✓ yabble

Drivers of Consumer Affinity for 'Ugly' Brands

June 11, 2025

Project Details

Topic

What drives consumer affinity toward "ugly" products and retail environments in an era of glossy hyper-curation and aesthetic optimization?

How did "ugly" become a signifier of authenticity, rebellion, and / or sustainability?

What psychological, cultural, and economic mechanisms are driving customers toward "ugly" brands?

How does a brand's "ugliness" contribute or detract from their market positioning?

Audience Specifications

The audience comprises a wide range of individuals from diverse races, cultures, generations, and backgrounds, including immigrants and minority groups. They range from expressive trendsetters who embrace "ugly" aesthetics as statements of authenticity, rebellion, or sustainability, to pragmatic and tradition-oriented shoppers who prioritize function, value, and familiarity over unconventional design. Represent those who perceive "ugly" brands positively as well as those who don't understand, care, or appreciate "ugly" aesthetics.

Questions from Knowledge Lake

1. What psychological factors (e.g., anti-perfection bias, novelty seeking, humor, empathy, nostalgia) drive consumer affinity toward "ugly" products and retail environments?
2. How do consumers feel when they engage with "ugly" products—empowered, ironic, comforted, or fatigued—and how do these feelings vary across demographics?
3. Is the appeal of "ugly" primarily about functionality (e.g., comfort, practicality) or a symbolic rejection of mainstream beauty and luxury standards?
4. How do perceptions of "ugly" vary across cultures, class, gender, race, and geography, and who has the social permission to embrace "ugly" without stigma?
5. Are there subcultures or communities (online or offline) that coalesce around "ugly" aesthetics, and how do they shape the legitimacy and meaning of "ugly"?

6. Does "ugly" represent a form of aesthetic privilege—accessible primarily to consumers who can afford to reject polish and traditional markers of taste?
7. How have definitions of "ugly" evolved over time, and are there cyclical patterns of rejection and re-absorption into the mainstream?
8. Could the normalization of "ugly" lead to aesthetic fatigue, a backlash toward hyper-curated beauty, or a complete reset of design norms?
9. How does "ugly" manifest in physical retail spaces—store layouts, lighting, signage, displays—and how do these environments affect the shopping experience?
10. Can "ugly" products thrive in polished, minimalist retail spaces, or do they require contextual alignment with a matching "ugly" aesthetic?
11. What are the sensory and spatial consequences of "ugly" environments—do they enhance or detract from consumer comfort, dwell time, and purchase intent?
12. How does "ugly" translate to digital retail—web design, app interfaces, social media content—and can "ugly" brands succeed on platforms optimized for polished visuals?
13. Are there examples of anti-UX or intentionally "ugly" digital design that resonate with consumers, and what are the risks and rewards of such an approach?
14. How do supply chain realities (e.g., material availability, production constraints, cost pressures) shape the emergence of "ugly" products, intentionally or by default?
15. Does the materiality of "ugly" products (e.g., textures, weight, finish, packaging) influence perceptions of authenticity, quality, and value?
16. Is there a pricing ceiling for "ugly" products, and how do consumer expectations around price, value, and quality differ from more polished offerings?
17. Can "ugly" branding sustain long-term profitability, or is it a high-risk, short-term differentiation strategy vulnerable to commodification and backlash?
18. Is "ugly" retail inherently more sustainable (e.g., repurposing waste, embracing imperfection), or is it sometimes a greenwashing tactic masking low-quality, disposable products?
19. Could the aesthetic normalization of "ugly" lead to lower design standards, lower product durability, or a throwaway culture disguised as anti-consumerist authenticity?
20. Who holds the power to define "ugly" in retail—consumers, brands, cultural critics, or platforms—and how do these definitions reflect underlying power dynamics in culture and commerce?

⊞ Market Trends

Drivers of Consumer Affinity Towards "Ugly" Products and Retail Environments

This report synthesizes market research to understand the growing consumer affinity for "ugly" products and retail environments, exploring the psychological, cultural, and economic factors driving this trend.

