

Design and Development of Gender Neutral Collection for Digital Marketing and PR Employees

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Abstract - Purpose – The purpose of this paper is design and develop a gender-neutral collection for digital marketing and PR employees. With the rise of gender-fluid clothing globally, Indian designers are coming up with gender-fluid collections. Although gender fluidity is an emerging concept in everyday clothing, work wear/formal wear is a minimally explored domain. Thus, our project focuses on developing a gender-neutral attire collection for digital marketing and PR employees.

Design/methodology/approach – The methodology involves developing designs through portfolio boards, which are developed through data acquired from research, surveys and interviews.

Findings – Today, people are not wearing the clothes, that society demands but also the clothes that enable them to express themselves and their thoughts, beliefs, ideologies more independently. Many organizations and companies are also taking measures to make their workplace inclusive and diverse. After COVID 19 pandemic, many digital jobs such as digital marketing specialists, content writers etc. have been on the rise. In addition, people are getting to adapt themselves to the new work culture and people are more willing to wear gender-neutral clothes.

Originality/value – It is an original work, as gender-neutral clothing is an emerging concept in the southern part of India.

Paper Type – Qualitative research

Key Words: Gender neutrality, Gender-neutral fashion, Gender-fluid clothing, Digital job employees, Work wear/formal wear

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, companies such as MasterCard, Tata Steel, Wipro, Infosys etc., are training their employees to make their organizations inclusive for LGBTQ+ employees. In order to avoid restricting talented workers, companies are willing to have diversity and inclusivity in their workplace. Gender neutrality will also be helpful to put a stop to gender discrimination and encourage cohesiveness at work place to

technological advancements, the ubiquity of digital marketing and PR jobs have increased dramatically. Marketing and PR managers feel that confidence and communication are the primary keys to cultivate trustworthiness and professionalism while interacting with clients and audiences digitally. Attire could also play an intermediary role in enhancing confidence and communication.

1.1 Aim and objective of the work:

The aim of the work is to design and develop a gender-neutral collection for digital marketing and PR employees. The objectives of the paper is coming up with a collection for digital marketing and PR employees, incorporate gender neutrality while developing the collection and promoting inclusivity and diversity in corporate organizations.

1.2 Scope of the work:

The importance of maintaining digital presence and resonating with the audience is highly crucial in organizations. Employees believe that a business that values diversity and inclusion is more likely to introduce new ideas.. This in turn, will make the employee to be more dedicated and engage better with work.

1.3 Intended approach:

The implementation strategy is developing portfolio boards based on data acquired from research and survey.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

For literature review, the following articles, books and blogs had been referred. The literature briefs about the gender fluidity concepts in clothing, impact of clothing on work attitudes and LGBTQ community in India. **Nihan Akdemir (2018)** conducted the study on how deconstruction in fashion influences breaking gender stereotypes. Many fashion brands prepare their collection in the concept of 'gender fluidity' by deconstructions. Gender fluidity through fashion helps people who are trying to find the self-confidence to express who they want to be and to bring a sense of normality. Fashion nowadays is all about expressing one's identity, regardless of whether one was born male or female.

Ben Smith and Daney parker (2015) talks about the influence of clothing on individual who work in the public relations sector. In the public relations sector, it is important to present the right image, as the business centred on communication, and what a person wear speaks volume. It is important for an public relation employee to reflect the organization's work environment while engaging with clients and audience. **Nayanika Nambiar and Parmesh Shahani(2018)** curated their book on the context of the LGBTQ community in the Indian work place. They mentioned that around six percent of the adult population is the LGBTQ community. They explained that marginalization and discrimination usually come at a higher price i.e. they reduce the pool of available talent, limit market opportunities, and delay economic growth. Recruiting LGBTQ people is not only beneficial for the company's welfare and growth, but it is also excellent for business growth. **Somak Ghoshal (2021)** in the mintlounge blog talks about how gender diversity is accepted in modern India. His findings mention that gender identity is more like a sphere than a two-dimensional continuum. In addition, companies such as D&I Consultancy located in Bangalore provide training for organization's employees on maintaining inclusivity and regulating gender diversity in the workplace. They implies employees and managers should be trained to use correct pronouns and form of address of employees. Other protocols like using Mx instead of Mr or Ms to address employees in offer letters and emails. **John Gosling (2018)** in his article talks about reflections of gender fluidity in contemporary society. He states that cultural norms of specific gender expressions are changing. And mentions that these changes are brought by Generation Y or popularly known as Millenials (born between 1981 to 1996) and Generation Z (born between 1997 to 2012) people. He mentions few notable celebrities who are breaking gender norms such as Miley Cyrus, Ruby Rose and AndrejaPejić, etc., **Lisa M and Diamond (2020)** in their article talks about the importance of teaching gender fluidity and non-binary gender identities among children and adolescents. From their study, they found out that the most beneficial approach to intervention is to create a safe and supportive space for all adolescents to experience different things. They suggested teaching peers, schools, communities and families about gender identities and expression and about the effectiveness of transgender and non-binary identities.

