

# FASHION AND ACCESSORIES

Where self-expression meets spending power, and campus choices become a brand loyalty opportunity



## Introduction

For Gen Z Students, fashion is a daily act of self-expression. It shapes identity, sparks conversation and signals values. These are formative years when personal style evolves fast, peer influence runs deep, and discovery happens everywhere. From everyday wear and athleisure staples to TikTok trends, resale gems and sneaker drops, fashion fuels individuality and community. Outfits for nights out, interviews and festivals are more than just looks – they are statements. This is where habits begin, loyalties emerge, and smart brands earn relevance that grows with every term.

## Massive Fashion Spend

Gen Z Students are one of the most fashion-engaged consumer groups in the UK. An Oct 2024 report from UNiDAYS highlighted that nearly all plan to buy clothing or accessories in the next six months, with a combined projected spend of over £1.2bn. That's around £6.6m every day, despite the reality of tight student budgets. Over half say they could spend up to £249 each in that time, underlining fashion's importance.

**£6.6m per day**

**£1.2bn in 6 months**

**99% set to spend on new clothing and accessories in the next 6 months**

**52% intend to spend up to £249**

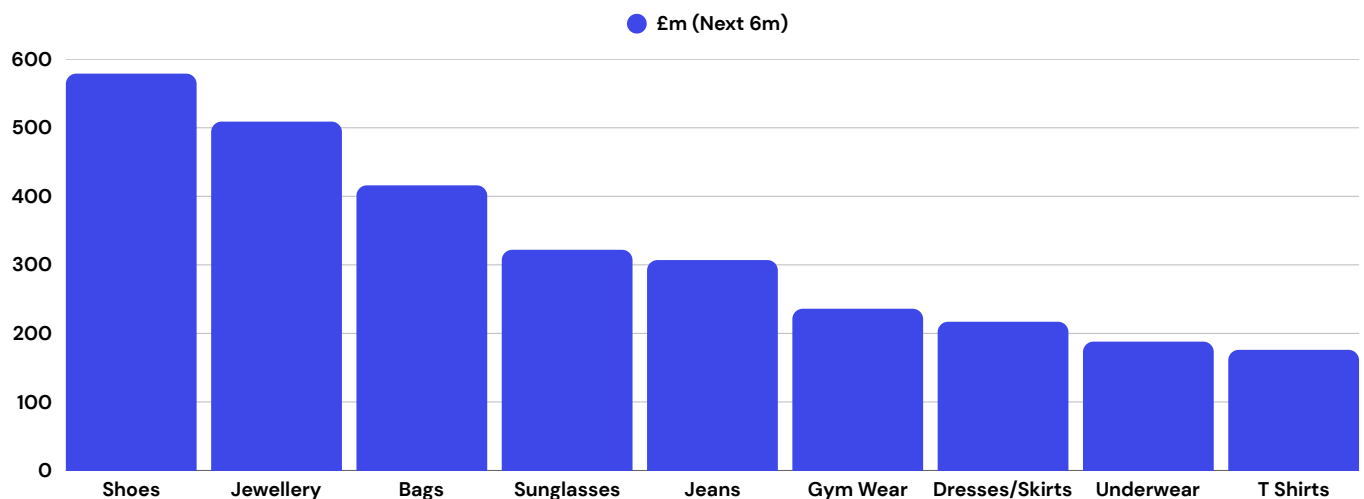
Sources: UNiDAYS "The Fashion Report", Oct 2024 (1)

Fashion holds meaning beyond the purchase. Students use it to express identity, mood and mindset, responding quickly to what feels relevant. They shop frequently, refresh often and buy with purpose. For brands, this is a key window to earn attention and influence real-time choices, laying the foundations for lasting brand preference in a high-choice market.

## What Are They Buying and Why?

From gym wear and jeans to trainers, bags and statement jewellery, students are shopping across every fashion category. Projected six-month spends include £579m on footwear, £509m on jewellery, and £416m on bags. Trainers dominate, with 85% planning to buy at least one pair. Key drivers: versatility, cultural relevance, and a passion point in their own right.

