

ANALYSIS, DIGITAL, MARKETING, NEWS

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Jeremy Jauncey: How I built a social empire from Beautiful Destinations

The founder of every millennial's favourite travel site reveals how his company balances its client and consumer sides—and how he's planning to conquer China.

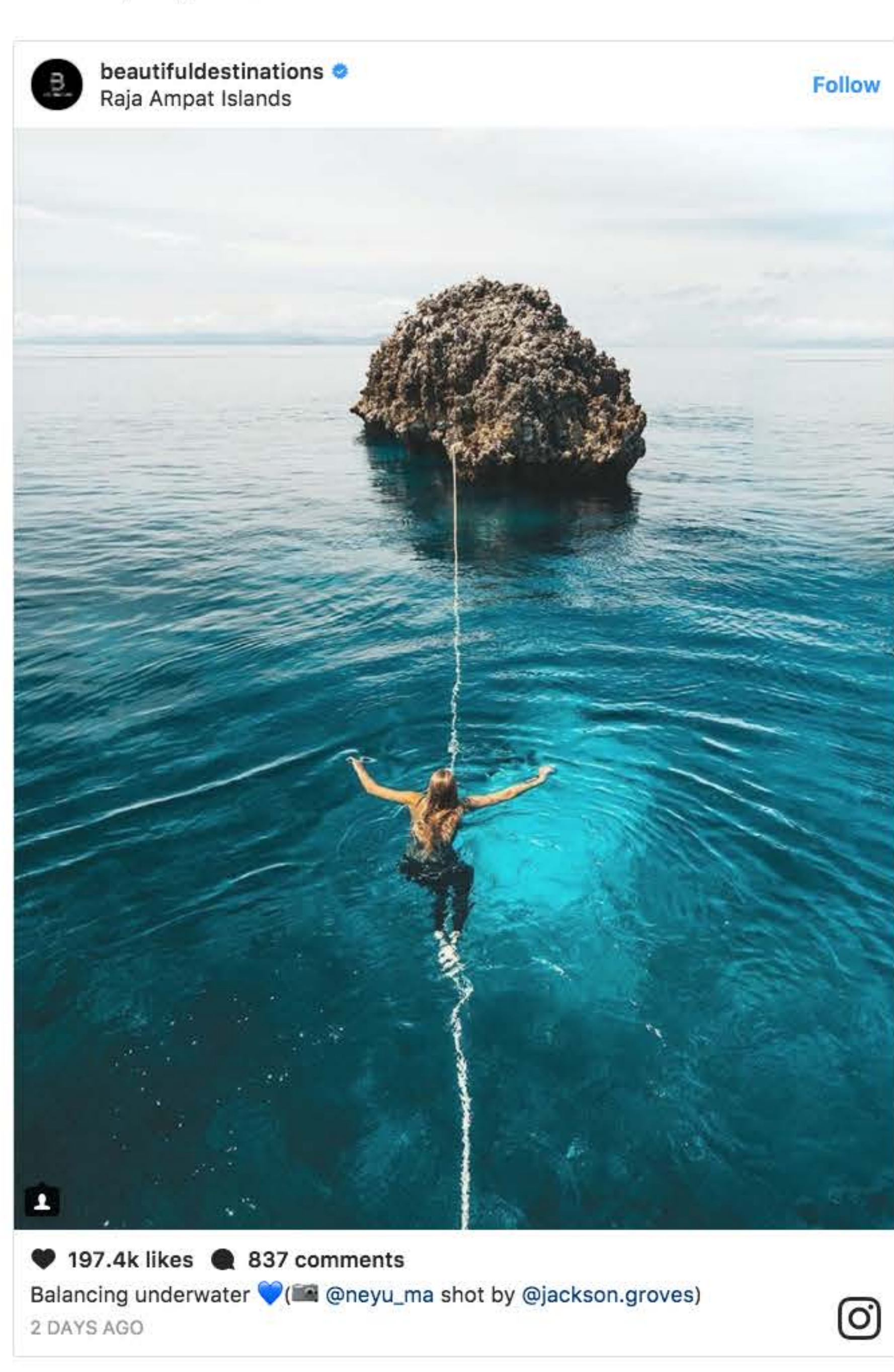


Campaign Asia-Pacific interviewed Jauncey at one of Hong Kong's own beautiful destinations, Sugar bar at East Hotel.

