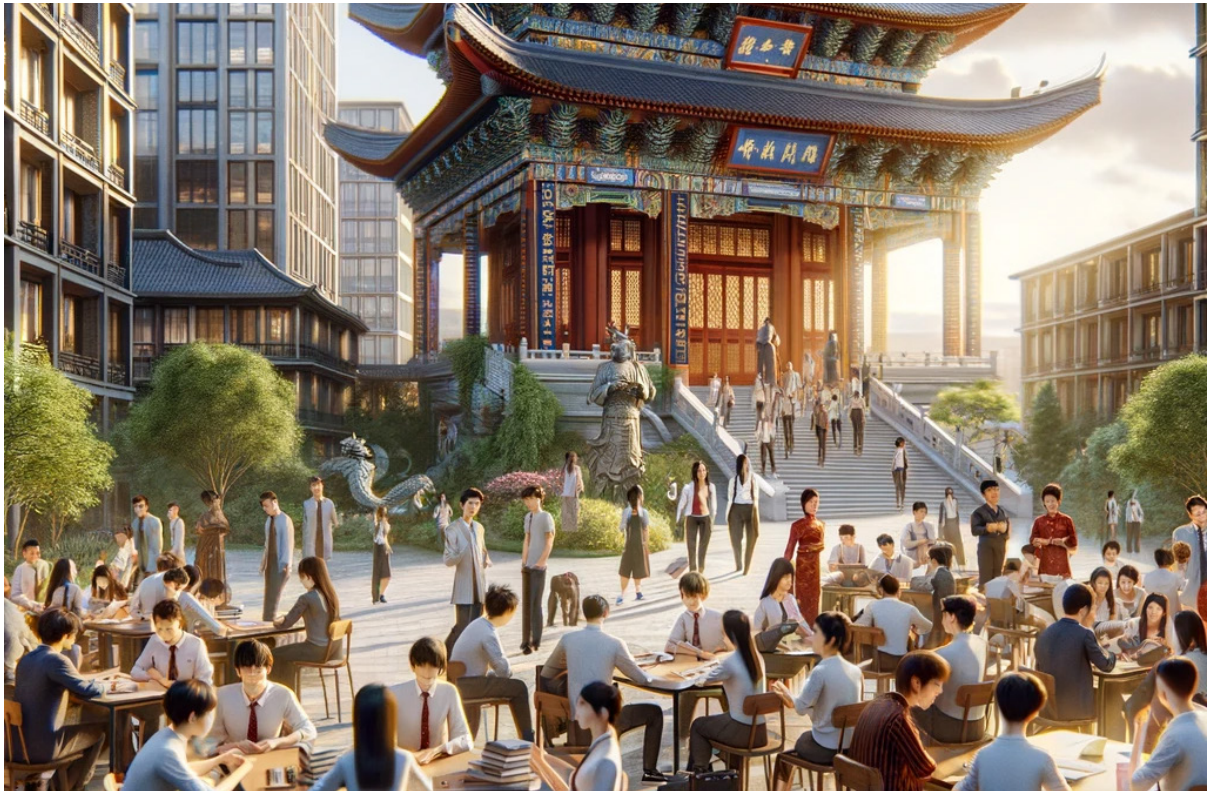
Digital marketing has become an essential tool for universities to promote their undergraduate programs, especially when targeting international students. With the widespread use of the internet and social media, prospective students and their parents are increasingly turning to online sources to gather information about universities and their programs. Digital marketing allows universities to reach their target audience more effectively by using channels such as social media, search engine optimization (SEO), KOLs and content marketing to promote their programs.

One of the biggest advantages of digital marketing is that it provides universities with the ability to showcase their reputation, which is a critical factor for many students and their parents when choosing a university. By creating a strong online presence, universities can highlight their strengths and achievements, share testimonials and reviews from current and past students, and promote their school values.

Moreover, **digital marketing provides universities with the ability to tailor their messaging and content to specific target audiences, which is crucial when promoting undergraduate programs to international students.**

For example, universities can create specific content addressed to either parents or students and disseminate them on social media platforms that matter to the targeted audience. Digital marketing also enables universities to track and analyse the effectiveness of their marketing campaigns, allowing them to make data-driven decisions to improve their marketing efforts.

Moreover, although certain educational institutions have already established strong reputations and may not need additional advertising, in the current competitive market, the frequency with which prospective students or parents come across your school can significantly influence their decision-making process.



As per the 2022 research data ran by KANTAR, at least 70% of the intentional study abroad population are at the undergraduate stage.