3. MAIN TEXT:

3.1 History of Gender fluidity in ancient India:

The first reference of transgender in puranas is Mohini - female version of Lord Vishnu. Many references of gender fluidity addresses in ancient epics (including Shikandi, Brihannala, Sudyumna etc.) The saree is referenced in Sangam texts as a garment worn by everyone. Male and female figurines wearing veshti is and dhotis can be found in Mamallapuram's stone carvings. Pandiyan Empire's pearl adorned the necks of Indonesian and Egyptian kings who were considered as powerful ruling class symbols of masculinity. In Koovagam, Tamil Nadu, an 18-day festival

during the month of April happens every year where the village transwoman dress up as aravan's wives and mourn for aravan's death



Figure 1 - Far left, Ancient Egyptian necklace containing pearl, left side, Hindu God, Ardhanariswara who is an amalgamation of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvathi, Right side, Stone structure at Mamallapuram Temple

3.2 Trend research on current fashion:

The latest runway collections of well-known labels like Hermès, Chanel, and Etro, as well as designers like Petar Petrov, were evaluated to determine worldwide trends. Gender fluidity and the post-pandemic setting have a big impact on the trends. Hermes spring RTW 2022 collection is all about the balance between practicality, comfort and sensuality. Chanel's 2021/22 Metiers d'art collection featured a knitted cardigan accented with flared denim trousers and an active ensemble paired with a cropped tweed jacket. Veronica Etro and Kean Etro went for a relaxed and versatile look for their Etro Pre -fall 2022 collection. Petar Petrov bought a twist on body conscious dressing through a diagonally knitted dress in his Spring RTW 2022 collection.



Figure - 2: From left to right, Hermes Spring RTW co-ord set, Chanel's 2021/2022 Metiers d'art knitted cardigan with flared denim, Chanel's 2021/22 Metiers d'art knitted co-ord with cropped tweed jacket, Etro pre-fall 2022 relaxed co-ords, Petar Petrov Spring RTW 2022 Diagonal stripes knitted dress.

3.3 Brand study and their ideology on gender fluidity:

A tribe of emerging fashion labels are changing the world through gender-fluid or genderless fashion in a post-pandemic world inquiring about inclusivity and ethical living. Few brands and their design philosophy is discussed in the following statements. Bloni is a firm believer in fusing craft and technology. Making traditions meet future technology in order to produce relevance and a globally unique experience. While also preserving a craft and a design language that places a premium on the craft and its emotional component in ensuring sustainability in today’s environment. Bobo Calcutta designs are largely influenced by Ayushman Mitra’s art, which he founded. As a result, there are a lot of odd prints and embroideries that depict his art. Bobo Calcutta should be at the top of anyone’s list if they enjoy expressing themselves through their views. While the majority of HUEMN’s designs are suitable for persons of all genders, they have created a non-binary section on their website. This is a positive step in the world of fashion, where inclusiveness and its representation are promoted. In general, HUEMN’s designs feature a lot of relaxed-fit shirts, jackets, and jeans.

3.4 Designer study and their philosophy on gender fluidity:

Purushu Arie, whose ‘ungendered’ label has become popular among men, women, and non-binary youth. Their designs are inspired by Tamil costume history, which according to Arie is full with progressive, functional gender neutrality. Aastha Jhunjhunwala brand sthal.a is a women-led home-grown brand that believes in slow, genderless, and ethical fashion, while continually seeking to further execute their ideas through their designs, discourse and over-all approach. Anvita Sharma wants people to be able to express via her apparel and to be confident in who they are without hesitation. Fashion is more than simply skin deep for her; the label’s entire existence challenges the current status quo.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The primary data for carrying out the work is derived by preparing a questionnaire and distributing them online for carrying out the survey. The questionnaire is utilized to know the target population opinion. The criteria for target customers are listed below.

