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The Return of the Real
Cultural and content trends in a maturing new normality

The new surge and ongoing status of the pandemic has created maturing manifestations of the new norm

It has changed people's mindsets, life attitudes and perceptions

As such brands need to tap into this new status quo to remain relevant and emergent
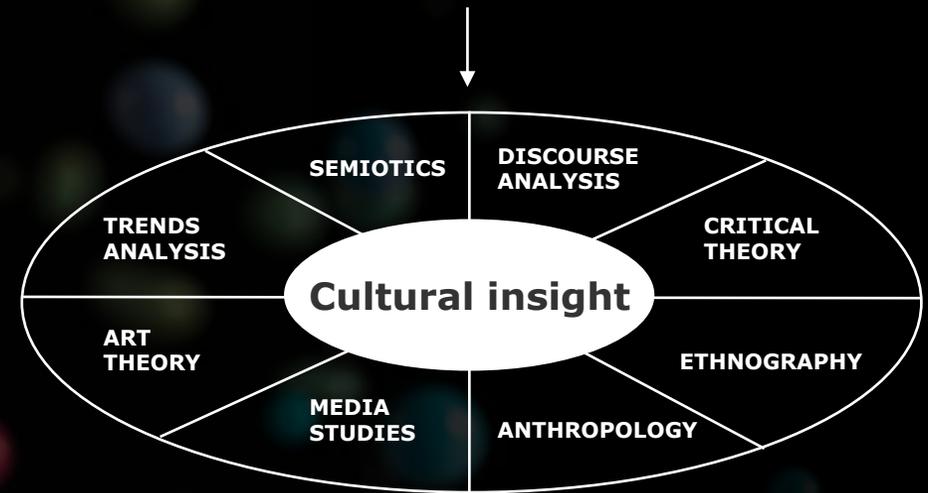
What we did

Collection of the most recent pandemic/lockdown content: cross category brand communications, social media UGC, Products & Services, Art & Design

Semiotics and cultural insight analysis

Identification of 3+1 cultural trends and how brands can tap into them evolving their strategy and expression

Cross category brand communications, social media UGC, Products & Services, Art & Design

Cultural insight

SEMIOTICS
DISCOURSE ANALYSIS
TRENDS ANALYSIS
CRITICAL THEORY
ART THEORY
ETHNOGRAPHY
MEDIA STUDIES
ANTHROPOLOGY

The first thing that became apparent was that all trends evolve around an *emphasis on humanism, authenticity and realism.*

Although technology has been and will continue to be instrumental - in general and during lockdown – ideas around what defines and celebrates the human condition become prioritized.

3+1 emergent branding spaces to inspire post pandemic strategies

THE RETURN OF THE REAL

REAL FEELINGS	REAL MOMENTS	REAL CONNECTIONS	

01 Mental Vibrancy

精神活力

Brands supplying significant boosts of emotional benefits through mental energy, optimism, positive attitude and uplifting spirit

02 Everyday Celebration

庆祝平凡的日常

Brands enriching and facilitating everyday life and the simplicity, inclusivity and authenticity that comes with it

03 Caring Humanism

人性的关怀

Brands becoming agents of care, compassion and connectivity to safeguard the essence of human nature and make the world a better place

04 Sanitized Design

具有洁净感的设计

Brands conveying a sense of trust and reliability through new norm aesthetics

Framework

Negative social context...

...counteracted by positive emerging culture

And ways brands can tap into them through new content

Cultural codes - trends that:

— **either present a new shift of meaning or style**

— **or amplify an already existing one**

01
MENTAL VIBRANCY
精神活力

01 MENTAL VIBRANCY CONTEXT

The pandemic has posed great challenges in maintaining mental energy and strength during everyday threatening conditions. Ongoing outbreaks and counter measures of lockdown increase feelings of uncertainty, insecurity and anxiety. The importance of mental health - awareness of which had already been growing – is seen as more essential than ever.

Continuous number of new cases diagnosed, and negative news created a state of continuous anxiety

Artworks, graphic design reflecting people's deteriorating emotional states

Letting out negative emotions through mocking reactions

01 MENTAL VIBRANCY CULTURE

Consumers counteracting negativity by injecting doses of positivity through content and experiences that convey lighthearted-ness, optimism and fun. Aiming to strengthen their inner-selves and improve their emotional wellbeing as well as promote social restoration and wellness.