"Ugly" as a Signifier: Authenticity, Rebellion, and Sustainability

The rise of "ugly" aesthetics challenges the traditional emphasis on glossy hyper-curation. Several factors contribute to this shift:

- Authenticity: "Ugly" products, particularly in the context of food waste (7), are perceived as more authentic and less processed. This aligns with a broader consumer desire for natural and unrefined products. The minimalist, industrial "AirSpace" aesthetic (6) also taps into this desire for authenticity by showcasing raw materials.
- Rebellion: "Ugly" fashion (1) can be a form of rebellion against conventional beauty standards and mainstream trends. Choosing "ugly" products can be a way to express individuality and challenge social norms.
- Sustainability: "Ugly" produce (7) is marketed as a sustainable solution to food waste, appealing to environmentally conscious consumers. However, the actual environmental impact of these businesses is debated (7).

Psychological, Cultural, and Economic Mechanisms

Several mechanisms drive consumers towards "ugly" brands:

- Shifting Social Norms: The acceptance of "ugly" fashion is linked to evolving social norms (1). As society's perception of aesthetics changes, previously unconventional styles become more mainstream.
- Comfort and Functionality: The success of "ugly" footwear brands (2) demonstrates a prioritization of comfort and functionality over traditional aesthetics. This is particularly evident in the growth of brands like Birkenstock, Hoka, and Crocs.
- Signaling Luxury: Research suggests that "ugliness" can signal luxury, particularly with prominent brands (5). Consumers may choose "ugly" luxury products to display status and exclusivity.
- Economic Factors: Economic downturns can influence consumer preferences, potentially favoring "ugly" brands that prioritize practicality, durability, and value (6). The rise of minimalism during the Great Recession exemplifies this trend.
- Marketing and Media Influence: Media coverage and marketing campaigns play a significant role in shaping consumer perceptions of "ugly" products (7). The positive framing of "ugly" produce as a solution to food waste has increased its visibility and appeal.

Market Positioning of "Ugly" Brands

A brand's "ugliness" can both contribute to and detract from its market positioning:

- Positive Positioning: "Ugliness" can be a unique selling proposition, differentiating a brand from competitors and attracting a specific target audience. This is particularly effective for brands targeting consumers who value authenticity, rebellion, or sustainability. The success of "ugly" footwear brands (2) demonstrates this.

- Negative Positioning: "Ugliness" can alienate consumers who prioritize traditional aesthetics. Brands need to carefully consider their target audience and market positioning when embracing "ugly" aesthetics. The decline of HeyDude (2) suggests that simply being "ugly" isn't a guarantee of success.

Future of "Ugly" Aesthetics

The future of "ugly" aesthetics will likely be shaped by several factors:
- Continued Emphasis on Comfort and Functionality: The trend of prioritizing comfort and functionality is expected to persist, further driving the acceptance of "ugly" but practical products.
- Growing Awareness of Sustainability: Consumer interest in sustainability will likely increase the demand for products marketed as eco-friendly, even if they are aesthetically unconventional.
- Fragmentation of Style: The diversified style landscape allows "ugly" brands to find niche markets and connect with specific subcultures.
- Potential Backlash: As "ugly" aesthetics become more mainstream, there might be a counter-trend where consumers seek more refined or traditional styles.

Actionable Insights for Businesses

- Embrace Authenticity: Brands can leverage the appeal of authenticity by highlighting the natural and unrefined aspects of their products.
- Target Specific Niches: Identify and target specific consumer segments who value "ugly" aesthetics for their rebellious or sustainable connotations.
- Balance Function and Aesthetics: Strive for a balance between functionality and aesthetics to appeal to a broader audience.
- Communicate Value Clearly: Clearly communicate the value proposition of "ugly" products, emphasizing their comfort, durability, or sustainability.
- Monitor Market Trends: Continuously monitor evolving consumer preferences and adapt marketing strategies accordingly.

This includes reputably sourced, broader, macro-level indicators of trends and other factors that are likely to have an influence on your chosen topic. This can include shifts in consumer preferences, economic conditions, behavioral trends, regional preferences, and more. These are all elements that surround your topic that we believe are important for your Virtual Audience to have context of to convey a broader understanding of the market.

