

RED  
CARD

# NBA RED CARD

# 2022

CHINA DIGITAL  
PERFORMANCE  
INDEX



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# I FOREWORD

Welcome to the sixth annual NBA Red Card report, as we dive deep into the digital performance of NBA teams, players, and legends in the 2021/2022 season.

The good news is the NBA was back live on CCTV for the first time since October 2020, ending an 18-month blackout.

The Warriors returned to the top spot after two years in second place, with a healthy dose of championship rings coupled with the formidable star Stephen Curry's dominance as the most popular NBA player on Weibo in China.

Kuaishou was the big winner this season after becoming the NBA's new official short video partner, as teams posted 118% more often there than on their Douyin accounts. Kuaishou, which owns a large amount of NBA material copyright, also launched the 'NBA Creation Camp' to open exclusive content to creators, with total video views topping 64B (that's right) in the first season's partnership.

We saw new exploration with digital technologies such as NFTs with Alipay, a rise in virtual influencers with Migu and QQ Music, and Weibo remained active with dozens of team activations.

The lockdowns throughout China this year brought their own challenges, however, the NBA Cares and CSR programs of NBA China continued to host events and explored ways to deliver value to the communities.

Thank you to Phil Van Camerik and the team for producing another all-star report.

Always ballin'.



Andrew Collins  
CEO



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## Back on CCTV

The NBA was back on the league's exclusive traditional TV broadcaster in China after 18 months off, giving the league a viewership boost and more leverage to activate with local partners. Live broadcasts of games were shown throughout the Playoffs and NBA Finals. A fixed relationship with CCTV is a strong sign for the NBA's future, helping re-open the door for NBA China, NBA teams, and NBA players to establish local partnerships and commercial deals.

## Innovations by NBA China

NBA China partnered with Alipay and Antchain to create multiple digital collectibles around Chinese national holidays, which strengthens the bond with NBA Alipay members via free, collectible gifts. They also invested in virtual influencers; first with Migu to develop virtual basketball influencer Gu Yifei to enhance NBA broadcasts, and again with QQ Music for a virtual musician named Ro1yi to promote an NBA Finals playlist. Finally, NBA China co-produced video content with Kuaishou, most notably a basketball reality show which averaged 15M views per episode.

## Short Video Surge

In the first full season since Kuaishou obtained NBA short-form video rights, NBA teams posted 118% more videos on their Kuaishou accounts compared to Douyin. Despite being less than Kuaishou, Douyin output increased YoY by 81% to reach 1,457 posts, showing that NBA teams realise the importance both short-form platforms play in having a well balanced social media presence. Engagement on Douyin had 28.5M likes across team accounts, a 204% increase compared to 2021. NBA teams have so far accumulated nearly 34M likes on Kuaishou.

