

Majors: MKT
S.No.: BBA 4

***Between Personal Identity and Cultural Expectations: Exploring Decision
Paralysis in GenZ Fashion Choices at OUTFITTER***



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Spring 2026

FINAL PROJECT APPROVAL SHEET
Open Defense Examination

Open Defense Date: 22/06/2026

Topic of Research: Between Personal Identity and Cultural Expectations: Exploring Decision Paralysis in GenZ Fashion Choices at OUTFITTER

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Abstract

This study examines decision paralysis among Generation Z consumers shopping at OUTFITTER, one of Pakistan's leading fashion retailers explicitly positioned around a Gen Z identity. While fashion consumption among Gen Z is widely understood as a vehicle for personal identity expression, Pakistani Gen Z shoppers negotiate this expression within a collectivist cultural context in which family and community expectations remain influential, creating tension between authentic self-presentation and cultural conformity. Adopting a positivist, quantitative research design, primary data were collected through a structured 15-item survey administered to 151 Gen Z respondents (aged 18–27 years) across OUTFITTER retail outlets in Rawalpindi/Islamabad and digital channels over a seven-day period in May 2026. Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis were used to assess the prevalence of decision paralysis and its association with family influence, peer influence, cultural conflict, and social media usage.

The findings show that decision paralysis at OUTFITTER is widespread and consequential rather than incidental: a mean overwhelm score of 3.05 out of 5 and a purchase-abandonment rate of 63.6% confirm that indecision directly affects sales. Cultural conflict between personal fashion preference and family or community expectations was reported by 76.2% of respondents, while family ($M = 2.97$) and peer ($M = 2.95$) influence emerged as near-equal pressures, departing from Western literature's tendency to treat peer influence as dominant. Social media usage for fashion guidance was the highest-scoring construct overall ($M = 3.25$) and was positively correlated with decision paralysis ($r = 0.290$), confirming its dual role as both an inspiration source and a contributor to overwhelm, while perceived cultural alignment with OUTFITTER's product range was the lowest-scoring construct ($M = 2.91$).

These results suggest that OUTFITTER's challenge with Gen Z conversion stems not from a deficit of brand appeal but from a shopping environment that does not adequately support decision-making within a culturally complex context. The study concludes with five evidence-based recommendations spanning store layout, in-store styling support, culturally anchored product development, size and trial-room accessibility, and the repositioning of social media as a decision simplifier, together with theoretical contributions to the literature on South Asian Gen Z consumer behaviour.

Keywords: Decision Paralysis; Generation Z; Cultural Identity; Choice Overload; Fashion Retail; Social Media; Pakistan

Acknowledgment

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to everyone who supported and guided us throughout the completion of this Final Year Project.

First and foremost, we are thankful to Allah Almighty for granting us the strength, patience, and clarity of thought needed to complete this research successfully.

We are deeply grateful to our supervisor, Ms. Naimah Khan, Marketing and Business Department, Bahria University – Islamabad Campus, for her invaluable guidance, continuous support, and constructive feedback at every stage of this study. Her insight and encouragement were instrumental in shaping both the direction and the quality of this research.

We would also like to thank the faculty of the Marketing and Business Department at Bahria University for the knowledge and academic foundation they provided throughout our Bachelor's programme, which made this project possible. Our sincere appreciation also goes to the 151 Gen Z respondents who generously gave their time to participate in our survey, both at OUTFITTER's retail outlets in Rawalpindi/Islamabad and through our digital channels; their honest and thoughtful responses form the foundation of this entire study.

Finally, we are profoundly grateful to our families and friends for their unwavering encouragement, patience, and emotional support throughout this journey.

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Executive Summary

Pakistan's fashion retail sector has become one of the fastest-growing segments of the country's organised retail economy, with Generation Z (born 1997–2012) now constituting its single largest consumer cohort. OUTFITTER, one of the few domestic brands explicitly positioned around a Gen Z identity, sits at the centre of this shift. This study, titled “Between Personal Identity and Cultural Expectations: Exploring Decision Paralysis in GenZ Fashion Choices at OUTFITTER,” was undertaken to understand why a large share of Gen Z shoppers struggle to commit to a purchase at OUTFITTER, and to establish whether this struggle stems from psychological overload, cultural pressure, social influence, or store-level shortcomings.

The research draws on a structured 15-item survey administered to 151 Gen Z respondents (aged 18–27 years) across OUTFITTER retail locations in Rawalpindi/Islamabad and digital channels between 3 and 9 May 2026. The instrument captured demographic profile, personal style identity, decision paralysis severity, cultural and peer influence, social media engagement, brand perception, and coping behaviour, and was analysed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis.

The findings confirm that decision paralysis at OUTFITTER is widespread and consequential rather than incidental. A mean overwhelm score of 3.05 out of 5 indicates that nearly three in ten Gen Z shoppers feel overwhelmed ‘often’ or ‘always’ when choosing an outfit, and 63.6% of respondents report having left the store without purchasing because they could not decide. Cultural conflict between personal fashion preference and family or community expectations is reported by 76.2% of respondents, while family influence ($M = 2.97$) and peer influence ($M = 2.95$) emerged as near-equal pressures — a pattern that departs from Western consumer literature, which typically treats peer influence as the dominant social force for this generation. Social media use for fashion guidance was the single highest-scoring construct in the study ($M = 3.25$) and is positively correlated with decision paralysis ($r = 0.290$), confirming that social media functions simultaneously as an inspiration source and a contributor to in-store overwhelm. Perceived cultural alignment with OUTFITTER's product range was the lowest-scoring construct overall ($M = 2.91$), though its correlation with acute in-store paralysis was comparatively weak ($r = 0.160$), suggesting it operates as a background brand-perception issue rather than the immediate trigger of overwhelm.

These results support the practical conclusion that OUTFITTER is not losing Gen Z customers because of a lack of brand appeal, but because the shopping environment does not adequately support the decision-making process within a culturally complex context. The report concludes with five evidence-based recommendations — zoned store layout, in-store styling support, culturally anchored product lines, improved size and trial-room accessibility, and a repositioning of social media content as a decision simplifier — along with a discussion of the managerial implications, theoretical contributions, limitations, and directions for future research.

Chapter 1: Introduction

“Between Personal Identity and Cultural Expectations: Exploring Decision Paralysis in Gen Z Fashion Choices at OUTFITTER”

1.1 Research Background

The fashion retail industry has experienced significant transformation over the last decade, particularly with the emergence of Generation Z as a dominant consumer segment. Generation Z, commonly defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012, represents one of the largest and most influential consumer groups worldwide. Unlike previous generations, Gen Z consumers have grown up in a highly digitalized environment where social media, online communities, and instant access to global trends shape their perceptions, preferences, and purchasing decisions. As a result, fashion consumption among Gen Z is no longer limited to fulfilling functional clothing needs but has evolved into a powerful means of expressing identity, personality, values, and social belonging.

In Pakistan, the fashion retail sector has witnessed rapid growth due to increased urbanization, rising internet penetration, and greater exposure to international fashion trends. Pakistani consumers, particularly young adults, are increasingly influenced by global fashion content available through platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, and Pinterest. These platforms continuously expose users to new styles, trends, influencers, and fashion ideals, creating an environment where consumers have access to a vast range of fashion choices and inspirations. While this exposure expands opportunities for self-expression, it also creates complexity in decision-making, especially when consumers are confronted with numerous alternatives and conflicting influences.

Among Pakistani fashion retailers, OUTFITTER has established itself as one of the leading brands catering specifically to the preferences of Generation Z consumers. The brand offers a diverse product portfolio that combines contemporary global fashion trends with local market preferences. Through its strong social media presence, trendy collections, and youth-oriented marketing strategies, OUTFITTER has successfully positioned itself as a preferred fashion destination for young consumers. However, the extensive variety of styles, designs, colors, and product categories offered by the brand may also contribute to challenges in consumer decision-making.

One of the emerging phenomena associated with modern consumer behavior is decision paralysis. Decision paralysis refers to a situation where individuals experience difficulty making choices due to an excessive number of options, conflicting information, or competing influences. Instead of facilitating better decisions, an abundance of alternatives can overwhelm consumers, increase cognitive effort, and ultimately delay or prevent purchase decisions. In fashion retail environments, decision paralysis may occur when consumers struggle to select products that align with their personal preferences, social expectations, financial constraints, and cultural values simultaneously.

The concept of decision paralysis has gained increasing attention within consumer behavior literature. Previous studies have demonstrated that when consumers face numerous alternatives,

they often experience choice overload, decision fatigue, and reduced satisfaction with their final selections. These challenges become particularly significant in fashion retail because clothing purchases involve both functional and symbolic considerations. Consumers evaluate products not only based on quality and price but also on how effectively those products represent their identity and social image.

