



CHINESE SMARTPHONE BRANDS AND COMPANION PRODUCTS

Socially Powerful | CHINESE CONSUMER HEADPHONES

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- 2. INTRODUCTION**
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METHODOLOGY

We have analysed the online presences of six Chinese consumer technology brands to see what they're doing to develop their European market shares. We have specifically focused on how these brands have begun creating ecosystems of companion products around their smartphones.

This analysis uses public quantitative data extracted from a combination of social insight tools, combined with the proprietary data from Socially Powerful. The amalgamation of quantitative and qualitative data forms insights for this research. Our analysis gives an indication of how a brand effectively uses social media in combination with influencer marketing relative to its peers.

6 brands were analysed in total. The primary objective was to understand the key steps brands take in order to establish a technological ecosystem and develop their communities. The 6 brands were selected based on their existing presence in the European market. These brands are Huawei, Xiaomi, OnePlus, Realme, Oppo and Vivo.

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TECH BRANDS ANALYSED IN THIS REPORT



realme

oppo



vivo

THE STATE OF CHINESE **CONSUMER** TECHNOLOGY

THE TECH-ECOSYSTEM

Chinese smartphone brands have begun the process of diversifying their product portfolios. Driven by internal and external factors including generating new revenue streams, technological and infrastructure advancements and trade and political issues in the US impacting the smartphone category. As a result, these consumer technology brands have diversified to create an ecosystem around their smartphones.

The ecosystem interlinks physical products and software for a seamlessly integrated user experience, that in turn becomes an integrated part of consumers' lifestyle. As part of this diversification, Chinese smartphone brands are adapting their business models to sell these companion products directly to consumers through owned channels, existing e-commerce marketplaces and social platforms.

Alongside this, they are focusing on nurturing their existing communities. By ensuring the loyalty of existing customers, these brands are almost able to guarantee the sales of companion products as existing customers are the most likely to purchase from a brand again.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY I/II

1

**CHINESE SMARTPHONE BRANDS HAVE
BEGUN DIVERSIFYING THEIR PRODUCT
PORTFOLIOS AS A RESULT OF
INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FACTORS**



These factors include the need for new revenue streams, tech and infrastructure developments and global trade and political challenges. Consequently, Chinese consumer tech brands have begun creating ecosystems around their smartphones. This ecosystem links physical products and software to produce consumers with seamless user experiences that easily integrates into their everyday lives.

2

**AS A RESULT, THESE BRANDS ARE
ADAPTING THEIR D2C RETAIL
STRATEGIES**



Chinese smartphone brands have begun adapting their retail strategies to sell companion products directly to consumers. Most brands have developed European online stores that customers can purchase directly from. To support sales from this store, some have also developed social commerce capabilities that help drive traffic to the website. The majority of brands also sell their products on popular ecommerce marketplaces such as Amazon, Lazada and AliExpress, through which, brands are able to leverage influencer affiliate marketing.

3

**NURTURING COMMUNITIES HAS
BECOME A KEY-FOCUS TO ENSURE
SALES**



Brands' communities have never been more important than now. Many have begun investing in nurturing their communities and existing customers as they are the most likely to repeat purchase from a brand, or impulse buy companion products. Huawei has implemented influencer marketing and exclusive music events for its headphones, Realme has been hosting competitions and giveaways where customers can win a set of headphones and OnePlus has created limited-edition headphones. By ensuring the loyalty of their community and existing customers, these brands can almost guarantee sales of their companion products.

4

**BRANDS HAVE LEVERAGED THE
SUCCESS OF HERO PRODUCTS TO
CROSS-SELL COMPANION PRODUCTS**



Smartphones remain the hero product of Chinese consumer tech brands, but by harnessing the success and popularity of smartphones and their nurtured communities, some have successfully begun cross-selling their headphones. Huawei has developed a solid ecosystem around its smartphones, with loyal customers purchasing headphones and bringing their discussions and reviews online. Xiaomi and OnePlus have promotions running where customers can purchase a smartphone and receive a free pair of headphones, creating and integrating an immediate ecosystem for their customers.

