Communication Within School Spirit and Clothing Apparel

Jolie Prins

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Introduction

COLLEGE STUDENT'S FASHION:

This project explores what fashion means to college students regarding choice, identity, and the desire for school spirit. Researchers can determine what college students liked and what they wanted to avoid based on their wardrobe selections. College students are interested in wearing apparel that is not only cozy but also durable and ecologically beneficial (Gam, 2011). Statistics show that the main factors influencing college students' clothing choices are the need to feel comfortable and the desire to fit in with society (Kapferer, 2018). This study asks university students, undergraduate, and graduate, how they feel about the role of clothing in helping them express their identities. From this, educational initiatives can be examined and learn lessons to decrease students' levels of prejudice toward members of racial or ethnic minority groups stemming from clothing-related issues.

An examination of how students feel about belonging to particular social groups is done within the context of social identity theory. According to the social identity theory, a person's perception of their identity and place in the world is influenced by their social groups. The two elements that make up this strategy are social and personal identities (Nimon, 2020). There are several methods to identify oneself as a member of a social group, such as by joining a club or a social class (Kapferer, 2018). Young people can align the overall and composite image created by their clothing with a desired social group while simultaneously separating themselves from the undesirable, or avoidance, reference groups by using their in-group identification (i.e., their group as opposed to out-groups) in complex social contexts. The clothing one chooses to purchase and wear intricately linked to aspects of one's individual and social identity. Self-concept is one's self-perception related to attitudes, feelings, and knowledge about one's appearance or abilities (Byrne, 1984).

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Researchers have used the social identity hypothesis to examine how students' identities affect their clothing decisions and other physical adjustments (Khair, 2021). For example, young men would disguise themselves in various clothing to change their identities if they were unsatisfied with who they were (Khair, 2021). In 2021, Khair surveyed approximately 500 students. This study examined the relationships between college men's identities and the clothing they chose to wear, drawing on the social identity theory as its theoretical underpinning.

Students may have a say on fashion habits and tastes. Students have received very little attention over the years, with a few notable exceptions and the significance it carries (Marcoux, 2017). It appears that female college students are more likely than male college students to study the social psychology of clothing, according to a cursory evaluation of the relevant studies (Nimon, 2020). In 2019, the U.S. market for student clothing was worth $22.2 billion, according to Statista. According to research, students are becoming more fashion-conscious, which drives the demand for the types of clothing being designed.

A few years ago, students seemed more concerned with their appearance, but this impression has substantially changed. Generation Z is very concerned about their appearance, especially those exposed to advertising and the media. Particularly for young students who have been exposed to marketing. Due to this, they are forced to go shopping for new clothing (Khair, 2021). Young students frequently utilize their clothing as a kind of self-expression, which may impact the clothing they choose to wear on their bodies. Apparel designers and marketers may leverage college-aged students' understanding of the relationship between their distinct identities and the clothes they select to reflect who they are. Online shopping amongst universities is a huge perk. Online shopping is trendy amongst all age groups, even with the simplicity of their cellphones (Smith & Anderson, 2016).

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A negative or positive reference point, an unpleasant end state, or both can help people live out their chosen identities (Park, 2021). Several studies have been done on the advantages brought forth by consumer buying selections. When consumers avoid items that do not appeal to them, they are better equipped to uphold the identities they have created for themselves (Kapferer, 2018). In the study conducted by Kapferer, researchers studied the fashion preferences of college students. Students who graduated from a prestigious Midwestern institution received the earliest attention. The findings of the preliminary study, which was exploratory, will be taken into consideration when changing the research interview questions for the following investigations.

Literature review

Clothing Inclusivity

While many studies have been done on clothing fit, research on body shape has come to be considered one of the most critical factors needed to solve clothing fit problems (Alexander et al., 2005). Body dissatisfaction is prevalent among adolescents, especially in the new generation. This generation compares themselves with social media and how people present themselves. There is a range of debilitating impacts on psychological and physical health, including depression and eating disorders, and impacts on academic performance. Prevention and early intervention for body image are indicated and are a priority public health issue. A sense of belonging and feeling included and wanted is essential to one's well-being (Atkistin et al., 2017).

