

Unisex Style: The History, Current Situation and Future

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the origins, development, and future trends of unisex clothing. We will analyze how unisex clothing has evolved step by step from the Baby Boom to the rise of feminism after World War II to the Peacock and Stonewall movements to its current growing acceptance from five perspectives. The development of genderless clothing is of course reflected in music, theater, film, and literature, and there is a wealth of written material for us to study. Through an interview with Ms. Wang, a professional in the clothing industry, we learned that genderlessness is not only a notable development in the clothing sector, but is also popular in the luggage and perfume sectors, and can be particularly reflected in the luxury goods sector. This shows that both men and women are more conscious of their own pleasure when it comes to consumption, and that the sense of equality is deeply rooted in people's minds, and that unisex clothing is just one of the paths that give us an insight into socio-economic development.

Keywords: *unisex, resistance movements, fashion shows, gender equality*

1. INTRODUCTION

The trend towards unisex was born out of the baby boom of the 1950s when stereotypes about gender were shattered. In the 1960s, the term 'unisex' was first used, initially by hairdressing salons to cater for boys and girls who wanted long, tousled hair equally. By the mid-1970s, gender non-differentiation was becoming a social phenomenon that permeated every aspect of American life. The 1970s was an era of freedom that is difficult to turn the page on in the history of fashion, and the era when the image created by David Bowie was the most widely known and sought-after. Designer Betsy Johnson once said: The 70s, stylistically, was all about freedom and liberty [1]. Not only was hippie style all the rage, but punk, bell-bottom pants, thick-soled shoes, and other retro nostalgic elements were also popular when fashion meant breaking the rules and releasing oneself. During this period, men also liberated themselves from the previous social requirements of masculinity by dressing up as women. David Bowie, a pioneer of glam rock, was more intense and avant-garde. His trademark long orange hair, tight pants and thick-soled shoes made him indistinguishable from an

androgynous man, making him a seminal figure in the 'androgynous' genre. He went on to create a pale, thin duke in his 1976 album "Station to Station"[2]. His carefully tailored shirts, well-made pants and suit undershirt made him look like a nobleman who had been brought up to be a little sickly. This role breaks the social expectation of masculinity to a certain extent. What's more, one of the pioneers of punk music, Patti Smith's white shirt and tie unisex look is one of the most iconic and impressive looks of the 70s. He always had a head of fluffy and slightly messy medium-length hair, white shirts not all buttoned up, thin ties casually around the neck, a hand casually holding a suit jacket, British, but also lazy and sexy. The New York Times first used the word "unisex" in 1968 in a story about "monster shoes". After this, the "genderless style" became a weapon for Europeans to fight against the gender stereotypes after the Second World War, women began to abandon traditional dressing and seek freedom in dressing, while men explored more definitions of fashion in the "Peacock Revolution", where color and style were no longer exclusive to gender [3].

Sexlessness is in fact also a practical expression of the concept of ambiguity in terms of gender. In the

twentieth century, when man began to make clothing from animal skins and leaves in order to cover his body in primitive societies, and later in agricultural civilisations, when matrilineal clans transitioned to patrilineal clans, the social status of men gradually increased and gender consciousness began to develop, a clear boundary began to appear in the labelling of gender in clothing. Then came the Rococo period, when the European aristocracy was very meticulous about clothing, and the concept of luxury also led to the emergence of many elements of men's clothing such as frills and lace. At the end of the 18th century, the beginning of the Industrial Revolution promoted the acceleration of the modernisation of society and the enhancement of industrial productivity. At this time, the social status of men was even higher than that of women, so men's clothing was more designed to highlight the identity and status of men, and the clothing was completely Femininity was removed. Women's clothing, on the other hand, became more comfortable and convenient to wear, and gradually became more homogeneous with men's clothing. The course of history not only has contributed to the development of unisex clothing, but also to the development of the genderless revolution, especially through movements that fought against unequal rights [4].

