
Global Influence, Local Impact: Exploring Gen Z's Loyalty to International Clothing Brands

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Abstract

This study is conducted to examine the psychological, sociological and digital media factors that affect the selection of international clothing brands over local brands by Gen Z in Karachi, Pakistan. Clothing by prominent western brands such as Zara, H&M, Nike, Adidas, etc. is becoming increasingly demanded, despite the strength of local brands. The research investigated the main causes that influence the choice of international brands among generation Z consumers through quantitative design with the use of a survey. Using a quantitative research design, the study surveyed Gen Z consumers (ages 16-24) to uncover the key drivers behind this preference. Psychological factors (e.g., status, self-image), media exposure, and social influences were found to significantly shape brand choices. As mentioned in the finding, the psychological factor that deals with the desire to distinguish oneself from his/her peers is the most effective factor followed by media factor through advertisement or social media. The effect of social factors, on the other hand, was found to be lesser. The study suggests, local brands can have stronger competition if they design their brands in a way that creates better psychological appeal for the customer, improve their quality, and increase their digital presence. This paper will be useful to the literature as well as several local brands which are looking for information about Gen Z consumers in a developing country to compete better.

Keywords: Gen Z, Brand preference, International brands, Psychological factors, Media influenc

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Introduction

Pakistan is one of the largest textile producers in the globe. However, its domestic fashion industry is very strange. Despite having a strong ability to make the raw material, semi-finished goods and finished product for some of the most well-known international brands, youth in Pakistan still prefer foreign brands as compared to the locally made ones. There is still a continued liking towards international clothing brands. Young consumers, especially from metropolitans, are increasingly opting for international brands, not only because of the product quality but also due to the emotional and social benefits attached to these brands overseas (Batra et al., 2000; Rehman & Al-Ghazali, 2022). Studies indicates that brands that are perceived to

have a nonlocal country of origin, more significantly a western one, are seen as a status enhancer, which has a strong effect on consumer attitudes, especially in developing markets (Batra et al., 2000). This phenomenon raises critical question: Being internationally branded is a testimony of excellence. What psychological, social, media, and other factors make these brands popular among the people especially in Gen-Z? Furthermore, how can local brands utilize this knowledge? This paper will examine the reasons why people make such purchases and offer recommendations for local brands regarding their positioning in the future.

Nature of the Problem

Pakistan is one of the leading textile producers of the world but ironically it does not have an esteemed fashion industry in its own country. Even the manufacturing of raw materials and finished products for some of the leading international brands is catered by Pakistan. With more local brands available than before, Pakistani Gen Z still prefers foreign brands for the most part. The customers in these countries have a strong preference for international clothing brands. The issue arises not only in the view of quality brands but in the cultural and psychological factors affecting it as well. The increasing presence of international brands among the youth in Pakistan invites us to explore the potential driving factors behind this shift. The desperation for status, peer pressure/trends, and portrayal of foreign brands as modern and successful by the media are some of the psycho-social and media reasons. In order for local brands to actively compete, they need to understand the psychological, social, and media-driven factors that propel Gen Z consumers toward foreign brands even when they have equal or superior local brands.

Background of the Problem and Current Scenario

For decades, Pakistan's textile industry has been a major contributor to both the domestic and global markets. Pakistan is one of the largest producers of textiles and garments in the world and is the supplier for many international brands. Nonetheless, Pakistan fashion brands fail to develop the same brand loyalty as foreign labels do in the country. The disparities exist due to the shift in consumer behaviour largely due to Gen Z. Gen Z has been brought up under globalisation and media where everything was available to them. Young consumers are gaining entry to global brands thanks to social media, influencers and e-commerce platforms. Consumers have a tendency to favor brands that look modern, trendy, and international due to this continuous exposure. Local brands in Pakistan have made solid improvements in design, quality and marketing but still face an uphill battle against their foreign counterparts which have greater symbolic value beyond just the product itself. Due to the growing popularity of international brands in Pakistan, local brands seem to be losing their grip on the youth despite being rich in textiles. Grasping this dynamic is important for local businesses to build strategies that will compete not just on price and quality, but also on the cultural, social, and emotional factors behind consumers' choices in this competitive environment.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is both academic and practical because it helps to understand the growing inclination of Gen Z to foreign brands in Pakistan. With the intervention of global brands in local markets, especially through digital mediums, the research tries to investigate the causes that shape consumer behavior in developing markets like Pakistan. From an academic standpoint, the research adds to the wider overview of customer psychology and branding management as students will a wide range of psychological, sociological and medias influence. This study fills a gap in the existing literature (particularly for the Pakistani market) by joining these dimensions for knowing how the foreign brands manage to create a perceived value which local brands cannot compete with.