Therefore, to understand the relationship between body shapes and clothing fit, some apparel companies have studied clothing fit preferences so that they can improve their products with better options for their target audience (Chensvold, 2007). Self-reported body shapes can be essential when college students wear clothing. In contrast, the actual body shapes provide data

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for clothing fit, such as knowing what may be needed among universities. Incorporating all sizes and marketing these different items on social media can bring more attention to becoming more inclusive with different body types.

College Student Wardrobe Choices

People can engage with one another through their clothing in a way that is particular to them yet shared by everyone else (O'Cass, 2020). Through this medium, people can communicate to the outside world who they are right now and whom they hope to become. Another indicator of a person's identity is the apparel they select to wear. People may convey information about who they are by their appearance, which helps to form their social identities. Within college sports, which is a huge part of school spirit, football generates the most revenue and media attention while also providing benefits to universities through school spirit, pride in the institution, and support from donors (Pedersen et al., 2021). Football may also build school spirit, reducing attrition and improving long-run graduation rates (Willner, 2016). Universities with school sports not only helps college students become more engaged, but also allows students to participate in other activities around their campus.

Recycling and reusing behaviors learned and adopted during college years are more likely to develop into life-long habits, and college students have a higher inclination towards being fashion opinion leaders who strongly influence their peers, as well as other consumer groups, to take part in collective sustainability efforts (Noh, 2021). There is a maddening rush never seen before to acquire fashionable clothing, whether needed or not (Kawamura, 2005). To stay competitive, fashion companies are coming up with newer styles more often and fueling the interest of consumers, resulting in an increase in apparel consumption at an alarming rate (Ruppert-Stroescu, LeHew, Connell, & Armstrong, 2015). For companies to keep pace with fast

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fashion, production, and distribution in an era of fast fashion, finding ways to limit textile waste

is crucial (Noh, 2021).

Upcycling is one solution that allows consumers and brands to repurpose or recreate old

garments to limit the amount of used clothing that enters the waste stream. Wilson (2016)

defined *up cycling* as a 'practice of refashioning something useless into something useful'

without wasting raw materials and without the input of non-renewable resources. This is a

practical solution to minimize resource depletion while reducing textile waste generation.

However, there is limited academic literature on the concept of upcycling and an even more

significant lack of quantitative studies on the topic. Therefore, Upcycling should be studied

further and in different ways to move the fashion industry and several consumer characteristics

and their relationships to intentions to upcycle old garments (Wilson, 2016).

Although college students have access to income and exhibit the interest in apparel to

consider them a viable market segment, this group of young adult consumers has often been

neglected in market studies, viewed "en mass" or as "one style fits all" college students (Bahng

et al., 2013). Meaning college students are in a specific group. Ignoring this market, while

students are in college and without their income, retailers lose the exact moment for developing

these customers into future loyal customers when they will have the potential to earn high

incomes after college (Arnett, 2000).

Students are more likely to be environmentally conscious, sensitive to higher prices, and

more likely to wear clothing to express a vintage look to be green for the environment. In

addition, students feel it is easier to save money to shop in secondhand stores for recreational

reasons like school spirit apparel and vintage T-shirts, sweatshirts, and flannels because this

provides them an opportunity to buy retro and vintage items that are no longer in production, it

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also gives them a sense of discovery and independence. It is also likely that college-age consumers may be worried about the concept of contamination which is defined as a violation of individual personal space resulting in an individual touching the items at their leisure (Yan et al., 2015).

College students have a wide range of possibilities when defining who they are. Students' clothing choices are an outright reflection of their distinctive personalities through communication. A sizable proportion of students attach great importance to how they show themselves and the clothes they choose to wear daily. Students believe appearance contributes significantly to their school's culture (Khair, 2021). Some students wear polo shirts and jeans to school, while others feel more at ease in sweatpants or basketball shorts. The clothing that college students choose to wear to their classes varies greatly. To project their masculinity, some students opt to dress in athletic-inspired fashion. Branded apparel tends to minimize consumer risk during the purchase process and help in enhancing social image of the consumer (Handa & Khare, 2013). Fashion products are associated more with branding as compared to other categories of product (Fernie et al., 1997). The role of brand love may vary in case of loyalty for multi-brands. This can, therefore, offer new insights and add value to this contemporary construct of branding. Brand experience is very obtainable by focusing on new moderating relationships in new settings (Garg. 2020).