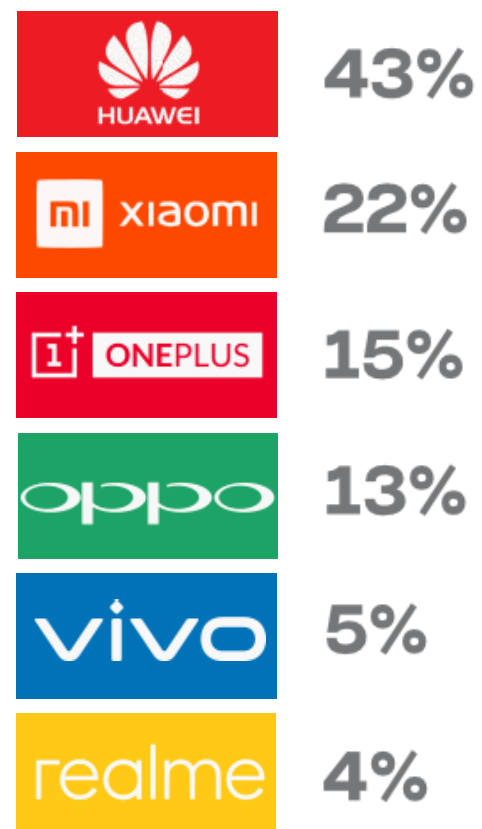
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY II/II

BRAND	HIGHLIGHT	COMMENT
	HUAWEI IS LEVERAGING ITS STRONG BRAND EQUITY AND SMARTPHONE SUCCESS TO DRIVE AWARENESS AND CROSS-SELL ITS COMPANION PRODUCTS	Focusing on Huawei, Oppo, OnePlus, Vivo, RealMe and Xiaomi, we discovered that Huawei has the most developed and integrated ecosystem on its social media. It has been in the European market for the longest and has successfully integrated the promotion of companion products into its overarching marketing strategy. It has created a strong online community with music events, influencer marketing and a community lifestyle forum.
	REALME'S FOCUS ON COMMUNITY NURTURING RESULTS IN THRIVING COMPANION PRODUCT CONVERSATIONS	While RealMe is still growing its presence in Europe, it's efforts at solidifying its community have resulted in thriving headphone conversations online. Though it is yet to utilise influencer marketing for its headphones, it holds competitions and giveaways for its customers and positions itself as a high-quality tech brand that provides consumers with an incredible user experience.
	XIAOMI BEGINS DEVELOPING ITS COMMUNITY COMPANION PRODUCT MARKETING	Xiaomi has a strong fanbase for its smartphones and has begun promoting its headphones to this audience. Xiaomi promotes its headphones around key events in the year, such as Christmas and Fashion Weeks, and often reposts user generated content which encourages its community to make more content. It has begun creating an ecosystem with a promotion where customers receive a free pair of headphones if they purchase a Mi 10T Pro smartphone.
	ONEPLUS GRADUALLY INTRODUCES HEADPHONES TO ITS COMMUNITY	OnePlus has introduced smartphones into its marketing strategy gradually by uploading one Instagram post a month, with key messaging around how seamlessly the headphones can be integrated with its smartphones. Though it is yet to introduce influencer marketing to its headphone promotions, OnePlus launched its most recent headphones alongside a new smartphone, suggesting to its community they should be used as a pair.
	OPPO DEVELOPS COMMUNITY FORUM FOR ITS AUDIENCE	Oppo primarily focuses on its smartphones and smartwatches within its marketing strategy, but has begun developing its forum, ColorOS, so customers can share or search for reviews on specific headphone products. It has developed a community through influencer marketing for its smartphones and watches, but we are yet to see this for its headphones.
	VIVO DEVELOPS ITS ONLINE COMMUNITY, BUT NOT ITS CUSTOMER JOURNEY	Vivo has only just begun developing its communities across Europe and had begun incorporating its headphones in a wider social media activation with the hashtag #ItMakesMeHappy. However, it potentially struggles to achieve high online mentions due to its headphones being hard to find in Europe as they are unavailable to purchase through Vivo's online store.

