



CHINA AND THE CURIOUS CASE OF AFFORDABLE SMARTPHONES



For the past few years, China has been dishing out some of the best phones in the market at a fraction of the price that non-Chinese brands such as Apple and Samsung offer at. Slowly but surely, the Chinese phone manufacturers are taking over the global phone market. Just recently, Huawei has overtaken Apple in smartphone sales, becoming the second biggest seller of smartphones this year. The top 5 list of smartphone sales support this Chinese uprising as 3 of the companies in the top 5 is Chinese. The Xiaomi Poco F1 is the latest in the seemingly unending line of smartphones that are coming out of China. With its specs, the Poco could easily demand a very high price, yet it costs only a fraction of other flagships. So how does China manage to sell extremely powerful phones for so much less than others?

To understand this question, we first need to understand some basic things about the economy. A product's cost is affected primarily by a few factors. These are the cost of raw materials, variable costs such as labour costs, and fixed costs such as power bills, salaries for staff etc. Lastly, the producer of said product will also want to make a profit. That means the producer must mark up the products a bit after costs. There are many other different things at play as well, such as the Chinese government and their massive markets. So here are the reasons why China can make their phones so cheap.

Goods from China have been historically very cheap due to the low cost of labour and many different resources. Their wages are some of the lowest in the world, even now. The wages have only started to increase since 2011, which is leading to many Chinese manufacturers to turn to automation. Even with wages that have increased a little, they

have the advantage of building and selling phones locally, which severely cuts down their transportation costs. Now, why is that an advantage?

The Chinese phone manufacturers have the single largest phone market to sell to. This is also helped by the fact that non-Chinese companies have a very tough time penetrating that market due to government limitations and simply not being able to compete with their Chinese competitors. This huge market of 1.52 billion phone subscriptions is another reason why China can sell phones for such a small price tag. Chinese manufacturers can simply sell their phones within the same borders they made it in, which cuts down a lot of the costs.

As noted above, the Chinese government places many restrictions to make sure their home-grown companies stay on top. This affects all foreign companies entering China,

including phone companies. However, this is not the only advantages the Chinese companies get at home. They also receive lots of government support. Huawei is even being considered being banned from use in US government due to its deep historical ties to China and its government. Many in the US have long worried that the government of China may be using Huawei to spy on American citizens. Not to mention companies such as ZTE and Huawei get a lot of support from the Chinese government, in legislative and economics.

There are a multitude of other reasons why China can sell phones for so cheap, and I'm not sure if it's possible to run down all of them. One is that China is not as concerned about the environment as the rest of the world, and are not afraid to increase the profit margin at the cost of the environment. This has led to such a bad environment that

there have been flights delayed in Shanghai due to air pollution. Worker rights are also not too important in the country, and they have a reputation for working their labours to death. All of these add up to very low costs per product, whether it be a phone or any other manufactured goods.

Overall, it's easy to see why China can sell Snapdragon 800 series powered phones at such an affordable price. The low cost of their manufacturing, a massive local market that favours them, a government that is constantly helping out home-grown companies and being environmentally insincere has led to Chinese domination on the smartphone market. If this keeps up, there is a good chance that all the phones you'll see a few years from now are all Chinese brands.

