

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF DIFFERENCES IN PERCEPTION OF CLOTHING STYLE AMONG INDIAN AND FOREIGN STUDENTS

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DECLARATION

This thesis is a presentation of my original research work. Whatever contribution of others are involved, every effort is made to indicate this clearly, with due reference of the literature and acknowledgement of collaborative research and discussions. The work was done under the guidance of **Mr. Pankaj Singh**, Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Lovely Professional University, Phagwara, Jalandhar.

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In my capacity as supervisor of the candidate's thesis, I certify that the above statements are true to the best of my knowledge.

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ABSTRACT

Clothing style and its perception is a significant behavior among the individuals in any society, so the study focused mainly on the college students from India and abroad. It examined differences in perception of clothing styles among Indian and foreign (African) students. Gender as a demographic variable was also included in the study. Male and female college students of Indian and foreign (African) origin (N= 100) were seen for cultural differences in their perception towards clothing style. The study tried finding cultural differences in perception towards clothing style of Indian and foreign (African) students including differences in the same cultural domain when it comes to gender using ATCBS-mc i.e. Attitude towards clothing Behavior Scale which is a five-point scale. Findings revealed no significant difference between Indian and foreign students whereas comparison on the basis of gender provided significant difference between males and females. Further examining differences in the same domain in terms of gender were found significant only in Indian culture.

Key Words. Clothing Behavior, perception and culture

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION.

“It is impossible to wear clothes without transmitting social signals. Every costume tells a story, often a subtle one, about its wearer.”

(Desmond Morris (1977, p.213))

Clothing is symbolic of social and psychological relevance to the individual. Clothing is a part of subtle language which is communicated via visual, non-verbal symbols. It is kind of sign language that communicates a complex and interrelated set of information about one’s culture, background and general values. One of the things that clothing represents is the identity we have established for ourselves. There are minimum three levels of identity that clothing conveys to the observer.

1. Personal
2. Cultural
3. Historical

CLOTHING BEHAVIOR. “It is an attitude and belief towards clothing, the awareness of and attention given towards clothing, the peculiarity and concern a person has regarding his/her own clothing as well as of others. It tapped the degree of time, money and efforts spent by an individual in the selection, use as well as care of clothing. (Gurel & Gurel, 1995). Clothing behavior helps to reveal the following.

1. **Age .** Stage of lifespan
2. **Occupation .** Uniforms, Hierarchy(religion), Utility
3. **Social Status/Class .** Quality and Expenditure
4. **Geographic Area .** Country, City
5. **Seasonal factor**
6. **Social occasions**
7. **Activity**
8. **Gender**
9. **Intention**

In addition to the above, clothing behavior also speaks about psychological aspects of the concerned person.

- Clothing style expresses people's attitudes both ways, i.e., society as well as their own selves in terms of what they wear and how they wear it.
- Clothes can be worn to try and change present set of affairs.
- People usually select clothes to satisfy their wish to be attractive to the preferred sex.

Clothing styles strongly determine the way other people perceive us. recent researches have shown that clothing not only influences how other perceive a person but also how they perceive themselves along with that it could also impact our decision-making in various ways through its impact on the information processing mechanism.

PERCEPTION

Perception is the ability to hear, to see or become aware of anything through the senses. It is the mechanism through which something is regarded, interpreted or understood. Perception varies from individual to individual. Different people perceive same situation differently. In addition to that we allocate the meanings to what we perceive. One might change one's outlook or simply make things mean something else. There is no fixed meaning to anything, meaning of anything will modify or vary when we look at it from a different angle. Thus, attitude is a settled way of thinking or feeling about something. In psychology, attitude is considered as an expression of preference towards or against a person, place or event. An attitude is described as favorable or unfavorable evaluation of people, activities, events and ideas – ranging from extremely negative to extremely positive, it can be compact, abstract or just about anything in our surroundings.

Person's attitude depends upon psychological factors like values, ideas, beliefs, perception etc. All of these have a mixed role in establishing the attitude of a person.

Family. Family plays an important part in the preliminary stages of attitude maintained by individuals. Initially, certain attitudes are developed from our parents, siblings and elders within the family. There's a high level of correlation between the attitudes observed in parent and child both.

Society. Society has a significant impact in establishing attitudes of a person. It is society, the culture, traditions etc which influence or guide an individual regarding what is reasonable and what is not.

Political Factors. Factors like political parties and ideology of political leaders; the states of political stability or instability influence attitudes of people surrounded by them.

Economic Factors. Person's attitude is influenced by factors like his/her pay, status, work quality etc.

Measurement. Attitudes remain a hypothetical construct which is difficult to observe directly, attitudes are difficult to measure because measurement is arbitrary; based on casual preference or personal impulse, rather than any systematic approach or rationale.

Whether attitudes are explicitly formed (deliberately) or implicitly formed (subconscious) remains a matter of further research and study. Implicit attitude seems to influence people's behavior in various ways either in association with each other or in isolation to each other.

Explicit. Explicit attitudes developing as a reaction towards recent information, automatic evaluation was assumed as representative of mental affiliations through early socialization experiences; once established, these affiliations are immune to change and remain stable in terms of context and time. Explicit assessment measures usually rely on self-reports or observable behaviors; involving bipolar scales (for instance- favorable-unfavorable, in support or against etc.)

Implicit. Implicit measures being automatic as they are not consciously directed are considered more valid and reliable than explicit measures. For instance, people will be inclined towards certain attitudes which appear to be socially desirable but implicit measures tackle such situations and reveals attitude that the individual might not want to show or be aware of such attitudes.

Multi-component model is the most significant model of attitude in which attitude is considered an evaluation of any object having behavioral, cognitive and affective aspects. These elements are also called as taxi/cab as they will take you wherever you intend to reach.

Cognitive aspect. refers to beliefs, thoughts and attributes related to any object.

Affective aspect. refers to our emotions or feelings attached to any object.

Behavioral aspect. refers to past behaviors or experiences related to any object.

MODE Model. (Motivation & Opportunity as the determinants of behavior-attitude relationship) if both are present, behavior is conscious and when either one is not present, impact is spontaneous. MODE Model is developed by Fazio; it assesses attitude in two different ways i.e. explicit and implicit.

Function. The functional approach suggests that for attitudes to change; appeals should be made to the function(s) which a specific attitude is serving to the person.

Daniel Katz categorized attitudes into four groups on the basis of their functions.

- **Utilitarian.** Acquiring attitudes that are rewarding & help in avoiding punishment.
- **Knowledge.** Individual's desire to keep an organized, meaningful and lasting perspective of the world; making things meaningful and fit in place.
- **Ego-Defensive.** It involves psychoanalytic approach implying that people resort to defense mechanisms to avoid any psychological harm.
- **Value-expressive.** Expresses one's central values & beliefs.