1.   https://www.researchgate.net/
2.   https://www.forbes.com/
3.   https://www.sciencedirect.com/
4.   https://www.ogilvy.com/
5.   https://ideas.repec.org/
6.   https://www.vox.com/
7.   https://newrepublic.com/

🌐 Market Insights

The Allure of "Ugly": Decoding Consumer Affinity for Unconventional Aesthetics in Retail

The Paradox of "Ugly" in a Hyper-Curated World

In an era dominated by glossy aesthetics and meticulously curated online presences, the rising popularity of "ugly" products and retail environments presents a compelling paradox. This trend challenges conventional notions of beauty and desirability, prompting a deeper exploration of the psychological, cultural, and economic mechanisms driving consumer behavior. While traditional marketing emphasizes visual appeal, the "ugly" aesthetic disrupts this paradigm, offering a unique value proposition centered on authenticity, rebellion, and sustainability (3, 4, 6).

Deconstructing "Ugly": Defining the Aesthetic

"Ugly" in this context is not simply the absence of beauty, but a deliberate design choice that deviates from established norms (3). It encompasses a broad spectrum of characteristics, from intentionally unpolished and raw marketing content (12) to unconventional product designs that challenge traditional aesthetics (11). This can manifest as mismatched patterns, kitschy accessories, and a rejection of minimalist principles (15), or as minimalist, cost-effective retail environments that prioritize function over form (2). The definition of "ugly" is subjective and context-dependent, influenced by cultural trends, economic conditions, and individual preferences (3, 11).

Psychological Drivers: Authenticity, Rebellion, and Status Signaling

Several psychological factors contribute to the appeal of "ugly" aesthetics. First, in a world saturated with polished, hyper-real imagery, "ugly" can signal authenticity and relatability (6, 12). This resonates with consumers seeking genuine connections, particularly younger generations who have grown up with highly curated online presences and are now pushing back against this pressure to conform (15). Second, "ugly" can be a form of rebellion against mainstream aesthetics and a means of self-expression (9, 15). This is particularly evident in Gen Z's embrace of the "weird girl aesthetic," which celebrates individualism and nonconformity (15). Finally, for established luxury brands, "ugliness" can function as a costly signal of exclusivity and status, similar to prominent logos (4). This aligns with the concept of conspicuous consumption, where visible displays of wealth communicate social standing (4).

Cultural and Economic Influences: Sustainability and Value

Cultural and economic factors also play a significant role in shaping consumer affinity for "ugly." The growing awareness of sustainability has led to increased acceptance of imperfect produce, with naturalness cues reversing consumer preferences in favor of "ugly" options (5). This aligns with a broader shift towards sustainable consumption practices (5). Economically, "ugly" retail environments, characterized by minimalist design and reduced operational costs, offer a value proposition that appeals to price-sensitive consumers (2). Retailers like Aldi and Dollar General have successfully implemented this strategy, demonstrating that cost-effectiveness can be a powerful driver of consumer behavior (2).

Market Positioning: A Double-Edged Sword

A brand's "ugliness" can be a double-edged sword in terms of market positioning. For established luxury brands, distinctive ugliness can enhance exclusivity and appeal to status-conscious consumers (4). However, for non-luxury brands, ugliness can be detrimental if not carefully executed (4). Intentional ugliness, when strategically employed, can enhance authenticity, memorability, and brand recognition (9). However, unintentional ugliness or poorly executed "ugly" design can be perceived as simply bad design, damaging a brand's image (9). The key is to strike a balance between challenging conventional aesthetics and maintaining a level of professionalism that aligns with the brand's values and target audience (6).

Future of "Ugly": Embracing the Unconventional

The trend of "ugly" aesthetics is likely to continue evolving, driven by factors such as changing consumer preferences, technological advancements, and the ongoing search for authenticity in a hyper-curated world. Brands that can successfully navigate this complex landscape by strategically incorporating elements of "ugliness" while maintaining a clear understanding of their target audience will be well-positioned to capture market share and build lasting brand affinity. This requires a willingness to take risks, challenge conventional approaches, and embrace the unexpected (3).

