

China / Hong Kong Industry Focus

Sportswear Sector

Refer to important disclosures at the end of this report

DBS Group Research . Equity

9 Jan 2025

Finding resilience

- **Global sportswear industry to post low-to-mid-single digit y/y growth, fuelled by product differentiation, innovation, and largely normalised inventory levels**
- **While challenger brands emerge, companies that enhance market responsiveness and agility should stand as outperformer**
- **China's favourable policy & stimulus on its sports industry, and the potential heightening of "guochao" under Trump's US leadership could also reinforce performance of Chinese brands. Our top picks are [Anta Sports](#) on brand diversification and continued share buybacks, and [Adidas](#) on a firm recovery and core market resilience.**

Economic headwinds driving softer spending. The global sportswear industry is entering 2025 with revenue expansion easing to an estimated low-to-mid single-digit rate (Source: Euromonitor) (2024: 4%). While macroeconomic uncertainty will likely continue to dampen global discretionary spending, sportswear brands with premium product positioning coupled with technical expertise and smart wearable integration, such as On's LightSpray or Hoka's Meta-Rocker, are expected to continue to attract consumer demand, driving full price realisation and brand loyalty.

Pressure mounts on incumbents. The sportswear sector continues to face heightened competition from challenger brands including On, Hoka (Deckers), New Balance, and Asics. Smaller rivals experienced robust growth in recent years through product innovation, specialised sports categories, and strategic marketing. Incumbent brands like Nike and Adidas will need to diversify their offerings and cultivate more authentic partnerships with athletes and celebrities to drive further breakthroughs. Meanwhile, Lululemon also faces headwinds in its home market, with its net sales in the Americas rising by only 2% y/y in 3Q24, due to rival brands such as Alo Yoga and Vuori, prompting it to seek growth in overseas markets.

Top picks: Anta and Adidas. Chinese sportswear brands have shown agility in responding to shifting consumer demand and exploration new geographic regions. They are also poised to benefit from the government's domestic stimulus as well as its goal of expanding the Chinese sports industry to Rmb5tn by 2025 (2022: Rmb3.3tn). To mitigate the impact of market volatility, key players are actively reducing excess stock and maintaining healthy inventory levels (Anta/ Fila at 5x inventory to sales). Overall, with the global sportswear industry expected to sustain a decent topline CAGR of 6.3% in 2024-27 (source: Euromonitor), brands that can improve their resilience and responsiveness to market changes are likely to outperform. Anta Sports has continually reinvented itself with the introduction of new brands such as Kolon Sports and Descente to offset softer growth in Fila. Valuation appears attractive at 14x FY25E PE against global players of 32x FY25E PE with 18.7m+ in share repurchases since Aug-24. We also turn positive on Adidas due to its resilience in its core EU market and recovery in Asia Pacific.

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Recommendation & valuation

Company		Price Local\$	Target Price Local\$	Recom	Mkt Cap US\$m
Anta Sports (2020 HK)	HKD	75.25	108.00	BUY	27,294
Li Ning (2331 HK)	HKD	16.38	24.40	BUY	5,440
Nike (NKE US)	USD	71.29	75.00	HOLD	105,455
Adidas (ADS GR)	EUR	244.7	285.00	BUY	45,274
Puma (PUM GR)	EUR	42.99	59.00	BUY	6,634
Lululemon (LULU US)	USD	392.92	281.00	FV	47,851

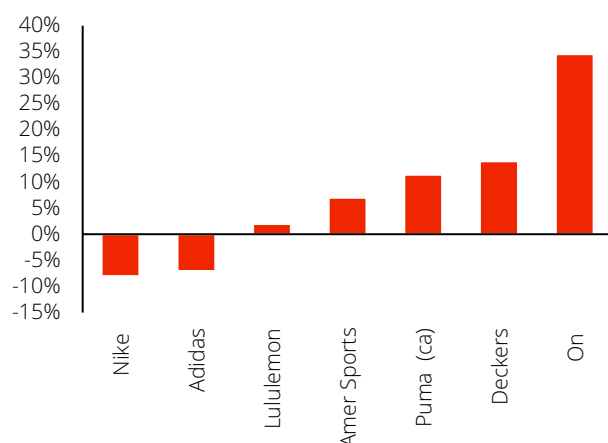
Source: Thomson Reuters, DBS Bank (Hong Kong) Limited ("DBS HK")

Market leaders struggle due to fragmentation of core markets in the US and EU

The sportswear sector faces **increasing fragmentation with the rise of specialised competitors**. Nike's withdrawal of FYMay25 guidance in 2QFY25 and cost-saving plan reflects an increasingly challenging landscape for incumbent brands, with smaller rivals gaining market share. Coupled with scaled back consumer spending, the shift is particularly evident in the US market – Nike reported an 8% sales decline (constant currency) in 2QFY25 with weakness in footwear (-14%), while Adidas recorded a 7% sales drop y/y in North America in 3Q24.