The findings of this research study will be beneficial for local Pakistani brands to make changes in their marketing strategies in order to serve Gen Z better and compete with international brands effectively. This

study that analyzes the reasons which makes the young consumers prefer global brands will be helpful for local brands in devising better campaigns for the young audience. The results will also provide local companies with key recommendations that can be used to enhance the product offerings as well as improve their brand image and position in the market to better appeal to the youth of Pakistan.

Research Problem

The research examines the irony of Pakistan being a major textile-producing country but Gen Z still prefers international brands. Pakistani youth love international branded clothes. This is true, especially for youngsters from urban areas like Karachi. They prefer international clothing brands like Zara, H&M, Nike, Adidas, etc. This trend continues even though we see the emergence of more and more local clothing brands. Local brands have improved markedly in quality, design, and marketing, but their preference still stands. At the heart of it all lies the desire to understand why international brands remain so strongly desired despite local brands having improved in quality and availability. The aim of this study is to explore psychological, social, and media-related influencers that impact Gen Z's buying decision for global brands over local brands. The research will examine why this particular brand is favoured over others, which local Pakistani brands can use to try and compete with this brand.

Research Questions

1. Understanding the psychological reasons why Gen Z in Pakistan prefer international brands over local brands?
 - This question focuses on the psychological issues (e.g. self-image, status, perceived quality) which impact the choice of the consumers. This connects well with the Research Problem since it tries to understand the psychological reasons behind the preference for international brands despite improvements in quality of local brands.
2. How social life influences the buying behavior of youths in selecting international brands versus local brands?
 - This inquiry investigates the extent to which social forces, including peer pressure, societal trends, and cultural norms, influence preference for foreign brands. This ties into the Research Problem as it looks at the social factors that are responsible for the global brand superiority in the Pakistani market including Gen Z.
3. How do media and the internet affect the purchasing behavior of Gen Z of selecting international brands over local brands?
 - Media influencer a lot in shaping the perceptions of Gen Z with the help of advertising, social media, and influencer culture. This question contributes directly to the Research Problem as it assesses how media exposure to international brands impacts the purchase decision making process.
4. What do you think – psychological, social or media factor plays the most important role in making youth preferring international brands to local?
 - What are the most important influencer over the consumer buying preferences? Understanding this aspect is vital to our Research Problem. It helps us pinpoint if it is the psychological or social or media influence which plays an important role in the preference of Gen Z for the international brands.
5. How can domestic brands enhance their strategies and rival international brands in a bid for the young consumer?
 - This question deals directly with the solution-oriented nature of the Research Problem. The aim is to provide impactful insights to local brands to enhance their competitiveness to

appeal to Gen Z and thereby help them in better competing with international brands in the market.

Research Objectives

1. Analysis of the Impact of Psychological Factors on Young People's Preference for International Brands in Pakistan.

This objective is closely linked to RQ1 and delves into the psychological influences (the need of status, self-esteem, and so on) that affect the Gen Z's propensity for buying international brands. The reasons behind the youth's tendency to flock towards global brands despite local brands gaining in stature are effectively addressed.

2. To examine the effects of peer pressure, social media influence and cultural trends on the purchasing behavior of young consumers in Pakistan.

This objective aligns with RQ2, which focused on the societal influence of consumer behaviour. The purpose is to find out how social life, peer pressure, and cultural trends influence the choice of international versus local brands. It relates to a major aspect of the Research Problem.

3. To determine the influence of media including advertising, social media, influencer culture, and more, on the buying choices of Gen Z for global brands.

