

PREMIUM

NEWSLETTERS



Volume 05
Issue 04



THE MINIMALIST LUXURY LIFESTYLE

About two years ago, Aaron and I were in a mall in Portland, Oregon and we randomly walked into a Bose store.

Thanh: “You gotta checkout these new headphones that I just bought.”

Aaron: “What? \$300? You’re crazy.”

Thanh: “Dude, they are worth it. They make me so much more productive. Trust me, get one.”

After going back and forth, I convinced him to buy these headphones (Bose QC15). To this day, we both still have them and Aaron keeps thanking me for convincing him to grab a pair.



To some people, it sounds crazy to spend a couple hundred dollars on a pair of headphones. To me, that’s completely normal.

Not because I’m swimming in money. Not because I’m an audiogeek.

No.

This is part of what I call my **Minimalist Luxury Lifestyle (MLL)**.

A few years ago I wrote in another [Premium Newsletter](#) about the idea of the **2 suitcases rule**:

Everything I own fits in two suitcases.

When you don't own a lot of stuff, it's easier to travel around, maintain everything and it's less stuff to worry about.

I try to follow that guideline as much as I can. Not because I travel all the time, but because I've learned that owning fewer things makes life simpler and makes me happier.

“When you don't own a lot of stuff, it's easier to travel around, maintain everything and it's less stuff to worry about.”

The things that I do own...they are top notch and I'm willing to pay top dollars for it. That's part of living a Minimalist Luxury Lifestyle.

For example, you can walk into my closet and see how little clothing I own. The clothes I do have, are all custom tailored or fitted. Whenever I go out, I don't get analysis paralysis of “what to wear” (unlike some of my ex-girlfriends). I know that whatever I wear will look good on me and I can move on with my life.

The same goes for my shoes - I only have four pairs of shoes. My two pairs of dress shoes together cost over \$1,000. However, I know that whenever I wear them, I feel comfortable and confident about the way I present myself.

My apartment is in the hotspot of the city where all the stores, people and activities are and I pay top dollar to be there. That's also why I don't own a car - I can walk to everything. I don't have to deal with traffic, fluctuating gas prices, car insurance or worry about when my next oil change is.

I'm not saying all these things to brag - I want to give you a different perspective on why paying more can be worthwhile aside from just the quality

that you pay for (while at the same time not spend more - more on that later).

Let me give you three reasons why you would want to live a Minimalist Luxury Lifestyle.

1. DESIGN A SIMPLE LIFE

With a Minimalist Luxury Lifestyle what you're trying to design is a life that's simple and prevents decision fatigue.

We have a limited amount of willpower each day and we need to use it wisely. Most of us here are knowledge workers - we work with our brains to get things done. Each time we have to think and decide, we use up a little bit of willpower before it is empty (usually near the end of the day).

If you are someone who has to do a lot of critical thinking or decision-making, you want to make sure you have enough willpower to come up with the best solution.

When you're trying to make decisions about lots of little trivial stuff, you're depleting your willpower for the stuff that's actually important.

That's why I own very few clothing choices, so I can save my willpower and decision-making for more important things ([like Steve Jobs and Mark Zuckerberg do](#)).

That's why I live in the heart of the city so that I can avoid traffic jams. I get stressed in traffic - I hate it. Stress is also a huge "willpower burner". Not to mention I never have to worry about car maintenance issues or finding parking.

Here's what I've found (and what tons of other research studies will back up):

The fewer decisions I make, the better decisions I make.

That's why you want to design a life that makes it inevitable for you to live a life that is simple and prevents decision fatigue. It all starts with owning few things, but the things you do own will...

2. BECOME MORE ASIAN EFFICIENT

The second reason MLL is so powerful is that it makes you so much more Asian Efficient. Aside from the decision making process, when you pay for

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quality you tend to use and appreciate it more. It will also last you a longer time.

That's why when I bought my last Macbook, I added every upgrade I could afford. My last Macbook lasted me 4 years so I knew that the next one will probably last about the same amount of time. So it would be worthwhile to get the best Macbook I could afford. When you amortize it, it comes down to a couple of hundred dollars a year. I'd be more than willing to pay that price if it helps me be really productive for all these years. It's a no-brainer.