This includes reputably sourced insights that are specific to the market related to your topic. These meso-level insights can include (but are not limited to) a market overview, consumer preferences, demographic patterns, and more. This becomes the context for your Virtual Audiences project related directly to your topic.

---

1.   https://medium.com/
2.   https://www.linkedin.com/
3.   https://publicispro.com/
4.   https://www.researchgate.net/
5.   https://www.frontiersin.org/
6.   https://www.fininternational.com/
7.   https://re-sources.co/
8.   https://www.sciencedirect.com/
9.   https://tszymanski.medium.com/
10.   https://www.mdpi.com/
11.   https://www.thoughtworks.com/
12.   https://www.incredible.plus/
13.   https://www.valens-research.com/
14.   https://www.komunikasi.gov.my/
15.   https://www.smh.com.au/

🔖 Overall Summary

Drivers of Affinity for "Ugly" Products and Retail

- Authenticity and Rebellion: "Ugly" aesthetics are seen as a rejection of glossy, hyper-curated perfection, offering a sense of honesty and rebellion against mainstream trends. Consumers perceive "ugly" products as more genuine and less manipulative, especially when compared to the often artificial and homogenous world of optimized digital retail. This resonates with a desire for transparency and a break from the constant pressure to conform to idealized standards.
- Sustainability and Resourcefulness: "Ugly" products, often made from recycled or upcycled materials, or featuring visible repairs, signal a commitment to sustainability and resourcefulness. This aligns with growing consumer awareness of environmental issues and a desire to reduce waste. The imperfections and visible repairs tell a story of reuse and longevity, adding to the product's value and appeal for eco-conscious consumers.
- Nostalgia and Familiarity: "Ugly" products, with their rough finishes and unconventional designs, can evoke a sense of nostalgia and familiarity, reminding consumers of cherished objects from the past or handcrafted items with unique stories. This connection to personal history and tradition can be a powerful driver of affinity, offering comfort and a sense of connection to the past in a rapidly changing world.

"Ugly" as a Signifier

- Challenging Beauty Standards: "Ugly" aesthetics challenge conventional notions of beauty and perfection, creating space for diverse voices and styles. This can be empowering for consumers who feel excluded by mainstream ideals, allowing them to express their individuality and reject the pressure to conform. However, the freedom to embrace "ugly" without criticism is not equally distributed, with privilege and social context playing a significant role in how these choices are perceived.
- Commodification and Appropriation: As "ugly" becomes mainstream, it risks being commodified and losing its rebellious spirit. Brands can exploit the aesthetic for profit, diluting its meaning and turning it into a fleeting trend. This can be particularly problematic when brands appropriate aesthetics from marginalized communities without understanding or respecting their origins, turning authenticity into a marketing ploy.

Psychological, Cultural, and Economic Mechanisms

- Anti-perfection Bias: Consumers are increasingly skeptical of overly polished and artificial branding, leading to an "anti-perfection bias." This bias drives a desire for products and retail environments that feel more real, relatable, and less manipulative. The imperfections of "ugly" products can signal transparency and a lack of pretense, fostering trust and a sense of connection.
- Community and Belonging: "Ugly" aesthetics can foster a sense of community and belonging, particularly in online forums, local shops, and subcultures. These spaces provide a platform for shared values and a sense of identity, reinforcing the appeal of unconventional styles. However, these communities can also be insular, creating new forms of exclusivity and gatekeeping.
- Economic Constraints and Resourcefulness: Economic constraints and supply chain issues can drive the creation of "ugly" products, as brands are forced to work with limited materials or reduce production costs. This can lead to innovative and resourceful designs that challenge conventional aesthetics. However, it can also result in products that feel unfinished or poorly made, blurring the line between intentional "ugliness" and simple cost-cutting.