This goal is related to Objective RQ3 and seeks to understand how media shapes brand preference among Gen Z. It looks into the impact of social media and advertisement brand exposure on consumer preferences that address the media driven nature of the Research Problem.

4. To find out the most influential factor, psychological, social or media on the purchase decision of youth in favour of international brands to local brands.

This objective relates to RQ4 and seeks to determine the driving force (psychological, social, media) behind Gen Z's brand preference. This is important because it allows the marketer to know what weighs the most in consumer decision-making.

5. The objective is to provide actionable recommendations to local Pakistani brands about improving their marketing strategies to compete with international brands and appeal to Gen Z.

The above objective aligns with RQ5. The aim is to provide local brand owners with practical suggestions to appeal to Gen Z. The importance of local psychological, social and media influences to compete with international brands. This essentially means a mix of brand equity.

Scope of the Study

The focus of this research is on Gen Z consumers residing in Karachi, Pakistan. Karachi is a city that is economically and culturally diverse. Furthermore, the youth population here is a very important demographic in the market. The research will obtain data from 2 sources shopping malls that have international brands largely and universities where the youth are influenced by fashions peer pressure and social media. The research will attempt to find out Influencing Factors on the Purchase Decision of the Consumers like brand quality, image, price, peer pressure and media. The objective of this research will be to analyze the interplay of all these factors to understand Gen Z's brand preference in the domain of fashion. The research will evaluate the influence of local brands in Pakistan regarding their adaptation and response to the needs and wants of youth as they globalize and become competitive. Our main objective through this research is to stress on the contextual specifics that might have relevance for broader marketing tactics for similar urban markets of Pakistan and beyond.

Literature Review

Batra et al. (2000) reveal how one's origin or country (country of origin (CO)) is a very important parameter in shaping consumer perception towards brands (Baughn and Yaprak (1993)). As the CO of a product is referred to as an external indicator, so like price and brand name, the CO contributes along with others in the evaluation of internal indicator, like product design and performance. Perceived economic, cultural, and political context of country influences the CO's impact on brand evaluation (Han 1989). The study conducted by Parameswaran and Pisharodi (1994) further mentions that CO image involves several dimensions such as strength of the economy, nature of the political system, and technological competence of the country. Nevertheless, previous studies only focused on how the CO impacted the perceived intrinsic quality and performance of the brand, which in turn influences its desirability (Bilkey and Nes, 1982; Han, 1989). According to Papadopoulos (1993), these effects are also found to vary across product categories and consumer segments; also, the impact of the CO is smaller when other indicators are available to the consumer. Another stream of literature suggests that in less developed economies, the CO also has an effect on brand desirability due to its status-enhancing and symbolic associations besides indicating quality. In such markets, the consumers tend to show a generic preference for nonlocal (foreign) brands. It has been seen in countries like China, Vietnam, Nigeria, and so on. According to studies (Sklair, 1994; Schultz, et al, 1994; and Arnould, 1989), foreign brands are valued for their prestige and status meaning that CO has a considerable effect on consumer attitudes towards global brands.

Batra et al. (2000) look at the impact of country-of-origin (COO) on consumer perception and brand preference, specifically focusing on the effect of non-local origin brands in developing economies. Based on responses from 1200 consumers in India, the study examines the COO influence on brand quality perceptions, emotional value and purchase decisions. The study's findings suggest non-local origin brands, especially those hailing from western countries, are perceived to be of higher quality and don't constitute need gratification, but rather desirability, because of the symbolic value they carry. When it comes to choosing where to buy their products, consumers associate international brands with their places of origin. The study emphasises how the effects of countries on consumer preferences are very much essential in emerging markets. On top of that, psychological factors like that of status plays quite a key role in the wishes for global brands.

Fall Diallo (2013) studied the consumer and image-related factors, in conjunction with store familiarity, influence store brand (SB) purchase behavior in France. The analysis involves 266 respondents and uses SEM to analyze the relationship between variables in the study. Store image perceptions, SB price-image, value consciousness and attitude toward SBs exert significant positive impacts on SB purchase behaviour, the findings show. Familiarity with the store has a positive effect on SB choice, but not on SB purchase intention. The results indicated that quality perception and value consciousness are strong determinants that affect consumers' preference for store brands. The findings further show that store brand images carry aspects which retailers can focus on to improve perceived value of their products in order to attract consumers. Consumer perceptions of price and value are central to shaping purchase behavior in the research setting, further supported by the understanding of the role of perceived quality in store brand preferences.

