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A Comparative Study of Crop Top versus Blouse Preference among Generation Z: A Survey-Based Review

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Abstract: ***The fashion consumption patterns of Generation Z reflect a decisive shift toward self-expression, comfort, and digitally mediated trends. This study presents a comparative analysis of crop tops and blouses, combining a structured survey with a critical review of existing literature. While blouses continue to retain cultural and formal significance, crop tops have emerged as a dominant preference among Gen Z consumers. The findings suggest that this preference is shaped by the convergence of social media influence, evolving body image perceptions, and the increasing prioritization of versatility in apparel. The paper argues that the popularity of crop tops is not merely a trend-driven phenomenon but an indicator of broader socio-cultural transformations in youth identity and fashion consumption.***
Keywords: Generation Z, fashion preference, crop tops, blouses, consumer behaviour, social media influence.

I. INTRODUCTION

Fashion, as both a cultural and economic system, continuously adapts to generational shifts in values and identity. Among contemporary consumer groups, Generation Z has emerged as a particularly influential cohort, characterized by high digital literacy, rapid trend adoption, and a strong emphasis on individuality. Unlike earlier generations, Gen Z navigates fashion within an ecosystem shaped by real-time digital interaction, where exposure to global styles is immediate and continuous [1]. Within this context, traditional garments such as blouses—historically associated with modesty, cultural continuity, and formal dressing—are being re-evaluated.

At the same time, garments like crop tops have gained prominence as symbols of modernity, autonomy, and aesthetic experimentation. This transition is not merely stylistic; it reflects deeper changes in how young consumers construct identity through clothing [2].

The present study seeks to examine this shift by comparing the preference for crop tops and blouses among Gen Z. By integrating survey findings with existing scholarly work, the paper aims to provide a nuanced understanding of how and why these preferences are evolving.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1) To analyse the visual evolution from structured blouses to cropped silhouettes.
2) To compare the styling flexibility of crop tops versus the singular purpose of a traditional blouse.
3) To evaluate Gen Z's shift toward comfort-centric clothing through a comparative lens.
4) To identify the impact of social media and lifestyle changes on garment preference.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a mixed analytical approach combining primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire administered to respondents aged 18–25, representing the Gen Z demographic. The survey included questions related to garment preference, perceived comfort, styling flexibility, and the influence of external factors such as social media. Secondary data was derived from fifteen peer-reviewed articles, industry reports, and academic publications focusing on fashion behaviour, youth culture, and consumer psychology. A thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring patterns and align them with survey findings.

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IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Gen Z Fashion Behaviour: The Shift Toward Performative Identity

Gen Z consumers (born 1997–2012) are defined by a departure from the "mass-market" conformity of previous generations. Their fashion behaviour is dictated by a "digital-first" mindset where garments are evaluated based on their "grid-worthiness" or social media compatibility [1]. Research by Twenge indicates that this demographic uses clothing as a primary tool for identity construction in virtual spaces [5]. Unlike Millennials, who prioritized brand names, Gen Z seeks "vibe-based" styling that allows for high levels of personalization.

Studies in consumer psychology suggest that for Gen Z, the "aesthetic" of a garment often serves as its primary functional value [9]. While affordability remains a baseline requirement, the "uniqueness" factor acts as the ultimate tie-breaker in purchase decisions [3]. This preference for individuality is a direct response to the democratization of fashion via platforms like Instagram and TikTok, where global trends are localized and remixed in real-time.

B. Factors Influencing Preference: Aesthetics, Versatility, and Identity

The pivot toward the crop top is driven by three primary variables identified in recent sartorial surveys: Aesthetic Dominance: As evidenced by modern trend analysis, the visual "silhouette" of the crop top aligns more closely with global "Chic" standards than the traditional blouse [14].Functional Versatility: The "Mix-and-Match" culture of Gen Z necessitates garments that can bridge the gap between ethnic and Western wardrobes. The crop top serves as a "bridge garment," reducing the need for extensive wardrobe collections [13]. Identity Construction: Gen Z utilizes the "Crop Top-Saree" combination to signal a "Rooted & Rising" identity—acknowledging heritage through the drape while asserting modern independence through the top [15]Cultural shifts toward body positivity and the rejection of gender-binary dressing have further normalized the crop top. It has become a medium through which young consumers communicate their values of freedom, breaking away from the "modesty-first" frameworks that governed previous generations [4].

