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# 'Neo-Crosssexual' fashion in contemporary men's suits

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## Abstract

Today, fashionable menswear is appropriating traditionally feminine design elements on an unparalleled international scale. This phenomenon should not be interpreted purely as a subversive gender issue, but should also be viewed as an expression of personal style and taste. In order to properly describe this phenomenon, the term 'crosssexual' must be introduced to English fashion vocabulary. This paper examines the innovative design characteristics of contemporary crosssexual menswear emerging prominently in men's suits since 2015 and also raises the necessity of coining a new term: 'neo-crosssexual'. Ultimately, this paper reveals how neo-crosssexual fashion employs a great variety of innovative silhouettes and novel design elements—ranging from structural or decorative details to colors, fabrics, patterns, and accessories—all of which enable the wearer to express whatever image of themselves they desire. Previous studies have interpreted crosssexual fashion as men simply portraying themselves as effeminate by wearing such clothing, but this conclusion is reductive and reveals there is still an unconscious recognition of limiting binary associations. The richness of neo-crosssexual fashion design, rather, gives individuals freedom to choose a sartorial image devoid of binary constraints. Conventionally classified 'feminine designs' are now perceived as creative and functional means to fluidity. This positive cultural shift has led to an increasing number of men choosing to wear suits that incorporate 'feminine' design elements, freeing this traditional garment from its limited formal use and symbolic hegemonic power.

**Keywords:** Neo-crosssexual, Crosssexual, Mens, Fashion, Menswear, Suits, Freedom of expression and taste, Personal style, Sartorial identity, Diverse images

## Introduction

Increasingly, there are a multitude of cultural shifts affording individuals a greater variety of choices in life, which are also reflected in contemporary fashion. Indeed, new and significant changes are especially evident in men's fashion today. Menswear designers are consciously incorporating feminine design elements on an unprecedented scale, perhaps inspired by reflections on the recent deaths of monumental pop and rock musicians like David Bowie and Prince who paraded feminized stage costumes in the 1970s. Such a phenomenon—whereby feminine design elements are consciously adopted by men—along with the sporadic emergence of subcultural styles of dress over the last century, has almost always been interpreted as a gender issue, either defying or denying gender.

This is also demonstrated by countless gender-related terms used to describe fashion including 'gender-bending' and 'genderless', to name just a few. Even the term 'androgynous' in fashion vocabulary signifies the blurring of gender distinctions, making gender ambiguous. All of these terms fall under the umbrella issue of nonconforming genders within fashion. The meaning of these terms can of course be interpreted according to Judith Butler's renowned theory of gender performativity<sup>1</sup>; Butler viewed these non-conventional 'performances' as 'subversions', 'purposeful parodies', 'gender resistance', with an aim of stirring up 'gender trouble' (Butler 2006). However, fashion phenomena of today can also be viewed as an important indicator of developments in men's personal taste and sartorial expression rather than a complex gender issue; their sex and gender are male, and they take pleasure in experimenting with traditionally feminine stylistic design elements, which expand their freedom of choice. An increasing number of men who choose to express themselves through fashionable dress do not necessarily think that they are subverting, changing or forming a new gender; rather, they appreciate and embrace these new design elements as purely fashion. Recent strong criticism and backlash from gender and sexually nonconforming individuals, declares that 'such fashion on heterosexual models' is wrongly labelled as 'gender nonconforming,' 'gender-fluid,' etc., and 'seen as gender politics,' simply 'to exploit and commodify gender issues,' jumping on the bandwagon of queer and gender theories (Tobia 2017). Acknowledging the sensitivity of these issues, this paper aims to examine crosssexual and neo-crosssexual menswear from a different perspective to gender politics.

All this coincides with what is being seen on the runways of men's fashion shows: the establishment of 'Baudelaire's aristocracy of taste,' i.e., the development or 'refinement' of taste in fashion by heterosexual men, according to the BBC (Singer 2014; Jacobs 2019). Recently, in fact, an extensive number of French bus drivers and English male students, regardless of age, have turned up to work and school wearing skirts instead of their long uniform trousers, claiming that they wish to stay cool in summer (Friedman 2017). Similarly, a sizeable proportion of the male population engages with traditionally female fashions purely for creative inspirations or practical convenience, and not as an outward expression of gender-based identity. Furthermore, the English language and academic vocabulary of fashion does not yet contain adequate terminology to describe these aforementioned male individuals. One could suggest the term 'metrosexual', but this outdated word created in 1994 technically encompasses male consumer culture and defines men who simply enjoy shopping and grooming themselves (Hall 2015). Considering the term 'metrosexual' is now passé and sometimes offensive, it is very helpful to introduce a new term: 'crosssexual' (cross-fashion + heterosexual men). First coined in South Korea in 2006 by journalists Beom-Suk Kim and Yun-Jong Kim, the word defined a notable fashion trend in the 2000s.

The term 'crosssexual' defines any man or group of men who take pleasure in feminine sartorial design elements and fashionable accessories, but who clearly define themselves as heterosexual and cis-male, unlike people who identify as 'the third-sex' or have

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<sup>1</sup> Judith Butler claims that 'gender attributes are not expressive but performative...(they) effectively constitute the (gender) identity they are said to express...(Butler 1988). One of her key arguments is that gender performances either normalize the binary or subvert it.