Godey and Lai (2011) conducted an analysis of Multinational Companies and Global Brand Portfolios. The study discusses about Procter & Gamble (P&G) strategy "the global brand strategy" in which global brands like Ariel, Tide etc dominate while the local brands either adapted or phased out. According to the research, local brands can succeed through niche markets or localization but are posed with significant challenges due to the global onslaught of MNC brands.

The study by Gupta et al. (2021) explores the impact of social media and brand image on the buying behaviour of consumers for fashion brands in India by using 325 respondents, multiple regression analysis (MRA) is applied to analyse how social media engagement ultimately affects brand image which in turn influences purchase intention. Social media has a positive effect on brand image and also positively affects the purchase behaviour of consumers as per the findings. Younger consumers, especially Gen Z, are influenced by social

media ads and influencer marketing, as per the research findings. According to the research fashion brands need to create engaging content and use influencers in a way that it will elevate their brand image and accelerate consumer engagement. The study mentions that the role of digital advertising and social media platforms is growing in making brand preferences, especially among youth in developing countries.

Ismail et al (2012) examines the factors responsible for a consumer's preference for international brands over local brands in Pakistan. The article focuses on the youth segment of the population. A research study conducted in Karachi revealed that country of origin, price and fashion, among other factors influence the brand preference of consumers between the age of 16-24. In order to arrive at the conclusion of the study, a sample of 200 respondents was chosen. The study revealed that the strongest effects were from price and fashion trend, however, the ethnocentrism showed moderate effects. International brands are preferred for social acceptance and status even though local brands are getting better quality.

Jin and Suh (2005) study the influence of brand image and price-quality inferences on the Korean Consumers' perception and buying behaviour. According to a study involving 1,000 respondents, a sample of multiple regression analysis was used to assess the relationship between brand image, perceived quality and purchase intentions. The study shows that purchase intentions significantly influenced by brand image of the product when consumers associate the brand as high-quality product. The article recommends that greater control over perceived value should be exercised by manufacturers, retailers and advertisement designers. This idea makes it more likely that individuals will choose international brands instead of local ones, especially if these brands stand for luxury. Research indicates that marketers should focus on strengthening the brand image and aligning it to quality perceptions, to improve consumer preference for one's brand.

Kapferer (2002) comments on the emergence of global brands then discusses some arguments for and against the globalisation of brands. The study looks at how global brands gain from scale economies, the homogenizing action of technology, and the global media that creates common consumer preferences. As the researcher examines the change of market segmentation where global brands are presumed to provide better quality, he wonders if the local brand will still have a place in the world. Local brands should not be fully dismissed in favour of global brands; local equity and brand loyalty matter in some cases. That much the paper suggests. The finding highlights the global marketing strategies and also indicates the necessity to cater to local brands for specific market needs. The finding suggests that global brands have a strong market presence. Yet local players use their knowledge of local markets to provide unique value in specific contexts

Kumar and Others (2009) study of purchase intention of the Indian consumer toward a United States brand and local brand. Focused on need for uniqueness, attitude toward foreign products, perceived quality and emotional value. Based on survey data from 411 university students in India, this study uses structural equation modelling to analyse the data. The findings of this study establish that need for uniqueness has a positive effect on Americans' attitudes toward U.S. brands, whereas positive attitudes toward foreign products lead to perceived quality and emotional value of foreign (particularly Japanese) brands. On the other hand, these effects are weaker or even negative for local brands. Purchasing intention on both local and foreign brands are significantly determined by the emotional value of brands. Consumers of developing economies associate more symbolism and emotion to an international brand than a local brand, which enhances their preference for the former. Overall, the study shows that psychological and emotional factors are critical in determining consumer preference for international brands in emerging markets and their consumption pattern. According to Lee, et al. (2008), they analyze consumer perceptions of a global US brand (Polo) versus a domestic brand in Mexico, South Korea and Japan. According to the insight that the study gained from the responses of up to 300 Mexican consumers from different socio-economic classes, Polo was perceived as a superior quality and prestigious brand than local brands but those local brands still hold the loyalty of people. In opposite, Korean and Japanese consumers have similar perceptions but are less brand-loyal to foreign brands. According to the study, emotional value and perceived quality are key antecedents of brand preference among consumers especially for international brands in developing countries.