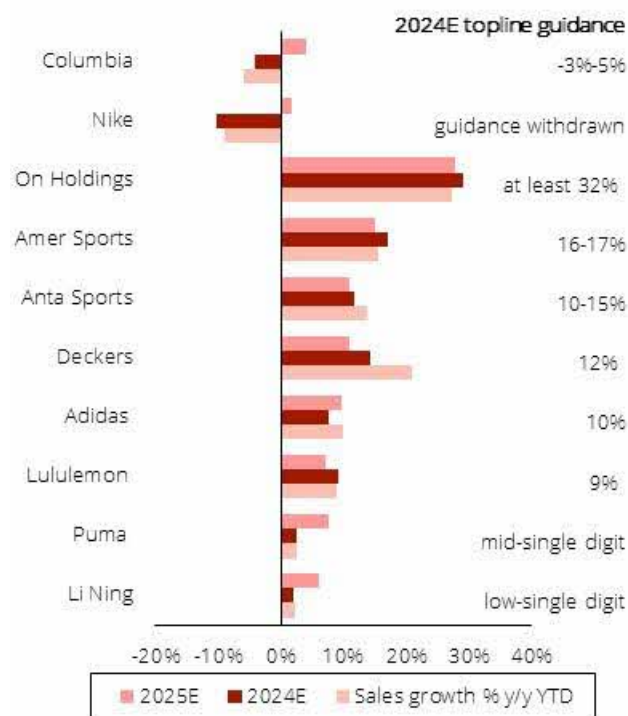
Emerging players demonstrated significantly stronger momentum in the region, catching the downturn of the incumbent brands, with On Running delivering sales growth of 34.5% y/y in the Americas in 3Q24, driven by its LightSpray technology and celebrity partnerships such as with actress Zendaya, as well as collaboration with luxury brands such as Loewe. Deckers also recorded a 14% y/y increase in its domestic market in 2QFY25, where its Hoka brand's consolidated sales recorded a 34.7% y/y increase over the same period. New Balance has also successfully repositioned itself with lifestyle crossover appeal in the US market.

Latest US quarterly sales changes (% y/y)



Source: Company data

Forecast topline growth (% y/y)



Source: Company data, Refinitiv

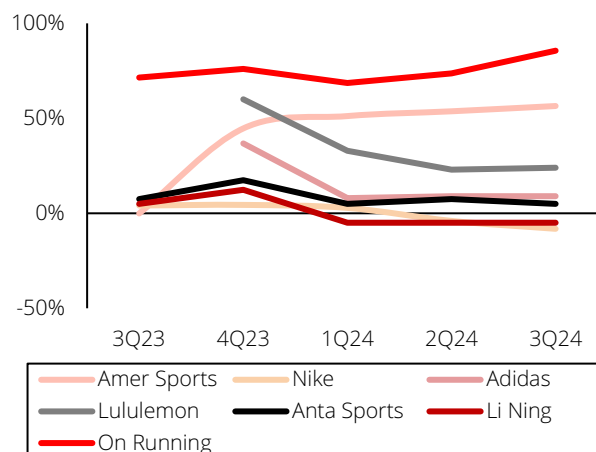
Nike: FYMay25 guidance withdrawn; Columbia (9M24), Nike (1HFYMay25); On (9M24), Amer Sports (9M24), Anta Sports (1H24), Deckers (1HFY25), Adidas (9M24), Lululemon (9M24), Puma (9M24), Li Ning (1H24)

China market share shift: Local brands and newcomers gain ground.

Prior to COVID-19, Nike and Adidas were the dominant players in China's sportswear industry. However, the rise of guochao as well as the appetite for new brands have led to a reshuffling of market dynamics, with emerging players gaining momentum, as highlighted in the latest quarterly results. Lululemon recorded a 36% y/y sales growth (constant currency) in China in 3Q24, while Nike recorded a 11% sales decline (currency adjusted) in 2QFY25. Adidas recorded a gradual sales recovery of 9% in 3Q24.

This shifting landscape reflects broader changes in consumer preferences, as newer entrants like Amer Sports and specialised players gain market share through **product innovation** and **strong local appeal**. Amer Sports achieved strong results across Greater China and Asia Pacific, with 3Q24 sales growth of 56% and 47% y/y respectively, driven by technical apparel (+34% y/y) of brands such as Arc'teryx and network expansion of Salomon footwear stores in China to 200 by end-2024. Its racket sports segment also experienced increased demand, thanks to Zheng Qin Wen's Olympic victory.

