

Original Article

Brand Value, Inclusivity, and Creative Identity: How Gen Alpha Interprets Youth Fashion Brands in India

Srishti Sriram

Indus International School, Hyderabad, India.

Corresponding Author : srishtis.uni@gmail.com

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Abstract - This research study examines the role of inclusivity, gender-neutral fashion, and brand value in gen alpha fashion brands. By observing the recent trends of inclusivity in popular youth fashion brands for Generation Alpha, the study also investigates how gen alpha customers are drawn towards certain brands and how these factors shape consumer trust, engagement and loyalty. The sample size for this research was considered to be 18 individuals. The method used to collect data throughout this study was Google surveys, where a combination of open-ended and multiple-choice questions was involved. From the survey, major statistics have been noticed as 61.1% and 50%. This research study is extremely vital to understand the growing economic market in the youth fashion industry. This study effectively bridges the gap to understand fashion choices and preferences. A combination of primary and secondary research was conducted to build fundamentals with qualitative evidence for the same. Most of the participants for the surveys were from Hyderabad, Telangana and Pune, Maharashtra. Most participants were from an Indian demographic background. The key findings from the primary and secondary sources highlighted how inclusivity positively influenced participants' perceptions of fashion brands and specifically participants mentioned their importance towards prioritising multiple body types, cultural diversity, gender-neutral fashion, and representation of different sexual orientations. In addition, participants found it important for current growing brands to shift their perspective towards adaptive clothing for those individuals facing minor and major disabilities and cater to their needs as well. Fashion is considered art, and everyone should be able to wear the clothes they like despite their physical disabilities. The findings clearly depict how brands should divert their focus into consumer-specific problems that could be resolved. Through creative and inclusive representation in their collections, all of their customers should be accepted. Brands should adopt unique and authentic strategies to increase their brand loyalty and strengthen their consumer-brand engagement and relationship.

Keywords - Fashion Industry, Gen Z, Gender-Neutral, Inclusive Fashion, Social Media.

1. Introduction

Contemporary youth fashion brands established themselves as models of inclusivity and creativity. Behind the unclaimed facades, the true depth, authenticity and originality of these brands remain opaque. While gender-fluid styling and reliability are present in most youth-initiated brands, the inclusive nature of branding adaptive and functional fashion remains up in the air. [1] No prior study has been examined in the Indian Gen Alpha context. Studies do touch upon inclusivity as a major factor in fashion, but inclusivity is not recognized thoroughly in gen alpha, since the millennial generation is prioritised. Previous studies also tend to look at fashion as merely a purchasing product. In assertion, the study also unveils and fills. The research gap investigates multiple variables with the world's most recent generation (gen alpha). This study also provides a contemporary perspective as to how gen alpha develops

their relationship with brands around the world, amidst the rise of the digital age. Additionally, studies focus on high-end and luxury brands instead of youth-focused startups. The significantly unrepresented community of individuals face an array of issues that include limited options for self-expression, creativity, and accommodation for diverse mobility needs as well. [2] Finding suitable garment alterations for most fashion brands remains particularly unknown and incongruous.

Without an efficient medium where individuals could openly express themselves through fashion, an increased sense of maladaptive behaviours, compulsiveness and a self-defeating mental health comes to light. The evident social invisibility in most brands creates an obstructive encounter, which normalises the reinforcement of body dysmorphism, perceiving a world that does not accept individuals who are deemed out of "normality".



