

Social media analysis of the UK's prospective international students

China deep dive

July 2022

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CHINA DEEP-DIVE

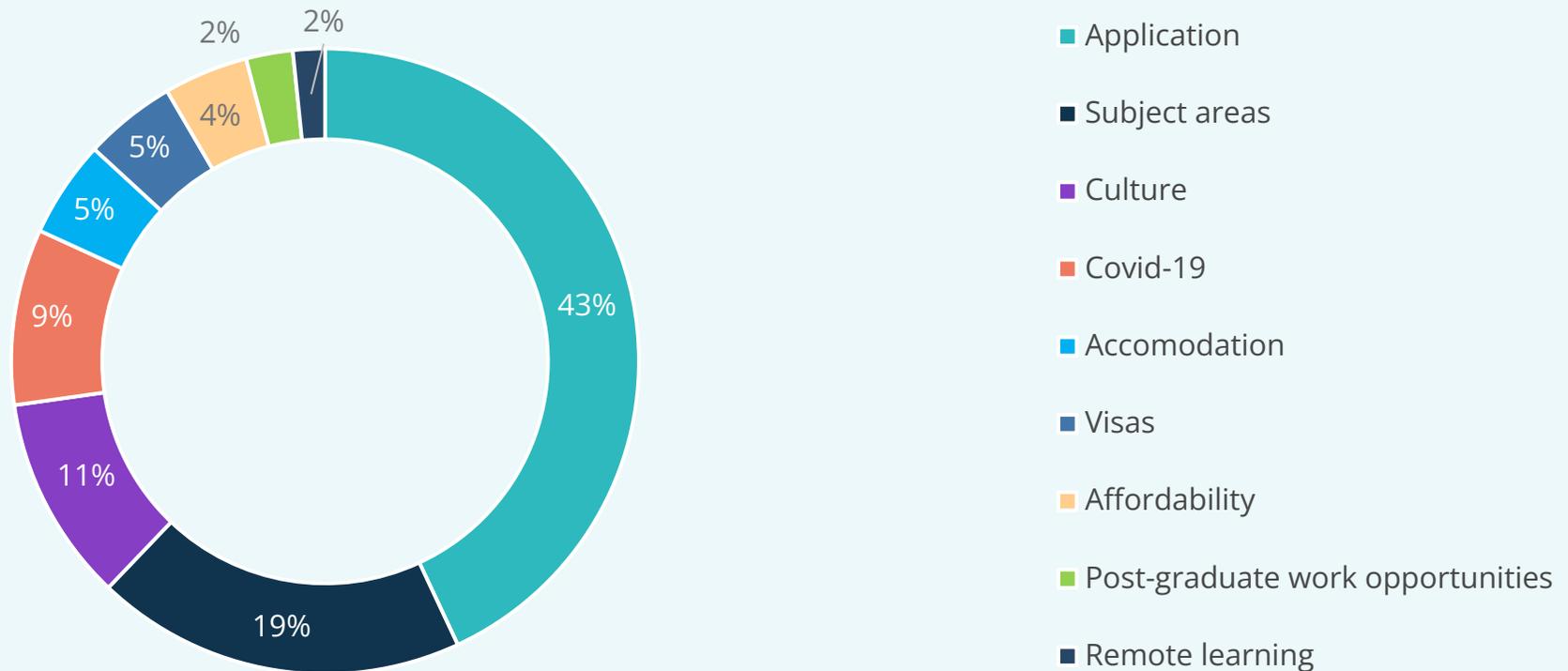


**Social media listening:
CHINA**



Chinese students support each other online during the university application process, sharing their experiences and asking for advice

KEY TOPICS - SHARE OF CONVERSATION



Application support and consultation agencies are popular among Chinese students, who use them to refine their submissions

APPLICATION

- Students ask questions online during all stages of the application process, for example on how to prepare their documentation and how to choose between their offers.
- Student application support agencies are another major topic in this area. Students discuss agency prices, which agencies are better, or if some agencies specialise in certain areas.
- Students like to share their application journey, including how they prepared documents, their academic background, when they submitted their applications, how many schools they applied to, and which gave offers.

