

MARKETING

What China's "lying-flat" trend means for luxury brands

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Thanks to China's new lying flat movement, young consumers are choosing slower lifestyles. But can luxury brands connect with this trend? Image credit: Prada Outdoor series, Prada's Weibo

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COVID-19 accelerated the shift of some customer lifestyles, leading them to favor simpler and nature-connected lives while challenging the economic and societal principles of modern society in the process.

In China, this phenomenon has impacted the new generations as well, and is implying changes to a country known for the most growth over the past decades, thanks primarily to its fast-paced rhythm, highly competitive environment and extensive workforce.

The pressure linked to modern lifestyles in big Chinese cities has become overwhelming, with "996" becoming a keyword that describes the [grueling Chinese work model](#) 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., six days a week especially inside local tech companies. In fact, sleep difficulties have become a national health concern among the post-80s and 90s generations.

But today, [Chinese urbanites have started questioning whether this hard work is worth it.](#)

A new consciousness has emerged denouncing "Neijuan" a concept that literally means "inward curling" which points out that the country's intense domestic competition does not necessarily result in large-scale economic growth or high productivity. This topic has generated more than 50 million discussions on the Douban app thus far.

As such, young Chinese consumers are shifting toward a slower life as a rebellious reaction against the societal pressure they face.

Online, [the "Lie Flat" movement](#) describes the mindset of Chinese youth fed up with fast-paced urban life and meaningless competition. Their personal choices reject society's expectations: they prefer not to get married [or have children](#), do not want to buy a house, and refuse to overwork themselves or hold a job at all, in some cases.

Aspects of this "Sang Culture" another expression that describes the status of being a bit down, feeling melancholy, or praising a slower lifestyle have turned many of this generation toward new Zen hobbies.



More Chinese youth are choosing to adopt a slower lifestyle. Image credit: Streetsnap in Shanghai

For example, gardening, **raising fish**, or chilling in the park ("Guang Gong Yuan") are traditional hobbies that used to be exclusive to elderly generations but are now becoming trendy activities for China's youth.

On Little Red Book, the hashtag "gardening" has collected more than 90,000 notes. "Plants are so simple. When you have time, you should look at flowers more and fill your heart with the simple joy, and it will make you calmer when facing the busy daily life." said the Douban user @.

Meanwhile, the tea culture revival has also been strong, with the hashtag #teahouse gaining more than 100,000 notes on Red.

With a minimalist style redesign, the modern Chinese tea house caters to the younger generations by providing a peaceful yet trendy place to reconnect to traditional Zen culture. Some of these young people even have dedicated spaces where customers can **rent a "Hanfu"** an ancient Chinese clothing style so they can be more immersed in this ambiance.



Zen hobbies such as gardening and visiting tea houses have seen a revival. Image credit: @NOWNESS official WeChat account, Little Red Book

How brands should connect to this lifestyle slowdown

Offer natural and peaceful urban escapes

To keep up with this new life trend, brands must shift their communication strategies toward a more authentic and natural approach. They must convey messages such as urban escapes, caring for nature and spiritual exploration to the customers.

For example, Chinese domestic fashion brand JNBY recently did a series of pop-up exhibitions across China. The exhibition space was decorated with various tropical plants combined with concrete architectural forms.

The show explored the concepts of "symbiosis, and the relationships between urban life, nature, and the universe," perfectly resonating with the young consumer mindset.



JNBY SS21 Symbiosis pop-up exhibition. Image credit: @Wallpaper official WeChat account

Prada also linked up with this trend by promoting its outdoor collection inside its Rong Zhai Villa in Shanghai, turning it into an outdoor camping destination.

The Prada initiative featured attractive workshops that provided unique opportunities for guests to explore gardening, horticulture, camping, and more.

Encourage more real-life social interactions and DIY workshops

In the new post-COVID-19 normalcy, young people are still eager for real-life connections.

Social events emphasizing personal interactions could attract experience-seekers looking for refreshing and relaxing things to do.

Those events usually focus on the arts, crafts, music and outdoor themes.

Last month, the niche lifestyle brand ME Ft. WE collaborated with the skincare label Uniskin and 33 other brands on an offline event in Shanghai.

In all, it offered a collective experience by combining sensory explorations, a live performance, do-it-yourself (DIY) tea making, skincare sessions, and unplugged live concerts.

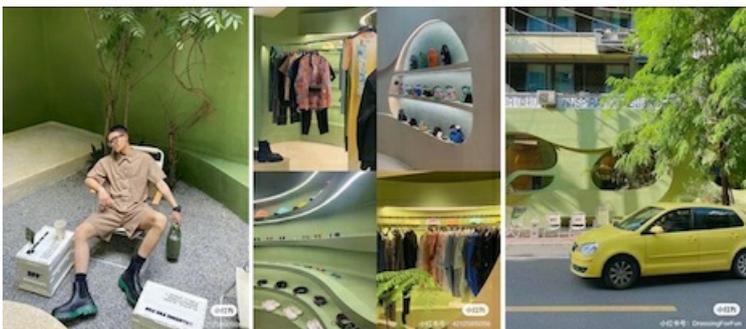
Contribute to the revival of the traditional lifestyle in a contemporary way

In response to China's "lie-flat" trend and its continuing China pride, brands need to rethink the concept of their physical stores by combining a Western mentality with traditional Chinese leisure activities.

To recruit new customers, local brands must create immersive, convenient and integrated shopping experiences that connect to this trend.

In Chengdu, a city favored by young Chinese fashionistas and known for its tea culture, retailers such as @Dressingforfun have recently reinvented the tradition.

Located on a quiet street and hidden by traditional Chinese plants, the shop provides a multi-brand shopping experience but also boasts a caf area that is beautifully decorated to look like a traditional Chinese garden.



DressingForFun's concept shop in Chengdu. Image credit: Little Red Book

Adopt a "less-is-more" approach with strong brand values and timeless products

Product and consumption values are also being challenged by this new generation, who want to depend less on

trends, brands, society, and commerce. Yet, they still want to gain in sophistication and style.

As such, they want to purchase timeless products of quality essentials with good design.

Also, brands that carry strong mottos or messages, act more ethically, and project slow-life attitudes will resonate more with this new generation of **conscious consumers**.

A brand can develop a selection of timeless and essential products that embody a less-is-more attitude or Zen lifestyle but still produce excellent design, personality and quality.

Young Chinese consumers are moving toward slow-paced lifestyles as a way of resisting the unforgiving nature of contemporary society.

In the process, they have started to embrace the natural world and refuse to overwork themselves.

Those emerging trends signal that international and local brands must review their offerings and communication new strategies to stay connected to younger Chinese generations.

Adopting nature-based and "less-is-more" perspectives while holding meaningful, sensorial events will be the key to their emotional engagement.

*Juliette Duveau and Sophia Dumenil are cofounders of **The Chinese Pulse**, a Paris-based creative consulting agency focused on deciphering trends in the contemporary Chinese market for brands in the fashion, beauty, luxury and lifestyle industries.*

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