2. DEVELOPMENT OF UNISEX CLOTHING IN HISTORY

The political and economic turmoil of World War I and the influence of the Futurist movement prompted THAYAHT to seek everyday clothing as a vehicle to express his desire to revolutionize his life and embrace a new, fast-moving era. In 1919, he conceived his most famous work, the Tuta, a one-piece suit designed to be practical and universal. The name Tuta has many different meanings, it refers to both a complete piece of fabric and the ability to cover the entire body, and it also implies that everyone can wear it. From a piece of fabric to the individual body, to the needs of the general public, a complete chain is formed. In addition, THAYAHT called Tuta "the most revolutionary garment in the history of Italian clothing". Tuta has many obvious benefits, such as it is made from a single piece of fabric, which is very economical. Tuta is a one-piece garment, cut in a straight line, minimizing the number of pieces and reducing the number of stitches. In addition, Tuta covers the entire body with only 7 buttons and a belt, making it easy to put on and take off, saving time, and allowing complete freedom of movement with minimal weight and maximum looseness, which is expected to be worn by everyone in a few weeks. In the 1920s, with the publication of Victor Margueritte's novel *The Girl Boy*, the image of the spontaneous heroine with her short hair, habitual smoking, masculine attire, and multiple sexual partners

challenged the traditional Victorian role of women while pushing the style known as 'boyish' into the mainstream.

The film "The Artist" also portrays the paper-thirsty 1920s. Dance, music, and movies, without exception, become daily activities. To facilitate dancing, a type of shoe worn by dancers in bars began to become popular, with a T-shaped strap and a small heel to avoid the shoe falling off while dancing, such a shoe was also called a T-Bar shoe. As an early form of modernism, Art Deco used a mechanical aesthetic, with a more mechanical, geometric, purely decorative line to express, such as fan-shaped radiant sunbursts, gears or streamlined lines, symmetrical and simple geometric compositions, the contours and details of architecture, and painted in bright and contrasting colors. And such a style can greatly disguise the lack of body, thin people wearing flowing and swaying, full-bodied people wearing can also look sexy and charming. And in this movie, the heroine with a bell-shaped cap, elegant and dynamic, she kept with a little boyish feeling Bob's head, the end of the hair perm curls, and bell-shaped cap perfectly fit. Feminists amid the first wave of feminism, also known as Bloomerist, a term that evolved from the dress Bloomer, which was strongly advocated by feminist Amelia Bloomer. At that time, there was an oriental style of bottomed lantern pants with a rather fluffy leg, which was fastened at the ankle, simple and practical, liberating the working woman from a complicated dress code, even when worn with a skirt, without affecting the flexibility of the body [5].

However, the real sense of women's Power Suit, to start with Gabrielle Chanel Chanel lady. Coco Chanel designed the first women's pants based on her boyfriend's suit pants and later designed women's baggy pants, etc. Ms. Chanel, first let pants enter people's view in the name of fashion. What is implied by the Power in Chanel's Power Suit refers more to sexual power, and somehow the right to dress freely, in Chanel's own words, "I gave them back their freedom. I gave them their real arms, their real legs."

After this, Yves Saint Laurent's combination of masculine and feminine elements can be said to have truly brought the androgynous aesthetic to the attention of the fashion world and society at large, while he also stimulated the process of the trouser revolution in Western society. In the 1960s, Yves Saint Laurent, a sensitive, introverted, and uncommunicative young boy, launched *Le Smoking*, the first piece in the history of modern clothing to be dressed for women. The first tailless gown for women in the history of modern clothing. Before Yves Saint Laurent's smoking suit came into the public eye, evening dresses were the preserve of men, worn only by the old-school gentlemen of Western high society, who smoked in smoking shoes embroidered with aristocratic insignia to