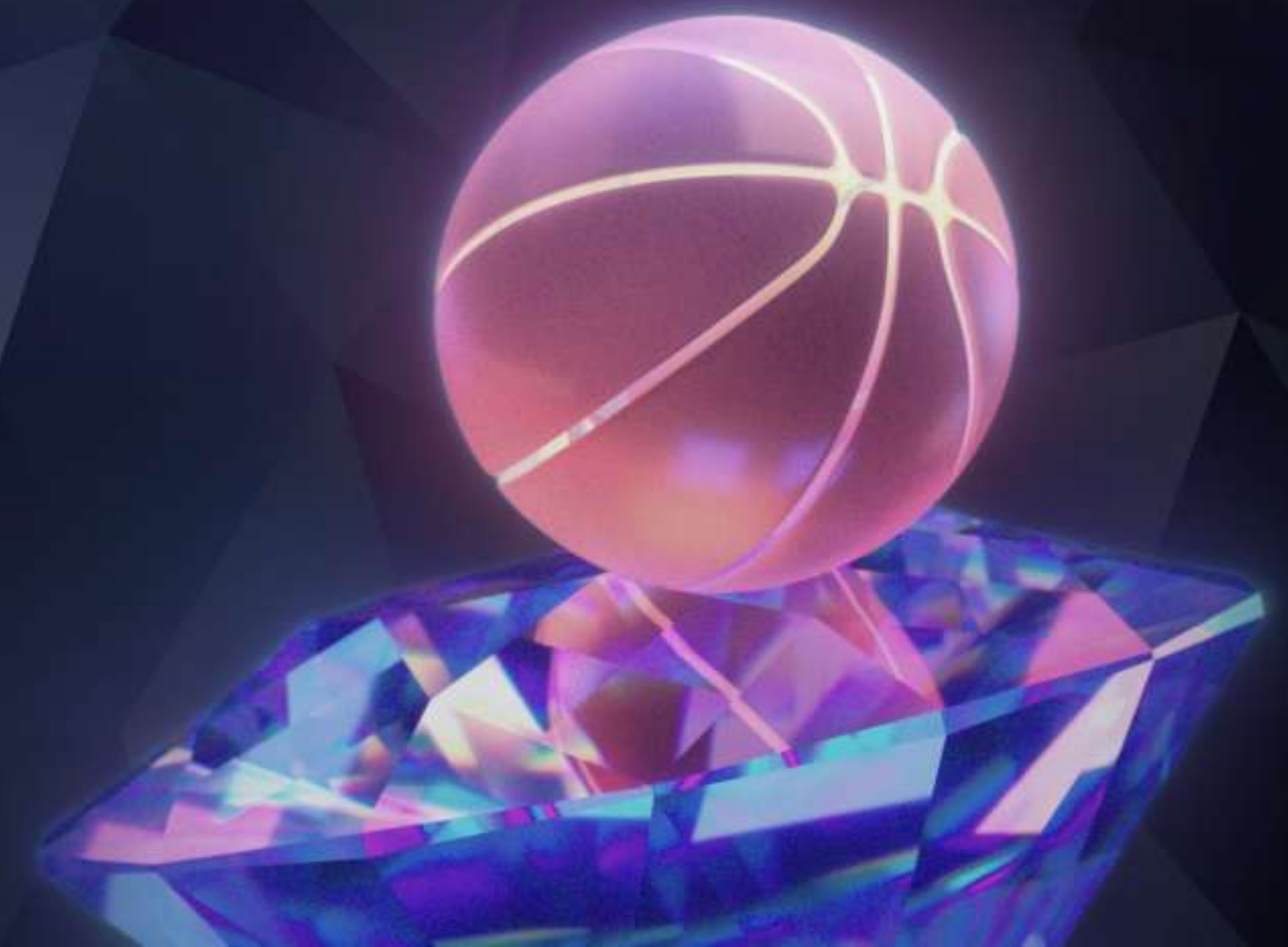
# KEY LEARNINGS AND OBSERVATIONS

## Kuaishou's Growing Importance

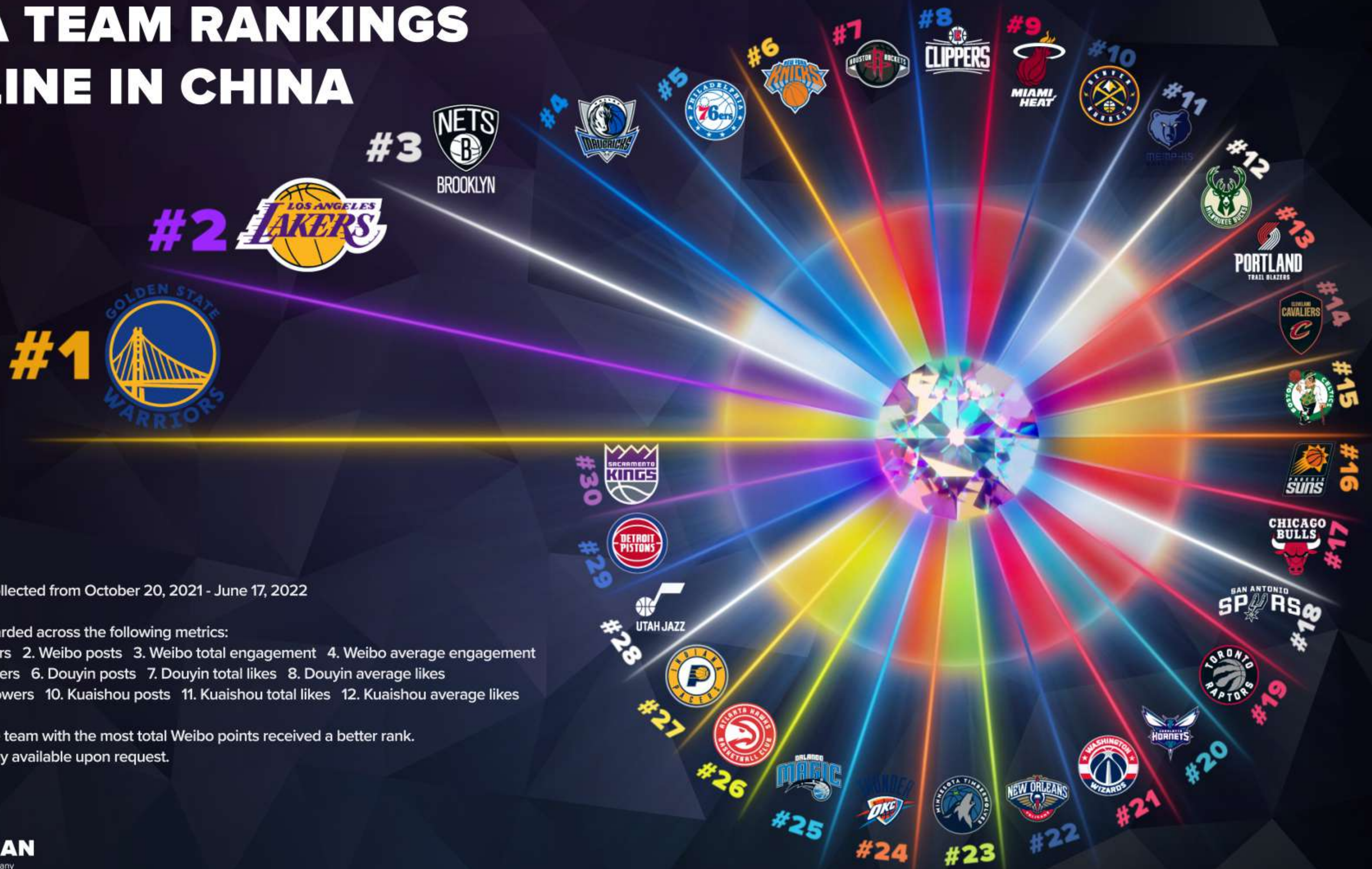
Almost no current NBA players have capitalised on Kuaishou's emergence as a major hub for NBA content. The platform is dominated by legends building their brands, such as Stephon Marbury and Tracy McGrady. Out of all current players, Mo Bamba has the most substantial presence on Kuaishou, whose average engagement on Kuaishou is actually higher when compared to his Douyin. It will take time for Kuaishou to grow its reputation as a top destination for athletes to invest time and resources.

