



Above: Hang tags of the shoemaker Vans. Right: The hang tags collected by Bai Xiaoyuan serve as a record of some of her most valuable life experiences. — Chen Chen



# You won't believe the things youngsters actually collect

Chen Chen, Lu Jiaqi and Tan Weiyun

It is said that one man's garbage could be another person's treasure. It is now an established fact that collectors of Generation Z are preoccupied with amassing bizarre gadgets and trinkets. Price appreciation is rarely their concern as they pile up collections after collections. They collect as a means of self-expression and brand-building.

Bai Xiaoyuan, a resident of Nanxiang Town in Jiading District, specializes in collecting hang tags and clothing and shoe labels. After being cut, framed, and mounted, these tags of various sizes, typefaces, shapes and languages have transformed Bai's home into a sort of pop art workshop.

"I would choose some tags with unique designs to incorporate into my home decor," she said.

Bai started collecting offbeat items more than a decade ago. At first, she kept the hang tags together with

back-up buttons so that they would be easier to sort. Over time, this turned into a habit and then a hobby.

After graduating from college, she entered the fashion industry, and her tag collection serves as a record of some of her most valuable life experiences.

Hang tags of the shoemaker Vans are one of Bai's favorite collections, as they represent much more to her than a mere fashion brand.

"It was a kind of fashion enlightenment during my student years. It also afforded me the chance to enter the fashion industry," she said.

The most rabid Vans fan can immediately identify the collection and the line of footwear at first glance.

Bai places its distinctive red-and-white labels inside a picture frame to "mark the pace of growth."

So far, she has amassed over 200 brands of hang tags and labels.

"This is how I observe the evolution of fashion," remarked Bai. "The logo designs of several brands vary in

different countries and regions. The changes in their labels reveal how they've evolved through time, which is an intriguing aspect from which to examine the fashion industry."

Weng Zhengyu, who is also from the same district, is slightly different. He started his collection hobby with the intention of losing weight and staying fit.

Weng has collected more than 20 souvenir badges that reveal how the 22-year-old shed 25kg by running marathons.

A bronze triangle badge hangs prominently in his room as a reward for completing his first 5km race.

"It was inscribed with a Scorpio, which is my astrological sign," he said with a smile. "What a happy coincidence!"

A year ago, he frowned at the numbers on the weighing scale.

He registered for a marathon through a sports app, and his journey to stay fit began with one competition after another.

As an anime fan, the big man with a "girl's heart" jogs to pocket lots of badges which are made in collaboration with cute cartoon characters like Chibi Maruko and Kuromi. Weng challenged himself and pushed his limits — from 2km to 5 and 10km.

"It was hard as a beginner, but those shiny badges were a great draw for me," he explained.

"My original goal was to lose weight, but the desire to collect all those medals keeps me motivated to keep jogging."

Weng's favorite medal is a cool stopwatch that he won for running 100km in one month. He devised a tough training regime that required him to jog at least 5km every day in order to get the medal. He finally got his hands on the medal after much sweating.

His next goal is to acquire all 12 zodiac sign medals.

"I'm going to challenge myself to run 200km in a month and perhaps shed another 5kg," he said.



Weng Zhengyu: before (above) and after shedding weight



Souvenir badges chart the journey Weng Zhengyu traveled to shed 25kg by running marathons. — Lu Jiaqi