The research paper examines how Gen Alpha, between the age group of 12 to 18, evaluate the values of youth fashion brands through the combined lenses of inclusivity, creativity, and brand storytelling. Exploring the balanced inclusivity in terms of gender fluidity and adaptiveness will be further explored. It analyses how youth brands integrate creativity, self-expression, and emotional resonance to connect with Gen alpha consumers. By directly engaging with Gen Alpha consumers across urban and rural sectors of India, this research paper evaluates the perceptions of adaptive and inclusive fashion in youth-oriented fashion brands to gather insights on the presence of comprehensible and creative appeals in inclusive fashion. The main purpose revolves around understanding how fashion brands develop emotional connection, brand storytelling and cultural diversity to relate to Gen Alpha consumers and the trends and fads that revolve with the support of social media. [3] This issue is extremely sensitive and needs to have a justified presence to be addressed. The need for evidential research arises from the developing disconnection between inclusivity and brand values in the fashion industry. Most brands advocate for diversification via their storytelling techniques. [4] Whereas, the real issue has not been brought about by a real and tangible solution. The need to represent the development of inclusivity, especially for underrepresented groups, such as individuals with physical impairments, is vital.

The paper further unfolds how Gen Alpha consumers evaluate the value of youth fashion brands through markers of inclusivity, creativity, and brand storytelling rather than price or luxury alone. In addition to this dimension, this study analyses how visual aesthetics, gender-neutral designs, cultural references and social messaging are utilised by youth-oriented fashion brands to signal inclusivity and originality. Additionally, the examination of creative and inclusive branding strategies and their influential impact on trust, emotional connection, and purchase intention among young consumers in India will occur. Lastly, to conclude with, how Gen alpha audiences tend to perceive the values of the market and identity building, as shapershifters for a brand's overall creativity and inventiveness.

2. Literature Review

Storytelling has appeared as a central strategy in the fashion industry; this is reflected when products are not the main focus, but rather different techniques of storytelling offer the brand a way to convey its values to the customers. [5] Current studies point to the fact that fashion companies incorporate heritage and craftsmanship references in their process of storytelling. [6] It acts as a major standpoint to create an emotional appeal towards the intended target group. Over and above that, storytelling is used as a consistent notion to provide consumers with purchasing intentions due to the credible environment that is being depicted. By relating the consumer's mindset with the clothes and

garments being displayed, the brand loyalty towards a symbolic background is being displaced. Christian Dior illustrated the larger vision of femininity and beauty after the war. [7] Relating their garments and pieces to post-war expressions with elegance, it directly refers to how runway shows are set in symbolic environments of feminism and equality, rather than just displaying clothes. The main techniques of storytelling explain how the consumers are not just buying a dress, but rather they are engaging in an emblematic and luxurious environment.

Fashion is underestimated as just clothing and a tool of cover-up. In reality, fashion is an influential sociocultural tool that expresses gender neutralisation, sexual and social studies. The inclusion of body types, gender neutralisation, and races has gained relevance over time in the fashion industry, depicting the large-scale evolution that has taken place. With the newer adaptations that are taking place in the fashion industry, there are a few other factors that are marginalised and could seek improvement. Many marginalised groups face systematic inequality, representing the lack of options and opportunities that pass through their way. Many research studies indicate that fashion is strongly influenced by socioeconomic privilege, cultural capital and conformity to dominant beauty standards, thereby reinforcing exclusionary structures. [8]

The fashion industry is an ever-changing system, in which ideals of beauty, desirability and status are being constructed and reformed. These ideals do not exist as absolutes but are constructed socially in the interactions between designers, consumers and the media platforms. Many different types of social media platforms, such as Instagram and Facebook, contribute to the acceleration of these dynamics, being impacted by trends and consumer preferences, which directly dilate the brand's overall image being represented. [9] Nonetheless, the industry has been fostering stereotypical and at times unrealistic standards like youthfulness, thinness, and Eurocentric traits, which remain the norm despite demands for diversity. Brands tend to value profitability to reinforce such values despite the efforts of the brands to become inclusive and move forward from such issues being raised over and over again. This presents a conflict between business success and ethical representation, where an inclusive atmosphere is not being supported by the fashion industry and obligates consumers to rail towards the brand's perceived image and presentation that they put forth. This action directly stimulated negative demands towards sociocultural ideas in the fashion industry.

