WeChat Mini-Programs: You don’t need an App for China (or do you?)

31Ten, January 30th 2019
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Get Ready for China!

The EU SME Centre is an EU Commission funded project which helps EU SMEs prepare to do business in China by providing them with a range of information, advice, training and support services.

The Centre is implemented by a consortium of six partners and was established in October 2010. It successfully completed its first phase in July 2014 and has now entered its second phase which will run until 6th July 2019.
31Ten is a digital agency specialized in building tailor-made web applications for WeChat: Mini Programs, "H5" or integrations with existing customer-facing or enterprise-grade solutions. In 3 years of existence, we have served 40+ brands across 90+ projects.

31° 10’N: our name is derived from Shanghai’s latitude, where we are based to serve as a compass that guides our clients in leveraging China’s super app to reach, engage, convert and serve an increasingly agile customer. Our constant R&D ensures we will help you choose the best interface, user flow and WeChat infrastructure to make your project a success. So get in touch with one of our expert consultants today and we’ll show you how we can can build your WeChat footprint effectively, together.

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- Avène
- Pierre & Vacances
- Publicis Sapiens
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1. What they are
2. Where MPs excel: 3 use cases
3. MPs’ limitations to consider
4. SME Mini Program examples
5. Design Best Practices
6. Mini Program requirements
7. Looking Forward
Chapter 1: What They Are
Carrefour
le marché
After a slow start, WeChat Mini Programs have exploded since the beginning of 2018.

1M+ Mini Programs

200M Daily Active Users (DAU)

95% of ecommerce brands have a MP

63% of WeChat users have used them

Average time spent using Mini Programs (minutes per day)

Source: Tencent, Jisu App, Aldwx
Mini Programs already represent 20~30% of traffic

Distribution of user traffic across Apps and mini-programs (July 2018), millions

Data from the Top 100 apps with an accompanying Mini-Program; all numbers rounded to nearest million. Source: Quest Mobile, 2018, Quest Mobile ‘TRUTH’ Data Set (August 2018), Resonance Analysis

Source: Tencent, Jisu App
A much better access experience

Source: Mindworks
Mini Programs = “Instant” Apps embedded in WeChat for disposable interactions, at the fraction of the cost of an App

**LIGHT & FAST**

- 4 Mb codebase, much quicker to load than an App
- Loads from Tencent servers
- No updates needed: the latest version is automatically loaded
- Cached on the phone
- Home screen shortcuts (Android only)
- Works offline: display ID, calculator, etc.
Light and fast
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**TIGHTLY EMBEDDED INTO WECHAT’S ECOSYSTEM**
- >60 entry points (and counting!)
- Directly shareable in chats
- “Deep linking” to a specific subpage of the MP
- Easy, normalized login
- Seamless integration with WeChat features: Member Cards, IoT/Bluetooth devices, Coupons, WeChat Pay…
- Can access WeChat info against permission (fapiao info, phone number, addresses…)
Tightly embedded into WeChat’s ecosystem

Sharing in chats

Shortcut bar

From Official Account
Low acquisition cost through virality: sharing is the #1 entry point overall

Mini Program Traffic by source, June 2018

- Sharing, 34.6%
- Quick entry, 25.9%
- Official accounts, 14.1%
- QR codes, 9.8%
- Redirects, 6.6%
- Template message, 3.7%
- Search, 2.9%
- Pay, 1.1%
- Other: coupons, LBS etc, 1.3%

Source: ALDWX
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**COST EFFECTIVE**
- Unique codebase across iOS and Android, no need to maintain 2 APP versions
- 20~50% of the development cost of an APP
- Much shorter time-to-release
Games and Ecommerce are the most popular MP categories

Top 100 Mini Program traffic share by category, June 2018

Source: ALDWX
Chapter 2: Where MPs excel: 3 use cases

A. O2O / contextual interactions

B. Complete replacement of long tail applications

C. Complement / entry point to “heavy applications”
A. O2O / Contextual quick interactions

- Bike unlocking
- Loyalty Program QR code to use in store
- QR codes on KFC’s tables to order directly via a Mini Program
"Good digital products let the user jump in and jump out quickly. (好的产品是用完即走)"

Allen Zhang, WeChat Founder
B. Complete replacement of long tail applications

- Infrequent use
- Quick tasks: simple and straightforward

 Courier ordering and tracking

Booking directly from airline
C. Complement / entry point to “heavy applications”

OFFER THE MOST FREQUENTLY USED FEATURES OF YOUR APP

• Order repeat, order status tracking etc.
• Use high value tasks as an incentive to use the App (e.g. Issuing a fapiao, International courier etc.)
• Apps can share links to MPs

EXCLUSIVE COMPLEMENTARY FEATURES

• Limited editions for ecommerce
• Personalized products

A TESTING GROUND FOR NEW FEATURES

• Fast release, no update required from the user
• Leverage WeChat and third party analytics data to tightly target and measure each iteration
Qunar: much more task-focused user experience
McDonald’s: segmentation across 5+ Mini Programs

Birthday Club
Order in store
Gift Cards
Delivery

NATIVE APP
MAIN MINI PROGRAM
Xiaomi Home: MP can only be used after you download and bind the App

- Shortcut to the devices shared with the MP
- Invitation to bind devices from the App
“In our studies comparing native Apps with their WeChat MP counterparts, users preferred the apps when the mini-programs only tried to replicate the native App (Ctrip, Ele, etc.). Brands succeeded when they created more single use functions as their MPs”

Samuel Jesse, Research Director at UXSPOT
Meitu: 3 core features as a teaser + invitation to download the full App
“Our users wanted an easy registration interface. By launching a Mini Program, not only the DAU traffic has increased exponentially, but the organic downloads of the App have gone up as well!”