C. Recontextualizing the Crop Top

The crop top, historically associated with cyclical fashion revivals, has been redefined within the contemporary Gen Z context. Rather than functioning solely as a stylistic choice, it has become embedded within discourses of body positivity and self-expression [5]. This transformation is particularly significant in light of shifting cultural attitudes toward visibility and autonomy in dress. Scholarly discussions emphasize that crop tops offer a unique combination of aesthetic appeal and functional adaptability. Their compatibility with high-waisted silhouettes, layering techniques, and casual styling enhances their utility across multiple contexts [6]. Moreover, their frequent representation in digital media reinforces their legitimacy as a mainstream fashion choice.



Figure 1: picture of Crop Tops

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D. Blouses and the Persistence of Tradition

Blouses occupy a distinct position within the fashion hierarchy, often associated with cultural heritage, formal occasions, and structured aesthetics. While they continue to be relevant in specific contexts, their role in everyday fashion among Gen Z appears to be diminishing [7].One of the primary limitations identified in the literature is their restricted adaptability. Unlike more contemporary garments, blouses are often designed for particular occasions, reducing their versatility in a lifestyle characterized by fluid transitions between social settings. Attempts to modernize blouse designs have yielded mixed results, as they often struggle to balance tradition with innovation.



Figure 2: picture of traditional blouse

E. Determinants of Garment Preference

The preference for specific garments among Gen Z is shaped by an interplay of multiple factors. Comfort emerges as a fundamental consideration, particularly in light of the increasing casualization of fashion [1]. Garments that facilitate ease of movement and climatic suitability are more likely to be favoured. Equally important is the role of self-expression. Clothing functions as a symbolic resource through which individuals communicate identity, values, and social affiliations [3]. Crop tops, with their diverse styling possibilities, provide greater scope for such expression compared to more structured garments. Social media influence further amplifies these preferences by creating aspirational frameworks and normalizing certain styles [4]. The repeated visibility of crop tops in influencer content contributes to their desirability and acceptance.

V. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The survey findings reveal a pronounced preference for crop tops among Gen Z respondents. A majority of participants identified crop tops as their preferred choice for casual and semi-casual settings, citing comfort, trend alignment, and ease of styling as key reasons. Blouses, in contrast, were predominantly associated with formal or traditional occasions. While respondents acknowledged their aesthetic value, they were less likely to choose them for everyday wear. This distinction highlights a functional differentiation between the two garments. Notably, a significant proportion of respondents indicated that their fashion choices are influenced by social media content. This observation aligns with existing literature, reinforcing the argument that digital exposure plays a critical role in shaping consumer behaviour [4].

A. Graphical Representation of Findings

The graphical analysis further supports the survey findings. As illustrated in Figure 3, a significant majority of respondents prefer crop tops over blouses, indicating a clear inclination toward modern and versatile clothing styles. This trend reflects the evolving fashion mindset of Generation Z, which prioritizes comfort and self-expression. Figure 4 highlights the key factors influencing this preference. Comfort and versatility emerge as the most significant determinants, followed closely by style and social media influence. These findings reinforce existing literature that identifies digital exposure and lifestyle adaptability as major drivers of Gen Z fashion choices [4].

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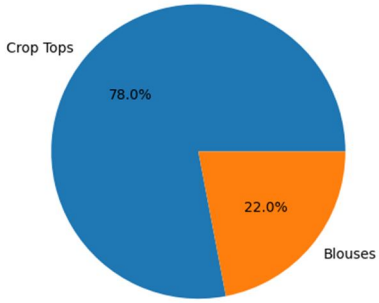