“
Help! I have received offers from the University of Sydney, Monash University, Birmingham University and Leeds University, majoring in public health. Which institution is better in the area of UK engineering, such as Teli education, Xinhua, UKEC and British International?
”

SUBJECT AREAS

- Most posts about course subject areas are related to applications, mentioning subject areas or project name.
- The most popular subjects mentioned are Finance, Economics, Computer Science, Maths, Statistics and Music.
- Some students present they like or hate their major when sharing their daily life

“
Undergraduate background: Peking University major: finance GPA: 87 gmat: 7402 Admission : MSc Finance and economics, London School of economics, Imperial College Finance

My first degree is insurance, and my second degree is law. My TOEFL score is 92, and my GRE score is 315. My postgraduate successfully applied for the offer of economics major of Manchester University and Boston University.
”

A more interactive classroom culture in the UK can be jarring to Chinese students

CULTURE

- Chinese students discussing UK education with their peers back home mention a culture shock in how classes are conducted. They warn that UK classrooms are very interactive, and that it can be difficult for Chinese students to give their opinions in front of their classmates without feeling embarrassed.
- The widespread availability of museums, art galleries, opera houses and other cultural facilities in the UK is seen as offering a different cultural feeling to China.
- Eating culture: English food like fish and chips, Sunday roasts and Yorkshire puddings are considered a novelty for students.

“ This evening's class is the most embarrassing class so far. I joined the embarrassing discussion and tried my best to make myself look outgoing and easygoing. I'm actually very nervous. They don't understand the topic I said, and I don't understand what they said... It's a wonderful collision of cultures. ”

“ During the period of studying in the UK #vlog# pandemic, only a few venues were opened, and one day for the British Museum is not enough. ”

COVID-19

- Perceptions of poor pandemic management in the UK were seriously off-putting to Chinese students in 2021. They hesitated to apply to UK universities or to attend once accepted.
- While we have not seen a more positive discussion around the subject in recent months, there has been a decrease in students expressing concern.

“ Before I got the offer, I felt that the competition was too fierce this year and I couldn't apply successfully. Now I think the pandemic in the UK is too serious to go there ”

“ Would like to ask if there are any UUS know more about the UK pandemic recently? I'm very tangled about whether to go to London in September ”

Chinese students use social media to seek information on the safety and affordability of UK student accommodation

ACCOMMODATION

- Students ask about accommodation, trying to understand whether halls or independent living is more affordable. They also seek information on how to approach finding a home in a safe and affordable area. Students who have already arrived in the UK share their advice with students who are still in the application and consideration phases.
- While cost and safety are both key concerns for those considering where to live, safety is their priority.
- Prospective students are advised that cost is dependent on location, with London being very expensive.

“

How to live in the UK, off campus, dormitory or homestay? Are there any other options?

I think safety is the most important. The rent would rather be expensive to ensure safety

The rent in London must be expensive. It's cheaper in suburbs and rural areas. Sometimes there's a big gap.

”

VISAS

- Hopeful students discuss the visa application process, highlighting how long-winded and it can be, and how long they have to wait for their visas.
- In 2021, some students felt pressure to come to the UK to avoid their visa expiring, despite feeling underconfident in how the virus was being managed.

“

The visa is about to expire. Due to the pandemic, I don't want to go to UK. Is it necessary to go to UK right now? 2. How to plan for the annual online course and UK work visa qualification?

”

The UK is seen as an expensive place to live, with some students hoping to work while studying

AFFORDABILITY

- The UK is considered one of the most expensive destinations for education. Knowing this, some students ask about the potential to work in the UK while they complete their studies. However, they are usually advised against attempting this as it could impact their grades.
- Tuition is seen as the biggest cost, dependent on the school, subject and location.

“ Is it really expensive to study in the UK? I expect to go abroad in June next year, with preparatory courses and undergraduate courses, and maybe a master's degree. Considering the cost, I won't consider the London area. How much is it expected to cost in a year? How much can I get for working? Is it easy to get employed? ”

POST-GRADUATE WORK OPPORTUNITIES

- Some prospective students ask about work opportunities in, but are advised by existing students in the UK that it is very hard to find employment.
- Students are more likely to discuss the potential for post-graduation employment in China.