Humorous social media content/activities creatively reacting to pandemic, using laughter to uplift negative mood

Wearing fancy costumes to add a dose of humor to the monotony and grimness of frequent testing

Social media content spreading positivity for self and social betterment

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Emotional Enhancement
孩童般的情绪体验

Emphasizing emotional benefits and boost through animated elements that evoke feelings of innocent purity, playfulness and childish carefree-ness

Characteristics:

— Childish animation style, graphics, details injected in realistic visuals creating half real-half animated compositions

— Size play (smaller than real)

— Saturated colors

— Animation design inspiring products and packs

**Positive Engagement
注入正能量**

Spreading optimistic and encouraging energy to boost resilience through reassurance and expectation for a better tomorrow

Characteristics:

— Predominance of color orange

— Protagonist objects symbolizing positivity and hope e.g., rainbow, smiley face, sun

— Rhyming and puns that combine brand name with positive attitude

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Humorous Irony
诙谐幽默
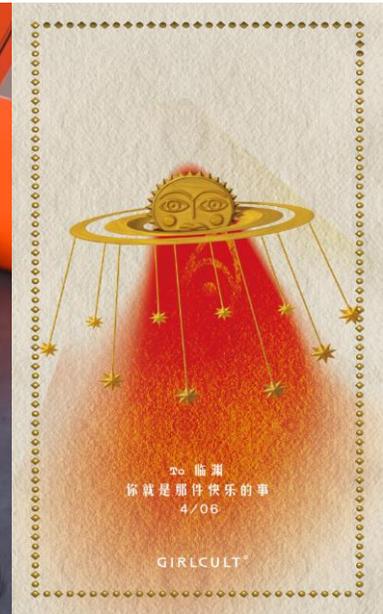
Lighting up moods and spirits in a funny, sarcastic but also thought-provoking way (evolving from previous more simplistic forms of humor, such as silly gags)

Characteristics:

— Creative re-usage of new norm objects, symbols and situations e.g., queue for test that resembles a fancy runway

— Characters/phrases reappropriated to deliver opposite than original meaning

— Witty tone of voice that makes people laugh and think at the same time e.g., 'Continue with Tangping after opening up'

生煎饅頭，長遠不見。

I am broken.

赢

600 宛平南路

再躺吧 躺会

解封了，然后呢？

为躺平鼓掌

2022上海春季時裝周
Omicron X HE SUAN
合作系列首秀

HE SUAN

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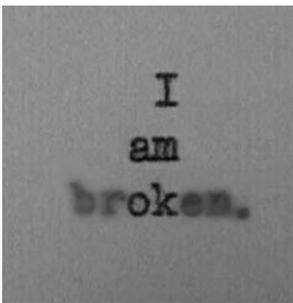
02
EVERYDAY
CELEBRATION
庆祝平凡的日常

02 EVERYDAY CELEBRATION CONTEXT

Prolonged periods of lockdowns have changed the meaning of normality, the experience of everyday, and even altered the sense of time. The on-going crisis deprived elements of normal life that were once taken for granted. Simple and oversighted moments and feelings suddenly became longed for, while everyday simple routines became the main source of activities.

Hot online topic (with billions of search results) about pandemic wasting 3 years of precious youth time

Records of everyday experiences take center stage in content and documentation of life during lockdown

Realization of the importance of basic and taken for granted needs such as sustenance

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02 EVERYDAY CELEBRATION CULTURE

Emerging design and content pays tribute to the experience and aesthetics of the everyday. The now and the ordinary are re-appreciated, and prolonged immersions in them are seen under a different and more insightful light. Appreciating everyday little moments and rituals seen as instrumental to enjoying life itself and discovering its meaning. A meaning defined by humility, honesty, and down-to-earth simplicity.

Art creation from everyday objects, turning the ordinary into ingenious, uplifting and entertaining

Ordinary moments and occasions become celebrated, and their experience amplified

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**Everyday Appreciation
欣赏每一天**

The design of everyday objects and moments acquires elevated importance leading towards lifestyles that are less pretentious, more real, warm, inclusive and affordable

Characteristics:

— Everyday material, objects and moments as protagonists and inspirations for design and content

— Objects act as symbols that convey simple human qualities e.g., bread for warmth, made up rings for love, remote control for entertainment

— Humble and simple tone of voice

It's time to explore the great indoors. **Jeep**

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Artistic Elevation
艺术性的提升

Emphasizing and enriching the importance and value of everyday situations and romanticizing their experience by injecting artistic undertones and associations

Characteristics:

— Classical art forms (painting, literature) representing, illustrating or acting as metaphors for everyday moments and experiences e.g., pandemic literature

— Art related celebrities as spokespersons

— Word play and puns between life and art e.g., green horse as a pun on health code