Market Positioning

- Differentiation and Niche Appeal: "Ugly" branding can be a powerful differentiator in a crowded market, attracting consumers who seek authenticity and a break from mainstream trends. This can create a loyal niche following, particularly when the aesthetic is aligned with the brand's values and story. However, it can also alienate consumers who prefer traditional aesthetics or question the brand's professionalism.
- Risk of Backlash and Trend Fatigue: Overuse or inauthentic application of "ugly" aesthetics can lead to backlash and trend fatigue. Consumers are quick to spot insincerity, and when "ugly" becomes just another marketing gimmick, it loses its appeal and can damage a brand's credibility. The long-term success of "ugly" branding depends on its connection to genuine values and its ability to evolve with consumer preferences.
- Shifting Power Dynamics: The definition of "ugly" in retail is constantly being negotiated, with brands, critics, platforms, and consumers all playing a role. While brands and influencers can try to steer the conversation, it's ultimately consumer choices and community values that determine what becomes normalized. The growing acceptance of "ugly" aesthetics reflects a shift in power dynamics, with consumers increasingly demanding authenticity, transparency, and a broader representation of beauty in the marketplace.

✦ Personas

Persona Summary

The audience comprises a wide range of individuals from diverse races, cultures, generations, and backgrounds, including immigrants and minority groups. They range from expressive trend-setters who embrace "ugly" aesthetics as statements of authenticity, rebellion, or sustainability, to pragmatic and tradition-oriented shoppers who prioritize function, value, and familiarity over unconventional design. Represent those who perceive "ugly" brands positively as well as those who don't understand, care, or appreciate "ugly" aesthetics.

Maya 'Authentic Trendsetter'

Age range	22-28
Gender	Female
Location	Brooklyn, NY (Urban, multicultural)
Personality traits	Expressive, open-minded, rebellious, highly engaged with online and offline subcultures. Enjoys standing out and challenging norms.
Pain points	Frustrated by mainstream, hyper-curated aesthetics that feel disingenuous; seeks truly authentic brands but worries about performative marketing.
Behaviours	Actively seeks out and purchases unique, unconventional, and statement-making products. Shares discoveries on social media, influences her peer group.
Goals	To express individuality, signal authenticity, and support eco-conscious brands. Prefers brands that promote rebellion against perfection.

- Maya values authenticity and rebels against mainstream aesthetics, viewing "ugly" products and environments as a form of self-expression and a rejection of hyper-curation. She actively seeks unique, unconventional items that signal individuality and challenge traditional notions of beauty.
- Sustainability is a key driver in Maya's consumption choices. She is drawn to "ugly" products, particularly those made with upcycled or recycled materials, as they align with her eco-conscious values and represent a conscious rejection of wasteful consumerism.
- Maya thrives within subcultures and online communities, using platforms like Instagram and TikTok to share her discoveries and influence her peers. She sees "ugly" aesthetics as a way to connect with like-minded individuals and build community around shared values of creativity and rebellion.
- Maya is highly critical of performative marketing and brands that superficially co-opt "ugly" aesthetics for profit. She seeks genuine transparency and values brands whose unconventional designs are rooted in a true commitment to sustainability, ethical production, or challenging societal norms.
- Maya's location in Brooklyn and her multicultural background influence her perspective on "ugly" aesthetics, recognizing the fluidity of these perceptions across different cultures and communities. She understands that "ugly" can be a form of privilege and remains mindful of the social and economic factors that shape its meaning and accessibility.

Liam 'Sustainable Pragmatist'

Age range	28-38
Gender	Non-binary
Location	Portland, OR (Urban, eco-centric)
Personality traits	Resourceful, practical, socially aware, environmentally responsible; less concerned with trendiness.
Pain points	Annoyed by excessive packaging and marketing-driven design; dislikes waste and planned obsolescence.
Behaviours	Seeks out products and brands that clearly communicate environmental benefits and value. Shops with eco-labels in mind.
Goals	To reduce environmental footprint and support ethical consumption, even if it means compromising on aesthetics.