“ Domestic employment mainly depends on the ranking. If you want to go to a higher ranking school, choose Edinburgh. But in fact, domestic enterprises generally set the qs100 standard ”

REMOTE LEARNING

- Some students who planned to study abroad abroad decided against this when remote learning was common.

“ Originally, I planned to study in the UK, but I didn't want to go even if I applied successfully, remote learning is not study abroad. ”

The relative merits of the UK, US, Canada and Australia are often compared by prospective students from China

UK LOCATIONS

- Posts about location are mostly sharing UK customs, weather, and comparison of the education system.
- Some posts mention that living expenses and tuition in Scotland is much lower than England.
- Few posts mentioned location as driving their choice of where to study in the UK, with students instead focusing on academic ranking.

COMPETITOR COUNTRIES

- Chinese students do not choose just one country in which to apply to universities. They apply to several institutions in multiple countries and then choose from their offers.
- The UK, US, Canada, and Australia are the most mentioned countries, and students often compare them.
- The UK is seen as having strong academic reputation, and with universities being relatively easier to gain acceptance in than top US universities.
- The US is praised for education and research quality, but criticised for safety. Poor US/China relations are a deterrent to study in the US. Tuition ranges from low to high. Some top ranking universities are seen as extremely expensive.
- Canada is praised as being easier to get a visa to, but is said to have fewer universities and it is relatively hard to get an offer.
- Potential students believe it is easy to get an offer from Australian universities, but increasingly hard to get a visa. It is also seen as expensive.

Potential students ask a wide range of questions around their applications and eligibility based on grades

KEY QUESTION TYPES ON SOCIAL MEDIA

- This is my background and score. Can I apply for G5 universities? If I can't, what rank of universities can I apply to?
- Which agency is better? Are there any agencies I can rely on?
- I received offers from several schools in different countries. Which one should I choose?
- How much is studying in the UK for a year? Is 300000 yuan (around £35,000 GBP) enough? Is the UK very expensive?
- What are Covid-19 policies in UK? Are there any mandatory quarantine requirements? If I get Covid, do I have to pay for my own medical expenses? If I get covid, can I still go back to China? What I should prepare before arriving, e.g. Chinese herbs?

- Most students ask advice about their applications.
 - Topics include:
 - School selection
 - Agency selection
 - Offer selection
 - Whether to go or not
 - Safety
 - Cost
- Questions about daily life and study in the UK, including
 - Where to buy groceries
 - What to buy before arriving/how to prepare luggage
 - Study difficulties, such as what to do if they struggle to keep up in class

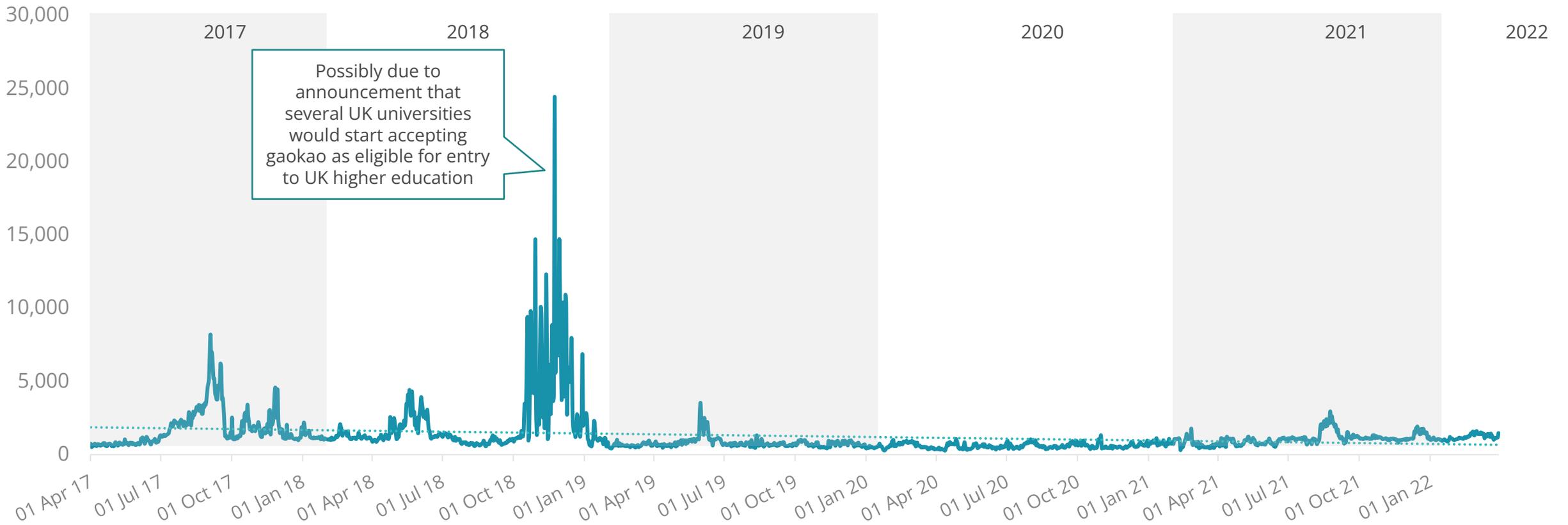
**Search & website traffic
analysis:
CHINA**



