

## AWARENESS ON UNISEX CLOTHING AMONG FASHION DESIGNERS: A STUDY

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### ABSTRACT

*A new trend, unisex clothing, is fast catching up in Indian context especially among fashion designers. In this study an attempt has been made to identify the awareness on unisex clothing among the fashion designers. Further this study identifies the opinion, attitude and barrier on unisex clothing. A total of 90 questionnaires distributed among the students across all the disciplines. Out of 90, 68 responded (75.55%), among the 68 respondents, 51 (75%) belongs to female community and 17 (25%) belongs to male. The age of the respondents were grouped into two as below 22 and above 22 of which 58.8% (40) respondents belongs to below 22 years and 41.2% (28) respondents are above 22 years of age. More than 50% of the respondents are aware of unisex clothing. 72.1% of the respondents are willing to accept to design unisex clothing. The unisex clothing were “already in use”. It is “something that could be beneficial” and “is part of life” were the opinion on unisex clothing among the fashion designers. The “body size”, “appearance” and “fitness” were identified as attitude that persists among the fashion designer on unisex clothing. Cultural difference and Social aspect were identified as a barrier by the fashion designer. The study indicates that the unisex clothing will become popular in India soon becomes a need of the day.*

**KEY WORDS:** Unisex clothing, awareness on unisex clothing, Fashion designers opinion on unisex clothing, barrier on unisex clothing.

### INTRODUCTION

In today's apparel market where styles and trends are fast moving with a short lifecycle, it is necessary for the manufacturers and designer's to evolve styles which are easy for manufacturing and they in turn have reduced the categories of their on-shelf garments i.e. the garments are displayed and marketed as unisex garments. In the same way consumers are also comfortable in picking up these garments which actually reduces their time spent on the shopping, also facilitates a common wardrobe for a couple. These are few of the reasons which paved the way for the boom of a new category of clothing i.e. Unisex Clothing. As seen and understood from the Fashion Trend and Forecasts, the concept of Unisex Clothing is very much in the trend. Almost all leading International Designers have created and launched their line for Unisex Clothes. But in India the concept is still in the nascent stage due to several reasons

### UNISEX CLOTHING

Unisex clothing is a style of clothing worn by men and women. The word 'uni' is a prefix and means 'single' and 'sex' refers to the biological differences between men and women. When 'uni' is entwined

with 'sex', the meaning is 'one-sex'. However, 'sex' is biological, whereas 'gender' is a social and cultural construction, hence, there are certain different social expectations of men and women.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the unisex collections should not be perceived as a 'one-sex, sex-less' design; but more as gender independent design, which equalises the differences of what is perceived as being distinct 'male' and 'female'. Clothing and adornment classed as unisex included items which by virtue of color and/or style could appropriately be worn by either gender in our society at this point in time. Clothing such as sweaters, t-shirts and blue jeans were considered to be Unisex. Minimally gender specific clothing was outfits with one gender specific item or decorative detail which made the clothing more appropriate for one gender. Peter pan collars, the color pink, ruffles, lace, tucks, shirring, ribbons, skirts, colourful shoes, tights, etc. were considered to be feminine items of clothing. Military fatigues, sports team logo apparel, rough, heavy fabrics, plaid flannel shirts, heavy work boots, dark intense colours, etc. were classified as masculine. The moderately gender specific clothing included wearing clothing or adornment which included two to three gender specific items, and the extreme gender specific clothing category included wearing of four or more items which would not generally be worn by members of the opposite sex.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The term was first used in 1968 in *Life*, an American magazine that ran weekly from 1883 to 1972.<sup>1</sup> The definition of "clothing" or "clothes" is described as items worn to cover the body.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, "unisex clothing" is best described as clothing designed to be suitable for both sexes in order to make men and women look similar. Among the most popular trends and tendencies are vests, oversized blazers, oversized shirts and baggy jeans.<sup>3</sup> Multiple celebrities have all been seen sporting this trend and the look does not appear to fade away anytime soon.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, many other large fashion brands have picked up this trend, for instance Aditya Birla Nuvo, Koutons, and Allen Solly etc., have all sort to foray into this segment with their distinguished offerings. This enhances the female demand for unisex clothing as they have already adopted the trend and flirt with the masculine silhouette. Despite many fashion brands having launched unisex-inspired clothes and pieces, no brand is built upon having a distinct gender independent collection, which offers high quality clothes as well as a unique brand universe. The pricing philosophy of the clothes entails that the clothes signify *affordable luxury*, hence, the clothes are characterized by high levels of perceived quality, taste, and status with a price just high enough not to be out of consumers' reach.<sup>5</sup>