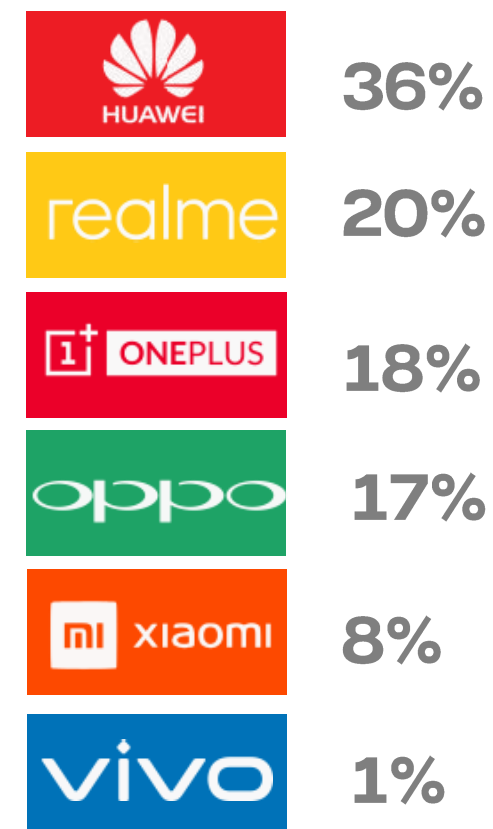
RESULTS OVERVIEW

The natural follow-on companion product from a smartphone, is headphones. We've looked at Huawei, Oppo, OnePlus, Vivo, RealMe and Xiaomi to see how they use social media to increase awareness and sales for their companion products. Huawei regularly promotes its headphones on Instagram and uses events and influencer marketing. Hence, Huawei dominates both brand and headphone-specific conversations. Despite having the second lowest mentions in brand conversations, RealMe has achieved a high conversation rate for its headphones through running Instagram competitions and giveaways and by positioning its headphones as top-of-the-range gadgets and making use of most features available on Instagram. Xiaomi has the second highest brand conversation rate but has failed to transition this to its headphones. It is irregular and inconsistent with headphone promotions on social media, meaning consumers do not consider them when making an ecosystem. OnePlus, Oppo and Vivo have a consistent focus on their headphones on social media, although Vivo is discussed less as its headphones are not easily accessible to European customers.

BRAND CONVERSATION



HEADPHONE CONVERSATION



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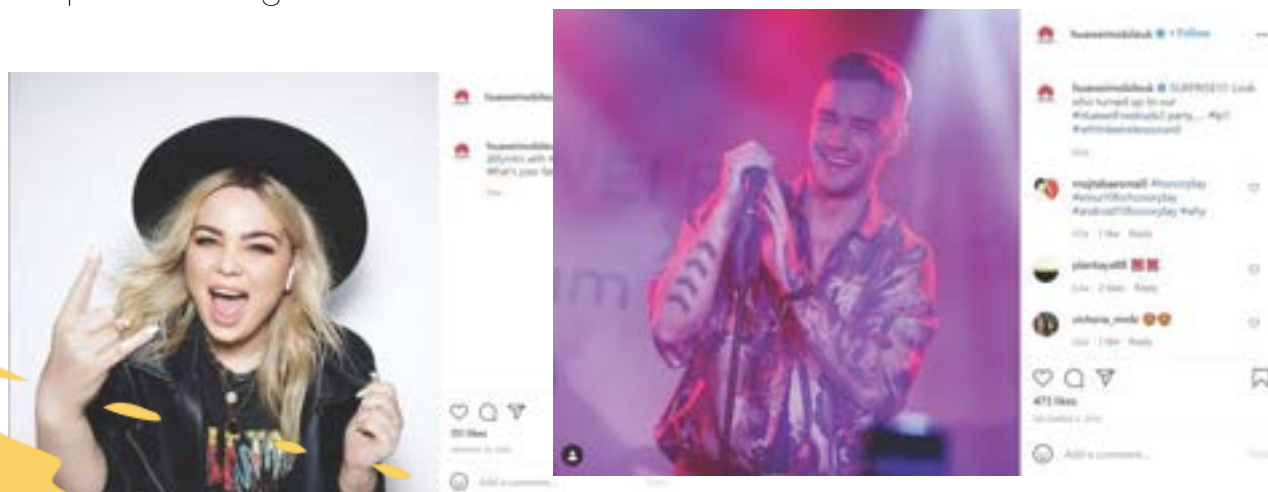


HUAWEI

HUAWEI MENTIONS LEAD GENERAL AND PRODUCT CONVERSATIONS AND ACTIVITY

Huawei dominates both brand and companion product conversations online, which is understandable considering it has been in the European market for the longest through its own store and pre-existing marketplaces. Since 2019, it has regularly integrated its headphones and other companion products into a Huawei ecosystem for its customers, with music events and Instagram influencers and LinkedIn entrepreneur activations.

Huawei has also been pushing itself as a lifestyle brand on its community forums with a lifestyle subsection. Huawei community members share their favourite headphones and companion products here, along with how they enjoy using their Huawei products together.