Generation Z, often considered 'digital natives', is the first generation to have grown up surrounded by digital communication (Smith, 2017; Adeola et al., 2020; Reinikainen et al., 2020). This, in turn, means that social media is a huge part of their lives. Marketers should consider the significant gender differences relating to impulse purchasing when targeting Generation Z and explore different communication strategies where possible to attract both

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males and females (Tamar, 2021). Various studies have measured the urge to buy impulsively

(Chung et al., 2017; Xiang et al., 2016). Now more than ever college students want what they see

on social media or even around campus, and their surroundings.

The idea that college students choose a particular article of clothing because of how it

makes them feel or because it conceals the sections of their bodies that they do not like while

emphasizing the parts of their bodies that they find appealing is given more support by this

information. People consider several factors when shopping for something they have not

purchased in the past, especially the ability to compare prices from multiple sellers and ask

questions about what they are buying. Ask for advice from people they may know, reading

material reviews, or even buy online without making a trip to the store are all examples of how

to step by step ensure young adults are buying what is right for them (Smith & Anderson, 2016).

Researchers examined how someone's sense of fashion and the items they decide to wear

may reflect and help construct their identity. Young people frequently utilize their clothing as a

technique to meet new people and confirm their membership in particular social groups,

according to the findings of various studies. The research was focused on the role that clothing

plays in developing and conveying the identity of a homosexual guy on both an individual and a

communal level. The participants in the study were chosen at random from Manchester. LGBTQ

identities may be impacted by several factors, including clothing choices, communal, neo-tribal,

and situational types of gay identity (Marcoux, 2017). For example, to prove one's personality to

others within the gay community; within a tribe; to prove one's "belongingness" to a social gay

cohort with a shared experience and set of feelings; and, on a situational level, to help one fit in

wherever they find themselves (Nimon, 2020). Due to their research, these three stages of LGBT

identification have been discovered. First, individuals belong to certain social groups and seek to

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socialize with others. Individuals use the meanings associated with clothing to indicate roles

within society to others (Kaiser, Nagasawa, & Hutton, 1991).

A young person could try to alter their look to fit in with the in-group while also avoiding

the unwelcome company of the out-group if they find themselves in an uncomfortable social

circumstance. Student consumers frequently experience concern about being foolish and being

the center of attention (Khair, 2021). The hypothesis postulated that students' expectations about

their gender roles correlated with their homophobia, fear of failure, emotional ambiguity,

closeness to other students, and closeness to other people overall. In the case of students, the

"avoided self" and avoidance reference groups may be viewed as feminine, unathletic, and

impotent if these traits are perceived as indicators of unattractiveness (Nimon, 2020). The

"avoided self" might also be seen as a symbol of impotence.

Fashion as Art and Culture

Building brands is a crucial component of the design sector in which the cultural and

creative sectors are heavily involved. Directly because of this, higher-quality items are produced.

The cultural and creative industries offer a wide variety of unique products, each based on the

individual country's rich artistic and cultural traditions and historical context. The result is that

consumers are more drawn to the features of luxury goods and the brands connected with them.

Which ultimately leads to a more significant likelihood of purchasing the items. Fashion

development reflects how well-off people live and how intelligent and creative they are. Cultural

differences are typically used as competitive advantages in traditional economic activity. The

fashion sector is most suited to assisting consumers in leading more fashionable lives while

meeting their cultural consumption needs. The fashion industry is the most flexible of all the

traditional industries (Marcoux, 2017). As an example, the multiethnic country of Taiwan is

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renowned for its ability to produce cutting-edge items (Marcoux, 2017). Creating new design

elements based on cultural traditions is significantly easier when regional cultural traits are

skillfully incorporated into apparel design.

Clothing has many functions, including some that are even basic. Research suggests that

all consumers wear clothing to fulfill their basic needs, such as protecting the body from the

physical elements, e.g., cold weather, rain (Barnard, 2002). This means more students typically

prefer to symbolize school spirit with cozier material during the wintertime. Nevertheless, not all

functions of clothing are essential. The clothing we choose to wear can be used as a tool to

express ourselves (Roach & Eicher, 1973). In another way, dress is more than appearance, which

includes aspects of body modifications and supplements recorded by all the senses-not just sight-

alone as the term appearance implies (Roach & Eicher, 1973). Being who each person

individually is a sign of expressing oneself fully.