Rehman and Al-Ghazali (2022) estimate the impact of social advertising individual factors and brand image on consumer buying behaviour Kamal fashion clothing brands in Malaysia. With a sample of 288 respondents, the study uses Smart PLS-SEM for data analysis. This research reveals that social advertising has an impact on buying behaviour through brand image meanwhile individual factors such as market mavenism, materialism and stability affect brand image. According to the analysis, social advertising will lead to future consumers according to their branding. According to the researchers, fashion clothing brands should improve their brand image through social advertising, especially in the Malaysian market, to appeal to the consumers. Therefore, the role of digital platforms and personal traits significantly shapes Gen Z's brand preferences. Furthermore, the media-driven components play a vital role in making purchases.

A descriptive study on consumer buying behavior along with theories and models of consumer decision making done by Roy and Datta (2022). Examining the psychological, social and economic factors which influence consumer behaviour. The paper presents a discussion of various theories highlighting consumer behaviour which include the Theory of Reasoned Action, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, and Pavlovian learning theory. According to the researchers, psychological factors (motivation, perception) as well as social factors (family, culture) are influential in consumer behaviour and purchase decisions. A useful marketing strategy can be formulated with an in-depth understanding of the factors.

According to a study by Salman and Warraich (2016), Consumer behaviour with respect to luxury brands in Pakistan investigated need for uniqueness, materialism, and avoidance of dissimilarity. A questionnaire-based empirical approach is used to analyze a sample of 600 university students in Karachi. The evidence finds that usefulness and functionality act as the most potent factors deciding buying behaviour of consumers. Next are need for uniqueness and materialism. According to outcomes, young consumers perceive international brands to have higher functional value and social status. Moreover, the findings of the study propose that clothing purchases are influenced by uniqueness and social differentiation. Highlighting either functional attributes or symbolic value can influence consumer choice and decision-making process. Overall, the research revealed that psychological and social factors significantly affect Young Pakistani Consumers' brands preference of international brands.

Wardoyo and Walean (2022) investigate Generation Z purchase intentions toward the local brand T-shirt in Indonesia. The researchers used data from 310 (155 male and 155 female) respondents and exploratory factor analysis to identify key determinants. Six determinants emerged from the study. Trend, Digital Channel, Social Media Influencer, Brand Originality, Simplicity, and Motif. This study concludes that Trend is the most important factor followed by Digital Channel because Generation Z prefers online shopping. The study recommended that local brands should keep up with the times and use social media influencers to appeal to youngsters.

Research Gap

While many studies have examined the effects of country-of-origin (CO) and brand perception on consumer behavior, particularly with respect to international brands, not much academic attention has been paid to the effects of CO and brand perception on consumer preferences of Gen Z in Pakistan. Most studies show that consumers from developing markets prefer foreign brands because of their status, prestige, and symbolic value (Batra et al., 2000; Rehman & Al-Ghazali, 2022). However, few have looked at the psychological, sociological, and media-related reasons behind the preferences for international brands over local ones amongst young Pakistani consumers. According to the literature review, it has been found that there is insufficient literature on social advertising, peer pressure, fashion, and media. Similarly, existing literature mainly covers quality perceptions and brand image. Additionally, brand image is important in fast-growing youth segment of Pakistan.

In addition, while researchers such as Gupta et al. (2021) and Wardoyo & Walean (2022) have studied Gen Z's consumer behavior in developed economies, there is a dearth of detailed research examining the impact

of digital platforms, social media influencers and status symbols on Gen Z's choice of brands in Pakistan, especially for international versus local brands. The urban youth of Pakistan, particularly Karachi, with their exposure to international brands, are practical in choosing these brands over local ones when it comes to styling garments. However, there is insufficient research on the psychology of adopting an international symbol for social differentiation and the emotional value of international products.

