

# Coffee Time

## 咖啡时间

Directly selling to Chinese customers can be a big investment for Swiss companies, but it is getting easier.

**The Bridge** speaks to Alfonso Troisi, Country Manager of Nespresso, about its experience of bringing premium coffee to Chinese consumers.

by **Mark Andrews**

在中国市场直接对消费者销售产品也许对于瑞士公司来说是一项巨大的投资，但是也日渐变得简单。《桥》杂志和Nespresso的总经理Alfonso Troisi进行了一场对话，谈了谈其将最好的咖啡带到中国市场的经验。

作者: **Mark Andrews**



### Can you give a brief rundown of Nespresso's history in the Chinese market?

Nespresso began as a Swiss company in 1986. Very early on we tested the concept in Japan and then rolled it out in a variety of European markets. The idea was to offer the same coffee bar quality of experience at home.

Nespresso entered mainland China in 2007 with plans for boutiques in Beijing and Chengdu – the first one opened in Chengdu a few months earlier than the one in Beijing. The plan was to have a footprint in different city tiers, not only in Beijing or Shanghai.

We then continued our expansion in Beijing and Shanghai by leveraging our unique direct-to-consumer business model. Over the past decade, we have opened seven boutiques in three different cities and we have around 100 points of sale in 18 cities. Its physical presence is complemented by a strong 24 hour customer hotline and online presence. In September 2016,

### 您能简要介绍下Nespresso在中国市场的发展进程吗?

Nespresso是一家于1986年成立的瑞士公司。最早在日本市场推出测试产品，随后将产品推向欧洲市场。我们的理念是让客户在家也能享受到同咖啡馆一样卓越品质的咖啡。

Nespresso在2007年进入中国大陆，最先在北京和成都开设了精品店——第一家成都精品店开业比北京早几个月。我们计划不仅在北京、上海，还要在不同的城市也开设分店。之后我们继续在北京和上海利用我们独特的直销模式进行扩张。在过去的十年中，我们已经在三个不同的城市开设了七家精品店，在18个城市大约有100个零售点。实体店背后辅以强大的24小时客服热线和线上支持。2016年9月，Nespresso推出官方

Nespresso launched its official E-Boutique with a full line of products on Alibaba's Tmall. The partnership with China's e-commerce giant marked Nespresso's worldwide debut on a third-party e-commerce platform and further increased the brand presence in 2nd and 3rd tier cities. Another important development was the 2013 shift of our head office from Beijing to Shanghai. The main reason was that Shanghai is a more cosmopolitan city, leading a lot of the country's retail lifestyle and food trends so we wanted to be at the centre of this living city.

### Nespresso largely use a direct sales method for its China investment. Why did you choose this method and what benefits do you believe this brings?

As an international premium brand, Nespresso aims to deliver consistent service and experience to consumers. Obviously, Chinese e-commerce is huge, it's growing very fast and the structure and behaviour of Chinese consumers is very different from other markets. Although Nespresso in China always had an online business, what we've developed in the past three years are different solutions. Initially we just had the desktop version of nespresso.com, so we created a mobile version and then the app. But most important maybe is the launch on Tmall. It is a marketplace where brands can engage directly with their consumers and they can keep the best customer service, best brand experience with this consumer.

### Would Nespresso do things differently if entering the market today?

Ten years ago e-commerce was still very small. What's changed is the size of the e-commerce market and the infrastructure behind it which allows many brands to jump a few steps in development and access markets within Chinese cities with a much stronger proposition in terms of customer service when it comes to delivery and the supply chain. So I think what was done by Nespresso back then is not necessarily what Nespresso would do if we opened in 2017. We could do a much faster market entry and penetration, but that's because not only the e-commerce market has changed but also the coffee market has changed. In 2007 there was a relatively small coffee market and it was mainly in home consumption. Now there are many coffee categories and out-of-home consumption is very big and growing much faster than in home.

### How difficult is it for a company to undertake such large scale direct investment in China?

The key is to have a clear focus in terms of geographies and the type of customers in order not to spread resources too thinly, especially in the beginning. So you will notice that our geographic expansion at least in terms of retail network has been quite careful. With the development of e-commerce we can very

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E-Boutique全系列的产品，在阿里巴巴的天猫商城亮相。与中国电子商务巨头的合作标志着Nespresso在全球范围内首次进驻第三方电子商务平台，进一步提高了二三线城市的品牌曝光度。另一个重要的里程碑是2013年，我们总部从北京搬到了上海。最主要的原因是上海作为更国际化的大都市，引领着中国的零售业、生活方式和食品的发展趋势，所以我们决定以上海这所充满活力的城市作为据点。

### Nespresso大量使用直销的方式在中国投资。为什么您要采取这种方式，这给你们带来了什么样的好处？

Nespresso是一个优质的国际化品牌，旨在向消费者提供稳定一致的服务和体验。很明显，中国的电子商务市场是巨大的，增长速度很快，而且中国消费者的消费结构和消费行为与其他地方非常不同。尽管Nespresso在中国一直有线上业务，但我们在过去三年用不同的方式在进步。刚开始我们只有桌面版的nespresso.com，后来我们创建了移动端版本，然后是应用程序，但最重要的也许是进驻天猫旗舰店。在中国市场，品牌可以直接与他们的消费者接触，用最好的客户服务、最好的品牌体验留住消费者。

### 如果现在重新进入中国市场，Nespresso的市场战略是否会有不同？

十年前的中国电子商务仍不成气候。电子商务市场的规模和背后的配套设施都有了显著的进步，使得许多品牌在一些中国城市的拓展和市场准入能够实现大跨步的发展，尤其是在快递物流和供应链的客户服务方面。因此我认为Nespresso当时所做出的一系列努力如果换到2017年可能不再适用，如今我们可以做到更快的市场准入和更深的市场渗透。不仅电子商务市场已经改变了很多，咖啡市场也发生了翻天覆地的变化。2007年的咖啡市场仍然很小，主要属于家庭消费。如今的咖啡种类更多，家庭外的咖啡消费更大，并且比家庭咖啡消费增长要快得多。

effectively and efficiently reach a lot of customers in other cities without having to open boutiques. E-commerce allows you to directly engage with consumers for both sales and communications without having a heavy capital investment upfront.