Sales growth rate diverging between brands in China

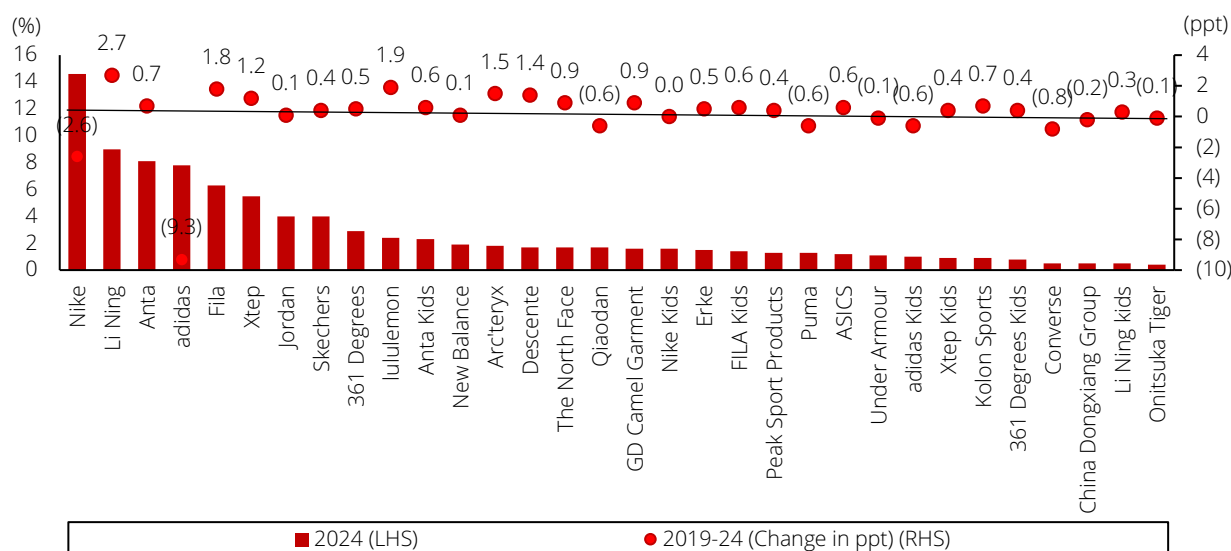


Source: Company data

Lululemon China comparable sales % y/y (constant change)

On Running as Asia Pacific (including Greater China)

2019 vs. 2024: Adidas and Nike's market share losses have led to gains by domestic brands such as Anta, Li Ning, Fila, Xtep, and emerging brands such as Skechers, Lululemon, Arc'teryx



Source: Euromonitor

Domestic stimulus to spur consumption spending.

The Ministry of Commerce, in collaboration with local governments of Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, Tianjin, and Chongqing, has allocated domestic vouchers for dining, culture, tourism, and sports to boost business sales and encourage investment, particularly targeting low- and middle-income groups in Sept-24, as part of China's stimulus package with additional monetary and fiscal support.

Top officials have prioritized boosting consumption and stimulating overall domestic demand. While specific details have not been released, potential plans for 2025 may include expanding government subsidies for consumer goods purchases and providing targeted aid to families and lower-income groups. For example, China has expanded consumption subsidies to include smartphones and other electronics, with the current national trade-in program extending to personal devices such as phones, tablets, and smartwatches.

Consumption vouchers/ subsidies

Local governments	Domestic vouchers/ subsidies
Sichuan	Sichuan provincial department of commerce allocated RMB400m from fiscal budget to issue vouchers. Of which RMB300m will be earmarked in home improvement sector. The vouchers would be usable in both online and offline, with a discount of RMB600-4,000 based on the total amount spent in Sept-24.
Shanghai	Shanghai municipal government allocated Rmb500m on consumption vouchers for dining, accommodation, cinema, and sports sector. Of which, Rmb360m will be allocated to the dining sector, RMB90m to accommodation, RMB30m to cinema, RMB20m to sports in Sept-24. The government began distributing second batch of consumption vouchers for dining in Nov-24, with lower value with a discount of Rmb90 when spending up to RMB300, and the highest up to RMB30 in discount when spending up to RMB1000.
Beijing	Beijing announce distribution of more than 30,000 ice and snow consumption vouchers to promote sports and boost winter sports market in Nov-24.