Search trend analysis

There has been a very slight downward trend in search activity in the past five years.

Monthly searches for 'Study in UK' over the Past 5 Years



How to read the Search Demand Map (following slide)

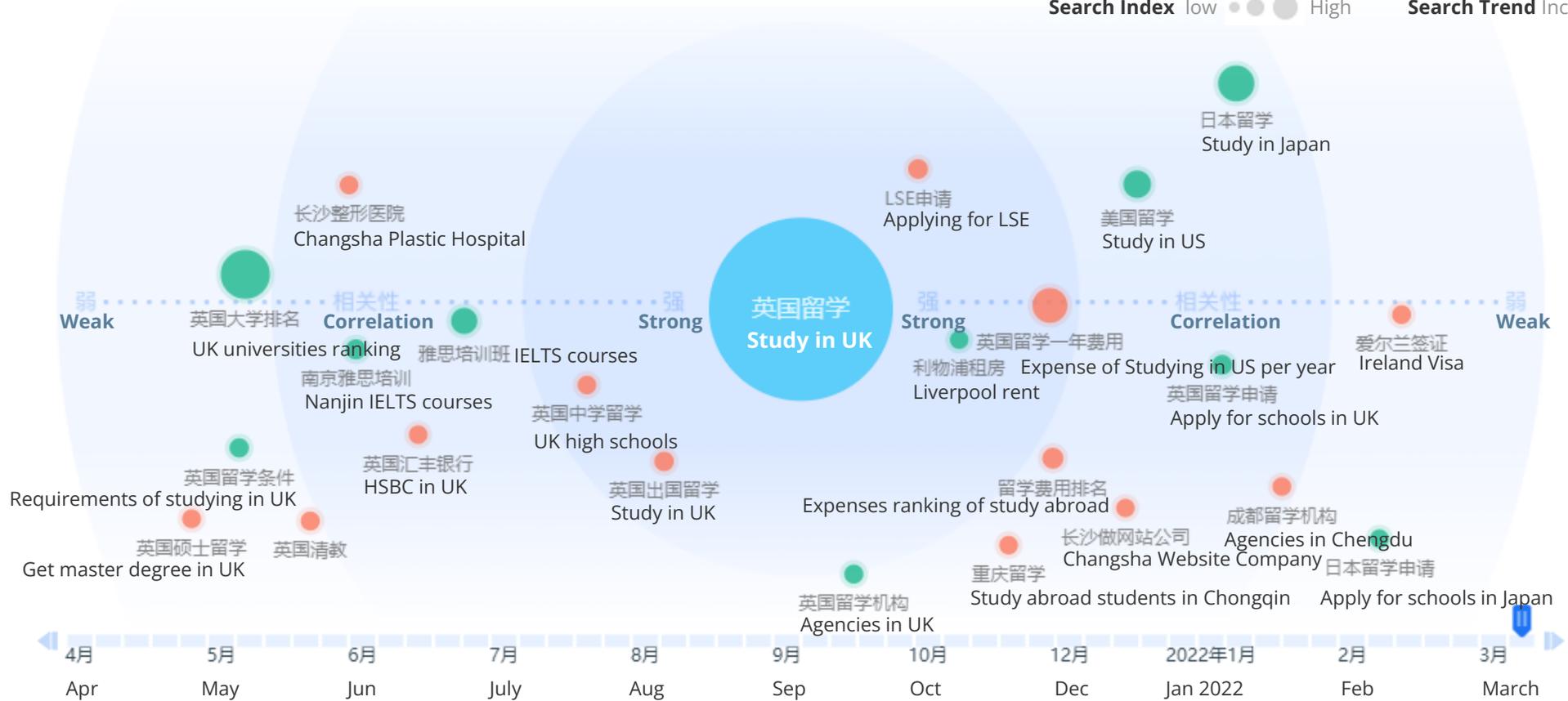
The map shows the other searches that people conduct before and after they search for 'Study in UK' keywords.