HUAWEI SUCCEEDS IN CREATING AN ECOSYSTEM

According to our data, the majority of mentions featured Huawei headphones being discussed alongside smartphones. The most popular products were the FreeBuds range, which features five different headphones. The majority of Huawei's headphones received positive mentions around the ease of use, great sound quality and good noise cancelling abilities. A few internet users compared Huawei headphones to other brands and named Huawei's companion products good value for money.

While generally receiving positive or neutral mentions, negative comments were only found for the Freebuds range, suggesting they were uncomfortable, had poor volume control and didn't connect well to Bluetooth or charging devices.



realme

REALME

REALME COMPANION PRODUCTS THRIVE

RealMe has the lowest general conversation rate, but the second highest in terms of headphones, suggesting that the brand has been successful in encouraging customers to buy its companion products. RealMe promotes its headphones on its own Instagram regularly and holds competitions and giveaways where customers can win a pair.

RealMe generally refers to the technical qualities of the headphones, positioning them as a top-of-the-range option that will provide an incredible user experience. In addition, RealMe is the only brand to have a story highlight on Instagram for its headphones Buds Q. However, RealMe is yet to utilise influencer marketing for its headphones, despite already doing so for its phones.



REALME MAKES NEWS HEADLINES FOR HEADPHONES

Contrary to all other brands, the majority of mentions online came from news outlets, rather than Twitter. Most positive and neutral mentions were featuring Buds Air Pro in "Best Gadgets of 2020" rankings, alongside the announcement of new headphones launching alongside a smartphone.

In addition, RealMe was the only brand to have all its headphones discussed within our selected time frame, which shows the popularity of its products. Discussions of headphones also included other companion products, such as smartwatches, suggesting RealMe customers enjoy using the products together. The only negative mentions suggested the Buds Air Pros were too similar to Apple AirPods, and too expensive in Europe compared to India.





XIAOMI

XIAOMI STRUGGLES WITH INCONSISTENCY

Despite being the second most popular brand for general conversations, Xiaomi's portion of headphone conversations was the second smallest of our discussed brands. Xiaomi has been experiencing growth and popularity in Europe for its smartphones, but our data shows the brand has not yet fully developed an ecosystem around them.

While Xiaomi does promote its headphones on Instagram, it is inconsistent and only around key events in the year, such as Christmas and Fashion Weeks. It does not regularly work with influencers, but reposts user generated content of headphones taken on Xiaomi smartphones. In addition, within Xiaomi's community forums headphone threads are only findable if you search the exact product.

They are not grouped under a lifestyle or companion product section, suggesting they are standalone products. Despite this, there is evidence of attempts at creating an ecosystem with a promotion alongside the Mi 10T Pro, where customers receive a free pair of True Wireless Earphones 2 with the phone.



XIAOMI NEEDS SOCIAL MEDIA

The sentiment of mentions for Xiaomi headphones was positive or neutral; it did not receive any negative comments, however Twitter users did mention how similar the True Wireless range of headphones were to Apple AirPods.

The positive comments were generally good reviews of the products, or social media users commenting they liked the product. To coincide with social media promotions, mentions spiked around Christmas, suggesting the brand would have more mentions should they invest in social media efforts.