For Generation Z consumers, fashion serves as an important tool for identity construction and self-expression. Clothing choices communicate individuality, lifestyle, beliefs, and group affiliations. Consequently, fashion purchasing decisions often involve considerable emotional and psychological investment. Young consumers seek products that reflect their authentic selves while simultaneously meeting societal expectations and maintaining social acceptance. This balancing act becomes even more complex within collectivist societies such as Pakistan, where family values, cultural norms, and community expectations continue to play a significant role in shaping individual behavior.

Pakistani Gen Z consumers operate within a unique environment characterized by the coexistence of global influences and traditional cultural values. On one hand, they are exposed to international fashion trends that promote individuality, experimentation, and self-expression. On the other hand, they remain embedded within cultural frameworks that emphasize modesty, family approval, and social conformity. This creates a tension between personal identity and cultural expectations, particularly when making fashion-related decisions. Consumers may desire clothing that reflects their personal style but hesitate to purchase certain items due to concerns about family reactions, cultural appropriateness, or social judgment.

In addition to cultural influences, social media plays a significant role in shaping fashion preferences and decision-making processes. Social media platforms provide inspiration, product information, trend awareness, and peer validation. However, they also expose users to idealized lifestyles and endless fashion alternatives, increasing comparison anxiety and uncertainty. While social media can help consumers discover new styles and make informed decisions, it can simultaneously amplify decision paralysis by expanding the range of available options and increasing pressure to make the “perfect” choice.

The interaction between personal identity, cultural expectations, family influence, peer pressure, and social media exposure creates a complex decision-making environment for Pakistani Gen Z consumers. Understanding how these factors contribute to decision paralysis is essential for both academic researchers and fashion retailers. From a business perspective, decision paralysis can result in purchase abandonment, reduced customer satisfaction, and lower conversion rates. For retailers such as OUTFITTER, identifying the factors that hinder consumer decision-making can provide valuable insights for improving store layouts, product categorization, marketing communications, and customer experiences.

1.2 Problem Statement

OUTFITTER is facing increasing decision paralysis issues among Gen Z shoppers, which are negatively affecting the overall shopping experience and purchase behaviour. This study is conducted to identify the psychological, cultural, and social factors influencing fashion decision-

making at OUTFITTER. Choice overload, cultural expectations, social media influence, and confusion while selecting outfits are common issues experienced by Gen Z consumers. These problems are leading to purchase abandonment, customer dissatisfaction, and difficulty for OUTFITTER in effectively meeting the needs of its target market.

1.4 Research Gap Analysis

A review of the existing literature on Gen Z consumer behaviour, choice overload, and cultural identity reveals three specific gaps that this study is designed to address. Each gap, the reasoning behind it, and the source literature from which it is drawn are summarised in Table 1.1.

Gap	Reason Gap Exists	Source / Researcher	Method Used
Gap 1 — Context Missing	Empirical studies specific to Pakistan's fashion retail environment for Gen Z decision-making remain scarce globally.	Fatima, Mirza & Qureshi (2023), Asian Journal of Social Science	Qualitative — in-depth interviews with South Asian youth consumers
Gap 2 — Culture × Paralysis	The intersection of cultural identity conflict and decision paralysis in fashion retail has not been documented in South Asian research.	Niazi & Ahmed (2023), Journal of Asian Finance, Economics & Business	Quantitative — structured survey; descriptive & regression analysis
Gap 3 — Isolated Drivers	Studies address cognitive (choice overload) or social (peer pressure) drivers separately. None integrates both with a cultural identity framework.	Lim, Rasul, Kumar & Ala (2022), European Journal of Marketing	Quantitative — meta-analysis & experimental survey design in digital-age retail

Table 1.1: Research Gaps, Rationale, and Source Literature

Taken together, these three gaps justify a study that is (a) empirically grounded in the Pakistani retail context, (b) explicitly focused on the interaction between cultural identity conflict and decision paralysis, and (c) integrative of cognitive and social drivers within a single cultural-identity framework — rather than treating choice overload, peer pressure, and cultural conformity as separate, unconnected phenomena. This research addresses all three gaps simultaneously by studying OUTFITTER's Gen Z shopper base through a combined psychological, cultural, and social-media lens.

1.3 Research Objectives

- To identify and analyse the key psychological and cultural factors contributing to decision paralysis in Gen Z shoppers at OUTFITTER.
- To examine the relationship between personal identity expression and cultural conformity as it manifests in fashion decision-making.
- To explore the role of social media in amplifying or alleviating decision paralysis among Gen Z at OUTFITTER.
- To provide evidence-based recommendations for OUTFITTER to better serve the Gen Z consumer segment.

1.4 Research Questions

- What are the primary psychological and cultural factors driving decision paralysis in Gen Z shoppers at OUTFITTER?
- How does the tension between personal identity expression and cultural conformity manifest in Gen Z fashion decisions?
- What role does social media play in either amplifying or alleviating decision paralysis among Gen Z at OUTFITTER?
- What practical strategies can OUTFITTER adopt to reduce decision paralysis and improve the Gen Z shopping experience?

1.5 Significance of the Study

Academically, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on Gen Z consumer psychology and decision paralysis within South Asian retail contexts — an area that Fatima et al. (2023) identify as significantly underrepresented in international research. Practically, the findings are directly applicable to OUTFITTER's marketing strategy, store layout, product curation, and digital engagement approaches.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter situates the present study within five interconnected bodies of literature: Gen Z fashion identity, decision paralysis and choice overload, cultural identity theory, social media's influence on fashion behaviour, and the specific context of Pakistani fashion retail. Each section builds toward the integrated theoretical framework presented in Section 2.6, which underpins the survey instrument and analytical approach used in Chapters 3 and 4.

2.1 Gen Z and Fashion Identity

Generation Z is characterized by a uniquely fluid approach to personal identity, with clothing serving as one of the primary mediums through which self-concept is communicated and negotiated. Hwang and Shin (2023) find that unlike Millennials, who used fashion largely as a signal of aspiration, Gen Z consumers view clothing as an extension of authentic selfhood — a vehicle for communicating values, subculture affiliations, and individual uniqueness. This emphasis on authenticity creates a heightened sensitivity to perceived misalignment between outward appearance and inner identity, making the act of purchase more psychologically consequential. Where an older consumer might treat a clothing purchase as a largely functional transaction, a Gen Z consumer is more likely to treat the same purchase as a statement about who they are — raising the psychological stakes of every decision and, by extension, the potential for hesitation and second-guessing at the point of sale.

In the Pakistani context, this dynamic is further complicated by the interplay between globalised fashion aesthetics — largely disseminated via TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube — and locally negotiated cultural norms. Niazi and Ahmed (2023) document that Pakistani Gen Z consumers exhibit a dual fashion consciousness: an aspiration toward globally recognised trends paired with a practical need to conform to family and community expectations regarding modesty, gender norms, and cultural appropriateness. This duality is a primary source of internal conflict at the point of purchase. Importantly, this dual consciousness is not experienced as a one-time decision but as an ongoing negotiation that resurfaces every time a Gen Z consumer stands in front of a rack of clothing and must decide which version of themselves — the globally-styled self or the culturally-compliant self — a given garment is meant to serve.

2.2 Decision Paralysis and Choice Overload

The foundational theoretical framework for this study draws on the concept of choice overload. Lim et al. (2022) revisit and update this framework for digital-age retail environments, demonstrating that the mechanisms of choice overload are amplified by online browsing behaviour, algorithmic curation, and the infinite-scroll design of e-commerce and social media platforms — all of which are central to the Gen Z shopping experience. Their study establishes that beyond a threshold of available options, consumer satisfaction decreases and decision avoidance increases. Critically, Lim et al. (2022) argue that the effect of choice overload is not purely a function of raw option count, but of the cognitive complexity of comparing those options — a

distinction that becomes important when interpreting OUTFITTER shoppers' browsing patterns in Chapter 4.

In fashion retail specifically, Brooke and Thompson (2023) identify decision fatigue as a phenomenon distinct from general choice overload: where choice overload stems from the quantity of options, decision fatigue results from the cognitive effort of simultaneously evaluating multiple attributes — style, fit, price, cultural appropriateness, and peer perception. Gen Z shoppers, who consider a broader set of social and identity-related criteria than older consumers, are disproportionately vulnerable to this form of fatigue. Brooke and Thompson (2023) further note that decision fatigue often manifests behaviourally not as prolonged deliberation but as premature narrowing — a shopper overwhelmed by the number of attributes to weigh may simply default to the first ‘safe’ option, or abandon the decision altogether rather than continue evaluating. This distinction between deliberation-driven and avoidance-driven responses to overload is directly relevant to the browsing and abandonment patterns examined later in this report.