## Partner Activation Opportunities

The NBA granted more flexibility for teams to activate with partners in international markets, and it's finally beginning to materialise in China, as demonstrated by the Phoenix Suns and PayPal. Like many European football clubs have done, a few NBA teams also created cross-branded content with their international partners through social media channels. As it stands, NBA teams have not formed many partnerships with local Chinese brands (outside of the Brooklyn Nets), so this is a clear opportunity for teams in coming years.



# NBA TEAM RANKINGS ONLINE IN CHINA



The data was collected from October 20, 2021 - June 17, 2022

Points were awarded across the following metrics:

1. Weibo followers
2. Weibo posts
3. Weibo total engagement
4. Weibo average engagement
5. Douyin followers
6. Douyin posts
7. Douyin total likes
8. Douyin average likes
9. Kuaishou followers
10. Kuaishou posts
11. Kuaishou total likes
12. Kuaishou average likes

Tie breaker - the team with the most total Weibo points received a better rank.

Full methodology available upon request.

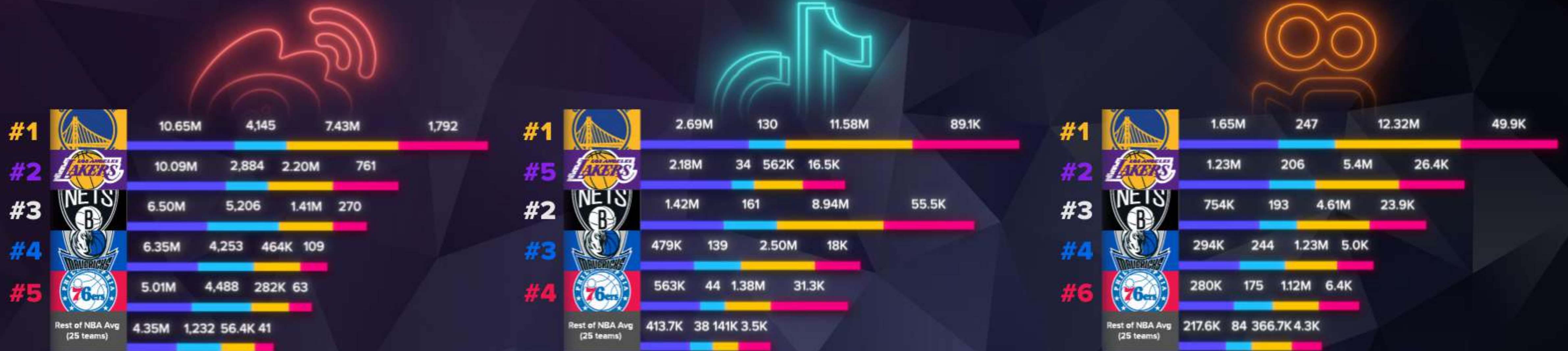
# NBA TEAM RANKINGS ONLINE IN CHINA

2022

NBA Teams	Score	Change
 Golden State Warriors	299	+1
 Los Angeles Lakers	226	-1
 Brooklyn Nets	223	0
 Dallas Mavericks	155	+8
 Philadelphia 76ers	154	+9
 New York Knicks	97	+18
 Houston Rockets	82	-3
 Los Angeles Clippers	82	-2
 Miami Heat	79	-1
 Denver Nuggets	68	+8
 Memphis Grizzlies	65	+12
 Milwaukee Bucks	59	-5
 Portland Trail Blazers	57	+2
 Cleveland Cavaliers	55	-4
 Boston Celtics	55	-4
 Phoenix Suns	54	-11
 Chicago Bulls	53	-4
 San Antonio Spurs	52	+3
 Toronto Raptors	51	-10
 Charlotte Hornets	49	+2
 Washington Wizards	49	-5
 New Orleans Pelicans	46	+5
 Minnesota Timberwolves	45	-4
 Oklahoma City Thunder	45	-7
 Orlando Magic	45	+3
 Atlanta Hawks	44	+3
 Indiana Pacers	42	+3
 Utah Jazz	40	-3
 Detroit Pistons	38	-3
Sacramento Kings	38	-10

# ANALYSIS - TOP NBA TEAMS

■ Followers    ■ Total Engagement (Likes)  
■ Posts    ■ Avg Engagement (Likes)



## Warriors' Dominance Continues

The Warriors were #1 across all platforms in terms of engagement, showing that when they post, their loyal fanbase is eager to interact. Much of their success can be attributed to the team's on-court performance in another Championship-winning season. Winning cannot take all the credit though, as the Boston Celtics also reached the NBA Finals, but didn't crack the top 10 across any platform.

