

Gen Z and "ugly" fashion: new aesthetic codes or snobbery?

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Abstract

The "ugly" trend is increasingly popular on social networks. Fashion-forward GenZers are flaunting clothes that they themselves define as "ugly". While this anti-aesthetic movement may be seen as a new trend to follow, it could also appear as a stance against standard beauty canons. After verifying in a quantitative study that Margiela's Tabis shoes and Crocs were two relevant examples of the ugly trend, we conducted in-depth interviews with 24 GenZers fashion trend-setters owning (or not) one, the other or both pairs of shoes, to understand their attraction for "ugly" fashion. Results suggest that whilst they claim to introduce new styles, "ugly" fashion is a way to signal fashion expertise. Adopting "ugliness" is a complex interplay between expressing identity in contradiction with the traditional standards of aesthetics and conforming to the fashion injunctions disseminated on social networks.

Subject Areas: *Attitude, Consumer Behaviour, Decision-Making, Product Management*

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