

The Multi-Occasion Collection Design for Digital Natives Based on Postmodernism

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Abstract

Digital Natives—particularly those in Generation Z—have grown up immersed in digital technology, leading to multitasking lifestyles that blur the boundaries between work, socialising and leisure. Yet both the fashion industry and design research have largely overlooked their need for garments that transition seamlessly across these contexts. This mixed-methods study seeks to fill that gap by identifying digital natives' apparel preferences, analysing their dressing styles, integrating postmodern art concepts into fashion design, and developing and evaluating a multi-occasion collection. We conducted a four-step process combining a quantitative survey with 40 participants, qualitative style analysis using a paper-doll dataset, documentary analysis of postmodern artworks, and research-through-design practice. The findings show that Generation Z respondents favour versatile pieces with loose silhouettes, monochromatic and neutral palettes dominated by black, and materials with smooth textures and subtle patterns. Postmodern art analysis revealed themes of minimalism, appropriation, deconstruction and mixed-media assemblage, which informed a five-look collection—“Synsation: Synthetic Sensation”—that uses mixed-media knitting and modular elements to enable reconfiguration for multiple occasions. By integrating consumer data, art theory and creative practice, this research demonstrates how fashion design can serve as a rigorous mode of inquiry and offers a transferable framework for future multi-occasion apparel development.

Keywords: Digital Natives; Generation Z; multi-occasion apparel; postmodernism; fashion design research, research through design.

Introduction

The last three decades have witnessed a profound transformation in the social and technological landscape as digital communication and networked media have become embedded in everyday life. The concept of “Digital Natives” refers to individuals who have grown up with digital technologies and who therefore possess innate familiarity with computers, mobile devices, and the internet (Prensky, 2001). This group encompasses a large segment of Generation Z (born after 1997), who integrate technology into every aspect of their daily routines and whose consumption patterns are shaped by multitasking and rapid access to information.

In Thailand and globally, Digital Natives represent a significant consumer cohort with increasing purchasing power (International Telecommunication Union, 2013; Mindshare Thailand, 2014). They lead active lives that span work, socialising and leisure within a single day and often maintain multiple professional roles simultaneously. As a result, their clothing increasingly needs to be functional, comfortable, and adaptable across various activities, moving beyond the conventional separation of casual, business and

partywear (Utiswannakul, 2022). Moreover, the Covid-19 pandemic and the rise of flexible working have accelerated demand for garments that can seamlessly transition between physical and virtual contexts, making multi-occasion apparel a critical area of inquiry.

To date, few fashion brands have addressed the specific requirements of Digital Natives, particularly within an academic framework that integrates consumer data with conceptual design. Postmodernism, with its emphasis on hybridity, irony, and the deconstruction of established norms, offers a fertile theoretical foundation for reimagining multi-occasion apparel (Hutcheon 1989; Chiewpitayakarn, 2017). This research therefore investigates how postmodern art concepts can inform fashion design for Generation Z Digital Natives.

Despite the growing importance of Generation Z Digital Natives as consumers, there is little scholarly research that combines empirical insights into their clothing preferences with theoretical frameworks—such as postmodernism—to guide the design of multi-occasion garments. Existing studies tend to treat consumption behaviour and creative practice separately, leaving a gap at the

intersection of fashion design research and user-centred evidence. This study addresses that gap by integrating quantitative and qualitative data with postmodern art theory to develop a practical design framework and prototype collection.

While postmodernism encompasses a wide range of artistic expressions, it was selected as the primary conceptual framework for this study because of its inherent compatibility with the lived realities of Generation Z Digital Natives. Rather than functioning solely as an aesthetic reference, postmodernism is employed here as a conceptual system for designing adaptability. Postmodern art rejects rigid hierarchies, fixed meanings, and singular functions, instead embracing hybridity, fragmentation, irony, and the coexistence of multiple interpretations. These characteristics resonate strongly with the multitasking lifestyles of Digital Natives, who routinely navigate overlapping social, professional, and leisure contexts within a single day. By drawing on postmodern principles—such as deconstruction, mixed media, and the reinterpretation of everyday forms—this research positions fashion not as a static response to a single occasion, but as a

flexible system capable of adaptation and reconfiguration. Postmodernism therefore provides a theoretically robust lens through which multi-occasion apparel can be conceptualised, allowing garments to shift meaning and function according to the wearer's context, rather than conforming to traditional dress codes.