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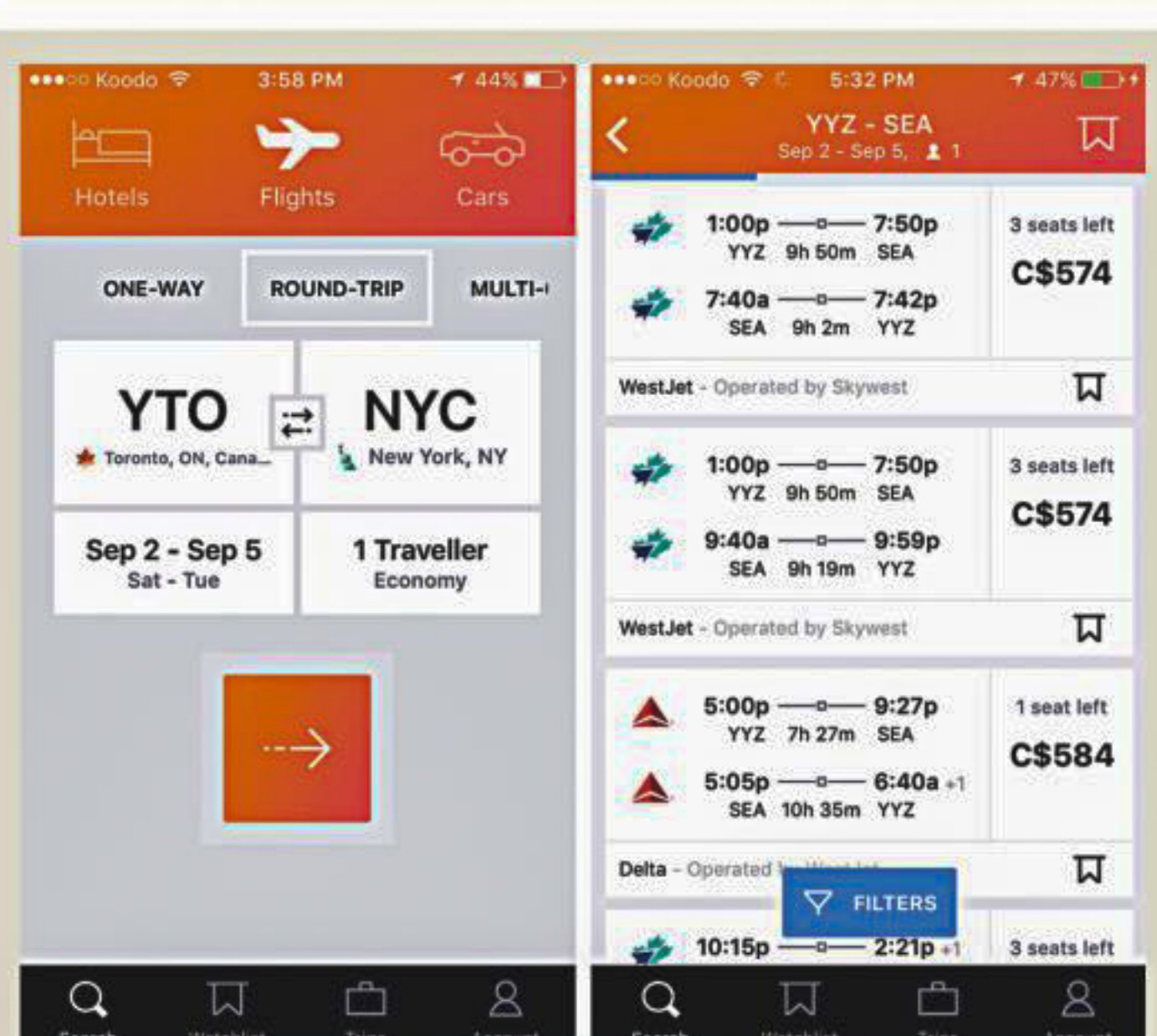
APPS ON THE FLOOR

Three must have travel apps

I write this as I pack for my solo Euro Trip and by the time you read it, I will have once again used the following apps to its fullest potential. I have had the pleasure of being able to travel to four different destinations around the world in my short but eventful life. However, these following apps are the reason why every travel so far has felt like a breeze.

VISIT A CITY

Free
Platform: Android and iOS
The app picks out activities and tourist attractions. As soon as you sync it with your Google Plus account, it lets you pick from its top visited places. Visit A City comes with guide options which come with pre-made plans of up to 5 days. There's an option for Sights and the always important Map. Unlike Google Maps, the Map feature in Visit A City points out the specific tourist attractions much more prominently. The app also allows you to download the data for your destination of choice, making for a hassle-free sightseeing experience.

