



Simplicity

as a Lifestyle Preference.

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The public has grown cautious of the modern-day consumption of their time and mental space, thus initiating a trend of returning to simplicity. Technology, as a major factor that contributes to the complexity of modernity, has encountered backlash in many regards.

Executive Summary

- While minimalism as a design principle enjoys popularity in first-tier cities, minimalist sportswear has been less successful. There is potential for brands utilizing minimalist design to spread to more remote areas.
- In the age of digital transformation, sports brands should take advantage of digitalization to simplify the customer journey and lower the barriers for new customers.
- Consumers are starting to realize excessive possession hinders a simple life. Brands can bring extra values to their products by introducing multi-functional products or building an online forum.

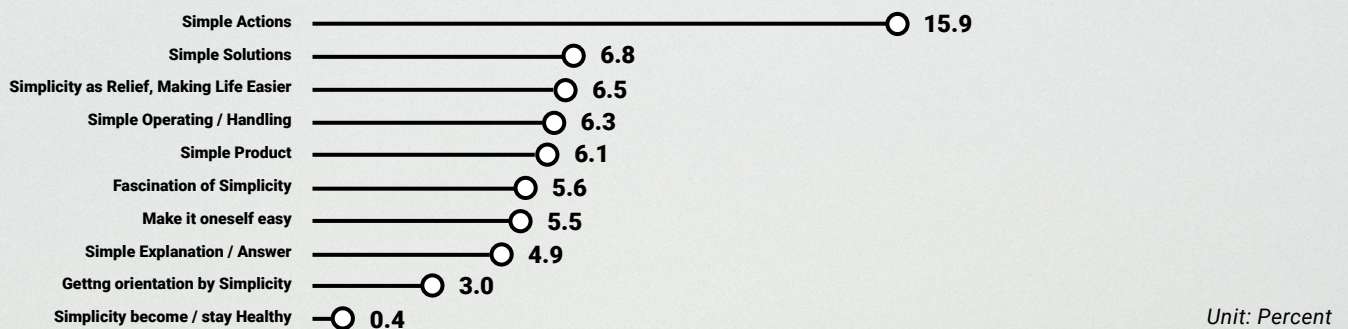


Looking for a Simpler Lifestyle, Minimalist Product Design Becomes More Prominent in China

The public continuously grows cautious of a culture that takes up too much time and mental space and thus, initiating the trend of returning to simplicity. As Trendbüro's Chinese Consumer Value Index 2019 shows, Chinese consumers frequently discuss "simple products," "simple solutions," and "simple actions."

1 VALUE SIMPLICITY: FREQUENTLY DISCUSSED CONTENT OF POSTS

Most postings about simplicity pronounce it as a factor of making one's life easier to handle (in general, products, actions, solutions). A remarkable share of postings concentrates on a more, superordinant view (fascination of simplicity, orientation by simplicity)



Source: Chinese Consumer Value Index 2019 (Trendbüro, 2019)

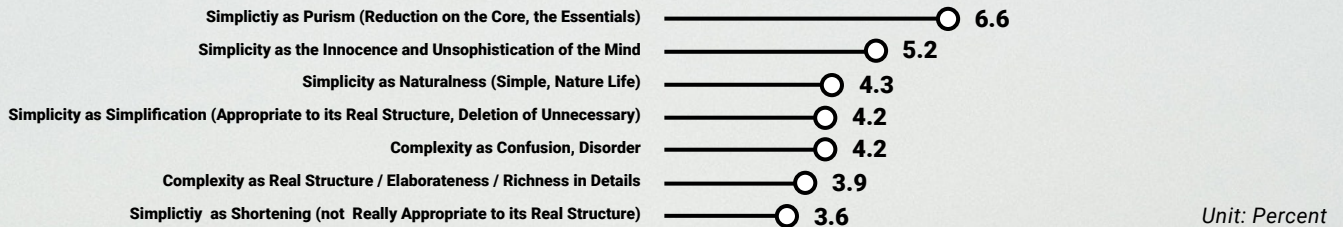
One expression of this trend is the increasing popularity of minimalist fashion and interior design. Especially in the high-end, tier one markets like Shanghai, Beijing, etc., consumers are searching more and more for timeless and durable products. This is exemplified by the success of the Japanese lifestyle chain, Muji, in China. In the sports industry, companies with a reduced design approach can celebrate great success. The Canadian brand Arc'teryx, is considered the most sought-after brand among Chinese outdoor enthusiasts. The company avoids playful designs in its equipment and is particularly successful among sophisticated customers who enjoy an active lifestyle.