- Liam prioritizes sustainable, ethical consumption, valuing function and transparency over aesthetics and actively rejecting over-curated, wasteful consumerism. "Ugly" products and environments are appealing for their authenticity and rebellion against hollow marketing, provided they demonstrate genuine eco-credentials.
- They actively engage in online and offline sustainability communities, seeking products with verifiable environmental benefits and sharing knowledge about responsible practices. Liam's social circles reinforce their eco-conscious values.
- Frustrated by excessive packaging, planned obsolescence, and marketing-driven design, Liam seeks durable, repairable, and minimally impactful products. They are willing to compromise on conventional aesthetics for genuine sustainability.
- As a white, middle-class individual in Portland, Oregon, Liam acknowledges their social permission to embrace "ugly" aesthetics without stigma, recognizing that this acceptance may not be universal.
- Liam is resourceful and practical, prioritizing long-term value and mindful consumption. They are willing to pay a premium for sustainable products that align with their values, but expect transparency and accessibility from brands.

Omar 'Heritage Seeker'

Age range	35-45
Gender	Male
Location	Dearborn, MI (Suburban, strong immigrant community)
Personality traits	Value-driven, family-oriented, pragmatic with a deep appreciation for tradition and resourcefulness.
Pain points	Dislikes superficial, expensive branding; feels alienated by brands that ignore cultural heritage. Sometimes skeptical of trendy aesthetics lacking substance.
Behaviours	Shops for utility and longevity; gravitates to products resembling those from childhood or community; values resourcefulness and shared stories.
Goals	To maintain connection with cultural roots and support brands that honor authenticity and tradition.

- Omar deeply values authenticity and cultural heritage, seeking products and retail environments that reflect these values, particularly those reminiscent of his upbringing and community. He views "ugly" aesthetics positively when they represent genuine resourcefulness, tradition, and a rejection of superficial trends.
- Durability and practicality are paramount for Omar. He prioritizes long-lasting, functional items over fleeting styles and is wary of consumerism that undermines sustainability and craftsmanship. He appreciates honest materials and straightforward design.
- He is highly skeptical of brands that utilize "ugliness" as a superficial marketing tactic without genuine connection to heritage or community values. Such attempts at trend-chasing feel disrespectful and alienating to him.
- Omar's purchasing decisions are strongly influenced by his family and local community. He engages in discussions with them about his choices and seeks brands that resonate with their shared values.
- Sustainability is a significant factor for Omar. He avoids unnecessary waste and prefers products and brands that demonstrate environmentally conscious practices, aligning with his resourceful and pragmatic lifestyle.

Barbara 'Functional Traditionalist'

Age range	54-68
Gender	Female
Location	Des Moines, IA (Suburban/rural Midwest)
Personality traits	Practical, value-driven, cautious, prefers the familiar and reliable over the new and unconventional.
Pain points	Discomfort with unconventional or 'ugly' designs; worries about lack of quality or longevity; skeptical of design fads.
Behaviours	Shops for trusted brands and proven products; cares about price, durability, and ease of use. Avoids impulse purchases.
Goals	Maximize value, minimize risk, and maintain social acceptance among peers and family.

- Barbara prioritizes function, affordability, and longevity in products, viewing "ugly" aesthetics with skepticism and associating them with lower quality and fleeting trends. She prefers trusted brands and classic designs that align with her traditional values.
- Driven by a need for stability and community acceptance, she avoids risky or unconventional purchases, seeking reassurance and comfort in familiar products and retail experiences. She relies on word-of-mouth recommendations and established routines, resisting pressure to adapt to rapidly changing styles.
- "Ugly" branding is perceived as a marketing gimmick rather than a genuine commitment to quality or sustainability. She expects lower prices for unconventional products unless they demonstrate superior functionality or durability.
- Digital environments that deviate from clear, familiar layouts reinforce her distrust of "ugly" aesthetics.- She prefers straightforward, user-friendly interfaces that prioritize ease of use and reliability.
- Barbara's skepticism extends to "ugly" retail spaces, which she finds uninviting and unsettling. She associates polished, traditional environments with dependability and customer respect.