As an exploratory, design-led investigation, this study is subject to several design-related limitations. First, the creative outcomes are exploratory and practice-based, focusing on a five-look prototype collection rather than large-scale production or commercial feasibility. As a result, certain technical aspects—such as long-term durability, cost efficiency, and industrial scalability of mixed-media knitting and modular components—were not fully tested. Second, while postmodernism offers rich conceptual flexibility, its emphasis on abstraction and hybridity may not appeal to all consumer segments within Generation Z, particularly those who favour minimal functionality over conceptual expression. Finally, the evaluation of the designs was conducted through expert review and limited wearer feedback, which, while appropriate for design research, does not provide

statistically generalisable results. These limitations underscore the exploratory nature of the study and point toward future research opportunities that could expand testing, refine production strategies, and compare alternative artistic frameworks.

Literature Review

The term “Digital Natives” emerged to describe young people who have grown up in a world saturated with digital technology. Unlike “digital immigrants,” who were born before the digital era, Digital Natives are familiar with computers, mobile phones and the internet and use these tools intuitively (Chanchairuk, 2011). They are typically between ten and twenty-nine years old (Chanchairuk, 2011) and exhibit distinct cognitive patterns: they prefer to receive information quickly, engage in parallel processing and multitasking, navigate content randomly via hyperlinks and thrive on networked communication and instant feedback (Prensky, 2001). This generational shift from the analog age to the digital age has produced individuals with strong digital literacy and adaptability. Taken together, these characteristics suggest that Digital Natives are not only technologically fluent but also accustomed to fluid role-

switching and rapid contextual change. For fashion design, this implies that static, single-purpose garments may no longer align with their everyday practices, highlighting the need for apparel that supports adaptability across multiple social and professional settings. Recent design research also emphasises modularity and adaptability as core strategies for responding to contemporary lifestyle complexity, positioning garment transformation as both a functional and conceptual design approach (Rissanen & McQuillan, 2020).

Globally, the demographic significance of Digital Natives has grown rapidly. Early large-scale reports indicated the rapid growth of Digital Natives as a demographic group, with international and national surveys already identifying them as a significant proportion of youth populations in the early 2010s (International Telecommunication Union, 2013). In Thailand a 2014 market survey reported that Digital Natives accounted for roughly half of the country’s internet users aged 14–24 (Mindshare Thailand, 2014). These statistics highlight both the scale of this cohort and its growing purchasing power, particularly in consumer sectors such as fashion.

The lifestyles of Digital Natives are characterized by multitasking and fluid transitions between professional, social and recreational activities. Many maintain multiple jobs—designing graphics, creating content, composing music or working in digital media—while simultaneously socializing and pursuing hobbies. Such mobility leads to a demand for clothing that is not limited to a single occasion but can adapt seamlessly to various contexts throughout the day. However, much of the existing fashion discourse addresses these lifestyle shifts at the level of consumer behaviour rather than translating them into concrete design strategies. This gap suggests the need for a framework that connects lifestyle analysis directly to garment construction, modularity, and aesthetic decision-making. More recent studies continue to characterise Generation Z as a cohort defined by fluid role-switching, hybrid online–offline engagement, and context-dependent consumption practices (Francis & Hoefel, 2018).