Predicted spend over next 6 months, UNiDAYS Oct 2024 Fashion Report, 1,600 Students [2]



But it's not just about category, it's about context. Student wardrobes are shaped by the moments that matter: Fresher's Week, festivals, job interviews, gym sessions, holidays and term-time nights out. These trigger purposeful purchases. Style choices shift to match mood, event or setting, blending function with expression.

Price and convenience remain central, but motivations go deeper. Fashion is how students show up, reflecting identity, confidence, culture and connection. Purchases are driven by influence – from social feeds, peers and campus spaces – and by intent, tied to events and milestones.

Brands that align with both lifestyle and mindset by tapping into the student calendar can reach students at their most receptive. For a fuller view of key cultural and commercial moments across the year, download our [Campus Calendar](#).

# Footwear Trends and Sneaker Culture on Campus

Sneakers play a central role in student fashion. For Gen Z, they combine practicality with self-expression and are worn daily across campus. Footwear tops all fashion categories in spend, and trainer purchases are consistent and intentional. While Nike, Adidas and New Balance dominate preference lists, students are brand-fluid and will switch if the fit, price and style feel right.



87% say they like to wear casual sneakers (highest of any generation)



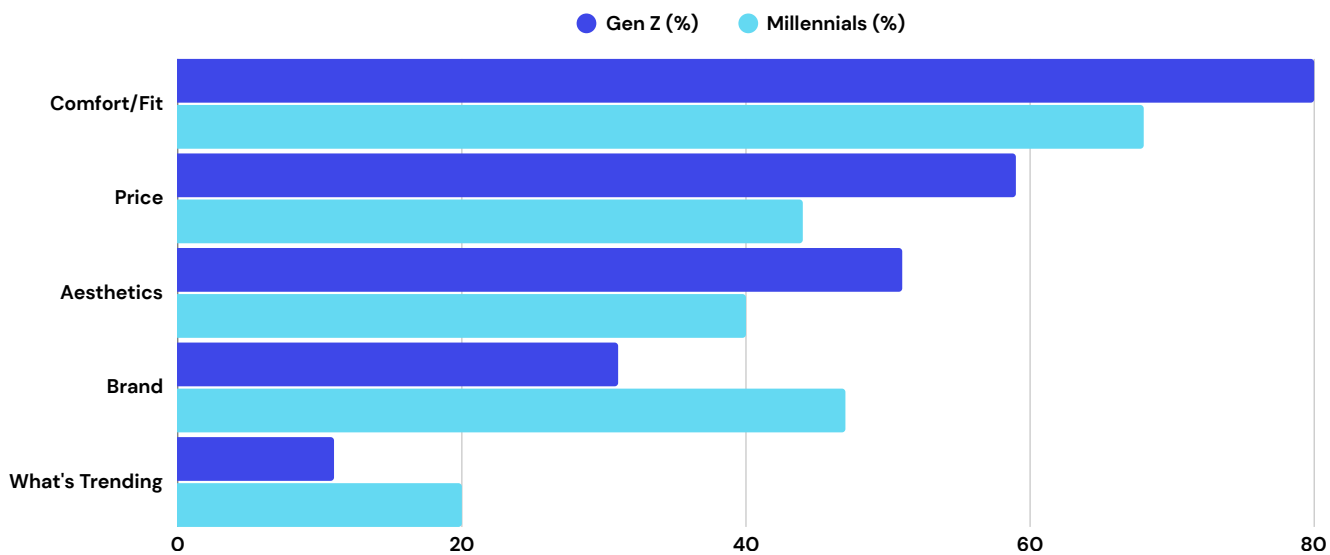
75% say that sneakers are an important part of popular culture



66% pick shoes they like the look of (vs. just 39% of Millennials)

Sources: UNiDAYS “Fashion Report”, Oct 2024 (3)

Comfort leads all purchase drivers, named by 80% of students, followed by price and visual appeal. For this audience the feel and function of a shoe often matter more than the logo. Unlike Millennials, who tend to stick with favourite brands, Gen Z is more open to exploring. This creates a key window for brands to earn trust early and build loyalty that lasts.



Sources: UNiDAYS “Fashion Report”, Oct 2024 (4)

Some students track limited-edition releases, others resell online, and many simply enjoy the confidence that comes from wearing the right pair at the right time. For brands, this presents a rare mix of consistent demand and cultural relevance – an open invitation to engage, influence and convert on campus.