When British entrepreneur Jeremy Jauncey launched an Instagram account in 2012 to round up photographs of attractive places, it was little more than a "passion project".

7,042 posts and 9.7 million followers later, [@beautifuldestinations](#) has spawned six sister Instagram channels (including [@beautifulhotels](#) and [@beautifulcuisines](#)), a Facebook page, two Snapchat accounts and a YouTube channel, all gathered under one glossy 'Beautiful Destinations' (BD) brand umbrella.

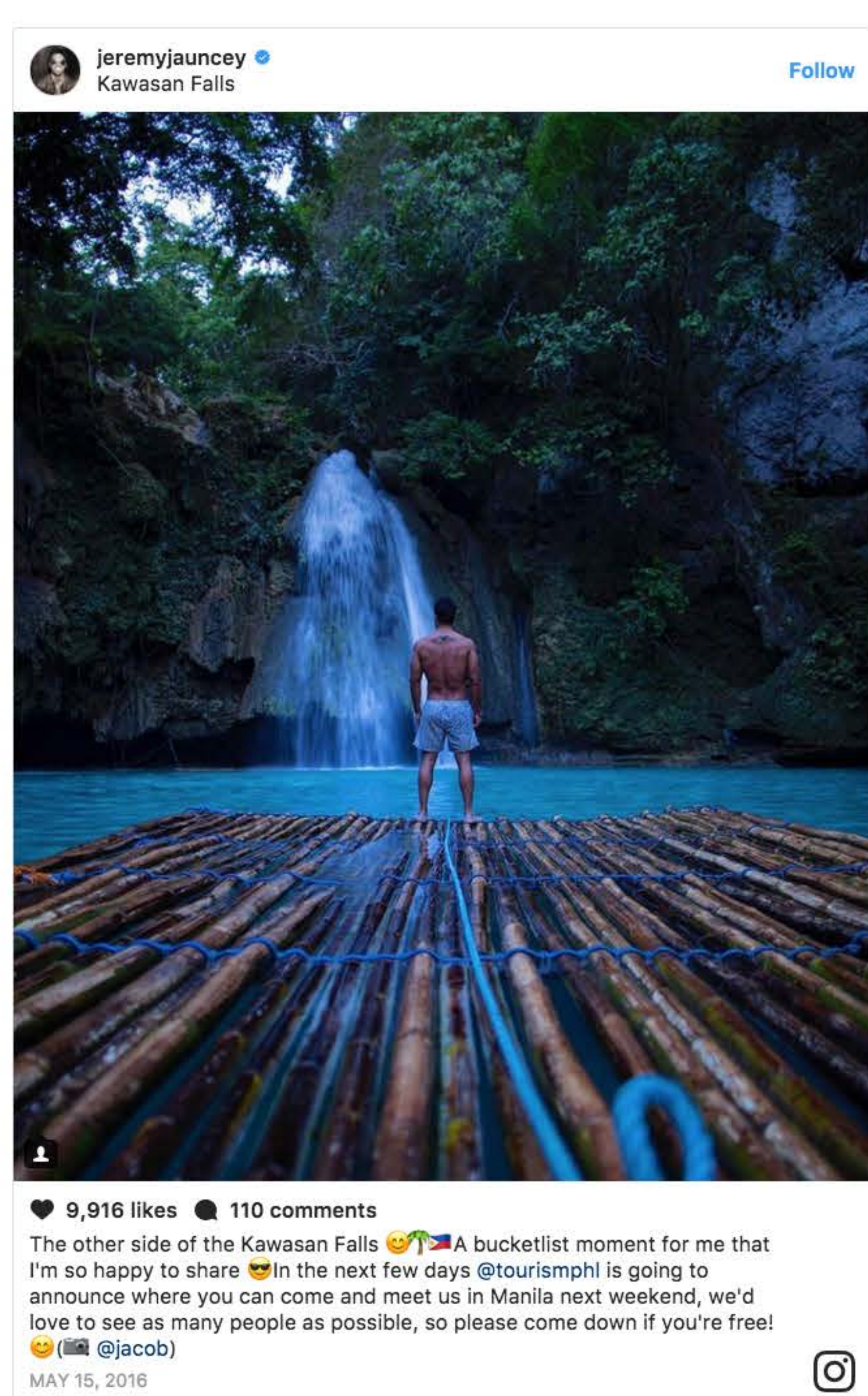
BD is now the largest social-media travel organisation in the world, with a combined reach of 17 million people, 30 employees in New York, London and Manila and an enviable reputation: when the company posted an advert for an in-house photographer role last year, billing it as 'the world's coolest job', it received 65,000 applicants.