To address this demand, it is instructive to look beyond conventional fashion paradigms to theoretical frameworks that embrace hybridity and flexibility within both conceptual and material dimensions of design. Postmodernism, a

cultural movement that emerged in the late 1980s as a critique of modernist uniformity, emphasizes the fusion of disparate elements, appropriation of everyday objects and deconstruction of established forms (Hutcheon, 1989). In fashion design, postmodernism dissolves boundaries between high and low art and celebrates bold colors, patchwork, bricolage and theatrical presentation. Designers such as John Galiano, COMME des GARÇONS, Alexander McQueen, Yohji Yamamoto, Yves Saint Laurent and Vivienne Westwood are notable for incorporating these principles (Chiewpitayakarn, 2017). Postmodern fashion encourages adaptability through the combination of incongruent pieces and the reinterpretation of historical garments; for example, traditional corsets are shortened for casual wear and long-sleeved shirts are deconstructed into party apparel. The movement also values bricolage—the creative assembly of diverse materials—which fosters garments that can be rearranged and layered in unexpected ways (Chiewpitayakarn, 2017). Performative runway presentations by designers like Galiano and McQueen further demonstrate how fashion can blend with installation art and mixed media.

Across these examples, postmodern fashion is less concerned with fixed stylistic categories than with the negotiation of meaning through recombination and reinterpretation. When viewed through the lens of Digital Natives' lifestyles, postmodernism offers more than an aesthetic reference; it provides a conceptual logic for designing garments that can shift function and identity according to context.

Synthesising the above literature, this review underscores the relevance of postmodern concepts for multi-occasion clothing. The deconstruction and recombination of garments, the blending of high and low references and the use of mixed media resonate with Digital Natives' desire for versatile, expressive apparel. At the same time, the literature reveals a gap in the market: despite the rising purchasing power of Digital Natives, few brands offer multi-occasion clothing that aligns with their multitasking lifestyles. Our research therefore draws upon postmodernism to develop a design framework that bridges this gap. By reframing postmodernism as a design logic rather than a stylistic label, this study positions fashion design as an analytical response to contemporary lifestyle complexity.

Objectives

This study aims to:

1. **Identify** the apparel needs and lifestyle characteristics of Generation Z Digital Natives who lead multitasking lives and hold multiple professional roles.
2. **Analyse** current dress styles of Digital Natives to determine design elements suitable for multi-occasion wear.
3. **Synthesize** postmodern art concepts into design principles that can enhance multi-occasion apparel.
4. **Create** and evaluate a prototype multi-occasion collection that integrates consumer insights and postmodern theory.

Methodology

This study adopts a mixed-methods research design combined with research-through-design practice. The methodological structure was developed to systematically connect user data, visual analysis, theoretical inquiry, and creative experimentation. Each method addresses a specific research objective and generates distinct data outputs that inform subsequent stages, enabling triangulation across quantitative, qualitative, and practice-based evidence. A four-step mixed-methods research design was employed (Fig. 1). Each step builds upon the previous one, enabling

triangulation of data from different sources and ensuring that the final creative outputs are grounded in both empirical evidence and theoretical frameworks.

Step	Purpose	Method	Outcome
1. Quantitative survey	Profile the lifestyle, purchasing behaviour and clothing needs of Generation Z Digital Natives in Thailand.	A structured questionnaire was distributed online to 40 purposively selected respondents aged 18–27. The survey comprised four sections: demographic information, daily activities and lifestyle, fashion consumption behaviour, and multi-occasion clothing preferences. Descriptive statistics were used to identify dominant trends.	Identified desired clothing categories (casual, streetwear, business, party), consumption habits and preferred design features.
2. Qualitative style analysis	Examine existing dress styles worn by Digital Natives.	The Paper Doll Data Set (Yamaguchi et al., 2012) was adapted to analyse 100 outfits collected from local and international sources between September 2021 and March 2022. Garments were coded for silhouette, colour, material and pattern.	Derived patterns of loose silhouettes, monochromatic colour schemes and smooth textures that define multi-occasion wear.
3. Documentary research on postmodernism	Investigate how postmodern art principles can inform fashion design.	Analysis of 15 artworks by Jeff Koons, Félix González-Torres and Damien Hirst. Works were examined for composition, colour, materials and techniques.	Identified themes of minimalism, appropriation, deconstruction, mixed media and viewer participation.
4. Creative practice	Translate research insights into a prototype fashion collection and evaluate its suitability for multi-occasion wear.	Trend forecasting (Spring–Summer 2024 WGSN reports) informed the development of a new trend “Parallel Perception.” Mood and material boards were created by synthesising postmodern concepts with fashion trend analysis. Design sketches were developed, followed by material experimentation and mixed-media knitting techniques. Five looks were constructed and evaluated through peer review and wearer feedback.	Produced the “Synsation: Synthetic Sensation” collection comprising five modular outfits with interchangeable components suitable for casual, streetwear, business and party settings.