'gender-challenging' identities (Park and Yim 2017). Crosssexual fashion in the 2000s was more widely accepted by men than androgynous subcultural styles that emerged in the twentieth century. This same phenomenon also developed in the West, as seen in the collections of luxury Western menswear brands. Hedi Slimane's designs for Dior Homme best represent crosssexual fashion; the skinny and tight-waisted silhouette Slimane created, inspired by the then-stereotypical appearance of gay men, aimed to break heterosexual men's prejudices against homosexual men and to enable heterosexual men to feel comfortable enjoying such designs (Manning 2015). These became the most prominent, defining qualities of crosssexual fashion and had a worldwide impact. Nevertheless, crosssexual fashion's quintessential skinny-fit meant that men who wore these fashions were, in reality, somewhat limited both practically and functionally.

However, since the Spring/Summer collections of 2015, unparalleled changes have occurred in crosssexual fashion. Literature on crosssexual fashion in the 2000s simply described men who followed the trend as only portraying feminine sartorial identities or those related to women, however a recent London-based menswear designer's 'collection featured all manner of feminine detail', of which it is said that 'intriguingly the attitude of the clothes was so incontrovertibly masculine at the same time' (Singer 2014). This demonstrates that men can not only retain their masculinity while trying on 'feminine' design elements, but they can also express confidence through them and portray an image of themselves beyond those limited to femininity. Furthermore, men of various body types are confidently adopting such designs today because they regard them as creative, functional solutions for dealing with practical problems caused by summer heat, for example.

These design innovations are evident in the major global menswear brands of today. Contemporary menswear design is much more diverse and sophisticated than the crosssexual fashions of the 2000s. Past fashion primarily paraded the skinny-silhouette, but from 2015 onwards, a colorful variety of 'suits of every shade', made with 'the most feminine, couture-level fabrics' with intricate 'prints all over' dominated on a wider scale (Farra and Yotka 2018). Furthermore, ingenious cut-off suits with 'super-short shorts' (Black 2018) now exist and express a new image of masculine sensuality and casual relaxation. Evidently, menswear designers and consumers are in pursuit of expanded, yet tangible definitions of masculinity.

These recent changes are especially noteworthy in men's suits. In the past, crosssexual fashion developed more largely through casualwear, but since 2015, suits have made a fresh comeback on menswear runways due to their revival in popular blockbuster films such as *Kingsman*, along with recent and rapid technological advancements in the suit industry (Flammia 2017). It is necessary to analyze the large-scale adoption of these new crosssexual design features in men's suits, garments that traditionally symbolize formality and hegemonic masculinity.

Previous studies in academic literature chiefly focus on delineating various characteristics of non-conforming genders, sexualities and their application within fashion, but lack meaningful analysis of such fashion worn by heterosexual men as a sartorial expression of personal style and taste (Kosmala 2013; Eldridge 2013; Kim and Yim 2015; Egner and Maloney 2016; Mauriès 2017). Studies on crosssexual fashion are largely limited to fashion analysis of menswear collections before 2011 and casualwear; on average, 91.8%

of crosssexual fashion items researched were casualwear (An 2007; Kim 2011). Park and Yim (2017) examined both casualwear and suits, but their research only used Hedi Slimane's designs prior to 2015 as a case study. Regarding men's suits, a variety of academic studies exist on their history, functions and meanings (Hollander 1995; Breward 2016; Barry and Weiner 2017), and overall design trends occurring before 2010 (Bang 2009; Lee 2010). Some of these works briefly mention feminizing trends visible in men's suits, but only regarding silhouette or color, and no research on crosssexual trends has yet been undertaken, especially on suit collections post-2015. Research published after 2015 is generally limited to a specific suit brand identity or to a particular country (Cedrola and Silchenko 2016; Jacomet 2017). Thus, analysis of new crosssexual design elements observable in contemporary men's suits is lacking.

Therefore, this paper examines the characteristics of new crosssexual design elements observable in men's suits and seeks to coin and raise the necessity of a new term that defines this global menswear design phenomenon: 'neo-crosssexual.' The aim of this paper is to analyze these changes demonstrated in major global menswear brands, focusing on suits from Spring/Summer 2015 to Spring/Summer 2018, and thus define the term 'neo-crosssexual', which evolved from the more casual-oriented crosssexual fashion trend of the 2000s. In order to achieve this, this study first conceptually defines and differentiates some often-confused terms that denote femininity in menswear, including 'crosssexual', to demonstrate why the term 'neo-crosssexual' is so valuable. Secondly, this study analyzes innovative design elements in men's suits since 2015 that are distinguishable from crosssexual fashion of the 2000s. Finally, this study coins the term 'neo-crosssexual', defining the word, highlighting its necessity and revealing its implications. It is meaningful to analyze how men today adopt conventionally-classified feminine design elements of neo-crosssexual fashion, how this redefines the importance of major menswear brands' suits, and makes a pivotal impact on the history of men's fashion. Furthermore, this study will illuminate how contemporary men's suit designs innovatively and freely change and thus aid predictions of future trends.

## **Literature review**

### **Definition and attributes of various fashion-related terms connoting femininity in menswear**

A host of literature on fashion still conflates the terms 'androgyny', countless 'nonconforming gender' based terms, 'metrosexual', and 'crosssexual'. For example, some studies have defined 'crosssexual' men ambiguously as having an 'effeminate pretty face and appearance' or as being almost the same as androgynous; others have insisted that the term 'metrosexual' encourages fashion 'completely undermining dichotomous notions of gender..', identifying it with nonconforming genders (Willett 2010; Kim 2018). However, these four concepts can be distinguished, especially 'crosssexual', as follows:

Firstly, androgyny, consists of two words combined etymologically from the Greek *andro* (man) and *gyne* (woman), and thus can be defined as a person who expresses a very strong fusion of masculine and feminine features to make their gender appear ambiguous (Nelson 2009; Morley 2012). It also emphasizes unification of male and female, in internal feelings and external projections (Eldridge 2013). The following two cases exemplify this difficulty in gender/sex distinction: a woman who has a shaved head,

wears a man's coverall to completely hide her figure and stands proud with an aggressive expression, and a man who wears a woman's voluminous dress, heavy make-up, and lies in a vulnerable passive pose. Historically, androgynous fashion is emblemized by the subcultural fashions of the 1960s hippies and 1970/1980s pop icons such as Ziggy Stardust, Boy George and Leigh Bowery. As both sexes were wearing color palettes inspired by ornate 'acid phantasmagoria', growing their hair long, and borrowing each other's clothes (such as flowing trousers/dresses or jumpsuits), it was hard to differentiate them (Eldridge 2013). These fashions have often been described as 'otherworldly'; worn by 'a third sex'; 'transcend(ing) the existing concept of sexuality'; 'a hyperbole of what an imagined multi-gendered futurist fashion person could be' (Fischer 2018), thereby giving more shocking implications compared to crosssexual fashion.

Furthermore, unlike metrosexual and crosssexual men's fashion, androgynous fashion includes that worn by women, the quintessence being Yves Saint Laurent's suits of the late 1960s. At the time, the suit was still an indisputable form of hegemonic masculinity; except for the few extreme stage costumes worn by male pop figures, it became a prominent androgynous fashion worn by women, later becoming more adopted in the 1980s as power-suits. In fact, what started as androgynous fashion for women usually became more accepted into mainstream fashion consciousness, in contrast to androgynous fashion worn by men. As Hollander argues, male androgynous fashion, such as voluminous dress, creative décolletage for chest and back, veils, and stiletto-heels, is limited to subculture, and is not likely to be taken up soon by 'ordinary Western men' (1995). Overall, the term 'androgynous' still has too strong a connotation to involve heterosexual and cis-male men, who recognize their sex and gender simply as male.

Next, as the research scope and size make it difficult to investigate all the separate meanings of nonconforming gender terms—including 'gender-bender', 'genderless', 'gender-fluid', and 'nongender'—this paper will consider them collectively. It is noteworthy that while the terms metrosexual, crosssexual and androgynous place a greater emphasis on outward expressions, such as one's appearance and/or mood, these collective gender terms focus more on denoting a person's gender identity and how that person identifies oneself.<sup>2</sup> This gender identification of oneself comprehensively involves a 'scrambling of (all) gender markers' comprising not only fashion, but behaviors, gestures, speech patterns, and attitudes (Robertson 1992; Booker 2016; Oul-Fakir 2017). As a whole, these words should be used to define those who use all these markers to inform others of their non-conventional gender identity, as someone who either challenges, subverts, or denies the gender binary, or shifts with fluidity along the spectrum. Consequently, 'gender-bending' fashion can, for example, include androgynous fashion as a manner, if it is worn by those who identify as 'a gender-bender'.

This is further supported by the influential article by gender-fluid activist Jacob Tobia at Duke University, criticizing *Vogue* for describing Gigi Hadid and Zayn Malik, two heterosexuals styled in flamboyant suits on the magazine's cover, as 'gender-fluid' and

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<sup>2</sup> It is important to take notice that Butler in her later work, *Undoing Gender* (2004, New York: Routledge), has to some extent accepted criticism from other scholars on her claims opposing all stable gender/sexual identities. She suggests that her queer theory is only "opposed to unwanted legislation of identity" and that it cannot be concluded that queer theory is opposed to all gender/sex assignments. Therefore, one's claim of a stable gender/sexual identity is no longer completely excluded by Butler's view, especially if the subject wants to make that identity claim.

'gender-bending' people. Tobia potently argues that the fashion world is wrongly labeling such heterosexual models and their fashion, exploiting these gender progressive terms to gain media attention, and that such usage is 'flagrant cultural appropriation' that 'whitewash(es) the lived experiences of actual gender-nonconforming people' (Tobia 2017). Tobia and others claim that gender-nonconforming people actually need the public discourse around such terms 'to refer to their internal gender identities,' rather than allow them to be exploited by the fashion world (Tobia 2017; Ton 2018). Consequently, it is inappropriate to use these terms, which are based on 'nonconforming gender identities,' for men who are heterosexual and perceive their sex and gender as male, but simply enjoy feminine design elements in their fashion choices. It is essential, then, that there is a specific term to denote these men and their fashion.

One might suggest the term 'metrosexual' to be used for such men's fashion. However, it is noteworthy to go back to its founder's definition, as it was coined in 1994, and then slightly updated in 2002: 'a young man with money to spend...living in metropolis -where all the best shops, clubs, gyms and hairdressers are...like male vanity products and herpes, they're pretty much everywhere' (Simpson 1994, 2002). Hence, it is not a fashion-specific term, but rather one that refers to a city-based and consumer-driven lifestyle trend and is applicable to the men involved, who are simply expressing their desire for grooming and maintaining their appearance. The term 'metrosexual' had inadvertently taken on some feminine connotations, as the acts of shopping and preening were still regarded as feminine. However, the term falls short, as it does not mean that they chose feminine design elements and fashion in the same manner as crosssexuals. In fact, the concept of the metrosexual was well incarnated by the nineteenth century London dandies. Beau Brummel famously highlighted the impeccable cleanliness of his appearance by pursuing 'sober colors of new cities'—that is to say, the grey hues of an industrial nineteenth century England—and going broke for the sake of his sartorial presentation (Vinken 2004; McDowell 2012). It is also best represented by David Beckham in the 2000s, who was the epitome of conspicuous consumption and personal grooming, maintaining close ties and profitable partnerships with major luxury brands (Coad 2008).

