

# ***How Overseas Designer Brands A-COLD-WALL\* Enter the Chinese Market Through Cross-border Marketing?***

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**Abstract:** The concept of cooperative marketing was introduced into China at the end of the 20th century and was sought after by the marketing circle. Some enterprises join forces to implement cooperative marketing, which reduces the risk of competition and improves the efficiency of marketing. With the increasing market competition, the concept of cooperative marketing extends to the field of brand operation, and a new trend appears, which is called cross-border marketing. This paper analyzes how A-COLD-WALL\*, a British niche designer brand, enters the Chinese market and expands its brand influence through cross-border marketing cooperation with Converse. Compared with the overall marketing of enterprises, brand operation is a specific and special level, which determines that cross-border marketing is different from cooperative marketing although it originates from it.

**Keywords:** Cooperation, Marketing, Branding, Trend, Fashion

## **1. Introduction**

With the upgrading of "new retail", China's apparel industry is quietly undergoing a transformation. In the Chinese consumer market, the young group is becoming the main force. To meet the personalized and diversified consumer needs of this group is the focus of many brands. They are influenced by avant-garde programmes, in the clothing consumption concepts, awareness, and the way of change, so the new market demand is also changing, and China's apparel industry is constantly making new breakthroughs. China's clothing industry is constantly making new breakthroughs [1].

As one of the "clothing, food, housing and transport", clothing plays an important role in the life of residents. Under the background of steady growth of per capita disposable income and per capita consumption expenditure, China's apparel retail industry will have a good market prospect. 2022 per capita clothing consumption expenditure accounted for 5.6% of per capita consumption expenditure [2]. With the effective control of the epidemic, China's clothing market demand is expected to rise further.

Nowadays, "cross-border marketing" has become an essential skill for brands, and it has become one of the most important ways for brands to communicate with young people, often attracting the participation of many young people and creating hot topics, thus bringing the marketing effect of "1+1>2" for brands. The year 2022 has just passed. In the past 2022, cross-border co-branding is still one of the most important marketing methods for luxury brands to "break the circle", and it is also an important marketing tool for many international brands to enter the Chinese market. When this kind of cooperation is becoming more and more normalised, consumers are putting forward higher

demands for brand creativity, and international brands are facing greater challenges, what they need to further think about in the Chinese market is: how to really create memory for the brand through cross-border co-branding and establish a real emotional connection with more consumers, so as to truly penetrate into the Chinese market through cross-border marketing?

## **2. Methodology**

In the field of global fashion, understanding a brand's strategic penetration in a given market requires a comprehensive approach. This research, whose central case study is A-COLD-WALL\*'s foray into the Chinese market, is based on a multi-layered methodological framework that is structured to provide both depth and breadth in understanding the brand's efforts and the nuances of the Chinese market. The study began with a market analysis and conducted a longitudinal study to capture the evolution of consumer preferences in China over the past decade. Given China's geographical diversity, we conducted a region-specific analysis that describes the dynamics of the urban, semi-urban, and rural markets, providing a tailored understanding of different consumer groups.

### **2.1. Brand analysis**

Brand analysis, central to the research, assessed A-COLD-WALL\*'s pricing strategies alongside its sustainable fashion initiatives. In the digital age, where brands are increasingly communicating and engaging with their consumers through online platforms, our study extended to a deep dive into the brand's social media engagement. Major campaigns across platforms such as Douyin, Weibo, and Red were explored. In addition, an evaluation of more than 2,000 instances of user-generated content on Red offered insight into its growing traction in China.

### **2.2. Investigation of the marketing strategies**

Investigating A-COLD-WALL\*'s cross-border marketing strategies included examining its collaborations, particularly with Converse, and its efforts at Milan Fashion Week. Assessing feedback mechanisms provided insight into the brand's response to its Chinese clientele.

Converse is a sports footwear brand that is very popular among young people in China. It was founded in 1908, Moore Converse in the U.S. eastern Massachusetts city of Morden, created a factory specializing in the production of rubber shoes, and named after his own family name Converse, Converse brand was born. Converse is one of the world's top sports brands, but also the earliest advocate of global sports fashion and the most successful practitioner. A-COLD-WALL\*'s usual design style is more inclined to the mature workplace style, it chose to cross-border marketing with a sports shoe brand like Converse is a new innovative model for A-COLD-WALL\*, through the launch of co-branded products, the two different areas of the brand to link, not only can share the each other's user groups and markets, but also create new brand value, bringing a double harvest of word of mouth and performance.