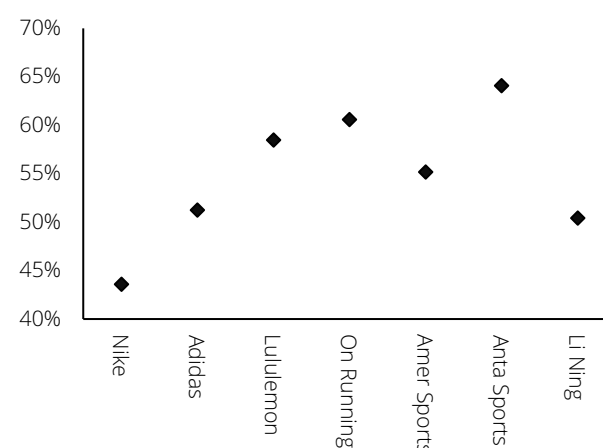
Source: Company data

Key sporting trends in 2025

The sportswear industry is experiencing strong growth in emerging sports categories, particularly racket sports, outdoor activities, and running. The rising popularity of padel and pickleball is driving significant new product launches among major brands. Wilson's **ball & racquet sports** segment, for instance, grew over 11% y/y in 3Q24, while On Running is leveraging successful partnerships with retired tennis player Roger Federer.

Besides the expansion into lower tier cities by Anta, Nike and Adidas with more value proposition in the **running shoes** category, the **outdoor category** is demonstrating strong growth, particularly among specialised players adopting premium pricing strategies. This is demonstrated by the superior gross margins enjoyed by these emerging brands (On Running: 60.6%; Decker: 55.9%), thanks to their direct-to-consumer (DTC) model and premium pricing strategies, compared to traditional sportswear brands like Nike (43.6%). A case in point is Hoka's trail running shoes, which are priced at USD175-200, significantly higher than traditional athletic footwear, reflecting strong consumer willingness to pay for specialised performance-based products. Excluding Nike, sportswear players largely recorded an expansion in GP margins, with the largest expansion seen from Amer Sports (+4.2ppt), followed by Decker (+2.5ppt).

Latest GP margin



Source: Company data, Refinitiv

Tariff impact on supply chain: limited effect on domestic names while global leaders brace for impact.

During Donald Trump's campaign trail, the president elect promised tariffs of 10-20% on imports, with a blanket rate of 60% on all imports from China, creating negative rhetoric around the apparel & footwear trade. China is a dominant supplier to the US for toys and sports equipment, accounting for approximately 40% of US footwear imports as well as approximately 25% of textiles and apparel imports.

Since the last tariff shock, major apparel & footwear companies **have taken the time to diversify their manufacturing supply chain from China towards Southeast Asia** including Vietnam, Cambodia, Bangladesh, Indonesia. For example, Nike's footwear and apparel manufactured in China has reduced to 18% and 16% respectively vs. 26% and 26% in 2018. However, reshoring manufacturing from China may not result in manufacturers fully avoidant of tariffs. Vietnam rides on a large trade surplus with US which could be the next target. China domestic sportswear players may face limited impact due to limited exposure in the US markets.

2023 US imports (USD bn) by segment

	China, %	Total (USD Bn)
Machinery	18.3	445.5
Electronics and electrical machinery	27.0	444.0
Transportation equipment	4.0	417.9
Chemicals	6.3	327.5
Miscellaneous	12.6	314.0
Fuel	0.1	253.7
Metals	14.0	159.9
Stone and glass	5.9	115.7
Textiles and clothing	24.5	109.8
Plastics and rubber	20.6	100.4
Prepared foodstuffs	2.6	94.1
Vegetable products	2.7	76.8
Wood products	13.3	50.1
Toys and sports equipment	74.6	42.3
Animal products	3.5	41.0
Footwear	41.1	32.0
Hide and skins	21.8	14.1
Mineral products	4.3	8.9

Source: PIIE, US Census Bureau

Global players sourcing China exposure

Company	Sourcing capabilities
Nike	Nike outsources to 37 countries and up to 518 factories worldwide. Of which, China accounts for 22% of finished goods, or 9% of workers employed globally. Of the products produced, apparel accounted for the largest component of 57%, equipment 25% and footwear 33%
Adidas	Adida's primary suppliers (Tier 1) reflects factories where Adidas holds a direct contractual sourcing relationship for the supply of products whether for export or domestic need. Adidas has 81 suppliers in China, accounting for c.22% of its total factories worldwide.
Amer Sports	Greater China less than 30% of Amer Sports global sourcing Sourcing from China to the US market represent 10-12% of total Group revenue Ball & Racket is highest exposure segment, similar to last period of rising tariffs Performance equipment segment would be most impacted, tennis rackets, baseball balls and basketballs Lever to address potential tariff: price increases, supply chain
Deckers	Decker has a total of 226 Tier 2 suppliers (Apr-24) where China accounts for 125 suppliers or 55% of its suppliers.
Lululemon	China accounts for 16% of Tier 1/2 suppliers as disclosed.
Puma	China accounts for 34% of Puma's total factories worldwide