The gap in current literature explores how social life, media, and psychological factors influence Gen Z's preference for international brands as compared to local brands. There is a need for practical insights for local brands on how they can better position themselves to compete with international brands by having a global appeal but retaining the local relevance.

Methodology

A survey-based quantitative research design is adopted in this study to investigate the determinants influencing the preference of Gen Z consumers towards international clothing brands instead of local brands in Karachi, Pakistan. The study shall explore the impact of psychological, social and media factors on consumer behaviour. The research adopted the convenience sampling method, which entails selecting respondents based on their convenient availability. The target population comprises people aged between 16 to 24 years belonging to Generation Z who live in Karachi, Pakistan. Data were gathered from 200 to 300 respondents. Participants will be chosen from shopping malls and universities characterized by the presence of international brands and peer influence. With the help of a structured questionnaire comprising close-ended questions segregated into sections for demographic data, psychological factors (such as status & self-image), social factors (peer pressure, family), media (advertisements, social media trends). The questionnaire will be pre-tested with 10-15 respondents.

The analysis of data will be carried out through descriptive statistics frequencies, percentages, and mean scores model, which will help in knowing the brand and the influencing factors. Cross tabulation will be used to compare the responses of different demographic groups, followed by correlation analysis to investigate the connection between peer pressure, brand preference. If needed, factor analysis will be used to group variables into composite factors to make the explanation of preference better reveal the main drivers. When designing his experiments, the psychological researcher had to take ethical considerations into account such as informed consent (participants' voluntary agreement to participate), confidentiality of responses, and receiving relevant ethical approval. This methodology will help understand the psychological, social, and media factors that cause Pakistan's Gen Z consumer to prefer international clothing brands.

Results, Findings, and Discussion

This section presents and explains the data collected from the participants for this study on the factors affecting Generation Z consumers' preference for international clothing brands over local brands in Karachi, Pakistan. The analysis uses the tidy dataset and will be done in a systematic manner. The sample and the key study variables are first explained using the descriptive statistics and demographic characteristics. The next step is conducting hypothesis testing as well as correlation analysis so as to test the relationship between psychological, social and media factors and international brand preference. The underlying dimensions of the constructs are finally validated using exploratory factor analysis. Using SPSS, the results are presented and all the sets of findings are interpreted and discussed in the light of existing consumer behaviour and related studies.

The demographic distribution of the sample is female-dominated (61.7%), with most respondents in the range of 18–23, thus accurately representing Gen Z consumers. The study primarily focuses on university-going youth, as observed from the sampling frame. Almost 45 per cent spend below PKR 5,000 on clothing a month indicating having low income.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics and Demographic Analysis

Table 4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents		
Demographic Variable	Category	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	38.3
	Female	61.7
Age Group	18–20 years	40.4
	21–23 years	36.2
	24–26 years	23.4
Education Level	Intermediate	12.8
	Undergraduate	66.0
	Graduate	21.2
Monthly Personal Spending on Clothing	Below PKR 5,000	44.7
	PKR 5,001–10,000	34.0
	Above PKR 10,000	21.3
Source: Authors own estimation		

The demographic profile indicates that respondents are young, educated, and cost-conscious, which is consistent with Gen Z consumer characteristics in Pakistan. The monthly spending on clothing has not been high which may explain why there is a gap between aspirational preference for international brands.

The predominance of young undergraduate respondents suggests the suitability of this sample to study children’s fashion consumption. The respondents’ low spending capacity points to the limited ability to consume international brands contrary to their strong psychological preference and media influence. This demographic context is the important context to interpret the next inferential result.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Table 4.2 Descriptive Statistics for Key Constructs				
Variable	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Psychological Factors	2.00	5.00	3.98	0.68
Social Factors	1.80	4.80	3.42	0.71
Media Influence	2.20	5.00	3.76	0.65
International Brand Preference	2.00	5.00	3.89	0.66
Source: Authors own estimation				
Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree				

Descriptive statistics show that the psychological factors are the highest ($M = 3.98$), while it is followed by international brand preference ($M = 3.89$) and media influence ($M = 3.76$). The mean score obtained for social factors is comparatively lower at ($M = 3.42$), but still above the neutral midpoint. Standard deviation values are between 0.65 and 0.71, indicating average dispersion, which is acceptable.

