

V1.1, OCTOBER 2017



You Have Cracked Your WeChat Strategy, Zeroed in on the Role Your Account Content Will Play in Your Followers' Lives & on Your Business?

HERE'S THE PERFECT GUIDE TO MAKE THE BEST OF IT.

WHO IS THIS PIECE FOR?

- **CMOs & marketing executives** looking for a great reference guide to give to their team for optimized content ROI
- **Digital marketing managers** in search of a best practices baseline to benchmark their team's output
- **Marketing executives & content managers** upping their WeChat game

WHAT BENEFITS CAN YOU EXPECT FROM THIS GUIDE?

- ✓ A thorough understanding of WeChat content's key performance factors
- ✓ Integrating best techniques and tools for optimal WeChat content publishing
- ✓ Ensuring consistency and quality of content
- ✓ Producing content that is better at engaging and converting WeChat readers



Shijuezhi broke absolute WeChat article reading and engagements records in Sept. 2017 with a relatively simple article : a heartwarming collection of beautiful love moments.

The article alone raked 0.5 M new followers to the account

Table of Contents

1. First Impressions
2. Article Layout
3. Article Body
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5. Article Exit / Conversion Management

01. First Impressions

- With ever-increasing content overload and competition for eyeballs, there is greater pressure to have your content stand out in the constant flood of notifications the average WeChat user receives on a daily basis
- Quality, relevant WeChat article content is only “half the work”; visual appeal and packaging is just as important to make sure it will have maximum reach
- Best performing articles are a balance between good packaging and how good the content is

WeChat Content's Useful Lifespan Being 2-3 Days, First Impressions are Crucial for Maximum Reach

- The average lifespan of a WeChat article is 2-3 days
- During this time, each piece will receive 80% of its total lifetime reads

⇒ **Thus, it is critical to make sure that published articles make the most impact in this period for maximum reach**



Typical read patterns as shown on the default WeChat backend, and planning and publishing tool Kawo



Order of Most Impactful Attention-grabbing Elements : Header Image > Title > Lead-in > Intro

ARTICLE PUSH

SINGLE ARTICLE PUSH



Header
image
ratio

~9:5

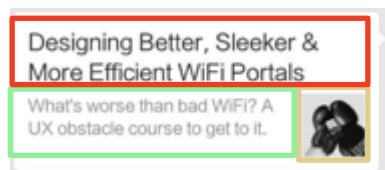


~9:5

1:1

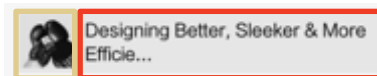
ARTICLE SHARING

IN CONVERSATION



1:1

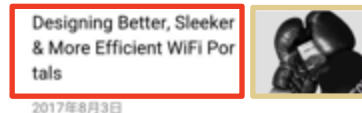
ON MOMENTS



1:1

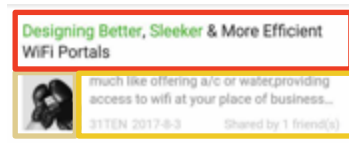
ARTICLE SEARCH

OFFICIAL ACCOUNT HISTORY



4:3

WECHAT SEARCH MENU



1:1

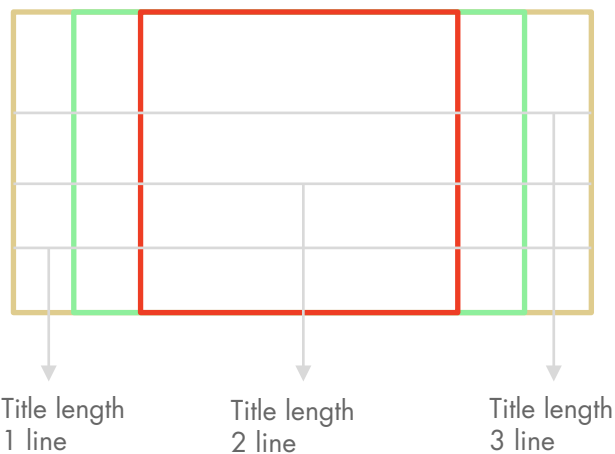
- Cover image/header is a crucial visual element as it usually attracts the most attention
- Full size header image is particularly important when aiming at high reading rates among account followers
- Titles, then lead-ins are second most impactful for opening rates

FIRST IMPRESSION ELEMENTS

- Header Image
- Title
- Lead-in
- Intro

Header Image Crop Varies by Different WeChat Touchpoints

WECHAT HEADER IMAGE CROPPING



- Lone & first article in push notification = ~9:5 and slight croppings depending on screen ratios (full size)
- Official Account history & top stories = 4:3 crop
- Everything else = 1:1 crop (2°-10° article, sharing snippet, Moments sharing, WeChat search engine)

PUSH NOTIFICATION



CONTENT HISTORY BROWSING



ARTICLE SEARCH



SHARING IN CHAT WINDOW



Maximizing Header Impact by Placing Key Visual Information in Central “Golden Square”