Most researchers associate metrosexuals with English or American middle-class or upper, urban Caucasian men, who link personal appearance to career success and consumer culture (Luciano 2001; Pompper 2010). According to a survey on American men by the University of Cincinnati, the vast majority concluded that the word 'metrosexual' no longer exists, because it now merely refers to 'well-dressed men' with money to spend (Nauert 2018). Therefore, the use of this term today is inappropriate.

In light of all this, it is very helpful to introduce the term 'crosssexual' (a portmanteau of cross-fashion and heterosexual) as a new term in English-language fashion analysis. The term was coined in Korea in 2006, representing the fast-growing global trend, both in the West and Asia, directly linked to men's fashion. It is applied to heterosexual men who, beyond being simply well-dressed, 'genuinely enjoy or select feminine design elements and accessories as part of their fashion codes' (Kim and Kim 2006). 'Apart from their fashion, they behave and speak as a man'<sup>3</sup>, that is to say, recognizing

<sup>3</sup> This phrase might sound problematic since it does not convey the total spectrum of maleness today. Although being a man today could show different forms of masculinity, what this definition actually means is that crosssexuals are physi-

and proclaiming their sex and gender as male (i.e., cis-male), and being also recognized still by others biologically and physically as a man<sup>4</sup> (Kim and Kim 2006; Park and Yim 2017). By definition, it is the surface-level fashion that these men focus on. Therefore, crosssexuals and their fashion can be distinguished from androgynous people and their fashion through the latter displaying a more extreme portrayal of gender ambiguity. Furthermore, crosssexual men can also be clearly distinguished from people with nonconforming gender identities.

For crosssexual men, the emphasis is placed on their stylish personal taste for such fashion, as well as on their self-expression. Regarding the formation of an individual's taste in contemporary society, Skeggs has pointed out the importance of the individual's resources, such as learning, information, social networks, investment in the body, and fluidity between cultural boundaries (Skeggs 2004). Particularly with the rising attention to a construction and expression of an aesthetic-self, it is becoming essential to highlight the role of one's individuality, increasingly having a preference for standing out from the crowd, with a more personal sense for beauty (Skeggs 2004). Bennett et al. also claimed how 'versatility' and 'novelty' are key resources for the formation of stylish taste (Bennett et al. 2009). In pursuing one's fashion taste, Kim emphasized that it is a means of obtaining aesthetic pleasure (Kim 2004). Although one's taste is established on an individual level and has its own peculiarity, it inevitably affects others and is approved, to an extent, by one's reference group. Therefore, a fashion taste is further constructed by a group of people who participate in similar experiences and social/cultural interactions. Indeed, the crosssexual trend in global menswear collections has also had a more widespread influence on men's fashion taste, and vice versa, to be increasingly accepted as a genuine fashion for men.

Historically, there have always been men, such as King Louis XVI, who retained a powerful image, yet adorned themselves with precious stones, embroideries, ribbons, and dressed in flamboyant colors. These decorative elements have frequently been regarded as feminine in modern times. As Flügel and Entwistle emphasize, men have always had a taste and a natural drive for exhibitionism and decorative fashion, but since they have been repressed from the Victorian era, modern men have been seeking compensation for this repression and are doing so by 'displacing this desire to "show off" onto other things' such as high-tech gadgets (i.e. techno-sexual men) (Entwistle 2000). Even earlier in the aftermath of this repression, however, the British teddy boys of the 1950s showed off their fashion sense by wearing drainpipe trousers and light make-up of eyeliner and eyeshadow, which became more widely adopted beyond the subculture by both men in the West and Korea from the 2000s (Jones 2018). Under the terms of our analysis, these

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Footnote 3 (continued)

cally and biologically recognized as a man with the exception to their fashion; it is the surface-level fashion that these men focus on.

<sup>4</sup> The authors of this study are not trying to deliberately exclude sexual/gender minorities; it is certainly possible that they can also try the styles shown in our research. However, there have recently been strong criticism and backlash from people of actual gender minorities, on how 'such fashion on heterosexual models is wrongly labelled as gender nonconforming, gender-bending etc.', and seen as 'gender politics', simply 'to exploit and commodify gender issues', 'jumping on the bandwagon' of queer and gender theories (Illingworth 2017; Tobia 2017). This is why for this study, the authors tried to purposefully look at crosssexual men from a different perspective to gender politics. Thus, the term 'crosssexual' is more of a fashion term for the recent trend and fashion taste by heterosexual cis-male men, rather than a term for gender politics.

men can be identified as crosssexuals. The crosssexual phenomenon is also demonstrated by the propagation of new terminology applied to menswear, such as 'meggings' and 'mewelry'; linguists emphasize this as a start of emancipation in men's fashion, encouraging men to express themselves, their opinions, and their tastes (Passariello and Smith 2011). They use feminine design elements not to radically transform how they look but to assert confidence as a fashion-conscious man. Thus, this crosssexual fashion has the possibility to spread to a wider male public compared to more limited androgynous fashion.

Scholars have argued that these crosssexuals had emerged in the 2000s because of a postmodernist influence that demands men to outwardly express their individuality and sensibilities accordingly with various lifestyles in the twenty-first century (An and Park 2007). While this is a factor, it is noteworthy that this fashion phenomenon became prevalent at the same time as the ubersexual one<sup>5</sup>, underlining the portrayal of more traditional masculine qualities. It can also be argued that social unrest and anxiety caused by the recession at the turn of the millennium were also major factors that led to these two opposite phenomena, as men with faltering confidence tried to recenter the formation of their sense of self through the pursuit of new fashions (Singer 2014).

Ultimately, this research will adopt the term 'crosssexual', to signify men who select feminine design elements and accessories as part of their fashion codes, to express their stylish fashion choices and tastes.