However, the preference for minimalist designs is not yet evenly distributed. Especially in less international cities and areas, traditional shapes and colors are in demand. It can be assumed, however, assisted by new technologies, that trends and general sentiments will spread exponentially faster throughout the country in the future.

② VALUE SIMPLICITY: DETAILED CONTENT OF POSTS

Many discussions on simplicity celebrate it as purism or the absence of the unnecessary. Again many posts recognize it as innocence of mind. Others discuss it as being not appropriate to reality, since complexity is real.

Basic direction of simplicity



Source: Chinese Consumer Value Index 2019 (Trendbüro, 2019)

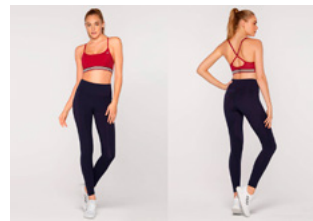
Three Successful Brands that cater to Minimalism Taste



White Mountaineering successfully integrated the typical Japanese-style of simplicity into its outdoor wear series and attracted multiple other famous sports brands such as Adidas Originals and UGG for collaborations.



Arc'teryx is a Canadian high-end outdoor sporting goods company. With the minimalism philosophy in its DNA, Arc'teryx brings clothing with ultra-minimalist design and advanced technology, reducing weight of garments while delivering durably waterproof protection.



Lorna Jane is an Australian manufacturer and retailer of women's premium and supportive activewear. Using simple designs and proprietary fabrics, the founder Lorna Jane set out to transform how women feel about being active and fit.

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WITH MINIMAL DESIGNS YOU CAN BE SUCCESSFUL IN CHINA.

In international, Tier 1 cities, this aesthetic is already very widespread. However, the opportunity lies in spreading the style to the smaller cities. The lower-tier cities, accounting for more than 70 percent of China's population (CNBC, 2019), were neglected for a long time by international companies. While the first-tier-city dwellers have long been loyal chasers of an elegant simple style, the market in more remote districts is ripe for sports and outdoor brands who dedicate themselves to timeless and sustainable designs.

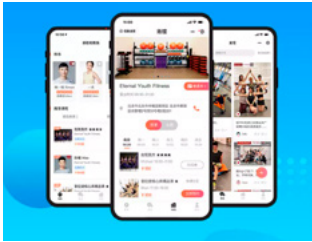
Technology-driven Simplification will Prevail

The desire for convenience and a simpler lifestyle puts a lot of pressure on complex consumption processes. This holds true for the giant market of gyms and sports clubs as well. Technology has the potential to push overwhelming complexities to the back and offer a seamless user experience instead.

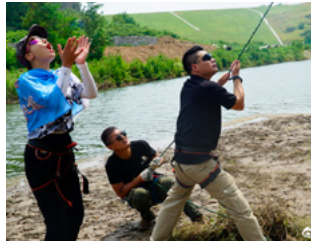
According to the 2018/19 Fitness Industry White Paper published by QingCheng Fitness Technology, the number of gyms in China is still booming at a growth rate of 31.13 percent in 2018, and is estimated to reach 98,000 across China by 2020. Since China is constantly digitalizing new aspects of people's lives, the fitness center is going through a transformation. As Xia Jinglong, co-founder of staffless gym-startup Supermonkey said, "Online will become the industry standard in the future." Streamlining labor-laden and inefficient processes of traditional gyms is a market full of potential.

Many other sports activities have a huge potential for simplifying training sessions, booking services or process payments, which would in turn attract more digital-savvy consumers. Technologies like AR and VR may also transform entire sports. Take skiing for example: high travel expenses and setup costs alongside high health risks may avert beginners. This is especially true in first-tier cities far away from the mountains. That is why the startup SkyTechSport developed an indoor skiing simulator which reproduces the sensation of skiing down a mountain in a controlled and accessible environment. To enjoy an immersive skiing experience, participants only need to step in front of the panoramic screen and snap into the snowboard binding on the simulator platform. This kind of VR simulator simplifies the learning curve of a sport while saving valuable time and money.