2.3 Cultural Identity and Fashion Decision-Making

Cultural identity theory provides a critical lens for understanding the internal conflict experienced by Gen Z shoppers in Pakistan. Fatima et al. (2023) demonstrate that South Asian youth navigate a complex hierarchy of identity obligations — beginning with family and community expectations, then peer group norms, and finally personal aesthetic preferences. In a fashion retail setting, this hierarchy creates what the authors term a ‘cultural veto’: items that satisfy personal identity preferences may be mentally eliminated from consideration due to anticipated negative social responses, narrowing the effective choice set and amplifying dissatisfaction with what remains. The cultural veto mechanism is theoretically significant because it reframes decision paralysis not simply as a cognitive overload problem, but as a problem of constrained choice: the shopper is not paralysed because there are too many options in an absolute sense, but because too many of the options that would otherwise satisfy personal preference have already been silently disqualified before conscious evaluation even begins.

The concept of cultural capital, as applied in contemporary retail contexts by Chen and Liu (2022), is equally relevant: the social value assigned to particular fashion choices in Pakistani society does not map uniformly onto the value systems represented by global fast-fashion trends. Gen Z consumers must therefore perform a constant — often unconscious — translation between global fashion codes and local cultural codes. This is a cognitively demanding process that contributes directly to decision paralysis. This translation burden helps explain why cultural conflict, once present, tends to be a chronic background condition rather than a one-off obstacle: the same negotiation must be repeated for every new garment, every new trend, and every new shopping occasion.

2.4 Social Media Influence on Gen Z Fashion Behaviour

Social media platforms function as both an inspiration source and an anxiety generator for Gen Z fashion consumers. Kaur et al. (2022) establish that platforms such as Instagram and TikTok significantly increase purchase intention among young consumers but simultaneously elevate comparison anxiety — the distress arising from comparing one's choices against a curated stream of idealised images. In a Pakistani context, this anxiety is compounded by the frequent misalignment between globally trending styles and locally acceptable fashion.

Furthermore, Chen and Liu (2022) find that social media exposure creates a paradoxical effect: the more Gen Z consumers engage with fashion content online, the more expansive their personal style preferences become — but this directly increases the number of considerations they must balance when making an in-store purchase decision, intensifying decision paralysis rather than resolving it. This paradox is central to the present study's third research question, since it implies that any retailer-led social media strategy aimed at 'helping' Gen Z shoppers decide could just as easily backfire by expanding their aspirational reference set rather than narrowing their effective choice set.

2.5 The Pakistani Fashion Retail Context

OUTFITTER occupies a distinctive position in Pakistan's fashion retail landscape. Haider and Khan (2022) describe the brand as one of the few domestic retailers to explicitly position itself around a Gen Z identity — offering a product range that attempts to bridge the gap between Western casual aesthetics and South Asian sensibilities. However, the authors also note that this positioning creates an inherent tension: the breadth of the product range, designed to appeal to diverse Gen Z subcultures, may itself be a driver of the choice overload that affects this demographic. This tension positions OUTFITTER as an almost ideal case study: a brand whose core strategic asset — breadth of appeal across a fragmented Gen Z identity landscape — may simultaneously be its biggest source of customer-facing friction.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

Synthesising the literature reviewed above, this study adopts an antecedents–mechanism–outcome framework. Family influence, peer/social group influence, cultural conflict with fashion preferences, and social media usage for fashion are treated as antecedent (independent) variables; decision paralysis / overwhelm functions as the central mediating construct; and purchase abandonment is treated as the ultimate behavioural outcome. This framework, summarised in Table 2.1 below, directly informed the variable structure of the questionnaire described in Chapter 3.

Framework Layer	Construct	Measurement
Antecedent	Family Influence	Likert 1–5
Antecedent	Peer / Social Group Influence	Likert 1–5
Antecedent	Cultural Conflict with Fashion	Yes / Sometimes / No
Antecedent	Social Media Usage for Fashion	Likert 1–5
Mediating Mechanism	Decision Paralysis / Overwhelm	Likert 1–5
Behavioural Outcome	Purchase Abandonment	Yes / No

Table 2.1: Theoretical Framework — Antecedents, Mediating Mechanism, and Behavioural Outcome

2.6 Gaps Identified in the Literature

A review of the existing literature reveals three primary gaps that this study addresses:

- Despite growing international research on Gen Z consumer behaviour, empirical studies contextualised within Pakistan's fashion retail environment remain scarce.
- The specific interaction between cultural identity conflict and decision paralysis in a fashion retail setting has not been systematically documented in South Asian consumer research.
- Existing studies tend to focus on either cognitive (too many choices) or social (peer pressure) drivers in isolation; this study uniquely integrates both dimensions alongside a cultural identity framework.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Research Philosophy & Approach

This study adopts a positivist research philosophy, treating consumer attitudes and behaviours at OUTFITTER as objectively measurable phenomena that can be captured through a structured survey instrument and analysed statistically. A quantitative methodological approach was selected as the primary mode of inquiry, consistent with the recommendation of Brooke and Thompson (2023) that consumer behaviour research on Gen Z benefits from rigorous, numerically grounded measurement given the complexity of the constructs involved. Open-ended responses collected alongside the closed-ended items were used only to contextualise and illustrate the quantitative results, not as an independent qualitative strand of analysis.

3.2 Research Design

A cross-sectional survey design was adopted as the primary data collection mechanism, enabling efficient data gathering from a representative Gen Z sample within a defined, one-week timeframe. The cross-sectional design is appropriate for this study's descriptive and correlational objectives — establishing the prevalence of decision paralysis and its association with cultural, social, and media-related variables — although, as noted in Section 5.4, it does not permit causal inference. The design is non-experimental and observational: respondents were not assigned to conditions or exposed to any researcher-controlled stimulus; all variables were measured as they naturally exist among OUTFITTER's Gen Z customer base.

3.3 Target Population & Sampling

The target population for this study consists of Gen Z individuals aged 18–27 who have visited or shopped at OUTFITTER within the last six months. This age range was selected to capture the full breadth of the Gen Z cohort that is economically active and independently engaged in fashion purchase decisions, while excluding younger teenagers whose purchases are typically parent-mediated.

A purposive convenience sampling technique was used, with respondents recruited at OUTFITTER retail locations in person and via a digital link distributed through a QR code and social media channels. Purposive convenience sampling was chosen over probability sampling because no complete sampling frame of OUTFITTER's Gen Z customers exists; this is a standard and accepted limitation in applied consumer-behaviour research of this scope, and its implications for generalisability are discussed in Section 5.4.

3.4 Sample Size and Data Collection Period

Parameter	Detail
Population	Gen Z shoppers (18–27 years) at OUTFITTER
Sampling Technique	Purposive convenience sampling
Data Collection Period	3 May 2026 – 9 May 2026 (7 days)
Data Collection Locations	OUTFITTER retail outlets, Rawalpindi/Islamabad, and digital channels
Responses Received	154
Valid Responses Retained	151 (after removal of incomplete entries)

Table 3.1: Sampling and Data Collection Summary

3.5 Data Collection Instrument

The primary data collection instrument is a 15-item structured questionnaire combining Likert scale items, multiple choice questions, a ranked choice item, and short open-ended response options across five thematic sections: Demographics, Personal Identity and Style, Decision Paralysis at OUTFITTER, Cultural and Social Influences, and Brand Perception and Recommendations. All Likert-scale items used a 1–5 response format, anchored at the construct-appropriate extremes (e.g., 1 = Never / Strongly Disagree / No Influence; 5 = Always / Strongly Agree / Very Strong Influence).

3.6 Questionnaire Design and Survey Variables

The questionnaire was developed and finalised with reference to the choice-overload measurement approach of Lim et al. (2022), adapted to the cultural and retail-specific context of OUTFITTER. Table 3.2 summarises the finalised and deployed questionnaire structure.