### NEED FOR THE STUDY

A new trend of unisex clothing which is fast catching up in Indian context especially in females, also known as crossover clothing in the loose sense it is the arrival of de-gendered clothing in India. It is an evolution of the Indian clothing fashion scenario and its willingness to experiment with quite a bold expression.<sup>6</sup> The shopping behavior varies between men & women; also it is quite different between the women of different countries, religion, culture, age groups – this has inspired to get a deeper insight about the consumer's psyche and attitude regarding Unisex Clothing in India. Other reasons for this study are the Transformation of women into Smart & intelligent Consumers and Shifting consumer attitudes and mindsets. Therefore in this study an attempt has been made to identify the awareness on unisex clothing among the fashion designers.

### OBJECTIVE

The objectives of the study were

- To identify the opinion on unisex clothing among fashion designers
- To identify the attitude among fashion design students on unisex clothing

- To elucidate the barriers on unisex clothing
- To know the awareness among fashion design students on unisex clothing
- To identify the inquisitiveness among the fashion design students in designing the unisex clothing

**HYPOTHESES**

- There exists difference in opinion on unisex clothing among fashion designers
- There exists difference in attitude among fashion design students on unisex clothing.
- There exist barriers in designing on unisex clothing
- The fashion design students were well aware about unisex clothing
- There exist inquisitiveness among the fashion design students in designing the unisex clothing

**SAMPLE**

The awareness on unisex clothing among the fashion designers had been ascertained from the students of fashion designers. A total of 90 questionnaires distributed among the students across all the disciplines. Out of 90, 68 were responded (75.55%). Among the 68 respondents, 51 (75%) belongs to female community and 17 (25%) belongs to male. The age of the respondents were grouped in to two as below 22 and above 22 of which 58.8% (40) respondents belongs to below 22 years and 41.2% (28) respondents are above 22 years of age. Also, the researcher tries to identify the nativity of the respondents which also plays an important role in the awareness on the unisex clothing. Among the 68 respondents, 55 (80.9%) were from the urban background followed by 9 (13.2%) from semi urban. Very few of the respondents are from the rural background.

**Table 1**  
**Department-wise responses**

S. No.	Department	No. of respondents	Percent
1	Fashion Design	13	19.1
2	Knitwear Design	20	29.4
3	Textile Design	3	4.4
4	Accessory Design	12	17.6
5	Fashion Communication	9	13.2
6	Fashion Technology (Apparel Production)	4	5.9
7	Fashion Management	7	10.3
<b>Total</b>		<b>68</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**DATA ANALYSIS**

To ascertain the awareness on the unisex clothing, initially the respondents were asked whether they were aware about the unisex clothing or not? Obviously, the data shows that all the respondents were aware about the unisex clothing. Being Design students, they were well aware about the unisex clothing and further questions were asked about attempting on designing unisex clothing and awareness on unisex clothing brand. The responses were shown in Table 2.