Source: Company data

Sportswear Sector

Valuation

Top picks Anta Sports. Based on current valuations, premium growth players such as Lululemon, On Holdings, and Decker are trading at higher PEG ratios of 2.3-3.7, versus incumbent brands that are trading at 0.4-1.5 PEG ratio. We prefer Anta Sports, as we believe it offers compelling value now trading at 1SD below its 5-year average at 14x, with a stable growth outlook (22%+ core earnings growth) and growing market share in China. The Company looks to deliver new exciting IPs similar to Super Anta, Champion stores to encourage offline spending, with intention to expand further into 2nd to 3rd tier cities, and to overseas market (Southeast Asia, US, Middle East) in the medium term. Lastly, the Company has **initiated share buybacks** of 18.7m at an average price of HKD77.6/sh amounting to HKD1.45bn since 1H24 results release,

utilising its **strong net cash position** of RMB32bn as of Jun'24 (Jun'23: Rmb33.6bn).

Adidas. We are also turning more positive on Adidas, as we expect the **sales declines in North America to narrow** and expect **recoveries in Greater China and Japan/South Korea**, with its footwear models including Samba, Gazelle, Spezial, and Campus garnering popularity. Adidas's valuation, at 32.5x FY25E PE, reflects a recovering story of over 80% y/y in 2025E.

Sportswear peers table

Company Name	Code	Currency	Price Local\$	Mkt Cap US\$m	Fiscal Yr	PE 24F x	PE 25F x	Yield 24F %	Yield 25F %	P/Bk 24F x	P/Bk 25F x	EV/EBITDA 24F x	EV/EBITDA 25F x	ROE 24F %	ROE 25F %
China Sportswear															
Anta Sports*	2020 HK	HKD	75.25	27,294	Dec	16.2	14.4	1.6	1.8	3.1	2.7	9.5	8.3	19.8	19.2
Li Ning*	2331 HK	HKD	16.38	5,440	Dec	12.1	11.5	3.7	3.9	1.5	1.4	4.6	3.8	12.5	12.3
Xtep International	1368 HK	HKD	5.55	1,914	Dec	11.0	9.9	7.5	5.2	1.4	1.3	5.6	5.1	13.2	13.9
361 Degrees Intl.	1361 HK	HKD	4.01	1,065	Dec	6.9	6.0	5.5	6.7	0.8	0.7	2.6	2.3	11.2	11.9
Pou Sheng Int'l	3813 HK	HKD	0.485	332	Dec	4.8	3.9	9.1	10.0	0.3	0.3	n.a.	n.a.	5.9	6.7
Topsports#	6110 HK	HKD	2.91	2,318	Feb	11.5	9.5	7.7	9.4	1.7	1.7	4.6	4.2	13.9	17.0
MC wt. avg						14.7	13.1	2.7	2.9	2.6	2.3	8.0	7.0	17.8	17.5
Global Sportswear															
Nike#	NKE US	USD	71.29	105,455	May	34.1	28.8	2.1	2.2	8.3	9.8	25.8	23.1	24.9	29.0
Adidas	ADS GR	EUR	244	45,274	Dec	62.3	32.5	0.7	1.2	8.4	7.1	17.6	13.5	14.9	22.8
Puma	PUM GR	EUR	42.99	6,634	Dec	20.5	15.6	1.9	2.4	2.4	2.2	7.2	6.5	12.3	14.5
Lululemon Athletica#	LULU US	USD	392.92	47,851	Jan	27.7	25.9	0.0	0.0	10.1	8.1	14.2	13.4	39.0	35.5
Under Armour A#	UA US	USD	8.09	3,498	Mar	28.1	20.3	0.0	0.0	1.9	1.8	13.1	11.0	6.3	8.6
On Holding A	ONON US	USD	55.54	35,223	Dec	62.8	49.0	0.0	0.0	11.1	9.1	38.9	28.7	18.9	19.7
Deckers Outdoor#	DECK US	USD	207.52	31,527	Mar	37.4	32.7	0.0	0.0	12.1	9.9	24.1	21.4	33.5	31.3
Asics	7936 JP	JPY	3116	15,145	Dec	35.3	29.1	0.8	1.1	11.2	9.5	17.2	14.8	31.1	33.2
Columbia Sportswear	COLM US	USD	82.62	4,725	Dec	21.3	19.3	1.5	1.5	2.5	2.3	13.5	10.9	12.0	12.6
Amer Sports	AS US	USD	30.53	15,435	Dec	65.4	45.1	0.0	0.0	3.4	3.2	17.1	14.0	8.7	7.4
MC wt. avg						41.9	31.9	0.9	1.0	8.9	8.4	22.6	19.1	24.6	26.6