- The distance between the topic bubble and the central 'Study in UK' bubble indicates the correlation between the search terms (how likely they are to search for both terms). The closer the bubble, the more likely they are to search for both terms.
- The size of the topic bubble indicates how often the topic is searched for, independent of 'Study in UK' keywords.
- The colour of the topic bubble indicates whether there has been an increase or a decrease in searches for the topic over the last 12 months.

Search Demand Map | Study in UK

搜索指数 低 ●●● 高 搜索趋势 上升 ● 下降 ●

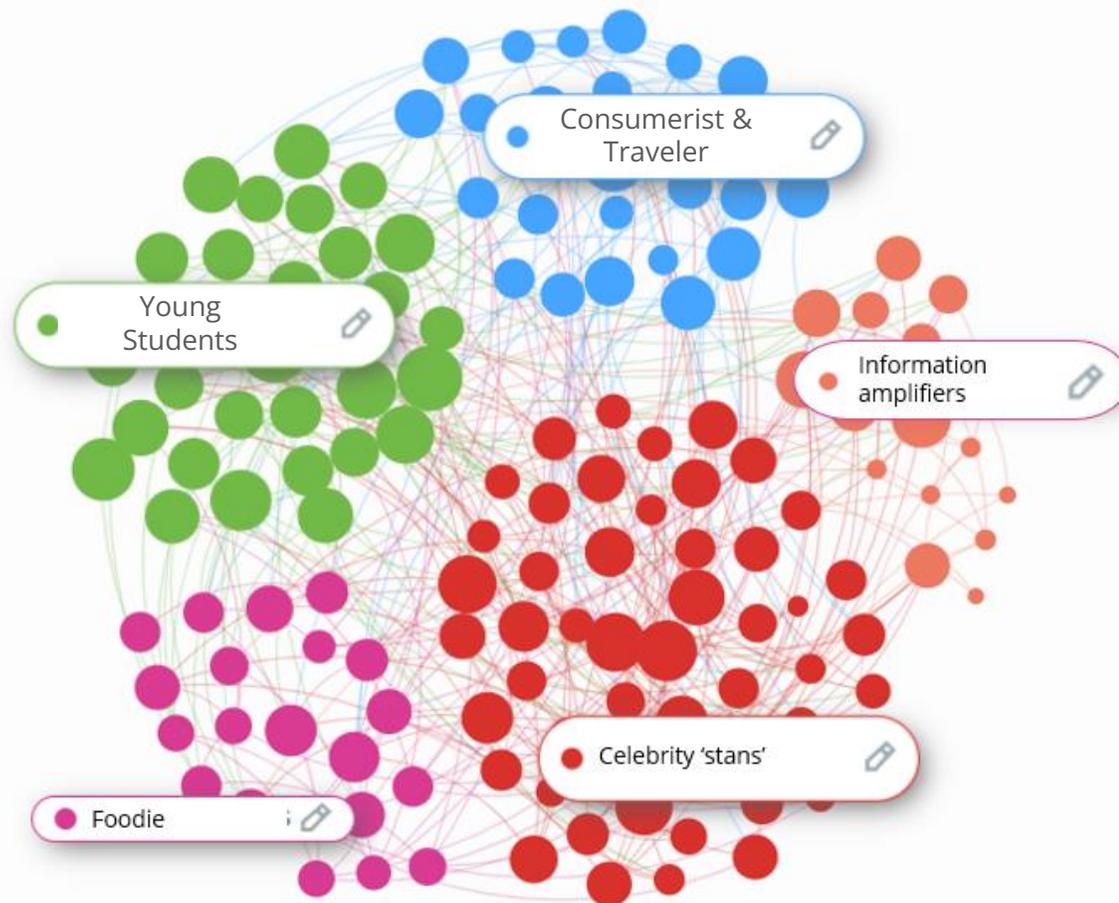
Search Index low ●●● High Search Trend Increase ● Decrease ●