### **Masculine and Feminine aesthetics in fashion**

Based on various fashion research, surveys, and articles on conventional classifications of masculinity and femininity in fashion, including all the aforementioned analysis, the lead author has summarized design elements and attributes popularly categorized as masculine and feminine, in Table 1 (DeLong 1987; Bolich 2007; Han and Lee 2012; Kissick 2014; McCauley-Bowstead 2018).

As seen above, items of clothing and design elements often serve to connote 'femininity' or 'masculinity', to portray a person's fashion as more 'feminine' or more 'masculine'. However, there is actually no natural link between an item of clothing or a design element, and 'femininity' or 'masculinity'; there is only 'an arbitrary set of associations which are culturally specific.' (Entwistle 2000). For example, fashion items such as trousers were traditionally associated with men and considered improper for women to wear in the West, but they have been worn by women for centuries in the Middle East (Entwistle 2000). Furthermore, since the twentieth century, they have been comfortably and fashionably worn by Western women, who no longer think they are subverting gender norms by doing so. This shows that feminine and masculine aesthetics in fashion are always open to change, and with time, such fashion perceptions, trends, and tastes evolve. It allows the possibility that both women and men can perceive a fashion item or a design element conventionally limited to the opposite sex from a different perspective,

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<sup>5</sup> In the book, "The Future of Men" by Marian Slazman, Ira Matathia and Ann O'Reilly (to whom the term owes its origins), the term 'ubersexual' is defined as 'a man who exhibits strong traditional masculine qualities as well as the caring nature of the New Man'. The term is derived from the German 'uber', meaning 'the greatest'.



**Table.1 Design elements and attributes that are popularly categorized as Masculine and Feminine**

	Design elements and attributes conventionally categorized as Masculine	Design elements and attributes conventionally categorized as Feminine
Silhouette	Emphasis on linear; Y- or H- silhouette; emphasis on the men's shoulders; wide and large; clear-cut silhouette; clearly bifurcated legs through trousers	Emphasis on curves; X-silhouette; hourglass; waist-emphasis; skinny; tight; dropped shoulder; explicit revealing of one's body (e.g. bare legs—hotpants); hiding of bifurcated legs through skirts
Detail (structural or decorative)	Small and simple details, generally limited to inconspicuous seams and darts; not many decorative details; occasionally dominant, bold, directed, thick, straight line; straight linear neckline, lapel and sleeves (linear details)	Increased decorative detailing through seams, darts, gathers, etc.; curvilinear decoration(s) on neckline, collar, sleeves; décolletage for chest, back and shoulders; lightweight lines; bonnets, veils, trains; ruffle, flounce, embroidery, beads, sequins, ribbons, feathers, bows, eyelets, etc
Color	Achromatic color; dark, cold colors; colors of low-chroma; value contrast; colors reminiscent of sooty smoke from factories	Bright; colors of high-chroma; colorful; pale tones; pastel shades; warm colors; tints of warm or cool hues, etc
Fabric	Thick material; not sheer; non-shiny; matt; homogeneous surface (usually using one type of fabric); heavy fabric; coarse, textured fabric	Sheer; smooth; shiny; lustrous; flexible and thin; minute variations; often printed and/or blurred; silk, velvet, lace, chiffon, organza, fishnets, fur, quilting, etc
Pattern	Generally, not much emphasis on decorative pattern; hardly any pattern, or stripes at the most usually	Colorful or flamboyant patterns, allover; motifs from nature or abstract ones; vegetal, floral, animal prints, curvilinear geometry; bold or minute motifs in many numbers
Accessories	Not much emphasis on accessories; limited to simple, undecorated ones such as cufflinks, watch, etc.; backpack; necktie; sunglasses; dark shoes without decorations	Ornamental scarves, jewelry, precious stones, pearls, bags, purse, socks, shoes, heels, sandals, uggs, etc., of various colors, patterns, and/or with extra details of decoration

as purely fashionable, according to their new tastes and desires to express themselves. This is indeed increasingly becoming a feature of crosssexual men today.

### Crosssexual fashion and its evolution

Crosssexual fashion of the 2000s was characterized by 'men's skinnism',<sup>6</sup> and a slim appearance tightly-fitted to body (Park and Yim 2017). It also meant that hidden curves were discovered in men so that a tight, thin waist (X-silhouette) and narrow shoulders were highlighted (Davis 2011). 'Effeminate images were portrayed' primarily through the emphasis of this silhouette, rather than through other design elements such as color or pattern; Samsung Fashion Institute claimed that 'the biggest issue in menswear is the change of silhouette' (Kim 2006). This can be accredited to the influence of Hedi Slimane, who created pants with a leg-opening of 17 cm in diameter (Woolf 2016). Many men, not just in Korea, strove to drastically lose weight to conform to such a skinny silhouette, including Karl Lagerfeld who lost up to 40 kg to fit into Dior Homme's new pants and jackets (Lagerfeld 2004).

Feminine decorative details, such as ruffles, ribbons, beads, and eyelets were also adopted. However, with suits especially, they were largely used as simple points of

<sup>6</sup> Men's skinnism' is a term frequently used in Korea to denote very skinny bodies and silhouettes essentially adopted by the crosssexual men and fashion in the 2000s. The term is also used to refer to the 'skinny' designs made by Hedi Slimane at Dior Homme, who only used male models with a height of 1.85 m or taller, and with a weight less than 62 kg.

decorative emphasis, such as the placement of small cross-stitches only on parts of jacket seams, rather than the embellishment of the whole menswear item (An 2007). Sometimes, frills or lace were added to men's casual tops to draw attention to a tight-fitting skinny waistline (Kim and Kwak 2010). As for colors in crosssexual fashion, pink and pastel ranges were adopted, however largely limited to casualwear (Kim 2011). Examining the suits released at this time by global menswear brands reveals that achromatic or dark cold colors were used in the vast majority, and occasionally brown or beige was used. The use of crosssexual colors was usually limited to dress-shirts or neckties, or sometimes added as a small accent color to suits. For example, many brands including Gucci used solid suit colors of black, grey and navy, with red, purple or yellow as a point accentuation (Bang 2009).