As per Doob (1947) learning accounts for much of the attitudes we are holding, unlike personality, attitudes are assumed to change owing to experiences, theories of classical and instrumental conditioning as well as social learning are mainly behind attitude formation. Other factors like 'exposure' also influence the person's attitude. Robert Zajonc under the concept "Mere Exposure Effect" indicated that people will develop a positive attitude towards 'attitude objects' if they are exposed frequently to it in comparison to if they are not. Just multiple and frequent exposure to the stimulus is enough condition for development of attitude towards it.

Tesser (1993) reasoned hereditary factors affecting attitudes, to determine genetic basis for a particular trait, twin studies are used.

Dissonance-reduction theory by Leon Festinger is a very famous example of such a theory which explains modifying or adjusting any belief to positively correlate any behavior. Other theories including Balance theory by Heider (1958) and the Self-perception theory by Daryl Bem.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO PROBE THE CONCEPT OF PERCEPTION TO UNDERSTAND ANY BEHAVIOR?

People's behavior is determined and directed on the basis of "their" perception of what reality is, not the actual reality.

Factors affecting Perception

The Situation. social context, timing

The Target. size, background, similarity, proximity, sound and novelty

The Perceiver. motive, interest, attitude, expectation and experience

PERSON PERCEPTION. HOW JUDGMENTS ARE MADE ABOUT OTHERS?

Attribution Theory. Observing any behavior, individuals try to determine whether that behavior is caused internally (by the individual's personal control) or externally (any outside "force" made you to behave in a particular way).

Fundamental Attribution Errors. The tendency to overestimate the impact of internal variables and underestimate the impact of external variables while judging others' behavior.

Self-Serving Biases. Individuals' tendency to attribute their success to internal factors whereas blaming external factors for failure.

Attribution Theory. Shortcuts used while judging others

Selective Perception. Whatever is seen is interpreted by the individual on the basis of their experiences, attitude, background and interests.

Halo Effect. Generalizing something about any individual solely based upon a single characteristic.

Contrast Effect. Evaluating someone's character influenced by comparing it with recently encountered individual ranging high or low on the similar trait or characteristic.

Projection. Assigning one's own characteristics to others.

Stereotyping. Making judgments about someone based upon the individual's perception of that group to which the person is related.

FACTORS AFFECTING THE WAY INDIVIDUALS PERCEIVE THE WORLD

Role of Culture and Gender

Our perceptions or the way we interpret the world around us, is influenced by our emotions, motivation and biases. All of these factors are rooted in culture. As emotions are universal and felt by people all across the world but the perception of those emotions is influenced by the particular culture to which the person belongs, which evokes the need to study cultural framework to understand the variations in perception.

Culture provides rules, guidelines, structure and expectations to facilitate people in understanding and interpreting behaviors. Several ethnographic studies reveal the presence of cultural differences in social consequences specifically when it is concerned to evaluation of our emotions and behavior as well as others.

Culture & Gender: As the determinant of personality.

Culture consists of norms and behavioral expectations which dictate which of the personality traits are important and these traits vary from culture to culture due to differing needs, values and beliefs. Any trait can be considered positive in one culture and may be negative in another, causing varied expressions of personality across cultures.

Ideas of appropriate behavior for each gender varies from culture to culture; therefore, gender norms i.e. the behaviors that are expected from male and female to conform to within a society which in turn emphasize different traits between different genders which influences their personality.

These gender norms vary across cultures and tend to change with time; for instance, historically assertiveness and aggression have been considered as positive masculine personality traits whereas submissiveness and caretaking are ideal feminine traits

While some gender roles remain constant, some vary with time; such change in attitude over time results in behavioral shifts that co-occur with changes in expectations of traits and shifts in personal identity for both men and women.

Culture and Clothing.

“Culture is the total of the learned behavior of a group of people that are generally considered to be the tradition of those people and are transmitted from generation to generation.”

“Culture is a collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the member of one group or category of people from another.”

Culture as a way of living of any group of people – referring to the accumulated deposition of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, symbols and behaviors that they acquire, usually without any awareness and that are transferred by communication and imitation from one generation to generation. Culture influences the emotion people feel by influencing how they decode the meaning of situations and events as culture is not just a physical setting, but as meanings and practices through which we see and create the world.

Cultural Relativism. Various cultures feel, think and act in different ways. There is no objective basis available to compare any group inherently higher or lower to another. Analyzing variations in cultures requires an outlook of cultural relativism. It doesn't state standards for one or one's society. However, it necessitates for insight while interacting with different cultures. Knowledge about the nature of cultural variations among societies, their background and their outcomes should precede our judgment and how we act.

Mostly all the countries are populated by immigrants as a result the culture is affected by the various groups of people that altogether constitute the country; this too is part or feature of growth. As the country expands, so does its cultural diversity.

Clothing styles in different cultures.

Various cultures have a lot of varied clothing style and sense, and every clothing trend has experienced variations and changes with the changing time. In addition to that, many traditional styles or specifications of certain countries started overflowing into other cultures. In spite of that; every region and culture in the urge to keep-up with the changing styles managed to maintain and restore their own tradition.

AFRICAN CULTURE

When it comes to Africa, everything is about prints and patterns. But, don't think that these patterns stop at some simple checked prints. They are so much more, and the amount of color and lines will swirl your mind. Africa has traditionally been known for many attires and personal adornments. With time, African clothing evolved. Decorated costumes, vibrant colors, long dresses are screaming Africa, though it is important to mention that these fashion trends are subjective and prone to individual differences.

African clothing means a lot more than just a fashion statement; it can be a symbol of status, creativity as well as homage to its tribal roots. Each symbol, shape of the clothing and even the color carries a very specific meaning or purpose.

Following are some of the prominent colors observed in African clothing along with their symbolic meanings, which can vary depending upon the particular group under study but generally, the common meanings represented by these colors are.

Gold. Extremely prevalent and popular color, representing fertility and wealth.

Red. Considered the color of blood; representing tension in political or spiritual world.

Blue. Blue is a harmonious color, representing love and peace.

White. Purity and spirituality

Green. It represents life and prosperity

Therefore, selecting any African garment means a lot more than something that just flatters your appearance.

INDIAN CULTURE

Indian culture has been an inspiration for the world for a long time, beautiful colors, fabrics and their texture became extremely popular. Rich and colorful Indian sarees begin to represent a little work of art. They are graceful, elegant and fabrics that are used are truly fine. Embroidery, that is usually gold, can make anyone fall in love with this style, and sometimes it is so delicate that it captures imagination of every non-designer's mind.

In a country like India rooted in religious beliefs, simple expressions of color that bind together the lifestyle, traditions and the multitudes of outlooks- be it religion, festivals, politics or celebrations; the symbolism of color stands out and governs each and every aspect of life in India, the meanings behind most of the colors resides in the mythical lives and power of its gods. Similarly like several other cultures, color and culture go hand in hand be it the north, south, east or west. Following are some of the classifications of color commonly found in India.