FY24: FY25; FY25: FY26

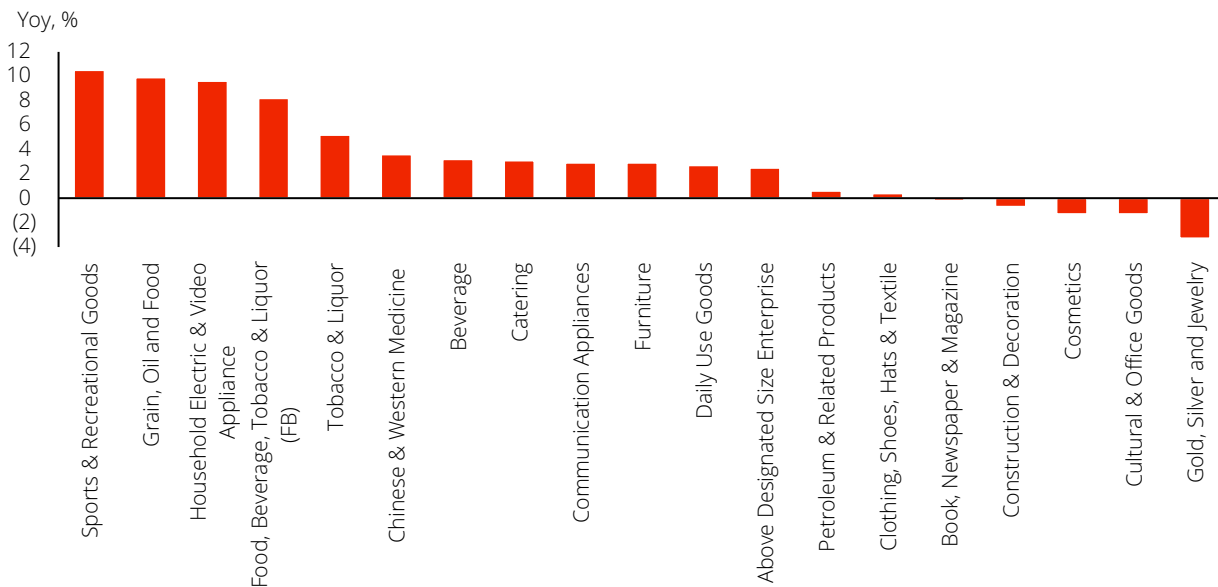
Source: Thomson Reuters, *DBS HK

China retail sales



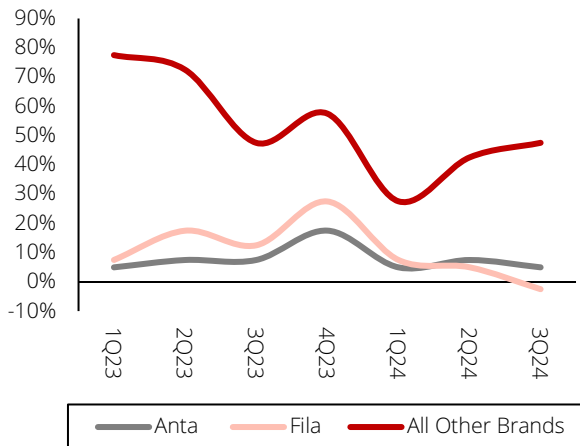
Source: NBS

Retail sales of consumer goods (above scale) YTD y/y



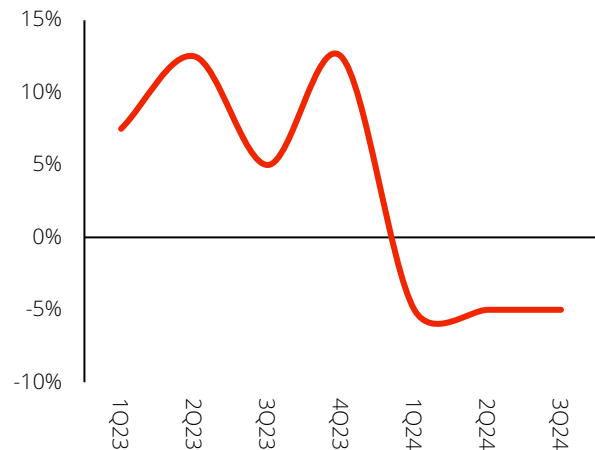
Source: NBS

Anta Sports quarterly same-store sales change (%)