Target consumer: Digital marketing and public relations sector employees (including freelancers)

Demographic profile of target consumer: Age (Early 20’s – Late 30’s), Gender (Unisex)

Geographic profile of target consumer: In and around Coimbatore & Tirupur region

Psychographic profile of target consumer: Open-minded, empathetic, Self-governing

Behavioural profile of target consumer: Social responsibility, Potential users of unisex clothing

4.1 Survey interpretations:

4.1.1. Profile of the respondents:

The responses were collected from 51 respondents and the findings are listed below.

4.1.2 Age Group:

Out of the total respondents, 90% of respondents are under 18-24 years, 6% of respondents are under 25-30% and other 4% are above 30.

4.1.3 Occupation:

Out of the total respondents, 78% of respondents are students/freelancer, 9.8% of them are company employees and 16% of the respondents are self-employed.

4.1.4 Preference over gender-neutral clothing:

Out of the total respondents, 71% of them are willing to buy unisex clothing and 29% of the respondents are not sure of their preference over unisex clothing.

4.1.5 Rating for the collection shown on gender-neutral clothing:

The following image is shown and the respondents were asked to rate the collection.



Figure – 3: Equipment brand’s gender fluid work wear collection.

Table – 1: Rating on respondents liking preference

Rating	Preference
1	4%
2	6%
3	21%
4	43%
5	25%

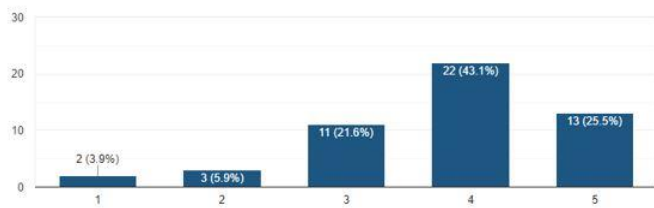


Chart - 1: Pivot chart on respondents liking preference

From the respondents, it is evident that around 80% of people like unisexual clothing.

4.1.6 Colour Preference from the respondents:

The respondents were asked about their choice of colour for work wear.

Table - 2: Colour preference of respondents

Colour	Preference
Pastel	59%
Neutral	51%
Dark	37%
Bright	27%
Others	4%

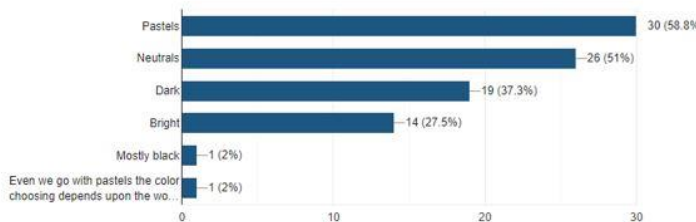


Chart - 2: Pivot chart on colour preference of respondents

From the responses, it is evident that people prefer pastel and neutral colours over dark and bright colours.

4.1.7. Requirement preference:

The respondents were asked about their primary requirement for work wear.

Table - 3: Work wear requirement preference

Requirement	Preference
Comfort	84%
Elegance	41%
Neatness	60%
Trendy	23%

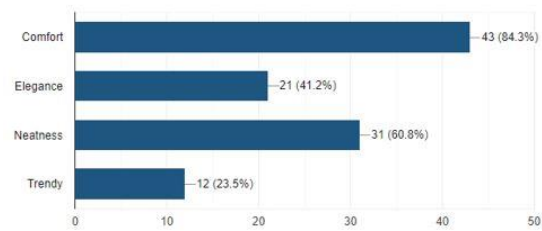


Chart - 3: Pivot chart on work wear requirement preference

From the respondents, is clear that they prefer comfort and neatness as primary qualities for their work wear clothing.

4.1.8 Fabric preference:

The respondents were asked about their choice of fabric for work wear.

Table -4: Fabric preference for work wear

Fabric	Preference
Light weight	40%
Medium weight	74%
Heavy weight	14%
Shiny fabric	10%

