

A Chinese gifting habits webinar

17 OCTOBER 2023

4PM Beijing | 10AM Paris

Key topics covered:

- How Chinese consumers choose gifts
- Special gifting occasions in China
- Current gifting trends
- Chinese gifting culture
- Top gifting platforms
- Successful brand case studies

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A brand's guide to

Chinese gifting habits

2023



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Highlights

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Gift giving is becoming a daily habit, with Chinese people gifting more often and casually.

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Gifting is vital in strengthening roles within harmonious relationships.

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Health/wellness are rising in popularity as gift givers seek ways to support the wellbeing of others.

04

Personalization/customization, interactive experiences, and an “expensive yet sophisticated” look can make products more appealing.

05

Festive occasions, notably the Chinese New Year, let brands showcase their cultural understanding through gifts.

06

Gift givers rely on social media as a source of gifting inspiration.



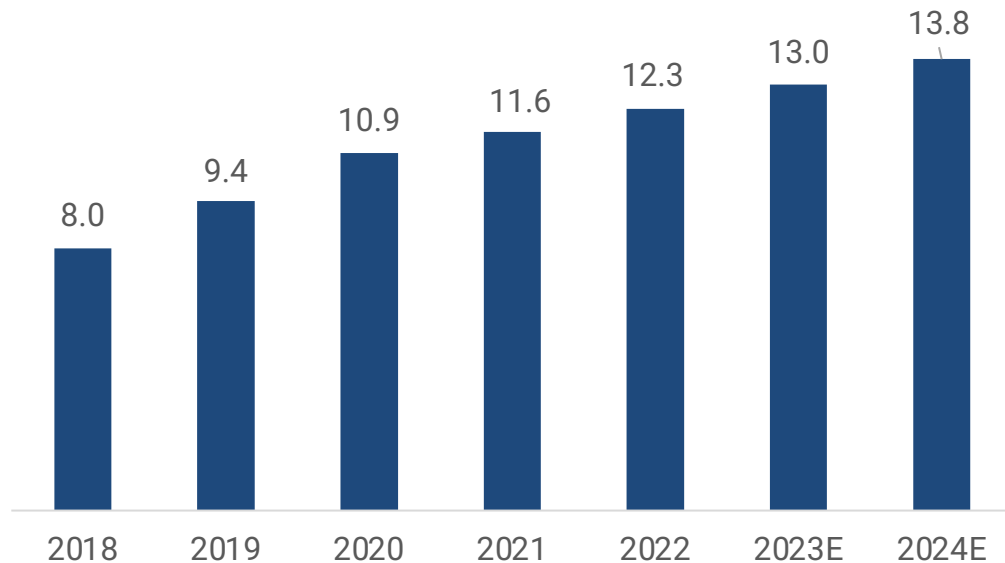
Chinese gifting habits

Photos Sources: Xiaohongshu users 向左向右户外 and 沿媛.

The role of gifting in modern Chinese culture

While gift-giving has long been prominent in China, it is becoming more frequent and casual compared to Western cultural practices.

Market size and forecast of China's gift economy from 2018 to 2024 (in RMB trillion)



Source: iiMedia Research Inc.

When do Chinese people give gifts?

More different from the west

To communicate their social status

Gifts may be given to another person in a different social position as a sign of respect and acknowledgement or as a sign of power and status.

To establish and maintain relationships

Many people in China cultivate guanxi (关系), or social relationships, with family, friends, neighbors, and business partners, often through consecutive gift-giving.

To and from travel

Many Chinese travellers bring local Chinese specialties and gifts - even if only small delicacies or trinkets - when traveling and bring foreign specialties back to China to share with family, friends and coworkers.

To show gratitude and/or love

People show their appreciations and affection through gifts to homestay families, party hosts, and departing or reuniting with friends.

To mark special occasions

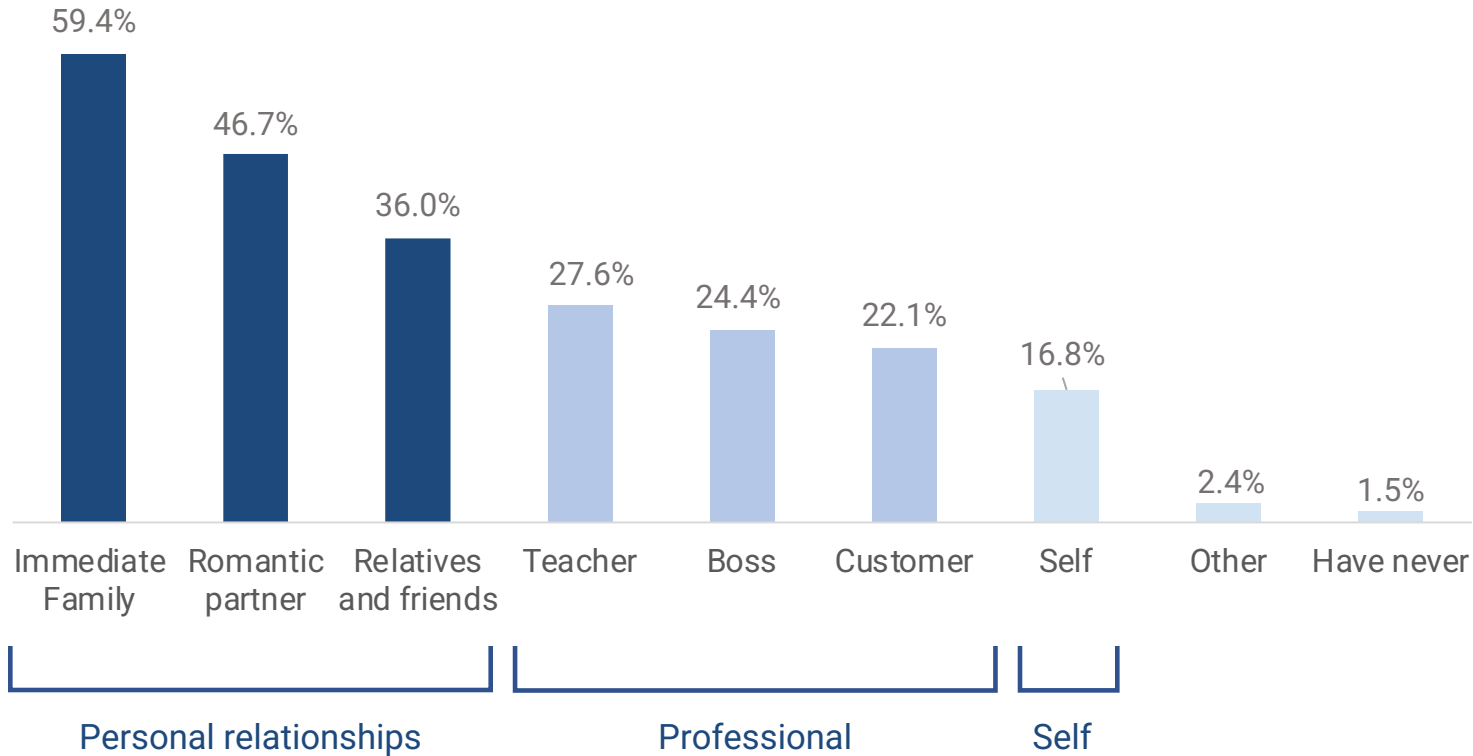
During holidays special events like birthdays