Tariq 'Skeptical Mainstreamer'

Age range	40-52
Gender	Male
Location	Manchester, UK (Urban, multicultural)
Personality traits	Skeptical, practical, conservative in tastes, values straightforwardness in brands and products.
Pain points	Finds 'ugly' aesthetics off-putting and sees it as a sign of poor design or lack of effort. Dislikes being targeted with gimmicky marketing.
Behaviours	Defaults to familiar, mainstream brands; does not seek out unconventional products and generally ignores design trends.
Goals	Avoid regretful purchases, maintain a sense of normalcy, and get good value for money.

- Tariq is deeply skeptical of "ugly" aesthetics, associating them with poor quality, carelessness, and gimmicky marketing. He sees no value in unconventional design and prefers the reliability and straightforwardness of established, mainstream brands.
- Driven by a need for stability and value, Tariq prioritizes practicality and functionality over trendy or rebellious aesthetics. He seeks to avoid regretful purchases and ensure he receives good value, especially when purchasing for his family. He's averse to risk and prefers the familiar.
- Unconventional or "ugly" retail environments actively detract from Tariq's shopping experience. He prefers clean, organized, and traditionally well-designed spaces that inspire confidence and trust. "Ugly" design, whether in a physical store or online, increases his perception of risk and makes him less likely to engage with a brand.
- Tariq is resistant to trends and largely ignores social media hype. He's not persuaded by arguments for "ugly" design as authentic or sustainable, viewing them as excuses for lower quality or higher prices. He's more likely to see "ugly" as a cost-cutting measure than a genuine design choice.
- He believes "ugly" branding is a short-sighted strategy. He expects a return to traditional design values and anticipates a backlash against the normalization of "ugly" aesthetics. He values durability and dependability, traits he doesn't associate with "ugly" products.

Jin 'Rebellious Creative'

Age range	18-26
Gender	Non-binary
Location	Seoul, South Korea (Urban, design-forward)
Personality traits	Artistic, risk-taker, deeply engaged in countercultural and creative communities, highly expressive.
Pain points	Feels stifled by homogenous, 'perfect' global brands; dislikes being boxed into narrow standards of beauty or taste.
Behaviours	Frequently shops at niche stores and supports indie designers; customizes or upcycles clothing and accessories.
Goals	To assert individuality, subvert norms, and inspire others to appreciate unconventional beauty.

- Jin embraces "ugly" aesthetics as a form of rebellion against Seoul's hyper-curated design scene and mainstream beauty standards, viewing it as a powerful expression of individuality, authenticity, and sustainability.
- They actively participate in online and offline subcultures that champion unconventional styles, influencing peers through creative upcycling, customization, and support of indie designers.
- "Ugly," for Jin, signifies creative risk-taking, a rejection of conformity, and a celebration of diversity and inclusivity, fostering a sense of community among like-minded individuals.
- They are drawn to brands that prioritize substance, ethical production, and unconventional design, willing to pay a premium for products that align with their values and personal narrative.
- Jin views the materiality of "ugly" products – raw textures, visible imperfections – as evidence of genuine craftsmanship and a rejection of mass-produced uniformity, enhancing their perceived value and authenticity.

Ana 'Cultural Connector'

Age range	32-45
Gender	Female
Location	Los Angeles, CA (Urban, multicultural)
Personality traits	Open-minded, empathetic, culturally fluent, values diversity, and bridges communities.
Pain points	Feels overlooked by brands that present a single story or 'perfect' image; sensitive to cultural appropriation in design and marketing.
Behaviours	Seeks out brands with multicultural or inclusive stories; supports minority-owned businesses and designers.
Goals	To feel recognized and represented in the marketplace, and support brands with authentic cultural resonance.