The Warriors found success in making simple posts about celebrities who are regulars on Weibo's trending topics list. This allowed them to appeal to fans and followers of that celebrity, and in turn frequently achieve over 10K in engagement per crossover post. For reference, nine NBA teams did not surpass 10K cumulative engagements for the entire season, so this tactic is widening the gap between Warriors and other teams.

## Lakers Stay Within Distance

The Lakers remained strong across Weibo and Kuaishou, maintaining consistent output and strong engagement metrics. However, the biggest surprise is the Lakers' performance on Douyin, as no other top five team had a bigger gap in their output rankings on Douyin compared to other platforms. The Lakers embraced the transition to Kuaishou as the main outlet for short videos, and the decision was justified by their Kuaishou having 60% higher average engagements compared to Douyin. To top the Red Card rankings again in the future, the Lakers will have to build a balanced content strategy across all three platforms, as the Warriors and Nets have continued to do.

## Nets Closing In

The Nets have developed a standalone business department comprised of Chinese employees which oversees all operations related to the China market, including building a network of top-tier KOLs to generate exclusive content. The results were top five ranks in every Red Card metric, a stat that only the Warriors accomplished. Since Joe Tsai's acquisition of the Nets, they have steadily increased their China-specific content and invested in charitable acts, such as building a basketball court in rural China last season. Results meant the Nets rose from #19 in the Red Card 2019, all the way up to #3 in 2022. If the Nets can maintain dedication to digital content and successfully execute one viral topic, such as another charitable initiative or a partnership with a popular Chinese company, then they may break into the top two.

## Mavs and 76ers

The Mavericks (+8) and 76ers (+9) both took leaps forward this season through similar approaches to their channel management. Both teams performed consistently across all platforms by posting frequently, maintaining strong engagement through funny and entertaining content on Douyin and Kuaishou.

# TEAM BEST PRACTICES AND CASE STUDIES

## Brand and Partner Inclusions

Utilising social media for commercialisation in China has not been prevalent for NBA teams for the last few seasons, but progress was made this season, particularly on Weibo. A few NBA teams launched initiatives that featured a brand integrated in their content, with some used exclusively on their China channel.

### Dallas Mavericks x Therabody

During the Playoffs, the Mavericks launched China-exclusive campaigns with Therabody. The first was a Therabody-branded graphic to initiate a user-generated content (UGC) campaign. The second was a sweep-stake which drove fans to follow the Therabody Weibo account for a chance to win a Theragun.



### Phoenix Suns x Paypal

The Suns ran a sweepstake during the Playoffs that was co-branded with their jersey partner, PayPal. The Rally The Valley Worldwide - presented by PayPal - was effective in driving significant engagement, achieving an average of about 3K engagements per post (36x higher than average).



### Los Angeles Lakers x Beyond Meat

The Lakers activated with their partner Beyond Meat through creating a China exclusive branded series. #BeyondHuddle showed Lakers huddle photos which included Beyond Meat logos into the graphic design and written copy. The 4 posts each received over 1K engagements (30% higher than average).



### Los Angeles Lakers x Bibigo

The Lakers also drove exposure for jersey patch partner, Bibigo. The activation entailed creating a high volume of topical graphics, such as player birthdays and jersey reveals. In total, 35 posts reached over 15.4K total engagements.





# TEAM BEST PRACTICES AND CASE STUDIES

## Leverage In-stadium Events

All teams should look to integrate their Chinese fan base into stadium activations, however, not all teams have started new events or content ideas that will drive interest for fans across the globe. Below are examples of how teams brought the stadium experience directly to Chinese fans.

### Brooklyn Nets x Panda Express - Chinese New Year

A combination of digital content and in-stadium activations led the Nets to have a very successful Chinese New Year. They partnered with Panda Express for the event, but also collaborated with Asian artists, featured a thank-you video from the New York Chinese Consul General, and donated to the community through scholarships. Related posts received 19.3M reads on Weibo and 550M views on Douyin.



### Warriors and Grizzlies Utilise Chinese Fan Reporters

On a near weekly basis, the Memphis Grizzlies hosted a show to cover a variety of topics, including team news and interviews with other Chinese fans. They featured a Chinese reporter again during the Playoffs versus the Golden State Warriors, receiving over 1,150 engagements (over 15x more than average). The Warriors did a similar series throughout the Playoffs, using a variety of Chinese hosts to interact with fans outside of Warriors games or viewing parties. The episodes peaked at 3,973 engagements (over 2x more than average).