**Table 2**  
**Designing Unisex Clothing and Brand Awareness**

S.No.	Description	Yes	No	Total
1	Have you attempted in designing unisex clothing	27 (39.7%)	41 (60.3%)	68 (100.0%)
2	Are you aware of Unisex Clothing Brand	42 (61.8%)	26 (38.2%)	68 (100.0%)

60.3% of the respondents said that they have not attempted in designing unisex clothing where as 39.7% attempted in designing unisex clothing which is a good move towards the latest trend. It is also a fact that among the 60.3% of the students who had not attempted in designing the unisex clothing at present but they would design if it is required by the client. More than 50% of the respondents are aware of unisex clothing. Further the respondents were asked whether they are willing to design unisex clothing, if they are asked to do? It is interesting to note that 49 (72.1%) of the respondents are willing to accept to design unisex clothing whereas 10 (14.7%) respondents will accept depending on various factors. However, 9 (13.2%) firmly reject on designing unisex clothing.

As part of the awareness on unisex clothing, the respondents were asked to respond on opinion, attitude and barriers in unisex clothing on a five point scale such as Strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree. Each factor is further classified into various sub factors. Table 3 shows the factors and the sub-factors there on.

**Table 3**  
**Awareness Factors**

Factors	Sub-Factors
Opinion	Something that could be beneficial
	Is a part of life
	Already in use
	Need of the day
	Environment friendly
Attitude	Appearance
	Fitness
	Body Size
	Fabric
	Acceptance
Barriers	Cost
	Colour
	Domination
	Cultural difference
	Social aspect
	Personal Look
	Comfort

The opinion on the unisex clothing among the respondents is shown in Table 4. The analysis was carried out on mean and standard deviation and the respondent’s opinion were ranked based on the mean value.

**Table 4**  
**Opinion on Unisex Clothing**

S.No	Description	SDA		DA		NO		A		SA		Mean	Std	Rank
1	Something that could be beneficial	5	7.4%	0	.0%	6	8.8%	3	51.5%	2	32.4%	4.01	1.044	2
2	Is a part of life	2	2.9%	6	8.8%	2	33.8%	1	23.5%	2	30.9%	3.71	1.094	3
3	Already in use	1	1.5%	2	2.9%	8	11.8%	4	60.3%	1	23.5%	4.01	.782	1
4	Need of the day	1	1.5%	1	25.0%	1	14.7%	2	33.8%	1	25.0%	3.56	1.164	4
5	Environment friendly	8	11.8%	4	5.9%	1	26.5%	2	33.8%	1	22.1%	3.49	1.240	5

It is seen from table 4 that the respondents given first preference to “already in use” (3.56) followed by “something that could be beneficial” (4.01) and “is part of life” (3.71). However, “unisex clothing is environment friendly” as the last preference.

Further the opinion on unisex clothing was analysed based on the age as well as the sex of the respondents which is shown in Table 5.

**Table 5**  
**Opinion on Unisex Clothing Vs Age Vs Sex**

S.No	Description	Below 22			Above 22			Male			Female		
		Mean	Std.	Rank	Mean	Std.	Rank	Mean	Std.	Rank	Mean	Std.	Rank
1	Something that could be beneficial	4.22	.423	1	3.71	1.512	2	3.35	1.618	2	4.24	.651	1
2	Is a part of life	3.80	1.018	3	3.57	1.200	3	3.06	1.435	3	3.92	.868	3
3	Already in use	4.08	.656	2	3.93	.940	1	3.47	1.068	1	4.20	.566	2
4	Need of the day	3.63	1.213	5	3.46	1.105	4	2.76	1.200	4	3.82	1.034	4
5	Environment friendly	3.63	1.213	5	3.29	1.272	5	2.59	1.622	5	3.78	.923	5

The data revealed that the opinion of the respondents does not differ in respective of age and the sex. The opinion on the respondent’s age of above 22 and the male are very similar and the age of below 22 and female are almost similar except the fourth and fifth rank which are interchanged between the female and below 22 years. Also it could be seen that the variables “Something that could be beneficial”

and “Already in use” are the top two preferred opinion of the respondents. Further the nativity of the respondents were analysed against the opinion of the users. Table 6 which reveals that the urban and semi urban respondents prefer “something that could be beneficial” as top preference (Mean 4.02) followed by “is a part of life” (3.76) in respect of urban. As far as the semi urban is concerned, equal weightage was given to the parameters “Already in use” and “Need of the day” as the second preference. The preferences were identical in nature for 3 parameters (mean 4.75, std.dev 0.500) and 2 (mean 4.25, std.dev 0.500) parameters.