### **2.3. Interviews with key stakeholders**

The primary data collection was enriched by in-depth interviews with key stakeholders such as opinion leaders, fashion bloggers and long-term customers. This was complemented by a study of post-purchase behavior and a comparison of A-COLD-WALL\*'s innovative strategies with market leaders. The trust and loyalty indices further strengthened our analysis.

## 2.4. Data analysis

Data triangulation, sourced from platforms such as JD.com and Hypebeast, was used to ensure in-depth information. Advanced statistical tools, including multivariate regression models and cluster analysis, improved the validity of our findings.

A detailed analysis of China's first A-COLD-WALL\* store in Beijing's Taikoo Li Sanlitun offered a tactile sense of the brand's aesthetic and market strategies. In addition to this, the research explored China's thriving streetwear scene and assessed the potential of brand accelerators, such as Tomorrow, in shaping the success trajectory of emerging brands [3]. All in all, this study is rooted in its intricate methodology and comprehensively examines the strategic strategy of A-COLD-WALL\* in the dynamic Chinese market. It is a testament to the complexity and potential of China's growing fashion field and provides a vital guide for brands interested in navigating the labyrinth.

## 2.5. Store Analysis

**Store Design and Aesthetics:** China's first A-COLD-WALL\* store, located in the Taikoo Li Sanlitun shopping district in Beijing, is analyzed. The store design reflects the brand's signature contemporary and utilitarian aesthetic, featuring wire frame construction dipped in volt blue with silver and white trim. Influenced by Samuel Ross' product design experience, the space combines modern and industrial styles, with steel walls, concrete floors, bespoke seating, end-to-end LED lightbox ceilings and LED signage.

**Product Presentation and Offers:** The store's product display was evaluated, and the clothes were carefully placed in shades of electric rust, slate gray, dusty neon yellow, cobalt blue, caramel and white. Exclusive launches and multi-sensory events are also part of the store's offer [4].

## 2.6. Market Dynamics

**China's Streetwear Scene:** An analysis of China's burgeoning streetwear market, which is heating up and attracting major brand collaborations [5].

**Brand Accelerators:** The role of brand accelerators such as Tomorrow, which offer cash, shared services and economies of scale, has been studied. The potential of this approach to turn high-potential young brands into success stories has been assessed.

In conclusion, this research with its extensive methodology provides a deep dive into A-COLD-WALL\*'s strategic efforts in the Chinese market. It serves as a comprehensive guide for brands trying to navigate China's complex fashion landscape.

## 3. Results

A brand analysis to determine the distribution of the consumers was applied, based on the data collected from the three official platforms of Red, Weibo and WeChat accounts, the distribution of gender, age and regional ratio of each account was obtained, and the evaluation of brand-consumer portrait was initially formed.

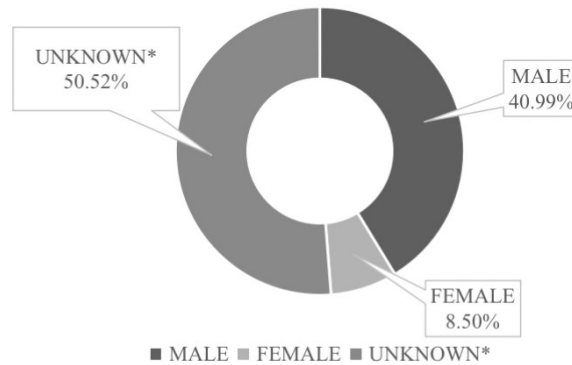


Figure 1: Gender distribution on WeChat.

Table 1: Gender distribution on WeChat.

Gender	Total users	Propotion
Unknown*	5,583	50.52%
Male	4,530	40.99%
Female	939	8.50%

As can be seen from Figure 1 and Table 1, it demonstrates the gender distribution of A-COLD-WALL\* on the platform of WeChat. It shows that the male audience accounted for 40.99% of the total, almost five times as many as the female audience, which appears that the audience's gender is mainly male.

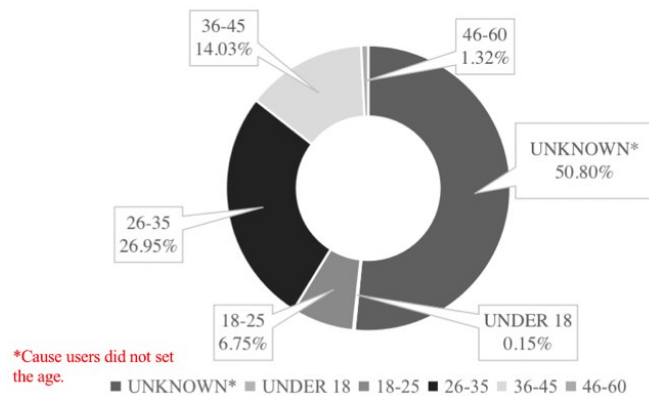


Figure 2: Age distribution on WeChat.