### Mavericks Involve China in Celebrating Dirk

The Mavericks produced weeks of Dirk Nowitzki-related content leading up to his jersey retirement ceremony, and were excellent at keeping Chinese fans engaged throughout. They invited former Mavericks players Yi Jianlian, Wang Zhizhi, and Ding Yanyuhang to send videos to Dirk, Wang Zhizhi even sent Dirk a Chinese-style rug as a gift. Chinese fans were also able to send gifts and messages through multiple UGC activities for the 'Nowitzki Jersey Retirement' through various team channels.



### NBA China 75th Anniversary Campaign

To kick off the NBA's 75th Anniversary, NBA China invited teams to collect fan messages. The goal was to create a montage video to be played on every team's main screen during one of the team's first home games of the season. Eight teams participated, including all of the top five teams in this year's Red Card, plus the Portland Trail Blazers, Denver Nuggets, and Houston Rockets.



# TEAM BEST PRACTICES AND CASE STUDIES

## Long-form Original Production

After the 2021-22 season, the Portland Trail Blazers invested into an episodic series called the 'Blazers Talk Show'. It was the team's first video series that was produced specifically for the China market, and it was published exclusively on the team's Weibo channel. The four episodes featured three key fans from China, who together discussed the most iconic moments in the franchise's history. The series performed exceedingly well, receiving 6.9M hashtag reads, 4.2M video views, and nearly 2,565 engagements (12x season average).



# 1 YEAR ONE OF KUAISHOU PARTNERSHIP

## Empower the User

Kuaishou launched the 'NBA Creation Camp' in order to make exclusive content available to creators. The platform encourages users to create basketball videos, and rewards top performers with promotional resources and monetisation opportunities. This initiative has incentivised basketball fans to create and engage with the NBA, leading to 2B views from over 13K viral videos and challenges. The network of creators in the "NBA Creation Camp" has surpassed 75M fans, showing that the creator economy on Kuaishou is expanding rapidly.

## NBA and Players Leverage Livestreams

Livestreaming is an integral part of NBA China's strategy, hosting over 1K livestreams to-date. These include originally-produced China shows, and also a near constant stream of historical replays. Team accounts will also broadcast NBA China streams if relevant to their team, but no teams have produced their own livestream yet.

NBA China organised a series of livestreams during the NBA Finals featuring Scottie Barnes, Quentin Richardson, Nick Young, and Allen Iverson, with Young and Iverson subsequently opening official Kuaishou accounts. The four shows amassed almost 11M views, and Young (1.1M followers) and Iverson (765K followers) both experienced explosive follower growth within ten days.

## Innovative Kuaishou Content

NBA China and Kuaishou developed a new reality TV show called 'Let's Play Basketball' which focused on combining general entertainment elements with the digital resources of the NBA to reach new audiences. The show took shape as a variety show, whereby different basketball influencers and celebrities were invited to the NBA Basketball School in Haikou to participate in fun games, challenges, and discussions related to basketball and lifestyle topics. To add, NBA China also produced interactive studio shows that connected fans with top celebrities and influencers so that fans could actively be a part of the discussions. These types of initiatives helped NBA-related topics reach 64B views on Kuaishou in Season 1, and teams will benefit from investing into similar original productions.



## Player Accounts Avoid Game Footage

Most player accounts have not been using highlights in their Kuaishou or Douyin videos, whilst some players completely removed previously published videos from their Douyin accounts. The NBA official accounts remain the best outlet for highlights, but NBA footage is also in the hands of Kuaishou platform creators through initiatives like the 'NBA Creation Camp'. Player accounts lean towards outlets for lifestyle content, showing their off-court personalities to grow their fanbase.

## Douyin Still the Player Hub

Douyin has 22 current NBA player accounts while Kuaishou only has four. It's clear that Douyin still has more awareness with players because it is the TikTok of China, and therefore a more familiar platform for growing their brand. However, the first current NBA superstar to join Kuaishou will receive significant media attention, similar to when Cristiano Ronaldo gained 7.5M followers in two months after becoming a Kuaishou ambassador in November 2020. The appeal of Kuaishou is growing for NBA players though, evidenced by the recent arrivals of Nick Young, Allen Iverson, and Tim Hardaway Sr.

# MOST POPULAR NBA PLAYERS ON WEIBO



Stephen Curry  
79 points



Klay Thompson  
68 points



Derrick Rose  
53 points



Chris Paul  
50 points



Russell Westbrook  
38 points



# ANALYSIS - MOST POPULAR NBA PLAYERS ON WEIBO



## Curry Holds Top Spot

Stephen Curry's huge fan base continues to engage with his content at impressive rates. Curry's account is so dominant that his top two posts alone (248K engagements) surpass the season-long engagement total of the next best player account, teammate Klay Thompson, who had 224K total engagements.

His most successful posts during the season were not original content, but congratulations posts generated from the Weibo Sports platform to announce trending topics, such as his Record-Breaking Moment for 3-pointers made (128K engagements), NBA Finals MVP (120K engagements), NBA Finals win (94K engagements), Western Conference Finals MVP (85K engagements), and All-Star Game MVP (46K engagements).