**Table 6**  
**Opinion on Unisex Clothing Vs Nativity**

S. No.	Opinion	Nativity							
		Urban		Semi Urban		Rural		Total	
		Mean	Std.	Mean	Std.	Mean	Std.	Mean	Std.
1	Something that could be beneficial	4.02	1.063	3.89	1.167	4.25	.500	4.01	1.044
2	Is a part of life	3.76	1.018	2.89	1.269	4.75	.500	3.71	1.094
3	Already in use	4.15	.621	3.11	1.167	4.25	.500	4.01	.782
4	Need of the day	3.55	1.152	3.11	1.167	4.75	.500	3.56	1.164
5	Environment friendly	3.53	1.120	2.67	1.658	4.75	.500	3.49	1.240

Apart from the opinion on unisex clothing, the respondents were asked to give their response on the attitude towards unisex clothing. The responses received were analysed and ranked based on the mean as well as standard deviation values (Table 7).

**Table 7**  
**Attitude on Unisex Clothing**

S.No	Description	SDA	DA	NO	A	SA	Mean	Std	Rank
1	Appearance	5 7.4%	0 .0%	12 17.6%	43 63.2%	8 11.8%	4.01	1.044	2
2	Fitness	6 8.8%	4 5.9%	23 33.8%	16 23.5%	19 27.9%	3.71	1.094	3
3	Body Size	3 4.4%	10 14.7%	17 25.0%	29 42.6%	9 13.2%	4.01	.782	1
4	Fabric	5 7.4%	0 .0%	10 14.7%	29 42.6%	24 35.3%	3.56	1.164	4
5	Acceptance	2 2.9%	13 19.1%	8 11.8%	27 39.7%	18 26.5%	3.49	1.240	5

The attitude on “body size” is given as the top most preference followed by “appearance” and “fitness”. However the respondents given “acceptance” as the least preference.

**Table 8**  
**Attitude on Unisex Clothing Vs Age Vs Sex**

S.No	Description	Below 22			Above 22			Male			Female		
		Mean	Std.	R	Mean	Std.	R	Mean	Std.	R	Mean	Std.	R
1	Appearance	3.97	.480	2	3.36	1.283	3	2.94	1.391	5	3.98	.547	2
2	Fitness	3.70	.853	4	3.36	1.592	4	3.47	1.419	3	3.59	1.152	4
3	Body Size	3.47	.933	5	3.43	1.200	5	3.47	1.231	2	3.45	.986	5
4	Fabric	4.22	.698	1	3.64	1.420	1	3.65	1.801	1	4.10	.700	1
5	Acceptance	3.72	.960	3	3.61	1.397	2	3.35	1.412	4	3.78	1.045	3

Further, the attitude on unisex clothing was analysed based on the age and sex of the respondents. The order of preference in the case of first rank is “fabric” respect of age as well as the sex of the respondents. However the other order is interchanged among the other categories. The preferential order in the case of age i.e below 22 years is similar to the female whereas the order is not similar in above 22 years and the male community. The female respondents in the age group of below 22 years prefer fabric as first preference followed by appearance and acceptance. It is interesting to note that they are not giving much importance to the body size whereas the male give body size as second preference who are above 22 years are accepting the facts. The nativity of the respondents against the attitude were analysed and the same is shown in table 9.