Creators can get inspiration from various cultural sources while producing cultural

commodities like paintings, sculptures, and other works of art to develop fresh ideas. In addition,

rather than being designed as high-end luxury goods, cultural and creative commodities are mass

manufactured (Khair, 2021). People in charge of designing and producing things of cultural

significance may use historical allusions, ethnic references, and cultural references to boost the

monetary value of the completed product. People can use these items to establish a link to their

history and participate in cultural transmission. Developing a product that focuses on regional

customs, cultural norms, and features is a crucial step in manufacturing. The left and right sides

of a person's brain work productively when content. Therefore, product designers must consider

mental and physical reactions when creating goods, as shown by sensory and cognitive studies

on mental and physical experiences and assessment tools. The most crucial elements in creating

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a product's personality are how it seems, the connections it creates, and how it makes people feel.

Style and Design Components

Ideas and concepts, originality, material, color, shape, structure, methods, human factors, components, accessories, and time should all be considered while examining fashion trends. The most crucial aspects of a garment's presentation are its lines, fabric, and color, and each feature demands much research and expertise be used effectively (Khair, 2021). Expressing one's feelings through clothing is just as important as expressing one's physique. One element that may be seen as a trend in fashion is the degree to which a group is aware of and agrees with a particular viewpoint. A person's choice of clothing may be interpreted as a reflection of how they spend their lives.

A designer must try to create items that fit physiological and psychological expectations since the aesthetics of modern clothing design must consider all aspects of function, design content, and technological challenges. As a result, the product's usability is improved, and additional benefits, such as a pleasurable user experience, are exhibited. The clothing's materials, structures, forms, and functions are its four main elements. Garments can have various shapes and structures depending on the cloth they are made. While the buyer's interest in some materials might not be immediately stimulated, the buyer should be aware that some materials may significantly impact the outcome (Marcoux, 2017). A system's structure is determined by the relationships and interactions between its many components and the techniques used to mix the various materials. The choice of material and the construction of a garment determine its form. While students are in college and without their own income, retailers lose the exact moment for

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developing these customers into future loyal customers when they will have the potential to earn

high incomes after college (Arnett, 2000).

The hue is made up of several lines and shapes. The form may be understood as a symbol

and a medium of communication. An item's potential connection to a person's clothes bestows a

functional and social worth, supporting its function as apparel (Nimon, 2020). As a result, there

are two main categories of clothing: those worn for formal events and with a purpose and those

worn for cultural reasons. It was found that students with backgrounds in fashion design place

more value on a piece's ability to evoke memories of everyday life, to meet the needs of a variety

of users, and to be adaptable, practical, and comfortable to wear than students with backgrounds

in other types of design. Students majoring in fashion design also showed more enthusiasm for

the final products than those majoring in other design disciplines. How the two of them felt about

using physiological engineering in medical research was the most significant contrast between

them. Therefore, it should not be surprising that fashion design students concentrate more on the

professional and technical aspects of the designs.

Methods

The participants of this study were undergraduate and graduate students at a private, four-

year university in the Southeastern United States. This survey study was conducted during the

summer of 2022. Every participant that took this survey is considered anonymous. Students

received an email link to the survey instrument on SurveyMonkey. In total, 31 people responded

to the survey, which consisted of 15 questions. The demographic questions included gender

identity, ethnicity, age, current university, and current employment status.

Additional questions were asked pertaining to school spirit, specifically at the

participant's university. Other questions regarding school spirit included whether school apparel

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makes students feel a sense of belonging to the school and whether students wear school apparel

to sports events at the participant's college. Further questions about what would make school

spirit more inclusive were asked in the survey and whether students care about what they wear

around campus and attending school events. The last few questions in this anonymous survey

were whether an appearance on campus matters to students, what area of school apparel could be

maximized here on campus and whether clothing can define who you are and what you believe

in. Lastly, how often do students shop for clothing?

Results

Participants

Of the 31 participants who contributed to completing this survey, 90% were 18-24 years

old, 6% were 25-34, and 3% were 35-44 years of age. No participants under the age of 18

participated in. this survey. Most participants, or 64.5%, indicated that they were White or

Caucasian, 9.6% were African American, and 19.3% of participants were Multi-Racial or Bi-

Racial. Most participants were female, or 64.5%, while the other 35.4% were male. Mainly all

participants, or 83.8%, are currently attending a university either as an undergraduate or a

graduate student while the other 16.1% are currently professors working on campus. When asked

about employment status, 67.7% of participants are employed, while 32.2% are currently

unemployed.