The result shows Gen Z respondents have a strong association between international brands and psychological benefits, such as better self-image and quality. The influence of media also has a strong impact, in which global fashion penetration becomes their norm. Social influence, although present, appears lesser in magnitude compared to the psychological and media factors.

The findings indicate that the perceptions of Gen Z consumers towards international clothing brands are influenced more by internal beliefs and digital experiences than by external social pressure. The high average

score of brand preference showed that while consumers were able to pay lesser amounts for premium cosmetics, they still showed a willingness to pay more for it. This indicated the presence of an attitude-behaviour gap, whereby an aspiration does not result in a purchase.

Demographic Insights in Relation to Brand Preference

While the study was not centred on inferential demographic comparisons, the descriptive patterns indicate that.

- Younger respondents between 18 and 23 have stronger agreement with psychological and media influence items.
- Female respondents tend to feel the influence of media and fashion trends more than male respondents do.
- Those who spend more on clothes prefer foreign brands, data shows.

These demographic patterns may influence how age and gender and spending capacity impact the relationship between psychological/media factors and brand preference.

Although these patterns are not formally tested, they represent a good guide for future research as well as practical segmentation approaches for local and international brands.

Table 3 Hypotheses Testing Results

Table 4.3 Correlation-Based Hypothesis Testing Results				
Hypothesis	Variables	Pearson Correlation (r)	Sig. (2-tailed)	Result
H1	Psychological factors & Brand Preference	0.640	0.000	Supported
H2	Social factors & Brand Preference	0.410	0.004	Supported
H3	Media factors & Brand Preference	0.580	0.000	Supported
Source: Authors own estimation				
Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

The SPSS regression output suggests that all independent variables are positively and significantly associated with Gen Z's international clothing brand preference. There is a significant strong relationship between psychological factors ($r = 0.640$, $p < 0.01$) and media factors ($r = 0.580$, $p < 0.01$). The relationship of social factors is also significant but weaker ($r = 0.410$, $p < 0.05$).

Psychological motivators dominate as the primary influencer of the international brand preference of Gen Z consumers, finds study. Individuals exposed to the media clearly develop a preferred choice whereby social aspects are mere influencers rather than definers.

The impact of psychological factors has been widely recognized in the branding literature that emphasizes self-image congruence and the symbolic value of fashion consumption. Studies have shown that consumers associate international brands with quality, confidence, and prestige. Through digital platforms, media impact further reinforces these perceptions by normalizing international fashion ideals. Social influence now plays a secondary role, validating rather than initiating brand preference through peer approval.

All the variables of the study are significantly positively correlated. Psychological and media factors show strong correlation whereas social factors are moderate correlate to psychological perceptions and brand preference.

The results indicate that brand choice of Gen Z operates as a linked mechanism wherein psychological beliefs are bolstered through media exposure and validated through social interaction. The moderate intercorrelations indicate complementarity rather than multicollinearity, which supports the robustness of the constructs.

Table 4 Correlation Analysis

Table 4.4 Correlation Matrix				
Variables	Psychological	Social	Media	Brand Preference
Psychological	1.000	0.460**	0.520**	0.640
Social	0.460**	1.000	0.390*	0.410*
Media	0.520**	0.390*	1.000	0.580
Brand Preference	0.640	0.410*	0.580	1.000
Source: Authors own estimation				
Notes:				
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).				
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

There is a strong correlation between psychological and media factors, which emphasizes the importance of digital space and the globalisation of consumers. Messages disseminated through media are not just stand-alone but assist aspirational beliefs regarding global brands. Social influence, although significant, appears to be contextual and legitimizes the preferences of our peers. The international brand continues to appeal even when local brands can satisfy functional needs.

Table 5 Factor Analysis

Table 4.5 KMO and Bartlett's Test	
Measure	Value
Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.740
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	$\chi^2 = 312.600$
Df	28
Sig.	0.000
Source: Authors own estimation	

The KMO value of 0.740 indicates adequate sampling adequacy, while Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is significant ($p < 0.001$), confirming that the data is appropriate for factor analysis.