More similar to the west

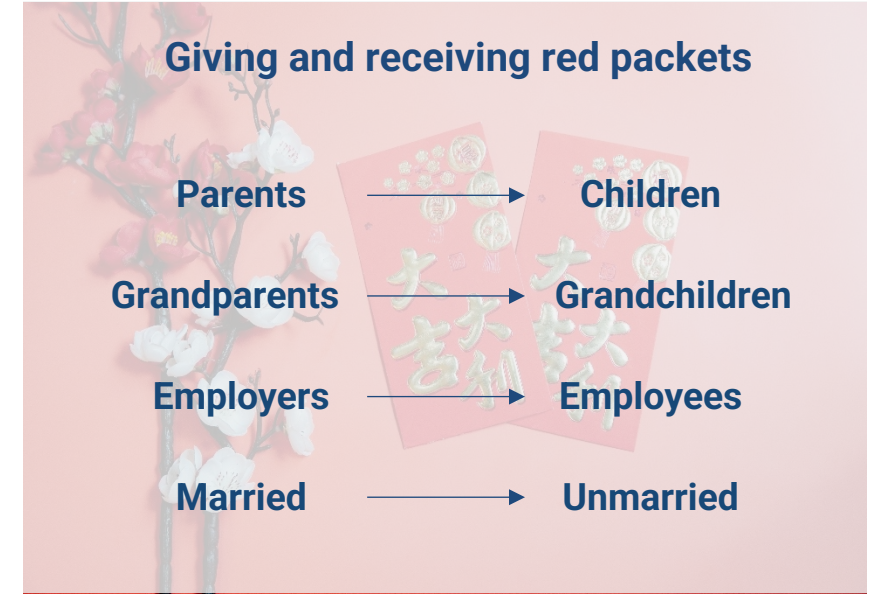
Gifting reinforces roles in “harmonious” relationships

People use gift-giving, an indirect form of communication, to not only strengthen their ties with their families but also with others like their teachers, bosses, and customers.

Gift recipients in China
(N=1,944, 2021)



Source: iiMedia Research Inc.



Influenced by Confucian values, **social roles in China are well-defined**, and gift giving follows these social roles.

For instance, during Chinese New Year, parents or grandparents give children *hongbao*, or red packets filled with money, but children rarely give *hongbao* to parents. Married people also give *hongbao* to unmarried people (with the exception of weddings), and employers to employees.

Business gift giving demands premium packaging and customization

Chinese professionals often give gifts to business partners, potential/existing clients, and employees. In many cases, although they do not express it, they expect to receive some kind of favor or gift in return.

Business gifts are carefully chosen, considering the recipient's hierarchical position, cultural background, and the depth of the relationship. However, it's not just the physical gift that matters; the deeper meaning or the purpose attached to it is also important.

Giving culturally significant items is appreciated

Tea holds significance in Chinese culture, and both Chinese and foreigners can exchange it to showcase their appreciation for the other's culture. Shang Xia, a luxury fashion brand, offers a red gift box set with two teacups (for two people) and a container of tea, priced at RMB 680.



Gifted products can often include logos from the company or from specific brands

Branded functional products are particularly popular. While high-quality gifts are preferable, the cost must be considered due to China's strict anti-bribery regulations and due to the recipient feeling burdened to reciprocate with a gift of equal or higher value. Companies may buy a customized product with special packaging in bulk to gift to clients.



Packaging is more important in business gifts

Packaging is even more important in business settings than in casual occasions. In some cases, gifts may even be wrapped in black for a more sophisticated look. Hongdian's black Forest series black pen, priced at RMB 50, ranked first on Tmall's Business Art Pen Sales in March 2023.



Sources: Clifford Chance, Taobao.com, and Liwushuo.
Photos Sources: Taobao.com, and Liwushuo.

How customized gifts are a tool to strengthen relationships among Chinese

Young Chinese consumers are opting for personalized gifts, using DIY and customization to not only elevate the experience of the recipient but also the gift giver and their relationship, resulting in unique, creative, and romantic presents.

Unique

Crafting products that are distinctly tailored to the recipient or the relationship



Creative

Modifying or transforming existing products or ideas in a way that generates new and fun experiences



Romantic

Customizing products that capture the shared romantic experiences



Source: Xiaohongshu.

Staying within a certain budget is important for gifts

When looking for gifts on social media such as Xiaohongshu and Weibo, Chinese people look for products with a high value for money. Budget is also important to consider for Chinese gifters to ensure their gift is in an appropriate range, not too cheap but not too extravagant.

Pursuing value for money in XHS and Weibo



Clear price tag and quantity ordered: Chinese consumers are highly influenced by popular products. As a result, displaying the quantity ordered boosts one's impulse in buying certain products online. On the image of this post, in addition to the price tag, ("388 RMB/set"), there is the quantity ordered ("Gift box: 391 quantity ordered").

Gifts under certain prices: Many posts include the phrase "under X price," like this one which is priced under 100 RMB. The content also emphasizes that the product is of high-quality yet remains affordable enough to be a decent gift. It also includes a reassuring disclaimer, "This product is by no means a bomb!", indicating that it offers great value for its price.

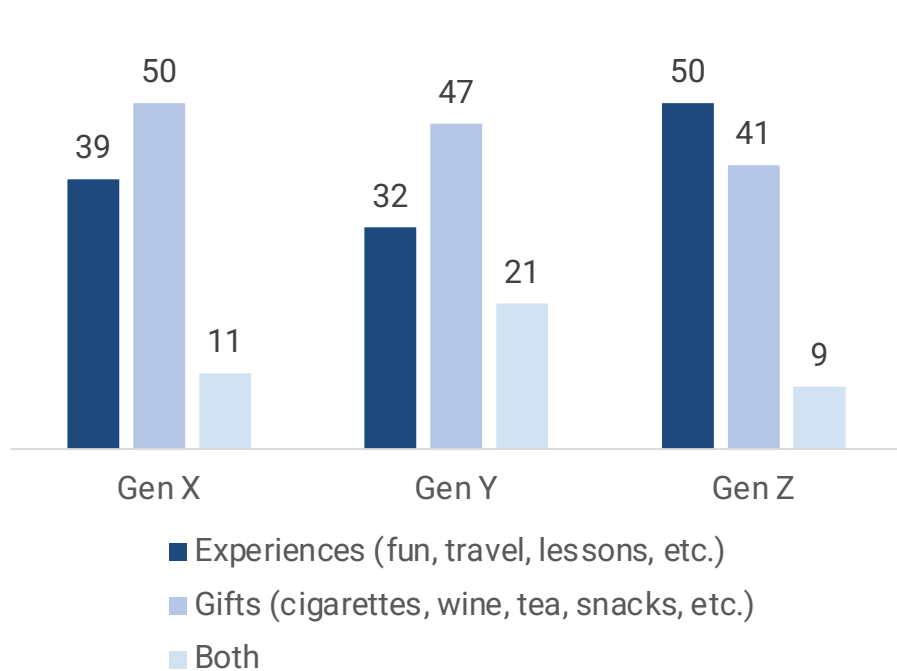
Expensive looking products yet not expensive: There are a lot of posts with recommended items for giving a gift for boyfriends. Understanding that Chinese consumers are price-sensitive and value cost performance, the bolded headlined states, "Products that look expensive yet not expensive".

Sources: Xiaohongshu and Weibo.

Gen Z demands experiences over products as gifts

Gen Z (born 1997-2012) make up about 18% of the population as of May 2022 but already contribute about 40% of consumption. They are comfortable with new technology and desire to have products and experiences that allow them to express themselves.

Gift-giving categories across different generations (2022)



Over 50% of Gen Z consumers **buy experiential gifts** such as fun activities, restaurant bookings, trips, lessons, according to a survey by LeadLeo Research Institute.

Sources: Statista, McKinsey & Company, Medium, LeadLeo Research Institute, ctrip.com, and Sina Finance.
Image Sources: Xiaohongshu and ctrip.com.



Live Action Role Playing

Many youngsters take their friends to **Live Action Role Playing (LARP)** as a surprise birthday gift. It is an immersive and interactive form of entertainment where participants assume fictional roles in simulations with props and detailed narratives.

Glamping

A popular trend among the Gen Z in China is **glamping (glamor and camping)**, along with other outdoor leisure activities. These activities don't only allow them to **find healing and relaxation** but also allow them to **share on social media**.



Walk! Go camping (electronic card)

Responding to this demand, Ctrip, a leading online travel agency, has expanded its offerings to include a variety of experiential products, including **customized trips** to natural scenic sites and camping grounds, as well as plane and bus tickets.

Customers can gift themselves these experiences by purchasing **physical or electronic gift cards**, which are available in different prices and designs.