UNDERSTANDING THE CHINESE HIGHER EDUCATION MARKET

Overview of the current state of the Chinese higher education market

As of 2023, the Chinese higher education market has demonstrated remarkable progress and achievements. Chinese higher education institutions (HEIs) have been consistently producing a larger number of graduates compared to the combined total of graduates from the United States and India. **With an annual output of approximately 8 million graduates, this figure has witnessed substantial growth and is expected to increase by an extraordinary 300 percent by the year 2030.**

The Chinese higher education market has experienced substantial growth and is of significant size. In 2015, the market was valued at 1.6 trillion yuan, and by 2020, it was projected to reach an impressive 2.9 trillion yuan. In 2021, the market size specifically for higher education reached US\$17.91 billion, with further growth anticipated in the future.

These developments underscore the immense scale and potential of the Chinese higher education market, establishing it as a major force in the global education landscape. It highlights the commitment of Chinese HEIs to meet the educational needs of a vast student population and presents abundant opportunities for continued expansion and advancement in the years ahead.

Analysis of the trends and factors influencing the market

There are various factors driving the growth of the Chinese higher education market.

- **Increasing Demand for Higher Education:** China has experienced a significant increase in demand for higher education due to its growing population, expanding middle class, and the importance placed on obtaining a degree for career prospects.
- **Government Policies and Reforms:** Government policies and reforms play a crucial role in shaping the higher education market. **China's government has been implementing various initiatives to improve the quality of higher education, enhance university rankings, and align curricula with industry needs.** These policies and reforms will continue to shape the higher education landscape in China.
- **Internationalization:** China has been actively promoting internationalization in its higher education system by attracting international students and fostering partnerships with foreign universities. This trend is expected to continue, as it promotes cultural exchange, enhances the quality of education, and strengthens global connections.

• **Industry-Academia Collaboration:** Collaboration between higher education institutions and industries is gaining importance worldwide, and China is no exception. By fostering strong ties with industries, universities can align their programs with the needs of the job market, offer internships and practical training opportunities, and enhance graduates' employability.



THE IMPORTANCE OF NOT OVERLOOKING PARENTS IN YOUR COMMUNICATION

When targeting Chinese students for overseas undergraduate programs, it is crucial not to overlook the role of parents. **Chinese parents play a significant role in the decision-making process and hold a strong influence over their children's educational choices.** Engaging with parents and addressing their concerns can greatly enhance the appeal of an educational institution. The reputation of the school and future job prospects is one factor but another key aspect to consider is assuring parents about the safety and security of the school environment.

Parents naturally worry about sending their children to unfamiliar environments far from home, so it is essential to alleviate their anxieties. By demonstrating that the chosen school is a safe and secure environment, educational institutions can build trust and reassure parents. Emphasizing campus security measures, robust student support services, and the availability of resources such as counseling, health services, and emergency protocols is crucial. Sharing information about the local community, the city's reputation for safety, and the institution's track record in ensuring student well-being can further alleviate concerns. Additionally, highlighting success stories and testimonials from Chinese students provides reassurance to parents.



By addressing parental concerns and focusing on the safety measures and support systems in place, educational institutions can strengthen their appeal to Chinese parents. This approach not only installs confidence in parents' decision to choose an overseas undergraduate program but also contributes to the overall academic and personal success of Chinese students. **Creating a safe and nurturing environment for students not only attracts more Chinese students but also ensures a positive educational experience for them.**

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN CHINA HIGHER EDUCATION MARKETING

Overview of the current state of the Chinese higher education market

Social media has become a crucial element in digital marketing in China. **With over 800 million internet users, China is the world's largest social media market.** Social media platforms such as **WeChat/Weixin, Douyin, Weibo, Xiaohongshu, and Toutiao** are popular for marketing in China. In fact, social media is a more significant phenomenon in China than it is in other countries, including the United States, making it essential for anyone trying to engage Chinese consumers.

Percentage of internet users aged 16 to 64 who use social media channels to find info about Brands and Products

	CHINA	FRANCE	USA	UK
Any Kind of Social Media Platform	79.9%	57%	62.4%	55.8%
Q&A Sites	20.9%	15.7%	19.2%	15.5%
Forums and Messages boards	19.9%	12.8%	13.7%	12.5%
Messaging and Live Chat Services	22.1%	8.1%	10.3%	9.0%
Micro-blogs	24.3%	5.2%	7.3%	6.4%
Vlogs	15.7%	5.5%	8.4%	7.2%
Online Pinboards	11.8%	4.5%	10.3%	6.8%

Analysis of the most popular social media platforms for promoting undergraduate programs to Chinese students

When promoting undergraduate programs to Chinese students, it's crucial to select the right social media platforms that align with the target audience and their position in the marketing funnel. By carefully choosing platforms, universities can effectively engage with students and parents at different stages of their decision-making process. Tailoring content and engagement strategies based on the specific personas ensures effective communication and resonates with their interests and needs. Whether it's raising awareness, sparking interest,

providing detailed program information, or guiding students through the application and enrolment process, the right platform choice allows universities to connect with potential students in a meaningful way. Understanding the unique features and user behaviours of each platform is key to maximizing impact and successfully promoting undergraduate programs to Chinese students. Regular monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation of strategies based on platform performance and market trends are essential for a successful marketing campaign.