**Table 9**  
**Attitude on Unisex Clothing Vs Nativity**

S. No.	Nativity	Urban		Semi Urban		Rural		Total		Rank
		Mean	Std.	Mean	Std.	Mean	Std.	Mean	Std.	
1	Appearance	3.75	0.907	3.67	1.323	3.5	0.577	3.72	0.944	2
2	Fitness	3.38	1.163	4.44	1.333	4	0.816	3.56	1.214	4
3	Body Size	3.47	0.94	3.89	1.167	2.25	1.5	3.46	1.043	5
4	Fabric	3.91	1.041	4.56	1.333	3.75	0.957	3.99	1.086	1
5	Acceptance	3.73	1.13	3.56	1.236	3.25	1.5	3.68	1.152	3

It is revealed from the attitude of the respondents against the nativity that they prefer fabric as the first preference followed by appearance and the acceptance. As far as the nativity is concerned, the respondents are not giving much importance to the body size as in the case of age and the female respondents.

The barriers the respondents are facing while using the unisex clothing were analysed and the same is shown in table 10. The researcher identified Cost, Colour, Domination, Cultural difference, Social aspect, Personal Look and Comfort. These barriers were ranked based on the five point scale such as strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree.

**Table 10**  
**Barriers inn Unisex Clothing**

S. No.	Barriers	SDA		DA		NO		A		SA	
1	Cost	2	2.9%	14	20.6%	20	29.4%	25	36.8%	7	10.3%
2	Colour	2	2.9%	5	7.4%	14	20.6%	37	54.4%	10	14.7%
3	Domination	1	1.5%	13	19.4%	15	22.4%	31	46.3%	7	10.4%
4	Cultural difference	2	2.9%	0	.0%	11	16.2%	41	60.3%	14	20.6%
5	Social aspect	1	1.5%	4	5.9%	5	7.4%	51	75.0%	7	10.3%
6	Personal Look	3	4.4%	8	11.8%	10	14.7%	27	39.7%	20	29.4%
7	Comfort	6	8.8%	6	8.8%	12	17.6%	20	29.4%	24	35.3%

In a whole 75% (51) respondents felt that the social aspect is the main barrier. The respondents also opined that the comfort in unisex clothing is also one of the main barrier followed by personal look. However 29.4% (20) respondents are on neutral in respect of cost whereas 20 respondents are agree in nature on personal look and comfort as barriers. Very few respondents felt that there is no barrier while using unisex clothing.

To ascertain the response of the respondents in respect of age as well as the sex, the data was analysed and the same is presented in table 11.

**Table 11**  
**Barriers on Unisex Clothing Vs Age Vs Sex**

S.No	Description	Below 22			Above 22			Male			Female		
		Mean	Std.	Rank	Mean	Std.	Rank	Mean	Std.	Rank	Mean	Std.	Rank
1	Cost	3.60	.928	7	2.89	.994	7	3.65	1.367	6	3.20	.849	7
2	Colour	3.90	.744	3	3.43	1.069	5	3.76	1.300	5	3.69	.761	4
3	Domination	3.73	.679	5	3.04	1.192	6	3.81	1.109	4	3.33	.909	6
4	Cultural difference	4.00	.641	2	3.89	.994	1	3.82	1.286	3	4.00	.566	2
5	Social aspect	4.02	.530	1	3.64	.911	4	3.47	1.231	7	4.00	.400	1
6	Personal Look	3.83	1.059	4	3.71	1.243	3	4.00	1.225	2	3.71	1.101	3
7	Comfort	3.65	1.001	6	3.86	1.604	2	4.06	1.088	1	3.63	1.326	5

The respondents opined that the social aspect is the important factor while using unisex clothing in view of the respondents who are below the age group of 22 years and from the female community where as the above 22 years respondents are of the opinion that the cultural difference is the main barrier and the male community opined that the comfort is the prime barrier. It is inferred that the opinion of the respondents in respect of sex as well as the age group is not identical except the least preference of the cost as the barrier. Also the nativity of the respondents were in the opinion that the Cultural difference and Social aspect are the main barriers (table 12) and given cost as the least barrier.