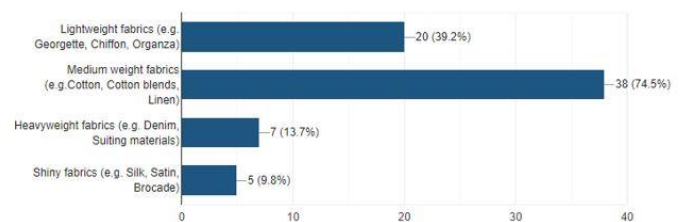


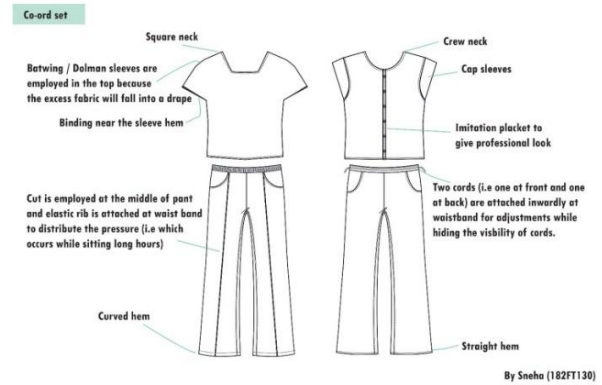
Chart - 4: Pivot chart on fabric preference for work wear

From the responses, it is clear that people prefer medium weight fabric such as cotton and cotton blends and lightweight fabrics such as georgette and chiffon.

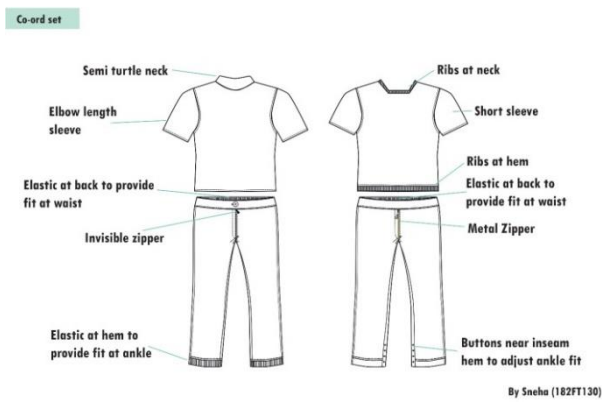
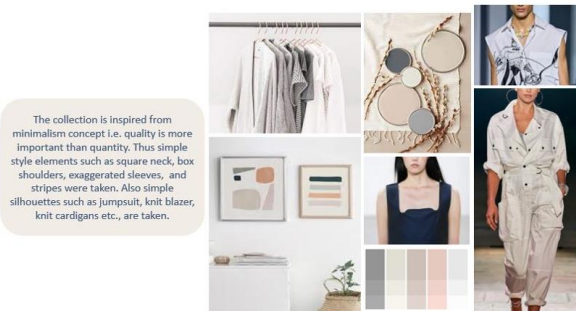
5. 5. DESIGN:

Based on the data acquired from surveys, portfolio boards such as trend board, inspiration board and mood board were developed. In addition, with the help of portfolio boards, design explorations were carried out and designs were developed.

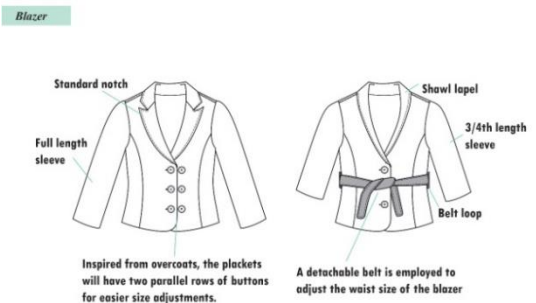
5.1 Trend interpretation board:



5.2 Inspiration board:

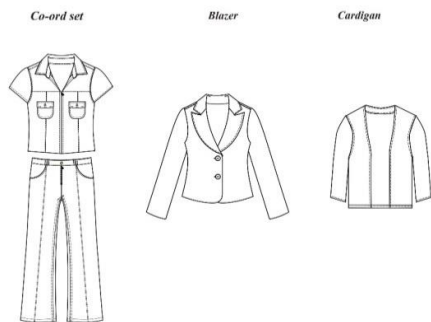


5.3 Mood board:

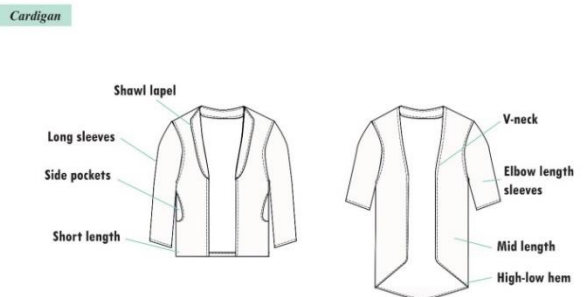


5.4 Design explorations:

Initial style for design exploration

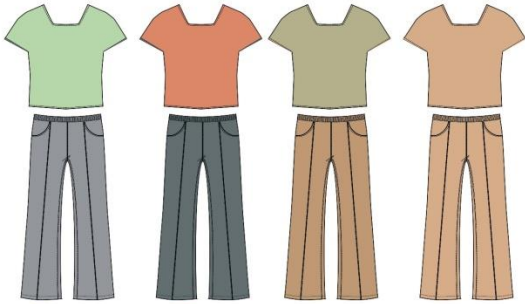


By Sneha (182FT130)