Andrea Sperenza, CEO of YEYU App
User resources:
time to accomplish a task & complexity

So, App or MP?

Frequency of use

MP

App + MP
So, App or MP?

User resources:
- time to accomplish a task & complexity

THE SWEET SPOT

Frequency of use:
- Low
- High

App + MP

MP
Chapter 3: MPs’ limitations to consider
Mini Programs’ main limitations

- No Notification / Pushes
- OA User ≠ OA Follower
- Limited discoverability: still no real “App store” to find them
- No Games => Mini Games (小游戏), which have their own set of rules and APIs
- No VR/AR (not really)
- WeChat Pay only
- Do not work well with audiences outside of WeChat
- Dependent on Tencent’s changing rules
- No Connections to APIs Outside of China, all data sources need to be ICP enabled
- Need Tencent approval on every update (unlike PWAs)
- User login does not provide identifiers (email, phone number)
Mini Programs: a traffic’s dead end?

- Official Accounts
- Sharing
- Scans
- Direct
- Other Sources

Linking back to the OA is painful and “hacky”

Share loop can only send back to the MP

Other MPs
Chapter 4: SME Mini Program examples
SJ Grand, an accounting firm in China, provides a series of tools for businesses and employees to calculate different costs associated with the operation of the company.
FreshPrints, a chat bot developing company, allows users to create and send to print timeline prints, photo books, calendars, and magazines by uploading their own pictures.
Le Wagon, a developing bootcamp, provides a platform where interested parties can contact Le Wagon.

Mini Program recruitment platform
BWA, a Spanish wine importer built a B2C MP ecommerce to automate small orders and directly serve end customers
Chapter 5: Design Best Practices
Designing for simple, specific tasks

- Focus on “extreme usability” & fast learning of the interface: you can’t assume the user will learn with repeat use
- Focus interface elements to the task at hand and minimize attention fragmentation
- Few key steps (3-4 max) to task completion
Using helpers: follow Official Account
Using helpers: follow Official Account

Detection that you are not following the official account

Providing the benefits of following OA and a step by step breakdown of how to do it

Alert is gone
Using helpers: follow Official Account

CTA to follow the Official Account

Popup with the official account name to search

On validation copies the OA name into clipboard, ready to paste in search
Zui Qiang Danyidan, one of the most popular mini games, went through many game mechanics and UI revamps.

V1  V2  V3  Today
Chapter 6: Requirements for a Mini Program
Requirements

Mainland Official Account
- Verified Account ✓
- OWN MPs: 10
- 3rd Party MPs: 3

Mini Program
- Verified Account ✓
- Linked with up to 500 OAs

Overseas Official Account
- Verified Account ✓
- OWN: 10
- 3rd Party: 3

Overseas Mini Program Limitations:
- X Nearby Mini Programs feature
- X Ecommerce Mini Programs
- X Individual account support
- X Limited categories of service
- X WeChat payment

Stand-alone Mini Program
Once the goals, KPIs and design is final start creating the Mini Program

- **Link to Official Account (Optional)**
- **Add Analytics Tool**

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**Steps**

1. **Create and Verify Mini Program Account**
2. **Develop**
3. **Add Analytics Tool**
4. **Publish**
Chapter 7: Looking forward
They’re commoditizing very fast

Map of the WeChat Mini Programs ecosystem

Source: Le Wagon
Alibaba, Baidu, Phone makers and now Toutiao jumping on the MP train
Spot the differences!
Spot the differences!
Key takeaways

• WeChat MPs are the first large-scale materialization of a “post-App” world

• 3 Main use cases
  • O2O and contextual interactions
  • Complete replacement for long tail applications
  • Good complement for fully blown Apps as entry point or shortcuts

• User experience is way superior to the service account for offering services, because of standardization and increasing number of entry points

• MPs are a “H5” killer for most use cases, except notably for omni-channel H5s

• Excellent virality, potentially much cheaper user recruitment than Official Accounts

• But using a mini program DOES NOT turn users into followers, putting too much focus into recruiting MP users might diminish your overall reach capacity on WeChat

• Other Mini Programs? Unless you are Qunar, Starbucks or Nike, “wait for the dust to settle”
Q&A
Connect With Us

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11 great WeChat accounts to help you stay up to date with the latest WeChat trends

**DaxueBlog**
Daxue Consulting is a market research firm specialised in being your portal to relevant data on the Chinese market.

**Grata**
Grata is a Customer Service Console for Official Accounts.

**TechNode**
TechNode is the number 1 resource for news and information about China’s startup and tech ecosystem.

**WalktheChat**
WalktheChat is a cross-border e-commerce platform. We help foreign businesses sell to China via WeChat.

**31TEN**
31TEN is a professional digital agency based in Shanghai. We cover all kinds of digital projects with genius.

**China Channel**
China Channel helps non-Chinese organizations make sense of WeChat through training, consulting & events.

**ChoZan**
ChoZan is a training and resources platform for marketers who work with Chinese social media, such as WeChat and Weibo.

**Grata**
Grata is a Customer Service Console for Official Accounts.

**KAWO**
KAWO is a SaaS platform that makes brands loved on social media in China.

**PARKLU**
PARKLU is China’s Premier Influencer Marketing Platform.

**TechNode**
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**WeAreSocial**
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**WeChatGlobal**
The official account of WeChat Global Marketing. Publishes useful guides and interesting case studies.
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