Item	Type	Theme
Age group	Multiple Choice	Demographics
Gender identity	Multiple Choice	Demographics
Personal fashion style	Multiple Choice	Personal Identity
Frequency of feeling overwhelmed when choosing an outfit	Likert Scale (1–5)	Decision Paralysis
Number of items browsed before purchase	Multiple Choice	Decision Paralysis
Left the store without purchasing due to indecision	Yes / No	Decision Paralysis

Item	Type	Theme
Extent of family influence on clothing choices	Likert Scale (1–5)	Cultural Expectations
Extent of peer/social group influence on clothing choices	Likert Scale (1–5)	Cultural Expectations
Cultural norms conflicting with personal fashion preferences	Yes / No / Sometimes	Cultural vs Identity
Frequency of using social media to guide fashion decisions	Likert Scale (1–5)	Social Media Influence
Factor that matters most when choosing an outfit	Ranked Choice	Decision Drivers
Strategies used to overcome indecision while shopping	Multiple Choice	Coping Strategies
Satisfaction with OUTFITTER's current variety for Gen Z	Likert Scale (1–5)	Brand Perception
Perceived alignment of OUTFITTER's clothing with cultural identity	Likert Scale (1–5)	Cultural Fit
Changes that would reduce shopping overwhelm	Multiple Choice	Recommendations

Table 3.2: Finalized Survey Questionnaire Structure

Table 3.3 maps each construct onto its role within the theoretical framework introduced in Section 2.6, distinguishing independent (antecedent) variables, the dependent/mediating construct, and the behavioural outcome variable.

Variable	Role in Framework	Scale
Decision Paralysis / Overwhelm	Dependent Variable (DV)	Likert 1–5
Family Influence on Clothing	Independent Variable (IV)	Likert 1–5
Peer / Social Group Influence	Independent Variable (IV)	Likert 1–5
Cultural Conflict with Fashion	Independent Variable (IV)	Yes / Sometimes / No
Social Media Usage for Fashion	Independent Variable (IV)	Likert 1–5
Cultural Identity Alignment	Brand Perception Variable	Likert 1–5
Purchase Abandonment	Behavioural Outcome	Yes / No

Table 3.3: Variable Roles within the Antecedents–Mechanism–Outcome Framework

3.7 Data Analysis Plan

The collected data were analysed using quantitative statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarise respondent profiles and survey responses.

In addition, Pearson Correlation Analysis was applied to examine the relationship between decision paralysis and key independent variables, including family influence, peer influence, social media usage, satisfaction with OUTFITTER, and cultural identity alignment.

All data analysis was conducted using Microsoft Excel to ensure accuracy, consistency, and ease of interpretation.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Participation in the survey was entirely voluntary and anonymous. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents prior to completing the questionnaire. No personally identifiable information was collected or stored. The research complies with the ethical guidelines of Bahria University and relevant data protection standards.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis & Findings

4.1 Introduction to Data Analysis

This chapter presents a comprehensive quantitative and thematic analysis of survey data collected from 151 Gen Z respondents (aged 18–27 years) who have visited or shopped at OUTFITTER. The survey was conducted between 3rd May and 9th May 2026, covering OUTFITTER retail locations in Rawalpindi/Islamabad as well as digital distribution channels. Out of 154 total responses received, 151 were retained after data cleaning (removal of incomplete entries).

All Likert-scale items were scored on a 1–5 scale (1 = Never/Strongly Disagree/No Influence; 5 = Always/Strongly Agree/Very Strong Influence). Descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, and standard deviations) were computed for all quantitative items, supplemented by cross-tabulation by age and gender, and Pearson correlation analysis to identify relationships between constructs.

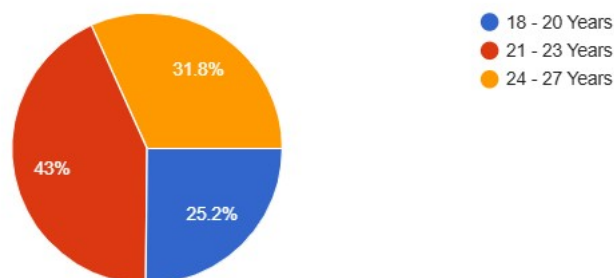
4.2 Sample Profile and Demographics

4.2.1 Age Distribution

The sample was distributed across three age sub-groups within the Gen Z cohort. The 21–23 age group constituted the largest segment (43.0%), reflecting the typical university-going demographic in the Islamabad/Rawalpindi region — OUTFITTER's core target market.

Age Group	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
18 – 20 Years	38	25.2%
21 – 23 Years	65	43.0%
24 – 27 Years	48	31.8%
Total	151	100%

Table 4.1: Age Distribution of Survey Respondents (n=151)

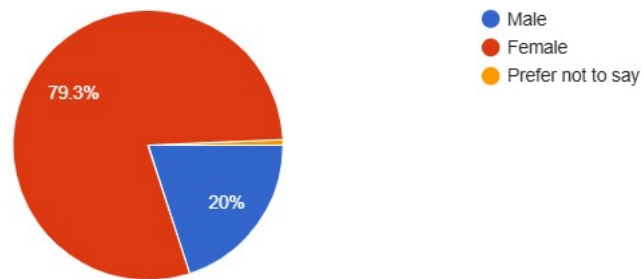


4.2.2 Gender Distribution

Female respondents constituted a clear majority of the sample (78.8%), with male respondents at 19.9%. This distribution reflects the observable reality that female Gen Z consumers tend to engage more extensively with fashion retail environments, both in-store and online. One respondent preferred not to disclose their gender identity.

Gender Identity	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Female	119	78.8%
Male	30	19.9%
Prefer not to say	1	0.7%
Total	151	100%

Table 4.2: Gender Distribution of Survey Respondents (n=151)

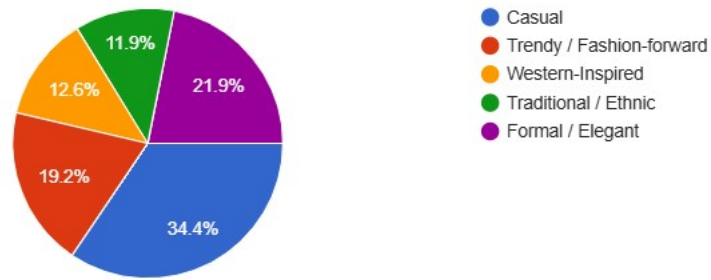


4.2.3 Fashion Style Self-Identification

Respondents self-identified their personal fashion style from five categories. The diversity of styles underscores the challenge OUTFITTER faces in curating a product range that simultaneously satisfies multiple style identities — a structural contributor to choice overload.

Fashion Style	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Casual	52	34.4%
Formal / Elegant	33	21.9%
Trendy / Fashion-forward	29	19.2%
Western-Inspired	19	12.6%
Traditional / Ethnic	18	11.9%
Total	151	100%

Table 4.3: Fashion Style Self-Identification (n=151)



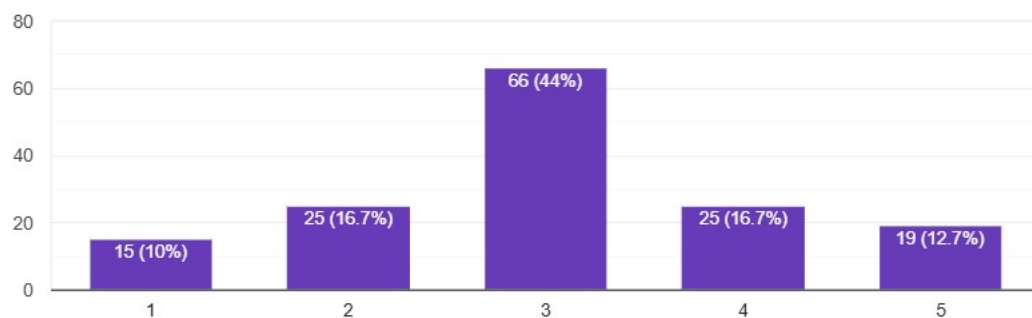
4.3 Decision Paralysis — Frequency and Severity

4.3.1 Perceived Overwhelm at OUTFITTER

Respondents rated how often they feel overwhelmed when choosing an outfit at OUTFITTER on a 1–5 Likert scale (1 = Never, 5 = Always). The mean score of 3.05 (SD = 1.12) indicates a moderate-to-high level of decision paralysis across the sample. Notably, 29.3% of respondents report being overwhelmed 'often' or 'always', while only 10.0% report never feeling overwhelmed.

Rating	Label	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1	Never	15	10.0%
2	Rarely	25	16.7%
3	Sometimes	66	44.0%
4	Often	25	16.7%
5	Always	19	12.6%
Mean = 3.05 SD = 1.12		151	100%

Table 4.4: Frequency of Feeling Overwhelmed at OUTFITTER (Q4, n=151)



Cross-tabulation by age reveals a progressive relationship: older Gen Z respondents (24–27 years, $M = 3.25$) report significantly higher overwhelm than those aged 18–20 ($M = 2.84$). This suggests that as personal style preferences become more defined with age, the gap between what shoppers want and what they can comfortably choose in a culturally constrained environment widens.