- Being displayed in pushes, full size image header has the most impact on WeChat article opening rates
- Keep in mind that actual surface displayed varies depending on phones resolutions and ratios (slight cropping variation on the left and right)
- For multi article pushes, the length of the title should be carefully considered to avoid the overlay covering any key visual information



- 4:3 zone is used while someone is going through the OA article history



- **The “Golden Square”,** or centered 1:1 Zone, is the only area that will be displayed through all the article presentation and sharing formats. **Most, if not all relevant visual elements should be within this zone**

Download Our Free WeChat Header Image Template Here

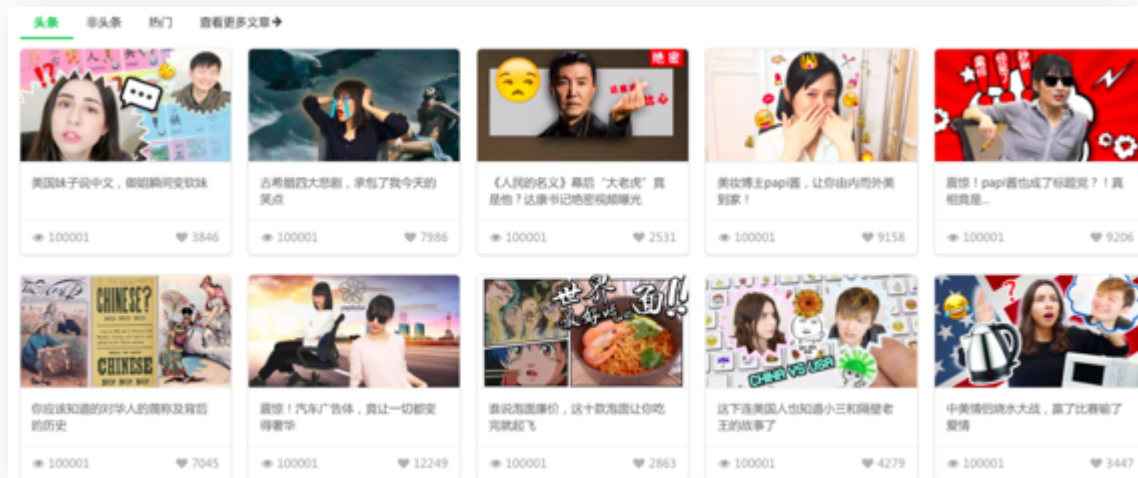
Save time and create consistently formatted header images with this ultra convenient tool loaded with the latest WeChat cropping grids

Get your own editable file (PPT and PSD format)

Scan or click here : <http://qr28.cn/FgsEXy>



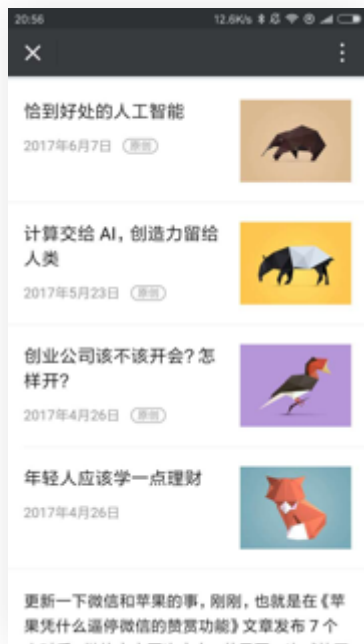
Sample Testing Header Image is Now a Best Practice, Especially for Large Follower Bases



- Especially useful practice for big accounts with massive followings
- Captions, emojis, Snapchat-type filters, memes, and collages are commonly used for entertaining/light-reading content aimed at young audiences and work as identifiers
- Additional tools for easy cover production and editing:
 - [Chuangkit](#)
 - [Canva](#)



Building Consistency and Stronger Brand Imprint with Continuity in Header Design



ID: knbknb



ID: ishansong



ID: jiemojp

- Especially useful for media-type content strategies
- Works best for content series, creates the expectation of regularity
- Visual element of thumbnails in a combined push can improve cohesion in branding
- Can be achieved either
 - Through pictures using similar filters
 - Custom graphics or captions representing a single theme or series or text when viewed together

Embedding Messages in Sub-piece Thumbnails as an Additional Branding Opportunity



"Welcome to the G20 Summit"



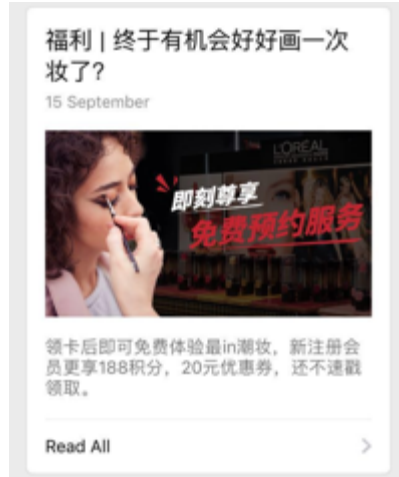
Member Day of China Southern Airlines



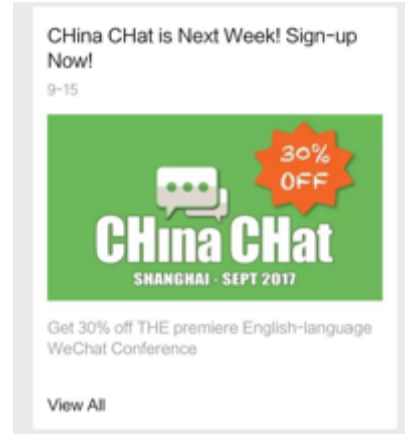
"Go Go Go, China women's national volleyball team!"