You need to be smart about what's most efficient in areas such as customer service and supply chain. For example, we have a good balance of in-house and outsourcing services. We take good care of our partner companies in terms of training and coaching for interactions and delivery. By having our own team and our own standards we ensure that what the consumer gets is different from the average experience they get from other brands, and the same holds for customer service.

### **Nespresso uses as a similar model in all countries. Is it more difficult or easier to enter the Chinese market compared with some of those other markets?**

There's a fundamental difference between most markets and China which is the size and complexity of the market. The key is not to be over ambitious and try to penetrate the Chinese market by being in 10 or 20 cities at the same time from the beginning because every city has its specificities. It would be like entering Europe by launching in 20 markets simultaneously a retail network and supply chain. China is not only large, but it's also diversified. So the way we would work with our partners in the trade or in engaging with consumers may be a little bit different in Guangzhou to Shanghai. There are also regional taste preferences.

I think also that there is a deliberate effort now from authorities to protect consumers especially in the areas of food and home appliances, which involves us because of our coffee machines. Potentially standards will be higher than in many mature markets for these categories, but it is for good reason and we welcome that. On the other hand, the retail environment is much more efficient and effective than it was probably 10 to 15 years ago when there were severe logistical challenges. China is today famous for having an amazing logistics infrastructure on a global scale. It's considered one of the best markets despite the size and the complexity. So there's been a huge transformation in this area and what would have been a nightmare in terms of reaching consumers for example in Sichuan from Beijing or Shanghai, today is very easy.

### **What do you think are the medium to long term prospects for premium fast moving consumer good type products in China?**

I think the Chinese market is still a very promising market for most premium categories. It is certainly the case in coffee where we see that coffee is not considered a commodity and it's not a product consumed very frequently in daily life. So I think there's a very bright future for premium products as long as there's a good mix between the product and the service and there is a real value in the proposition. However, brands will need to be honest. Chinese consumers travel more and more and they will recognize whether a brand is positioned as 'premium' in China, but is, in fact considered lower elsewhere. This has already happened with some brands. ○

### **对于（一家外资）公司来说，在中国进行大规模的直接投资难度几何？**

关键是根据地域不同和顾客的类型不同，要有一个清晰的针对性目标，这样资源分配不至于过于分散，尤其是在公司刚刚落地的时候。所以你会发现我们在地域上的扩张，至少是在零售网络上一直是很谨慎的。随着电子商务的发展我们可以十分快速高效地接触到其他城市的很多顾客，即使没有很多线下精品店都没问题。电子商务让我们能够直接与客户进行接触，不管销售还是沟通在前期都不用巨额投资。

对于如何提升客户服务和供应链方面需要很大的智慧。比如，在公司内部进行的项目和外包服务之间平衡得比较好。对于伙伴公司在与顾客交流以及送货上的培训也不放松。坚持我们自己的团队和自己的标准，确保顾客从我们这里得到的体验不同于其他品牌，并且对于顾客我们都一视同仁。

### **Nespresso 在所有国家都使用一个相似的模式。相比较其他国家的市场而言，进入中国市场是更难还是更容易？**

许多国家和中国的市场相比有显著的区别，市场规模和市场的复杂程度。关键是不好高骛远或者一开始就要渗透中国市场的10-20个城市，因为每个城市其实都有自己的特点。同等情况下相当于是要同时进入20个欧洲城市的市场的零售网络供应链。中国不仅大，而且情况复杂。我们同广州的伙伴做生意的时候，方式方法同上海的生意伙伴就可能有些许的差别。在不同地域也有不同的口味上的差异。

我还认为现在中国政府在刻意努力保护消费者，特别是在食品和家用电器市场，这让我们的家用咖啡机受到了一定的影响。在这些类别的市场中，我们面临的标准将高于许多成熟的市场，但这是合理的要求，我们对此表示理解和欢迎。零售业相比10到15年前在物流方面受到很大的挑战，要求我们更有效率。中国今天在全球范围内以拥有令人惊叹的物流基础设施而闻名。就算规模大而复杂，中国市场仍被认为是世界上最好的市场之一。曾经我们要从北京或者上海接触到四川的客户是一场噩梦，如今联系这一地区也变得非常简单。

### **您认为高端快消产品在中国的中期和长期的发展前景是什么？**

我认为中国市场对于很多高端快消产品来说仍有很好的前景。我们知道在中国，咖啡并没有被视为一种普通的商品，也还不是一件日常生活中被频繁消耗的日用品。我认为如果在产品和服务上都能够做好，优质的高端产品在中国仍有光明的前景。然而，品牌需要忠诚度。中国消费者现在旅行越来越频繁，他们会逐渐发现在中国市场被定义为“高端”的品牌可能在世界其他一些地方却不那么高端。这是一些品牌的前车之鉴。 ○