By Sneha (182FT130)

Co-ord set *Color explorations*



<p>■ Bleached spruce #1b4d4b</p> <p>■ Welrus #f98999</p>	<p>■ Copper coin #d98564</p> <p>■ Nevada #697d70</p>	<p>■ Green Tea #b7b38d</p> <p>■ Loneyard #c19c74</p>	<p>■ Santa Fe tan #d4e08a</p>
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By Sneha (182FT130)

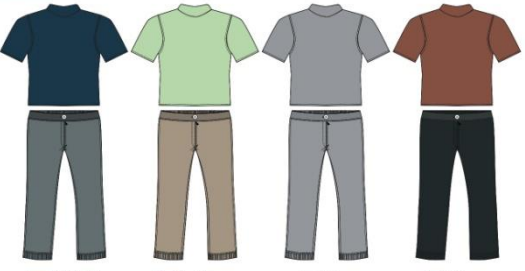
Blazer *Color explorations*



<p>■ Male foam #f89140</p>	<p>■ Reflecting pond #112948</p> <p>■ Male foam #f89140</p>
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By Sneha (182FT130)


Co-ord set *Color explorations*



<p>■ Reflecting pond #112948</p> <p>■ Nevada #697d70</p>	<p>■ Bleached spruce #1b4d4b</p> <p>■ Wooden peg #d49783</p>	<p>■ Welrus #f98999</p>	<p>■ Male foam #f89140</p> <p>■ Blackadder #272828</p>
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By Sneha (182FT130)


Blazer *Color explorations*



<p>■ Wooden peg #d49783</p>	<p>■ Green Tea #b7b38d</p>
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By Sneha (182FT130)

Co-ord set *Color explorations*



<p>■ Air castle #1b4d4b</p>	<p>■ Male foam #f89140</p>	<p>■ Green Tea #b7b38d</p> <p>■ Wooden peg #d49783</p>	<p>■ Fern canopy #1b4d4b</p> <p>■ Green Tea #b7b38d</p>
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By Sneha (182FT130)


Cardigan *Color explorations*



<p>■ Air castle #1b4d4b</p>	<p>■ Copper coin #d98564</p>
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By Sneha (182FT130)

Co-ord set *Color explorations*



<p>■ Santa Fe tan #d4e08a</p> <p>■ Reflecting pond #112948</p>	<p>■ Copper coin #d98564</p>	<p>■ Bleached spruce #1b4d4b</p>	<p>■ Intense mauve #1b4d4b</p> <p>■ Blackadder #272828</p>
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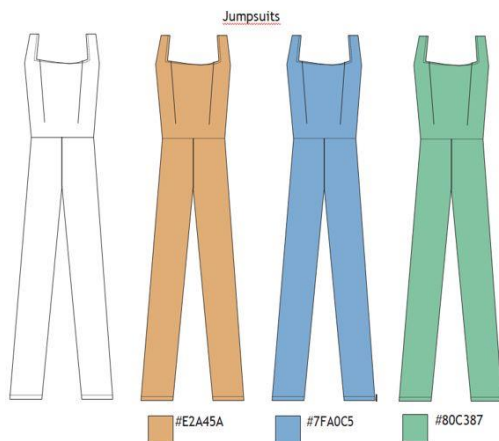
By Sneha (182FT130)

Cardigan *Color explorations*



<p>■ Intense mauve #1b4d4b</p>	<p>■ Welrus #f98999</p>	<p>■ Blackadder #272828</p>
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By Sneha (182FT130)



6. CONCLUSIONS

Developing a gender-neutral collection for employees who are working in the digital marketing and public relations sector will help encourage corporate social responsibility. Employees should be appreciated and valued for their hard work and talent regardless of their gender and culture. Furthermore, an employee coming from different gender communities and cultural backgrounds will feel assured if they are treated equally. It will also help them in engaging better with work, colleagues, and clients. The company also reap the benefits of having an inclusive and diverse workspace, which will boost their organization goals. Thus, the data from research studies and surveys were utilized to develop portfolio boards and designs.

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