Three elements significantly important to the research study are storytelling, gender neutrality, and industry pressure. Focusing on all three elements through a lens that connects them to the main purpose of the research study examines their role and interconnectedness with one another. The research question evaluated for this study is "To what

extent does the growing demand for inclusivity in youth fashion mould how fashion brands create clothing to communicate with their consumers, understanding their brand value in the current generation?" By evaluating performative inclusivity in the fashion industry, their acceptance by the youth generation is argued.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design, Site, and Participants

This study effectively adopts the use of a qualitative-dominant mixed-method approach, which is grounded in a phenomenological framework. Qualitative-dominant mixed methods refer to a majorly qualitative-reliant research method that observes world perspectives, open-ended data, while minorly involving quantitative strands of research. Applying mixed methods of qualitative and quantitative investigations, the outcome of the research was grounded within a phenomenology theory. Qualitative data analysis is the classification and interpretation of linguistic (or visual) material to make statements about implicit and explicit dimensions and structures of meaning-making in the material and what is represented in it. [10] Phenomenological theory focuses on exploring individuals' lived experiences and how they are shaped by those experiences, and their attachment towards them. The investigation focuses on an array of young consumers by interpreting brand value and other means of creativity, inclusivity and storytelling. In this project, young customer interpretation is examined further beyond just price-based variables and pure economic relations. The research is conducted through an array of digital consumers part of the Generation Z and Generation Alpha community, to identify and evaluate how inclusivity, creativity and brand value are prioritised and how it affects their perspectives towards certain brands. The research site is primarily digital and India-based, focusing on publicly accessible fashion-brand content circulated through different types of social media, and brand websites, like Instagram, Facebook, etc. 18 young consumers were included from India in the age group of 12-18. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method where individuals are selected based on their relevance to the objectives of the research paper. [10] Through the presence of purposive sampling, access to participants for the qualitative data collection occurred, and this was brought up along with the snowball sampling method as well. The snowball sampling method focuses on drawing participants towards their own networks. [11] Additionally, the aim of snowball sampling is to recruit newer participants through already present respondents of the research group. Through these sampling strategies, access to participants was much easier and connected to the main objective of the research project.

3.2. Data Collection Methods, Instruments, and Analysis

The two major research methods that were applied to collect effective and usable data are qualitative content analysis and questionnaire-based survey research. This was

linked with ethnography. Ethnography is the qualitative research method that involves studying individuals in their familiar and everyday environment. [10] Through digital ethnography, people were specifically examined in terms of their behaviour, responsiveness to situations, cultures, and everyday experiences from their perspectives. Through the use of questionnaires, the overall brand familiarity, perceptions of inclusivity and creativity, trust, emotional appeal and purchase intentions are unveiled through a combination of open-ended and closed-ended questions, which were organised on a short Google Form. Through qualitative content analysis, the bigger idea of the data collected was unveiled. Additionally, the survey material collected would aid in analysing the response patterns. To attempt to collect data via the two fundamental research methods, a specific time frame of 2-3 weeks is maintained, where the data collected is bound to this timeline. The two major research methods of analyses have been used to analyse datasets in terms of narrative analysis, and descriptive analysis. By identifying and segregating common and repetitive data sets, the recurring patterns would signal patterns and their meaning towards inclusivity, brand value, and perception. Elements that shape the thematic idea of the project are similar to inclusivity, gender-neutral aesthetics, cultural reference, relatability, humour, and creative identity. Through the qualitative close-ended questions, familiar and simple comparisons will be made to understand the thematic influence. The specific data analysing applications that were used to organise and specify data were mainly Excel and Google Sheets, for data cleaning and extraction of important data points.