Black. Black is considered evil and is often related with negativity, anger, darkness and death.

White. Though white represents everything positive or desirable in western countries; in India, it takes on a gloomy connotation. White symbolizes absence of color and is acceptable at funerals and ceremonies related to death and is the only color allowed to widows.

Red. Red is dynamic and is the color associated with one of the goddesses of Hindu mythology- Durga. Red color symbolizes fertility and purity, while also connoting a certain sensuousness and is the most preferred color for a bride's garment.

Yellow. It symbolizes sanctity

Blue. Blue is often correlated with Lord Krishna; one of the most favored gods in India.

Green. It symbolizes nature, harvest and a new beginning and is also the most favored color of Islam; a major religious section of India.

The colors of India have fascinated visitors, outsiders as well as rulers, perhaps more because of the legends and stories that bind its culture, beliefs and its people with a perfect blend of history and modernization

REVIEW OF LITERATURE.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE.

Clothing conveys a lot about its wearer without having to meet or talk to that person, making it a very crucial non-verbal tool in everyday social interactions so the underlying reviews provide a critical overview of all the researches undergone till date and provide us with the nature and extent of exploration of our research variables i.e. attitude and perception towards clothing style/clothing behavior in relation to other possible variables or factors considered relevant and tested by other researches and how it supports or opposes our investigation.

HOW OUR CLOTHING IMPACTS PERCEPTION ABOUT US

Clothing impacts perception about us, it makes a huge difference in the ways people might be thinking about us. There is way more to our clothing preferences than we can imagine; a little thought and caution in our clothing choices may lead to variations in others' perception about us. The research was conducted on 300 adults (men & women). They were asked to rate the images of man and women just after 3 seconds exposure. The variations or modifications in the suits were very minor and somewhat insignificant – control for all the major factors like color and fabric, along with the face of the model was ensured so that there can be no transfer of any message in disguise through the facial expressions. The resultant judgments excluding the fact how well he was dressed rated him more positively in a tailor-made suit than in a high street equivalent. Model's face in the pictures were blurred which ensures impressions being formed soon after eyeing what he was wearing.

In the second research to study differential gender-biased standards minor modifications and variations in female formal clothing was made to ascertain how this affected people's perception. Whether their occupational role will make any difference to these impressions was also investigated. Testing was conducted on 129 females who rated pictures of faceless (pixilated) female models, on six dimensions based on competence. In all the images the clothing was conservative with some minor insignificant variations. The images were shown for just 5 seconds and models were described in association with different occupational roles.

Study revealed that even such subtle changes in clothing mattered. People rated the senior manager less positively when her clothing style appeared 'provocative', and more positively when dressed conservative. It is important to outline the fact that the changes were very minor. So even such insignificant modifications to clothing can influence impression of the capability and competence of women who are holding high positions.

Researches reveal that these impressions about us begin from childhood - one such study says that teachers speculate child's academic ability on the basis of their clothing. Therefore it is justified to say that our clothing says a lot about us and can display various socially significant meanings to others (Fletcher, Phil & Oxon, 2015)

WHEN CLOTHING STYLE INFLUENCES COGNITION

Across five experiments, authors Michael Slepian, Simon Ferber, Joshua Gold, and Abraham Rutchick found that the clothes we wear have a significant influence on our thinking; dressing formally developed people's ability to think abstractly and influences our physical and mental performance. In an experiment in social psychology, while wearing a white lab coat in an attention based task the subjects made significantly less mistakes (approx 50%). In another attention based experiment, subjects' performed better when told that their lab coat belongs to a doctor than those who were told that it was a painter's smock or the one who just saw a doctor's coat on display. The experiments further suggest the effect of formal clothing in relation to feelings and perception of power and dressing up (in suits) & down (in sweats) positively correlates with the testosterone levels

Further research shows that social distance in the form of politeness enhances abstract thinking. Essentially, events being psychologically "distant" are considered more abstractly, than events that are psychologically "near". Therefore as formal clothing is correlated with increased social distance, it is said that wearing of formal clothing will increase and improve abstract cognition. (Slepian et al., 2015)

How clothing affects success.

Researchers at national research council of Canada identified visual aspect i.e. appearance as a strong influence upon other people's perception of our economic worth, authority, trustworthiness, intellect as well as the ability for the prospects of hiring or promotion. The NRCC research also concluded that if we incorporate our appearance and socialization skills, others' perception of us is influenced and their behavior toward us is also affected. What we are wearing not only communicates our worth in other's mind, but also determines extent of career achievement.

"Clothing *in addition to* communication skills determines whether or not others will conform to our request, entrust us with information, provide access to decision makers or purchase our products and services,"(Smith.J., 2014)

HOW CLOTHES MAKE THE WOMAN IMMORAL. IMPRESSIONS GIVEN OFF BY SEXUALIZED CLOTHING

Clothing mediates the interaction between body and social world; serving as a means to how it is presented, experienced and attributed meaning; and, this information goes way beyond the wearer and the intended image to the way clothes communicate meaning and what they are interpreted by others. (Littrell & Berger, 1985-1986)

The possibilities of clothes being interpreted as symbolic of sexuality have not been probed in detail. Clothing defines class status and serves as indication of "taste" or wealth. Appropriate representation of sexuality are determined by the specific stage in life; for example, older women, married women and mothers are desexualized culturally, so clothing in a revealing manner is perceived with doubt and judgment and having received this message they believe that they should avoid revealing or bright colored clothes and prefer clothing intended towards hiding perceived bodily flaws related to the aging process. (Clarke, Griffin & Maliha, 2009)

The present research intended to investigate clothing as a determinant of women's sexuality. 95 women in their 20s-60s took part in the in-depth interviews in which majority of women reported

their concern regarding what sexual messages are perceived from their clothes and evaluated other women's clothes on the aspects of morality, authenticity and suitability.

Findings of the study indicated women's body being socially monitored and the suppression of sexual subjectivity on the basis of stigmatization of women's sexualized clothing as differences in self and others clothing judgment was observed on the basis of target's age, parental and marital status and for some judgment was based upon social class and generation. (Montemurro, 2013)

CLOTHING AND APPEARANCE AS A SOURCE OF INFORMATION.

Viewers translate cues into meanings whether intended or unconscious from other's clothing & appearance; this evaluation process happens both ways i.e. how you are forming impression of other person along with what impression is being formed about you by that person and our assumption of how we're being perceived will determine how we'll behave in return. A content analysis of response provided by 39 women in open-ended interviews regarding.

- Impression formed by them on the basis their appearance
- Their belief that others too are using appearance and clothing while forming impressions about them.

Most of the participants were convinced that decoding of general appearance and clothing cues were accurate from both sides which were limited to personality traits, information about behaviors, biological factors and social roles, whereas some participants acknowledged that accuracy of perception is situation bound and depends upon particular appearance and clothing cues. (Johnson, Schofield, & Yurchisin, 2002).

