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## „From “Made in Germany” to Market Strategy: German Cosmetics Brands in the Chinese Market“

The cosmetics market in China is projected to reach a sales value of approximately €62.04 billion in 2025, maintaining a growth rate of around 5.10%, similar to 2023 and 2024. Assuming that natural cosmetics, including natural-inspired cosmetics, account for a 6% market share, the estimated sales value of natural cosmetics in China would be about €3.72 billion.

By 2025, the Chinese cosmetics market is experiencing a major structural shift from volume-driven growth to quality- and brand-driven competition. Key characteristics of the market include the rise of domestic brands, increasingly informed and rational consumers, and a dynamic but highly competitive landscape.

The opportunities for German cosmetics in the Chinese market remain significant, but the market has become considerably more complex. It has evolved from a market in which a “Made in Germany” label alone could guarantee success into a highly competitive environment that requires strategic adaptation, strong branding, and a clear focus on quality and scientific credibility. The core opportunity for German brands lies in their strong reputation, which aligns well with the current demands of Chinese consumers.

### Reputation for Quality and Safety:

German products are highly regarded for their strict quality control, safety standards, and the use of high-quality and often natural ingredients. This reputation for reliability and rigor represents a major competitive advantage in a market where product safety and effectiveness are top consumer concerns.

### Alignment with the “Ingredient Hunter” Trend:

Chinese consumers are increasingly knowledgeable about product formulations and ingredients. German brands, which are often known for their scientific, functional, and no-frills formulations, are well positioned to appeal to this “ingredient hunter” consumer segment. The “Made in Germany” label has become largely synonymous with trust, safety, and efficacy.

### Strength in Key Product Categories:

Germany is particularly strong in product categories that are currently experiencing strong growth in China, such as high-quality skincare, scientifically proven anti-aging products, and products based on natural ingredients. This provides a solid foundation for market entry and brand positioning. While these opportunities exist, the Chinese cosmetics market has also become a highly competitive environment in which only the most adaptable and strategically positioned brands can succeed.

### Fierce Local Competition:

Domestic brands now dominate the market, holding more than 57% market share in 2025. These companies have become highly skilled in digital marketing, social media engagement, and rapid product innovation, making them very strong competitors for foreign brands.

### Intense Market Consolidation:

The market is currently undergoing significant consolidation. In 2025, more than 26,900 brands (over 41% of all active brands) exited the market, while the top 500 brands continued to grow. This indicates that market success is increasingly concentrated among the strongest and most competitive players.

### High Regulatory Hurdles:

China has implemented a stricter regulatory framework for cosmetics. This increases the cost and complexity of market entry, but it also benefits serious and high-quality brands by eliminating competitors that rely on false advertising or low-quality products.

### Rapidly Evolving Market Structure:

The market is becoming increasingly polarized. In 2025, approximately 58% of sales came from value-driven products priced below €40, while the premium segment (above €100) also remained strong. The mid-range segment is shrinking, forcing brands to clearly define their value proposition and market positioning.

For German cosmetic brands to succeed in China, several factors are critical:

1. **Adopt a Digital-First Market Entry Strategy:**

An e-commerce-focused entry strategy is a relatively low-risk and cost-efficient way to test the market, build brand awareness, and generate initial sales without large upfront investments.

2. **Find the Right Local Partner:**

Partnering with a capable local company is essential for navigating regulations, building supply chains, managing logistics, and executing effective marketing strategies.

3. **Leverage Core Brand Strengths:**

German brands should focus on their reputation for scientific rigor, safety, reliability, and high product quality. These values should be clearly communicated to consumers, who are increasingly skeptical of pure marketing claims and demand proven efficacy.

4. **Commit to Long-Term Brand Building:**

The era of easy growth in China is over. Success now requires long-term brand building, continuous investment in research and development, and a deep understanding of consumer behavior and preferences.

In summary, the Chinese cosmetics market is no longer a “gold rush” in which any foreign brand can succeed easily. For German cosmetics companies, the opportunity lies in positioning themselves as high-quality, scientifically credible brands that are willing to adapt their strategies to the unique and highly competitive Chinese market environment.

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## Zur Person



Rongmei Hui-Drobnik verfügt über langjährige internationale Erfahrung an der Schnittstelle von Medizin, Kosmetik und Marktentwicklung. Nach ihrem Medizinstudium in China arbeitete sie zunächst als Ärztin, bevor sie im Jahr 2000 nach Deutschland kam. Später war sie als Key Account Managerin bei LOGOCOS Naturkosmetik AG für den asiatisch-pazifischen Raum tätig, insbesondere mit Fokus auf den chinesischen Markt. Seit 2017 ist sie Mitgründerin der Unternehmensberatung DeHui und spezialisiert auf chinesische Regulierungsanforderungen für Kosmetikprodukte. Mit ihrer Expertise unterstützt sie Unternehmen strategisch beim Markteintritt in China sowie bei der Registrierung und Positionierung von Produkten. Darüber hinaus teilt sie ihr Fachwissen regelmäßig in Vorträgen und Fachartikeln.

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