3.3. Ethical Considerations and Confidentiality

The participant group for the investigation and sampling was under 18, mainly respondents between the ages of 12 and 18. The sample age group involves a vulnerable group of participants; therefore, it required extensive ethical care and consideration. The presence of parental consent is required for these respondents to participate in the various prepared sampling strategies. The ethical considerations that would take place prior to the data collection include voluntary participation, informed consent from young participants, parental or guardian permission or presence. The above procedures are required because minors were questioned and their personal details were collected while responding to consumer perception and media content. No personal identifiers will be collected in the questionnaire. The age of the specific responder was collected, and further information was restricted and anonymous. Sensitive personal data was avoided in this investigation to maintain an ethical boundary with the respondent. Confidentiality will be maintained through pseudonymization, secure storage of responses, and while reporting any findings, it will not reveal or contain information about the user. The content would solely be used for academic analysis without the presence of criticism or judgement. In addition, the content would not be applicable

or used towards commercial purposes, and the analysis would only focus on objectivity with respect to the way. Misleading interpretations were avoided, and personal data comments would not be specifically listed or used in the investigation. Solely focusing on brand content, without distortion or selective misinterpretation, would lead the investigation in a respectful manner.

4. Results and Discussion

Inclusivity is defined as the act or practice of including all types of people equally and avoiding marginalization. Secondly, creative identity is referred to as a set of beliefs and personal narratives that define the way we persevere ourselves in basis to our value system. Amidst contemporary youth fashion, inclusivity has been an expanding factor that individuals of Gen Alpha expect in every brand they shop from. As brands become further socially driven, the generation Z and alpha believe in the importance of reflecting inclusivity in brands of this era. [12] As time progresses, the mindset of individuals is also rapidly changing. Through the exposure of social media and technology, thoughts, actions, and needs have changed, and the fashion industry needs to work along with the necessity and needs of their target audience. This theme, therefore, explores how gen alpha consumers perceive inclusivity

within youth fashion companies, and whether their portrayal of inclusivity influences their opinions and thoughts towards meaningful engagement in the brand. The analysis draws upon primary and secondary research to quantitatively and majorly qualitatively depict the broader pattern of inclusivity and its concepts in gen alpha fashion culture and trends.

One of the most prominent themes that emerged from the survey was the importance of inclusivity and portrayal. From the survey, many respondents indicated how inclusivity matters to them, in many different ways and forms. Most individuals focused on inclusivity present in body types, cultural diversity, and gender-neutral clothing. The different types of inclusivity that was highlighted significantly was the importance of valuing all different body types and cultural diversity. 15 respondents indicated that an array of sizes for individuals should be present in all brands in the fashion industry. In addition, cultural diversity was also highlighted to show how the presence of multiple different ethnic groups should be prioritized as well. However, respondents also suggested how inclusivity is rather a propaganda for marketing and a process of money-making. Rather than truly showing different forms of inclusivity, brands represent inclusivity on their social media pages to attract customers, as shown in Figure 1.