Fabrics such as furs, sheer materials, knits, silks and velvets were frequently introduced, but they were generally utilized for a small point of emphasis, or to show the thinness of the wearer. Often knit fabrics or velvet were used in jackets, vests and tops to impose a tight X-silhouette and reveal the waistline, in both casualwear and suits (Kim et al. 2010). All these uses of fabric were assessed as endowing men with softness and delicacy (Kim et al 2010; Morigan 2016). For accessories, a high-waist or ribbon belt to tighten the waistline was often used, as well as earrings, rings, and necklaces in the form of chokers or pendants were adopted (Lee 2006). With suits generally, the use of feminine accessories was much more limited and included relatively inconspicuous scarves, small charm bracelets and/or necklaces in rather plain colors. Finally, there was relatively little emphasis on colorful patterns in 2000s crosssexual fashion. In many of the studies, patterns were either briefly mentioned in terms of simple floral or dot patterns, or excluded from analysis altogether (Kim and Kwak 2010). Particularly on suits, patterns were chiefly limited to plain stripes or dots in achromatic or dark colors (Lee 2010).

Studies on crosssexual fashion collectively insisted that engaging with such fashion forced men to be perceived as exhibiting a romantic, sensual, dainty, elegant, or soft image (Kim 2011; Park and Yim 2017). However, it is arguable that these studies, and many crosssexual men at the time, have still unconsciously fallen into binary interpretive frameworks, produced by a heteronormative and patriarchal society. They have interpreted such design elements and accessories as simply giving men limited images conventionally related to women or effeminacy, assuming only a limited range of meanings are to be associated.

However, since 2015, unparalleled changes have occurred in crosssexual fashion globally, where many more men are now adeptly 're-appropriating the codes of a womenswear wardrobe' (Compain 2016) to express whatever image of themselves they desire, in contrast to the limited feminine images allowed by crosssexual fashion of the 2000s. As it shall be thoroughly examined in the analysis section of the 'neo-crosssexual' fashion phenomenon, design elements and their meanings have become much more diverse and daringly decorative, including a wider variety of silhouettes and full-scale patterned suits. These notable changes have led the authors of this research to designate the new phenomenon of men and their fashion as 'neo-crosssexual'.

This is all thanks to a variety of factors across the economic and social spheres. Many Western heterosexual men today are showing a more heightened interest in fashion, now spending '43% more on clothes every month than women do,' according to a 2018 study

conducted in the UK by American Express and Nectar (Davis 2018). Recent vigorous feminist movements, such as #MeToo, have peripherally contributed to the expression of sexual equality through sartorial choices. While women's rights movements in the past have helped to propagate the masculinization of womenswear, today, they are actively encouraging fashion designers to launch much more colorful menswear collections so that men can equally enjoy fashion and take part in this cultural revolution (Baker 2015; Schnall 2017). Major changes in perceptions and values are the foremost factors in the proliferation of this new phenomenon of neo-crosssexuality and have even extended to the general male public. In an American survey of 1478 randomly chosen people in 2018, over 75% stated that they found 'feminine trends on men attractive', with extra 17% finding 'some' attractive, thus amounting to over 92% (Izett 2018).

Furthermore, this fashion phenomenon in design elements, style and consumer behavior can also be well explained by the aesthetic and cultural aspects of post-postmodernism theories today. Firstly, the current period can be characterized by 'hypermodernity'.<sup>7</sup> 'Pleasures derived from consumption are great' and people are passionately in constant search for novelty in fashion as a hedonistic impulse, but at the same time, they have grown weary of fast fashion and cheap items (Morgado 2014). This has brought about an emphasis on more splendid abundance and diversity of rich decorative design elements and details, even in menswear, ranging from flamboyant embroideries and patterns to various sumptuous fabric and bright color combinations. Secondly, another feature of the post-postmodern period is 'performatism' (Eshelman 2008), which can also be an important factor for encouraging this neo-crosssexual phenomenon. In 'performatism', a high degree of importance is placed on 'subjects who have authorial power' in that they can control 'time, space and causality' for their own personal preference, and on their 'action in performative works' (Eshelman 2008; Morgado 2014). These subjects' action enables them to transcend the context in which they are embedded, generating an aesthetic experience. This highlights the personal taste and preference of the subjects, and allows them to erase or view differently existing interpretive categories. With fashion, they can thus 'reconsider ideas regarding individuality and its expression in dress, as well as the roles and functions of dress in contemporary first-world countries' (Morgado 2014). This has allowed more and more neo-crosssexual men to comfortably adopt what was conventionally interpreted as feminine design elements, now purely as fashionable design means, as part of their new taste and individual fashion choices. However, there is a slight difference between performatism and the neo-crosssexual phenomenon in that the former also includes people who purposefully subvert commonly accepted categories and try to upend social conventions, whereas the latter is more about men whose key aim is not social subversion, but rather the choosing of such fashion for their own pleasure. Finally, according to the post-postmodern theory of 'digimodernism'<sup>8</sup>, a significant increase of fashion blogs, especially those authored by fashionable males, has democratized fashion reporting (Kirby 2009; Morgado 2014), resulting in a more widespread acceptance of and respect for individual fashion tastes. This has created the space for the

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<sup>7</sup> Hypermodernity is a 'society of hyperconsumption'. 'Excessive consumption of fashion-related items is certainly motivated by the pleasures of buying, owning and wearing...characteristic of the contemporary ethos'. From Morgado 2014.