PERCEPTION OF COLOR IN DIFFERENT CULTURES.

Another important element in clothing choices is the perception and interpretation of different colors in terms of gender and culture. For example, white color worn by a lady from an Indian culture has different meaning and belief attached to it as compared to a lady from western culture.

In one experiment, participants were told to rate the attractiveness of people photographed in different colored clothes. Results revealed that color of clothing influenced the ratings of men for both females' and males' attractiveness and how women rate men's attractiveness but surprisingly women's ratings were not influenced by the clothing color (Roberts et al, 2000).

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BODY IMAGE IN TERMS OF CULTURAL CONTEXT AND CLOTHING PERCEPTION.

A study was conducted using both qualitative and quantitative methods to examine the bodily perceptions along with their impact on clothing choices with the objective to ascertain women's perception towards their body and socio-cultural factors related to this concept and to analyze their clothing preferences. 100 questionnaires and 15 in-depth interviews (informal) were done; participants' religious and cultural backgrounds were explored with age which was considered as a relevant factor while comparing body image perception as well as clothing preference.

Findings revealed that majority of women accepted that their clothing behavior was influenced by others' reactions; therefore women's perception and preference for clothing is associated with their feelings about their bodies and the manner others' react to them in their cultural context.

Both clothing and bodily perception have common consequences about how one looks and how they feel about themselves. Individuals use clothes in making their bodies social and acquire an identity as our bodily image which depicts our mental image processing i.e. both perceptual and affective elements of our body. It influences the way we correlate with clothing and the presentation mechanism of our 'clothed appearance' (Rudal & lennon, 2000).

EFFECTS OF GENDER AND CLOTHING ON HELPING BEHAVIOR

Various researches taking helping behavior as a function of clothing appear inconsistent. Some depicted considerable differences when the clothing style or dress was controlled while others did not. These inconsistencies seem to differ across testing surroundings or environment and helping behaviors.

The present study investigated the impact of clothing and gender on the helping behavior and the underlying feelings and perceptions which influenced their decision to help were also probed.

128 subjects were asked by both female and male confederates for 37e and made to fill a questionnaire afterwards; either the confederates were dressed properly or sloppily. Analysis showed women being helped more than men but no difference was observed in help received by well-dressed and sloppily dressed confederates and the helping was based upon the perception of confederates being needier; additionally, subjects reported considerable discomfort from the helping request compared to those who did help (Long, 1996).

PERCEPTIONS OF AN INSTRUCTOR. DRESS AND STUDENT'S CHARACTERISTICS

Individuals resort to various cues such as clothing to form opinions about others. These perceptions depend upon several intervening factors of the perceiver as well as the situation. Researches suggest clothing and appearance being used in construction and interpretation of images and actions of others.

The present study evaluated the student's perception of the instructor's characteristics on the basis of female instructor's clothing style.

Independent Variables. Formality of clothing style, student's clothing preference along with student's gender

Dependent Variable. Perception of the instructor's traits or characteristics

216 students from three different universities were administered on a 25-item questionnaire. Using social perception as the theoretical framework the study found perceptions about Instructor's traits or characteristics varying significantly with the formality of clothing style. To some extent, student's clothing interest also influenced perceptions but the gender of students showed no significance anyhow. (Lukavsky, 1995)

Influence of appropriate clothing & gender.

Self-Perception of Occupational Attributes. The study investigated gender difference of perceived impact of clothing in enhancing ten occupational attributes such as responsibility, reliability, efficiency, knowledge and competence etc mediated by.

- Mode of clothing (properly dressed & improperly dressed).
- Participants' self-perception of their attributes.
- Participants clothing preferences.

Findings obtained for males (132) and females (190) supported the notion of clothing as a means of enhancement in the perception of occupational attributes. Inconsistent with the males' belief females were not convinced that attributes can be improved by any modification in clothing and this belief was not dependent on their perception of occupational attributes or clothing preferences (Kwon, 1994)

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR CLOTHING AWARENESS

Inner workings of the mind has equally fascinated scientists as well as laymen. Several theories have emerged trying to describe how we think and process information. One such theory which has managed to draw significant attention is "Thought Process Theory" comprising of four stages.

1. Description
2. Sorting
3. Inferring, and
4. Judging

Which can be used in integrating a lot about what we study and what we know about clothing, as clothing is such a source of information which we encounter daily and we use this information in various ways; and this act of recording and implementing clothing information is called 'clothing awareness'. This has been termed as "visual analysis of dress" by DeLong (1987) emphasizing the visual and aesthetic aspects of perception and what our mind does with these dimensions is the concern of 'clothing awareness'.

Information is gathered and sorted, location of historic precedents is done in the memory and inferences are verified in the light of original descriptive information and this entire process happens within just a few seconds (Lyon, 1994).

CLOTHING AND SOCIAL IDENTITY

Clothing is a crucial social symbol which individuals use in defining their identity because;

1. Clothing is a routine activity
2. Clothing involves regular public exposure.
3. Manipulative aspect of personality

Individuals generally choose objects which are in accordance with their sense of social-identity; many researches have outlined clothing being highly congruent with individuals' social identity.

Three themes have evolved from clothing research;

1. Impressions about others are formed on the basis of clothing cues. (Buckley & Roach, 1974; Workman, 1988)
2. Differences in observers' behavior has been observed on the basis of clothing worn by the individuals. (Bickman, 1971)
3. People seem to favor clothing which conveys image similar to the one they are having of themselves. (Buckley & Roach, 1974)

Clothing is assumed to be used in defining and communicating social identities to others, considering this as the governing rule, the present study evaluates;

Study 1. were the observers able to identify or perceive the social information communicated by the clothing chosen by others to be an expression of their personality and were these perceptions in congruence with the individuals' opinion of themselves.

Study 2. Ability of observers to similarly identify the social information evident in jeans brand labels was examined.

The study used empirically evaluated social identity descriptors. Subjects of the research were 25 female undergraduates who were told to evaluate list of 100 bipolar adjectives, the subjects were

told to relate those adjectives that will suitably define an individuals' personality, solely on the basis of clothing information.

To arrange stimulus for the study, additional 18 female subjects confined to range of 6,7 and 8 clothing sizes were told to bring a complete attire which best represented their personality as per them and were made to rate their own personality on the given 20 bipolar scales.

In third, independent group comprising of 10 female and 10 male subjects were shown photographs of 18 clothing outfits aided with a brief verbal description of every clothing style was provided. The subjects were asked to determine the personality of the persons who bought and wore those outfits on the 20 bipolar scale.

The findings of the research provided perceptions not being related to the personalities of people wearing them which suggests that clothing do have meaning but the inter-relatedness between clothing, its identity and meaning is highly complex (Feinberg, 1992).