Increasing Opening Rates on Pushes and Shares with Catchy Lead-ins

SINGLE ARTICLE PUSH



ID: LOR_PARIS



ID: China-Channel

ARTICLE SHARING IN CHATS



- Leads in displayed on single article pushes and in article share widgets
- To craft a compelling summary
 - find a pertinent hook
 - stick to a central theme
 - evoke the desired emotion : suspense, urgency, validation or anticipation
- Maximum permitted length is 120 characters regardless of language

Defining Reader Expectations with Crafting Compelling Titles

- Composing a good title is an art by itself
 - 5 most common types of titles that can yield increased reading rates :
 - Question
 - "Stop Your Dog from Barking Constantly" => "Do You Know the One Trick That Will Stop Your Dog from Barking Constantly?"
 - List of tips
 - "X Ways | Tips | Tricks To {Solve Your Problem}"
 - "How-To"
 - Benefit-presenting
 - "Get a Good Night's Sleep by Using These Relaxation Techniques Before Bed"
 - Why/How
 - "Memory Foam Mattresses Help Ease Back Pain" => "How Memory Foam Mattresses Help Ease Back Pain"
 - Titles for long-running content plans can be presented using TV series-like tiles => Season I: Theme, Episode I: Topic
 - Use flags in titles when publishing multi-themed or multi-format content in your OA: e.g. download | event | analysis | trends, etc.
 - Use [tag], tag | or #tag# (Weibo style double hash) as separators
- ⇒ **BUT avoid clickbait titles if content is of insufficient reader value:** Creating or relying on hype on thin, low-value content might give good short-term results but ultimately creates a trust deficit

Tip: Use title testing tools, e.g. <https://coschedule.com/headline-analyzer> for English titles



Boss vs Leader: 25 Major Differences

2017年9月8日



[EVENT] March 22d : New Trends in Corporate Wellness in China

2017年3月16日



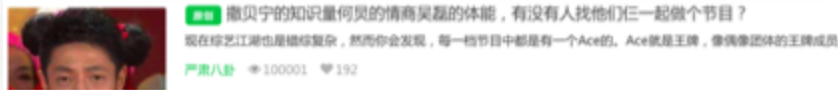
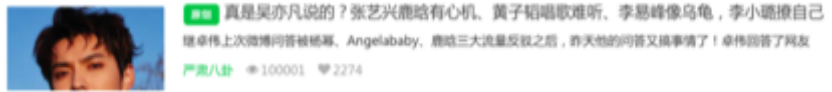
Mikey J 徐

49"



Sharing an example of an account playing with the sharing snippet fields to lure users into thinking it is an audio message

Improving Readership and SEO With Long Titles



- WeChat's current character limit for titles is set at 64 regardless of language
- WeChat articles titles tend to grow in average length (source: Newrank)
 - 2015: 15-18 characters
 - 2016: 18-20
 - 2017: 21-23 characters
- Despite traffic being still marginal in 2017, long titles help SEO within WeChat and Sogou search

02. Article Layout

- The arrangement of copy or images in the body is the next factor to consider in presentation
- Details such as spacing, text size and orientation determine the ease with which readers can skim and consume content
- If done right, article layout elements support reading flow without creating fatigue; conversely, bad layouts can be content killers

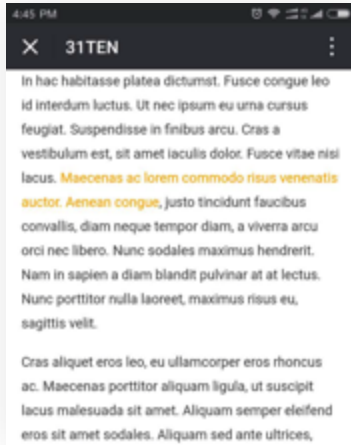
Improving Trust and Branding Through Uniform Styling

公众号排版色彩参数

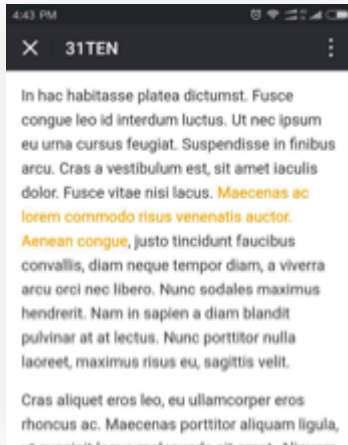
标题颜色	正文颜色	注释颜色
	#3f3f3f	
#f79646	#4f4f4f	#d99694
#3daad6	#7f7f7f	#a5a5a5
#2e6e9e	#545454	
	#595959	