Three Companies Utilizing Digital Services to Improve Sports Experience



Qingcheng Fitness Technology serves more than 25,000 gyms across China. It provides a one-stop solution for gym membership management and helps traditional gyms cope with the digital disruption by data analytics.



Crazy Spirit is the first extreme sports streaming program in China. It has successfully integrated product promotion into the live-streaming: when the host completes a round of bungee jumping with a perfect hairstyle kept intact, a purchasing link to the hair product website is provided. This is just one playful example of the power digital media possesses.



Using the motion platform and special software, **SkyTechSport** can replicate a real skiing sensation and G-force of descending a slope. The movement platform can also recreate different snow conditions by changing motion sensors.

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MAKE FULL USE OF THE DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES AT HAND.

Making purchasing simpler by removing redundant steps is an example. A simple digital purchasing process can improve customer experience immensely. Sports brands can utilize the tremendous purchasing power in Chinese social media like Little Red Book and Tik Tok, where users can buy the item in the posts with one click. Utilizing technology to bring outdoor activities to the cities is an option as well. Mixed reality sports using goggles and simulators simplifies the training process. In China, winter sports and many other outdoor sports are still in the promotion stage. Training in a virtual setting lowers entry barriers for beginners and attracts advanced learners with convenient urban locations.

Subtraction: a Way to a Simple Lifestyle

In pursuit of a simple life, a growing number of consumers are cutting down unnecessary possessions. The evolving awareness can be seen in Trendbüro's Chinese Consumer Value Index 2019, as a large chunk of discussions of simplification on Chinese social media revolves around creating a simple lifestyle. "Add to life by subtracting," has the potential to become a trend as consumers mature.

One stereotype of Chinese consumers is how they squander and buy in bulks, as shown by the record-breaking sales during each year's online shopping binges. However, as Nielsen research points out in Ten Trends of China's Consumer Market in 2018, nowadays many people are more inclined to rationally consume rather than blindly purchase high-priced goods.

Leaving behind their consumerism mindset, members of the Chinese middle-class are beginning to reflect on what they really need in life. "Experienced Chinese consumers start to realize their possessions are actually a burden," said Zhu Rui, a marketing professor teaching at Cheung Kong Graduate School of Business. She stated this in her interview about the rising simple lifestyle among affluent Chinese with "South China Morning Post" (2018). The same main point exists in owning sports gears and wears. According to Accenture's 2018 Chinese Consumer Insight Report, sports lovers have a higher likelihood of impulse purchasing than average. With this in mind, it is essential for sports brands to cater to consumer's desire of simple living by making the customers feel the extra worth or reducing the possibility of idle items.

Two Brands Helping Sports Consumers Build a Simple Life



Using the innovative self-adaptation material P4U, TAICHI 1.0 launched by Chinese brand **PEAK** functions as both casual wear and professional running shoes. It is an affordable shoe which provides a soft experience at a slow pace and its cushioning ability automatically increases as the wearer speeds up. Consumers can save themselves from buying another pair of shoes.



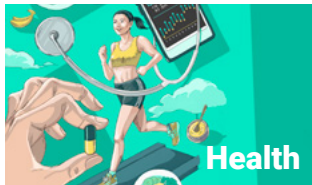
With a reasonable price of 16 Euros, **Xiaomi's** foldable walking pad addressed the old pain of heavy-duty treadmills that occupy considerable space in the room.

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MAXIMIZE THE VALUE OF EACH CUSTOMER'S PURCHASE.

As city dwellers grow more enthusiastic towards a simple life, sports brands need to be part of the solution rather than problem. One approach could raise from developing multifunctional products or minimizing the sense of idle existence, such as multifunction home strength training equipment. The added value can be injected via soft approaches. Gyms or sportswear companies are creating online communities that allow customers to exchange tips and find like-minded individuals.

Six More Chinese Values that are Relevant for Your Business in China.



Health



Nature



Community



Success



Recognition



Freedom

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The 7-part whitepaper series *Chinese Sports Consumer Values* builds on Trendbüro's *Chinese Consumer Value Index 2019* – the first-ever quantitative and qualitative analysis of Chinese consumer values, based on 7.7 million user-generated posts from Sina Weibo and WeChat. An international team of researchers applied the CCVI's findings to the Chinese sports and outdoor industry, complete with best practice examples and business implications.

Pictures: The images shown are pictures from companies were selecterd as best practices, otherwise sketch illustrations were created to underline the context of the values.