show their sophistication, nobility, and refinement. Striped pants with four buttons, straight high-waisted satin shirts, and white muslin shirts. Rather than being an adaptation of the smoking jacket, the "smoking outfit" refers to the old idea that women smoking in public was a deviation from the norm. During the same period, the Peacock Revolution emerged. In the 1960s, with the 'Peacock Revolution' as its slogan, men chose to wear Edward VII-inspired shirts and brightly colored, softly printed leggings, completely pushing genderlessness onto the catwalk and inspiring designers in their own right. John Stephen was the first designer to notice the potential of the young menswear market, and in 1957 he opened his first boutique in London, selling brightly colored suits. This initiative kicked off the Peacock Revolution and led to Carnaby Street, where the store was located, becoming known as "Peacock Lane". He once said, "Carnaby Street is my creation. It is to me what sculpture is to Michelangelo." At one point in the '60s, Stephen expanded the number of stores to 15, and his style was favored by rock bands such as The Who, The Kinks, and the Rolling Stones. Dougie Millings, the Beatles' designer, created one of the Beatles' most iconic and subversive looks in 1963, the gray lapel-less suit, which was admired by many young Britons. In 1966, a new jacket from the boutique *Granny Takes a Trip* was featured on the back cover of the Beatles' album *Revolver*, and his store was featured in *Time* magazine that same year, making it world-famous. Later, in the entire history of the world, the gay and lesbian affirmative action movement has only started to happen in the last hundred years, from the extreme stigmatization of homosexuality to the legalization of same-sex marriage [6].

3. THE CONCEPT OF EQUALITY IN UNISEX CLOTHING

Virginia Woolf once said, "All great souls are androgynous." This is exactly the kind of idea that unisex clothing conveys. The dressing has become a way of expressing oneself for the new generation, and the genderless style has been one of the weapons to convey gender equality since its inception, declaring the attitude that people are born equal and are brave enough to be themselves. In the opinion of Kidwell, Claudia Brush; in *Men and Women. Dressing the Part: truly androgynous clothing would eliminate the respective disadvantages of men's and women's clothing and combine the strengths of each.*

Western countries today, with the most influential movement in the course of history being the Stonewall movement in the United States in 1969. On June 28, 1970, the first Pride parades were held in New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Chicago to commemorate the Stonewall movement. Within the next decade, the U.S. federal government lifted its

exclusion of homosexuals; the medical community changed its long-held beliefs - they had previously believed that homosexuals needed psychiatric treatment. In the late 1980s, the U.S. repealed many anti-sodomy laws and legalized homosexuality, though by 2015. In 2016, Barack Obama declared Stonewall Bar and its surrounding neighborhoods to be named Stonewall National Memorial Park. 50 years later, the outbreak of the Stonewall movement may have had many coincidental elements, but put into the context of a long history, this event was inevitable. It was a sexual liberation movement, and more importantly, a queer affirmative action movement and Stonewall was undoubtedly a milestone in the development of genderless clothing.

4. STYLE OF UNISEX CLOTHING FROM THE PAST TO THE PRESENT

Media, the factor that plays the most significant role in exploring ideas to let more people know is luxuriant. Since the unisex clothing idea's origin, people read about genderless garments in fashion magazines, imitate what the actors or actresses wear in movies, designers attend branded shows, which are all great instances of media propaganda. *Morocco*, a love film released in 1930 plays the pioneering role in expanding the unisex idea. It was Josef von Sternberg's masterstroke and one of Marlene Dietrich's legendary performances. At that time, more than 2 million people watched the film, it was the first time women's tuxedos and trousers began to enter the public's view. Marlene Dietrich's performance was followed by many celebrities like Madonna, and she was arguably the first to bring women dressed in men to the stage. When Dietrich first stepped on the deck, wearing a black smoking suit, wearing a bonnet, and carrying her luggage, she leaned forward and strode tiredly toward the cabin, waving her arms in response to the smoking suit she was wearing, which was a landmark in unisex Clothing history to express her courage in defiance of others. It also faces the audience with a fashion pioneer attitude, which inevitably makes the audience shocked by the look and burst out their sense of identity.