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Gifted products


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Photos Sources: Xiaohongshu users 茉莉花社, yiyi.xu, 小龙, and 成都银泰中心 in99.

Commonly gifted products in China

	Health products 	Fruits/snacks 	Clothing 	Cigarettes 	Alcohol 	Jewelry 	Red packets 	Specialized treats 	Experiences 
Main occasions	Reuniting or during health events like pandemic or births	Dinner or lunch gatherings, visiting relatives on Spring Festival	Spontaneous, birthdays, New Year	Social gatherings, including business events	Social gatherings, festivals and celebrations	Weddings, anniversaries, birthdays	Chinese New Year and weddings	Holidays	Birthdays, anniversaries, graduation trips, honeymoon
Explanation	Not only limited to the elderly but has expanded to young individuals	It is impolite to arrive to a host's dinner, especially at home, empty handed	Some items with negative cultural associations are avoided such as shoes	Men will often gift cigarettes at any occasion, even to non-smokers	Often used for celebration and/or showing of status	A relatively expensive gift that reflects the relationship's importance	Red packets not only include cash, but also people's best wishes	Ranging from mooncakes to Zongzi, holiday-specific products	Experiences include spa treatments, gourmet dining, and tickets to cultural events
Main gift givers	Family, close friends	Guests	Family, friends, parents	Guests	Guests, friends, relatives	Self, boyfriends, husbands, friends, parents	Older family, relatives, wedding guests, boss	Older family, friends, relatives, employees	Friends, family members
Main gift recipients	Elderly, close friends, women who gave birth, patients	Hosts	Family, friends and their kids	Cigarettes are usually exchanged between men	Elders, leaders, respectable people	Self, girlfriends, wife, significant women in life	Younger family, kids, bride and groom, employees	Friends, relatives, boss	Friends, couples
Example	Multivitamins for romantic partner	Fruit when visiting relatives and friends	Baby clothes when visiting a newborn baby	Cigarettes to leaders for closer relationships	Relatives bring Baijiu to the elders on major festivals	Jewelry as birthday gift for mothers and grandmothers	Red packets from wedding guests to the bride/groom	Mooncakes on the Mid Autumn Festival	Concert tickets as birthday gift

Gifting health and wellness products to loved ones

Health and wellness products are becoming popular as gifts as people seek ways to support the holistic wellbeing of others. Covid-19, the aging population, urbanization, and increased health awareness, have further amplified this.

Beauty & personal care products



There has been a rising demand for massaging tools, beauty devices, and other personal care products among the **younger generation**. ROAMAN introduced a special couples electric toothbrush gift box for the Qixi festival and SKG has topped the charts on JD and Taobao with massaging products.

"Healing" products



"Healing (疗愈系) products" is a term frequently used in marketing campaigns and advertisements to describe products that **look aesthetic and evoke feelings tranquility**. These products are strategically targeted towards customers who are seeking thoughtful gifts or a sense of comfort.

Vitamins and health supplements



Vitamins and supplements are popular gifts for a broad demographic, including parents and even diabetic people. Popular products for the elderly include milk powder, joint health supplements, and traditional Chinese medicine. Protein powder, gummies for improved sleep and reduced stress, and vitamins for productivity and energy are becoming more favored among young consumers.

Image Sources: Taobao and Xiaohongshu.
Sources: JD.com, Taobao, Xiaohongshu, and Sohu.

Trendy gift among the Chinese upper-middle class: Paxlovid

Before Covid-19, conventional medicine was not commonly given as gifts in China. However, in the end of 2022 and early 2023, medicine, such as Pfizer's Paxlovid, had become a trending gift among the Chinese upper-middle class.



In 2022, Paxlovid was introduced in China, selling out **within a little over 30 minutes** quickly after appearing on the media, highlighting the strong demand for COVID and flu treatments. However, its inclusion in China's healthcare insurance ended in March **due to its high cost**. In June 2023, CSPC Pharmaceutical Group **partnered** with Pfizer to introduce a local version of Paxlovid, aiming to improve access in China.

Before policy lifting in 2022

- Conventional medicine is not considered appropriate for gifting
- Medicine should be taken under doctors' instructions
- Nutritional supplements instead are a gifting option for familiar recipients
- Recipients' health condition and daily diet are critical when purchasing nutritional supplements

After policy lifting in 2022

- Demand for Paxlovid far outstripped the supply
- About 8,300 RMB per box at some high-end private hospitals
- Gifting among upper-middle class to maintain relationships
- "More coveted than Maotai (茅台)"

Sources: *Financial Times*, *Reuters*, and *Leadleo Research Institute*.

Image Source: *paxlovid.com*.

Fruits are a go-to gift in China, now with premiumization

Fruit symbolizes one blessing the recipient with longevity, health, and success. They are gifted on a wide range of occasions, from formal events like Chinese New Year and the Mid Autumn Festival to casual gatherings like spontaneous/planned home visits.



Fruit gift boxes are sold as ready-to-give from supermarkets, and can be presented in baskets, boxes, or bags. The fruit selection may vary depending on the recipient and occasion.

As for Chinese New Year, **7 fruits considered auspicious** (see below) to be given as gifts.

Giving pears, however, is **considered unlucky** as “sharing a pair” (分梨) is a homophone of “to separate” (分离).

<p>Oranges</p> <p>Good luck and happiness</p>	<p>Pomelos</p> <p>Family reunion</p>	<p>Apples</p> <p>Peace and safety</p>	<p>Grapes</p> <p>Abundance</p>	<p>Pineapples</p> <p>Wealth</p>	<p>Pomegranates</p> <p>Longevity and prosperity</p>	<p>Sugarcane</p> <p>Success</p>
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Image Source: JD.com.

Sources: China History Network Zhejiang, Top China Travel, Blue Whale Finance, and GONYN.COM.



International brands like Dole and Zespri are making use of the increasing desire for premium **fruits to secure a position in the high-end fruit market**, while local brands are **concentrating on the low-end market**. To commemorate the Year of the Rabbit, Zespri marketed their popular gold kiwi in attractively packaged gift boxes.

Winning over gift givers through enhanced product attractiveness

Aside from the product itself, gift givers and recipients value the personal, cultural, and interactive experience.

Coloring and numbering

Some **colors** are favorable, while some are to be avoided due to their negative cultural associations

- Red: auspicious color because it brings luck and joy
- Gold: prosperity and wealth
- White: mourning and death

Similar to colors, some **numbers** are to be avoided, particularly when targeting older recipients

- 4 and its multiples: unlucky numbers as four (四 sì) sounds similar to (死 sǐ) which means death
- 6 and 8: lucky numbers as the former sounds like liū (溜, "smooth") and the latter (八 bā) sounds like fā (發, "to prosper")

Chinese gift givers highly value the **personal sentiment and uniqueness of a gift**, as it reflects the relationship and care they have for the recipient

- Voice message on gift packaging or card
- Name, personal message, or photo engraving services
- Personalized product recommendations, such as Taobao's gift recommendation list by target recipient
- Limited edition products

Personalization and customization services



Interactive experience



Interactive gift product experience can promote engagement, not only between individuals but also between people and the packaging itself, creating a more memorable experience.

- Virtual unboxing
- Multifunctional packaging
- 3D pop-up cards/packaging
- Interactive QR codes with personalized messages



During Valentine's Day and as the trend of self-giving continues to rise, Chinese gifters are particularly drawn to beautiful items that hold personalized emotional value, good craftsmanship and good quality.

Perfect Diary's envelope-shaped packaging includes a barcode that allows senders to infuse a touch by sending a heartfelt voice message to the recipient, fostering a sense of storytelling and enhancing the overall personalized emotional sentiment associated with the gift.

Image Sources: Xiaohongshu.

“Niche yet sophisticated” gifts #小众高级 are trending

#小众高级 is a trending term indicating that the products are one-of-a-kind, unconventional yet goofy.