Figure 1 Four-step mixed-methods research process.

1. Quantitative survey

Purposive sampling recruited 40 respondents (aged 18–27) to capture diverse perspectives within the Generation Z Digital Natives demographic. This sample size is consistent with Hertzog’s guidance for pilot and exploratory studies, which evaluates sample sizes of 10–40 participants per group and cautions that larger pilots may be impractical. Our sample thus lies at the upper bound of this recommended range, ensuring rich, illustrative insights without seeking statistical generalisation. Participants were recruited through social media channels and invited to complete an online questionnaire. The survey allowed multiple responses per question to reflect respondents’ multitasking behaviours. Data were analysed descriptively to identify dominant apparel occasions and design preferences.

2. Qualitative style analysis

To triangulate the survey findings and gain deeper understanding of existing fashion habits, a qualitative analysis of 100 outfits drawn from local and international fashion scenes was conducted. The Paper Doll Data Set method provides a systematic way to analyse style elements

(Yamaguchi et al., 2012). Outfits were coded independently by the researchers, and any discrepancies were resolved through discussion. The distribution across casual, streetwear, business and partywear aligned with the survey results, validating the sample’s relevance.

3. Documentary research on postmodernism

Postmodernism resists fixed definitions and is characterised by pluralism, irony and the juxtaposition of high and low culture (Hutcheon, 1989; Chiewpitayakarn, 2017). To operationalise postmodern concepts for fashion design, the research examined 15 works by three leading artists who epitomise different strands of postmodern art. Jeff Koons’s appropriation of ready-made objects, Félix González-Torres’s participatory installations and Damien Hirst’s confrontations with mortality provided case studies for analysing composition, materials and techniques. The analysis synthesised key themes that could translate into design strategies, such as deconstruction of conventional forms, incorporation of everyday materials and the use of mixed media to evoke multiple interpretations.

4. Creative practice and evaluation

Creative practice served both as a research method and as a means of knowledge generation. Fashion trend forecasting identified overarching themes such as SenseScapes: Synaesthesia and Creative Confidence from WGSN's Spring–Summer 2024 report, which informed the development of a new trend, Parallel Perception. An inspiration board titled “Synsation: Synthetic Sensation” was curated to connect postmodern art with contemporary fashion trends. Materials were selected to embody hybridity (e.g., combining denim and organza) and sustainability (e.g., recycled synthetics). A mixed-media knitting technique was developed to integrate different yarns and textures within a single garment, reflecting postmodern collage. The resulting five looks were reviewed by three fashion design lecturers and trialled by two Generation Z volunteers to assess fit, comfort, and adaptability. Feedback highlighted the ease of transforming outfits for different occasions and the novelty of the mixed-media knitting technique.

Results

1. Consumer insights

Core findings: The survey identified casual wear as the most frequently selected apparel category among Generation Z respondents, followed by streetwear, business wear, and party wear.

Supporting information: All respondents reported multitasking daily routines involving combinations of study, freelance work, and creative activities. Casual wear was selected by 90% of respondents, streetwear by 62.5%, business wear by 52.5%, and party wear by 30%. Although business and party wear were selected less frequently, respondents reported using formal garments for meetings and presentations and party garments for after-work social activities. Additional survey responses indicated interest in unique designs, vintage-inspired pieces, and garments designed for use across multiple occasions within a single day.



Figure 2 The characteristics of Digital Natives (Generation Z)

Source: www.vogue.com, www.instagram.com, www.google.com

Arranged: Papawarin Akkharanet, Atthaphon Ponglawhapun, 2022

2. Style characteristics of multi-occasion wear

Core findings: The style analysis revealed consistent preferences for loose silhouettes, layered garments, and restrained colour palettes among Digital Natives.

