

**CONSUMER PERCEPTION OF GENDER-NEUTRAL PERFUMES AND ITS INFLUENCE ON PURCHASE INTENTION****Dr. Santhini S**

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ABSTRACT

The perfume industry has traditionally classified fragrances as masculine and feminine. However, changing consumer preferences, increasing individualism, inclusive marketing, and evolving social attitudes have contributed to the growth of gender-neutral or unisex perfumes. This study examines consumer perception of gender-neutral perfumes and its influence on purchase intention. The study focuses on perceived inclusivity, product attractiveness, brand image, and social acceptance as major factors influencing purchase intention. A descriptive and analytical research design is proposed, using a structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale. For the purpose of demonstrating the analysis, an illustrative sample of 200 respondents is considered. Descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analysis are used to examine relationships between consumer perceptions and purchase intention. The illustrative results indicate that consumers generally have favourable perceptions of gender-neutral perfumes.

KEYWORDS : Gender-neutral perfumes, consumer perception, purchase intention, fragrance marketing, brand image, inclusive marketing, consumer behaviour.

INTRODUCTION

Perfume is an important product within the beauty, personal-care, and luxury-goods industries. Apart from its functional purpose, perfume represents personality, lifestyle, emotions, social identity, and self-expression. Consumers select fragrances based on several factors, including scent, quality, price, brand image, packaging, social influence, and personal preference.

Traditionally, perfume companies have divided products into men's and women's fragrances. Masculine fragrances are frequently associated with characteristics such as strength, confidence, freshness, and adventure, whereas feminine fragrances are often associated with elegance, beauty, softness, and romance. Such classifications have influenced product names, packaging, advertising, retail displays, and consumer expectations.

Gender-neutral perfumes have therefore emerged as an alternative to conventional gender-based positioning. These products are marketed as suitable for consumers regardless of gender. Instead of focusing primarily on whether a fragrance is masculine or feminine, gender-neutral positioning can emphasise fragrance notes, mood, personality, lifestyle, occasion, and individual preference.

Statement of the Problem

The traditional classification of perfumes as men's and women's fragrances may limit consumer choice and reinforce gender stereotypes. Although gender-neutral perfumes offer an alternative, consumer acceptance of these products is not guaranteed.

Consumers may appreciate the concept of gender-neutrality but may hesitate to purchase a product because of fragrance preferences, price, packaging, brand reputation, or concerns about social acceptance. Therefore, it is important to identify the factors that influence consumers' intention to purchase gender-neutral perfumes.

Review of Literature**Otterbring, Elbæk and Lu (2022)**

Otterbring, Elbæk and Lu investigated the relationship between gender identity and consumer preferences for products with gendered images. Their findings indicate that psychological gender identity can influence consumer preferences and that gender identity should be considered alongside biological sex when examining consumer behaviour.

Yin, Li and Su (2025)

Yin, Li and Su examined gender-neutral marketing and consumer product evaluations. Their research suggests that gender-neutral marketing can reduce consumers' dependence on binary gender stereotypes when evaluating products. This research is directly relevant to gender-neutral perfumes because it demonstrates how marketing positioning can influence consumer evaluation.

Chatterjee, Bryla and Saleh (2025)

Chatterjee, Bryla and Saleh studied demographic influences on fragrance marketing and purchasing behaviour in India and Poland. Their findings demonstrate that demographic and cultural factors can influence consumer responses to fragrance marketing. The study is

relevant to the present research because it highlights the importance of understanding consumer characteristics when developing fragrance marketing strategies.

Research Gap

Previous research has examined perfume preferences, gender identity, gender-neutral marketing, and gender-fluid consumption. However, limited attention has been given specifically to the relationship between consumer perception of gender-neutral perfumes and purchase intention. The present study attempts to address this gap by examining inclusivity, product attractiveness, brand image, and social acceptance as potential predictors of purchase intention.

Sample Size: For demonstrating the proposed analysis, a sample size of 200 respondents is considered.

Sampling Technique: Convenience sampling may be used to collect responses from accessible perfume consumers through online and offline questionnaires.

Brief Theoretical Overview: The study "Consumer Perception of Gender-Neutral Perfumes and Its Influence on Purchase Intention" is based mainly on Consumer Behaviour Theory, the Theory of Planned Behavior, and Self-Congruity Theory.

Consumer Behaviour Theory explains that perfume purchases are influenced by factors such as fragrance quality, brand image, packaging, price, personal preference, and social influence. The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) suggests that consumers' attitudes and social influences can shape their purchase intentions. Self-Congruity Theory (Sirgy, 1985) explains that consumers are more likely to prefer products that match their personality and self-image.

In the context of gender-neutral perfumes, consumers may be attracted to products that provide freedom from traditional gender classifications. Therefore, perceived inclusivity, product attractiveness, brand image, and social acceptance are expected to influence purchase intention.

Overall, the theoretical framework assumes that positive consumer perceptions of gender-neutral perfumes lead to stronger purchase intentions.

Data Analysis and Interpretation**Correlation Analysis****Correlation with Purchase Intention**

Variable	Correlation
Perceived Inclusivity	0.61**
Product Attractiveness	0.68**
Brand Image	0.65**
Social Acceptance	0.54**

Note: $p < 0.01$; illustrative values.

Interpretation

All four variables have positive relationships with purchase intention. Product attractiveness has the strongest correlation ($r = 0.68$), followed by brand image ($r = 0.65$), perceived inclusivity ($r = 0.61$), and social acceptance ($r = 0.54$).

This indicates that consumers' purchase intentions may increase when they perceive the perfume as attractive, credible, inclusive, and socially acceptable.

Awareness of Gender-Neutral Perfumes and Purchase Intention Data based on 200 respondents

Awareness	Low Purchase Intention	Moderate Purchase Intention	High Purchase Intention	Total
Aware	15	43	84	142
Not Aware	18	25	15	58
Total	33	68	99	200

Chi-Square Test Results

Test	Value
Pearson Chi-Square (χ^2)	25.84
Degrees of Freedom	2
Significance (p-value)	< 0.001
Sample Size	200

The Chi-square test was conducted to examine the association between consumer awareness of gender-neutral perfumes and purchase intention. The illustrative analysis produced a Pearson Chi-square value of 25.84 with 2 degrees of freedom and a significance level below 0.001. Since the p-value is less than the 0.05 significance level, the null hypothesis is rejected. The findings indicate a significant association between awareness of gender-neutral perfumes and purchase intention. Respondents who were aware of gender-neutral perfumes demonstrated comparatively higher purchase intention than respondents who were unaware of the concept.

CONCLUSION

The perfume industry is gradually moving beyond traditional male and female classifications. Gender-neutral perfumes provide consumers with an opportunity to select fragrances based on personal taste, lifestyle, personality, and sensory preferences rather than predetermined gender categories.

This study examined the relationship between consumer perception of gender-neutral perfumes and purchase intention. The analysis focused on perceived inclusivity, product attractiveness, brand image, and social acceptance. The illustrative findings indicate positive relationships between all four variables and purchase intention.

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