

Success

as the Never-fading
Brand Image

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Pillar generations aspire to work smarter and demand flexibility, yet the current national obsession with success has hindered their ability to pursue work-life balance. Anxieties over knowledge and success generate ubiquitous introspective behaviors and create a tremendous marketplace for knowledge cash-out platforms.

Executive Summary

- The foundation for personal success, especially in the professional realm, is a balanced physical and mental status. Sports' essential role in achieving or restoring the balance is extremely appealing to success-craving Chinese consumers.
- Strengthening social features or building social scenes around sports caters to Chinese people's instinct and desire to build success-related relationships in a casual setting.
- As indicators of higher social status or financial success, participation in elite sports or consumption of luxury-level sports products are two major ways Chinese people adopt by following their successful role models.



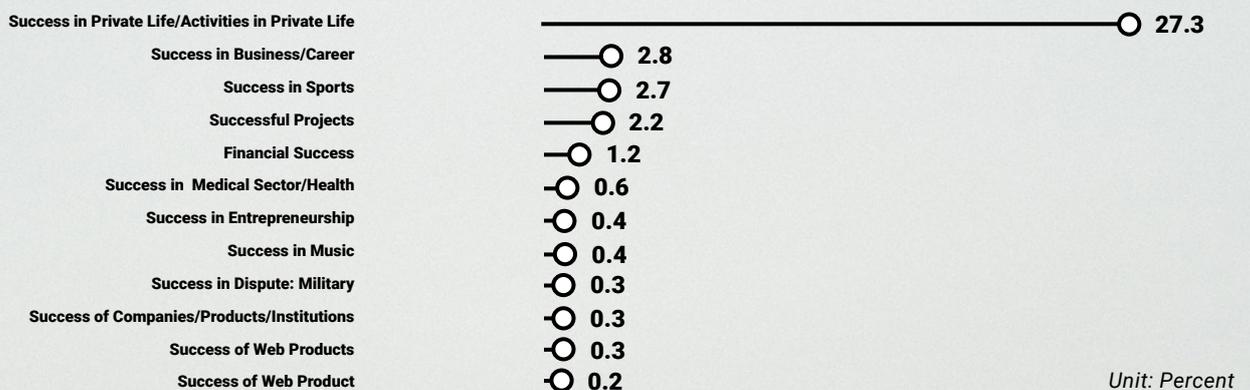
Consumers View doing Sports as Building Foundations for Success

As shown by the diagram below, “success in sports” has taken up an almost equivalent portion as “success in business/career” (Chinese Consumer Value Index 2019, Trendbüro). Success standards have been changing across generations but used to be restricted to financial achievements or money-derived status manifestations such as elite sports clubs. Many sub-health problems have sprung up to jeopardize people’s pursuit of a successful career, and typical individual stories often made headlines. In school, the academic pressure students face posed a similar problem. To address this, many companies and schools in China started to invest heavily in sports facilities and organizing team-building events that help with employees or students’ physical performances. According to 51jobs.com, 78% of the finance companies provide company gyms.

1 VALUE SUCCESS: DETAILED CONTENT OF POSTS

Main focus of Social Media talks about success is success in private life. Business, sports or successful projects fall far behind.

1. Subject of success



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

It has been predicted that the next KEEP-level company will emerge in the meditation market. Psychological health is just as important for the long-term success of young generation Chinese, considering 93.4% of the white-collar workers reported that their negative emotions come from the workplace (zhaopin.com). Many companies have entered this market from different perspectives: by the end of 2018, the app “little sleep” and the psychology platform KnowYourself launched their own mini programs and went viral at the same time, the latter of which received 650,000 positive user ratings

within two days. According to *Whitepapers on Chinese Urban Dwellers' Psychological Health in 2018*, 73.6% of the urban population have a low mental health status. Meditation and therapy are to anxiety what fitness is to obesity and ailments. As more and more young Chinese people are willing to pay for “becoming a better self”, the market demands a self-facilitated platform to fill in the current blank.

Best Practices



Company gyms are in great demand yet are limited to space and require better engagement rates. Hence, small and smart facilities come in handy. **KM1930** smart stationary bike is one of the solutions that make workplace exercising more fun and relaxing. By matching real recordings of travel-themed sceneries and providing different modes of cycling from group riding to cycling competition setting, it greatly inspires employee interest and improves team cohesion. It has been adopted by many companies including Tencent.



Psychology is a big element of the consumption upgrade wave. **KnowYourself**, founded by post-90s overseas returnee Qian Zhuang, is the fastest-growing company in China's psychology market. Qian and her team assessed the psychological appeal of the young Chinese from China's unique background of social development: generational heritage, one-child policy, class fluidity etc. So far it has produced many hit articles that went viral on social media.



Disruptive sportswear player, **HALE BOSS** entered the Chinese market in 2017, and shows rapid growth. It aims to expand into more than 500 stores by 2020. With the design principle oriented around French fashion, HALE BOSS caters to the young office elites who want to work-out elegantly and maintain the success image even while wearing a sports outfit.

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BRANDS SHOULD PRESENT SPORTS TO AMBITIOUS CUSTOMERS AS THE FACILITATING LADDERS FOR THEIR CAREER SUCCESS.

Practitioners in industries such as finance, investment banking, and consulting suffer from tremendously high rate of psychological pressure and sub-health status. They will be the most loyal costumers should the products or programs be introduced in the most relevant way to their pursuit of success.