CASE STUDY



"We Want You" lead generation campaign

COMPANY

Rennes School of Business is a leading French business school located in the city of Rennes, in the Brittany region of France. It was founded in 1990 and has since grown to become one of the top business schools in France and Europe, offering a range of undergraduate, graduate, and executive education programs in management, finance, marketing, and other business-related fields. The school is accredited by EQUIS, AACSB, and AMBA, which are the three leading international accreditations for business schools.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rennes School of Business (RSB) faced the challenge of engaging with their alumni, current students, and prospective students in a meaningful way. To address this challenge, they launched the «We Want You» lead generation campaign on WeChat. The campaign aimed to stimulate interest in RSB, evoke fond memories of the school, and provide support and guidance to new students.

星期五



10位朋友读过
【校友汇】William Lai - 如果可以，我想让欧洲看到台湾的设计

[项目介绍]MSc国际人力资源管理硕士
1位朋友读过

[项目介绍]MSc全球商务管理硕士
2位朋友读过

8 Jan 2021



7位朋友读过
【校友汇】雷恩高商 93届校友 Laurent CLAQUIN, 开云集团 (KERING) 美洲公...

[项目介绍]MSc国际奢侈品和品牌形象管理硕士
3位朋友读过

[项目介绍]MSc金融数据与人工智能硕士
1位朋友读过

4 Dec 2020



EFMD Awards
EQUIS Re-Accreditation to

【项目】申请成功就可以本硕连续的HBBA项目
1位朋友读过

【校友汇】Vincent 王冲: 雷恩高商的国际化与包容可以让人...

【校园】你未来的校园是什么样? 在线虚拟参观一下先!

CHALLENGE

The main challenge was to engage with alumni, current students, and prospective students in a meaningful way. The campaign needed to encourage them to share their experiences related to RSB and create a sense of community and support among students.

GOAL

The goal of the «We Want You» campaign was to stimulate the desire to attend RSB, polish old memories of RSB, and help new students. The campaign aimed to create awareness of RSB among potential students and to position the school as a desirable destination for business education.

PROCESS

The campaign process for the «We Want You» campaign on WeChat was as follows:

- RSB's official WeChat account released a post titled «I want you.» The post encouraged alumni to share their unforgettable moments and experiences during their time at RSB. It also encouraged current students to share tips, advice, and insights to help new students navigate their academic journey at RSB. As an incentive, participants were offered school-related souvenirs for sharing the post within the alumni WeChat group. Additionally, potential students were welcome to ask any questions they had about RSB.
- A follow-up post was released to summarize the shared stories, advice, and questions received from the previous post. Potential students were motivated to share their own experiences by offering them incentives. These incentives served as a source of motivation for prospective students to actively participate and contribute to the campaign.

RESULTS

The «We Want You» campaign on WeChat was highly successful in engaging with the target audience. Alumni enthusiastically shared their experiences, reminiscing about their time at RSB and highlighting the positive impact the school had on their lives. Current students actively participated by providing helpful tips and advice to incoming students, fostering a supportive environment within the RSB community.

Moreover, the campaign attracted significant interest from prospective students who actively sought information and asked questions about RSB.

This engagement demonstrated the campaign's effectiveness in generating awareness and interest among potential students. The success of the campaign showcased the importance of leveraging social media marketing, specifically WeChat, for educational institutions. WeChat provided a platform for RSB to reach and engage with their audience effectively, driving participation and fostering a sense of connection among students and alumni.

CONCLUSION

The «We Want You» campaign served as a testament to the power of a well-executed digital marketing initiative. RSB successfully utilized WeChat to engage alumni, current students, and prospective students, resulting in increased awareness, a strong sense of community, and a boost in RSB's reputation as a leading business school. This case study highlights the significance of social media marketing for educational institutions and underscores the positive outcomes that can be achieved through thoughtful and engaging digital campaigns.

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BEST PRACTICES FOR DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS FOR RECRUITING CHINESE STUDENTS.