- Distinct color palette for content can makes the overall piece look more polished and aesthetically pleasing
- Colors used should be consistent and well integrated with branding
- When done successfully, can be immediately recognizable as a signature element

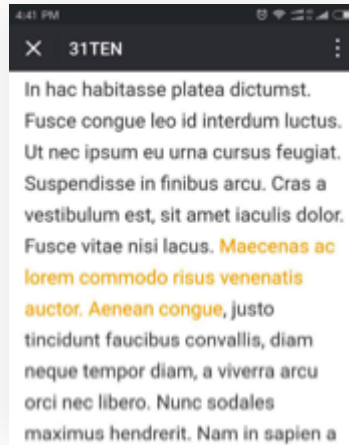
Using 16px as Best Compromise Between Aesthetics and Readability



14px



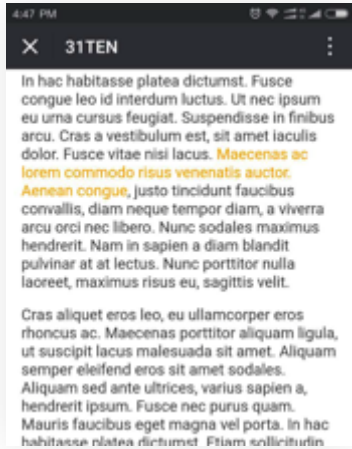
16px



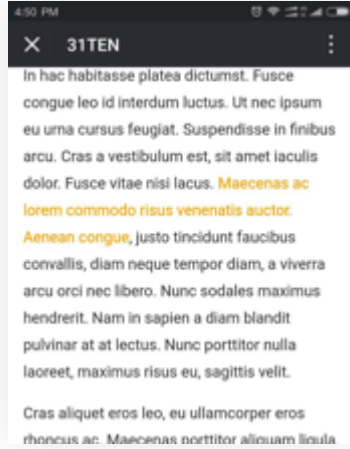
18px

- Standard range is 14-18 px, 16px is used most commonly by OAs
- If article is text heavy, 16-18px works well
- if the content style is “delicate” / mostly visual (e.g. luxury, lifestyle pieces), best to go with 12-14px

Easier Reading with Optimized Paragraph and Line Spacing



1.0



1.75



- Line spacing set between 1.0 - 1.75 causes the least strain on eyes
- Page margins should be 12 – 15px
- Chinese articles read best when justified
- Word spacing: 1px in Chinese
- Text without breaks and spacing lacks clear flow and is harder and less enjoyable to read

Ensuring Proper Display on Desktop with Centered Images

- WeChat desktop readership increasing, especially among B2B audiences & users utilizing WeChat as their central professional communication channel
- WeChat aligns images left by default, not centering images leads to a broken look when viewed on desktop



LEFT ALIGNED IMAGES



CENTERED IMAGES

Added Creative Storytelling Using Landscape Layouts



- Landscape display still vastly underutilized in WeChat articles
- Suitable categories: art, clothing collections/lookbooks, event announcements, television and film promos, educational diagrams, flowcharts, frameworks and infographics etc.



Dedicated WeChat Article Editors Are Now the De Facto Standard

- Editing from default WeChat backend very limited in terms of creative layout and content
- Using dedicated editors allow much better customizations
- Most popular options:
 - [Xiumi](#)
 - [iPaiban](#)
 - [pb.ishangtong](#)



03. Article Body

- Most brands aim at creating a win-win situation, where readers are satisfied with time spent on the piece and OAs are able to improve readership, awareness and influence
- With WeChat content maturing at a very fast pace, content best practices are emerging and should be the baseline for all content manager and WeChat marketers