What “niche yet sophisticated” means for Chinese gift givers

One-of-a-kind

Adding unique elements related to the gift recipient, including photos and quotes, and can also incorporate aspects based on the recipient’s MBTI, favorite sports, or musical instruments

Unconventional

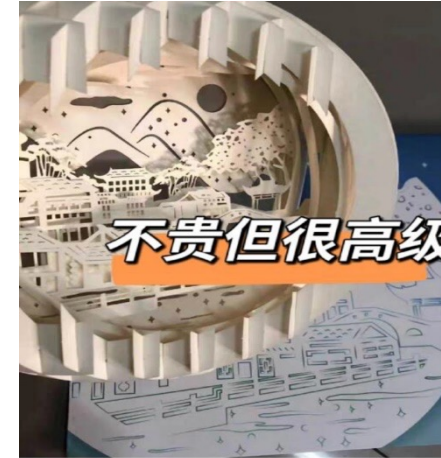
Buying gifts that are quirky and fun, which is fresh for the recipient.

Good craftsmanship

Sophistication is reflected in the intricate detailing and excellent craftsmanship, adding a meaningful touch

Creative

DIY gifts enhance the entire experience from purchasing to presenting. As these gifts are distinctively personal creations, they hold a niche appeal and offer a more personalized touch.



Source: Xiaohongshu.

How Chinese boyfriends choose gifts for their girlfriends

When giving gifts to boyfriends or girlfriends, the gifts can become more intimate and personal as the relationship progresses.

Infatuation Stage



Trendy or general products, especially ones that most women would like

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Stage 1: Infatuation Stage

Gift	¥	Description
 shu uemura 植村秀	¥ 470	持色持妆, 无暇底妆 18H持色不暗沉
 Q O Q 契欧泉	¥ 129	防晒提亮, 改善暗沉 SPF50+, pa+++物化结合的 全波段防晒霜质地轻薄, 成 膜速度快, 不会搓泥
 M A C 魅可	¥ 176	质地水润轻盈 色泽透亮, 涂上拥有高阶亮 泽感, 纯欲感满分
 C & K	¥ 239	做工精致, 版型好看 颜色很时尚, 日常穿搭 约会背上很有范哦

Stability Stage



Symbolic products that mark special moments and create meaningful surprises

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Stage 2: Stability Stage

Gift	¥	Description
 perfectdiary 完美日记	¥ 119	粉质细腻, 高光绝绝子 里里外外都冒着仙气 夏日甜妹就靠它了
 花束	¥ 99	没有女生会拒绝一束漂亮的花束, 女生看见美好的东西心情真的会很好
 LANQING 蓝情	¥ 89	上脸肤感真的绝了, 牛奶质地很水润, 爬山用这个是真不怕晒, 价格便宜也不会心疼, 很适合日常通勤使用
 Swarovski 施华洛世奇	¥ 215	小巧精致, 很有设计感 3-5cm延长链, 可灵活调节 细节也做得很好

Understanding Stage

Practical gifts that hold intimacy in daily life, such as toothbrushes and clothing, and sometimes health related products

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Stage 3: Understanding Stage

Gift	¥	Description
 XinmonLee 李星梦	¥ 158	版型好看, 面料透气 没有多余的线头, 穿上很舒服, 很有仙气
 Dior	¥ 725	淡淡的清香, 闻起来不会腻 给人一种温柔优雅的感觉 瓶身也设计得很好看
 飞科	¥ 169	电池容量大, 外形美观 高级杜邦刷毛, 可以很好的保护牙龈
 暖宫腰带	¥ 149	颜值很高, 充一次电可以用好久, 振动模式还可以按摩腰部, 很舒服。

Source: Xiaohongshu.

How Chinese gift givers choose gifts by age

When giving gifts to friends, boyfriends, or girlfriends, the type of gifts can vary depending on the life stage of the recipient.



Childhood (Under 14)

- **Cute items:** stuffed animals, instant films, flowers with candies
- **School supplies:** pencils, notebooks, water bottles
- **Small treats:** Skittles, Kuai Kuai



Adolescence and Young Adulthood (14-25)

- **Appearance-related products:** watches, hair accessories, lipsticks,
- **Party-related:** high-heeled shoes, perfume, dresses, alcohol
- **School-related:** books



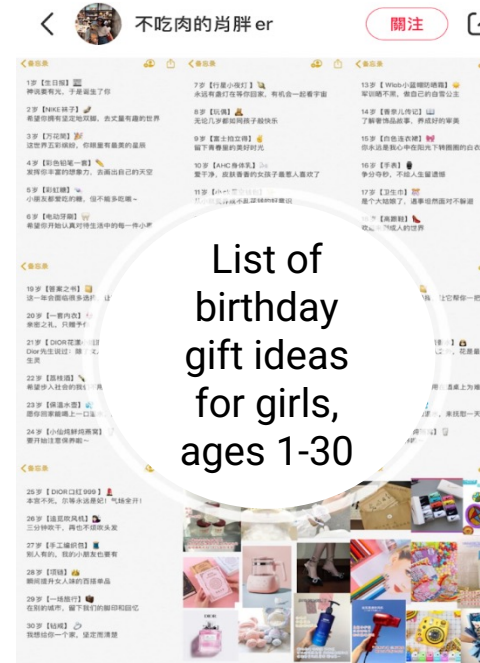
Adulthood (26-30)

- **Products that symbolize stability:** bank cards, suits, ties
- **Experiences:** travel tickets
- **High-end products:** luxurious cosmetics and accessories



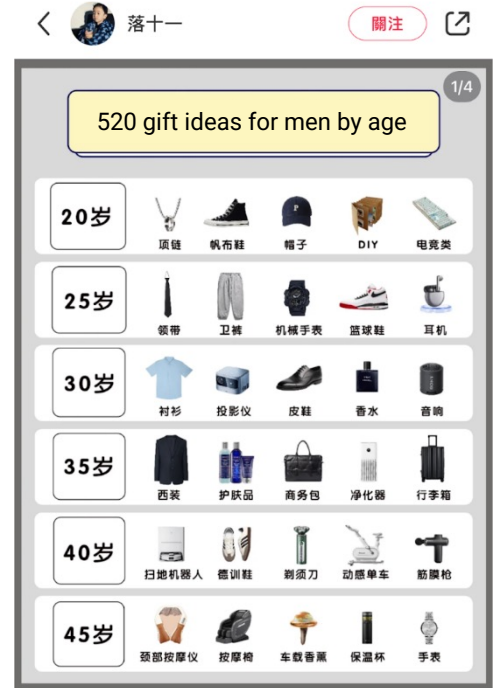
Middle Age (31-45)

- **Home-related products:** robot vacuum, air purifiers, massage armchairs, electric shavers
- **Travel:** suitcase



送给女生|女朋友|闺蜜的1-30岁生日礼物

#生日礼物



我证明 !! 20-45岁男生520礼物这样选最实用

Tailoring gifts based on age adds a thoughtful touch to special occasions like loved ones' birthday or Chinese Valentine's Day.

Source: Xiaohongshu.

In China, students frequently give gifts to teachers

In China, it's customary to give teachers gifts during notable events like graduations, birthdays, and Teacher's Day. Chinese students prefer practical, affordable, high-quality, and personalized items to express appreciation and enhance the teaching experience.

Common gifts for teachers

Health and wellness related products

Products that can improve the throats are commonly given, including bird's nest and wolfberry, considering that teachers use their throat a lot. Humidifiers, hand creams and massagers are given to improve health

Office/classroom supplies and decorations

Students give products that can enhance the experience of teaching, including chalk holders, humidifiers, fountain pens or note pads, and subject-related decorations.

DIY products

Teacher portraits, clip-art image, cards, and paper flowers

Coffee and tea

Coffee and tea and related items like a mug or coffee machine

小红书



“Teacher's Day is approaching! When giving a gift to our respected teachers, it's important to have a sense of ceremony 🍀. A vintage yet sophisticated gift for Teacher's Day is a favorite among teachers. It perfectly captures their elegance 🎯.

“When it comes to Teacher's Day gifts, the most reliable approach is to consider whether the teacher is male or female. To assist with this, K-Dad has thoughtfully compiled separate gift lists for male and female teachers, making it easier for everyone to make the right choice.