Table 2: Age distribution on WeChat.

Age	Total users	Propotion
Unknown*	5,614	50.80%
Under 18	17	0.15%
18-25	746	6.75%
26-35	2,978	26.95%
36-45	1,551	14.03%
46-60	146	1.32%

According to Figure 2 and Table 2, it contains the data of age distribution of A-COLD-WALL\* on the platform of WeChat, it displays that the audiences are concentrated in the 26-35 years old, which is in line with the brand's positioning for consumers to a certain extent. The avant-garde young people and middle-aged people can also accept the design style.

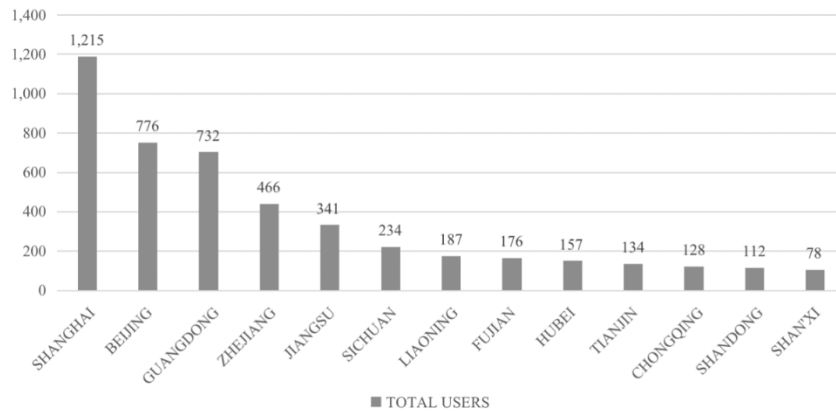


Figure 3: Key region distribution on WeChat.

As indicated in Figure 3, it presents the key region distribution of A-COLD-WALL\* on the platform of WeChat. Shanghai, as a first-tier international city in China, has stronger consumption ability and fashion cognition compared with other cities, also the brand pricing is more easily accepted by consumers in Shanghai, thus it is obvious that Shanghai ranks first. Beijing as the capital of China ranks second.

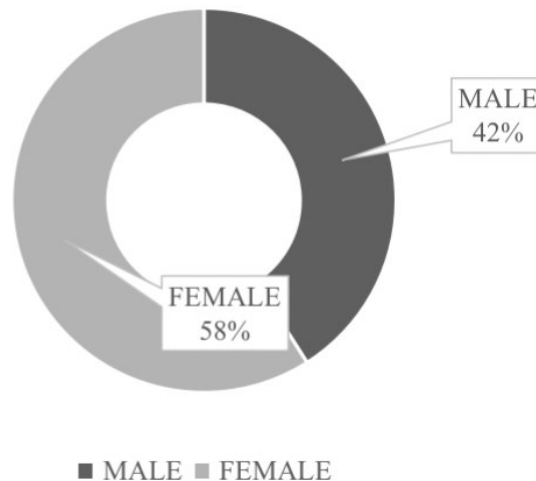


Figure 4: Gender distribution on the Red.

Table 3: Gender distribution on the Red.

Gender	Total users	Propotion
Male	1,064	42%
Female	1,470	58%

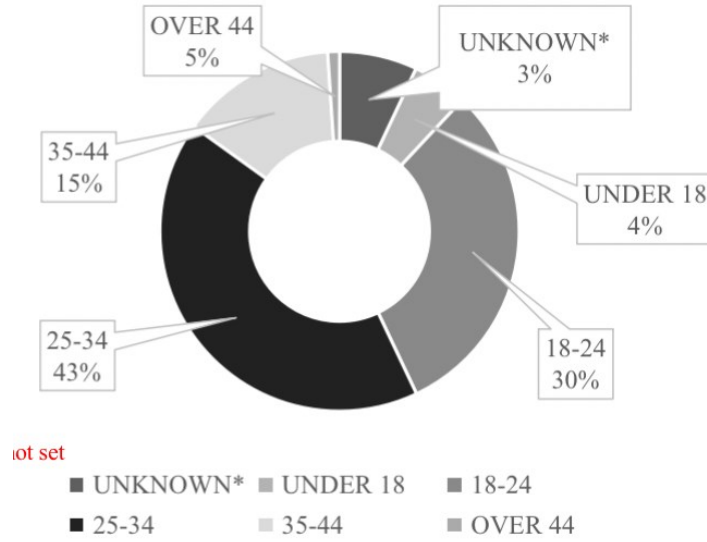


Figure 5: Age distribution on Red.