But there's more to BD than feeding gorgeous travel shots to an army of inspiration-hungry millennials. Jauncey has successfully monetised the venture by selling the company's services—photography, videography, data analytics, strategy and ad consultancy—to a substantial list of clients including Mastercard, Airbnb and the Hilton, Starwood and Marriott hotel empires, as well as a handful of Asian national tourist offices.

These brand wins are based on two main offerings, explains Jauncey, the first being content at scale. If brands aren't putting out content every day, he says, they risk losing relevance. During a [partnership with the Philippines Department of Tourism](#) in May 2016, for example, BD dedicated a team of five people to five different content-creating mediums—DSLR cameras, iPhones, drones, video cameras and 360-degree cameras—in order to have enough assets to post across all of BD and PDOT's social accounts, reaching 5 million people on Snapchat and 7.8 million on Facebook in the process.

Measurability—improving conversion—is the second hook BD hangs its hat on. If a piece of content is successful on social media, for instance, BD has "a very high degree of certainty" that it will perform better than other content assets when run as an ad on Facebook, Instagram or any other channel, Jauncey says.



This being said, each social network also has its own differentiations in terms of which content works best, particularly in China. BD chose [Weibo](#) as its conduit into the China market this year, assisted by a [partnership with Hong Kong-based MCN VS Media](#). The account has attracted almost 2 million followers in just nine months. But Jauncey says there is a lot more to learn.

"Localisation in terms of translation is certainly one [aspect]," he says. "But also what we have found is actually coming to China and shooting Chinese content was the thing that really changed the trajectory of our growth. Before, we were sharing content from all around the world on our account and we were growing, but when we actually came to China and created a mini-series called 'Beautiful China' in Sichuan, that was the starting point for the account really exploding."

Says Tiffany Wan, regional director at VS Media, "What's challenging about Weibo is that it is a rather text and image driven platform, unlike Instagram where Beautiful Destinations has excelled with its strong visual storytelling." Content that resonates on Weibo has to be timely and relevant, she says, focusing on trending destinations—both "world famous" and "uprising" places are popular; as are visa-free or e-visa accessible places—and current social campaigns. Collaborations with local influencers, like the popular Chinese-American actress and singer Fala Chen, have also helped BD's work get more traction.



Jauncey with dragon dancers at the 2017 Chengdu Intangible Cultural Heritage Festival

Looking ahead, cracking the WeChat community and breaking into China's "massive" live streaming user base are high up on BD's immediate bucket list. But the company is also planning a significant expansion of its filming work, Jauncey reveals. BD is just starting to invest in its own entertainment division, following in the footsteps of platforms such as Facebook, Snapchat and Amazon, all of which are starting to develop their own TV show formats in America.

"You have all of these technology players getting into content in a way that perhaps in the past was the realm of Hollywood, the realm of traditional content creators in television and film," says Jauncey. "We see a massive opportunity to be in that space so we are now shooting our own short-form four to six minute TV style shows for these streaming platforms and we think that is going to be a huge area of growth for us."

Source: [Campaign Asia-Pacific](#)

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