Age Group	Mean Overwhelm Score (Q4)	Interpretation
18 – 20 Years	2.84	Moderate decision paralysis
21 – 23 Years	3.03	Moderate-to-high decision paralysis
24 – 27 Years	3.25	High decision paralysis

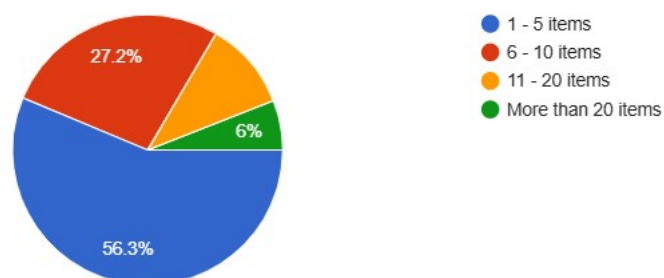
Table 4.5: Mean Overwhelm Score by Age Group

4.3.2 Browsing Behaviour Before Purchase

The majority of respondents (56.3%) browse only 1–5 items before making a purchase decision, suggesting that many shoppers narrow their choices quickly — possibly as a coping mechanism to avoid prolonged decision-making rather than as a reflection of limited interest. A combined 16.6% browse more than 10 items, indicative of extensive deliberation consistent with decision fatigue.

Items Browsed	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1 – 5 items	85	56.3%
6 – 10 items	41	27.2%
11 – 20 items	16	10.6%
More than 20 items	9	6.0%
Total	151	100%

Table 4.6: Number of Items Browsed Before Purchase (Q5, $n=151$)

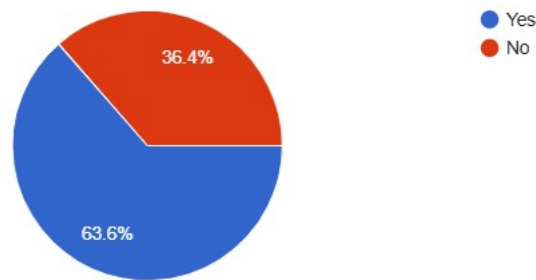


4.3.3 Purchase Abandonment Due to Indecision

This question directly operationalizes the behavioural outcome of decision paralysis. A striking 63.6% of respondents — nearly two in three Gen Z shoppers — confirmed they have previously left OUTFITTER without making a purchase because they could not decide. This represents a significant conversion challenge for the brand.

Response	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes — Left without purchasing	96	63.6%
No — Always made a purchase	55	36.4%
Total	151	100%

Table 4.7: Purchase Abandonment Due to Indecision (Q6, n=151)



Both female (63.0%) and male (66.7%) respondents report abandoning purchases at comparable rates, confirming that this is a systemic retail environment challenge rather than a gender-specific behavioural pattern.

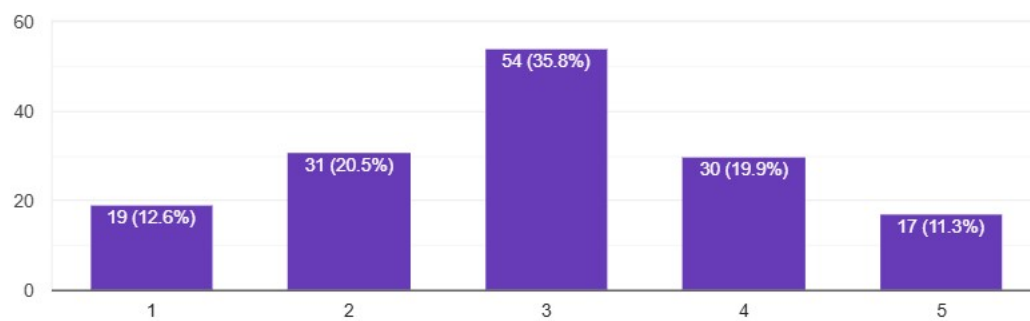
4.4 Cultural and Social Influences on Fashion Decisions

4.4.1 Family Influence on Clothing Choices

Family expectations were rated on a 1–5 Likert scale (1 = No influence, 5 = Very strong influence). The mean of 2.97 (SD = 1.17) indicates moderate family influence — suggesting that while family approval is not the dominant stated factor for most Gen Z shoppers, it is a consistent background pressure that constrains the effective choice set, particularly in relation to modesty and gender-appropriate dressing norms.

Statistic	Value
Mean	2.97
Standard Deviation	1.17
Minimum Score	1
Maximum Score	5
Interpretation	Moderate family influence on clothing decisions

Table 4.8: Descriptive Statistics — Family Influence (Q7, n=151)

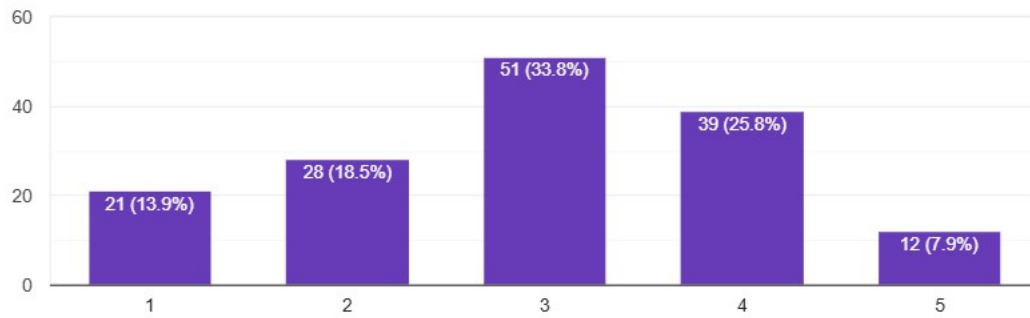


4.4.2 Peer and Social Group Influence

Peer influence was rated at a near-identical mean of 2.95 (SD = 1.15), matching family influence almost exactly. This challenges the common assumption that Gen Z is primarily peer-driven: in the Pakistani context, family and social group expectations exert equally significant levels of pressure on fashion decisions.

Influence Source	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Family Expectations (Q7)	2.97	1.17	Moderate influence
Peer / Social Group (Q8)	2.95	1.15	Moderate influence

Table 4.9: Comparative Influence — Family vs. Peer Pressure (n=151)

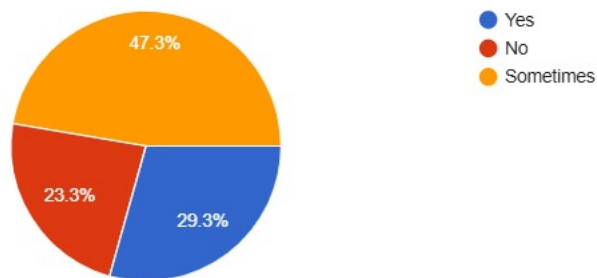


4.4.3 Cultural Conflict with Fashion Preferences

One of the most significant findings of this study is the near-universal experience of cultural conflict. A combined 76.2% of respondents experience conflict between their personal fashion preferences and cultural norms — either sometimes (47.0%) or always (29.1%). Only 23.2% report no cultural conflict.

Response	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
No — No conflict experienced	35	23.2%
Sometimes	71	47.0%
Yes — Always experience conflict	44	29.1%
Total (valid responses)	150	100%

Table 4.10: Cultural Norms Conflict with Personal Fashion Preferences (Q9, n=150*)



Cross-tabulation by age shows that the 18–20 group experiences the highest rate of 'sometimes' conflict (55%), while the 21–23 group has the highest rate of 'no conflict' (34%). This nuanced pattern suggests that late adolescent shoppers are still actively navigating the tension, while some older members of the cohort have reached a more stable resolution — either asserting personal identity or internalizing cultural conformity.

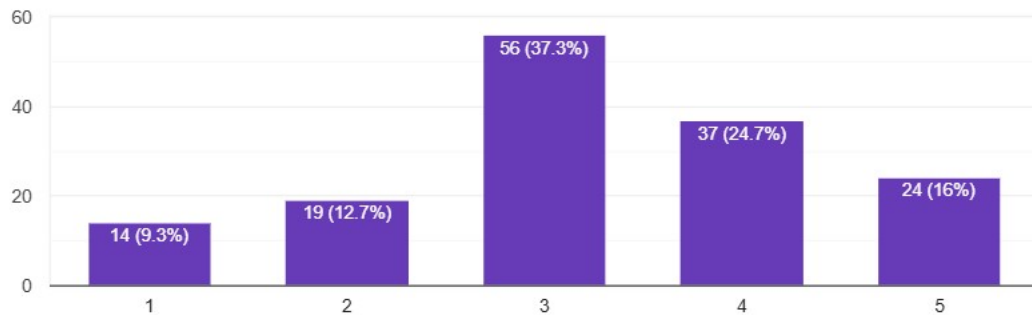
4.5 Social Media and Fashion Decision-Making

4.5.1 Social Media Usage for Fashion Guidance

Social media usage for fashion guidance was the highest-scoring variable across all Likert-scale items, with a mean of 3.25 (SD = 1.15). The table below ranks all Likert-scale constructs by mean score, illustrating that social media engagement supersedes family pressure, peer pressure, brand satisfaction, and cultural alignment as an active daily force in Gen Z fashion decision-making.