THE INFLUENCE OF THE PERCEPTION OF MOOD AND SELF-CONSCIOUS ON THE SELECTION OF CLOTHING

Previous researches have suggested a correlation between one's self-concept and the clothing chosen to wear (Dubler & Gurel, 1984). It was observed that the choice of clothing was affected by the way individuals feel about themselves and the clothing one chooses to wear affected one's feeling towards the 'self'.

Further studies indicate clothing as a means being used to strengthen their self-concept, particularly by those who usually perceive themselves negatively, research supporting the same was done (Campton, 1962; Gibbins & Gwynn, 1975) which supported the idea that certain fabrics and outfits can be used to boost self-presentation.

As clothing is generally used to define one's social-self; various researches have studied the relationships between variables of clothing and public self-consciousness. As Solomon & Schopler (1982) verified the presence of correlation between public self-conscious and clothing preference which was observed higher in males as compared to females.

The present study examined the correlations between self-consciousness, perception of mood and the choice of clothing among students (both males and females). Survey responses of 141 females and 113 males were statistically analyzed whose findings were as following.

- Females were found more sensitive than males to various mood states which influenced their clothing choice.
- Female's perceived moods, particularly negative mood and their private self-conscious largely influenced their selection of clothing in comparison to males.
- For females effect of perceived mood on the choice of clothing was influenced more by private self-consciousness than public self-consciousness.
- Clothing selection in females was largely affected by perceived mood among high scorers than those who scored low on private self-consciousness (Kwon, 1991).

CLOTHING AND THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF GENDER PERCEPTION. A DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH

Young girl's symbolic correlations of clothing styles with personality traits and behaviors were examined in consideration of developmental factors. 95 girls aging 2 through 10 years in the initial evaluation were subjects in study 1; 43 among these girls served as subjects four years later in the longitudinal and trait components of the study.

In study 1. Using MACP i.e. The Measure of Attitudes Toward Clothing for play; four different clothing styles were matched with play activities and how & why of this matching was examined. Study 1 comprising of both cross-sectional and longitudinal data presented an increasing inclination with age to relate unisex clothing styles with aggressive and physically active play behaviors. In contrast, frilliest dressing styles were associated with doll play by girls of all ages, specifically the older ones.

In study 2. It focused on traits; the data presented traits associated with interpersonal attraction (e.g. concern with popularity and appearance) being matched with the frilliest clothing, whereas unisex styles (jeans) was associated with traits relating to aggression, bravery and strength.

Further the data revealed that middle childhood females along with cognitive flexibility to adopt compromise preferences also develop capability of interpreting clothing imagery using contextual aspects. Thus the study brings symbolic, cognitive and cultural considerations into the picture (Kaiser, 1989).

EFFECT OF CLOTHING ON PERCEPTION OF MASCULINE AND FEMININE MANAGERIAL TRAITS.

The purpose of the present research is to ascertain the role of clothing masculinity as a potential route for conveying both feminine and masculine managerial traits in women. Previous researches has outlined that most of the traits considered essential for persons in managerial positions are stereotypically masculine traits. One study further provided that women applicant's masculine clothing enhanced perception of masculine managerial traits in a positive and significant way.

70 subjects were made to view one out of four videotapes of a woman interviewing for a managerial position and were asked to rate the applicants on 14 feminine and masculine managerial traits. The extent of masculinity of the clothing in each videotape was manipulated so that each of the four videotape presented varying degrees of masculinity.

Analysis of variance depicted a positive correlation between masculine clothing and masculine managerial traits i.e. substantial relationship between masculinity of the clothes worn by the applicant and the perception of masculine managerial traits in women was observed; although perception related to feminine managerial traits remained unaffected by the masculinity of clothing (Forsythe, 1987).

EFFECT OF CLOTHING STYLE ON THE PERCEPTION OF PERSONAL TRAITS

The present study tries to examine.

- The effect of relatively polar i.e. daring conservative and dressy casual clothing styles on the perception of personal traits determined by the viewers.

- The correlation between personal traits rating of each clothing style and clothing interest ratings of the observers. The data attained would provide insights upon the attribution and the impression formation process.

The cues communicated via four clothing styles on the estimation of 18 personality traits investigated on 1-7 semantic differential rating disclosed strangers dressed in casual and conservative style were perceived as being more understanding and reliable whereas persons dressed in daring style were considered to be individualistic and more attractive than those dressed in other styles; apart from that a stranger dressed in dressy clothing communicated social discomfort and dependence on others.

Significantly positive correlation was observed between various personal traits of daring clothing style and the clothing interest rating of the subjects, whereas significantly negative correlation was revealed between the former and attraction and popular traits of casual and conservative style. These findings suggest that first impression communicated by various clothing styles is also affected by the clothing interests of the perceivers (Paek, 1986).

MEANING OF CLOTHING CUES IN SOCIAL CONTEXT

This study is an evaluation of the ways business employees make sense of people and interactions in formal setting using clothing as the determinant or cue; which is based upon the assumption that dressing or clothing of a person takes on meaning within the social context in which the interaction happens.

It is an investigative study to see the influence of interpersonal context- contrasts and similarities in the clothes worn by two interacting people- upon the relationship as well as the person perception. For this both female and male employees of private organizations (N=64) expressed what they assumed was happening in 4 varied pictures of office setting in which a female and a male person (stimulus) each wearing formal or informal clothing. Categorization of verbal responses was done as per a tailor-made system for the classification of the content within the descriptions.

Analyzing the variance in distribution of content implied men and women who wore suits were attributed management roles compared to those in casual clothing. Contrast of formal versus informal clothing was meaningful in;

- Men and women who wore suits were reported as higher in rank when their adjoining associate was in casual clothing.
- Males in suits were reported as indulging in more of a directive interaction with females in casual clothing.
- Males who wore suits when pictured with a casually dressed female were reported with more positive feelings.
- Males pictured with a formally dressed female were assigned with 'activity' traits.
- Males wearing suit with the female wearing casual clothes were reported to be indulgent in a personal involvement rather than business.

Clothing depicted in the context of social interaction served as a much wider information source than previously undertaken clothing perception researches; as they were often limited to stimulus in which respondents were presented with clothed bodies backing contextual information due to which those perception studies underestimated the varieties of social information contributed and affected by clothing (Damhorst, 1985).

SEX, GENDER IDENTITY AND BEHAVIOR CONCERNING SEX-RELATED CLOTHING

Sex differences in clothing are observable in every society across the globe. Cultural norms of any society govern clothing items as appropriate or inappropriate for men and women thus enforcing socially specified sex-appropriate clothing which from a sociological viewpoint-is an outward expression or representation of appropriate sex role behavior.

Socialization processes make individuals aware of appropriate behavioral expression through clothing for their sex and sticking by the norms to escape any social ridicule and in some of the societies, even punishment.

Inspite the rising flexibility in terms of wearing sex-related clothing by females and males which often reflects change over time as well as change in the particular status of each one of the sexes

in the society, sex differences in clothing remain observable. So in the present study, psychological construct of gender identity (masculinity and femininity) and an individual's sex is used to determine the wearing of sex-related stereotypic clothes.