This formal recognition and shock during the viewing of the film helped Unisex Clothing to spread the unisex idea. On the other hand, In the 1950s, actors Marlon Brando And James Dean affected people's minds by wearing T-shirt s and jeans. Their movie actions broke the general stereotype of masculinity of wearing jeans. This is not only a phenomenon on the stage, it made a huge contribution to make people watching their works accept and opened the prelude to the democratization of fashion. *The Train of desire*, directed with a kind of sexual desire style movie, on the other hand, is a representative of the dress way for men and also a woman—jeans with a white T-shirt. The man

of the movie *James Ballard* was born in a lower-class family. Because he grew up in chaos, drug, and violence, the characteristic wore functional and inexpensive white T-shirts. After that, more female characters began to wear jeans and white T-shirts, which seemed to be a way for both men and women to wear. The movie ignited the style of simplistic dress and man and woman both wear the form of collocation. This is one of the earliest and easiest and most common examples of gender-ambiguous clothing. In 1992, the youth romance singles starring Campbell Scott and Bridget Fonda brought the grunge style to a climax. This "anti-fashion" style of dressing has inspired many designers. They went to great lengths to mix bohemian and punk, hippie and hardcore rock together, and any young person who liked this decadent style could wear it by mixing, mismatching, and layering cheap second-hand clothes, worn-out jeans, camouflage, punk, skinny printed pants, Martin boots, and florals. "It doesn't matter what you wear, it's the way you wear it that matters" is also an important concept of genderlessness.

After several decades, another representative movie came out. *The Danish Girl*, 2015, directed by Tom Hooper won the 19th Best Director at the 19th Hollywood Film Awards. It is the film that can be seen in every list of top unisex movies. The play is based on a 1920s novel by David Ebershoff and a true story of the same name which makes the movie be more convincing and finally became one of the most successful movies containing the unisex fashion idea. With the development of the movie industry, in 2015, over 30 million of the global population watched the film. This allows the concept of gender ambiguity to be more vividly reflected in clothing. The background of the story is soon after World War One, the condition for everyone changed, for garment designers, the garments for females developed unprecedentedly. Einar the male character who holds strong disagreement of his natural gender wanted to be a woman, to be enchanting. After all, he tried the way of transgender and became a woman to chase the ideal beauty and gender identity. It is the first time, a movie expressed the main standard of unisex clothing that it is free and flexible to choose what you want to be and to wear even it does not belong to the natural gender. Although the movie is a tragedy, Einar with no doubt was abused by people at that time mentally. However, the movie gets rid of some of the bias of transgender and people are willing to focus on all the way to what they really want, what to wear what to do. In these ways, it is not surprising to see a woman wearing jeans or a smoking suit or blazer on stage and also a man wearing the garment with lace, and other feminine design at all [7].

In the last decade, there are seldom people are tend to be close to unisex style, but after 2000, more and more people get across the gap and accept the unisex clothing as a part of their wardrobes. According to the