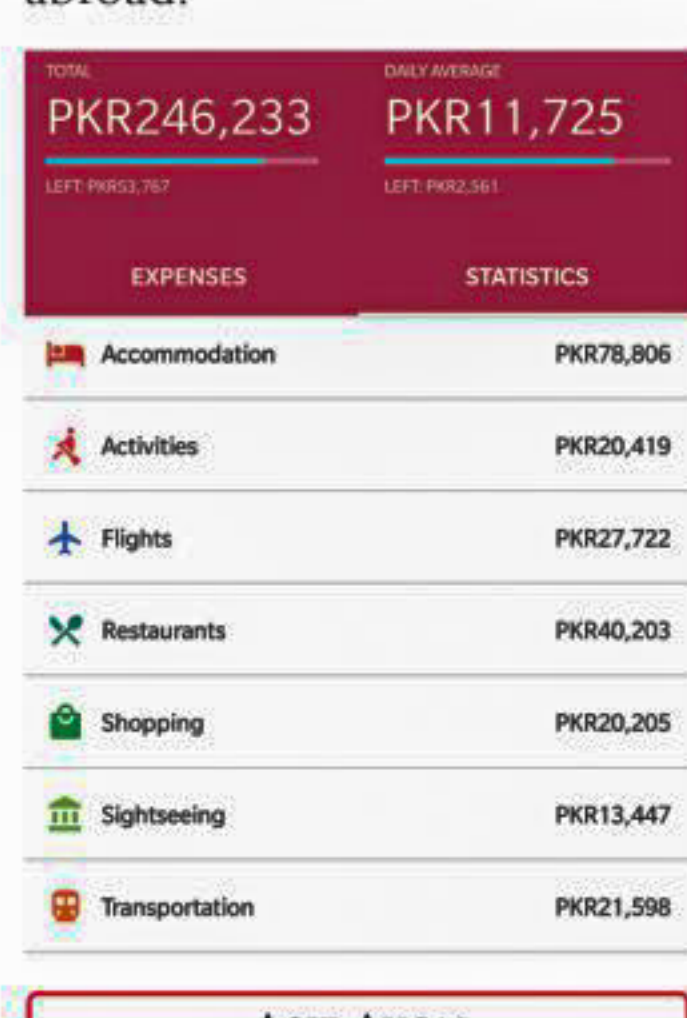


KAYAK

Free
Platform: Android and iOS
Kayak is the ultimate travel search engine. The app helps you find the best deals on flights, hotels, packages and rental cars. This is very useful for booking flights and finding the best rates, the shortest journeys, and the earliest flights. The app shows transit durations and the cost of flights too. The detail that Kayak goes into listing out each flight is helpful for every traveler and they put the same amount of care into listing out hotels as well giving you the all-around app you'd need in order to prepare for a tour.

TRAVELSPEND

Free
Premium version available
Platform: Android and iOS
TravelSpend is absolutely essential especially if you are travelling on a budget. It's a simple app which lets you track your spending. You create individual trips, set the currency of the region of visit, set the duration of the trip and give yourself a budget. The UI is easy to understand and the app is a must-have for every travel, both home and abroad.



ASIF AYON



Time to say goodbye to ATMs

ATMs or Automatic Teller Machines are probably one of the most the most cynical digital being in the face of the earth if you have spent most of your pay-check by the first week of the month- just like me. Their sinister demure smile will keep on breaking your heart till your next payday. If you have observed, even when you have money in your account, your ATM machine out of notes. You probably would encounter this more often if you are residing out in a small town where replenishing this money-spitting machine is a costly and treacherous endeavour till now. But soon this is going to change. Instead of ATMs, banks in Bangladesh are going for Cash Recycler Machines (CRMs). So what's the big deal with CRMs? CRMs are nothing but a bit suave and sleek version of ATMs where you can withdraw money, deposit money and these will adjust with your bank account in real-time. Moreover, unlike conventional

ATMs, these don't require the bank to feed notes every day. Instead, it can 'recycle' the notes deposited by the customers and adjust the balance sheet in customer and banks end automatically in real-time. To ensure counterfeit notes are not entering the machine, when you deposit cash, a cash recycler counts the currency notes and displays the amount denomination wise and records the serial number of every note. You get to see the amount beforehand on the displays. All you have to do is confirm if the amount is correct to complete the transaction. All though on a single transaction, there is a limit on how much you can deposit and withdraw which varies from bank to bank. In Bangladesh, these machines have been making their way in Bangladesh for quite a while now. Three banks have already introduced these machines and more are introducing them soon.