## Preferred Shopping Channels: In-Store, Online and Resale

For a digital-first generation, Gen Z Students have a surprising love for in-person retail. Across most categories, students prefer browsing fashion in-store over online. This sets them apart from older consumers and challenges assumptions.

Why the in-store pull? Three factors lead the way:



**73%** say being able to try on clothes is essential



**61%** value taking items home immediately, avoiding delivery waits



**54%** enjoy visiting multiple brands in one trip, often on high streets or malls

Sources: UNiDAYS "Fashion Report", Oct 2024 (5)

That said, online shopping still plays a major role in the student fashion journey. Ecommerce appeals for its ease, variety and convenience – especially in categories like gym wear, where sizing is more predictable or less of a priority. For many students, added incentives help seal the deal: one in four say a modest 5%–10% discount would tempt them to buy online, while nearly a quarter are drawn to the immediacy of same-day delivery.

**65%**

**UK Students prioritise price, quality and discounts when buying clothes**

**92% of Gen Z Students use discount codes**

**82% remain loyal to brands offering regular student discounts**

Sources: UNiDAYS "Fashion Report" 2024 (7) & "UK Back to Campus Report" 2022 (8)

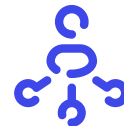
Resale is the third pillar of student fashion. Second-hand platforms like Depop, Vinted and eBay are now part of the everyday fashion cycle. 76% of students shop pre-loved, driven by a mix of cost and conscience. In the UK 67% cite sustainability as a motivation, and 37% resell their own clothes, often to fund future purchases or extend garment lifecycles.



**76%** of students shop for pre-loved clothing



**67%** cite sustainability as a motivation



**37%** resell their own clothes

Sources: UNiDAYS "Fashion Report: Pre-Loved Fashion", 2023 (9)

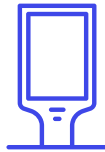
For Gen Z, shopping is omnichannel. They expect a frictionless experience across online and offline touchpoints, with sustainability and value built in. Brands that meet students where they already shop, and understand why they shop, can build stronger, more meaningful connections.

## How Digital, Social and Shared Spaces Shape Style

For Gen Z Students, fashion discovery happens everywhere – from a TikTok scroll or a friend's outfit, to an OOH screen on campus. While 59% cite social platforms for trends, 66% discover brands in-store, and nearly 40% say outdoor ads influence their choices. This is a peer-led generation, but 47% still say professional ads shape their decisions – more than any other age group.



59% say social platforms are their 'go-to' for trends



38% say OOH ads influence their fashion choices



47% say brand advertising plays a role when actively shopping

Sources: UNiDAYS "Fashion Report", Oct 2024 (10)

Style signals come from both screens and spaces. What cuts through is content that feels real, relevant and rooted in culture. Students value relatable creators, brands that speak their language, and communities that reflect their identity. In fact, 59% of 16–24s are more likely to buy from fashion brands they consider authentic.

Authenticity is more than a buzzword; it's expected. Over half of Gen Z say video ads help brands feel genuine, compared to 43% of those aged 25 and over. Realism matters too. 61% want to see realistic people in ads, and 58% expect to see diverse body types.

59%

Gen Z are more likely to buy from fashion brands they consider authentic

61%

say advertising should show realistic people

Sources: UM & ITV Research, 2,000 respondents, 2019 (11,12)

TikTok, Instagram and YouTube remain key engines of inspiration. 'Get Ready With Me' videos, try-ons, hauls and trending drops all shape what students wear, want and search for. According to the UNiDAYS Fashion Report, creator content now has more influence than celebrity endorsements.

Offline holds weight. 38% of students say they discover fashion through OOH. When seen in social settings like campus, these ads are more likely to be remembered and discussed. Connecting digital influence with real-world visibility and communities creates relevance that lasts beyond the scroll.



38% of students say they discover fashion through OOH advertising

Source: UNiDAYS "Fashion Report" Oct 2024 (13)

## Sustainability and Ethics: Ideals vs. Reality

Sustainability matters to Gen Z Students. Raised in a climate-conscious world, 70% say they actively seek out ethical companies. On campus, this sentiment runs deep: one study found that 63% of students are concerned about the social impact of fast fashion, and 48% about its environmental cost. Just 3% said they had no concern at all.



