

RETAIL

## Neo-Chinese fashion shows that guochao is here to stay

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While not new, "neo-Chinese fashion" is seeing a revival with searches surging 15,945 percent on Xiaohongshu as of June. Image credit: Sisters Who Make Wave

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This is not your grandparent's closet: once considered to be garments worn by older generations or reserved for special occasions, Tang suits and qipaos are having their moment.

Young local fashionistas are taking these traditional pieces and combining them with modern clothing such as fishnet tights and combat boots to create a new style dubbed "neo-Chinese fashion" ().

Unlike hanfu, this hybrid aesthetic drops the formality for a casual, contemporary vibe.

Although not a new phenomenon, searches for "New Chinese Style" have recently increased, up a staggering 15,945 percent on **Xiaohongshu** as of June 2022 compared to the previous six months.

This has translated to sales: a recently released **Tmall report** found that over the past three years, the growth in gross merchandise value (GMV) of related apparel products has exceeded 100 percent.

After the report's publication, the hashtag "Why has neo-Chinese style gone viral?" started trending on Weibo, raking in over **230 million views**.

**The Jing Take:** So why has neo-Chinese style become so popular now?

Driven largely by Gen Z and millennial consumers ages 18 to 34, this fashion trend speaks to the staying power of **guochao**.

As young people continue to develop a strong sense of national pride, they are incorporating traditional culture back into their daily lives in this case, mixing-and-matching Chinese clothing elements such as frog buttons and Mandarin collars with Western ready-to-wear.

The aesthetic has also received a boost from domestic media.

In the latest season of *Sisters Who Make Waves*, contestant Yu Wenwen attracted netizen attention with her qipao-



and-skirt ensemble. And celebrities **such as** Song Zu'er, Victoria Song and Gong Jun have all been spotted putting their own spin on traditional Chinese wear.

Period dramas such as *A Dream of Splendor* have similarly led to increased searches for hanfu and modern styling hacks.

Typically, international luxury brands will create China-specific designs for special collections, such as Chinese New Year or Valentine's Day.

Adding more culturally-inspired clothing to their regular collections could be the next step in localization. After all, "today's Chinese consumers like [products] with a Chinese feel," **said** adidas CEO Kasper Rorsted on where the company had gone wrong in the market.

Offering guides on how to blend luxury pieces with the country's traditional wear is another option.

But before global houses jump on the bandwagon, they should be careful about crediting the culture.

As Weibo blogger @ pointed out, "Recently, some luxury clothing in the West has been constantly borrowing and appropriating Chinese traditional cultural elements, which also sounded the alarm for us: China's excellent traditional culture needs to be protected, inherited, developed and continued by ourselves."

As neo-Chinese style appears here to stay, labels should be careful not to cross into the territory of cultural appropriation.

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