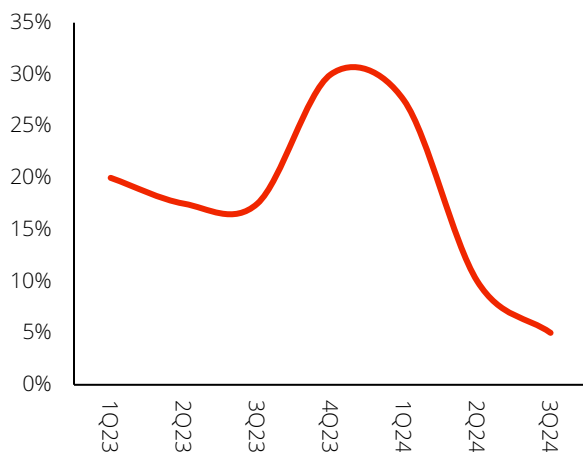
Source: Company data

Li Ning quarterly same-store sales change (%)



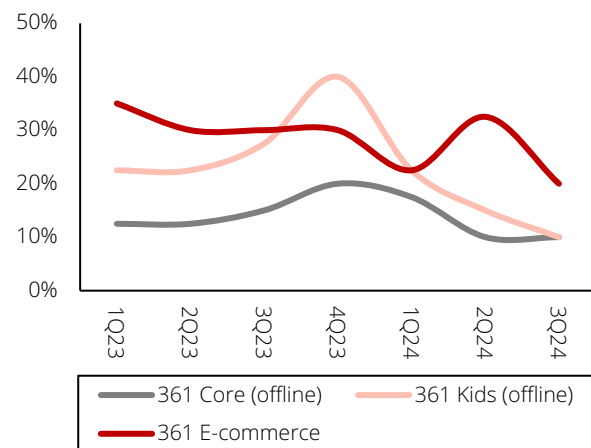
Source: Company data

Xtep quarterly retail sell-through rate (%)