Figure 3: Preference between Crop Tops and Blouses among Gen Z

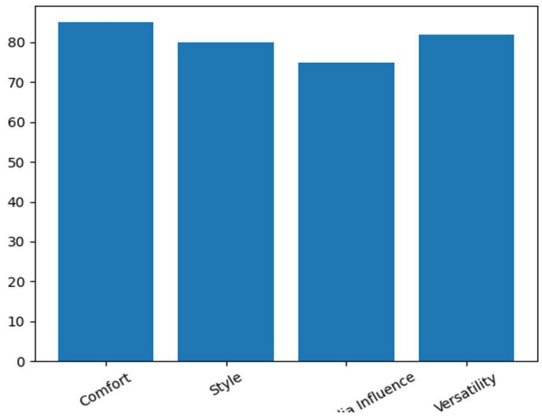
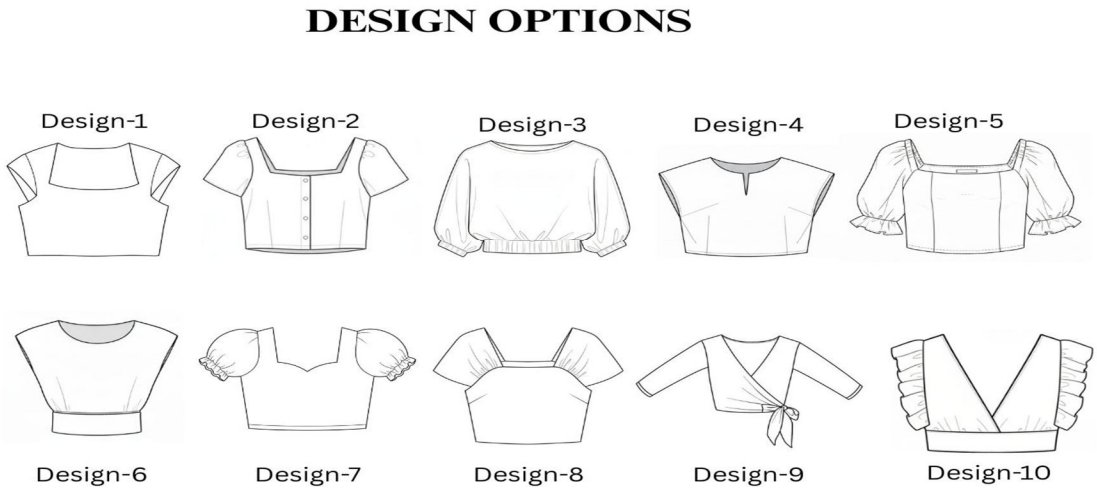


Figure 4: Factors Influencing Preference for Crop Tops

VI. DESIGN PROTOTYPING AND REALIZATION

The initial phase of design realization involved creating ten distinct silhouettes, labeled Design-1 through Design-10, to evaluate Gen Z's preference for specific necklines, sleeve styles, and structural elements. These options were designed to bridge the gap between traditional aesthetics and modern "Chic" standards, focusing on high styling flexibility.

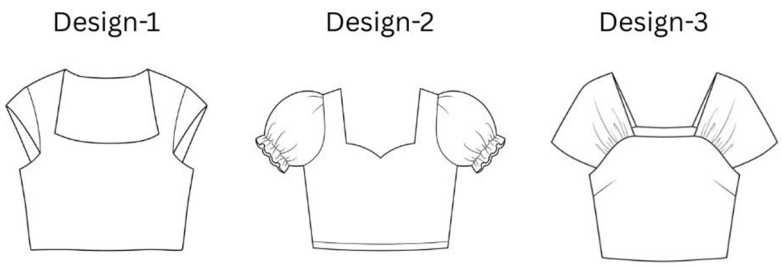
A. Survey-Based Design Selection



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SURVEY-BASED PROTOTYPES



B. Final Product Development:

FROM SURVEY INSIGHTS TO STITCHED SILHOUETTES



It highlights the functional versatility and styling flexibility that your respondents cited as key reasons for their preference.

C. Discussion

The convergence of survey findings and literature analysis underscores the growing dominance of crop tops within Gen Z fashion. This preference can be interpreted as a response to broader socio-cultural shifts, including the democratization of fashion and the increasing emphasis on individuality. Crop tops exemplify the characteristics that resonate with Gen Z: adaptability, visual appeal,

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and symbolic value. Their ability to function across multiple contexts enhances their practicality, while their association with confidence and self-expression strengthens their cultural relevance. Blouses, despite their enduring significance, are constrained by their contextual specificity. Their limited integration into everyday fashion reflects a misalignment with the dynamic and fluid lifestyle of contemporary youth