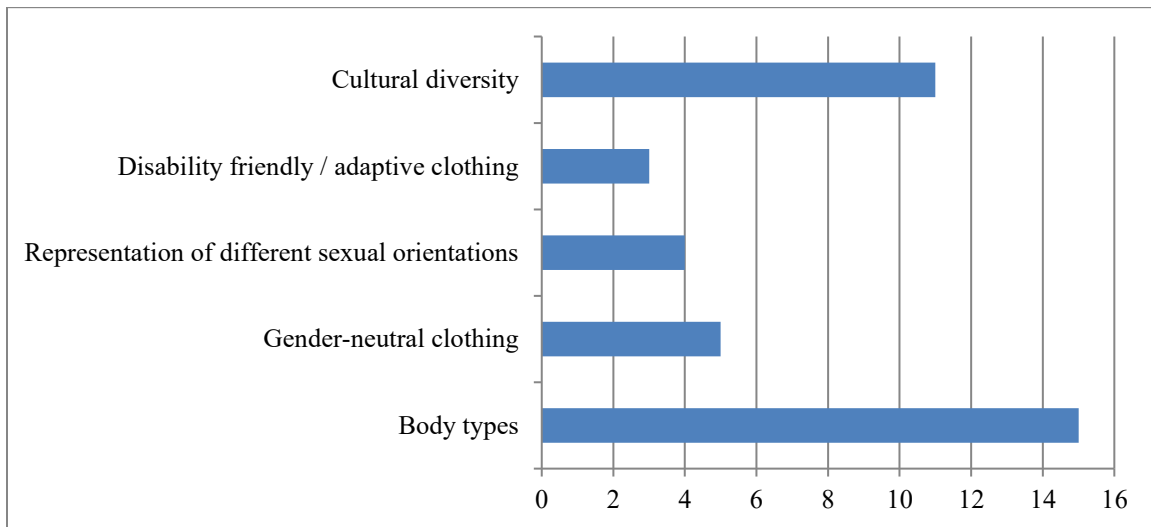


Fig. 1 Survey responses on body-type representation (a) and cultural-diversity priorities (b) among participants, referenced in the preceding paragraph

By evaluating factors of inclusivity, such as storytelling through taglines and advertisements, and social media exploration, six different brands depicted varying methods of depicting inclusivity. Out of the six brands, three major brands were evaluated. These brands were selected based on increasing demand, popularity, and necessity in the fashion industry. Nishorama is a youth-emerging brand that majorly focuses on constructs of creative identity and inclusivity within the cultural aspect. The first brand, Nishorama utilizes community-driven methods, which focus on relatability

towards their target audience to make their clothes more appealing to the youth. Nishorama sells clothing that involves Indian cultural integration, and it adapts towards the needs of the current generation, while also respecting historical norms and cultures. [13] Nishorama was founded by a young entrepreneur, Ria Mehta, whose current fashion designs and work have been exceptionally noticed by many individuals as part of the youth. By focusing on a modern and cultural fusion, she fulfils the needs of the youth generation alpha individuals. In addition, Nishorama follows

many business tactics that would show authenticity and realism towards their clothing. By opting towards behind-the-scenes videos on various social media platforms, users tend to prefer their clothes because of the casualness maintained by personal storytelling. [14] Through phrases that explicitly connect the users to the brand, it increases bonds and reflects customer-centric relationships. The price that is maintained by Nishorama remains between ₹1000 and ₹ 3000. Many questions were asked of individuals part of Generation Z to understand their perspectives about Nishorama.

On the other hand, Souled store reviews ideas of brand value and creative identity, to emphasize on fandom-based clothing, for customers to connect with their preferences, developing a stable and growing relationship with the brand. This, therefore, increases brand loyalty. The second brand, the Souled Store, incorporates different ideas of storytelling by focusing on a specific target audience who have a profound interest in fandom-based and fictional humour. [15]

Connecting with a child-friendly age group, the brand reveals pop culture and fandom storytelling around TV shows, anime, gaming, and superheroes. Instead of just selling a t-shirt, they focus on finding a way for customers to express their interests and belongingness in the fandom community. The relatability and humorous tone that is displayed in their social media platforms like Twitter (X) and Instagram make the brand appeal to younger audiences, showing how it is not a corporation, but a friendly companionship instead. Messages which are often shared through social media are “Wear what you love” and “express your fandom”, showing how it aligns with self-expression and identity development of those part of the generation Z and generation alpha as well. [16] This reflects the survey findings depicting how individuals prefer brands because it helps respondents express themselves, as shown in Figure 2. The Souled Store offers affordable options for teenagers to purchase their clothes. Between ₹500 and ₹ 2000, individuals are able to buy clothes.