<sup>8</sup> Digimodernism refers to the current period where 'the widespread adoption of digital technologies is evident', such as Web 2.0 platforms (e.g. Twitter, blogs, YouTube, etc.). Its key traits are 'fluidity', 'boundlessness', etc. From Morgado 2014

more frequent use of decorative elements in male fashion. These factors are all heralding a new-era for men and menswear, in the form of neo-crosssexual fashion.

### **Suit norms and their changes**

These changes in fashion and perception are especially manifesting in men's suits today. Historically, suits have been an item to be worn as a set (jacket with lapels, shirt, vest, trousers) and only in limited places and situations (Breward 2016). Since the Industrial Revolution, suits eschewed all splendor and became a practical, simple garment, upon which the social-rational role was imposed rather than the private-emotional one (Hollander 1995). This hastened the separation of male and female fashion crossover. From this tradition, suits have usually been made of a plain, thick material, in achromatic colors reminiscent of the industrialized society with its factories' sooty smoke (Hollander 1995). Men wore these suits to both establish and adhere to images of hegemonic masculinity, such as authority, self-control, agility and professionalism, and from the twentieth century, they have been considered more conservative and uniform, as a strict item of formality (Barry and Weiner 2017).

There were occasionally instances in the twentieth century where suits took on variant forms, such as the neo-Edwardian suits adopted by the 1950s teddy boys, the tight-fitting, dark-colored suits of the 1960s mods, and the assortment of adornment that heralded the so-called "peacock revolution" (accommodating relatively more daring elements, influenced by Beatles and other pop icons, such as collarless jackets, the addition of feminine colors, and high heeled boots) (The V&A Museum 2019). However, these trends were largely limited to youth subculture in the somewhat restricted world of music, and not as prevalent when compared with the more widely adopted crosssexual fashions in the twenty-first century.

In the 2000s, there was indeed a tendency toward feminization in men's suits, influenced by crosssexual fashion. Nevertheless, this was largely through the tight, elongated fit or the X-silhouette (Bang 2009). In terms of suits' length, color, and other design elements, their variation was relatively insignificant because the rapid development and expansion of casual items resulted in a much more limited use of suits (Breward 2016).

However, from 2015 forward, suits have enjoyed a renaissance with a variety of innovative designs emerging on an unparalleled scale. In big box-office films such as *La-La-Land* (2016), actors are seen parading about in their colorful suits, and such visuals had a strong influence on male consumers (Renwick 2017). Importantly, Lizzie Bowring, the runway director at WGSN, has also stressed that male consumers are growing tired of cheap fast fashion, and with the recovery of the global economy, are turning their attention towards new stylish suit fashions (Hanbury 2018). Furthermore, boundaries between suits and casual clothes are becoming blurred, and suits are now being recognized as much more comfortable clothing by men, resulting in a thriving suit business (Flammia 2017). Considering all the developments in and around men's suiting mentioned thus far, there has not yet been a comprehensive study examining the prominent changes in crosssexual fashion and in men's suits today. Consequently, this paper looks at the design characteristics of neo-crosssexual fashion demonstrated through male suits, thereby defining its concept in order for the new term to be accepted globally.

## Method

This study undertook both literature review and empirical research, having taken the following procedures:

1. Through investigating extensive literature on the often-confused, various male-fashion related terms that connote femininity in menswear (androgyny, nonconforming gender identity based terms, metrosexual, crosssexual), distinguish these terms by their definition and concepts, demonstrating why it is helpful to use the term 'crosssexual' today. Then, also discuss what has conventionally been considered feminine or masculine aesthetics in fashion to date.

2. To compare with the neo-crosssexual fashion phenomenon and its innovations in suits since 2015, summarize the characteristics of the 2000s crosssexual fashion by reviewing previous literature, and consider why crosssexual fashion has evolved today. Next, examine historical meanings of men's suits before 2015 and possible factors for the change in their norms recently.

3. Through visual content analysis, analyze feminine design elements shown in the suits of global designer brands' collections (Spring/Summer 2015–Spring/Summer 2018) in the order of silhouette, detail (structural or decorative), color, fabric, pattern and accessories, and thus determine the characteristics of neo-crosssexual fashion. The photo analysis of the suits is based on runway images available through *Vogue's* website.<sup>9</sup>

Regarding the research scope, a 'suit' here means a set comprised of a jacket, dress-shirt or innerwear, vest (optional) and pants, in the form of a suit, but those suit forms in which length or size has been modified have also been included. Through a review of press and studies on fashion, the most representative menswear brands have first been chosen; those that have made a major impact on the global market and have consistently released their menswear collections at the 'Big Four' Fashion Weeks (London, Milano, Paris, New York) during the analysis period of this paper. With this list of brands, a specialist group of eight individuals, majoring in fashion design at postgraduate-level or above, was each asked to pick brands of notable reputation in men's fashion from their perspective. The top ten brands mentioned most frequently, and also showing a prominent neo-crosssexual tendency, have been selected in the end, which are the following: Dolce & Gabbana (D&G); Gucci; Zegna; Dior Homme; Louis Vuitton; Paul Smith; Alexander McQueen; David Hart; Thom Browne; Calvin Klein.

Although the vast majority of these brands strongly show the tendency from the Spring/Summer 2015 season, three brands (David Hart, Thom Browne, Calvin Klein) demonstrate the tendency notably from their Spring/Summer 2017 collections. Hence, just for these three brands, their analysis period has been limited to Spring/Summer 2017–Spring/Summer 2018. They happen to be three US-based brands; the US is conventionally known for their functionality in suits (Lee 2010), therefore, it is arguable that these brands have caught up with the new phenomenon in their suits slightly later compared to the European brands.