Supporting information: Across the 100 analysed outfits, loose silhouettes were predominant, including maxi-length trousers and skirts and knee-length dresses. Tops were most commonly waist-length and worn beneath longer outerwear. Most outfits consisted of three garments, reflecting layered styling practices. Colour analysis showed a high prevalence of monochromatic black ensembles (90%) and neutral combinations of black, white, and grey (77%). Vivid colours appeared infrequently (5–13%) and were typically used as accent

elements. Fabric analysis indicated a predominance of smooth textures (70%), with rough or matte surfaces appearing less frequently to provide contrast. Decorative patterns were primarily abstract or composition-based and occupied a limited area of each garment (approximately 1–20%).

3. Postmodern art analysis

Core findings: The documentary analysis identified recurring formal and conceptual characteristics across selected postmodern artworks by Jeff Koons, Félix González-Torres, and Damien Hirst.

Supporting information: Analysis of Jeff Koons's works revealed the repeated use of ready-made and industrial materials, such as stainless steel, to replicate familiar objects including balloon

animals and household items. Félix González-Torres's installations were characterised by the use of everyday materials—such as light bulbs, candy, and paper stacks—and by formats that allow physical interaction or participation by viewers. Damien Hirst's works frequently combined organic and synthetic materials within assemblages and installations. Across the analysed artworks, common features included restrained or minimal compositional structures, the use of primary or highly saturated colours for contrast, the elevation of commonplace or mass-produced objects, and the inclusion of viewer presence as an integral component of the artwork.

4. Creative fashion collection design: Syensation—Synthetic Sensation

The resulting collection consists of five looks designed to be worn interchangeably across casual, streetwear, business and party contexts. Key features include:

- **Mixed-Media Knitting:** Each garment integrates multiple yarn types and materials (e.g., recycled polyester, metallic thread) within a single knitted piece, creating rich tactile contrast.

- **Modular Components:** Detachable sleeves, collars and panels enable the wearer to reconfigure garments for different occasions—e.g., adding a structured collar for business meetings or removing a knit panel for a casual look.
- **Colour Palette:** Predominantly monochromatic black and grey with strategic pops of vivid neon inspired by postmodern art, allowing wearers to express individuality while maintaining versatility.
- **Deconstructed Silhouettes:** Traditional garments such as suits and party dresses are reinterpreted; for example, denim (associated with streetwear) is incorporated into an evening dress, and a tailored blazer features asymmetrical hemlines reminiscent of installation art.
- **Accessory Integration:** Accessories such as resin handbags and hybrid floral arrangements blend real and artificial elements, reflecting postmodern concepts of appropriation and mixed reality.



Figure 3 Sketch Design “Synsation: Synthetic Sensation”

Source: Papawarin Akkharanet, Atthaphon Ponglawhapun, 2022



Figure 3 Complete Creative Collection Designs of Five Fully Tailored Outfits

Source: Papawarin Akkharanet, Atthaphon Ponglawhapun, 2022

Peer and wearer feedback without compromising aesthetic emphasized that the garments are coherence. The mixed-media knitting comfortable, allow freedom of movement technique was praised for its visual and can be styled in multiple ways novelty and tactile appeal, while the

modular design facilitated quick transitions between formal and informal settings.

Discussion

This study illustrates how a mixed-methods design can generate a nuanced understanding of consumer needs and translate them into concrete design solutions. The quantitative survey provided baseline data on clothing preferences, while the qualitative style analysis validated these preferences and revealed underlying aesthetic principles. Documentary research on postmodern art offered a theoretical lens through which to interpret consumer desires and challenge conventional design norms. By integrating these strands, the creative practice not only produced a tangible outcome but also served as a form of research that generated design-oriented knowledge about multi-occasion apparel.

Building on the empirical findings, the predominance of black and neutral colours among Generation Z respondents can be interpreted through postmodern aesthetics: monochromatic palettes offer a blank canvas for personal expression and align with minimalism, while pops of vivid colour can be read as acts of appropriation and irony. Loose silhouettes and modular

layering echo postmodern deconstruction, allowing garments to be rearranged and reinterpreted by the wearer. Mixed-media knitting and the use of recycled and synthetic materials reflect the postmodern celebration of hybridity and the blurring of boundaries between art and everyday life. By synthesising these elements, the collection moves beyond mere functionality to propose a new aesthetic for Digital Natives—a fusion of comfort, adaptability and conceptual depth.

