

MARKETING

What China's "45-degree life" trend means for luxury

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A new movement shows how China's youth are prioritizing wellness and balance over the grueling "996" work culture. Image credit: Shutterstock

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A new movement, tang ping, or "lying flat" (躺平) arose among China's youth last year. It represents an attitude that refuses to engage with the country's grueling "996" work culture that is, working 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., six days a week.

Despite going viral online, is this trend indicative of a widespread cultural change?

According to the latest study conducted by Fudan University's Center for Communication and State Governance Research on a sample of 4,000 Weibo users born between 1990 and 2005 it might not be so.

The investigation found that more than **70 percent** of participants' posts have shown the opposite: a hardworking attitude, and great appetite for learning and growth. In fact, only 10 percent had actually practiced "lying flat."

What it is

And so another neologism has emerged: "45-degree life" (45度生活). This refers to the gray area between burnout culture and "lying flat," and is believed to be a more appropriate description of the younger generations' attitude.

Fudan University's study results set the Chinese web alight, with the topic

#post2000dontwanttolieflattheyareactuallyhardworking amassing more than 700 million views on Weibo so far.

Many netizens admitted that while they could not afford to give up their salaries, they did not wish to "neijuan" (内卷), or overwork. Therefore they fit somewhere in-between: a "45-degree life."

This healthy, balanced lifestyle suggests practical avenues that luxury could explore: for instance, collaborations with sleep aid companies and therapy centers or leveraging a diverse cast of KOLs instead of the usual fashion influencers.

Why it matters

This cohort is known for defending their rights.

Many post-2000s interns or junior employees have spoken out on the Web to decry unfair work cultures and demand

more transparency in the workplace.

On this point, luxury should be wary.

An industry based on selling fantasies, its own working practices are often far from dreamy. Low wages, especially in retail, can alienate young talents and sit uneasily with them especially given the industry's exorbitant, and rising, prices.

The potential exposure of unpleasant working conditions and low salaries could well lead to a PR disaster something that every company wants to avoid.

Bottom line

Companies often place customers' interests at the heart of their strategy. Maybe now it is time for them to look to the people behind the scenes responsible for the business' success.

Maisons should take pride in fostering a transparent and healthy work culture.

While the fact that it is the right thing to do should be reason enough, a positive brand image will arise from the prioritization of employee wellness which, whatever angle you look at it from, is all-important to mainland Gen Zs.

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