Table 4: Age distribution on Red.

Age	Total users	Propotion
Unknown*	76	3%
Under 18	126	4%
18-25	785	30%
26-35	1090	43%
36-45	354	15%
46-60	126	5%

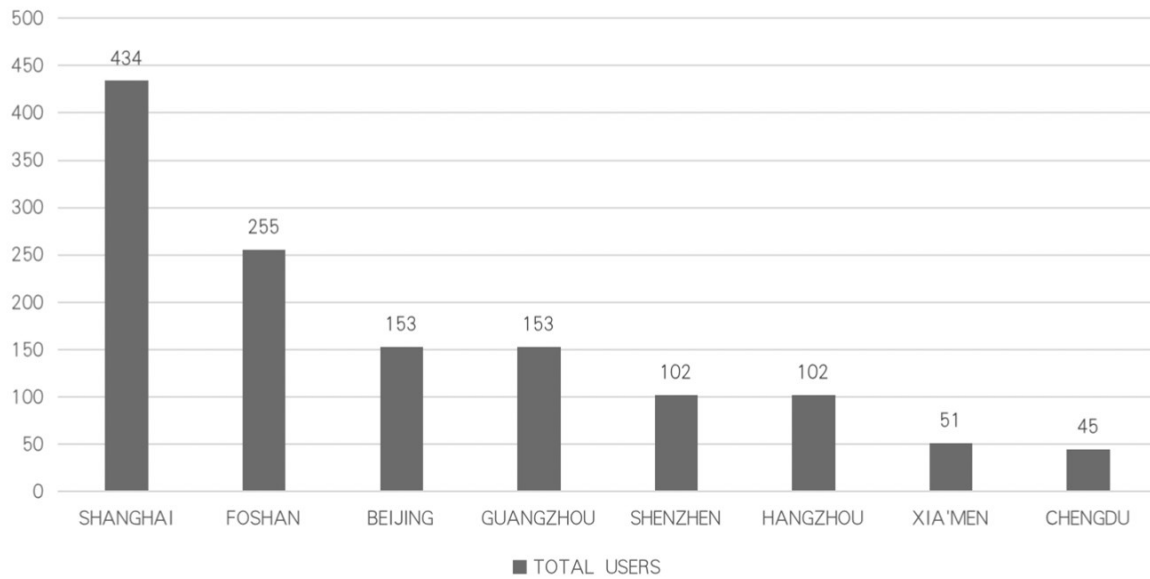


Figure 6: Key region distribution on Red.

The Red is a popular software with a female proportion of 78.6% in the word, female's main interests are beauty, clothing, food and travel and other fields. As a clothing brand, the brand content published on Red will receive more attention from female users, who have a high degree of recognition for clothing matching skills and high-quality goods and services like A-COLD-WALL\*.

In contrast to WeChat, its gender distribution is mainly on female, which is 16% higher than that of male. Similarly, its age distribution is still concentrated in 26-35 years old and the ranked major city is Shanghai.

In general, although A-COLD-WALL\* is a men's wear brand and it will gain more attention from male consumers as mentioned beforehand, its audience will not be completely limited to its product features on social platforms of different tonalities. Female users will also be interested in men's wear because of the way the platform is displayed, thus it is a right choice for A-COLD-WALL\* to publish content on these two platforms at the same time.

There are 3 key factors that make this crossover marketing to be successful. First, the brand and the crossover point of fit, for example, A-COLD-WALL\*'s leather shoes and Converse's loafers are all the species of shoes, to the latest launch of the CONVERSE × ACW CHUCK 70 series, Chuck 70 through the design of A-COLD-WALL\* mature design system design, the use of semi-transparent soles, highlighting the matte eyelets, and the use of customized co-branding details, such as a number of details Designed to echo the casual design of the shoe, the two loungewear knit pieces each emphasize the key features of the Chuck Taylor Icon [6]. The second is the brand's own brand charm, for example, Converse itself has a strong appeal and market attention, A-COLD-WALL\* has a unique brand charm and has a certain market base and stable consumer groups, and Converse as a globally renowned brand, has a wide range of popularity among Chinese consumers, but also a lot of consumers' childhood memories, with a unique brand value. The launch of this new product has attracted the attention of many new and old customers. Third, the extension of the field should be related to the original field, cross-border cooperation between the two brands in line with the temperament, although sports and tide are in two different fields, they all have a young temperament, the cooperation of the selected black is not only the brand's representative colors, the design of sports style can also give consumer a young and lively feeling. Realized the effect of "1+1>2".