Responses of 174 female and male students were tapped on Bem Sex Role Inventory (Bem, 1974) and a sex-related clothing inventory. It judged the responses in terms of degrees to which subject wore male and female-specific, feminine, masculine and neutral clothing. Sex of the individual was discovered to be a stronger predictor towards sex-related clothing behavior than gender identity (referring to self-attribution of personality traits-deterministic of and suitable for males (masculinity) and females (femininity)). The females in the study were more inclined towards female-specific or feminine clothing, and the males were more inclined than females in wear male-specific or masculine clothing. The study thus extended clothing research by associating gender identity as a personality trait to the external behavior of wearing of specific clothes (Davis, 1985).

Evaluation of dressing cues.

American Indian and Caucasian high school students were compared to ascertain counselors' warmth, concreteness and empathy as provided by six pairs of female and male counselor dress. Based on the counselors' clothing the students from both the cultures varied in their perceptions and the difference was not based on sex of the students or the counselor except for empathy. The results identified and acknowledged clothing dimensions significant for understanding cultural similarities and differences in non-verbal communication conveyed via clothing (Littrell & Littrell, 1983).

Clothing stereotypes.

Contrary to the commonly held beliefs of women being way more fashion conscious and aware of others' clothing and makeup efforts than males. Against this gender stereotype, studies lifting the lid on men's insecurities related to clothing which have shown men being more self-conscious compared to females in terms of their personal dressing sense and the way they are being seen publically (Solomon and Schopler, 1982).

This reinforces the need to understand the importance or relevance of clothing preferences regardless of gender consideration. Clothing behavior influences both our self-image and the

impression that is being conveyed in return; even the manner of people's behavior towards us, whether male or female it implies to both.

VARIATIONS IN PERCEPTION OF CLOTHING AS A FUNCTION OF DRESS FORM & VIEWER'S SOCIAL COMMUNITY

The most prominent aspect of an individual's appearance is the individual's clothing style. It serves as a primary means for conveying not only personal identity but also social identity and what is interpreted of a given clothing form will differ as any social community's ideology provides a particular framework of meaning for its members; which governs the rules or guidelines for 'what to wear'.

Differences in interpretations or ways of expressions among different communities results in different attributions, so the present study tries to empirically verify these predictions. It focuses primarily on the predictions regarding the meaning attributed to any specific clothing form and how it varies as a function of that particular clothing as well as the social community to which the viewer belongs.

Employing a 4 by 4 factorial design responses of students from one of four differing faculties were taken in form of a questionnaire about a photograph depicting one of four types of clothing. The findings suggested though clothing communicates a wide range of social meanings and those meanings depend upon the context of viewer's social framework of interpretation (Noesjirwan, 1982).

GENDER STEREOTYPES, ASCRIBED GENDER AND SOCIAL PERCEPTION

This research examines the effect of gender labeling, physical appearance and outward expression on social perception of individuals. Many of the individuals observed by subjects were at variance biologically from their outward appearance i.e. clothing and mannerism.

Present study evaluated the influence of gender labeling on the information provided by naïve observers (i.e. 104 females and 43 males) of filmed representation of five individuals. For most of the five individuals anatomic and chromosomal gender was inconsistent with the evident gender predicted via clothing or physical appearance. After the initial rating the observers were

informed of the biological gender of the five persons and were asked for repetition of their descriptions. Just changing the label i.e. female/male modified the descriptions significantly. These labels seem to appeal the observers' stereotypic ideology of male and female qualities and overrode "objective" assessment. (Rosen, 1977)

Clothing style and its perception is a significant behavior among the individuals in any society. The perception of clothing style has also been studied by social scientists in various aspects. However, differences among different members in various societies for their psychological perception about clothing styles have not been studied with empirical evidences. Whereas along with the notion of individual differences, cultural differences are expected to play their meaningful roles in variations of clothing styles perceptions of group members across the different societies. In the backdrop of above literature of review, the present research will intend to achieve the objectives as given below.

OBJECTIVES.

The following four objectives will be achieved to study the clothing style perceptions among Indians and Foreigners.

- To examine the cultural differences in perception of clothing style among Indian & foreign(African) students.
- To investigate the perceptual difference for clothing style among male & female students.
- To compare male and female groups in terms of clothing style perception in Indian culture.
- To study male and female groups in terms of clothing style perception in foreign(African) culture.

HYPOTHESES.

- There are no significant cultural differences in perception of clothing style among Indian and foreign(African) students.
- Male and female students are not statistically different in terms of their clothing styles perceptions.

- Indian male and female groups are not significantly different for their perceptions of clothing styles.
- Foreign(African) male and female groups in terms of clothing style perception are not significantly different.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Methodology is a way to systematically solve the research problem. It may be understood as a science of studying how research is done. Research methodology is a systematic procedure which carries on the research work in a scientific and valid manner. It provides information about tools and techniques by which research problem is dealt with.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY.

This is a cross-cultural study. The study focused mainly on the college students from India and abroad. This study examined differences in perception of clothing styles among Indian and foreign (African) students. Gender as a demographic variable is also included in this study. Male and female college students of Indian and foreign origin were seen for cultural differences in their perception towards clothing style. This study provided an opportunity to find cultural differences in perception towards clothing style of Indian and foreign (African) students including differences in the same cultural domain when it comes to gender.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The present study is inferential in nature in which we'll try to infer from the sample data what the population thinks and make judgments whether the observed difference between groups is dependable or not. The study included Indian and African young students who were asked to participate and answer on statements in survey questionnaires related to clothing style perceptions. For the data analysis, appropriate statistical approach is applied. At last, the proposed hypotheses is tested on the basis of findings.

Sampling.

For the present study, purposive sampling is used. We took sample of total 100 undergraduates within age range of 18 to 25 years on the following basis.

50 Africans - 25 Male & 25 Female

50 Indians - 25 Male & 25 Female

All the participants will be taken from Lovely Professional University.

Type of data.

For the present study, Primary Data is collected from the sample using Attitude toward Clothing Behavior Scale.

Tools.

Keeping in view, our variable of study to be measured, the aim of study and the nature of the sample we selected ATCBS-mc i.e. Attitude toward Clothing Behavior Scale by Dr. Dolly Mogra & Dr. Vijaya Laxmi Chauhan, which is a five-point scale ranging from extremely agree to extremely disagree. The scale is helpful in screening individual's attitude towards clothing.

Statistical techniques.

The following statistical techniques will be used to analyze the data.