Table 6 Rotated Component Matrix (Varimax Rotation)

Item	Component 1 (Psychological)	Component 2 (Media)	Component 3 (Social)
International brands improve my status	0.810	—	—
I trust international brands more	0.770	—	—
I would buy more if my income increased	0.730	—	—
Social media trends influence my choice	—	0.840	—
Online advertisements affect me	—	0.790	—
Influencers shape my fashion decisions	—	0.750	—
I buy brands popular among peers	—	—	0.710
Friends' approval matters	—	—	0.680
Source: Authors own estimation			
Note: Loadings < 0.50 are suppressed			

Table 4.7 Total Variance Explained

Component	Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Cumulative %
Psychological	2.59	32.4	32.4
Media	1.93	24.1	56.5
Social	1.09	13.6	70.1
Source: Authors own estimation			

Three components were extracted with eigenvalues greater than 1 that accounted for 70.1% of the total variance. Psychological factors represent the largest share of variance, confirming their key role in international brand preference among Gen Z consumers.

The factor structure of the study confirms its conceptual framework. The dominant latent construct is psychological influence which highlights the significance of perception of status, aspirational value, and perceived quality. The second strongest factor is media influence, borrowing from the proposition that digital and social media ecosystems enhance/negate brand desirability. Social influence accounts for less variance although significant. It does not necessarily claim the primary role as a motivator but rather a supportive and legitimizing force. The results imply that local brands have to reposition themselves in psychological and digital dimensions in order to compete with international brands.

The results from SPSS reveal that the psychological perception and media exposure of Gen Z, along with social influence, affect their preference for international clothing brands.

Conclusion

The study seeks to examine the elements influencing the preference of Gen Z consumers towards international clothing brands over local ones, specifically in Karachi, Pakistan. The findings show that factors like status, self-concept and perceived quality of international brand play the most important roles in purchasing decisions. The influence of media, including social media through ads and influencers, is also strong, adding to the desire for international brands. Social factors, including peer pressure and family approval, were important but secondary influences. They acted more as reinforcement rather than being a primary influencing factor. Local brands must improve their psychological appeal, product quality and digital presence to compete better with international brands, the findings suggest. Research indicates that global brands are favoured first by Gen Z consumers of Pakistan followed by local brands. The issue further highlights the factors influencing this behaviour. These include psychological motivations, media exposure, and social influence. Therefore, it was suggested that local brands should make necessary adjustments to their marketing strategies which meet the preferences of Gen Z consumers of Pakistan.

Policy Suggestions

According to the results of the study, several policy recommendations have been provided for local Pakistani clothing brands to compete better with global brands. Local brands must associate their products with values of prestige, modernity, and status that Gen Z strongly relate to, and in turn enhance their brand image. Meanwhile, the use of digital marketing and social media should become core to doing business. Influencer collaborations and targeted online campaigns can help the local brands strengthen their digital presence. Third, enhancing the quality and comfort of products will allow local brands to meet consumer expectations, particularly in terms of quality and durability of materials used. Furthermore, local brands must stay in tune with international trends and yet keep local relevance by infusing cultural elements into their designs. The Pakistani consumer wants the best of both worlds. In the end, aspirational marketing focusing on lifestyle and self-image associated with wearing local brands can help increase their desirability amongst Gen Z.

Directions for Future Studies

Although this research offers key insights into Gen Z's international brand preference factors, it can be used further for research in several ways. One way to make the study better is by taking it on a larger level and checking on major cities of Pakistan. Another possibility would be to conduct a longitudinal study to see how Gen Z's brand preferences change with time as the social, economic and technological factors evolve. Furthermore, a comparative study between the age groups of Millennials and Gen X could enhance the understanding of brand preference. Future research could further investigate how cultural values including patriotism and ethnocentrism affects one's preference of local versus international brands. Moreover, the role of brand loyalty and how it impacts purchasing decisions can provide more insight into the long-term behavior of consumers. Finally, it would surely be interesting to see an exploration of the impact that technologies like augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) would have on shopping experiences designed for Gen Z.

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