The rise of cross-border marketing attention reflects the change of consumer mentality. With economic growth, people's living standards are rising, and they are more and more willing to try new things. The idea of two brands providing consumers with high-quality products and services while meeting escalating consumer demand is the original intention of some brands for cross-border co-branding. In this collaboration, the stories and practices of these artisans are documented by architect Dongping Huang, founding director of design firm Food New York, and award-winning industrial designer Nifemi Marcus-Bello [7]. Both artists are masters in their fields and have introspectively examined what icons mean to them. Photographed in their studio environments in New York and Lagos respectively, they have developed a common school of thought. Founder and Artistic Director, Dr Samuel Rose, turned his attention to his peers, exemplary artists and thought leaders in the global community. Subsequently, he designed a series of sophisticated products as an integral part of the artist's uniform, an ode to the pursuit of creative expression. The starting point of this strategic co-operation is to provide consumers with products and services of higher quality and better experience, which is a concrete embodiment and perfect combination of the artisanal quality and innovative spirit of the two brands.

As a relatively niche designer brand, A-COLD-WALL\* has not been well known, but through the co-branding cooperation with the popular brand Converse, A-COLD-WALL\* has successfully entered the field of vision of many potential consumers, through the launch of co-branded products, the back of the revealed concern for the young consumer groups, more and more young people have contacted and learnt about A-COLD-WALL\* as a niche brand.

#### 4. Evaluation

On the one hand, it can add topicality to the brand and increase brand memory points. Experts point out that the key point of a brand is perception, and brand value must be created on the basis of perception. However, if cross-border marketing only raises awareness without focusing on clear cognition, it cannot bring value to the product. A-COLD-WALL\* and Converse are both products with high topicality, which triggers consumer curiosity and increases discussion and memory points for the brand.

Secondly, it can expand the consumer group and bring real performance improvement for the brand. A series of cross-border products of various famous brands is a useful attempt to improve the single consumption structure. Successful cross-border marketing can achieve the effect of "1+1>2", give the brand new vitality, attract more consumer groups, and achieve the diversified business objectives.

However, cross-border marketing should also be rationally viewed, not all cross-border products have been successful. On the one hand, in recent years, some local brands have achieved great success in integrating Chinese traditional culture and popular elements into their products, Chinese consumers are gradually recognizing and choosing local brands, which means that the combination of traditional culture and popular elements of the "national tide" development path is increasingly being recognized by the public, through the creation of a topic of concern, cross-border products, precise positioning of user profiles and other paths. The Chinese government has also launched cross-border marketing by creating buzz, product crossover, and accurate positioning of user profiles [8]. Some Chinese local brands are shaping brand core values, innovating marketing models and upgrading brand IP, while taking into account the dual output of products and culture. According to the well-known e-commerce platform data, November 1 launched the "Double Eleven" sales, 102 brands turnover over 100 million yuan by selling only one hour, of which more than half of the national brands; On November 11, 50 Chinese brands on T-mall turnover exceeded ten million yuan, of which 11 Chinese local brands turnover exceeded 100 million yuan, becoming a major highlight [9, 10]. As local brands explore a new round of business innovation, Chinese consumers' cultural confidence and local brand identity are deepening. This is also a big blow to overseas brands, as consumers focus more on supporting the development of local brands, which will reduce their purchasing power for overseas products.

#### 5. Conclusion

In general, with the increasing competition in the market, the concept of co-operative marketing has been extended to the field of brand operation, and a new trend has emerged. Overseas niche brands are adopting cross-border marketing techniques to enter the Chinese market, which on one hand reduces the risk of competition and improves the efficiency of marketing, helps to increase brand attention, gives new value to the brand, transmits the brand culture, and rebuilds the brand image. On the other hand, there are many co-branded products that are just a flash in the pan, and how to continue to attract and retain consumers, especially young people, is the biggest problem many brands face when doing cross-border co-branding. Brands need to think about long-term plans in order to revitalize their brands. Achieving brand rejuvenation and consumer rejuvenation has been the biggest problem facing the apparel industry today. If used cross-border marketing as a tactic, it cannot sustainably trigger the attention of consumer groups. At the same time, carrying Chinese consumers' cultural self-confidence and the pressure of deepening the identity of local brands, how to cross-border marketing from the stage of tactics to medium- and long-term strategy, is a test of the comprehensive ability of A-COLD-WALL\*, but also to be tested by the time and the market.



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