Advertising Gender-inclusive fashion: Identity Signaling, Uniqueness Appeals, and Perceived Social Impact in Young Consumers

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Gender-inclusive fashion has become a visible platform for identity signaling and value expression in contemporary brand communication. However, advertising research still lacks evidence on which psychological mechanisms convert identity-oriented motives into actual purchase behavior in this category. This study develops and tests a persuasion-relevant model explaining gender-inclusive clothing purchase among Gen Z and millennial consumers. Using survey data from Australian and millennial and Gen Z consumers, we examine how image-focused personality characteristics connect to buying behavior via distinctiveness-driven motivations, and how this mechanism intensifies when individuals view their decisions as socially influential in contesting traditional gender conventions. Findings support a mediated and moderated process linking image-focused personality characteristics to buying behavior. Implications for practice indicate that communication strategies combining distinctiveness cues with credible norm-change impact claims are more likely to activate purchase responses in gender-inclusive fashion contexts.

Keywords: gender-inclusive clothing; personality traits; symbolic consumption; distinctiveness; gender conventions.