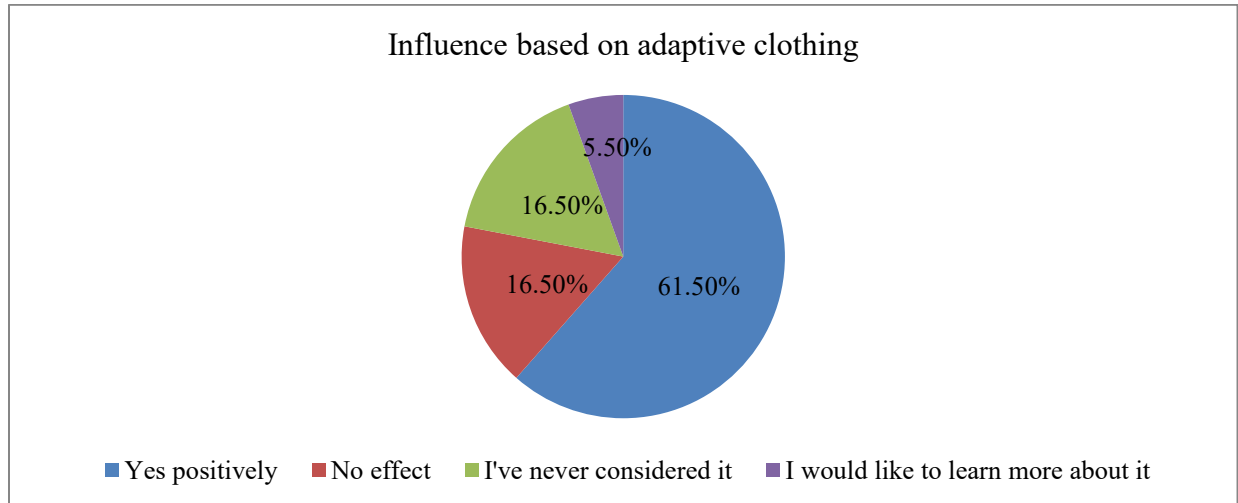


Fig. 2 Survey responses on brand engagement and self-expression, referenced in the preceding discussion of the Souled Store

Adaptive clothing is an overlooked area where individuals who are differently abled are not able to express themselves via clothing due to the lack of availability. IZ Adaptive is one of the few brands that contribute to individuals as part of this target group. [17] Unlike many mainstream fashion brands, IZ Adaptive, a foreign brand, significantly portrays inclusivity by emphasizing on diversity in the fashion industry. This brand was created to highlight the challenges faced by those in this field, which include the lack of wheelchair-friendly designs and clothes with low functionality for people as part of this target group. Respondents in a survey propound the importance of adaptive clothing. 61.1% of individuals believe that adaptive clothes influence their opinion of a brand. Respondents from Generation Z highlight how the generational gap increases inclusive development to adapt to people with different needs and requirements. IZ Adaptive also accommodates these

challenges by focusing on adaptive closure and wheelchair-friendly designs, showing its commitment towards inclusion beyond just marketing and representation. [17] In the current mindset, many brands today represent inclusivity as a means of marketing and business profits. 50% of the respondents believe that most brands today are mostly performative for marketing purposes, rather than truly including inclusivity in their products and clothes, as shown in Figure 3. IZ Adaptive is one of the few digital brands that include technological ideas to show the functionality of their clothes. For example, their features include real-life digital demos and practical try-on videos. This aids individuals to accommodate their abilities and find clothes that are suitable for their requirements. Through dignity-focused storytelling, IZ Adaptive presents fashion as something that should be available to everyone regardless of physical ability.