Construct	Mean (1–5)	SD	Rank
Social Media Usage for Fashion	3.25	1.15	1st
Satisfaction with OUTFITTER Variety	3.09	1.05	2nd
Decision Paralysis / Overwhelm	3.05	1.12	3rd
Family Influence on Clothing	2.97	1.17	4th
Peer / Social Group Influence	2.95	1.15	5th
Cultural Alignment with OUTFITTER	2.91	1.08	6th

Table 4.11: Ranked Mean Scores Across All Likert-Scale Constructs (n=151)



The positive correlation between social media use and decision paralysis ($r = 0.290$, see Section 4.8) supports Chen and Liu's (2022) paradoxical effect: social media expands aspirational preferences while increasing the number of criteria against which in-store choices are evaluated, ultimately intensifying rather than resolving decision conflict.

4.5.2 Social Media as a Coping Strategy

When asked about strategies used to overcome shopping indecision, 17.9% of respondents selected 'checking social media for inspiration (Instagram, TikTok)' as their primary coping mechanism. This dual role of social media — simultaneously a source of paralysis and a coping tool — is a nuanced finding with direct implications for OUTFITTER's digital marketing strategy.

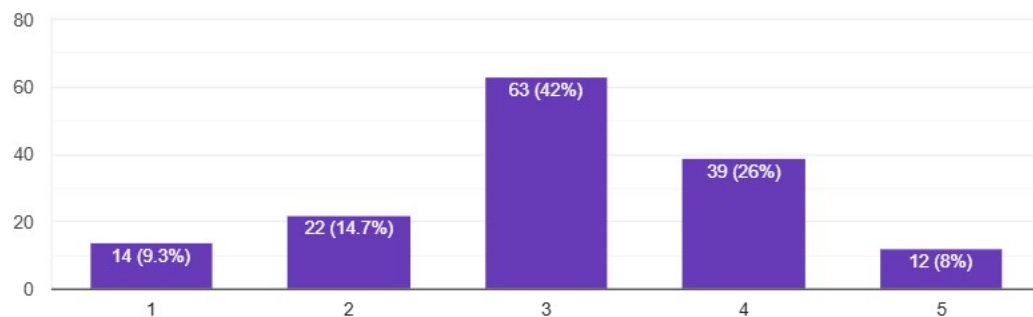
4.6 Brand Perception: Satisfaction and Cultural Fit

4.6.1 Satisfaction with OUTFITTER's Gen Z Variety

Overall satisfaction with OUTFITTER's product range for Gen Z yielded a mean of 3.09 (SD = 1.05), indicating a broadly neutral-to-moderate level of satisfaction. The concentration of responses at the midpoint (41.7% selecting 'neutral') indicates significant untapped potential — the majority of the Gen Z audience is neither clearly satisfied nor clearly dissatisfied, representing an addressable opportunity.

Rating	Label	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1	Very Dissatisfied	14	9.3%
2	Dissatisfied	22	14.6%
3	Neutral	63	41.7%
4	Satisfied	39	25.8%
5	Very Satisfied	12	7.9%
Mean = 3.09 SD = 1.05		150*	100%

Table 4.12: Satisfaction with OUTFITTER Gen Z Variety (Q13, n=150*)

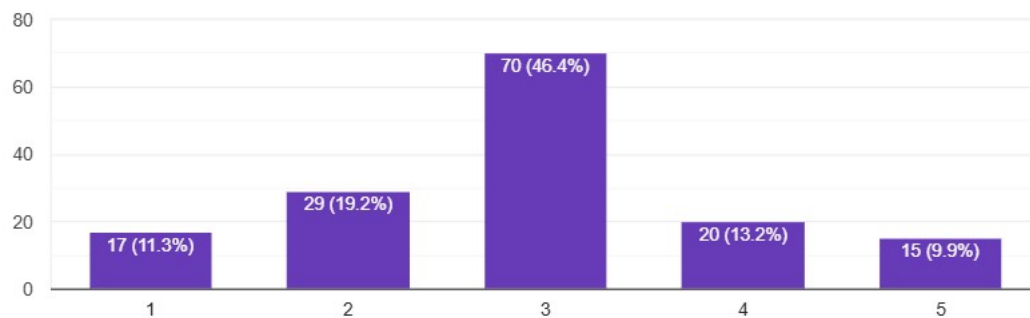


4.6.2 Cultural Identity Alignment

Perceived cultural alignment with OUTFITTER's product range registered the lowest mean across all Likert-scale items (M = 2.91, SD = 1.08). This is the most strategically significant finding in this section: Gen Z consumers do not strongly feel that OUTFITTER's clothing reflects their cultural identity. Given that 76.2% of respondents experience cultural conflict in fashion decision-making, this low alignment score suggests that OUTFITTER's product range is not adequately addressing the cultural dimension of its core customer's identity.

Statistic	Value
Mean	2.91
Standard Deviation	1.08
Minimum	1
Maximum	5
Interpretation	Low-to-moderate cultural alignment perceived

Table 4.13: Cultural Identity Alignment with OUTFITTER (Q14, n=151)



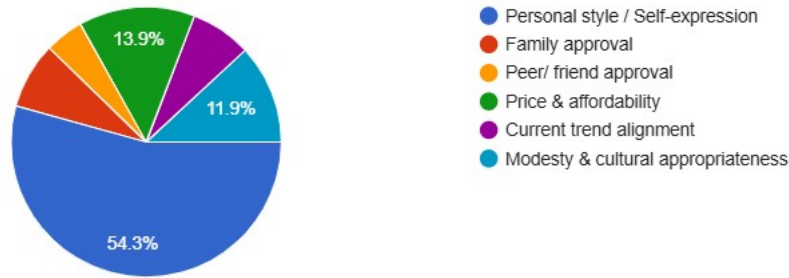
4.7 Coping Strategies and Recommended Store Improvements

4.7.1 Primary Decision Factors

Personal style and self-expression was the overwhelmingly dominant decision factor at 54.3%, followed distantly by price and affordability (13.9%) and modesty and cultural appropriateness (11.9%). This confirms the literature's characterisation of Gen Z as identity-driven fashion consumers — even in Pakistan's culturally constrained retail environment, self-expression remains the primary aspiration.

Factor	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Personal style / Self-expression	82	54.3%
Price & affordability	21	13.9%
Modesty & cultural appropriateness	18	11.9%
Family approval	12	7.9%
Current trend alignment	11	7.3%
Peer / friend approval	7	4.6%
Total	151	100%

Table 4.14: Primary Decision Factor When Choosing Outfits (Q11, n=151)



4.7.2 Strategies to Overcome Indecision

The most common strategy (30.5%) was buying only what 'feels most comfortable' — a cognitive simplification strategy that bypasses the broader choice landscape when overwhelmed. Budget-setting (25.8%) serves as a pre-commitment device that limits the decision space. Together these suggest that decision paralysis is causing consumers to default to safe choices, likely limiting purchase exploration and reducing basket size.

Strategy	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Buy only what feels most comfortable	46	30.5%
Set a budget before shopping	39	25.8%
Check social media for inspiration	27	17.9%
Take opinions from friends/family	23	15.2%
Choose based on current trends	15	9.9%
No strategy / blank	1	0.7%
Total	151	100%

Table 4.15: Strategies Used to Overcome Shopping Indecision (Q12, n=151)

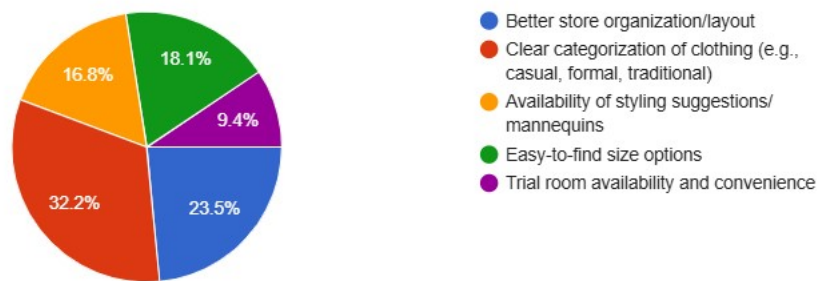


4.7.3 Recommended Store Improvements

Respondents were asked what changes would make their OUTFITTER experience less overwhelming. Clear product categorisation was the top-ranked improvement, selected by nearly one in three respondents (31.8%), followed by better store organisation (23.2%). The combined emphasis on navigation and layout (55.0%) indicates that OUTFITTER's current store environment is not sufficiently structured to reduce cognitive overload in the shopping experience.