- 1) Independent sample t-test
- 2) Central tendency measures- mean, median
- 3) Cross tables – frequency and percentage

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The research focused on the clothing styles and their perceptions among young students both from Indian and Foreign groups. To understand the behavior dynamics of youths with different background with regards to their clothing style behavior and perception. Table 1 below presents the demographic details of the sample (N=100). The sample is assessed on the basis of cultural background i.e. Indian & African along with gender consideration. The sample is collected from participants ranging between 18-21 years of age.

| Table 1. Demographic details of the sample (N=100) | | | |
|---|---------------|------------------|--------------|
| NATIONALITY | GENDER | AGE GROUP | TOTAL |
| INDIAN | 25 Male | 18-21 yrs | 50 |
| | 25 Female | | |
| AFRICAN | 25 Male | 18-21 yrs | 50 |
| | 25 Female | | |

The present sample involves data collected from Indian and African participants from both the gender; to further assess the role of culture in determination of perception or attitude towards clothing style the sample collection was restricted to Africans (both males and females) belonging to Muslim community whereas in case of Indian (both males and females) sample the data was collected from those belonging to Hinduism. This systematic break-up of sample facilitated the assessment of Attitudes towards clothing behavior in terms of culture as well as gender.

Table 2 shows the mean differences in attitude towards clothing behavior between Indian and African students along with gender comparison within each cultural group. The mean values of Indian males is 106.12 and Indian females is 124.16 and their comparison shows statistically significant difference (t value = -2.560, $p > 0.05$). On comparing African students, the mean value for African males is 106.12 and African Females is 118.20 and their comparison shows no significant difference (t value = -1.976, $p < 0.05$).

| TABLE 2. Attitude towards Clothing Behavior among Indians and Africans in relation to Gender | | | | |
|---|------------------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|
| Variables | Country | Means | t-value | P-value |
| Attitude Towards Clothing | Indian Males | 106.12 | -2.560 | 0.014* |
| | Indian Females | 124.16 | | |
| | African Males | 106.12 | -1.976 | 0.55 |
| | African Females | 118.20 | | |

***Significant at 0.05 Level**

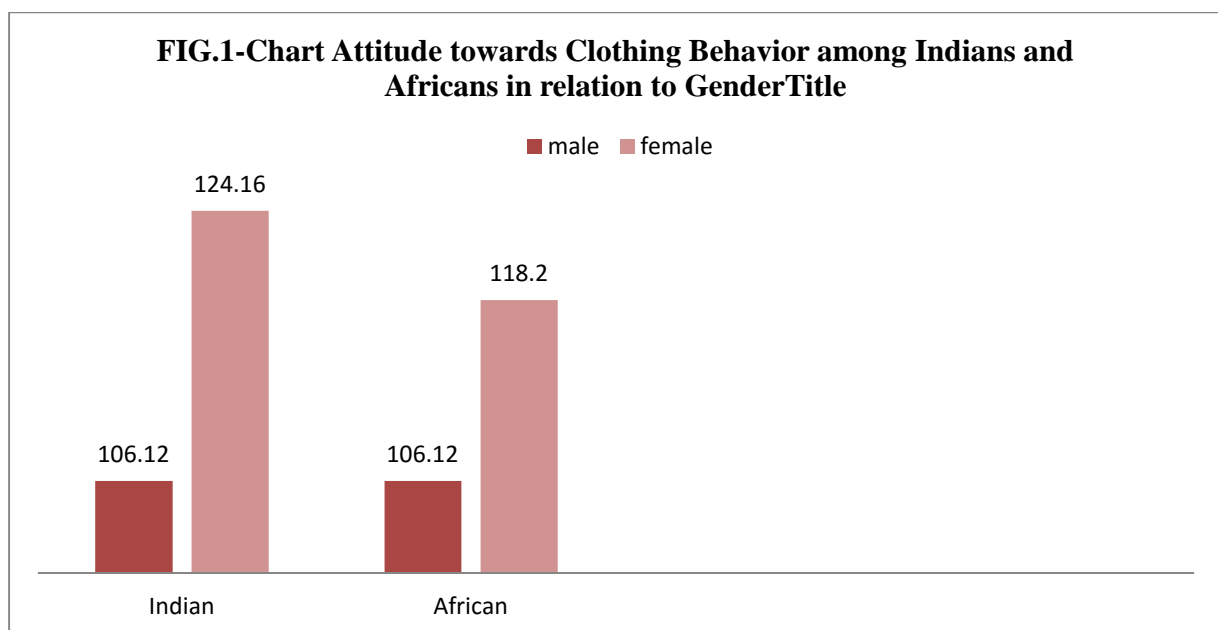


Table 3 below shows mean differences on attitude towards clothing behavior of males and females; and between Indian and African students as well as on overall gender basis; the findings reveal mean values for males and females to be 110.18 and 121.18 respectively which present statistically significant difference between males and females in general (t value = -2.608, $p < 0.011$). On comparing African and Indian students regardless of their gender the mean value for Indians is 115.14 whereas the mean value for Africans is 116.22 which is not statistically significant (t value = -0.248, $p = 0.805$)

TABLE 3. Differences on Attitude towards Clothing Behavior among Males and Females and among Indian and African Subjects

| Variables | Country | Means | t-value | p-value |
|---------------------------|---------|--------|---------|---------|
| Attitude Towards Clothing | MALES | 110.18 | -2.608 | 0.011* |
| | FEMALES | 121.18 | | |
| | INDIAN | 115.14 | -0.248 | 0.805 |
| | AFRICAN | 116.22 | | |