- Ana values authenticity and inclusivity above all else, seeking brands that genuinely reflect multicultural narratives and lived experiences, particularly those of marginalized communities. She is drawn to "ugly" aesthetics when they represent a rejection of homogenized beauty standards and an embrace of cultural heritage, resourcefulness, and sustainability.
- She actively supports minority-owned businesses and designers, connecting with diverse communities both online and offline to share her findings and advocate for greater representation in consumer markets. Ana acts as a cultural bridge, valuing honest storytelling and ethical practices.
- While open to unconventional aesthetics, Ana is highly critical of brands that co-opt "ugliness" as a superficial marketing tactic or for cultural appropriation. She distinguishes between performative "ugliness" and genuine expressions of cultural identity, resourcefulness, or sustainable practices.
- Ana is willing to pay a premium for "ugly" products when they align with her values, but there's a limit. Inflated prices or perceived inauthenticity erode her trust and interest. She seeks meaningful value in comfort, durability, ethical sourcing, and genuine representation.
- She views the power to define "ugly" as a dynamic interplay between consumers, brands, critics, and platforms, with communities holding significant influence through their voices and purchasing decisions. Ana believes that thoughtful embrace of "ugliness" can disrupt the status quo and foster inclusivity.

Alex 'Eco-Minded Youth'

Age range	17-25
Gender	Male
Location	Berlin, Germany (Urban, progressive)
Personality traits	Idealistic, globally aware, experimental, follows global youth movements, and values purpose over perfection.
Pain points	Frustrated by inauthentic eco-marketing; dislikes brands that prioritize style over substance.
Behaviours	Looks for brands with transparent sustainability credentials, sometimes chooses unconventional designs to make a point.
Goals	To contribute positively to the environment, support circular economy, and influence peers toward meaningful change.

- Alex is deeply driven by authentic sustainability and actively rejects greenwashing and superficial eco-marketing. "Ugly" aesthetics are appealing to him when they represent genuine sustainable practices, like upcycled materials or minimal packaging. He sees this as a rebellion against consumerism and a marker of a brand's commitment to environmental responsibility.
- Transparency and verifiable impact are crucial for Alex. He is highly skeptical of brands that adopt "ugly" aesthetics purely for trend or marketing purposes without demonstrable commitment to sustainability. He requires clear communication and proof of a brand's ethical and environmental practices.
- He is an active participant in online and offline communities focused on sustainability and climate activism. He seeks to influence his peers and the broader community towards meaningful change and adoption of circular economy principles. He views "ugly" as a way to connect with like-minded individuals and challenge conventional consumerism.
- Alex prioritizes function and substance over aesthetics. While he appreciates unconventional designs, this appreciation is contingent on the product's genuine environmental benefit. He is willing to pay a premium for "ugly" products only if they deliver on values like durability, circularity, and demonstrable positive impact.
- He is particularly sensitive to brands co-opting "ugly" as a marketing ploy. This erodes trust and reinforces his cynicism towards inauthentic eco-marketing. He actively seeks brands whose values align with his own and whose "ugliness" is a byproduct of their commitment to sustainability, not a superficial aesthetic choice.

About Yabble AI

This Virtual Audiences project was brought to you by Yabble.

From revolutionary Virtual Audiences that give you insights in minutes, to a suite of AI tools that allow you to securely analyze your data 1000x faster than a human – Yabble is the leading AI solution for every stage of research. Built with a combination of custom algorithms, 50,000+ hours of training and world-class Large Language Models – Yabble is trusted by leading brands globally.

Yabble's Virtual Audiences gives you the ability to create quality insights without the need for traditional sample. Yabble sets the context and trends from your chosen topic, creates the virtual audience, and goes about 'talking' with this audience to generate insights relevant to your project. You can customize the segments and the questions asked, and once the project has completed, you can talk directly with your virtual audience to ask follow-up questions. You can even securely add your own proprietary data to build on the research data and market segments you have already created.

While the audiences are not physical people, they have been created specifically in the context of real human behaviors and factual sources. They have been built to replicate the insights that a traditional panel would provide, and you can access the sources that influenced these insights at the completion of your project.

Yabble, founded in 2017, is a cutting-edge technology company that is revolutionizing the world of insights. A first-of-its-kind insights ecosystem built on game-changing AI products, we help brands enrich their customer understanding and generate transformative knowledge that drives growth and innovation.

Comprised of experts from six different countries, our team has a relentless focus on building world-leading products using state-of-the-art artificial intelligence technology. That means consistently ensuring we're developing our business using the best of the best, including our own proprietary algorithms and the world's best LLMs.