Source: Xiaohongshu.



Special occasions



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Photos Sources: Xiaohongshu users ANNND 共和设计事务所, 小陈很迷糊, DOXILE多薷樂, and 小罐茶长沙国金店fang.

Major traditional gifting occasions in China

The major gifting occasions in Chinese culture are deeply rooted in traditions and customs. Observing these traditions and participating in these events is an essential part of Chinese culture, emphasizing the value placed on interpersonal relationships and social harmony.

Occasion	Spring Festival/ Chinese New Year	Mid Autumn/ Moon Festival	Dragonboat Festival
Explanation	Bids farewell to past year and welcomes new with family gatherings, food, entertainment	Celebrates the harvest and full moon with family gatherings, moon cakes, lanterns	Commemorates Chinese scholar Qu Yuan, with sticky rice dumpling and dragon boat races
Date	First day of the first lunar month	Fifteenth day of the eighth lunar month	Fifth day of the fifth lunar month
Main gift givers	Family, friend, company, coworker, self	Family, friend, coworker, client	Family, friend
Main gift recipients	Family, friend, coworker, client	Family, friend, coworker, client	Family, friend
Popular gifts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food: tea, red wine, pastries • Household items: thermos cups, towels, candles • Family experiences: hotel reservations, trips, dinner • Digital products: earphones, smart watches • Health/wellness: massage chairs, skincare items 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialized treats and products: mooncakes, hairy crabs, telescope, flowers • Food: fruits, nuts, pastries, , wine, tea, supermarket gift card, vitamins • Cultural and creative gifts: fans, calligraphy works, knots 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food: Zongzi, tea, wine, regional and seasonal foods including fried dumplings in Jinjiang, Fujian • Cultural gifts: hanging ornaments, t-shirts, Chinese knots, paper cutting, fans, calligraphy, kites, flowers

Chinese New Year: Time for brands to show off their Guochao (国潮) products

The Spring Festival, also known as the Chinese New Year (春节), is the most important holiday in China. Brands leverage this opportunity to incorporate Chinese elements into their products and demonstrate to consumers their appreciation of Chinese culture.

Incorporating Chinese elements into product or transform entire product



In 2023, luxury brand Loewe celebrated the Year of the Rabbit with its series of **iconic rabbit-shaped bags**. The rabbit's dropping ears are formed by a knot, which symbolizes connection and good luck between people.

Adding Chinese elements into package design



In 2023, milk brand Yili launched a Chinese gift box, with two of its milk packaging **featuring Chinese characters** "family" (家) and "happiness" (福). The third one allowed customers to personalize it with their family name, each with its unique history.

Complementing product with other culturally relevant products



In 2023, spirit baijiu brand Kweichou Moutai offered a rabbit-themed gift box with a pair of Maotai, **complemented by two pairs chopsticks and bowls**, reflecting the culture of eating and celebrating the new year together.

Image Sources: Xiaohongshu and China Daily.

Brands create their own hongbao (红包)

Red packets, known as hongbao in China, are money-filled envelopes given on numerous major festivals like the largest one known as the Chinese New Year and other personal occasions like birthdays, job promotions, and weddings. As important as it is for Chinese people, brands have produced unique and creative ways to show their understanding of them.

Branded “red packets”

Elements on red packets

Branded red packets **include traditional Chinese elements** like the Chinese zodiac, flowers, and auspicious clouds, in addition to the brand logo. While **red is the typical color**, they can occasionally be created using alternative ones.

Heartfelt messages as a thoughtful touch

Brands add **warm words or wishes** on the cover of red packets.

WeChat customizable digital red packets

Since Spring Festival of 2019, WeChat has opened the function of **customizing the cover of red envelopes**, most of which are customized by the enterprises, including large luxury brands, popular games and firms from food industry. By creating their own branded digital red packets, brands can **raise brand awareness with low cost** in Chinese market.



For the year of the rabbit, brands **added rabbits** on the Zodiac design and some **happy new year blessings**.

Fendi's Chinese New Year gift box had **panda-shaped and Fendi logo engraved red packets**, a red lucky pouch, and plum blossoms.

KFC created its **digital red packet on WeChat**.

PepsiCo developed its “Red Packet Rain”, incorporating its **brand blue colors**, blue and red, and an **interactive element**, emoji rain, onto the user interface.

Sources: Xinfengkou, China Daily, JPMorgan Chase & Co.
Image Sources: Xiaohongshu and NetEase.

Engaging in “family time” on Chinese New Year

During Chinese New Year, Families gather to exchange gifts, light fireworks, and participate in other celebratory activities. Brands engage in marketing activities and promotions to capitalize on the festive season.

Brand initiatives for Chinese New Year gifting

Family-themed products

Brands release products centered around the concept of "family," such as family product/packaging designs and large family-size products. These offerings can also be limited in terms of time and supply, adding a sense of uniqueness and exclusivity.

Chinese New Year short films

Brands create short films that show their understanding of the festival and the idea of families gathering to connect emotionally with their consumers and even drive them to buy their products for gifting.



In 2023, Nongfu Spring released Collector's Edition glass bottles. The packaging and glass bottle design featured a family of rabbits and the brand's iconic red lettering on a white background, in honor of the Year of the Rabbit and the joyous family occasion. Like previous years, a limited amount of 100,000 sets were sold mainly as gifts.



In 2023, Red Bull created a Chinese New Year atmosphere through a **holistic series of marketing activities**.

Short films were launched to showcase the liveliness of the New Year and to encourage netizens and KOLs to share their inspirations.

An immersive AR feature was introduced in their offline stores introduced, providing participants with additional surprises.

Additionally, Red Bull released a limited New Year gift box containing classical and new year drinks along with red envelopes.

Image Sources: DIGITALING and China Internet News Center.
Sources: DIGITALING, Xiaohongshu, and China Internet News Center.

Non-traditional major gifting occasions in China

Major gifting occasions in China revolve around an individual or group in society. Gifts are given to the target individual or group but sometimes even for other members in his family and other community.

	Familial		Romantic		Professional		Birthdays	
Occasion	Mother's Day	Children's Day	Marriage	Wedding Anniversaries	Teacher's Day	Graduation	Birthdays	100th day celebration
Explanation	Appreciates mothers and soon-to-be mothers	Celebrates the wellbeing and happiness of children	Celebrates the start of a shared and unique journey between the couples	Honor the strength and longevity between the married couple	Recognizes and appreciates the contributions and hard work of teachers	Acknowledges the educational completion of the individual	Celebrate one's birth	Celebrate baby's arrival by inviting friends and family to one's home
Date	Second Sunday of May each year	June 1	Varies	Varies	September 10	Varies	Varies	100 th day since baby's birth
Main gift givers / recipients	Family, friend, self → mother	Parents, other family, school → children	Family, friend, and wedding guests → newlywed couple	Family and friends ↔ couples	Student, parent of student, colleague → teacher	Parents and friends → student and sometimes student → teacher	Anyone including self → birthday individual	Family and friends ↔ baby and/or mom
Popular gifts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wellness and health care products Jewelry Flowers Skincare products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educational and fun toys Stationery products Hobbies-related products Snacks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Red packets and alcohol "xi tang" (喜糖) candies to guests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For wife: skincare, jewelry, clothes, travel, dinner For husband: watches, wallets, suits, dinner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Office tools Office healing decorations Cultural and creative products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flowers High-end pen gift boxes Jewelry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For men: small digital home products, outdoor sports products For women: Cosmetics, flowers, jewelry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cosmetics Clothes Red packets Jewelry for the baby

More Valentine's Days in China, 6x more chances to gift love

China has multiple Valentines Days. In recent years, the gift recipients have expanded from just significant others, to also include oneself, relatives, friends, and even pets.