Some of Curry's best content was published prior to the season starting. His official account first shared a video of a young basketball star in China who emulates Curry's skills and wears the #30. The video received 125K engagements, as he asked his followers to connect him with the young player. He followed up by creating a shout-out video and tagging the young player's Weibo account, which contributed another 29K engagements.



## Thompson Bounces Back

Klay Thompson finished second this year on Weibo having not finished in the top five last year. The improvement can be credited to a strong blend of highlights from games, pictures and videos from his personal life, as well as snippets of China-specific content with local partners. The account performance relied heavily on Championship-related topics, as well as two posts about his return from a two-and-a-half year injury. Klay also participated in a partnership with Mobil 1 and NBA China, in which he published sponsored graphics throughout the NBA Playoffs.



## The Rise of Rose

Rounding out the top three is Derrick Rose, who proved that consistency and authenticity can lead to elite results. Rose had one of the most active accounts this season, in terms of output, but also in terms of original content for China. Aside from CNY posts, Rose created a heartfelt message to Shanghai during the city-wide lockdown. The post was simple, sharing an image of himself visiting Shanghai along with his best wishes, generating 3x his average engagement.

# MOST POPULAR NBA PLAYERS ON DOUYIN



James Harden  
84 points



Derrick Rose  
77 points



Ja Morant  
61 points



Klay Thompson  
57 points



Andrew Wiggins  
48 points

# ANALYSIS - MOST POPULAR NBA PLAYERS ON DOUYIN



## James Harden Steps Up

Harden activated his account in January 2022, and quickly became the most followed NBA player with 2.54M followers by the end of the season (#2 is Klay Thompson with 1.88M followers). His first video gained over 1.3M likes, which shows the overwhelming support fans have for him. He also published China-specific videos, such as a CNY message (over 220K likes) and a pledge to make 13 scholarship donations to students in China (over 150K likes).

The rest of Harden's videos were from his impressive training sessions and off-court lifestyle. The videos don't often use local elements or Douyin filters, instead opting for clean edits with American hip-hop. These videos continue to perform well, showing that Harden's fans respond positively to the authentic approach of his production team.

Harden also promoted his business interests, including his sponsor Adidas, a partnership with Autograph, and his own wine brand. If his account continues to gain superior performance, we expect him to monetise his channel with a local Chinese company, like Derrick Rose did.



## Coming Up Roses

Derrick Rose's fantastic performance on Douyin this year is a result of great content selection, a team that is adept at using Douyin filters and effects that make his posts more interesting, and extensive efforts in post-production to use old clips from Rose's playing career. He was also able to leverage his account to activate with a local partner, Bottled Joy, to create two promotional videos, which achieved 715K likes collectively.



## Ja Morant Takes Douyin By Storm

In a season where he won NBA's Most Improved Player, Morant matched his on-court progress by becoming a top-tier NBA player on Douyin. After launching his account in December, one of his biggest moments was a crossover with the Beijing Winter Olympics and its mascot Bing Dwen Dwen - a huge trending topic in China at the time. The video earned 3.5M views and 165K likes on Douyin, drew attention from non-basketball fans, and was trending across Douyin, Weibo and Kuaisou.

# ANALYSIS - NBA PLAYERS ON KUAISHOU

## Mo Bamba, Kuaishou King

Bamba stands out amongst the pool of current NBA players on Kuaishou. His account is still small compared to top performers on Douyin, but his average engagement on Kuaishou this season was 47% higher than on his Douyin account. His largest spike was a simple video welcoming Jackie Chan to Kuaishou, but because it capitalised on a trending topic it received 123K likes. If Bamba wants to cement his foothold on Kuaishou, he will have to invest more in exclusive content and livestreaming initiatives.

## Next Steps for Kuaishou

As the official short-form video partner for NBA China, Kuaishou has to be eyeing the top young players who are soaring in popularity with Chinese fans. Many of these stars are sticking to Weibo and Douyin, while Kuaishou seemed focused on solidifying its relationship with NBA, its teams, and NBA content creators on Kuaishou in year one.

However, to truly become the NBA content hub, Kuaishou will have to begin actively recruiting top-tier talent to open Kuaishou accounts. To do this, they will have to arm players with a pathway to success, including pre-planned crossovers with popular content creators, promotion packages for mass exposure, insights about industry trends, and eventually monetisation opportunities. James Harden opted to open an account on RED (小红书) instead of going to Kuaishou, so it's clear that Kuaishou is competing with other platforms, not just Douyin.



**Mo Bamba**  
**72 points**

Alfonzo McKinnie  
48 points

Zach LaVine (inactive)  
25 points

Austin Reaves  
14 points

Thomas Bryant  
10 points



# PLAYER CASE STUDIES

## James Harden on RED

Harden became the first NBA player to open an account on popular social media & lifestyle platform RED, and immediately made an impact by participating in a livestream specifically for China. The 20-minute livestream featured Harden engaged in a Q&A with a Chinese influencer and host, and then he signed shirts for viewers to win. The livestream had 104K viewers and 636K likes, growing his account by 176K followers and reaching 127K engagements within just one week.