Recommended Improvement	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Clear categorisation of clothing (casual, formal, traditional)	48	31.8%
Better store organisation / layout	35	23.2%
Easy-to-find size options	27	17.9%
Availability of styling suggestions / mannequins	25	16.6%
Trial room availability and convenience	14	9.3%
No response	2	1.3%
Total	151	100%

Table 4.16: Recommended Store Improvements to Reduce Decision Paralysis (Q15, n=151)



4.8 Correlation Analysis

To explore relationships between key constructs, Pearson correlation coefficients were computed between the decision paralysis variable (perceived overwhelm) and all other Likert-scale items. All correlations were statistically positive, indicating that higher levels of family influence, peer pressure, and social media engagement are each associated with elevated decision paralysis.

Variable	Pearson r	Strength	Direction	Interpretation
Family Influence	0.301	Medium	Positive ↑	Higher family pressure → higher decision paralysis
Peer / Social Group Influence	0.291	Medium	Positive ↑	Higher peer pressure → higher decision paralysis
Social Media Usage	0.290	Medium	Positive ↑	More social media use → more decision paralysis
OUTFITTER Satisfaction	0.251	Weak–Medium	Positive ↑	Lower satisfaction linked to more paralysis
Cultural Alignment	0.160	Weak	Positive ↑	Brand-level cultural misfit is a background factor

Table 4.13: Pearson Correlation Matrix — Decision Paralysis vs. Key Constructs (n=151)

The strongest correlate of decision paralysis is family influence ($r = 0.301$), closely followed by peer influence ($r = 0.291$) and social media usage ($r = 0.290$). These three converging social pressures form a triangulated influence framework that structurally predisposes Gen Z shoppers to decision overload. The relatively weak correlation of cultural alignment ($r = 0.160$) suggests that brand-level cultural incongruence functions as a background factor contributing to general dissatisfaction, rather than as the primary acute trigger of in-the-moment overwhelm; that more immediate trigger appears to be the active social-approval pressure exerted by family, peers, and social media at the actual point of decision.

4.9 Coping Strategies and Recommended Store Improvements

4.9.1 Primary Decision Factors

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Table 4.15: Strategies Used to Overcome Shopping Indecision (n=151)

4.8.3 Recommended Store Improvements

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Recommended Improvement	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Availability of styling suggestions / mannequins	25	16.6%
Trial room availability and convenience	14	9.3%
No response	2	1.3%
Total	151	100%

Table 4.16: Recommended Store Improvements to Reduce Decision Paralysis (n=151)

4.10 Discussion of Findings: Alignment with Prior Research

This section interprets the findings reported above against the body of literature reviewed in Chapter 2, explicitly noting where the OUTFITTER data align with prior research, where they diverge, and why. The discussion is organised thematically rather than by individual research question, since several findings speak to more than one research question simultaneously.

4.10.1 Psychological and Cultural Drivers of Overwhelm

The overall level of decision paralysis observed at OUTFITTER ($M = 3.05$; 29.3% ‘often/always’ overwhelmed) aligns closely with the choice-overload framework of Lim et al. (2022), which predicts that consumer satisfaction decreases and decision avoidance increases once the number of available options exceeds a manageable threshold. This alignment is expected given OUTFITTER's deliberately broad product range across multiple style categories (Haider & Khan, 2022), which structurally produces the high option count that Lim et al.'s framework identifies as the trigger condition.

The data also align with Brooke and Thompson's (2023) distinction between choice overload and decision fatigue: the fact that browsing volume alone does not fully explain overwhelm — 56.3% of respondents browse only 1–5 items yet 29.3% still report frequent overwhelm — supports their argument that fatigue stems from the cognitive effort of weighing multiple attributes (style, price, modesty, peer perception) simultaneously, rather than from sheer option count. Where the present findings extend beyond Brooke and Thompson (2023) is in showing that, in the OUTFITTER context, this fatigue manifests primarily as avoidance behaviour — narrowing the choice set quickly or abandoning the purchase — rather than as prolonged, exhaustive browsing.

4.10.2 Identity–Culture Tension

The contrast between what respondents value most (personal style/self-expression, 54.3%) and the high incidence of cultural conflict (76.2%) directly aligns with and empirically validates the ‘cultural veto’ mechanism proposed by Fatima et al. (2023): personally preferred items are pre-emptively excluded from consideration due to anticipated negative social response, narrowing the effective choice set. The 63.6% purchase abandonment rate is consistent with this mechanism,

since it represents the behavioural endpoint of an irresolvable identity–culture gap within a single shopping visit.

One finding that does not align with the broader Western literature on Gen Z social influence is the near-equal weighting of family ($M = 2.97$) and peer influence ($M = 2.95$). Much of the existing Gen Z consumer literature — including the comparison-anxiety findings of Kaur et al. (2022) — implicitly treats peer and social-media-driven influence as the dominant social force for this generation, with family influence assumed to be secondary. The OUTFITTER data do not support this assumption. The most plausible reason is contextual rather than generational: Pakistan's collectivist family structure and the cultural authority that family and community retain over modesty and gender-appropriate dressing (Niazi & Ahmed, 2023) elevate family influence to a level that simply does not exist in the more individualist Western contexts from which the peer-dominance assumption originates. This is therefore best read as a context-specific divergence rather than a contradiction of the underlying theory.

4.10.3 Social Media's Role

Social media usage emerged as the single highest-scoring construct in the study ($M = 3.25$) and was positively correlated with decision paralysis ($r = 0.290$). This aligns directly with Chen and Liu's (2022) paradoxical-effect finding that social media exposure expands aspirational style preferences while simultaneously increasing the number of criteria a consumer must reconcile at the point of in-store purchase, net amplifying rather than resolving decision conflict. It is also consistent with the comparison-anxiety mechanism described by Kaur et al. (2022), since the same exposure that inspires purchase intention also invites unfavourable self-comparison against curated, idealised content.

A partial misalignment appears, however, in respondents' own self-reported behaviour: 17.9% explicitly named social media as a coping strategy for indecision, implying a perceived problem-solving function that sits in tension with the positive correlation between social media use and paralysis. This is not a contradiction so much as a confirmation of the dual role Chen and Liu (2022) describe — social media is consciously used as a coping tool in the moment, even though its net statistical effect across the sample is to amplify, not alleviate, overwhelm. The reason for this gap between intention and outcome is that browsing social media for 'inspiration' while indecisive tends to introduce new stylistic options and comparison points rather than narrowing the existing choice set, so the coping attempt inadvertently reproduces the very overload it was meant to resolve.

4.10.4 Brand Perception and Cultural Fit

Cultural identity alignment with OUTFITTER's product range scored lowest of all constructs ($M = 2.91$) but showed the weakest correlation with acute decision paralysis ($r = 0.160$) of any variable tested. At first glance this appears to sit in tension with cultural identity theory (Fatima et al., 2023), which would predict cultural misfit to be a primary, acute trigger of paralysis. The more plausible reading, however, is that cultural alignment operates as a chronic, background brand-

perception issue — shaping general dissatisfaction with OUTFITTER's range over time — while the acute, in-the-moment overwhelm captured by the overwhelm item is driven more directly by active social-approval pressures (family and peer influence, both with stronger correlations) that surface at the specific moment of choosing an outfit. In other words, the findings do not contradict cultural identity theory; they refine it by distinguishing between cultural misfit as a structural/background condition and social pressure as the proximate trigger of paralysis.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Summary of Key Findings

This study set out to investigate the phenomenon of decision paralysis among Gen Z shoppers at OUTFITTER, Pakistan, with particular attention to the role of personal identity, cultural conformity, and social media. Based on a structured survey of 151 Gen Z respondents aged 18–27 years, the following core findings emerge:

Research Question	Key Finding	Evidence
Drivers of decision paralysis	Family & peer pressure are primary structural drivers; social media amplifies	$r=0.30$ (family), $r=0.29$ (peer), $r=0.29$ (social media)
Identity-culture tension	Purchase abandonment is the primary behavioral outcome of the identity-culture gap	63.6% have abandoned purchase due to indecision
Social media's role	Social media amplifies paralysis — net negative, despite its use as a coping tool	$M=3.25$ (highest); $r=0.29$ with paralysis
What should OUTFITTER do?	Clearer store categorization & culturally anchored product curation are the top priorities	31.8% demand better categorization; $M=2.91$ cultural alignment

Table 5.1: Summary of Key Findings by Research Question

Taken together, the findings confirm that decision paralysis at OUTFITTER is a structural and systemic phenomenon — rooted in the intersection of identity psychology, cultural conformity pressure, social influence, and inadequate store navigation — rather than a function of individual indecisiveness.