Several "Valentine's Days" in China

Double Third Festival

- 3rd day of the 3rd lunar month
- Mainly celebrated among Chinese ethnic groups

White Valentine's Day

- 14th of March
- Originated in Japan and spread to China
- Women give gifts to men

520 Day on 20th of May

- Celebrated mainly among the young but older people are adopting it
- Jewelry, watches, handbags, and vehicles

Qixi Festival

- 7th day of the 7th month of the Chinese lunar calendar
- Flowers, lipsticks, and necklaces, for women
- Gifts for men include e-sports products and e-shavers

Women's Day on 8th of March

- Chinese men prepare gifts and experiences to their girlfriends and mothers
- Companies often provide women half-day off work and small gifts

Western Valentine's Day

- 14th of February
- Popular especially among the younger generation who are more open to Western influence

Ways brands leverage Valentine's Day for gifting

Generate content weeks prior to day

Before Valentine's Day, brands create user generated content (UGC) and professional generated (branded) content (PGC) on major platforms, particularly Xiaohongshu, Weibo, and Douyin. They promote newly released products, commonly referred to as zhongcao (种草), or "planting."

Create love-themed packaging

Brands create love-themed packaging, not necessarily only for couples. Although not always red, designs usually include hearts.

Special promotions to generate sales

Brands hold different kinds of promotions, including customized lettering services on products, free gifts when purchasing requested amount, and limited combination sets.



Lancôme launches limited-edition lipstick gift boxes, targeting girls' boyfriends, friends, and family members on social media. It has become a popular choice for gifting for its high-cost performance and exquisite packaging.

Sources: China Daily, Investopedia, LAT Multilingual, Verdict Media Limited, and The Chairman's Bao.

Image Sources: Xiaohongshu.

It is increasingly common to give on non-holidays

Although the Spring Festival, Qing Ming Festival, Dragon Boat Festival, and the Mid-Autumn Festival are the main gifting events in China, people are now gifting on minor festivals, on dates that are important to them personally, or even without a specific occasion. These gifts can be either planned in advance or given spontaneously.





Occasion	Returning from travel	House visits / Housewarming	Hospital visits	Job promotions
Explanation	When returning from travel, it is common to bring gifts for family, friends and colleagues	When visiting someone's house or when one's house is being visited, guests and/or hosts give gifts.	When visiting someone at the hospital, gifts are prepared.	When someone receives a job promotion, s/he may give or receive gifts from one's employers and co-workers.
Examples of gifts				
Popular gifts among Chinese people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local specialties and products such as red ginseng sticks from South Korea and wine from France • Duty-free products, with the government building more offline duty-free shops and attracting more international brands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional gifts: red packets, calligraphy and paintings, antique vase • Household products: coffee machines, air purifiers, bed linings, cutlery set, lamps • Decorations: flowers, ornaments • Food: tea, snacks, fruits, wine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most common: flowers, fruit baskets • Health/wellness products: calcium tablets, vitamins, healthy snacks • Books/magazines and other items that can entertain the patient 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical gifts: fountain pens, wallets, watches, cups • Food: wine, liquor, spirits, tea, chocolates • Symbolic decorations: items with underlying meaning such as a deer ornament statue representing success and longevity

Image Sources: Taobao, Naver Shopping, Riesling, Hua.com, Xiaomi, and Waring.



Chinese gifting platforms


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Photos Sources: Dianping.

Taobao: a top choice for personalized, competitively priced, and high-tech gifting

Taobao (淘宝), owned by Alibaba, is a leading comprehensive e-commerce platform that offers a wide variety of products and sellers, competitive pricing, strong logistics, and other features to provide customers with a smooth one-stop gifting experience.

Gifting inspiration



Taobao provides with a comprehensive and immersive gift searching and selecting experience by offering:

- **Page dedicated to gifted products:** It allows customers to view its data- and AI-generated gifted products recommendations page
- **Livestream channels:** Provides detailed product information live videos held by celebrities, influencers, and merchants
- **Augmented reality:** Showcases products in 3D mode and provides consumers with virtual try-on features

Image Source: Taobao.

Gift purchasing and delivery



Taobao offers a smooth purchasing and delivery service. Consumers can directly send the gift to the recipient.

Delivery time may vary by seller, product, and other factors but the YSL 520 gift is to be delivered within 18 hours after payment.

Sources: Most Visited eCommerce & Shopping Websites, and Similarweb.

Other popular online gifting platforms among Chinese consumers

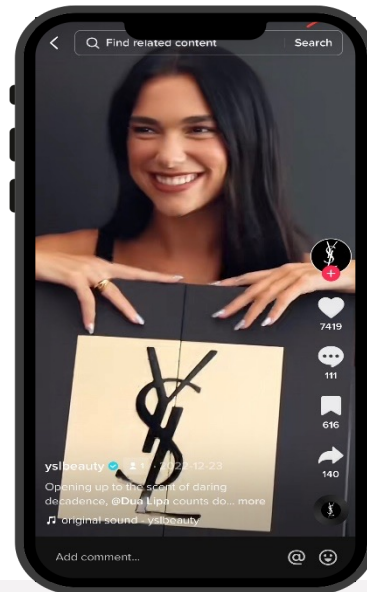
In addition to Taobao, some of the other major online platforms that Chinese consumers use for gifting are Liwushuo (礼物说), Douyin (抖音), and Xiaohongshu (小红书).

Liwushuo (礼物说)



- **Professionally generated content (PGC):** Provide detailed gifting advice according to different occasions and recipients
- **App version:** Choose gifts on the App, and purchase gifts on Taobao or JD.com
- **WeChat mini program version:** Choose and purchase gifts on mini program

Douyin (抖音)



- **Livestream channels:** Provide detailed introduction of products and enable CRM
- **Influencer marketing:** Consumers give more credential to the products recommended by the influencers and celebrities that they like or follow
- **Incentives:** Limited-time discounts or limited-number special offers

Xiaohongshu (小红书)



- **Content type:** PGC and user generated content (UGC) of gifting advice
- **Livestream channels:** Detailed product showcase, special discounts and offers, and CRM
- **Xiaohongshu Mall:** Enable consumers conduct direct purchase by clicking the link in the posts

Sources: www.chinabaogao.com, Liwushuo, Douyin, and Xiaohongshu.

Chinese consumers use social media in search of the right gift

Chinese gift givers aim to make their loved ones happy, so they use social media to find the best gift ideas and seek validation from others to ensure their choices will bring joy to the recipients.

知乎 Zhihu

Consumers use Zhihu for gift ideas on **special occasions** and especially specifically for people close to them.

送礼怎么搭配更好？

第一：烟酒。哪个送礼场合能没有烟酒？这是王者礼物。

第二：茶叶。虽没有标品，但中国人都能接受，且礼盒包装好看，送礼有面子。

第三：应季水果。搭配烟酒丰富礼品的多样性，也是日常可送礼的能选择的。

第四：护肤品。见家长适合送对象妈妈的礼物，毕竟烟酒是爸爸的，妈妈总要有自己的礼物。

第五：按摩仪器。实用性比较强，适合送爸妈，比烟酒更贴心。

下面我主要是根据这六类给大家推荐合适的产品，你可根据自己的预算搭配，以保证送礼效果。

Fourth: Skincare products. Suitable gifts for **mothers** when **visiting parents**, after all tobacco and alcohol are more appropriate for **fathers**. Mothers should have their own special gifts.

Fifth: Massage devices. They are highly practical and suitable for gifting **for parents**, even more thoughtful than tobacco and alcohol.

小红书 Xiaohongshu

There are many gift ideas under a **specific price range** that can be given to **specific people**, including boyfriends/girlfriends, teachers, and parents.



300-500

Small luxurious gifts for a guy's birthday

Low budget yet dignified

Weibo

On Weibo, people share their gifting experiences and **actively seek posts about bad gifting experiences** to avoid making the similar mistakes.



"For a child's birthday, if you don't know what gift to choose, I **recommend this adorable singing and swinging bear**. It's incredibly cute, and the packaging is exquisite, making it a perfect gift. Little Flower loved it so much that she screamed with joy, and even after a long time has passed, she still adores it. At night, you can turn off the music and cuddle with it while sleeping."