Providing Busy Readers with Reading Estimates

微信爆文最新风格：超长标题、超白话文、超级互动？

原创 2017-03-02 艾营斯坦 第九聪明的人

全文约 1500字 | 阅读时长 3分钟

ID: Linkin_dyh

短篇阅读 | 远在天边 by 蒂姆·温顿

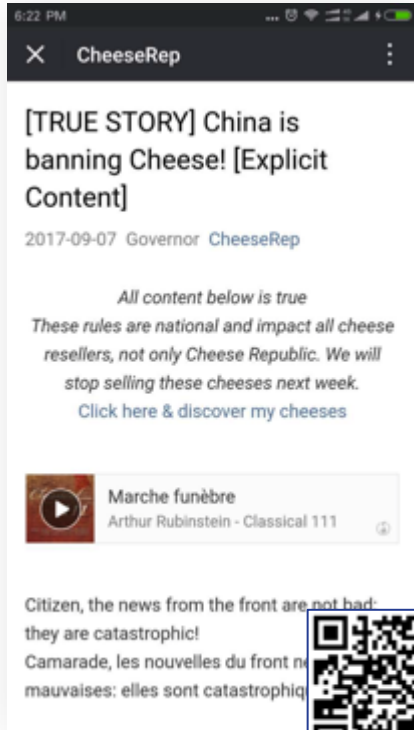
2016年11月7日 星期一



她倚在书架上，站了片刻，朝门口望去。她呼吸的时候，那张纸在她双乳之间像是通了电流。

ID: Mmmono

Providing Necessary Context and Helping Retain Attention with Introductions



- Opening text confirms the reader's expectations as created by the header, title and lead in
- Clearly state the value of reading the full article
- Avoid repeating the title in intro
- Refer to the root problem, concern or interest
- Good place to use persuasive facts or statistics

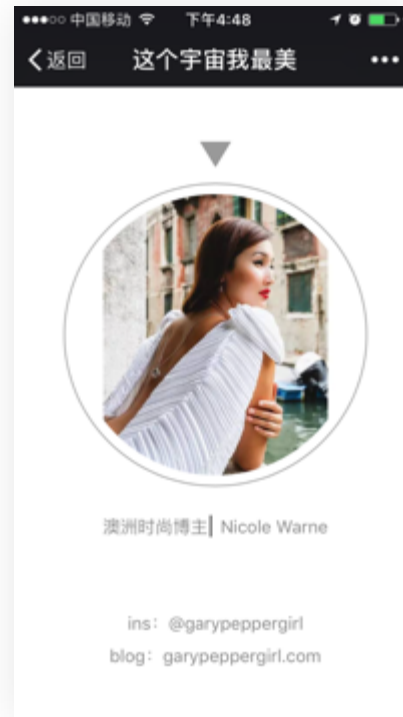
Boosting Perceived Reliability and Authenticity Using Author Credits

IN THE ARTICLE AUTHOR FIELD

Character limit =
8 for Chinese, 16 for English



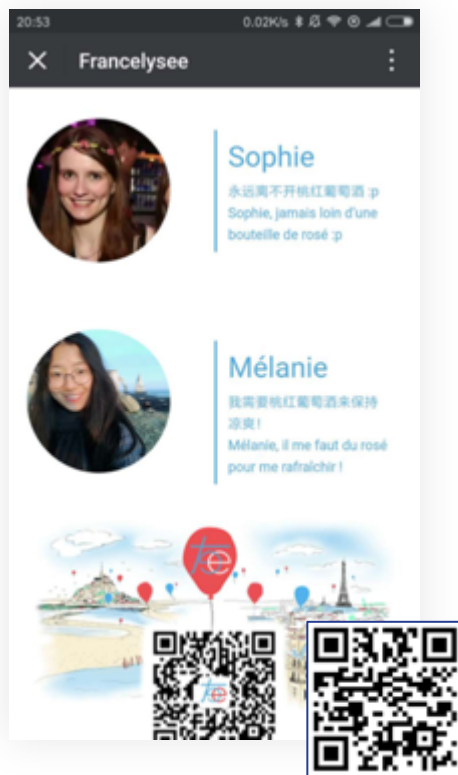
INSERTING AN AUTHOR PROFILE IN ARTICLE BODY



- Lends credibility, authenticity and transparency to content
- Helps readers relate better with the brand/publication and builds trust
- Particularly crucial when pursuing an influencer building strategy
- Gives recognition to the writer and an opportunity for readers to reach out to them, follow them and look up their other work
- Motivates team members to share their expertise and ensures they feel a personal sense of responsibility for the quality of content

Further Humanizing Content with Author Bios

Author bios can also be included at the bottom, right before the call to action/QR code



Two good practices combined : presenting the author at the top with a dual estimate for reading time (10 minutes for thorough reading, 4 for quick skim)

Unlocking Creativity with GIFs

- Great for visual storytelling, allow to remove limitations of embedded video files
- Cheap and effective : can be produced using a cellphone and a couple of apps or with online GIF generators
- Perfect for transitions, effects, short length videos (<10 s)
- With lower attention spans, GIFs allow to publish bite-sized pieces of content in a likeable (and hopefully shareable) way



Stunning fade-ins using GIFs

Dramatically Strengthening Production Value Using Multimedia-heavy Content

TEXT OVERLAID IMAGES



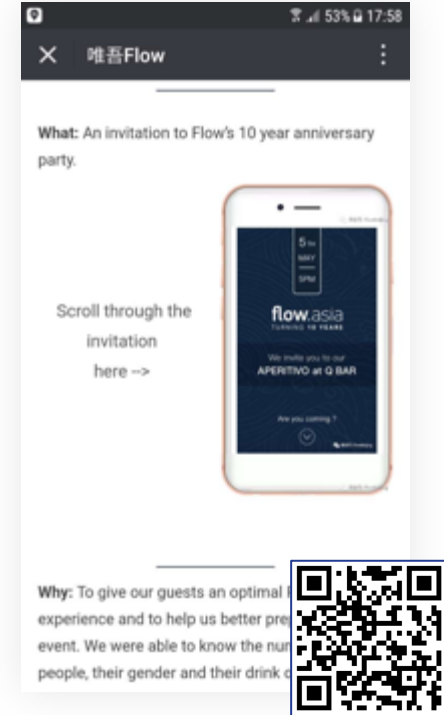
- Enables to brand the background of the article page
- Overlaying copy on an image allows text indexing and can give SEO boost

