Winning in China's $94.5B Gaming Market

China is home to 700M+ gamers and represents the world's largest gaming market. Yet many Western studios fail — not due to game quality, but because they underestimate China's unique ecosystem, platforms, and player behaviors.

Case Study 1: The Cost of Inconsistent Marketing

A client ran a short **"burst campaign"** in China:

- 1–2 months of influencer/media push to drive wishlist growth (**tens of thousands**).
- Followed by a pause in all activities, relying solely on launch-day conversion.

What Went Wrong:

- **Wishlist Decay:** Pre-launch wishlists lost value without follow-up.
- **Attention Competition:** Daily new releases captured player attention, erasing early gains.
- **Broken Community Link:** Halting influencer outreach and updates severed emotional. connections

Outcome:

- Despite strong pre-launch wishlist numbers, **conversion was dramatically lower than expected**.

Lesson:

- In China, **one-off marketing pushes fail**
- Continuous engagement is essential:
    - → Regular influencer activations
    - → Consistent content on Bilibili/Douyin
    - → Timely translations and player communication
    - → Visibility around seasonal sales and festivals

Key Takeaway: In China, continuity is king — marketing silence is as damaging as bad PR.

Case Study 2: Soulstone Survivors – Driving Growth Through Cultural Adaptation

Background:

When UK-based studio Game Smithing first approached us with their roguelite, bullet-heaven game *Soulstone Survivors*, China accounted for **just 6.6% of total unit sales** (early 2023). Despite strong mechanics and global traction, Chinese players were not converting at the same rate as Western audiences. The problem was not the game itself, but **visibility, cultural resonance, and market positioning**.

Challenges:

- **Low share of Chinese sales:** only 6.6% of units from China.
- **Limited cultural adaptation:** playable heroes did not reflect characters familiar to Chinese players.
- **Minimal presence in Chinese-facing events:** missed visibility during key online and offline festivals.

Our Approach:

1. **Cultural integration in-game:** co-designed a new hero inspired by Sun Wukong, tailored to the roguelike format.
2. **Festival participation:** appeared at Taipei Game Show, ChinaJoy, Eastern Game Fest, and Steam online festivals, increasing visibility among Chinese players.
3. **On-the-ground presence:** offline booths in Shanghai and Taipei to collect direct feedback and build brand recognition.

Results:

- **Share of Chinese sales:** rose from 6.6% to **35.7% during Eastern Game Fest**.
- **Player feedback:** highly positive, validating cultural adaptation strategy.
- **Long-term revenue:** China now consistently competes with the US as the studio's #1 revenue market.

Lesson:

- Market-specific adaptation, cultural integration, and local engagement transform China from a "side note" into a **core revenue pillar**.
- Key takeaway for PC developers: **embedding cultural touchpoints, showing up where players discover games, and signaling long-term commitment drives exponential results**.

# Decision Framework: Board-Ready Guidance

Use this decision tree to assess how adaptable your game is for the China market.

👉 This adaptability check is just one lens. The China Gaming Compass explores cultural, community, and market dynamics in greater depth to guide your strategy.

Decision Framework: Board-Ready Guidance (continued)