Everyday Practicality
务实的人生哲学
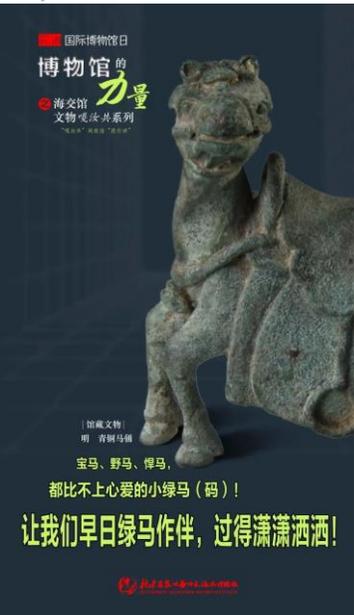
Delivering straightforward practical advise, services and offers that celebrate honesty and fairness as well as provide superior convenience

Characteristics:

— Content, services and innovation that highlight simple functionality and increased convenience e.g., offer lowest price directly, practical tips for emergency

— Honest and practical tone of voice

— Simple and/or handwritten typeface to show sincere and practical attitude

03
CARING
HUMANISM
人性的关怀
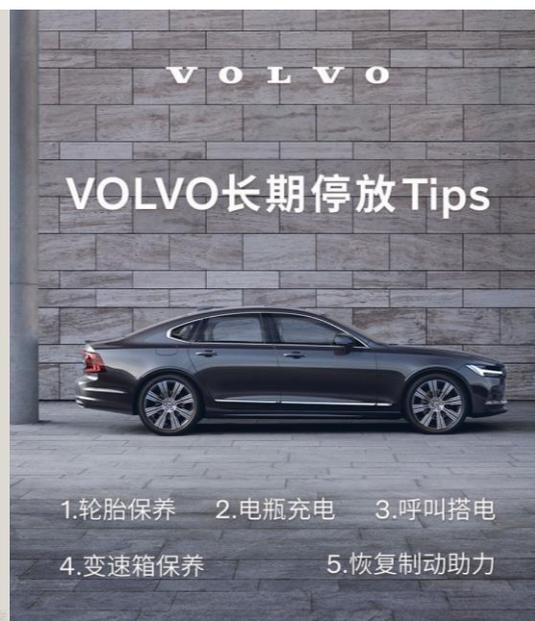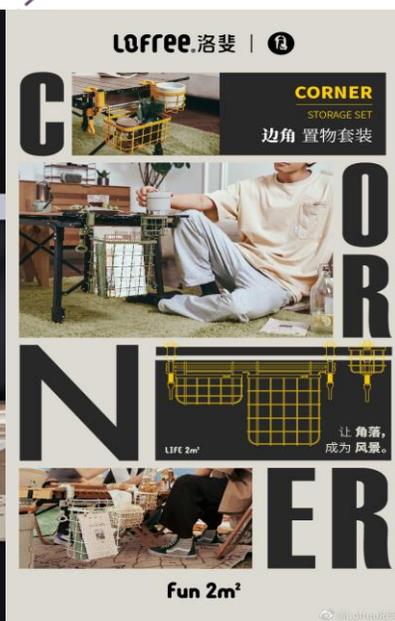
Pandemic and lockdowns produced prolonged periods of isolation and absence of connection between people, as well as with nature. This resulted in a threat towards human's innate social needs for bonding and experiencing outdoors (amplifying young generations' already problematic condition in these areas).

Art and graphic design content focusing on traumatic isolation and the fragility of the human spirit

Nostalgia and support for social gathering institutions that suffer the most

03 CARING HUMANISM CULTURE

The need for interpersonal and natural connecting experiences has significantly risen as aftermath. Resulting in an increase of compassion and selfless assistance as well as kindness and caring, injecting more humanism to society. Human spirit protection becomes a leading priority and ideology.

People creatively develop their own way to satisfy their need for fresh air, sunshine and socializing

Raise in acts of kindness between ordinary people, and heightened sense of animal care awareness

Outdoor Goodness
体验户外的美好

Highlighting open-air iconography and natural environments to emphasize the need and importance for intimate emotional bonding with nature and between people

Characteristics:

— Outdoor objects and natural environments (e.g. park bench, camping tent) as protagonists in content, design and retail

— Warm & low contrast colors

— Emotional and romantic tone of voice e.g. 'Meet with mountain and water'



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Retro Collectivism
传统集体主义的回归

Rediscovering and re-appropriating traditional forms of collectivism by celebrating the return of neighborhood spirit, sense of solidarity and shared warmth

Characteristics:

— Neighborhood relevant objects and activities as protagonists e.g., side by side doors as symbol of neighbors' connections

— Symbolic gestures to highlight collective spirit e.g., people doing the same gestures

— Campaigns with collective efforts e.g., competitor brands joining forces to celebrate the return of normal life


