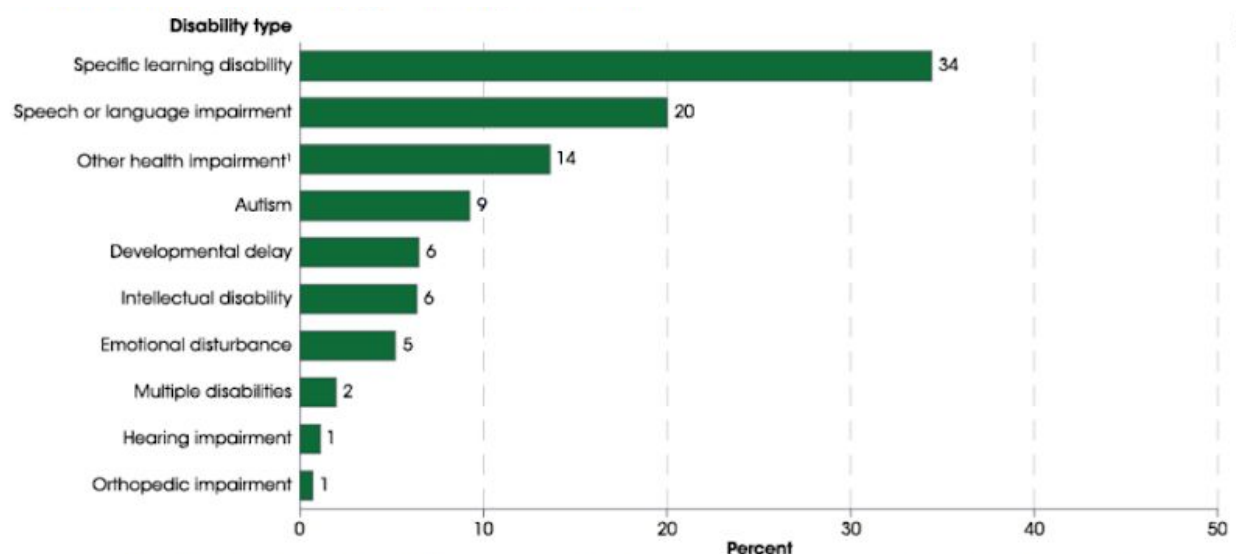


Adaptive Clothing for Children
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As the years go by, it seems as if gender roles are starting to blur more and more. We now live in an interesting time where people have the courage to step up and be whoever they want to be without having to label themselves. As a brand, we strive to create gender neutral, functional, and practical garments for kids with disabilities.

Our brand, LNKS, is made to fit our current fashion era for children both male and female. Clothing for disabled kids should not have to be boring or limited. They should be able to express themselves through their clothing just like any other kid. Children should have the option to wear things that are functional for their needs and make them happy. Our t-shirts will be available nationwide but with popularity and time, they are expected to branch out to other countries where a product like ours is not easily accessible. Our products will be strictly available online.

The age group that we are targeting is for kids ages 3-13. The following graph expresses the percentages of different types of disabilities from school age students, ages 3-21. The majority ranked in specific learning disabilities and lowest ranked in orthopedic impairment, according to the chart shown below.



(NCES, 2018)

Since parents are the ideal candidates who will be purchasing the shirts, our product is catered for the middle class families living in the United States. We are targeting divorced or single parents with one or more kids under 21, preferably ages 3-13. The parents keep up with what is currently trending but aren't the first to jump on the trends. The average median income according to the U.S. Census Bureau reported to be \$59,039 per household in 2016. It is considered to be a middle-class household if \$39,554 and \$118,072 is earned a year. The ranges mean different lifestyles depending on the number of people living in the household (Amadeo, 2018).

Based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs we are targeting Strivers. They believe in the importance to image and status, as a means of enabling acceptance by their peer group, at the same time holding on to traditional values (Market Media, 2010).

Very few companies have taken the initiative to cater people with disabilities. Our line strives to create products for children with disabilities to raise awareness. In this generation, kids are often seen to dress up in a more mature matter. Parents like to dress their kids like adults without having to cross the line. This can give them the chance to partake in this trend as well. As seen in an array of fashion shows including Dolce & Gabbana, Elie Saab and more, models would walk on the runway with babies and kids wearing matching clothes. Fashionista had an article expressing the mommy and me trend which started to boost in 2011 (George-Parkin, 2017). This trend is not what motivates our product, it is the gap that this topic lacks in. Majority

of clothing for disabled people is catered to the elder. That being said, the styles, colors and prints are extremely boring.

Our product will allow parents to easily dress their children with a variety of unisex patterns and colors that are priced fairly due to the fact that similar shirts cost a pretty penny. Despite there being a few garments catering to people with disabilities, majority of the fashion industry is not directly involved with clothing for the disabled. Our idea is to make sure the quality of the t-shirts are comfortable, and are able to be used for a long time at an affordable price since it is geared towards middle class families. It is hard enough for some families to have to pay for other expenses whether it's medical, educational or even on t-shirts similar to what we are producing.

Social media is a powerful marketing tool that is constantly growing. Placing ads on websites such as Facebook or Instagram would be a great way to target parents who might be in the market for some clothing for their children with disabilities. Advertising through apps on children's games can also potentially be a great way to market ourselves. In this day and age, you're bound to see children playing on their parent's phones or tablets. Kids are a lot more technologically savvy than kids from a few years ago, as technology is slowly starting to replace actual books and toys. By promoting our brand through common apps amongst youth, our products would be brought to the child's attention potentially leading them telling their parents about it and ultimately generating a sale. We plan to collaborate with bloggers within our niche to help promote our brand to an audience that would genuinely be interested in what we have to offer. We also plan on advertising in lifestyle and family magazines and/or blogs.