survey we did, among our population which's mean is 25 and the range of age is between 18 to 35. Firstly, the mode of question where is their financial support to for them to consume is "from other's support" which indicates that most of population do not have the ability to make enough money for their own. Based on other's financial supports, 52.6% of the population who do not have stable source of money chose their garment because of their own trends and also 34.43% of the population concern about the price performance which is common for people do not have stable financial support. It seems like people are tend to choose the garment that are able to express their own ideas and styles. Moreover, we have 169 out of 259 had already knew about or like unisex idea for their wardrobes. It is 65.25 % of the total population including people above 25 and under 18, and also having financial support or not. Obviously, the people between 18 and 25 which is the main of all samples are treat the unisex clothing as a trends and be willing to learn about the unisex clothing idea. Their mental ideas are not limited by the traditional patriarchal taste, and based on the exploration of unisex clothing people are more like to try new garments on, even man are able to wear dress and les and woman are not forbidden to wear smoke suit. Finally, for the last question, the 256 population responded us with that almost 96% of them appreciate or be acquiesced to the people wearing garments that has elements which are not belongs to traditional gender stereotypes. Only, 1.16%, 3 out of 259 are not convinced by this future trend idea of garments. Thus, people between 18 to 35 are tend to allowed the appearance and development of unisex clothing, and more and more people accept the advanced conceptional equality of gender in elements of garments, people 's freedom of chasing their ideal beauty are increasing. The unisex clothing are predictable to be a future fashion trends for the people between 18 to 35 years old. Fashion show is another way to creat new point of view of design and new idea of garments. For unisex clothing, it is the same way. Fashion show allows the audience to directly feel what the designer wants to express from the perspective of designers other than the producers of the wearer. In a sense, fashion show is the best way to stimulate the audience to feel new design concepts. Unisex idea is not a exception. Coco Chanel was the first designer to put smoking clothes on the runway. The appearance of the smoking suit was the pioneer of Unisex Clothing. The Power Suit banner of the 1960s was hold by Mr Yves Saint Laurent. He launched Le Smoking in 1966, the first tail-free dress designed for women. Giorgio Armani was the one after him, there is no more widely known Power Suit than the Giorgio Armani Power Suit. Not just for woman, but also for man, the post-Hiroshima look created by Japanese designers Yohji Yamamoto [8] and Rei Kawakubo during this period, with its loose and asymmetrical black underlining; Hedi

Slimane reworked the tailoring of men's clothing in subtle details. With the pace of the society, it is not unusual to see unisex elements in fashion show, and they really appear consequently. More recently, Thom Browne Autumn/Winter 2020 show with a typical special style of unisex worth to be talked about. Thom Browne's fall/winter 2020 show took us into a magical illusion, with models wearing different headpieces, like giraffes and lions, that came in pairs. Male and female models wore identical outfits, prompting people to think about genderless fashion. Trench coats, jackets, shawls, trousers, pleated skirts, pleated skirts, Oxford shirts and ties, with exaggerated proportions and boxy pleats. Gucci, as one of the most populist fashion brands, also integrates sexism into its design concept and takes it as the main theme of some fashion shows After taking over Gucci as a designer in 2015, he applied some details with female design elements, such as bright lace embroidery, into men's wear design, advocating the concept that both men and women can wear. In the recent fashion mini-series of spring and summer 2021, the designer took overseas male models as examples in the forefront of Unisex Clothing The obvious non-gender distinction is to express the mainstream stereotype that men and women have the right to pursue their inner beauty regardless of gender, which cannot restrict people's freedom of dressing. The Thom Browne Autumn/Winter 2020 show took us into a magical illusion as models emerged wearing different headgear such as giraffes and lions, all in pairs.



Figure 1 Gucci Fall/Winter 2015 Collection [9]

Thom Browne's signature red, white and navy blue accented the grey suits, and the deconstruction of animal prints with the suits added a sense of playfulness to the show, as did the appearance of male and female models in identical outfits, provoking thoughts of genderless fashion. A classic repertoire of trench coats, jackets, shawls, trousers, pleated half skirts, draped half skirts, oxford shirts and ties, with exaggerated proportions and boxy pleats.



Figure 2 The Thom Browne Autumn/Winter 2020 show [10]

The 'unisex clothing' style that has become so popular on the catwalks in recent years also proves that, in an age where the emphasis is on diversity in aesthetics, where the differences between men and women in dressing are narrowing and the fashion industry is constantly trying to discuss 'gender fluidity' and the 'blurring of gender concepts', genderlessness is becoming one of the hottest aesthetic styles and is becoming more and more known and recognised.