To compare - the last couple of Windows laptops I owned had to be replaced every 18 months which was just a hassle (buying them, installing everything again, configuring the settings, etc).

That's also why I paid \$300 for a pair of headphones because they will last me a long time and it makes me so much more productive. Have you ever worn a pair of Bose QC15? These things are AMAZING. The noise cancelation is superb and it allows you to focus very quickly. I use it at home to focus on work and on the plane for reading and to avoid hearing loud babies. Thanks to these headphones, I can focus and not deal with things that distract me (which makes me Asian Efficient).

To give you another example, I'll pay hundreds of dollars for a custom tailored shirt. I don't have many, but the ones I do have make me look good and last me a long time. My favorite shirt is one from Hugo Boss and I've had it over 4 years now. The best thing is? It still looks brand new and I get compliments on it all the time. That was a worthwhile one-time investment instead of buying a new shirt every couple of months that's mediocre and gets you no compliments (let's admit it, everybody likes to receive compliments...)

I have a couple of these shirts which means it's really easy to get dressed and be out the door in no time.

When you own few necessary things, but they are all high quality, it's really easy to live life. You don't have to maintain a lot of stuff. You avoid decision fatigue. And when it comes to tools and utilities, they'll make you much more productive (especially since they will last you a long time).

3. OPTIMIZE YOUR LIFE FOR CONVENIENCE

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The last thing I want to mention is convenience. We can all agree that if things are convenient for us, we tend to live happier lives.

One of the most stressful times of my life was when I was living frugally. I was worried about where every dollar went and in the back of my head I kept thinking about my spending habits.

I was always stressing about if I could/should purchase something or not.

All this time I was fighting and depleting my willpower over what I couldn't have. There's nothing wrong with living frugally - I got a lot of good habits out of it. However, you can take it too far. It then becomes stressful, not the crazy/high-pressure type of stress, but very subtle stress happening each day. It's like being cut by a thousand paper cuts - eventually it gets to you.

Once I hit that point, I had to revise my life and that's why I like the 2 suitcases rule. It gives me a simple guideline: **don't buy a lot of stuff, but when you do buy make sure it's of the highest quality.**

(And if I have too much stuff, something needs to go away before I can purchase anything or something needs to be upgraded/replaced.)

The other decision I made was I wanted to stop living in scarcity and start living in abundance.

When you follow the first two guidelines I mentioned earlier, what you end up designing is a life of convenience.

It's convenient for me to get to places because I live in downtown.

It's convenient for me to read on the plane because I have an amazing pair of headphones.

It's convenient for me get things done on my laptop, no matter where I am, because this thing is super powerful.

It's convenient for me to work from home because I freaking love my home office setup with a gorgeous view of the lake.

You get the idea. All these little conveniences add up. They make me happier (and help me avoid lots of annoyances and stress) and a happy person is

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always more productive than an unhappy, stressed person.

To sum it up:

1. Own few things.
2. The things you do own, make sure they are of the highest quality.
3. Design your life for convenience.

IS THIS COSTING AN ARM AND LEG?

Now you might be wondering: doesn't this cost a lot of money? Is it even sustainable to live like this when you don't make a lot of money?

The surprising truth is - from my experience - you tend to spend the same amount of money but it just happens less frequently.

For example, with my (expensive) Macbook I only have to replace it every four years or so. In the same timeframe, I had to replace my Windows laptops 2-3 times which added up to about the same amount of money.

It's the same thing for clothing. I buy clothes maybe once or twice a year. When I do, it tends to be in high dollar amounts. Before MLL, I would buy clothing more frequently but spend less each time I went shopping.

Not too long ago when I did my financial analysis over the years before I got into MLL, I've noticed that I spent about the same amount on clothing before and after MLL.

I do pay much more in rent than most people in town, but I also don't own a car so the difference in cost cancels each other out.

The Minimalist Luxury Lifestyle comes down to smart spending. You spend wisely on designing a life that is simple with a few nice things that help you become more productive as a result.

Oh, and you'll live happier too. I guess that's a nice bonus too.

-Thanh & the Asian Efficiency team