Your current community presence in China shapes the best entry path. Use this flow to identify your starting point.
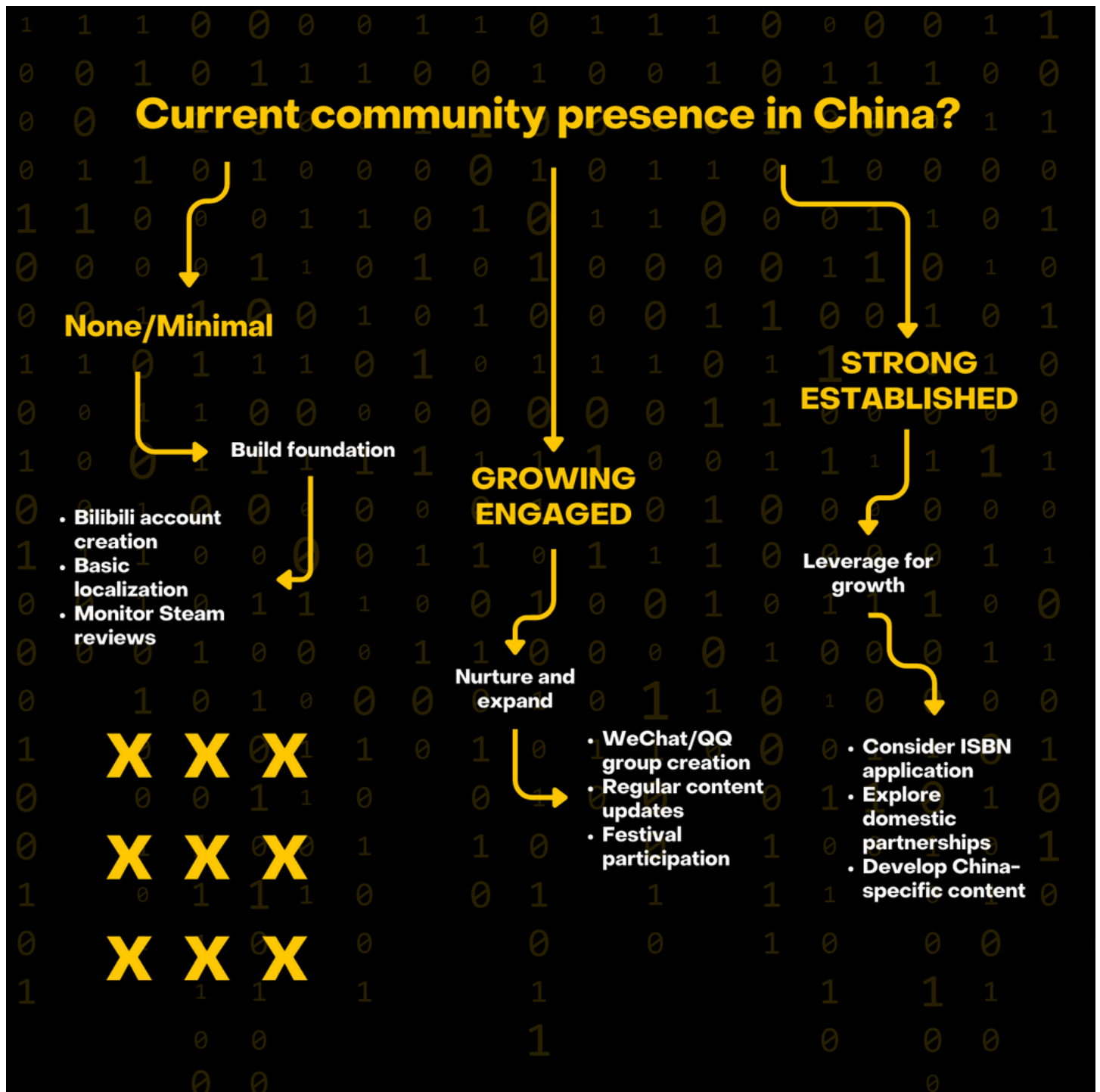
👉 **Wherever your game stands today, the China Gaming Compass shows you the most effective next step to grow in China.**

Why This Works

IP Adaptation Beyond Translation

- Align storylines, characters, and visual symbolism with Chinese culture
- Account for platform differences (Steam ≠ Steam China; TikTok ≠ Douyin)
- Drive retention through pre-launch community engagement

Platform Strategy

Video & Streaming	Social & Messaging
Bilibili 哔哩哔哩 • Core hub for Gen Z gamers, blending video, streaming, and community.	**Douyin 抖音** • Algorithm-driven virality; favors creative, native-style content over polished ads.
WeChat 微信 • The "super app." Central for retention, updates, mini-programs, and official accounts.	**Weibo 微博** • Trend and event-driven. Best used for campaigns tied to cultural or gaming moments.

Our Role

- Run partner discussions and secure local alliances
- Map genre fit, risks, and IP adaptation opportunities
- Deliver board-ready recommendations with ROI-backed insights
- Ensure your China launch is calculated, repeatable, and scalable

📩 Contact: hello@huqiaogames.com