Developing effective social media campaigns is crucial for universities aiming to recruit Chinese students. To create impactful campaigns, it is important to follow key steps that align with the needs and preferences of the target audience. This chapter will outline three essential steps to effectively reach your prospective students. By implementing these practices, universities can optimize their social media strategies and effectively engage with Chinese students throughout their decision-making process.

Know Your Target Audience

Understanding the characteristics, interests, and aspirations of both Chinese students and their parents is the first step in developing an effective social media campaign. By conducting thorough market research and gaining insights into their preferences, universities can tailor their messaging, content, and approach to resonate with their specific needs. Knowing their demographics, cultural nuances, and academic interests helps universities create targeted content that captures their attention and builds a connection with both students and parents.

Know Their Customer Journey

Mapping out the customer journey of Chinese students and their parents is crucial for guiding their decision-making process. Recognizing that parents often play a significant role in the choice of undergraduate programs, universities should consider their perspective throughout the journey. By identifying the various stages they go through, such as awareness, consideration, and decision-making, universities can align their social media content to meet their specific needs at each stage. This involves providing relevant information, addressing common questions and concerns from both students and parents, showcasing the university's unique selling points, and highlighting success stories of alumni. Understanding the customer journey of both students and parents helps universities deliver the right message at the right time, increasing the likelihood of conversion.

How to leverage your Social Media to Drive Targeted Traffic in Chinese Higher Education

An effective strategy for business school recruitment in China requires a comprehensive approach that taps into the power of the web ecosystem. As Chinese students increasingly turn to online channels for information and decision-making, it is crucial for institutions to establish a strong online presence and drive targeted traffic to their programs. This section outlines a step-by-step process to leverage the web ecosystem and social media platforms to generate digital leads and acquire prospective students. By strategically utilizing social media platforms and implementing compelling campaigns, institutions can enhance their student acquisition efforts and successfully navigate the competitive landscape of Chinese higher education recruitment.

Step 1: web eco-system

Based on our experience, an effective strategy for generating digital leads for Business School recruitment in China is to direct traffic from Baidu, the dominant traditional search engine in mainland China, to a specific landing page or set of landing pages.

Although emerging in-APP searches are becoming a new way of seeking information, statistics on these searches have not yet been released by institutional sources. To drive traffic, we utilize your assets such as videos and images to create compelling advertisements on Baidu.

Our team then programs Baidu to target a specific audience and display the advertisements, which include a clear call-to-action that encourages potential students to provide their contact information.

We compile the contact information obtained from this strategy and provide it to you as a database of potential leads.

Step 2: Social Media Ecosystem

Dekuple China possesses the necessary knowledge and skills to produce content for every stage of the decision-making process, including awareness, consideration, and purchase. We can manage your social media accounts to cover the entire decision funnel, and integrate them with social CRM tools to facilitate lead generation. By conducting frequent community engagement activities, we can acquire data about your followers while adhering to China's GDPR-like PIPL regulations. Additionally, we can use these activities to confirm that you are targeting the appropriate audiences and uncovering leads from among them.

Step 3: Campaigns to drive traffic

After setting up your web ecosystem and social media presence, the next step is to drive traffic through strategic campaigns. With our expertise and knowledge of the higher education industry, we will execute campaigns at pivotal times throughout the year.

ABOUT US

Business partners for your marketing and IT teams.

We strongly believe that China requires a new type of agency. This is why we created an hybrid model of consulting + agency company that focus on tailor-made performance marketing by China for China.

As experts in the field of higher education marketing in China, we, at Dekuple China, have worked with numerous institutions to help them reach and engage with Chinese students. Through our years of experience and knowledge of the Chinese market, we understand the unique challenges that institutions face when it comes to promoting their undergraduate programs to Chinese students. That's why we believe we are well-positioned to provide valuable insights and recommendations through this white paper. Our goal is to help you navigate the complexities of the Chinese market and develop a strategic marketing plan that sets you apart from the competition.

ACT NOW

Differentiating your institution from competitors can be challenging, especially if you already have a high ranking or reputation. At Dekuple China, we understand the complexities of the Chinese market and the difficulties you may face. Our solution is to assist you in creating a well-executed marketing plan that will make you stand out from the crowd. We value the high standards you bring to your students and are committed to supporting you throughout the process. Our approach involves evaluating your digital performance, devising a strategic plan, and welcoming Chinese students. We prioritize providing high-quality services, which is why we offer customized plans designed specifically for higher education institutions seeking to enhance their reach to Chinese students. Let us help you elevate your school to the top of Chinese students' selection list.

DO YOU HAVE A PROJECT? ANY QUESTIONS? CONTACT US.



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