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**Social Care
社会关怀**
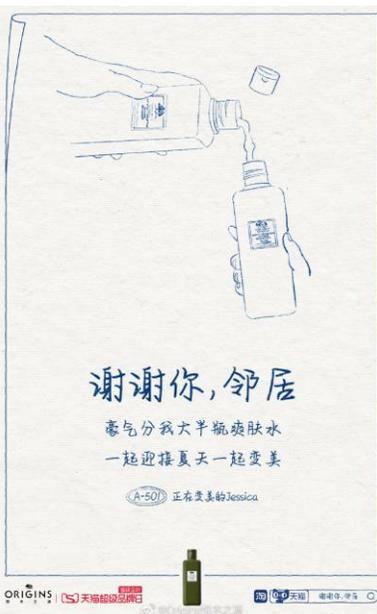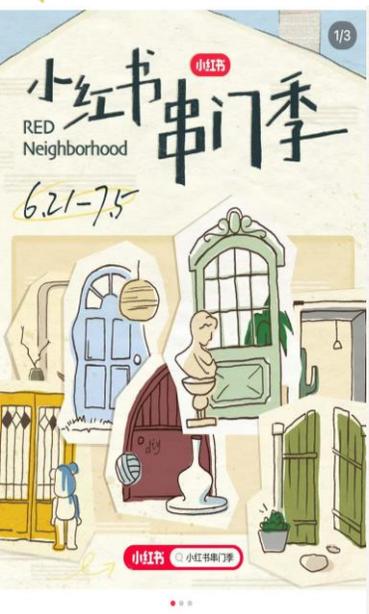
Empowering and elevating social wellbeing through social purpose gestures that are humane, meaningful, caring and heartwarming

Characteristics:

— (Frequent and small) Social purpose activities / gestures that go above and beyond to provide different forms of help

— Free offers, products and services that highlight the caring nature of a brand

— Catchy language blending brand name/character with social gesture e.g., Hey Tea associated with joy through its Chinese name

04
DESIGN TREND
设计趋势

Sanitized Design
具有洁净感的设计
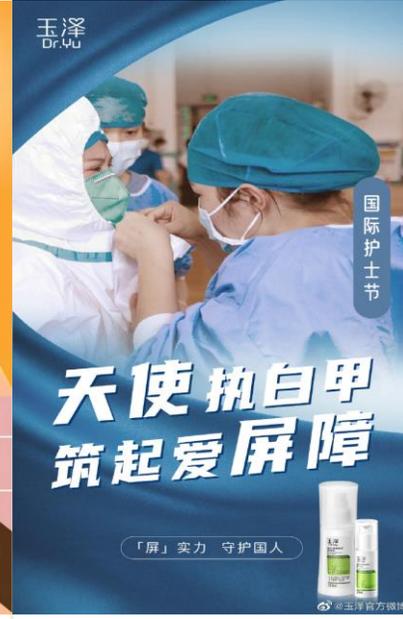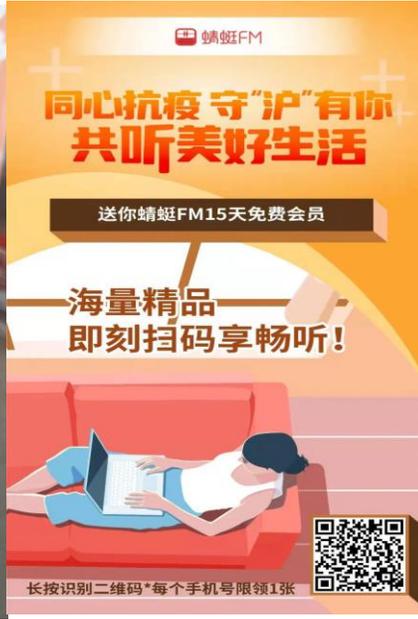
Daily interaction with and dependence on medical and scientific objects create a design trend inspired by them conveying reliability, efficacy, confidence, trust and assurance

Characteristics:

— Design inspired by pharmaceutical and scientific objects and graphics

— Predominance of white, sliver, and soft pastel colors

— Clear lines, simple and basic compositions

— Text arrangement inspired by medicinal recipes and labels
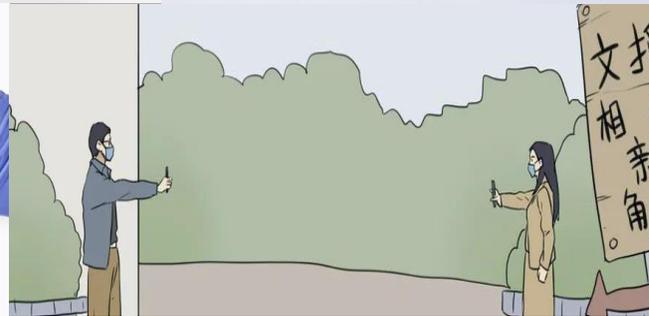
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Thank You

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