Table #1

Participant Demographics

Category	Total Selections	Percent Total (%)
	31	

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Age	28	90.3
18-24	25-34	6.4
25-34	1	3.2
35-44		
Race		
White	20	64.5
African American	3	9.6
Latino/Hispanic	6	19.3
Multiethnic	1	3.2
Gender		
	11	35.4
Male	20	64.5
Female		
Currently Attend UT?		
Yes	26	83.8
No	5	16.1
Employment Status		
Employed	21	67.7
Unemployed	10	32.2

Clothing Perspective

Regarding school spirit, when asked whether students and faculty are pleased with the school spirit on campus, 6.4% of participants responded with a great deal, 9.6% of participants responded with a lot, 38.7% of participants felt it was a moderate amount, 29% of participants said a little. In comparison, 16.1% of participants responded with none at all. The following survey question states whether or not students feel a sense of belonging when wearing school

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apparel. The majority, or 70.9%, responded with yes, while the other 12.9% responded with no, and lastly, 16.1 responded with unsure. The next question asked if students and faculty wear apparel to show support for sports teams. Again, most people, or 58%, responded yes, while the other 35.4% said no, and 6.4% said they were unsure.

Table 2

School- Spirit Among Participants

Category	Total Selections (31)	Percent Total (%)
Are you satisfied with the school spirit at your institution?		
A great deal	2	6.4
A lot	3	9.6
A moderate amount	12	38.7
A little	29	9
None at all	5	5
Does school apparel make you feel a sense of belonging?		
Yes	22	70.9
No	4	12.9
Unsure	5	16.1
Do you wear school apparel to show your support for sports teams?		
Yes	18	58

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| No | 11 | 35.4 |
| Unsure | 2 | 6.4 |

Expression Through School Spirit

In terms of school apparel, question number 9 asked, what would make school spirit more inclusive? Many students and 20 people said that mandatory sports events and spreading the word through social media could be entirely beneficial. Many other students responded by saying more activities around campus. One specific student responded by saying that clothing that the school provides includes more school spirit through blackout and whiteout events. The remainder of the students suggested more clubs and made them more known. Question number 10, asked, do you believe different groups on campus have something to do with your spirit to the school? Many participants, or 48.3%, agree, 19.3% strongly agree, 22.5% neither agree nor disagree, 3.2% agree, and 6.4% disagree. The following survey questions asked whether students care about what is worn when attending school events. The highest percentage, or 45.1%, defiantly would, 35.4% probably would, 16.1% probably would not, and 3.2% defiantly would not. The next question asks if appearance around campus matters to students. The majority of 35.4% responded with always, 32.2% said usually, 22.5% said sometimes, and 9.6% said rarely. The next question asks what area of school apparel could be maximized, this was a short response, and a majority of 20 people said women's shirts, socks, and athletic wear. The rest of the participants said making the apparel less expensive. The next question asked whether students believe that apparel can define who you are and what you believe in. The majority of students, 45.1% responded with likely, 22.5% responded with very likely, 22.5% responded with neither likely nor unlikely, and 9.6% responded with unlikely. The last survey question included

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how often students shop for clothing. Most participants, 33.3% responded with 2-3 times a month, 30% responded with once a month, 6.6% of participants said once a week, 6.6% responded with more than once a week, 6.6% said once every six weeks, and 3.3% responded with once a year.

Discussion

After researching college students' fashion clothing preferences, most college students are interested in wearing cozy, durable, and ecologically beneficial apparel. Undergraduate and graduate in the role of clothing encourages students to express their identity in the examination of how students feel about belonging to particular social groups is done within the context of social identity theory which means to identify oneself as a member of a social group we can join clubs and feel a sense of belonging. The social identity hypothesis is used to examine the effects of clothing decisions and physical adjustments. Students like to have a say in their fashion habits and tastes. Students enjoy expressing who they are and what they believe in through clothing. Referring to the literature review, female college students are more likely than male college students to study the social psychology of clothing, and students are becoming more fashion conscious. Distinctive personalities through communication contribute significantly to their school's culture.