70% say they seek out ethical companies



63% concerned about social impact of fast fashion



48% concerned about environmental impact of fast fashion

Sources: Sheffield Hallam University Research, Sept22 (14)

Students want their clothes to be responsibly made. But ideals don't always match actions. 9 in 10 students still buy fast fashion regularly. Price is the biggest factor. For those on limited budgets, trend-led pieces at £5–£10 are often the default.<sup>[15]</sup> Brands like Shein have gained exponential traction in this space, fueled by TikTok hauls and algorithm-led recommendations. Many students admit to buying fast fashion weekly or monthly.

Instead of avoiding fast fashion altogether, students often seek other ways to reduce their impact. Second hand platforms offer a more sustainable, budget friendly route, with 56–67% saying environmental benefits are the key reason they shop pre-loved.<sup>[16]</sup> Some resell, swap or thrift to extend the life of clothes. But when money is tight, price still trumps principle.

For brands the takeaway is clear. Sustainability messaging resonates, but must be paired with affordability and ease. Student discounts, visible cost-per-wear value and circular initiatives like resale or buy back schemes can bridge the gap. When values meet value, students are far more likely to choose the responsible option.

## Brand Loyalty, Discovery and Decision Drivers

Brand loyalty is up for grabs. Only 3% of UK students say they're loyal enough to a fashion brand to ignore others – meaning 97% remain open to switching. Today's favourite hoodie could be tomorrow's forgotten label if a new player comes along with something cooler or cheaper. For Gen Z Students, brand affinity is built through a blend of relevance, trust, and timing. Style tribes evolve fast, peer influence runs deep, and a better price or more aligned message can quickly redirect attention.



## Only 3% of UK Students say they're loyal enough to a fashion brand to ignore others

Source: UNiDAYS "Fashion Report" Oct 2024 (17)

To earn loyalty, brands need more than a great product. Community-building, on-campus visibility and student perks that feel genuinely rewarding can all help students feel seen and valued. A strong first impression during these formative years can lay the foundation for lifelong brand connection – what one report called “locking in a lifetime of loyalty”<sup>[18]</sup>. But it's never a one-and-done. Sustained creativity, social content with cultural resonance, and meaningful engagement – whether through events, partnerships, or purpose-led initiatives – are what keep Gen Z coming back.

Discovery happens everywhere. Peers, creators, ads and search all play a role – but what converts varies. Students might spot something on a course mate, then search online for a cheaper or more ethical version. They may be drawn to a streetwear label seen in a TikTok haul, then click on a paid result that leads them to buy. Offline moments matter too. Nearly four in ten say they discover fashion through public ads, particularly in campus environments where trusted spaces boost impact and spark conversation.<sup>[19]</sup>

At the decision stage, price still leads – but it's not the only lever. Students respond to brands that reflect their lifestyle and values. They want to feel seen, supported, and rewarded. Student discounts, perceived quality, alignment with identity, and even social causes can all sway preference. What's critical is that brands show up in ways that feel intentional and credible – especially during these years when new loyalties are still forming.

This openness makes university life a pivotal moment for fashion brands. The right message, in the right place, can convert interest into action – and a single campaign can spark far-reaching influence among students, their social circles, and future buying behaviours.

Fashion is shaped by what students see, share and remember.

## From First Look to Lasting Impact

Fashion moves fast and style signals start early. For students, fashion choices are part of a bigger process – trying on new identities, showing up in new spaces, and shaping how they're seen.

Across a three or four year journey, every term brings new context, new content, and new occasions to buy. Brands that understand this fluidity – and show up with relevance and rhythm – can become part of the student story long beyond the next trend cycle.



## Meet Eighteen24, Specialists in Student Engagement

At Eighteen24, we help brands connect with Students in the spaces that shape how they see themselves and express their identity. Our full-motion digital screen network sits at the heart of university campuses, in Student's Unions where student life happens and style choices are made.

With the largest Student Union digital screen network in the UK, we provide fast, frequent access to over 70% of the country's 3 million students. This is a 100% Gen Z audience, with no media wastage. Students visit their Union around 6 x a week and spend more than 40mins per visit.<sup>[20]</sup> These are not fleeting impressions – they're moments of shared attention, habit and influence.