Sport Acting as a Social Utility for Success

Research by Nielsen and the General Administration of Sport of China shows, the post-90s regard sports as an important link of their social life, and they like to post pictures and achievements during sports to shape their healthy image on social media platforms (2018-2023 Chinese Fitness Industry Analytical). Fitness consumers can be categorized into three major types: the determined—with existing regular workout schedules, the moldable—with strong will yet often lack either time or money, and the indecisive—equipped with all but lack of corresponding habits. According to Nielsen, the last category, being almost five times as big as the previous two, is the ideal group that most of the companies are trying to win over. Generally, this class of consumers value strongly the aspect of social life.

For higher-end management or executive level professionals, scenes such as golf clubs and tennis court serve perfectly for them to establish or reinforce their *guanxi* (Chinese slang for connections). Based on the latest data collection by China Horse Fair, there are over 2600 equestrian clubs in China and a new addition of 120,000 horsemanship enthusiasts. Similarly, the market for other sports perceived as upper class in China, like golf or even bowling, have been developing rapidly as well, especially considering the relatively mild nature and leisure element of it. Of course compared to popular sports, gentle trainers are vastly preferred over gym classes.

Best Practices



Company sports day is a common and successful practice when employees can interact and communicate on both horizontal and vertical level position-wise. Many Chinese companies have taken the initiative to organize innovative sports games such as crab-racing (when two people are tied up back to back and go for a race). Via doing sports like this, it easily helps to bring co-workers closer and creates conversational opportunities with executive-level people as well.



Located in Shanghai, **Sheshan International Golf Club** is one of China's most famous golf resorts. Its private membership system and national resort status set its tone to serve successful business people. Its experience in hosting many world-level golf tournaments also contributed to the members' desired image.



Previous national swimming athlete Xia Youqi founded **HITIE Gym** which is integrated into a mixture of workout space, art zone, nightclub and social scene. With settings like photography background wall, juice bar, DJ booth, bookshelf and art piece decorations, HITIE has read through young people's social desire and created this eye-grabbing social gym.

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GROUPS THAT CAN MAKE PEOPLE PHYSICALLY FIT, BUT ALSO PROVIDE THE POTENTIAL FOR ECONOMIC SUCCESS COULD BE A PROMISING OPERATIONAL MODEL IN CHINA.

Considering how vital it is for Chinese people to establish good guanxi in order to pave the path to success, companies will think about organizing events and building communities where participants can not only do sports together, but also support each other in their professional careers. Here we see a good entry point for sports companies.

Successful People's Passion in Sports can be an Elite Lifestyle Benchmark

A brief review of China's most successful businessmen will reveal something in common: Jack Ma (Alibaba CEO) persisted in practicing Taichi for more than ten years; Wangshi (Wanke CEO) was the oldest Chinese who conquered Mount Everest in 2003 at the age of 52; Chuanzhi Liu (Lenovo CEO), at the age of 75, still plays golf regularly with his friends and wife. This passionate sports trend among top CEOs is well-known and recognized in China, and has hence created a group of loyal followers – young startup CEOs and ambitious entrepreneurs – in fostering a consistent sports habit.

In the entertainment world, this phenomenon is no less pervasive, only with more media coverage. Therefore, it creates a strong fan-effect as well. Post-80s prodigy writer Hanhan has proved himself to be one of China's best racing drivers by bagging several national championships; famous Taiwanese actor Jimmy Lin rocked the stage of amateur racers no less. These people are not only perfect representatives of a successful lifestyle, but also have huge public appeal in terms of leading a sports trend. After signing Hanhan as its brand ambassador, outdoor brand Camel continued this strategy in signing Bear Grylls, which brought tremendous returns in sales. Certain sports products such as sneakers and basketball shoes have been elevated to the same level as luxury goods. It is a common phenomenon for Chinese pop stars to post pictures of newly acquired sports shoes, possibly the limited edition. The ability to wear and post a same pair of shoes as their idols do is a form of success for young Chinese people. This is why many brands often work with both athletes and pop stars at the same time to enrich the categories of potential audience.

Best Practices



Though it is hard to borrow the personal charisma of influential and successful people, sports brands have set out the other way around—shaping its own CEO into a sports role model and influencer. **KEEP**'s CEO Wangning, having lost more than 50 pounds himself, is one of them.



Xingzhi Group is the pioneer in China's sports + cultural tourism industry. More specifically, many of its event IPs tailor-made for the business world were greatly welcomed and endorsed by Chinese business elites. These include Ultra Gobi, Gaoligong by UTMB, and MBA Gobi Hiking etc.



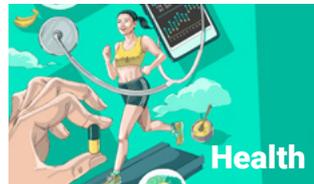
In 2018, **NIKE** signed Chinese actor **Bai Jingtong** as its new ambassador. Many were confused about this move as Bai isn't exactly a first-tier star even in China. However, besides Bai's energetic and youthful appearance and personality, his reputation of sports shoe maniac is widely known. Posts about his newly purchased shoes occupied the majority of his social media and often generates great effect among his fans.

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SPORTS COULD BE UTILIZED AS AN INDICATOR FOR SOCIAL STATUS AS LUXURY GOODS ARE.

With countless successful Chinese businessmen and celebrities endorsing this phenomenon, brands could customize campaigns or packages that encourage consumers to map out their own success stories in relation to practicing sports or wearing certain sports brands.

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



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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 selected as best practices, otherwise sketch illustrations were created to underline the context of the values.