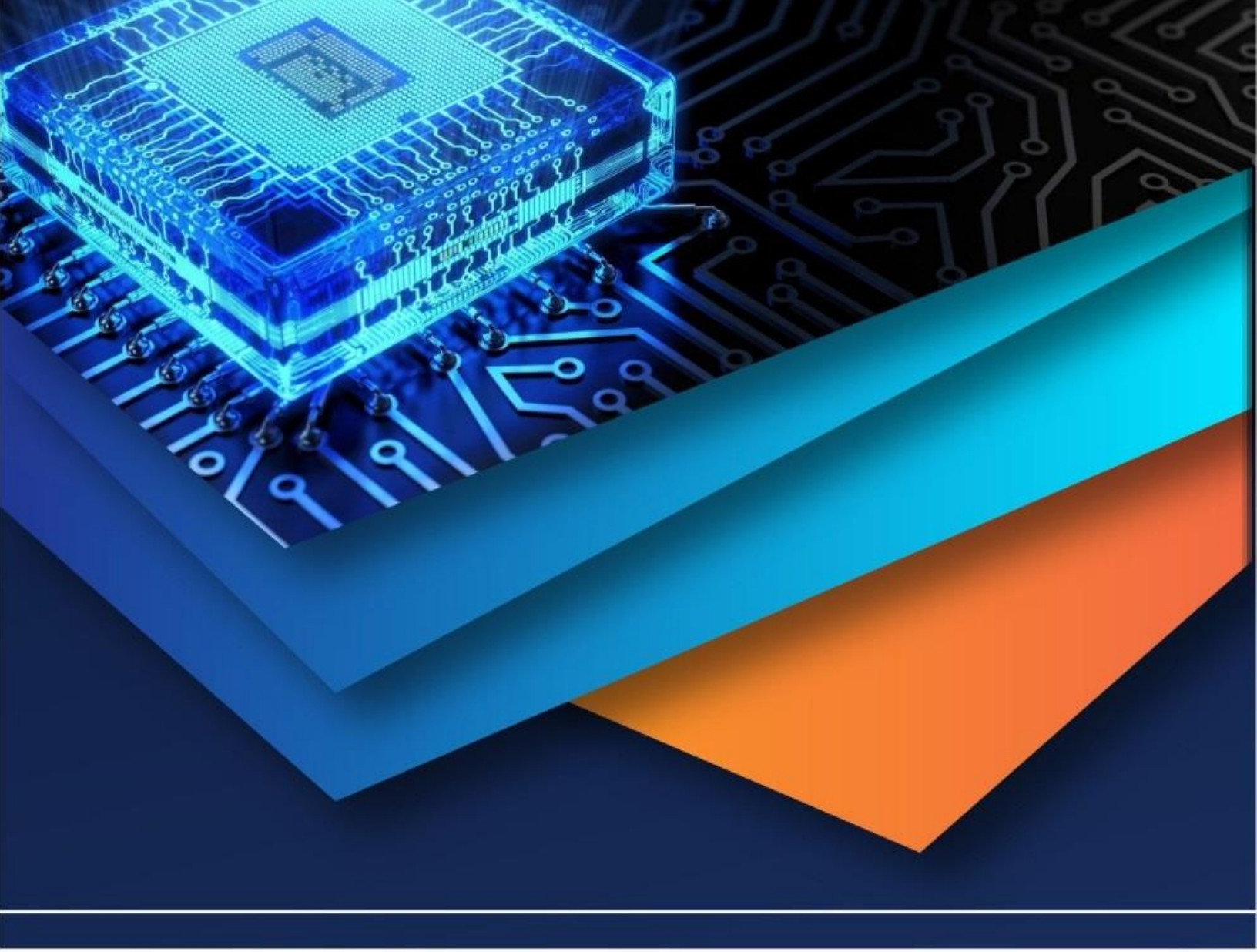
VII. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Generation Z exhibits a clear preference for crop tops over blouses, driven by a combination of functional, aesthetic, and socio-cultural factors. Crop tops align closely with the values of modern youth, offering comfort, versatility, and opportunities for self-expression. The findings suggest that this preference is indicative of a broader transformation in fashion consumption, where traditional norms are being redefined in favor of more flexible and inclusive styles. While blouses will continue to hold relevance in specific contexts, their role in everyday fashion is likely to remain limited.

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