**Student profile
estimation:
China**



Audience segmentation of young Chinese Weibo users



Celebrity 'stans' (31%)

They are fans of popular stars. They support their idols by reposting news about them, and endorsing their brands, films and music.

Young Students (29%)

This group posts are mostly about classes, homework, student labs and research. They share the details of their day-to-day lives, discussing the classes they attend, their efforts to meet deadlines and their academic achievements.

Consumerist & traveler (27%)

This group likes to post about their experiences of shopping, discussing the clothes, handbags and cars they have bought. They are also quite visual, posting images of landscapes, museums and art galleries.

Foodie (21%)

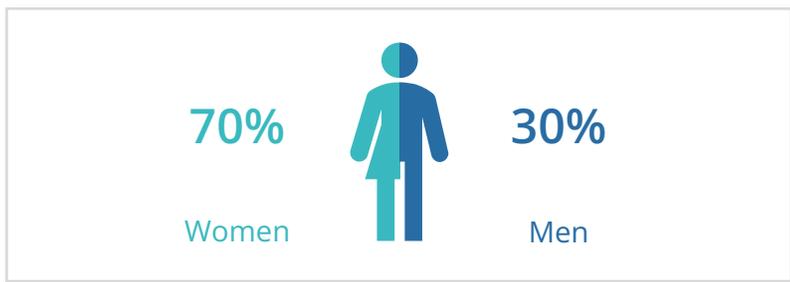
The group loves to post about the meals they eat daily, or about their cooking skills. They also love to share images and information of local dishes, restaurants and street food.

Information amplifiers (16%)

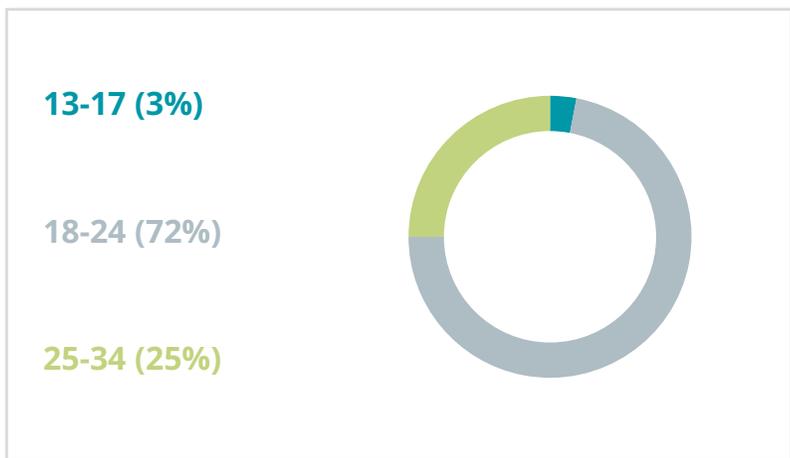
These people post online trying to make friends who are in the same educational phase as them, organise online groups of previous classmates, share study material and information on job positions.

Who are young Chinese Weibo users?