5. ANALYSIS BASED ON INTERVIEW

The author interviewed Ms. Wang, a practitioner in the marketing department of ESG in Paris. She has studied and worked in Paris for seven years and has worked for Marriott Hotels and LVMH Paris

The development of unisex clothing is directly linked to the world geographical developments. Ms. Wang uses the Asian market, the European and American market as examples to predict the market penetration of sexism. The Asian market has probably the lowest penetration percentage due to the overall cultural background. Asians tends to be more conservative so it counts for less than 30 percent of the overall market. The United States and Europe account for the most of the remaining percentage due to its high tolerance for different cultures. Different designers bring various thoughts and elements to these land making Americans and Europeans receive new concepts each day. Louis Vuitton Spring/Summer show, which was held in Shanghai, had apparel in line with the Chinese taste. Chinese stars are willing to come and are attracted by its beauty and manifestation of high-class fashion elements. Dior exposed a collection that uglified oriental image from an Eastern point of view; However, Dior intended to express the image of oriental mysterious culture. This shows that there is a big difference between Asian and Western regions thoughts.

Ms Wang says: "I think the genderlessness is mainly in perfume and luggage, for example Louis Vuitton's vintage luggage is almost always tailored to the customer's preferences and there isn't much gender division." And although there is a difference between the preferences of boys and girls for different flavors, men can spray perfumes with floral scents, and women will love the peace of mind and sense of security that comes with woody scents. But nowadays, more and more perfumes tend to break away from the framework brought by gender and recombine ingredients and fragrance notes to bring infinite possibilities of olfactory creations. The master perfumer Fabrice Pellegrin said: "A perfume is the experience of an emotion, a passion, a desire to share, for me there is no such thing as masculine or feminine. I like to start from the raw material and sublimate it through the perfume itself.

Ms. Wang's market forecast for the future of genderlessness is that the size of the sink market will be larger than the high-end market. She believes that the consumer group in the high-end market is more fixed and the style of luxury brands should be consistent, especially in the part of personalized clothing for customers. The lower end of the market may go to try more new things, because its product itself is relatively low cost. Instead of forcing customers to differentiate by gender, brands should focus on the needs of their customers, try to make unisex clothing for the LGBT community, and guide the public to recognize the core concept of "unisex clothing": regardless of gender identity, you can find your own style and become the person you want to be. So in the future, brands can't just understand "genderless" by its literal meaning, it is neither "LGBT", "unisex", nor "It is a brand attitude that transcends gender bias and promotes a more inclusive culture.

Ms. Wang also mentioned that the first publicly available Unisex fragrance in history was CK One, released by Calvin Klein in 1994, when it was also brought to life by Kate Moss, a supermodel with a chiseled figure and a sophisticated, cool temperament, who made people realize that a woman's beauty should not be limited to gender stereotypes. But there is not a necessary connection between perfume itself and gender, the driving force behind shaping the gender perception of fragrance is advertising. The Japanese research team also did find that after being guided by gender (such as a literal label or a hint of packaging), the subjects' perception of unisex fragrances showed a clear gender bias. Apart from some of the brand's more classic styles, the luggage was not very different for men and women.

As Ms. Wang said, the multi-faceted nature of beauty is destined to be undefined, and beauty is even less bound by gender, age and geography. The brand

can dig, pay attention to and respect the uniqueness of the individual, to achieve more beauty possibilities, is the essence of beauty. When we conceive the way of presenting ourselves, we will no longer consider gender, but only consider ourselves in the form of "human", perhaps we will all feel more free.

6. CONCLUSION

With the continuous advancement of social concepts, human understanding of gender is constantly changing. In today's multicultural society, women are no longer satisfied with a single imitation of men and call for equality between men and women. Women have begun to re-examine themselves and show the beauty of women to society. As women engage in social work, the pressure imposed by society and family on men has gradually decreased, and men have become more gentle and casual in their masculinity. From the pursuit of equality between men and women to the obfuscation of gender and the pursuit of freedom of human nature, this process of thought change is completely reflected in clothing. The masculinization of women's clothing and the feminization of men's clothing are both attrition of gender boundaries. Nowadays, freedom of dressing is advocated. Clothing is no longer a social symbol. It is more about expressing self-emotion and pursuing a better lifestyle. People are more concerned about self-development, following their own preferences, seeking individuality, and genderless clothing. It will become a popular trend, breaking the limitation of traditional norms on clothing, and making clothing design more free and flexible.

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