

Why Chinese parents prefer **Lego** to Barbie

Budding engineers cluster around a table-sized model of the China Art Museum, a landmark of Shanghai, adding **helipads**, carrot patches and other improvements with colourful **bricks**. **Prising** a child from Lego's vast shop near People's Square can be like **unsticking** two stubborn bits of Lego.

Lego 乐高积木

budding 崭露头角的

helipad 直升机停机坪

brick 砖块

prise 撬动

unstick 分开

Lego's rise in China has been **vertiginous**. The toy industry is growing by 9% annually in the country, but the Danish firm's Chinese arm notches up "very strong double digits", says Paul Huang, its boss.

It has done so even as the brickmaker's global business has looked **shakier**. In 2017 Lego cut 1,400 jobs and recorded its first drop in **revenues** and profits in over a decade. But last year both ticked up again, by 4% each. Lego has thus **retained** its status as the world's biggest toymaker, snatched from Mattel in 2014 — even as its American rival last year earned its highest revenues in five years from its Barbie dolls.

vertiginous 旋转的; 令人眩晕的

shakier 不稳定的

revenue 收入

retain 保持

Newly **affluent** parents in China have helped Lego recover. As in the West, the educational **merits** of bricks appeal to Chinese parents. Lego has also **astutely** catered to local tastes. This year the firm launched three sets specifically for China, the first time it has done so for any country. Fans were delighted at the attention to cultural detail.

affluent 富有的

merit 价值; 优点

astutely 敏捷的

With Barbie, Mattel tried to *localise* in the wrong way. A former Chinese manager at the American company calls its promotion of a line of cheaper, flimsier dolls “arrogant”. Because no effort was put into making her locally relevant, Barbie held none of her usual aspirational appeal, even for *spendthrift* Chinese.

Localize 使地方化

spendthrift 挥霍无度的