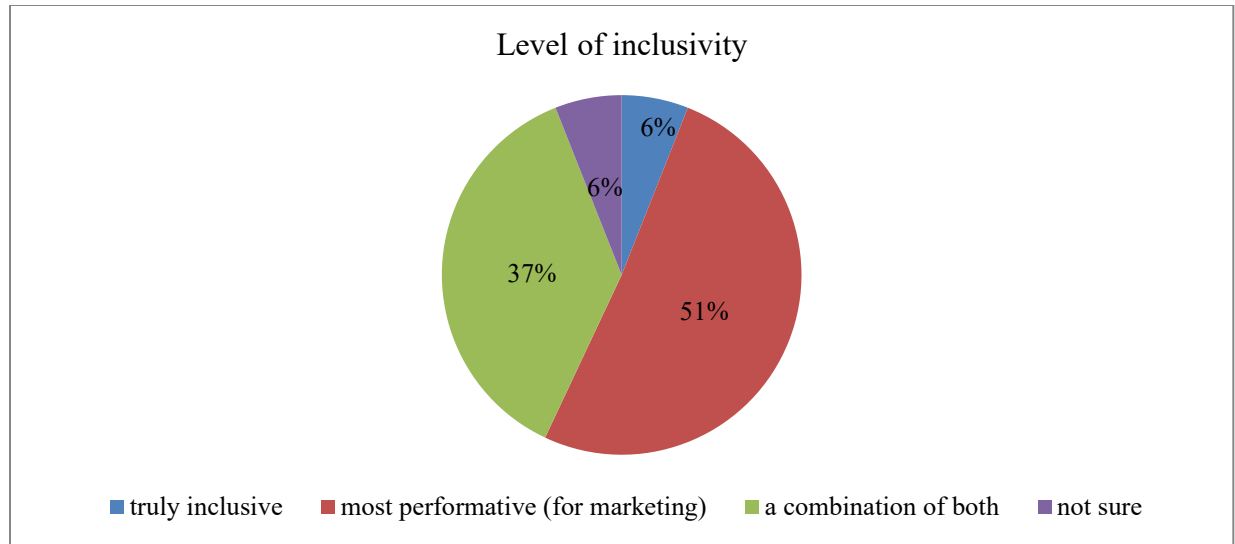


Fig. 3 Survey responses on adaptive clothing and performative inclusivity, referenced in the preceding discussion of IZ Adaptive

Table 1. Comparative analysis of the brands and their core objectives reflected in the marketing

Brand	Storytelling Style	Platforms	Tone	Content Type	Price Range (₹)	Taglines	Target Audience
Nishorama	Casual, personal storytelling	Instagram, YouTube	Community-driven, focusing on relatability	Behind-the-scenes videos and business tactics used	1000–3000	“Tell us what you want next” “You asked, we made it”	Gen Z girls, modern and traditional fusion
The Souled Store	Fandom-based, fictional storytelling	Instagram, Twitter (X)	Inclusive, child-friendly and humorous	Pop culture references and memes	500–2000	“Official merch drop”; “For the fans”	Mass Gen Z and fictional/fandom lovers
Bershka	Minimal and aesthetic, it follows the Gen Z trend	Instagram, TikTok	Visual-first, and bold	High-fashion campaigns throughout many countries	1700–5000	“This season’s must-have”; “New drop”	Global Gen Z, Pinterest-trend driven
Urban Monkey	Streetwear and identity-based (e.g., waist chains, baggy clothes)	Instagram, YouTube	Rebellious and expressive	Music and cultural collaborations	1000–4000	“No rules, just style” “Stay real”	Streetwear youth, carefree and self-expressive
Snitch	Clean and modern	Instagram, website	Aspirational	Influencer styling videos	800–3000	“Sharp fits only”; “Effortless drip”	Young men, affordable
IZ Adaptive	Functional and empowering	Instagram, Facebook	Inclusivity, dignity-focused clothing	Real-life demos and practical try-on videos	3000–8000	“Fashion for all abilities”; “Style meets comfort”	People with mobility issues

The above table discusses the various brands available. To examine how fashion inclusivity is reflected and portrayed across contemporary Gen Alpha fashion, a comparative and unbiased analysis was conducted. This analysis consists of the target audience, price ranges,

product offerings, social media presence, and their taglines. Brands with social media storytelling consisted of trending and more popular phrases in the current generation. This increases the reliability of information between the producer and the consumers. In addition, these factors were extremely

vital for the study since they indicate the generational development of all these brands, and to what extent each brand incorporates inclusive values within its work of art. The findings presented in Table 1 form the basis for the succeeding analysis of similarities, contrasting points, and future patterns that may emerge.