**Table 12**  
**Barriers Vs Nativity**

S. No.	Barriers	Nativity							
		Urban		Semi Urban		Rural		Total	
		Mean	Std.	Mean	Std.	Mean	Std.	Mean	Std.
1	Cost	3.24	.942	3.78	1.481	3.25	.500	3.31	1.011
2	Colour	3.65	.865	3.89	1.269	4.00	.816	3.71	.915
3	Domination	3.44	1.014	3.38	.916	3.75	.500	3.45	.974
4	Cultural difference	4.04	.719	3.44	1.130	4.00	.816	3.96	.800
5	Social aspect	3.84	.739	3.89	.782	4.25	.500	3.87	.731
6	Personal Look	3.78	1.083	3.56	1.590	4.25	.500	3.78	1.131
7	Comfort	3.71	1.257	3.56	1.590	4.50	.577	3.74	1.277



## FINDING

1. Among the 68 (75.55%) respondents, 51 (75%) belongs to female community and 17 (25%) belongs to male.
2. The age of the respondents were grouped in to two as below 22 and above 22 of which 58.8% (40) respondents belongs to below 22 years and 41.2% (28) respondents are above 22 years of age. 55 (80.9%) were from the urban background followed by 9 (13.2%) from semi urban. (Table 1)
3. 60.3% of the respondents said that they have not attempted in designing unisex clothing where as 39.7% attempted in designing unisex clothing which is a good move towards the latest trend. (Table 2)
4. 49 (72.1%) of the respondents are willing to accept to design unisex clothing whereas 10 (14.7%) respondents will accept depending on various factors. 9 (13.2%) firmly reject on designing unisex clothing. (Table 2)
5. The respondents opinion on unisex clothing, first preference to “already in use” (3.56) followed by “something that could be beneficial” (4.01) and “is part of life” (3.71). However, “unisex clothing is environment friendly” as the last preference. (Table 4)
6. The opinion of the respondents in respect of unisex clothing does not differ in respective of age and the sex. The opinion on the respondent’s age of above 22 and the male are very similar and the age of below 22 and female are almost similar. (Table 5)
7. The urban and semi urban respondents prefer “something that could be beneficial” as top preference (Mean 4.02) followed by “is a part of life” (3.76) in respect of urban. (Table 6)
8. The attitude on “body size” is given as the top most preference followed by “appearance” and “fitness”. (Table 7)
9. The order of preference in the case of first rank is “fabric” in respect of age as well as the sex of the respondents. However the other order is interchanged among the other categories. (Table 8)
10. Below 22 years is similar to the female whereas the order is not similar in above 22 years and the male community. The female respondents in the age group of below 22 years prefer fabric as first preference followed by appearance and acceptance. (Table 8)
11. It is revealed from the attitude of the respondents against the nativity that they prefer fabric as the first preference followed by appearance and the acceptance. (Table 9)
12. 75% (51) respondents felt that the social aspect is the main barrier. (Table 10)
13. 29.4% (20) respondents are on neutral in respect of cost whereas 20 respondents are agree in nature on personal look and comfort as barriers. (Table 10)
14. The respondents opined that the social aspect is the important factor while using unisex clothing in view of the respondents who are below the age group of 22 years and from the female community where as the above 22 years respondents are of the opinion that the cultural difference is the main barrier (Table 11)
15. The nativities of the respondents were in the opinion that the Cultural difference and Social aspect are the main barriers and given cost as the least barrier. (Table 12)

## CONCLUSION

In this study an attempt has been made to identify the awareness on unisex clothing among the fashion designers. This study was carried out primarily for identifying the opinion on unisex clothing among fashion designers. Further the study identifies the attitude among fashion design students on unisex

clothing besides elucidating the barriers on unisex clothing. The fashion design students were well aware about unisex clothing. This study also identifies the inquisitiveness among the fashion design students in designing the unisex clothing. This study indicates that there exist differences in opinion on unisex clothing among fashion designers. Further there exist difference in attitude among fashion design students on unisex clothing and there exist barriers in designing on unisex clothing. There exist inquisitiveness among the fashion design students in designing the unisex clothing.

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