*Significant at 0.05 Level

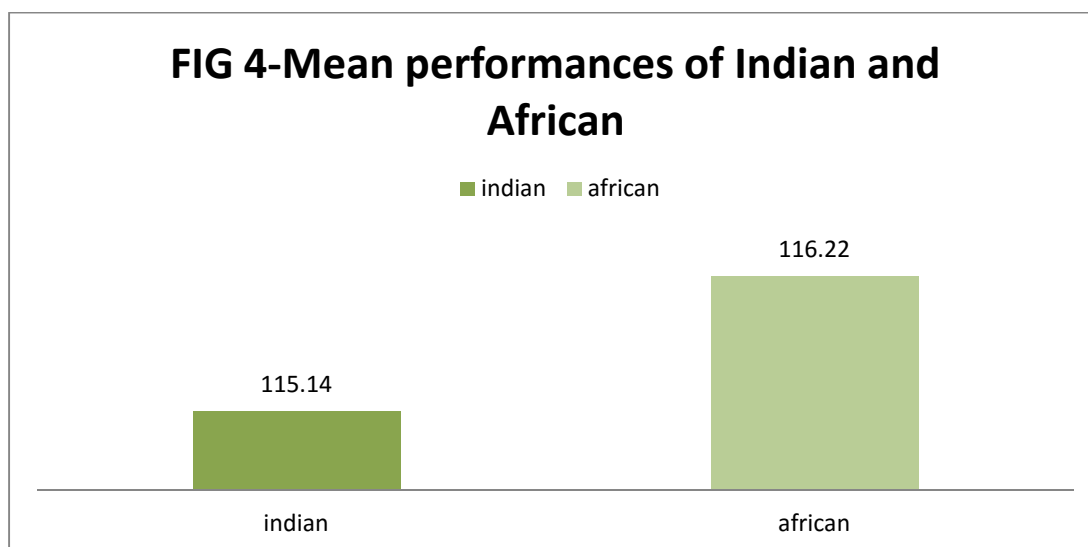
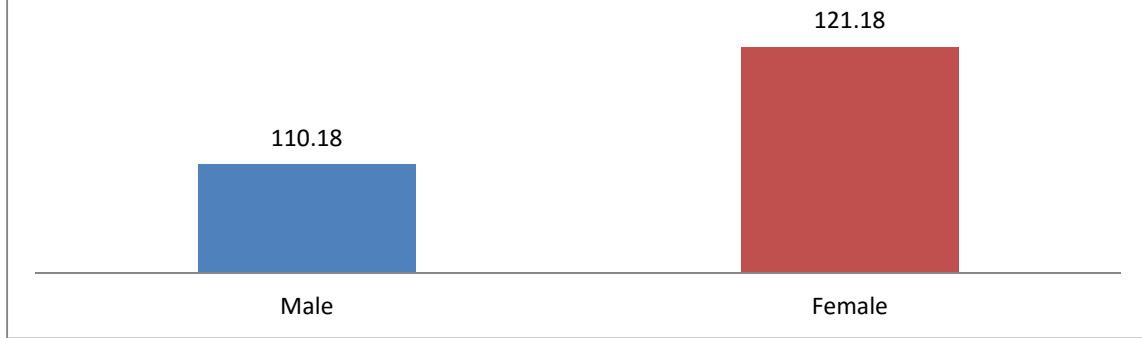


FIG 5-Mean performances of Males and Females

■ Male ■ Female



DISCUSSION

DISCUSSION

Analysis of data led to some significant and interesting outcomes and some not so significant findings were also revealed.

RQ 1. Firstly, we tried examining the cultural differences in perception of clothing style among Indian and Foreign (African) students. Analysis of the data collected revealed some variations but those variations in perceptions of Indian and African students were not significant, which supports our first hypothesis that there are no significant cultural differences in perception of clothing style among Indian and Foreign (African) students. This may be because of the fact that the data collected covered age group of 18-22 yrs only that too within the LPU's campus; moreover the usual clothing worn by the college going students of this age group is almost similar which can be the possible reason for our results. This is a limitation of the present study i.e. to ascertain the differences in perception as well as to tap in the role of culture we need to cover larger and distant population.

Contrary to the present findings, Littrell & Littrell (1983) identified and acknowledged clothing dimensions significant for understanding cultural similarities and differences in non-verbal communication conveyed via clothing. Our findings are somewhat justified as all the participants responding to our study were college going students; exposed to almost similar clothing styles within the campus which is similar to the findings of Reid, Lancuba and Marrow's (1977) that students extremely rate those clothing styles only which are not commonly seen in a university, which was lacking in our selected sample.

RQ 2. Next the research investigated the perceptual difference for clothing style among male and female students. On analyzing the data we found significant difference in perception of male and female participants towards clothing style; in which the mean scores of females were higher than those of males. Our findings are supported by those of Rudal & Lennon (2000) which revealed that majority of women accepted that their clothing behavior was influenced by others' reactions; therefore women's perception and preference for clothing is associated with their feelings about their bodies and the manner others' react to them in their cultural context; meanings whether

intended or unconscious from other's clothing & appearance; this evaluation process happens both ways i.e. how you are forming impression of other person along with what impression is being formed about you by that person and our assumption of how we're being perceived will determine how we'll behave in return. A content analysis of response provided by 39 women in open-ended interviews regarding.

- Impression formed by them on the basis their appearance
- Their belief that others too are using appearance and clothing while forming impressions about them.

Most of the participants were convinced that decoding of general appearance and clothing cues were accurate from both sides which were limited to personality traits, information about behaviors, biological factors and social roles, whereas some participants acknowledged that accuracy of perception is situation bound and depends upon particular appearance and clothing cues. (Johnson, Schofield & Yurchisin, 2002), which rejects our second hypothesis that male and female students are not statistically different in terms of their clothing styles perception.

RQ 3. Thereafter we focused our analysis on Indian culture only and tried examining the male and female groups in terms of clothing style perception which revealed significant difference in perception towards clothing style between these two with women scoring higher than men; which indicates women's perception being more sensitive for their own clothing style as well as of others as it has been empirically verified that majority of women accepted their clothing behavior and perception being influenced by others within their cultural context which rejects our third hypothesis that Indian male and female groups are not significantly different for their perceptions of clothing styles.

RQ 4. Next the present study assessed the African culture to examine the male and female groups in terms of clothing style perception which revealed no significant difference among the two; however the mean scores of females were higher than the males and these similar correlation was observed in Indian culture as well which further supports our earlier findings which all reveal women being more inclined in terms of their attitude and perception towards clothing style; however if we could have taken a larger sample to assess the degree of variation within the African culture we could have attained some conclusive evidences to support our observations however the results obtained support our fourth and final hypothesis that Foreign (African) male and female groups in terms of clothing style perception are not significantly different.

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

Hypothesis 1. There are no significant cultural differences in perception of clothing style among Indian and Foreign (African) students.

Hypothesis is accepted as no significant differences were observed in our findings to reveal cultural differences in perception among Indian and African students in their clothing style perceptions.

Hypothesis 2. Male and female students are not statistically different in terms of their clothing style perceptions.

Hypothesis is rejected as significant differences were found among males and females in their clothing style perceptions.

Hypothesis 3. Indian male and female groups are not significantly different for their perceptions of clothing styles.

Hypothesis is rejected as the Indian male and female groups were found significantly different in terms of their clothing style perceptions.

Hypothesis 4. Foreign (African) male and female groups in terms of clothing style perceptions are not significantly different.

Hypothesis is accepted as African male and female students were not significantly different in terms of their clothing style perceptions.

Overall findings reveal that mean scores of female participants were higher than those of males and this similar correlation was observed within culture as well which conclusively indicates women being more inclined towards clothing cues in terms of their attitude and perception. This difference in terms of can be due to the interplay of biological factors as well as the culturally

ascribed roles of males and females which needs to be further explored to get a better idea of the interplay of these factors.

LIMITATIONS

- Sample size could have been more to generalize the findings.
- The present study was completed within a limited time and could not explore more on different sources.
- Study was limited only to Indian (Hindu) and African (Muslim) which limits our objective to tap in the role of culture

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This is a well-known fact that research is a continuous process. Our research solves some current queries but raises many other future queries. More useful research may be taken up to unveil the nature and extent of clothing as a non-verbal source of communication as it has been empirically proved that clothing do have meaning but the inter-relatedness between clothing, its identity and meaning is highly complex. This study can be extended at higher levels to cover the larger population on the topic.

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