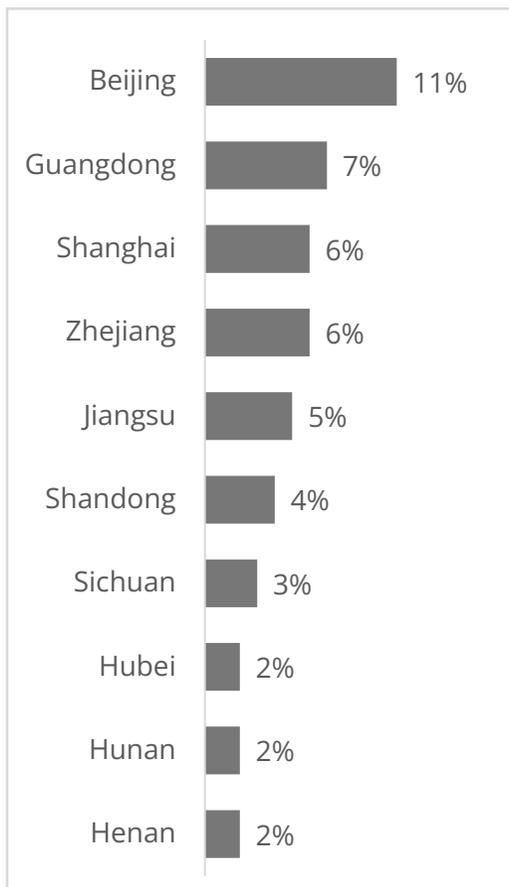
GENDER



AGE



WHERE THEY LIVE



WHEN THEY GO ONLINE* (Weibo only, last 30 days)



*Local time, based on last 30 days of data

PREFERRED SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS*

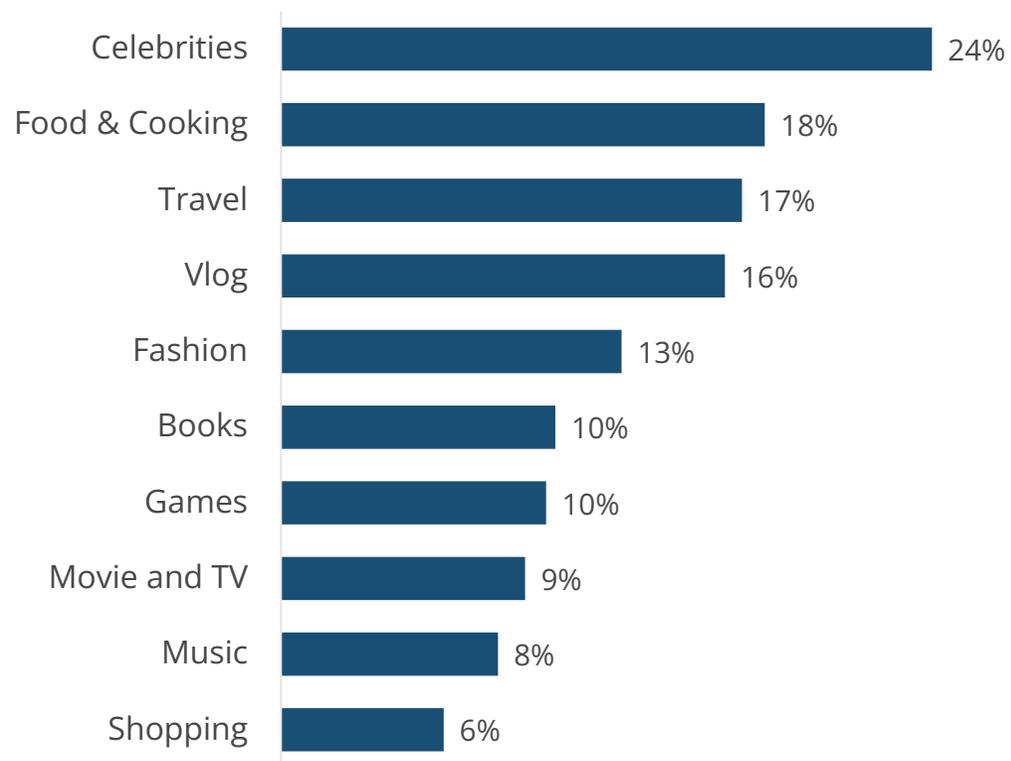


*Of Weibo users <35

What are young Chinese Weibo users interested in?

Entertainment and celebrities are the most popular topics. They share food and cooking experience, love travelling but are currently not able to do so due to Covid-19.