The study also demonstrates the value of research through design, in which the creative process served as a laboratory for testing theoretical concepts and consumer insights in real garments. Feedback from experts and wearers confirmed that the collection met the need for multi-occasion versatility while offering a distinctive aesthetic grounded in postmodernism. Such iterative practice suggests that fashion design can be a rigorous mode of inquiry when supported by systematic data collection and theoretical reflection.

A 2019 study by Lang and Wei used the Theory of Reasoned Action to examine young U.S. women's intention to buy transformable apparel. While this study

focused on consumer intention, it concluded that environmental beliefs, environmental apparel knowledge and a tendency for creative choice positively influence purchase intention, framing transformable garments as sustainable and uniquely expressive. Unlike this consumer-behaviour-focused research, our mixed-methods study not only gathered preferences but also integrated postmodern theory into a modular collection for Generation Z Digital Natives. This design-research approach moves beyond measuring intentions to actually demonstrating how versatility, sustainability and aesthetic innovation can be embodied in multi-occasion fashion.

Conclusion

Digital Natives in Generation Z demand clothing that accommodates their multitasking lifestyles and expresses their identities within both physical and digital realms. By combining quantitative and qualitative research with documentary analysis and creative practice, this study developed a holistic understanding of Generation Z apparel needs and translated these insights into a prototype collection. The five-look “Synsation: Synthetic Sensation”

collection demonstrates how postmodern principles—minimalism, appropriation, deconstruction and mixed media—can be harnessed to create versatile garments suitable for casual, streetwear, business and party occasions. The research contributes a methodological framework for integrating consumer insights and art theory into fashion design and highlights the potential of research through design to generate new knowledge.

More specifically, this study’s conclusions demonstrate clear alignment with the stated research objectives. The objective of identifying the apparel needs and lifestyle characteristics of Generation Z Digital Natives was achieved through survey and style analysis findings that confirmed multitasking routines and a strong demand for adaptable, multi-occasion clothing. The analysis of existing dress styles further addressed the second objective by identifying recurring design characteristics—such as loose silhouettes, layered construction, and restrained colour palettes—that define multi-occasion wear within this demographic. The objective of synthesising postmodern art concepts was fulfilled through documentary analysis, which translated recurring artistic strategies into fashion-

relevant principles. These principles were subsequently operationalised through research-through-design practice in the development and evaluation of the “Synsation: Synthetic Sensation” collection, thereby fulfilling the final objective of producing a prototype multi-occasion fashion collection. Collectively, the conclusions confirm a coherent relationship between the research objectives, methodological approach, and design outcomes, reinforcing the study’s contribution to fashion design research.

Recommendations

1. Expand the sample size and diversity: Future studies should recruit a larger and more diverse cohort of Digital Natives across different cultural, occupational, and geographic contexts. This would allow for comparative analysis and strengthen the generalisability of findings related to multi-occasion apparel preferences and lifestyle patterns.

2. Explore additional art movements: While postmodernism provided a productive conceptual lens in this study, other art movements—such as futurism, bio-art, or speculative design—may offer

alternative strategies for addressing adaptability, technology integration, or sustainability in fashion. Examining multiple artistic frameworks could generate diverse design logics and expand the aesthetic possibilities of multi-occasion garments.

3. Assess environmental impact: Given the growing importance of sustainability, future research should evaluate the environmental implications of multi-occasion apparel in greater depth. This may include lifecycle assessment of materials, analysis of production processes, and examination of how modularity influences garment longevity and consumption patterns.

4. Evaluate user experience longitudinally: Long-term wear testing with a larger and more diverse group of users is recommended to assess durability, comfort, and adaptability over time. Such studies would provide deeper insight into how users interact with modular garments in everyday contexts and how design features perform across repeated use and multiple occasions.

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