

## Marketing research in China: conservative vs. innovative methods

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When venturing into the Chinese market, it is crucial to have a good overall overview of general market, as well as in-depth insights about the specific industry in which a company is active. In view of the size and diversity of the market, this knowledge becomes even more decisive for business success - and more difficult to obtain.

In this talk, we take a close view on the marketing research paths available to Western companies going China. On the one hand, we consider traditional methods of field research, like surveys, interviews and focus groups. These kinds of research can be carried out either by foreign research agencies that are established in China, or by indigenous Chinese research providers. In both cases, the communication and the research process itself are challenging due to a number of barriers which can appear daunting as the Great Wall - be it linguistic, cultural or legal obstacles. In a wider perspective, field research is generally time- and cost-intensive. This is why traditional research methods are slowly, but steadily making place to advanced automatic research methods, often inspired by and based on technological trends around Big Data and processing of unstructured data.

On the other hand, use of the internet is booming in China, with new information sources flourishing across all customer segments. Especially young people are very keen to exchange information on the internet and, conversely, use it as their main source of information. Social networks like Weibo and WeChat, but also specialized industry websites and forums are actively used to provide feedback and exchange opinions on brands, products and services. Being freely available in large quantities, this information can be used to answer traditional questions of marketing research; it can also provide additional insights that cannot be solicited with traditional survey and interview methods. In the talk, we present the landscape of available technological tools for online data collection and analysis and show how they can be used to win with marketing research in China.