Interests



Accounts that influence young Chinese Weibo users

- The most followed account belongs to a high profile celebrity.
- Most accounts are education bloggers sharing information about schools and tips for applications.

	Name	Description
	@tfboys-王俊凯	Wang Junkai, a singer and actor, member of TF-boys is one of the most high profile celebrities in China.
	@微博vlog	Weibo official vlog account
	@崔钟博汶cook	Blogger focusing on studying abroad.
	@澳洲达伦哥	Blogger focusing on education, mainly produce original video
	@英国朱迪	Blogger focusing on education.
	@英国摩飞morphyrichards	Official account of Donal Morphy (Wang Junkai became Morphy Richards endorsement).
	@ukec英国教育中心大陆区	UKEC, a study abroad agency.
	@英国布里斯托大学	University of Bristol.
	@英俊哥英国求学	Blogger focusing on education.
	@英留申请干货君	Blogger focusing on education, applying to schools and universities abroad.

Content posted by young Chinese Weibo users

Students share information mostly about studying and applying to schools.

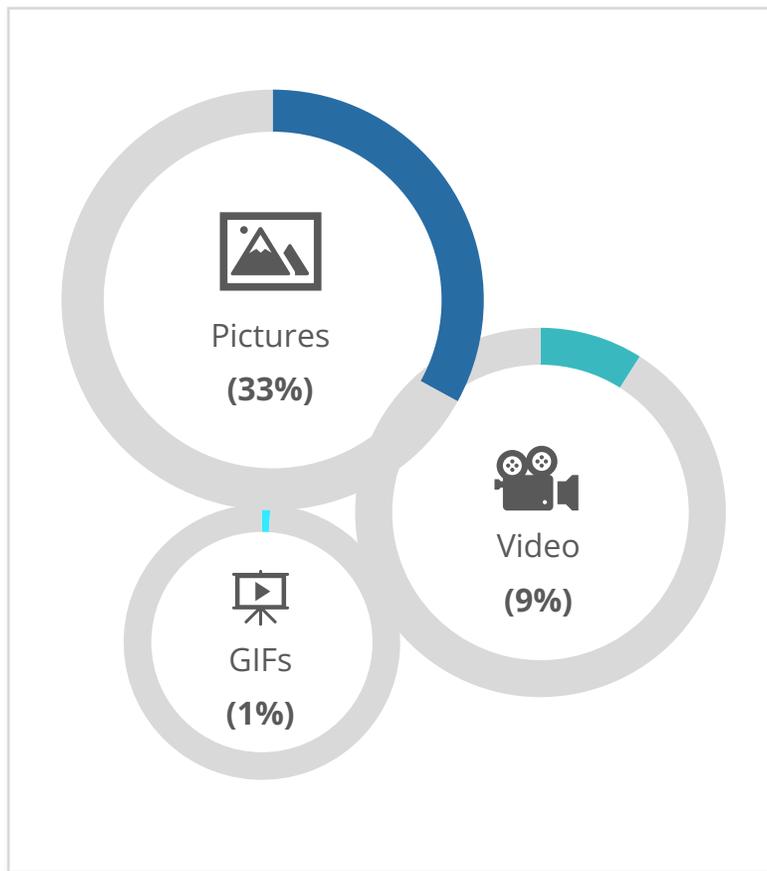
POPULAR EMOJI



POPULAR HASHTAGS

Hashtag	Translation	Meaning
#英国留学#, #留学#, #英国留学生#	#Study in UK#, #Study abroad#, #UK Chinese students#	Used in posts mentioning studying in the UK
#英国疫情#	#UK epidemic#	Covid-19 in Britain
#留学申请季#	#Season of applying for schools#	Application season for international study
#伦敦#	#London#	Any mention of London

MEDIA FORMAT



DOMAINS THEY SHARE LINKS TO

- <https://www.topuniversities.com/>
- <https://covid19.nhs.uk/>
- <https://www.usnews.com/>
- <http://rank2013.netbig.com/>
- Complete University Guide
- <http://jsj.moe.gov.cn/>
- <https://www.lookfantastic.com/>
- <https://www.emolument.com/>
- <https://www.1point3acres.com/bbs/>