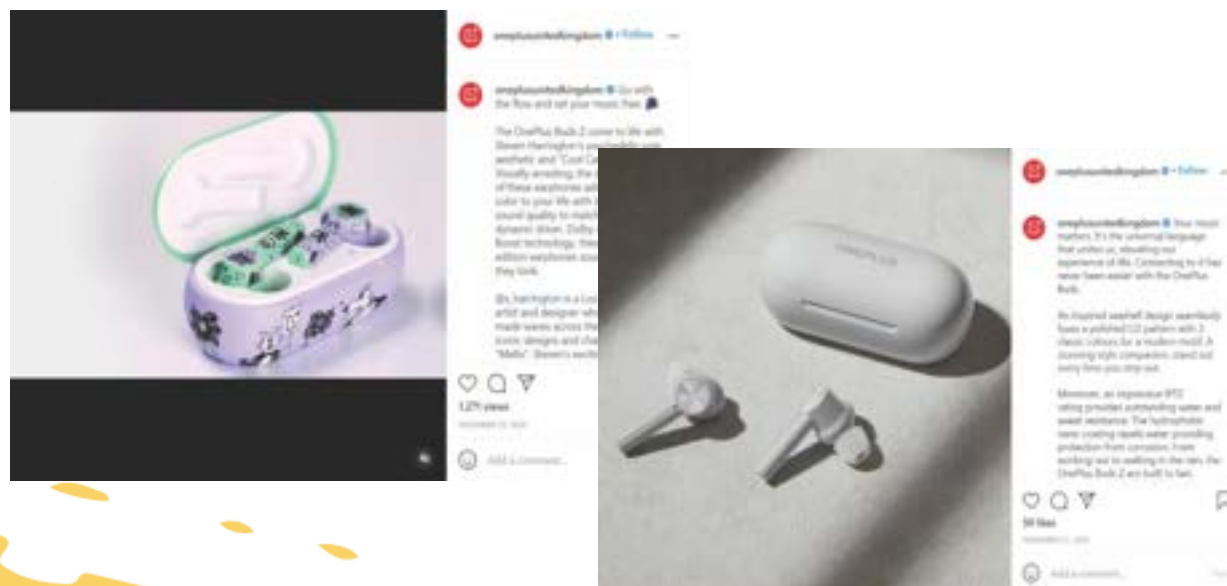


ONEPLUS

ONEPLUS IS CONSISTENT ACROSS GENERAL AND **PRODUCT CONVERSATIONS**

OnePlus holds the third highest mentions in general and headphone specific conversations, suggesting a constant focus on its smartphones and companion products. This can be supported by its Instagram content, which features at least one headphone post a month. The OnePlus UK Instagram was only created in November 2020 and is yet to partake in influencer marketing for its headphones.

While the UK and Global accounts primarily focus on smartphone content, whenever a post on headphones is uploaded, it focuses on how seamlessly the headphones can be integrated with the smartphones. In addition, one of its most recent headphones launched alongside a new smartphone.



ONEPLUS COLLABORATION WITH **ARTIST LEADS MENTIONS**

The majority of conversations online surrounded a limited-edition collaboration between graphic design artist Steven Harrington and the Buds Z. The main sentiments around headphones were positive and neutral, with only one negative comment. Nearly 75% of all conversations were on Twitter, with users agreeing that OnePlus headphones were very comfortable.

While the majority of mentions were very headphone-focused, some did discuss the headphones alongside other companion products (smartwatches) and smartphones, suggesting that consumers have begun to create OnePlus ecosystems.



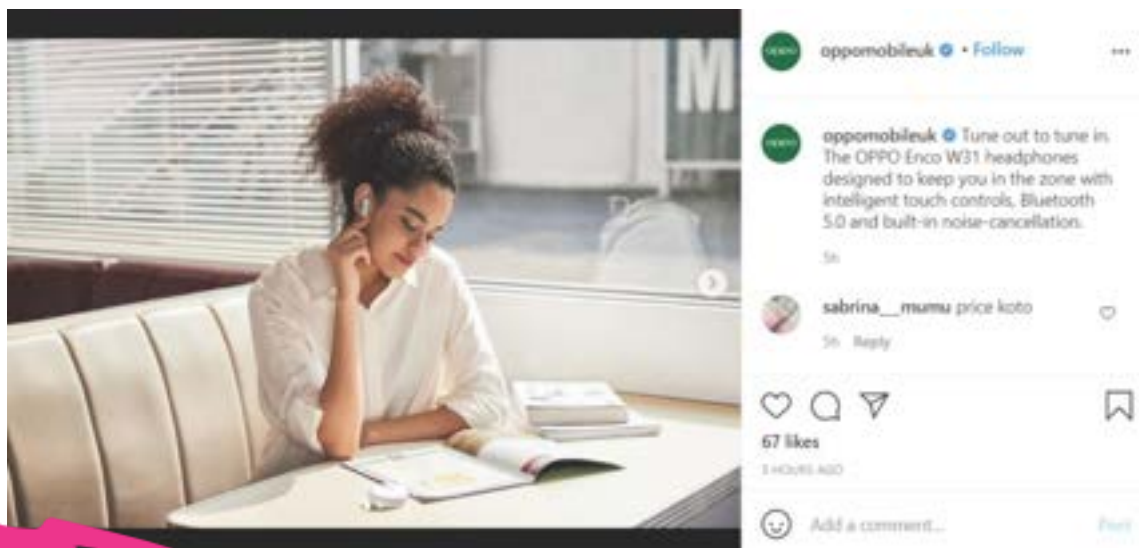
oppo

OPPO

OPPO IS YET TO FULLY FOCUS ON HEADPHONES IN ITS MARKETING

Oppo has been gaining popularity in Europe for its smartphones recently and ranks 4th in both general and headphone discussions. Oppo primarily focuses on its smartphones and smartwatches on Instagram, regularly using influencer marketing for those products, however, we have yet to see Oppo make the most of influencers for its headphones.