## Shaquille O'Neal Livestream on WeChat

Shaq was the first-ever NBA player to do a livestream on WeChat Channels, and it was a massive event with 5.8M viewers. In the one-hour livestream, Shaq celebrated his birthday with Chinese fans by doing China-related activities and gifting signed jerseys to fans. Shaq also recently relaunched his other social media channels on Weibo and Douyin, gaining over 1M followers in just 12 hours on Douyin.



## Luka Doncic x Nike x Douyin Collab

Just one day after Luka Doncic's official Douyin account opened, Nike organised the 'Step Back Makes Miracles' challenge to promote Luka's first signature shoe, the Jordan Luka 1. Luka's account posted a kick-off video that received 473K likes from users who participated and drove 37M views to the campaign hashtag. The campaign was also supported by Douyin, advertising that the winner of the challenge would be rewarded with additional on-platform perks, most notably more exposure for that user's own content.



# LEGENDARY STATUS

Aside from current NBA players, many former NBA players have been brand building in China for years. The top-tier of legends have excelled across all three major platforms, setting them and their China social media footprint into a higher echelon than most current NBA stars.



## Jeremy Lin

A powerhouse on social, Lin continued his dominance with perfect scores on both Douyin and Weibo. His content is funny, capitalises on trends, and most importantly is spoken in the local language. Lin has that advantage over other players on this list, but the effort he puts into creating original content is also impressive, as he finished #2 in post frequency for both platforms.

Weibo - 100  
Douyin - 100  
Kuaishou - NA



## Stephon Marbury

To date, Marbury leads in almost all major metrics on Kuaishou - boasting 1.8M followers and almost 11M likes for his videos. Despite being the leader on Kuaishou, Marbury's Douyin had the most impressive growth, improving likes and average likes by over 2x last season's performance. Marbury's most successful content is when he interacts with Chinese KOLs and personalities, such as a video of him playing 1-on-1 against "Chaoyang Curry" - which generated 1.1M likes.

Weibo - 81  
Douyin - 100  
Kuaishou - 88



## Allen Iverson

Iverson's accounts aren't particularly active, but fans are eager to engage. He did not focus on exclusive content for China, but relied on entertaining videos from his everyday life. In collaboration with NBA China, Iverson launched on Kuaishou during a livestream with a Chinese host. Four of his seven Kuaishou videos are clips from that livestream, but two of his videos also use in-game highlights, which we expect to see used more due to their high performance.

Weibo - 42  
Douyin - 55  
Kuaishou - 61



## Tracy McGrady

McGrady is very active on social, but his videos are predominantly about his new career as a basketball personality and analyst. He also posted sponsored content on his Douyin channel this year. The betting company, Bwin, sponsored a series that featured McGrady predicting NBA Playoff games, but the performance of these videos was far worse than his average due to Douyin placing restrictions on betting and gambling-related videos.

Weibo - 79  
Douyin - 50  
Kuaishou - 33



## Nick Young

Since Young appeared on Douyin, he has heavily reduced his output and it's impacted his overall performance. His NBA Red Card 2022 score was salvaged by launching a Kuaishou account during the NBA Playoffs. Within the first few weeks, he surpassed 1M followers and can grow further if he revamps his dedication to consistently create quality content for his China platforms, like videos with Chinese influencers and livestreams that worked well in the past.

Weibo - 25  
Douyin - 47  
Kuaishou - 77

# WINS FOR NBA CHINA

Official NBA China social media accounts have made significant strides to create new and original content this season. However, NBA China has many additional pillars in their China strategy that have been successful in establishing endless touchpoints with fans from varied audiences through partnerships, events, digital assets, and ecommerce.

## Investing in WeChat

Tencent is the digital media partner of NBA China, therefore NBA is continually building a presence on the Tencent-owned WeChat app. A huge platform with nearly 1.3B MAUs, WeChat is appealing to users because it offers an array of services via Mini Programs. The NBA's Membership Mini Program offers many functions, such as an NBA news and content hub, an ecommerce platform for NBA-authorized products, and access to NBA LAND for information about NBA Cares charities and NBA Hoop Park for reserving basketball courts or training sessions with coaches across China.



## Digital Collectibles Via Alipay

NBA China leveraged the trend of digital collectibles in China, partnering with the Antchain platform to create 18K copies for NBA fans during CNY 2022. Only members of the Alipay NBA Mini Program could register to win the digital collectibles, and they were won via an automated lucky draw system. Due to regulation on digital collectibles, the NBA fans are not able to sell or trade the items they won, but can display them on their Alipay Mini Program or on Jing Tan app - a digital collection platform which is also owned by Alibaba.



## NBA and Migu Extend Partnership

In November, the NBA and Migu (streaming subsidiary of China Mobile) extended for a new five-year agreement. The extension shows the NBA's commitment to providing a well-rounded entertainment offering to Chinese fans. The streaming company will be responsible for "enhanced viewing experiences" which is said to include VR, gamified features, and other activities embedded into the broadcast for viewers on Migu. The battle to win NBA viewer market share continues against Tencent, the NBA's official digital media partner which also streams games and NBA programming.



