



UnionPay, one of three major mobile payment services in China, takes to the road for a promotion in London.

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Shops in Rovaniemi, a small town in Finland, accept Alipay, which joined hands with Finland's ePassi to encourage local traders to use mobile payment services.

XU KANGPING / FOR CHINA DAILY



Burgers that can be scanned have been launched by a London restaurant to encourage mobile payments.

MATT WRITTLE / EVENING STANDARD

Mobile payments widen global reach

For Chinese travelers, the transaction platforms they use at home are being accepted more and more internationally

By **CECILY LIU**
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China's mobile payment platforms, including Alibaba's Alipay, Tencent's WeChat Pay and UnionPay's QuickPass, are rapidly expanding their international footprints, pioneering a global payment revolution to determine how money changes hands.

During the weeklong holiday in October to mark National Day, Chinese shoppers spent more in the United Kingdom than in any other country in Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

At Bicester Village, a shopping hub for designer goods near Oxford, they bought 50 percent more than they did in the UK as a whole, according to Alipay.

This made Bicester the No. 1 outlet globally among Chinese outbound tourists in terms of total spending through Alipay, China's leading mobile payment platform, during the holiday week.

Restaurants in London's Chinatown were also a popular destination, with 7.5 percent of all Alipay transactions in the UK taking place there.

Shoppers using Alipay spent an average of \$369 each in the UK during the week, higher than the global average of \$289.

The fast expansion of China's mobile payment platforms has significant implications for the spending habits of outbound travelers.

Alipay is now accepted in about 40 countries and regions, and supports tax refund activities at 80 airports.

WeChat Pay is available in more than 40 countries and regions, and 800 million users have linked their bank accounts or credit cards to the service.

QuickPass is accepted across 1 million point-of-sale terminals in some 20 countries and regions outside the Chinese mainland.

A Nielsen survey published in July showed that 65 percent of Chinese outbound travelers used mobile



A Cantonese restaurant in Singapore displays a poster for Alipay to attract Chinese tourists. China's mobile payment platforms, including Alibaba's Alipay, Tencent's WeChat Pay and UnionPay's QuickPass, are expanding overseas.

DU LIANYI / CHINA DAILY

payments on trips. Chinese mobile payment platforms have become so widely available that some travelers who were surveyed said they had struggled to spend all the 100 euros (\$115) in cash they had prepared for their trips.

Eighty-four percent of those questioned said they had also noticed an increase in the acceptance rate of Chinese mobile payment platforms by overseas merchants, compared with two years ago.

Wang Li, head of Alipay in Europe, the Middle East and Africa, said: "We hope to champion the concept of 'smart travel' to make payment and travel easy. We want to build a big network globally so that Chinese tourists traveling abroad can feel that they are enjoying payment convenience as if they are still in China."

"Our expansion overseas has two considerations. We see the outbound Chinese tourist market as a big opportunity, but also we think from our customers' perspective, to pro-

vide them a service they truly need."

Central to Chinese travelers' deciding to use Alipay, WeChat Pay and QuickPass overseas is the fact they are already familiar with and trust these payment platforms.

For outbound travelers, the two key benefits are that they no longer need to carry large amounts of foreign currency on their travels, and they can also secure good exchange rates.

These are guaranteed because Alipay, WeChat Pay and UnionPay all convert prices of foreign products from local currencies directly into yuan. In comparison, alternative platforms, including Visa and Mastercard, first convert product prices into US dollars and then into yuan, passing on the additional conversion costs to end users.

Unlike the UK, the United States and other developed markets, where consumers are familiar and comfortable with card payments, until a few years ago China was largely a cash-

transaction-based society before the advent of mobile payments.

The extent of the popularity of these payments in China is perhaps hard to imagine by those living outside the country.

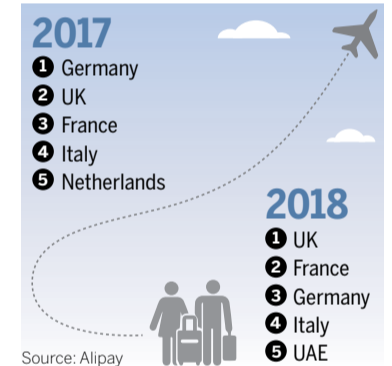
Not only are mobile payments taken for granted for shopping, traveling, accommodation and utilities payments, they are also now available at many street markets, pop-up shops, and are used for the instant transfer of cash between friends.

China is now the world's biggest mobile payment market. Its market size reached 40.36 trillion yuan (\$5.8 trillion) in the first quarter of this year, according to a report by Analysys, a Beijing data research company.

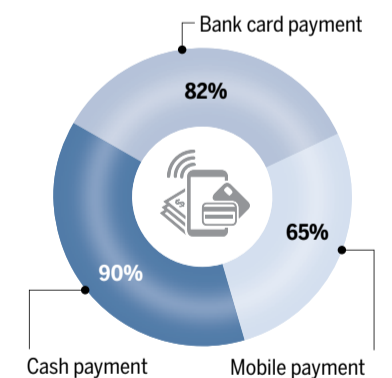
Alipay and WeChat Pay account for 53.76 percent and 38.95 percent market share, respectively, in terms of transaction amount.

WeChat Pay now has more than 900 million active users, while Alipay has over 500 million. These numbers are incredible compared

Top 5 holiday week destinations in Europe and the Middle East by transaction volume



Spending methods of Chinese travelers



CHINA DAILY

with Apple Pay's 127 million active users — and they are growing.

Having captured the domestic market, in recent years Chinese mobile payment providers have begun to focus increasingly on overseas growth, starting with the Chinese outbound travel market.

Alipay first entered Europe in 2015, when it became accepted at Tripidi, a luxury retailer at Frankfurt Airport in Germany.

Payment is easy. Customers just open the Alipay app on their

>> PAGE 23