Sources: Zhihu, Xiaohongshu, and Weibo.

Chinese consumers still place importance on offline channels when purchasing gifts

Offline channels remain important despite the prevalence of online gift purchases. In fact, offline channels ranked second overall in popularity for gift purchases, according to an iiMedia Research report. Chain stores and dealers are major types of offline channels.

Chain stores



Buying from brand chain stores **enables direct interaction** with employees and better gift selection and purchasing. At popular bakery chain Ganso's stores, customers **can get up to a 5% discount** by placing group orders through store managers.

Sources: 2021 Research Report on Development Trend and Consumption Behavior of China's Gift Industry, iiMedia Research, sohu.com

Image Sources: Ganso and Xiaohongshu.

Supermarkets and hypermarkets



When buying gifts from supermarkets and hypermarkets, consumers can **conveniently compare products and assess their quality and design** from a wide range of products. They can also get special edition gift boxes, which may only be available offline.



Case studies



Photos Source: Xiaohongshu Users 金黄色的大帆儿, 是藍, and _Siovan.

Be & Cheery 百草味 leading with creative Chinese New Year gift packaging

Be & Cherry, acquired by PepsiCo in 2020, is a top snack brand with the second largest share in the nuts industry. Renowned for its healthy and convenient snacks, its captivating gift packaging, especially for the Chinese New Year, garners widespread attention.

Strategies

Be & Cherry achieved success with its **innovative gift packaging** in 2022, capturing 80% of the nut gift baskets market through various strategies:

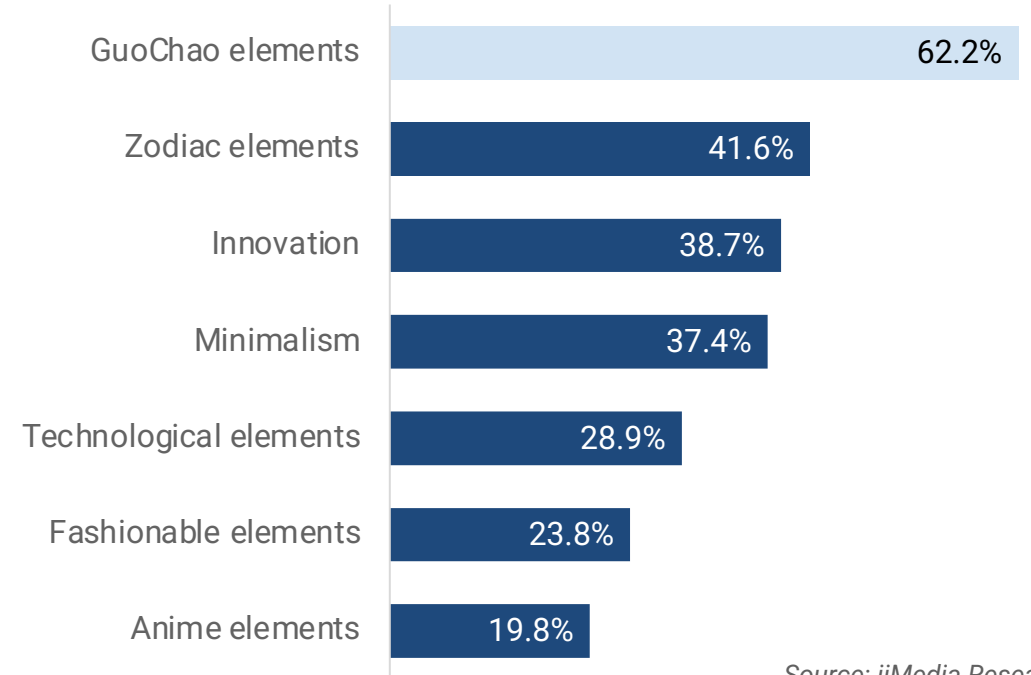
- **Guochao packaging:** added well-known mythological characters, new year wishes, classic new year scenes such as family gatherings
- **Differentiated packaging:** use simpler and 1.2 times larger packaging for offline channels than online channels to enhance visual appeal and attract attention
- **Party size:** launched individual product packages aimed at meeting the consumer demand for home stocking and sharing
- **Differentiated pricing:** priced gift box between 59-300 yuan, meeting diverse consumer gift-giving needs with low, medium, and high price ranges
- **Merchandise:** collaborated with local brands and artists including calligraphy artist Zhu Jingyi to create limited-edition merchandise



Image Sources: Xinhua News Agency.

Sources: Foodaily, Xinhua News Agency, and The Paper.

Consumer preference for Chinese New Year gift box packaging



Source: iiMedia Research.

Many Chinese people opt for gift box packaging that **incorporates Guochao elements** such as dragons, lanterns, and Chinese characters (e.g., 福 meaning "good fortune").

Usmile's winning formula: Co-branding to make product gift-worthy

Usmile has quickly risen to become one of China's top three electric toothbrush brands, gaining popularity as a go-to gift due to its appealing design. Its rapid success is credited to its continuous collaboration with artists and brands from various industries.

Usmile, founded in 2015, is a new player in the oral care industry that has challenged established brands like Colgate, Crest, and Yunnan Baiyao. Its product packaging has received significant attention and has won 16 International Design Awards, making it suitable for various age groups.

Strategies

- **Aesthetic packaging:** suitable for gifting
- **Matching packaging:** matching the packaging patterns up with the product patterns
- **Online channels:** Taobao (淘宝), Douyin (抖音), and Xiaohongshu (小红书)
- **Offline channels:** Sephora, Watsons, and pop-up events
- **Collaborations:** Create new product and packaging patterns with museums like The Metropolitan Museum of Art, designers, specialized organizations, and other brands

Image Sources: Usmile and Sina.

Sources: usmile Official Website and Ipsos.

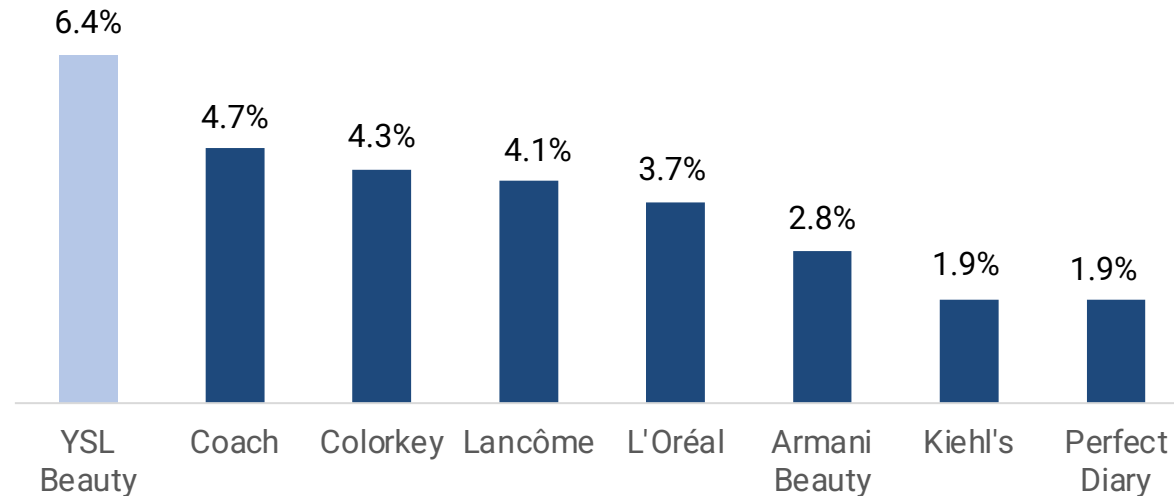


Usmile created a Valentine's Day-themed Roman column electric toothbrush to appeal to couples. It also collaborated with an LVMH designer to attract to younger generation. Through these collaborations, it has successfully been able to **expand its consumer base**.