This matters because, for Gen Z, fashion is more than function. It's how they show up and what they stand for. What they see and share in their everyday life directly shapes what they wear next.

We asked students how they feel about E24s Students' Union D6 Screen content. The results were telling:

<b>91%</b> said D6 screens are useful for staying informed	Pointing to a clear utility mindset – students look to the space for relevance, not just repetition
<b>61%</b> had discussed something seen on the D6 with a friend or course mate	Reinforcing that peer cues drive fashion decisions – screens become talking points, not just placements
<b>85%</b> said Students' Union D6s feel relevant to them as students	Relevance drives recall and recall drives response. Being physically present in these trusted real-world spaces gives fashion brands credibility by context
<b>50%</b> said the D6s feel more natural and less disruptive than social ads, none found them more disruptive	In a scroll-fatigued world, the format and the setting of Students' Union screens earn permission to be seen

Our student poll sample was small (n=50), but the responses are indicative and support what the UNiDAYS Fashion Report, referenced throughout this document, already tells us. Students discover brands everywhere, from OOH to online, but shared, trusted spaces like campus matter more than most. Visibility in these moments helps fashion brands build presence that's not only seen but remembered.

At Eighteen24, we offer a real-world route into student fashion culture. Trusted by students, designed for the way they discover, and built to help brands show up meaningfully – where style decisions are made. For fashion brands looking to build presence and preference early, we offer a channel that's trusted, targeted and always in step with student life.



## Why E24 Delivers Standout for Fashion Brands

We understand how and where Gen Z Students shape identity, experiment with style, and discover the brands that feel most like them. Our platform offers three key strengths that make it especially powerful for fashion brands looking to connect meaningfully and memorably.



### CAMPUS IS WHERE STYLE DISCOVERY HAPPENS

Campuses are where students try new looks and shape identity

Our screens reach them in moments of curiosity and influence, helping fashion brands show up when it counts



### BEYOND CAMPAIGNS AND INTO CULTURE

Student style is shaped by social feeds, peer cues and campus life

Our network helps brands tap into that cultural mix, from sportswear to streetwear, and the moods students are dressing for



### LOYALTY STARTS WITH RELEVANCE

Gen Z aren't brand loyal by default, but they stick with what feels authentic and in tune

Our placements support community-relevant campaigns that show up consistently, not intrusively, building familiarity, affinity and trust over time

## Our Formula for Effective Gen Z Engagement:

Reach 70% of the student population nationwide with Eighteen24, that's over 2 million students across all years, courses and campuses. Connect where they dress, express, shop and share. Show up with relevance in the real-world where fashion choices are made.

### Be where they **are**

2 million+ unique students passing our campus screens each week

### Be where they **care**

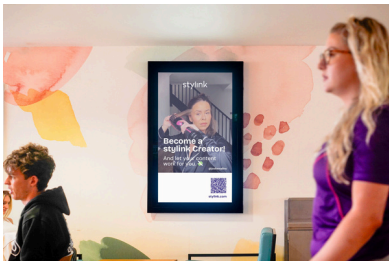
Located within students' unions in the heart of campus

### Be where they **share**

Positioned in high dwell areas  
(Cafes, gyms, study areas etc)

### Be where they **see you**

Premium full motion D6 screens in high impact environments



### Make it Real

Real people, real moments, real style

Students respond to what reflects their world



### Make it Relatable

Speak their language, understand their lives

From budget to belonging, relevance earns attention



### Make it Repeatable

Show up consistently across the year

Momentum matters on the student journey

## Don't Miss the Moment to Be The Brand They Take With Them

These are the years when fashion loyalties are still being formed. When every new term, trend and event prompts a refresh, and a chance to influence what's worn, shared and remembered.

Be visible where students discover style, make decisions and express who they are becoming. Show up meaningfully, and your brand won't just be part of their university wardrobe. It could become part of their story.

**Eighteen24 helps fashion brands show up where style decisions are made – on campus, in culture, and in the lives of Gen Z Students.**

**Talk to us about how your brand can be part of the student style journey:**

**[sales@eighteen24.com](mailto:sales@eighteen24.com)**

**Eighteen<sup>24</sup>**

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