CAROUSEL



- Showcasing products or "steps"
- Optimizes screen space usage in the article

PARALLAX



- Instantly engaging readers
- Interactive storytelling

Rules and Standards for Multimedia Content

IMAGES

- Formats: PNG, JPG, GIF
- Size: ≤2Mb
- Best width for Images in articles is 640 pixels
- Images uploaded on WeChat are recompressed and may lose quality

Original image

WeChat image



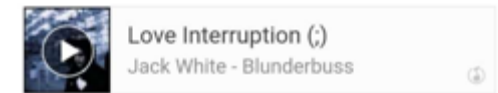
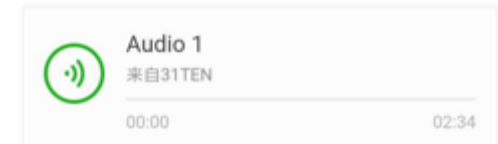
VIDEO

- Video Hosted on WeChat
 - Format:
 - Common online streaming media formats: mp4, flv, f4v, webm
 - Mobile device formats: m4v, mov, 3gp, 3g2
 - Size: ≤20 Mb
 - Length: ≤10 Hr
 - No Ads
 - Using video codecs like H.265 may allow to compress videos enough to host on WeChat
- Tencent video sharing platforms
 - No size restrictions
 - Has ads

AUDIO

- Audio Hosted on WeChat
 - Formats: mp3, wma, wav, amr
 - Size: ≤30Mb
 - Length: ≤30 min.
 - No need to submit track for review
 - No ads
- Clickable music embedded on QQ music
 - No size restrictions
 - Track needs to be submitted and reviewed
 - No ads

Embedded WeChat audio



QQ music track

04. Original Content Certification

- In response to the problem of content theft and to promote a more controlled form of sharing of quality content creation, WeChat introduced the 'original content' verification feature
- Content producers thus recognized by WeChat have an advantage in promoting traffic to their OA
- All accounts can curate their feed by sharing original content tagged articles, thus offering a good selection to readers without having to invest that time in creating the shared content

Original Content Certification is Granted After Reaching a Sufficient Track Record

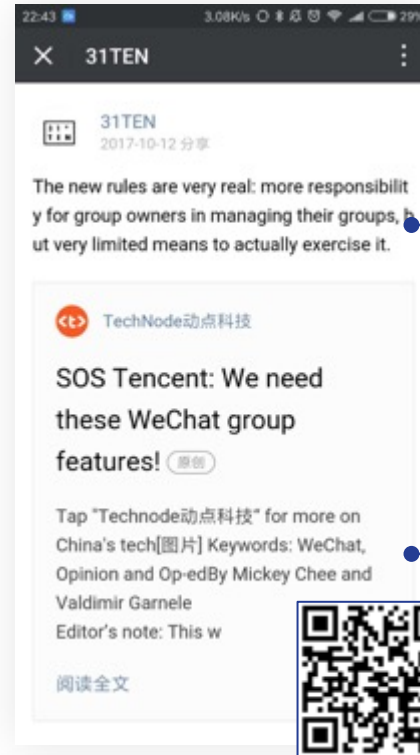


ID: Jing_Daily_China

- Content producers fulfilling the following criteria are sent an invite from WeChat to use this feature:
 - **Consistent** publication schedule
 - **High-quality content** that is well researched and considered valuable
 - A history of publishing articles **compliant with local laws** as well as WeChat **community guidelines**
- Invitations cannot be solicited, and requirements themselves are fairly opaque
 - No published specific minimum period of operation for accounts
 - Some OAs receive the invitation within weeks of launching

Reach, Legitimacy, and Visibility Enhanced by Original Content Verification

- Once invitation received and feature activated, content producers can use the "original content declaration" button in the backend when publishing to claim full ownership of the content
- Original content accounts also first to be considered by Tencent for its display partner programs
- Beyond the default sharing option, OAs whitelisted by certified accounts can either share entire articles (with a link to the verified OA automatically displayed at the bottom), or make edits if provided the permission by original owner
- Enables certified OAs to access a wider audience when allowing other OAs to reshare, without losing ownership of their material
- **Remarkably useful for KOL promotions** since KOL accounts need only share existing original content



STANDARD SHARING (SNIPPET)

140 characters introductory text

First 140 characters of the article

WHITELISTED REPOST

When whitelisted to repost original content, WeChat automatically generates a link to the original content at the bottom of the article page