YSL Beauty × NBA: Targeting boyfriends and husbands to sell makeup

In 2023, YSL Beauty was the most mentioned beauty and skincare brand in content related to Valentine's Day. It teamed up with the NBA on Tencent Sports in 2021 to create year-round Valentine's Day campaigns. This collaboration was a result of the shared target audience of YSL's Valentine's Day gift boxes and the NBA - specifically, male consumers between 18 and 34 years old with a high level of spending power.

Beauty and Skincare brands' proportion of mentions of "Valentine's Day"-related content in 2023



YSL received the highest proportion of mentions related to "Valentine's Day" among the top six beauty and skincare brands on social media platforms during the period from January 7th to February 4th, 2023.

Image Source: YSL Beauty WeChat Official Account.

Sources: QuestMobile and sohu.com.



- **Sleek and romantic heart-shaped packaging**
- **Variations:** contain different products in different gift boxes to cater for different recipients' preferences
- **Before games:** splash Ads on Tencent Sports app
- **During games:** interstitial Ads on Tencent Sports app
- **After games:**
 - Collaboration with female sports KOLs
 - First 150 consumers converted from games can get free membership of Tencent Sports

Nike's viral 2020 video offers a fresh take on gifting red envelopes

Nike's video celebrating the Year of the Rat garnered a remarkable 4.8 million views in just 2 weeks. The ad creatively showcased the Chinese tradition of polite refusal, while seamlessly integrating the brand into the narrative and raising brand awareness and interest.



Image Source: Nike's YouTube Channel, "Lunar New Year: The Great Chase"

“At Nike, we inspire everyone to make sport a daily habit; even through the festivities of Chinese New Year. The spot takes a playful approach on a Chinese tradition **reminding the audience to celebrate and have fun, to stay active during a time when we typically eat a bit too much.**”

– Steve Tsoi, Vice President of Marketing for Greater China

Source: Carnyx Group.

Nike's viral campaign video showcased a deep understanding of Chinese culture and its red envelope gifting tradition by:

- **Emphasizing the family-centric culture of China** through depictions of families visiting each other during Chinese New Year.
- Highlighting the **social role dynamics in red envelope gifting**, where older relatives give to younger ones until they achieve independence.
- Illustrating the **practice of polite refusal** before accepting red envelopes.
- **Symbolizing the rat's qualities** through the playful chase between the aunt and niece.

In addition to making it culturally relevant, the video was successful because it **took a humorous and playful approach** regarding red envelopes, exaggerating the long distances and years gifting red packages can take. It did so without giving insensitive, stereotypical, and disrespectful nuances.

Zodiac sign	Personality traits	Year
 1. Rat	Intelligent, adaptable, quick-witted	2032
 2. Ox	Reliable, patient, determined	2033
 3. Tiger	Brave, confident, enthusiastic	2034
 4. Rabbit	Gentle, sensitive, diplomatic	2023
 5. Dragon	Energetic, confident, charismatic	2024
 6. Snake	Wise, intuitive, determined	2025
 7. Horse	Energetic, friendly, adventurous	2026
 8. Sheep	Gentle, empathetic, creative	2027
 9. Monkey	Intelligent, clever, intuitive	2028
 10. Rooster	Hardworking, organized, honest	2029
 11. Dog	Loyal, honest, faithful	2030
 12. Pig	Compassionate, generous, diligent	2031

Jo Malone entices young people with a bear-themed Qixi Festival concept

For the the Qixi Festival in 2023, Jo Malone appealed to its young consumers with a bear-themed packaging, celebrity-influencer collaborations, and bear-adorned stores.



Jo Malone introduced a limited-edition packaging with the shape and nearly the same size of a teddy bear.



Jo Malone collaborated with Chinese celebrities, such as Wang Yibo and Chen Muchi who are popular among young women, and KOLs on Weibo and XHS to promote their products.



Jo Malone decorated its stores with bears and added interactive activities like crane machine for a cute, playful, and immersive experience.

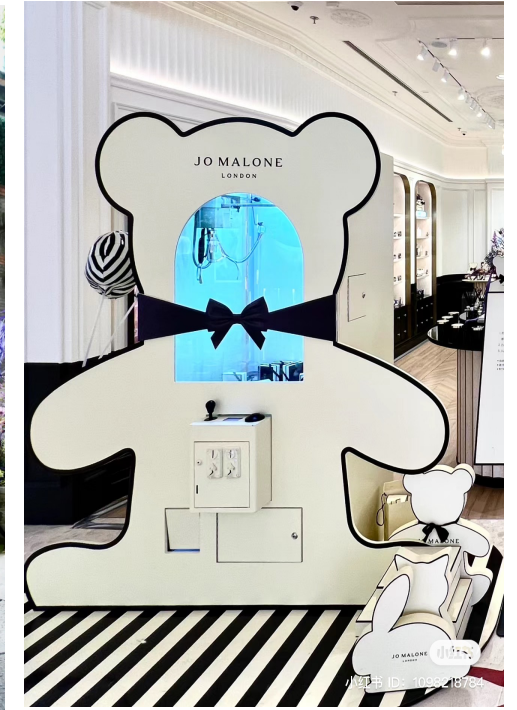


Image Sources: Xiaohongshu and Sohu.



ABOUT


daxueconsulting
beijing shanghai hongkong

Our mission is to guide businesses to holistic growth in China

Through our market research and strategy consulting, we equip businesses with the knowledge and guidance to achieve growth in China and beyond

Our Values

Our clients' goals are our goals

We see ourselves as an extension of the client's business in China or their target country, hence, we advise them as if we were in their shoes and investing along with them.

Embrace change enthusiastically

Similar to how markets are constantly changing, our mindset is also always evolving. We value routine only when it helps us improve and we value change because it helps to keep pace with our time.

Freedom enriches creativity & responsibility

Freedom to manage and envision her or his mission increases the sense of responsibility to that mission.

Knowledge is meant to be shared

While our projects team dives deep to provide catered research to clients, the media team shares insights publicly. At the same time, we foster a culture of sharing knowledge in our team, each individual works to increase their own knowledge and freely shares ideas each other.

Intellectual humility gives clarity

Only through the lenses of humility can knowledge be seen clearly. At Daxue Consulting, we are humble toward science and the truth. We interpret data in a way that lets it speak for itself, even if contradicts our hypothesis.

Our APAC Network



Partner offices:

- Philippines
- Malaysia
- Japan
- Thailand
- Indonesia
- Singapore

Our Clients

400+ clients since 2012



Clients' testimonials



JAPAC Revenue Strategy
Manager @ **Twitter**

*"Thanks so much for your hard work over the last several months and the multitude of presentations that you have done to [our] stakeholders. **I highly appreciate the quality of work and also the patience with which you have answered the questions.***

Overall the work has been very well received and has been very educational for our teams in Singapore, New York and San Francisco. We will be using a lot of this information as we make critical investment decisions into China over the next several months.

*Please do pass on our thanks to the entire Daxue team - hope you do take a moment with the entire team to celebrate the success and outcome of this project! **Also, I would be happy for you to use my reference for any future clients.***



Managing Director @
Palmer Hargreaves

*"**The communication, structure, problem solving and support we received from the team throughout the project was fantastic, and it provided us with the ideal structure to keep the client engaged and confident of the deliverables.***

In terms of the outputs / deliverables, I was very pleased with the level of detail in the reporting, speed of response to questions and the flexibility to adjust and provide alternative output views.

*Should we be in the position of providing similar support to our clients in future, **I would have absolutely no hesitation in contacting daxue consulting again, working in partnership to deliver a high-quality solution.***



E-commerce Manager
@ **LIDL**

*"Thank you so much for your and your team's support regarding our China eCommerce project. **The feasibility study was very well delivered and useful to give us insights about China market.** As business evolves, we definitely need to keep abreast of the latest developments to cope with the rapid change of the market. **In this sense, we will continue to need your support to our business growth.***



Director Ecommerce
Marketing EMEA @ **Ubisoft**

*"Thank you for your answer. I've been through the presentation and **I'm very impressed by all the useful detailed information I've found. Thank you so much!***

STAY UPDATED ON CHINA MARKET INSIGHTS



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<https://www.linkedin.com/company/daxue-consulting>



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