# WINS FOR NBA CHINA

## Jr.NBA Thriller in Shaanxi

The Jr.NBA initiative brings coaches and training tactics to youth basketball programs throughout China, making competitive basketball more easily accessible. Jr.NBA arranges tournaments and camps throughout the entire year, and a three-day competition in Shaanxi was a great moment for the program. The buzzer beater shot from this regional championship went viral after being published on the Jr.NBA official Weibo. Official news sites such as CCTV news and People's Daily discussed the competition, generating over 96M reads across all networks.



## Courts Are Coming From NBA Cares

NBA Cares focuses on charity and CSR campaigns around the globe, and is very active in China. In one of its biggest campaigns of the last season, NBA Cares China worked with government organisations to encourage participation in sports by improving conditions of sports facilities for rural teenagers. The campaign incentivised netizens to submit designs for new sports parks in rural areas, tallying over 100 submissions. The best 20 designs were voted on by a panel of experts and the public, and the winning designs are being constructed in the designated areas with government support.



## Streetballers x NBA Store

To capture the excitement around the 2022 NBA Finals, NBA Store worked on a short video series with streetballer celebrities to creatively integrate NBA Store product offerings into amusing activities and competitions. The campaign was successful in driving more traffic to the NBA Store Douyin account, with nearly 1M views and over 22K+ new followers. The ability to work with relevant and relatable influencers is often practised by the NBA official account, and that strategy has translated well for the commerce-related content as well.



## Panini America Previews the NBA Finals

Panini America, a longtime exclusive licensee of the NBA trading cards, collaborated with NBA China this season to capitalise on the excitement for the NBA Finals, and turned that excitement into social media success. The co-produced livestream was hosted by Shuhai, a prominent NBA commentator for Tencent, and other basketball KOLs. They collectively discussed the NBA season, the upcoming NBA Finals, and Panini America NBA trading card topics. The livestream drove over 1.2M views alone, and NBA Finals-related campaigns and content throughout the series generated 16M impressions on Panini America's Weibo.



# | 2022-23 OUTLOOK

## CCTV Paves Way for NBA China Games Return

After allowing NBA back on air, a full season of CCTV broadcasts could have huge positive implications for NBA China and its teams. Having the state-owned company increase the value of the NBA IP should lead to more official league partners and sponsors.

If NBA China is driving more revenue, and global sports organisations like UFC, WTT, F1, or PGA are able to resume events in China again for 2023, then we expect the player summer tours to come back and the NBA China Games to return, potentially as soon as the 2023 season.

## Kuaishou Builds on Content and Creators

NBA China is investing more into original content and livestreams on Kuaishou than Douyin, and teams are expected to follow that trend. Kuaishou has prioritised a grassroots approach to amplify the NBA's footprint, enabling content authors to use NBA footage to engage with basketball fans. The NBA China account remains the only official outlet for in-game footage, but expect teams to begin collaborating with creators so they can use game highlights to boost exposure and growth.

Meanwhile, Douyin will need to re-tool its role, pivoting to specialise in partnership activations or influencer crossovers for NBA China and its teams.

## RED Provides Competition to Douyin and Kuaishou

RED is a strong platform for broadcasting lifestyle and fashion content, which for some players, is more in-line with their personal accounts on Western social media, like Instagram, Twitter, or TikTok. The demographics are also different from Kuaishou, skewing heavily towards affluent, female users from Tier-1 or Tier-2 cities.

RED was initially founded as an app for sharing and discovering new trends in global products, so for NBA players who plan to collaborate with brands in China to sell products, building a strong presence on RED will certainly pay dividends.

## More Investment in Influencer Marketing

Working with local celebrities is a well established way for teams and players to reach new audiences that normally wouldn't consume their content. The Warriors found success in making posts about celebrities to capture interest and engagements on their Weibo page, but co-creating original content with celebrities, like the Nets have done on occasion, will be a next big step for many NBA teams.

There is a large pool of online influencers who are active in creating content across China social media and are interested in basketball and sports, and NBA China has begun to work with them.

## CSR a Priority for NBA

NBA will use CSR initiatives like NBA Cares to expand their efforts in rural parts of China, not only focusing on Tier-1 and Tier-2 city target audiences. Additionally, the 村BA, which translates to the Village Basketball Association, was a viral sensation throughout the summer. Huge basketball exhibitions were organised for entertainment while COVID restrictions have prevented professional sporting and spectator events from resuming.

The NBA China and teams like Lakers and Rockets have promoted some of these games with Kuaishou already, so expect teams and the NBA to take more active roles in supporting, organising, or sponsoring these types of exhibitions to connect with audiences through basketball.



# ABOUT MAILMAN

Mailman is China's leading sports digital agency. We exist at the intersection of digital & sports. We help top sports organisations & brands to build sustainable businesses in China, one of the world's most challenging markets. Mailman is part of 160over90, an Endeavor company.



## Business Opportunities

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# **NBA RED CARD 2022**

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