# [Chinese technology should give hoteliers paws for thought this Year of the Dog](#)

Submitted by patricia on Wed, 14/02/2018 - 08:59

What´s the biggest challenge for a European or North American hotel chain attracting Chinese travelers: language barrier or cultural differences? This Friday China celebrates the Year of the Dog and perhaps hoteliers should instead be giving more thought to another problem: technology.

But how can it be that technology, something that should be relatively unaffected by language or culture, could be anything other than a solution?  What are hoteliers doing wrong to make a solution become a problem?  The answer is that they are not embracing the technologies used by Chinese travelers.

In many respects China is much more digitally advanced than Europe or America. For example mobile Apps are commonly used to unlock doors in hotels and offices; and across many Chinese cities you can even use an App to locate a bicycle, unlock it and ride off – then dump it wherever and whenever you´ve finished.  QR codes are absolutely everywhere and used for absolutely everything, even on business cards and lunch menus.

All of this makes expectations very high for Chinese travelers – and leads to immediate disappointment and frustration. Imagine how lost you´d be if all of your Apps on your phone stopped working when you´re on holiday or a business trip, in an unfamiliar place, where no one speaks your language? That´s how the average Chinese traveler feels on touchdown at Heathrow or JFK. And when they can´t withdraw cash at the ATM, their frustration is probably reaching boiling point.

Let´s start with something very obvious but hugely important: payments. They are used to paying for everything virtually using their mobile phone; from a taxi ride to a restaurant bill to giving their children their pocket money, it's all about WeChat and AliPay. For the young, credit and debit cards are hardly used. And for those Chinese travelers that still use credit cards, few of them have Visa or Mastercard. Instead mostly have Union Pay, which many European retailers still don´t accept.

> The core of the problem stems from the fact that the technology platforms they are used to using are all entirely different from ours. They can´t access Google, Gmail, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or even WhatsApp; instead they use three main social media channels: Baidu (a search engine), WeChat (WhatsApp on steroids) and Weibo (similar to Twitter). And they don´t have Uber anymore, instead they use something called Didi.

This creates two headaches for hotels looking to welcome Chinese travelers. Firstly how to market to them; and secondly for customer services via social media. In both cases this doesn´t just mean working in the Chinese language, it has to be on their social media channels too – which aren´t always so easy to set-up, as in some cases to start an official account you need to be a registered company in China.

For us at Hotelbeds Group we´ve been deeply involved in the Chinese market for many years and already it is our fifth biggest source market globally. We´ve achieved this in part by embracing these technology changes and working with our hotel supplier partners to help them adjust their offering accordingly.

These are concerns that these challenges will only get worse as Chinese travelers begin to travel

less in groups and on pre-paid package trips, and instead travel alone – a trend which Japanese travelers followed from the 1980s onwards. Technology should be an enabler of this, and right now it is not in many cases.

This year of the dog shouldn´t have to be a dog of a year if hotels embrace the technology needs of Chinese travelers. If they work on this weakness, then the upcoming 2019 Year of the Pig could allow the forward-thinking to bring home the bacon.

Thumb image