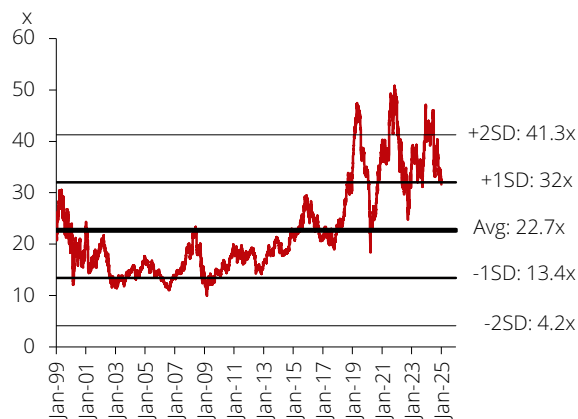
Source: Company data

361 Degree quarterly retail sales (%)

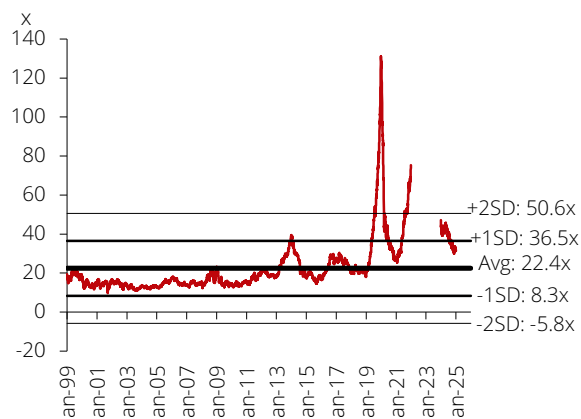


Source: Company data

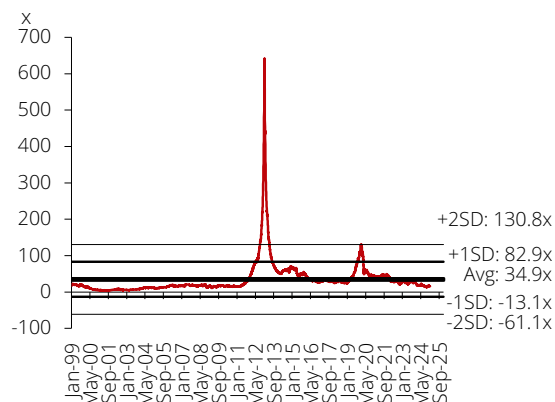
NIKE (NKE US) PE chart



Adidas (ADS GR) PE chart



Puma (PUMG DE) PE chart



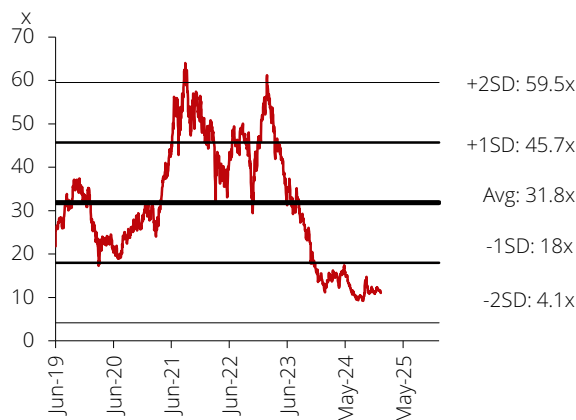
Lululemon Athletica (LULU US) PE chart



Anta Sports (2020 HK) PE chart



Li Ning (2331 HK) PE chart



Source: Thomson Reuters, DBS HK

Sportswear companies' guidance

Company	Latest Outlook
Nike (NKE US)	Nike has withdrawn its financial guidance and postponed its investor day scheduled in Nov-2024 to provide chance for incoming CEO Elliot Hill to review current strategies and plan future ones. Prior guidance expected topline to decline by low-single digit in 1HFYMay25. (Oct-2024)
Adidas (ADS SE)	Adidas expects 10% currency neutral revenue growth in 2024 (Previously: increase by high-single digit). Operating profit is expected to reach EUR1.2bn (Previously: EUR1bn). This assumes Yeezy inventory will be sold at cost with additional revenue of EUR50m, with no profit contribution in 4Q24. (Oct-2024)
Lululemon (LULU US)	Lululemon expects net revenue to rise by 9% (Previously: 8-9%) in 2024 to USD10.452-10.487bn, or 7% excluding 53rd week of 2024. Diluted EPS is expected to be between USD14.08-14.16/sh (Previously: USD13.95-14.15/sh). (Dec-2024)
On Holdings (ONON US)	On raises its 2024 net sales growth outlook to at least 32% on a constant currency basis to CHF2.29bn (9M24: 27.3% y/y), reflecting of an acceleration in net sales growth, offset by foreign exchange headwinds. On expects GP margin to be at 60.5%, with adjusted EBITDA between 16.0-16.5%. (Nov-2024)
Deckers (DECK US)	FYMar25 revenue expected to increase by 12% to USD4.8bn. GP margin is expected to be between 55-55.5%. OP margin is expected to be between 20-20.5% Diluted EPS is expected to be in the range of USD5.15-5.25/sh.
Puma (PUM SE)	Puma expects a mid-single digit currency-adjusted sales growth in 2024, while operating income (EBIT) to be in the range of EUR620m-EUR670m (2023: EUR622m), while net income (2023: EUR304.9m) to be in-line with operating results. (Nov-2024)
Amer Sports (AS US)	2024 Outlook: Amer Sports expects to record revenue growth of 16-17% in 2024 (Previously: 15-17%), with GP margin at 55.3-55.5% (Previously: 54.5%). OP margin will lean towards the higher end of 10.5-11.0%, with fully diluted EPS at USD0.43-0.45 (Previously: USD0.40-0.44), versus 2023 adjusted diluted loss per share of USD0.35. By segment, technical apparel will record 34% topline growth (Previously: >30%), with OP margin slightly above 20% (unchanged), outdoor performance at 8% topline growth (Previously: mid-to-high single digit growth), with OP margin at high-single digit (unchanged). Ball & racquet is expected to record a 4% revenue growth (Previously: low-to-mid single digit growth), with OP margin at low-to-mid single digit (unchanged). (Nov-2024) 2025 Outlook. Amer Sports has provided initial 2025 outlook to achieve reported revenue growth of 10-15%, with OP margin to deliver 0.3-0.7ppt expansion. (Nov-2024)
ANTA Sports (2020.HK)	Anta Sports maintains guidance of 10-15% revenue growth for Anta brand in 2024, while reducing guidance for FILA from teens to a high-single digit growth due to changes in fashion preference and changing consumer environment in the children's segment. (Aug-2024)
Li Ning (2331.HK)	Li Ning expects revenue growth at low-single digit in 2024, with 1ppt increase in GP margin lifted from gains in 1H24. (Oct-2024)

Source: Company data

DBS Group Research recommendations are based on an Absolute Total Return* Rating system, defined as follows:

STRONG BUY (>20% total return over the next 3 months, with identifiable share price catalysts within this time frame)

BUY (>15% total return over the next 12 months for small caps, >10% for large caps)

HOLD (-10% to +15% total return over the next 12 months for small caps, -10% to +10% for large caps)

FULLY VALUED (negative total return, i.e., > -10% over the next 12 months)

SELL (negative total return of > -20% over the next 3 months, with identifiable share price catalysts within this time frame)

*Share price appreciation + dividends

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