5. Conclusion

Based on the thorough analysis of both the primary and secondary resources, this research indicates a set of limitations that occurred during the process of the investigation. Limitations were identified, and the research contained methods to adapt to the limitations pinpointed. Firstly, small sample sizes were included, which resulted in a limited representation of the target group and their requirements. This made it even more difficult to generalise the outcomes of the multiple research methods considered. In addition, the smaller sample had also affected the magnitude of the issue. The lack of inclusivity in young fashion brands around the world has only been recognised recently. The reduced sample size indicates the lower magnitude of the issue, which raises questions about the uncertainty of the data collected as well. Secondly, the responses that were an outcome of the survey conducted may have contained biased opinions.

This is because the tendency of respondents to accurately answer a question could have been significantly impacted by social norms and expectations, rather than personal satisfaction and requirements. A distinct psychological mechanism called impression management complies with one of the limitations present in this investigation. Impression management involves the subconscious process by which individuals are influenced by a lens through which others and society perceive them. Next, the fluctuation of external variables during the primary data collection is a major limitation to this research project. Variables such as socio-economic background, family influences, and cultural norms may have affected the answers obtained via the survey of this investigation. This provides unreliable results for the investigation, which can lead, in some cases, to inaccurate conclusions as well. Lastly, snowball sampling through personal networks resulted in this study containing geographical bias since respondents were only considered from Hyderabad and Pune from an urban background, of both male and female, restricting empirical and verified data. As these factors were beyond the scope of the investigation, it is harder to prove the accuracy of the largely qualitative findings displayed. Despite the research study containing multiple limitations and drawbacks, there were ways through which they did not majorly affect the quality of the investigation. Firstly, a combination of both primary and secondary research methods ensured that evidence was present for the conclusions stated for every theme explored. In addition,

this reduced the probability of depending entirely on a singular source involved.

The use of primary and secondary resources was helpful to address the research question effectively. Through first-hand data, the opinions and assumptions of the target group were understood. The survey was designed to ensure that the answers collected aligned with the research question of this investigation. In addition, the primary data enabled the identification of similar patterns and provided similarities between responses. With qualitative responses, the overall investigation provided reasoning with evidence as well. The secondary data addresses the research objectives and the questions by establishing a theoretical foundation regarding fashion brands and their output for inclusivity. By referring to reputable publications, key concepts and variables related to the research study were thoroughly investigated. In conclusion, the secondary data provided the foundation and basic understanding for the research study, whereas the primary data supported the information collected through first-hand qualitative experiences. Therefore, this research contains both empirical conclusions and conclusions grounded in existing literature. Compared to existing literature, this study contains quantitative differences in terms of the need for inclusivity, how individuals base their loyalty to brands with respect to their brand value, creativity, and inclusive acceptance.

While this research successfully encapsulates theories related to brand value and inclusivity in Gen Alpha fashion, the overall investigation does contain future scope for further examination. For example, by increasing the sample size for the surveys, a wider community could be represented with complete accuracy. In addition, by including participants across different demographic areas, various opinions could be collected, highlighting how viewpoints differ along with demographic differences. Finally, by understanding additional variables, the scope of this investigation would improve. An example of this is considering luxury brands and fast-fashion brands, and understanding the major difference. On the other hand, this study could also address areas of emerging AI models and technology and their impact on the fashion industry, while directly affecting brand perception. In the current generation, AI and technological advancements drive people's mindsets and daily activities. Through emerging developments in the fashion industry as well, a sight for developed inclusivity and gender-neutral styles could be observed. Therefore, such approaches could be taken in the near future to extend the research background of this study.

Conflicts of Interest

The author(s) declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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