Specific companies have studied clothing fit preferences to improve their products and have better options for their target audience, incorporating all sizes in marketing these different options. According to the survey, there is a lack of school spirit, but clothing helps students feel that they belong. What students wear on campus and to sports events matters entirely to them. Social media and marketing new apparel can only bring more attention and become more inclusive with different body types. As individuals wear clothing, they communicate to the

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outside world who they are right now and who they hope to become. Another indicator of a person's identity is the apparel they select to wear. When students are with strangers and have only a few seconds to have a first impression, they rely heavily on fashion to create and convey their identity. Reusing and recycling factors come in with specific habits. College students are more inclined to be fashion opinion leaders who strongly influence their peers and other consumer groups.

Limitations

Some limitations of this survey include that it was sent during summer, so many people are either away or may not be around. Another reason this survey could be considered limited is that there is not a huge sports team selection, and there are no football games. Another factor is that it is a smaller university. Therefore, students may not care as much about school spirit or clothing apparel expressing who one is. Lastly, people may not understand what school spirit exactly means, which could limit their responses. Another limitation included in the short answer responses may have a lower validity rate than the other questions included. Lastly, students may not fully understand this topic and feel that they cannot answer to their fullest potential.

Recommendations

Some recommendations include qualitative interviews for the future would be recommended. A larger school with football teams can help with school spirit overall. According to the survey, many people care enormously about what they wear around campus and how they express themselves. Many students care about what they wear to school events and around campus. According to the survey, students feel that shirts, socks, and cheaper apparel would maximize school spirit through apparel exceptionally. Many students suggested that hats and t-shirts worn during sporting events could be improved for the future—more options without huge

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logos and fewer sweats. Most students shop for clothing monthly, so incorporating new items

into the bookstore could maximize apparel. An additional recommendation may be to

incorporate brands such as Lululemon to expand sales. Another recommendation would include

providing more affordable options. Universities should investigate environmentally safe options

because that will help drive sales, and more students feel more comfortable knowing where the

clothing comes from. Incorporating more collaborations to regular t-shirts such as lululemon

could increase revenue.

Conclusion

According to the survey's results, college students want to wear clothes that are not only

comfortable but also fashionable. These students understood how much of who they were inside

was mirrored in how they appeared on the outside. However, given how easy it is and how well

it helps them fit in with their peers, it should not be surprising that college-age students choose to

participate in their activities. These results support the notion that students value usefulness and

comfort more than looks. In terms of their priorities for what they dress, men and women in their

early twenties have entirely different priorities. According to the survey, most people agree with

incorporating cheaper apparel. Even though they may be more fashion-conscious, college

students prioritize usefulness above aesthetics when selecting their clothing. The results show a

strong correlation between how young students view their employment and how they dress and

how young individuals dress and how they feel about their places of employment.

Some poll respondents disliked certain clothing types because they did not think they

matched well with their sense of style. These people dressed as they did because they wanted

their peers to see their worth and value. It was terrible to disobey any of these standards, as they

showed in their examination of fashion trends that defied gender, racial, and class expectations.

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By examining the connections between college students' identities and the clothing they feel most comfortable in, this exploratory study adds a first theoretical contribution to the subject of fashion branding. Fashion designers might learn a lot from the study's conclusions about the types of clothes college-aged young people like to wear and how it influences their identity and sense of self-image. According to the research, there is a way to promote new apparel items to young guys successfully. The phrase "the strategy" refers to this approach. One must thoroughly understand the consumer's tastes to properly advertise clothing to students in college. With this knowledge, they can create marketing strategies that appeal to college-aged students. However, the fact that the interviews were conducted at a large institution in the Midwest with a mostly homogenous student body significantly impacted the findings. Considering this, educational institutions must teach students how to stop propagating discriminatory preconceptions about different types of people. By enforcing more about different groups through the readings, students' biases toward underrepresented ethnic groups might be lessened.

By examining the survey questions, most students feel as though school spirit at their university could be maximized in many ways. Students typically shop for clothes two to three times a month, so incorporating more styles and brands would expand student's choices of apparel. Sports and events around campus are important to students according to the survey conducted. Additional hats and sportswear would be extremely beneficial for more school spirit.

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