

Chinese Market – Gotta catch em' all?

Author **Dragan Berak**
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The global hit mobile game *Pokemon Go* has yet to arrive in China due to the stringent policing of the app market and ever-increasing regulatory obstacles. This has created a lucrative copycat app market in which apps like *Tan Tan* (Tinder's copycat) have already benefited immensely. In this instance Nintendo haven't helped the situation by failing to protect their IP sufficiently in China.

The knock-off game, *City Elf Go* which features a creature in the app's icon that looks like a cross between Pikachu and a raccoon is currently the top downloaded free game in China in the Apple App Store.

It copies most of the ideas that form *Pokemon Go*. Although there's no augmented reality feature, it is location-based, requiring you to run around in order to find and catch Pokemon. The principals and graphics are pretty much the same.



<http://kotaku.com/chinas-version-of-pokemon-go-1783571983>

Similarly Secret and Whisper, an app used to discover secrets among your friends, was recently cloned by a couple of Chinese developers. As mobile penetration in China and other countries increase, smartphone users seemingly wish to access the same types of apps as their counterparts in the western world enjoy. If those apps aren't available fast enough, it's quite conceivable that a local developer will wish to introduce their very own localized version before the original developers do.

Google Play is blocked in China and only has 2.4% of the market, which has culminated in the emergence of around 400 'Google Play'. These are created and run by mobile companies such as China Mobile, China telecom, device manufacturers such as Xiaomi or Huawei and Internet companies such as Baidu. It's fair to say it's a pretty fragmented market.

Some app developers would say that it's almost better to ignore the Chinese market altogether – due to the danger of your app getting copied. In reality it is worth it. First, China has the most smartphone users in the world with smartphone users in China now accounting for 53.3% of all smartphone users (Statista) and secondly even if you don't enter the Chinese market your cloned app could end up there– as Nintendo have found out to their own detriment.



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However, clones can often only bring short-lived success. Hub of China (www.HubofChina.com) recently surveyed 18-24 year olds who frequently download and use apps. 80% of participants said they would not only prefer to play the original apps but be willing to pay a premium for the privilege, rather than use a copycat version for free.

The Pokemon Go maker is already considering partnering with a powerful Chinese game’s company, to overcome current obstacles and tap into the market.

The Chinese app market has huge potential and should not be ignored. A piece of the largest smartphone market in the world is worth fighting for. In the words of Pokemon ‘Gotta catch em’ all’.

This guest post was written by David Joseph, he is CEO of [Hub of China](#) – A provider of market research (focus groups, interviews, surveys) in the Chinese market.

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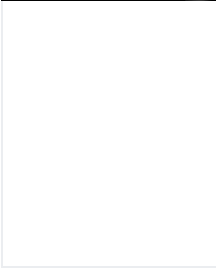
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