5.2 Theoretical Contributions

This study makes three contributions to the academic literature on Gen Z consumer behaviour in South Asian retail contexts:

- **First**, It provides empirical validation of the 'cultural veto' mechanism (Fatima et al., 2023) within a Pakistani fashion retail context, demonstrating that cultural constraints measurably narrow effective choice sets and drive purchase abandonment.

- **Second,** It extends Chen and Liu's (2022) social media paradox into a brick-and-mortar retail environment, showing that social media engagement is positively — not negatively — correlated with in-store decision paralysis.
- **Third,** It demonstrates that in Pakistan, family and peer influence operate at comparable intensity ($M = 2.97$ and $M = 2.95$ respectively), challenging the Western literature's tendency to prioritise peer influence as the dominant social force for Gen Z consumers.

5.3 Managerial Implications

Beyond the store-level fixes detailed in Section 5.4, the findings carry strategic weight for how OUTFITTER allocates investment, trains staff, and positions its brand within a culturally complex Gen Z market.

Priority	Implication
Treat the store as a decision-support system	Layout, staffing, and signage budgets should be evaluated by how much cognitive load they remove, not just by aesthetics or cost — making zoning and wayfinding a management KPI.
Redesign social content around restraint	Since social media use correlates with higher paralysis ($r = 0.290$), marketing teams should be measured on decision-ease, not just reach or engagement volume.
Invest in cultural fluency as a core capability	With cultural alignment scoring lowest of all constructs ($M = 2.91/5$), merchandising and design decisions should route through local cultural review, not just trend-following.
Use family/peer influence jointly in marketing strategy	Since family ($M = 2.97$) and peer influence ($M = 2.95$) are near-equal in Pakistan, campaigns should engage both circles together, rather than assuming peer-only influence as Western models do.

Table 5.2: Strategic Priorities for OUTFITTER Management

5.4 Practical Recommendations for OUTFITTER

Based on the empirical findings of this study, the following evidence-based recommendations are made to OUTFITTER across four strategic domains:

Recommendation 1: Restructure In-Store Layout Around Clear Category Zones

Evidence Base: 31.8% demanded clear product categorisation; 23.2% demanded better store organisation (Q15).

OUTFITTER should reorganise its in-store layout into clearly demarcated zones — Casual, Formal/Elegant, Traditional/Ethnic, Western-Inspired, and Trendy/Fashion-forward — supported by clear visual signage at the zone level. A zoned layout directly reduces the cognitive load of navigating the product range, addressing the single highest-priority customer demand identified in this study. Staff training should emphasise guiding customers to the most relevant zone based on a brief style conversation rather than overwhelming them with the full product range.

Recommendation 2: Introduce In-Store Styling Support

Evidence Base: 16.6% demanded styling suggestions/mannequins; comfort-driven purchasing (30.5%) signals disengagement rather than genuine preference satisfaction (Q12).

OUTFITTER should invest in regularly updated mannequin displays modelling complete, occasion-ready outfits across each style zone. A lightweight in-store styling assistance programme — brief, opt-in conversations with trained staff who can suggest complete outfits — would reduce the cognitive burden of outfit assembly for shoppers experiencing paralysis. A digital kiosk or tablet-based outfit-builder tool, allowing customers to input style and occasion preferences and receive curated outfit suggestions from current stock, would extend this capability without requiring proportional staff investment.

Recommendation 3: Develop Culturally Anchored Product Lines and Content

Evidence Base: Cultural alignment scored lowest of all constructs ($M = 2.91/5$); 76.2% experience cultural conflict (Q9).

OUTFITTER should develop a dedicated 'Pakistani Identity' product line or in-store section that explicitly bridges global aesthetics with local cultural conventions — pieces designed around modesty standards and gender norms prevalent in Pakistani society while retaining the brand's contemporary aesthetic. Collaborations with Pakistani designers, local influencers who embody culturally grounded style, and community-driven seasonal collections would strengthen this identity alignment. On the digital side, OUTFITTER's social media content strategy should pivot from globally aspirational imagery toward culturally contextualised content — demonstrating how OUTFITTER pieces can be worn within Pakistani social contexts rather than against them.

Recommendation 4: Improve Size Accessibility and Trial Room Experience

Evidence Base: 17.9% identified easy-to-find size options as a priority; 9.3% cited trial room availability (Q15).

Improving size accessibility — through better in-store size organisation, consistent stock availability of popular sizes, and clear size guides — would remove a practical barrier to purchase completion. Increasing the number and accessibility of trial rooms, and reducing waiting times, would also directly address a specific improvement demand. These operational improvements,

while less strategically complex than the cultural alignment recommendations above, would have an immediate positive impact on purchase conversion rates.

Recommendation 5: Reposition Social Media as a Decision Simplifier

Evidence Base: Social media use $M=3.25$ (highest construct); $r=0.29$ with decision paralysis; 17.9% use it as a coping strategy (Q10, Q12).

Given the dual role of social media as both a driver of aspiration and a source of cognitive overload, OUTFITTER should intentionally design its social media content to simplify rather than expand choice. This means moving away from 'inspiration gallery' content toward 'decision support' content: posts and reels that model complete outfits for specific occasions, cultural contexts, and budget ranges, reducing the aspiration-to-reality translation effort that amplifies in-store paralysis. Shoppable social media posts linking directly to specific recommended outfits would further collapse the distance between digital inspiration and in-store decision.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

This study is subject to several limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings:

- **Sample Gender Imbalance:** The sample is predominantly female (78.8%), which may limit the generalisability of findings to the male Gen Z segment at OUTFITTER. Future research should ensure gender-balanced sampling.
- **Geographic Scope:** The survey was administered in Rawalpindi/Islamabad only. OUTFITTER operates across multiple cities in Pakistan; consumer behaviour, cultural norms, and brand perception may vary significantly across geographies.
- **Cross-Sectional Design:** While this study provides strong descriptive and correlational evidence, it does not establish causal relationships between cultural conflict, social media use, and decision paralysis. Longitudinal or experimental designs would be required to confirm causality.
- **Self-Report Bias:** Self-reported Likert-scale data is subject to social desirability bias; respondents may underreport the extent of family or cultural pressure to appear more self-determined.

5.5 Directions for Future Research

The findings of this study open several productive avenues for future research:

- A gender-stratified comparative analysis of decision paralysis at OUTFITTER, with a targeted effort to achieve proportional male representation, would provide more nuanced insights into how identity-culture tension operates differently across gender lines.

- A qualitative follow-up study — using in-depth interviews or focus groups with a subset of survey respondents — would enrich the quantitative findings with first-person narrative accounts of the cultural conflict experience in the OUTFITTER shopping context.
- A multi-brand comparative study examining whether decision paralysis is OUTFITTER-specific or characteristic of the Pakistani Gen Z fashion retail experience more broadly would have significant industry-level implications.
- Experimental research testing the effectiveness of specific in-store interventions (zoned layouts, styling kiosks, curated outfit displays) on purchase conversion rates and decision satisfaction would directly test the recommendations proposed in this chapter.

5.6 Concluding Remarks

This study has produced the first empirically grounded portrait of decision paralysis among Gen Z consumers at OUTFITTER, Pakistan. The findings confirm that decision paralysis is not an individual failing but a structurally produced outcome — arising from the collision of identity aspiration, cultural constraint, social influence, and an inadequately navigable retail environment.

For OUTFITTER, the commercial implication is clear: 63.6% of Gen Z shoppers are leaving the store without purchasing not because the brand lacks appeal, but because the shopping experience fails to adequately support their decision-making process within a culturally complex context. Addressing this gap — through smarter store design, culturally grounded product curation, and decision-supportive digital content — represents a significant and addressable opportunity.

More broadly, this research contributes to a growing recognition that the Gen Z consumer experience in South Asian markets cannot be understood through the lens of Western retail theory alone. The intersection of global aspiration and cultural obligation that characterises Pakistani Gen Z fashion consumption demands a dedicated, locally contextualised body of research — and this study represents a meaningful step in that direction.

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