05. Article Exit / Conversion Management

- Beyond brand awareness and engagement, most businesses on WeChat need conversion to show ROI on their social budget and resources
- Default WeChat article conversion points (read more link, account link on top) by themselves are generic and lack context or urgency
- The ideal call to action (CTA) needs to show clear benefits to readers : it must be contextually relevant, rewarding and cohesive with the branding and content style of the OA

Improving Conversion by Using Closing Comments as a Bridge Between the Closing CTA and Article Body

- Best practice is to wrap up article with a call to action to encourage
 - Following the account
 - Comments
 - Sharing
 - Moving to a specific page
 - Clicking on the 'read more' link
- Put the hook before the actual CTA



ID: vicechina



ID: zhangxiaohanoliver



ID: ikea-cn

Managing the 'Read more' Conversion Gateway

- One of the most obvious exit points of an article, making it a key point of conversion
- Since can point to any URL, crucial to to attach a visual or text CTA with an arrow pointing to the read more link
- **Always best to enable the link:** if no specific conversion flow planned, link it by default to your account content history



ID: restaurant_hunter



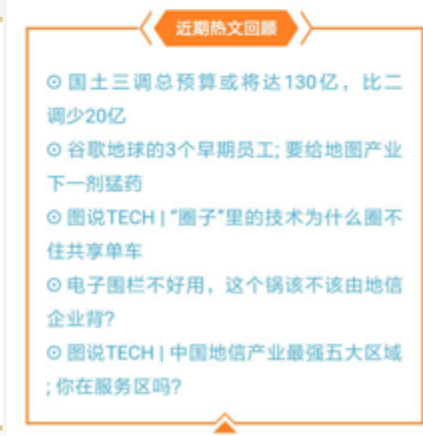
Article covering iced coffee and leading to a Nespresso store on a landing page for special edition iced coffee capsules. A CTA would have made it more effective

Extending Old Content Lifespan with Horizontal Navigation

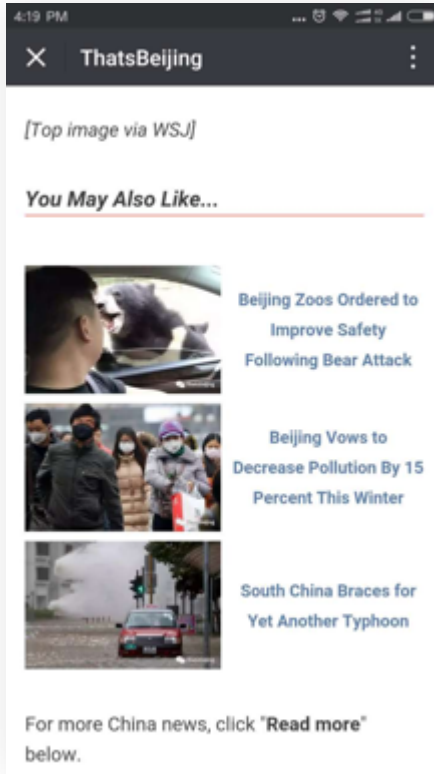
Mini Program



Older articles



ID: ThatsBeijing



ID: news_3snews

- Keeping readers engaged by including links to other owned content at the bottom of article
- Can be arranged by category:
 - Popular/trending
 - Related topics
 - Recent articles
- **To note:**
 - WeChat Pay needs to be enabled for links to external sources
 - OAs without WeChat Pay can only use links to their own published content

