

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

## Deciphering the Chinese Gen Z "Normcore" trend

August 31, 2020



*Gen Zers have repurposed the term "Sexually frigid" as a fashion statement, but does the trend have sales potential for brands in China? Image credit: Alyx, Haitong Zheng*

By [Jennifer Zhuang](#)

Subscribe to **Luxury Daily**  
Plus: Just released  
State of Luxury 2019 **Save \$246 ▶**

Term/phrase

Sexual Frigidity ()

About the trend

"Sexually frigid" may sound like an insult, but many Chinese youngsters are repurposing this term as a fashion statement that means neutral, simple and comfortable clothing styles.

The colors of these garments are often monotone and commonly referred to as "black, white and grey ()."

Over the last seven years, the niche phrase has slowly infiltrated mainstream social media.

On video-sharing platform [Douyin](#), the hashtag #SexualFrigidityStyle has more than 18 million views that detail the aesthetic or offer related fashion tips.

Additional context

"Normcore" is the corresponding global phrase that netizens attribute to this concept of "sexually frigid."

According to the Chinese social networking forum Douban, that term, which is a mashup of "normal" and "hardcore," was first coined by the trend forecasting company K-Hole.



The word "normcore" is a mashup of "normal" and "hardcore." Source: stillinbelgrade.com

Why Gen Z consumers like it

**Gen Zers** in China are known to replicate diverse and unique styles in their photos, however, to an extent, that the outlandish clothing only lives on social media.

As these young professionals become more financially independent, many of them turn to a less flashy style in daily life.

According to Miranda Yuan, a marketing executive at Chinese digital agency Qumin, one of the reasons why consumers favor so-called sexually frigid clothing is that it hides a woman's figure.

"This makes them feel more comfortable and relaxed, especially for office work," Ms. Yuan said, citing the Swedish brand **COS** as a popular choice for younger workers who are seeking a mature vibe.

The Gen Z verdict

Many Gen Zers who have recently joined the workforce are familiar with sexually frigid styles because they prefer safe outfit options, especially brands for a low budget.

Christy Qin, a 22-year-old professional who is based in Beijing, mostly has brown, white and grey clothing in her wardrobe.

"These colors are easy to match, especially if you're rushing to get dressed before work," Ms. Qin said. "I mostly buy clothes from & Other Stories, COS and **Artizia**, and I try to keep everything under 1000 RMB (\$150) due to my starting salary."



Many Douyin fashion creators post different sexually frigid matches every day, which helps them attract millions of followers. Source: Screenshot from Douyin account @Kaoka

How luxury brands should approach the trend

Brands need to understand that **Gen Zers** transitioning into adulthood are peer-pressured in social situations to keep up with trendy aesthetics during off-work hours. But they also want to maintain a serious image while at work.

Ms. Yuan said this is why brands that focus on black, grey, and white tend to fare better with the younger generation.

"Gen Zers hold the notion that sexually frigid colors make them appear more senior, which is necessary for their

workplaces," she said.

These sexually frigid colors generally represent maturity, decency and elegance.

"We have already witnessed many Douyin fashion creators [such as the account @Kaoka] posting different sexually frigid outfit combinations, attracting millions of followers," Ms. Yuan said.

For fashion companies who wish to jump on this trend, they need to borrow ideas from **KOLs** for their campaigns.

Kaoka, for example, gained popularity from her specific video style, which features her in different outfits, posing with background music, and adding flashy post-editing effects or fonts.

Brands need to recognize the demand for situation-appropriate styles and not just hip fads.

But they also must understand that getting the message across online is equally important. That means jumping on and tapping into KOLs who understand phrases such as "sexually frigid" that Gen Zers have repurposed.

*Published with permission from **Jing Daily**. Adapted for clarity and style.*

---

© 2020 Napean LLC. All rights reserved.

Luxury Daily is published each business day. Thank you for reading us. Your **feedback** is welcome.