While Oppo has minimal posts of its headphones on Instagram, each headphone is searchable within its community forum: ColorOS. The forum groups the headphones individually, and they are not included under the “lifestyle” section available.



OPPO'S NEW HEADPHONES RECEIVE A GOOD WELCOME ONLINE

The majority of online mentions were about the Enco X headphones that launched in January 2021. The general sentiment was neutral, followed by positive.

The main neutral comments were from news articles, or Tweets linking to rankings of headphones, rather than user experiences. However, positive comments did say that Enco Xs did have good noise cancelling properties for its size.



vivo

VIVO

VIVO BEGINS INTEGRATING HEADPHONES INTO ITS ECOSYSTEM

Vivo's smartphones are definitely more popular than its headphones, with general conversations ranking second to last, and headphones ranking last (with only 7 mentions in total).

This is surprising considering Vivo regularly posts promotional images of the headphones and smartphones being used as an ideal pairing. Vivo launched its UK and European Instagram accounts in October 2020 and began using influencers to promote its smartphones in November, but we are yet to see partnerships for its headphones.

It has recently begun using the hashtag #ItMakesMeHappy on all of its products, suggesting they should all be used together in harmony. Vivo is yet to develop a community forum in Europe.

VIVO IS IGNORED DUE TO TRICKY CUSTOMER JOURNEY

Vivo's most talked about headphones were the TWS Neos, followed by the Original TWSs. The lack of conversation is potentially due to the headphones being hard to find in Europe, and that the headphones are not available to purchase through Vivo's website.



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CONCLUSION I


Through our research, We found that different brands are at different maturity stages when integrating their companion products into their main marketing activities. Some have been successful in creating ecosystems with their customers, while others have only just begun the process.

NURTURE EXISTING RELATIONSHIPS TO STRENGTHEN BRAND COMMUNITY

Huawei has successfully nurtured its relationship with existing customers and smartphone owners to help create an ecosystem around its products. Through integrating companion products using lifestyle forums, influencers and events, Huawei has dominated the headphone market in Europe by creating a sense of community around itself. A social media presence is essential to creating a successful community as the majority of mentions for all brands (apart from Realme) were led on Twitter.

CROSS-SELL FROM EXISTING SMARTPHONE SUCCESSES

From this community, Huawei has been able to leverage its smartphone success in cross-selling its companion products to existing customers. We have also seen Xiaomi and OnePlus attempt this by offering a promotion where a customer can purchase a smartphone and receive a free pair of headphones. However, Xiaomi and OnePlus have not seen as much success as Huawei due to the fact they are still developing their online communities. Xiaomi uses influencer marketing for its smartphones and watches, but not for its headphones; if it were to develop an influencer marketing strategy for its headphones, it would undoubtedly see similar success to Huawei.





CONCLUSION II

Through our research, we found that different brands are at different maturity stages when integrating their companion products into their main marketing activities. Some have been successful in creating ecosystems with their customers, while others have only just begun the process.

HAVE SEAMLESS AND ACCESSIBLE DIRECT TO CONSUMER SELLING

All brands discussed have adjusted or begun adjusting their business models with a direct-to-consumer approach. Most, apart from Vivo, have created their own stores for European customers to buy directly from, or are easily accessible on popular e-commerce sites such as Amazon or Alibaba. In addition, most of these brands have begun developing social-commerce capabilities, where customers can purchase products directly from their Instagram accounts.

Some brands have also begun leveraging influencer affiliate marketing. With this, brands are able to directly drive sales to these companion products through their own websites or through ecommerce platforms that use affiliate links—for example, Amazon's Affiliate Program. Presenting customers with different purchasing options creates a seamless buying journey, which is essential to secure a new purchase. Vivo's products are not easily accessible in Europe due to the lack of online stores, hence the lack of discussions surrounding its headphones.

STAY RELEVANT

In order to create a successful ecosystem of companion products, brands need to develop and nurture their existing communities, so current customers will stay loyal. This can be done through seamless integration of D2C channels, including owned websites and pre-existing marketplaces, and with influencer marketing. Without a natural, easy journey, brands will not be able to stay relevant with their existing customers, let alone new ones.





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WE UNDERSTAND **ATTENTION**. WHERE IT GOES, WE GO.

INFLUENCING THE MASSES, **ONE-BY-ONE**.

We'll show you how to start powerful conversation, drive social engagement, build your brand, hit sales targets or meet other goals you have, wherever you are in the world.