Testing Linking Style That Generates Most Clickthroughs

LINKS EMBEDDED WITHIN
CUSTOM DESIGNED COVERS



ID: qq_qmp

CATEGORY KEYWORDS

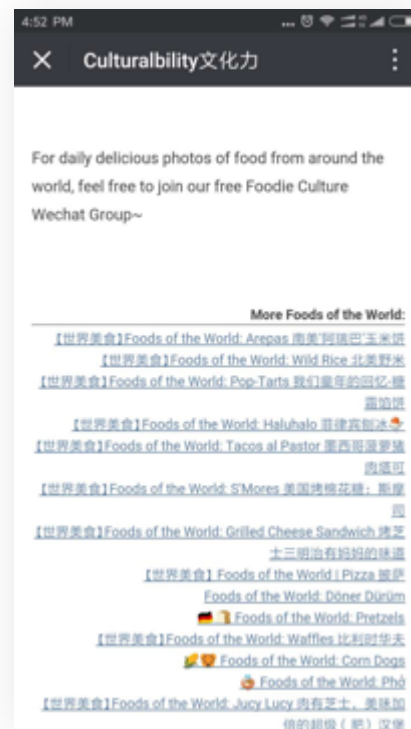


ID: qiechihe

FULL ARTICLE TITLES



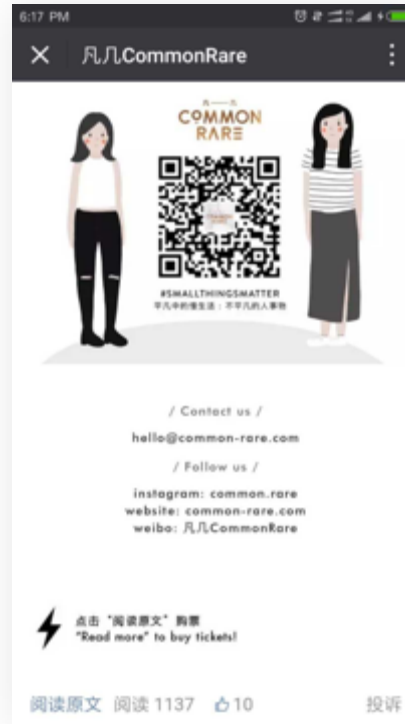
ID: thecity2015



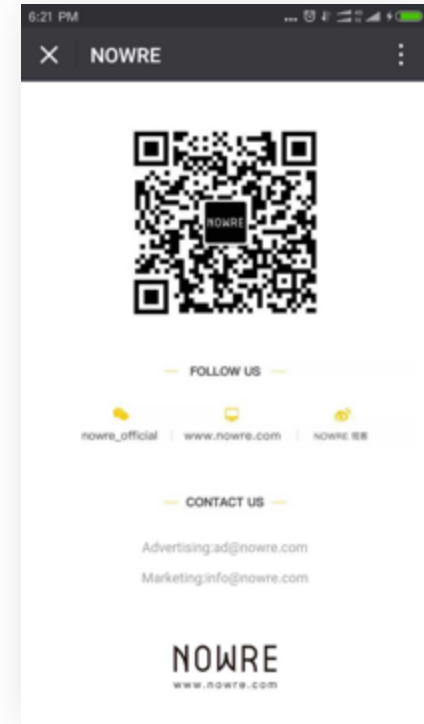
ID: culturalbility

Maximizing Conversion with User-friendly CTAs

- **Best practice:** Information included in the CTA should be **user-accessible** instead of being trapped in an image
- Most phones allow to direct call when selecting a phone number
- OAs lose conversion opportunities by embedding phone numbers, WeChat or email IDs, or URLs in images and expecting users to memorize this info
- Also allows WeChat to index them



ID: CommonRare



ID: Nowre_official

All key information in these CTAs can be selected and copy/pasted

QR Codes a Key Tool for Conversion

- Readers increasingly expect ease of movement, QRs now widely accepted as an exit point
- For non savvy audiences (e.g. 40+ readers), best to remind the long press principle on QRs
- QRs creates best conversion rates when placed in a seamless experience, end of the article is the most natural placement



ID: AskJerry



ID: ikea-cn



ID: Jing_daily_china



ID: China-Classifieds

Creative QR Codes Convert Better in the Current Saturated Content Environment



ID: lovepullandbear



ID: 奥迪

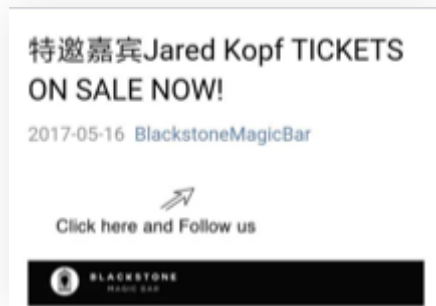


ID: ellechina

Maximizing Conversion with Visual Indicators

Supporting Exit Points and CTAs

- Arrows and other visual cues help guide the reader's attention
- Design should not detract from presentation, but be visible enough to get attention
- Typically for directing action for likes, clicks on external links, get readers to follow the official account, generate comments



ID: blackstonemagicbar



ID: LANCOME_CHINA



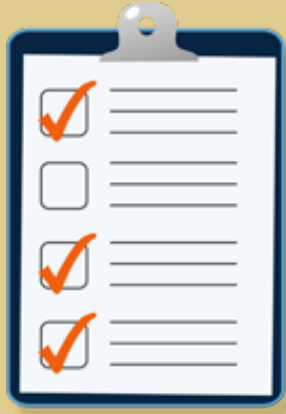
ID: ThatsShanghai



ID: ellechina



ID: lqiyi_vip



BONUS :

Download our **60-item** content checklist
to publish kickass WeChat articles
every time

Scan or click here : <http://qro2.cn/Ef6Gop>



Resources & Credits

MORE WECHAT CONTENT BEST PRACTICES :

- FREE RESOURCES:



This fantastic Zhihu [conversation](#) (CN)



WeChat account MJhuaren (EN)

- PAID:



www.chozan.co

Ultimate resource platform for Chinese Social Media learning and management (beyond WeChat)
Use promo code "31TEN" for an added free month subscription

WARM THANKS FOR THEIR INPUT AND REVIEWS:

- Mikey @MJhuaren
- Vincent & Sophie @France Elysee
- Thibault @Le Wagon
- Louis @Fred & Farid
- Clemence @PPTPop
- The KAWO team
- And all the contributors we bothered with our dedicated WeChat group !

Need Help with Your WeChat Strategy? Get in Touch.



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DIGITAL STRATEGIST

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/marioajuarez>

mario@31ten.network