The purpose of such visual merchandising is to attract, engage, and motivate the customer towards making a purchase. Representation is a huge problem in the fashion industry. When merchandising our products, we will have photoshoots with real kids living with actual disabilities to show our target market that they are not alone. Nobody should have to feel limited as to what they are able to wear just because certain designers do not cater to their needs. Our goal is to break this barrier.

A few designers have already started to create lines that go against gender roles and are wearable for male, female, and gender fluid consumers. Some of the brands that are currently selling unisex clothing include 69 Worldwide, Wildfang, Not Equal, and TooGood London (12 Gender-Neutral Clothing Brands, 2017). What sets us apart from our competition is despite the fact that they also sell gender-neutral clothing, we are the first to create specially designed garments for children with disabilities at affordable prices..

Cost plays a huge factor when it comes to both producing a garment and selling it at a price that is suitable for the consumers within your target market. We incorporate high quality fabrics and magnetic/velcro closures into our t-shirts to ensure that it will be functional and practical for the children wearing them. We plan to follow the penetration pricing strategy to encourage consumers to purchase our products because of our lower prices (Riley, 2009). Since our ideal target market would be families within the middle class spectrum, our t-shirts will range from \$25-\$40 depending on the complexity of the design.

LNKS is competing with small brands such as Silverts, Izzy Camilleri Adaptive Clothing, Able2Wear, and Adaptations by Adrian and Easy Access, just to name a few. Bigger brands are Target and Tommy Hilfiger. Target is a discount store that offers a wide range of adaptive

clothing for young children/toddler, men and women (Adaptive Clothing, 2018). Their price range for the kid section is \$15 to \$20. While for adults, ranges from \$25 to \$40. Tommy Hilfiger is a designer brand and differs compared to Target. Price being one of them. Their collection being pricier ranging from \$30 to \$200. What makes LNKS different from both these brands is that it is targeted towards families who struggle financially and who have medical bills to pay. Families who we are catering to give them an option to great quality clothing for their children without having to risk a lot of money for it. They can depend on LNKS to provide clothing that their kids feel their best in and also, clothing that are constructed to put on at ease.

As technology continues to advance immensely, it is now becoming part of every aspect in society. Many companies are integrating technology into their services and/or products. For this product line, our group will incorporate technology in apparel which may be beneficial to young disabled kids. Big-name companies like Samsung, Google, OMSignal, HexoSkin, and Under Armour have begun thinking about ways to make the clothes on your back as smart as the phone in your pocket (Gokey, 2016). Although this may be useful and beneficial to some consumers, such as those who are very athletic, there are still other target markets which can use the technology in other ways through apparel. Apparel is very significant in the modern society and integrating technology is a great marketing strategy for innovation. The line will focus on t-shirts which will include high tech features and trendy designs.

“Designed to suppress, delay, inhibit, or otherwise prevent the spread of flames, flame retardants are minerals added to base materials (additive) or chemically bonded compounds applied as surface finish and coatings (reactive) in manufactured goods that might be combustible” (Colditz, 2015). The textile of the shirts for this line will be flame retardant for the

safety purposes of disabled children. Chemicals used will be 100% nontoxic as well in order to prevent any health risks. Disabled children have the least capability to save themselves from a fire due to their dysfunctional muscles. The flame retardant will at least provide a higher chance of survival. Although, since the textile of the shirts will be fire-retardant, it will need to be fabricated with moisture wicking technology for breathability and to keep skin cool. Wicking fabrics are woven in such a way that the moisture is forced into and through the gaps in the weave so it can find the outer shell of the material (Bryant, 2018). The shirts will be manufactured with synthetic fabric in order to apply these features.

The construction of the shirts will be based on the disabilities of the children such as muscular dystrophy. These shirts will be more practical to put on as well as add comfort. They will have magnetic closures so children will not have the difficulty of raising their arms. Most apparel will have buttons, zippers, or just have seams which will make it extremely uncomfortable and even painful for disabled children to put on. For this reason, the magnetic closures will be sewn into the fabric on the left shoulder line and on the left side length. The shoulder line will contain three magnetic closures while the side length will have six. These magnetic closures will be secure for openings and closings and will require the least amount of effort to put on. The construction of the shirts will be directly from machines. Garment dyeing will also be required for this apparel line. The use of air-dyeing technology will be applied to this part of the process as it is more efficient and uses less water and leaves the fabric with a clean finish. "Air-Dye technology manages the application of color to textiles without the use of water. It is today's sustainable alternative to traditional dyeing and decorating processes" (Dhanabalan,

Sukanya, & Lokesh, 2015). In contrast to other dyeing techniques, this dye in this process will go directly in the fibre as opposed to on it which will help the color last longer.

In addition to the technological features and fabrication, the shirts will also come in trendy colors and prints for children. Some shirts may include inspirational quotes on the front. The shirts will be unisex to reach a greater market. Gender neutrality is becoming much more accepted in today's society; therefore, this product line is intended to support this movement. The colors will vary depending on the season. For example, if the apparel line will launch in the spring, then the shirts will have more pastel colors. It is crucial for kids with disabilities to feel inclusive of fashion as some may be discouraged to do so. "Many of these tots are not only embracing fashion like a beloved teddy bear but also becoming budding style stars, followed and fussed over on social media for their cutting-edge looks" (Nelson, 2018). This is an example of the significance of fashion among kids, which should also involve disabled ones.

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