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Start-up tapping into China's roving eyes

This is a much easier way to connect with people



SPHERE OF INFLUENCE: Wirra Wirra managing director Andrew Kay at the company's McLaren Vale winery.

Picture: TAIT SCHMAAL

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ADELAIDE start-up Rover has launched a new platform to tap into Chinese social media influencers and their ability to capture a growing market for South Australian brands.

The application recruits Chinese "micro-influencers" to promote businesses across the state through photos, videos, text and other promotional content.

The influencers are paid for their work at the time they produce the initial content and later as the content delivers results for the local brand.

Rover co-founder Chris Cheng, pictured, said while "micro-influencers" and "nano-influencers" had smaller audiences than celebrities and "macro-influencers", they could speak more "authentically" about a brand or experience. "Influencer marketing rep-

resents 2 per cent of the global \$327.28 billion digital marketing market," he said.

"In China, influencer marketing is even more important than in other parts of the world, because Chinese consumers rely on peer to peer information to make their purchase decisions.

"Conversion rates are higher in China from influencer marketing, as the latest Chinese marketplace and social media platforms allow influencers to unashamedly direct their followers to a call to action."

Rover has partnered with Chinese online classifieds giant 58.com and Mr Cheng's marketing technology company, Jetek, to launch the new platform, which has already secured well-known SA brands, including Wirra Wirra.

Content produced for the platform is shared through We-



Chat - China's version of Facebook - and boosted - using targeted 58.com advertising - to market products, services and experiences to Chinese consumers living in Australia and overseas. Mr Cheng said about 60 per cent of Chinese residents in Australia used WeChat as their main source of news and information, making it an important marketing tool for businesses.

"A growing number of our clients are taking a back-to-basics approach, scaling back their use of celebrities for so-called micro-influencers, who have smaller audiences but can speak more authentically about a brand or experience," he said.

"Companies can engage Chinese micro-influencers to ex-

perience their products or services and share their experiences through video or photo content to the Rover WeChat mini-app." Earlier this year, two Rover influencers visited Wirra Wirra at McLaren Vale, with their live video stream reaching more than 8000 viewers.

Summer Jiang, a micro-influencer in China, visited Wirra Wirra and has followers across multiple platforms.

She works on Hujiao, which is one of the most influential apps in China, with more than 100,000 followers.

The content was remarketed by Rover during a five-day campaign, generating more than 42,000 social media interactions.

Wirra Wirra managing director Andrew Kay said the technology made it easier to reach new audiences overseas.

"The Chinese market ob-

viously is so important for Australian wine - it's been growing very quickly and we've been there long enough to see the changes in the Chinese buyer," he said. "We've done it the hard way for a long time - getting on a plane, flying to China.

"But now, to be able to connect to so many people online is great. This is a much easier way to connect with people."

Rover co-founder Adam Rowe said the company was looking to expand overseas through partnerships with Chinese and western marketing agencies.

"Rover has helped our strategic partners Jetek and 58.com Australia to engage new clients in Adelaide," he said.

"We have a second round of capital investment under way and have been delighted with the response from the local Adelaide investment community,"



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