Based on the various fashion research and surveys on popular classifications of masculinity and femininity, a framework (Table 1) showing the conventionally categorized

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<sup>9</sup> The Vogue Runway (fashion-shows), (2014–2017, last updated 25 May 2018). *Vogue*. Photos for this research studied and retrieved from [<https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows>]. Between December 2017–February 2019.

masculine and feminine design elements has been prepared, to systematically recognize feminine design elements in male suits. During the first stage of selection, the lead author collected photographs of male suits with such elements from every season of each brand, based on this framework (Total: 1184 photos). During the second stage of verification, another fashion specialist group of four individuals double-checked each photograph; if only three or more people agreed, then the photograph was included in the final selection for analysis. This allowed a sum of 1120 photographs.<sup>10</sup>

## Results and discussion

### Silhouettes

The most prominent feature of neo-crosssexual suits' silhouette is that it does not simply emphasize one silhouette type of skinny-fit, but rather a multiplicity of silhouettes is present. Furthermore, by 2018 there exist experimental designs that were hardly demonstrated in a suit silhouette before.

Although tight-fitting lines can also certainly be recognized in neo-crosssexual fashion, much more generous fits of X-, Y- or H- silhouette are found, which are associated with a noticeably increased use of double-breasted jackets. In a study on luxury menswear brands' jackets from 2000 to 2010, more than 88.6% of them were tight-fitting and single-breasted (Lee 2011). In contrast, the use of double-breasted closures, which allows for a relatively looser fit, has increased more than three times (35.2%) in neo-crosssexual suits due to the preference for diverse silhouettes today. This invites more men to try on the X- or Y- silhouettes even if they are not one of the few who have the slimmest body. A variety of suit pants are paired with these double-breasted jackets, from pencil pants to flares, or baggy trousers with a curvaceous emphasis. Gucci, Calvin Klein, and Alexander McQueen<sup>11</sup> also present much looser double-breasted jackets with a slight curve on the waist, but at the same time, these cuts reveal men's toughness through an accentuation on the angled shoulders.

However, the most marked silhouette feature of neo-crosssexual suits is the active introduction of a boxy-silhouette, showing ample measure across the body. Such a silhouette usually connotes strength or comfort, but feminine curvilinear lines have partly been utilized for the construction of the pants, or the designers have cleverly extended the length of the jacket, shirt, or vest until thigh or knee line to give an impression of a dress. In particular, Paul Smith has styled a boxy jacket with spacious bloomer pants, symbolizing the 19th-century women's liberation movement,<sup>12</sup> while Louis Vuitton and others have added shirts with colorful prints to their boxy suits,<sup>13</sup> all creating a relaxed

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<sup>10</sup> Although the sum of 1120 photographs have been analyzed altogether to investigate their overall trend, due to the limited size of this paper, 33 photos of different looks that best represent neo-crosssexual fashion have been selected to be described in further detail in this paper. Because of the strict copyright restrictions of these photos, they could not be published in the end unfortunately. However, for these 33 images, their specific reference and link have been given in the endnotes, which the readers are encouraged to have a look, if needed. It is not necessary to view the images in order to understand our research. Nevertheless, the authors sincerely apologize for this inconvenience.

<sup>11</sup> Yannis Vlamos (Indigitalimages.com), (2015). Look 1, Spring 2016, Menswear, Alexander McQueen. *Vogue*. Please see: [<https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/spring-2016-menswear/alexander-mcqueen/slideshow/collection#1>]. Accessed 19 February 2019.

<sup>12</sup> Yannis Vlamos (Indigitalimages.com), (2014). Look 20, Spring 2015 Menswear, Paul Smith. *Vogue*. Please see: [<https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/spring-2015-menswear/paul-smith/slideshow/collection#20>]. Accessed 19 February 2019.

<sup>13</sup> Yannis Vlamos (Indigital.tv), (2017). Look 38, Spring 2018 Menswear, Louis Vuitton. *Vogue*. Please see: [<https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/spring-2018-menswear/louis-vuitton/slideshow/collection#38>]. Accessed 19 February 2019.

image. Dior Homme and Gucci's models also appear to be wearing a long dress or a skirt under their boxy suit because of the boldly extended vest and/or shirt.<sup>14</sup> This demonstrates the models' charisma as the large rectangular shape of the vest and shirt, with bright colors or flamboyant patterns, are highlighted even from afar. Relating to these tendencies for a boxy silhouette, Paul Smith has stressed that he now wants more men to enjoy feminine design elements, such as colorful prints, by providing men with more comfortable silhouettes compared with the past (Leitch 2017).

Especially by 2018, there are new suit silhouettes introduced in a more daring manner. For example, Thom Browne displayed knit tights as suit-pants, but enlarged his jackets to adopt an exaggerated, planar silhouette reminiscent of cubism, conveying tough strength as well as revealing the male models' legs with subtle sensuality.<sup>15</sup> Gucci has also fused a suit's top and bottoms together like a jump-suit, to reveal the whole natural bodyline of the male model.<sup>16</sup> Further, multiple brands have presented 'cut-off' suits, such as jackets cut-off latitudinally (e.g. Dior Homme); sleeveless jackets (e.g. Alexander McQueen); or suit-pants cut above the thigh to create something akin to hot-pants (e.g. Gucci, Thom Browne). Some have even cut off both tops and bottoms to sensually expose the arms and legs, and to stay cool in the heat.<sup>17</sup> Cultural sociologist Entwistle has argued that men's suits chiefly obscure sexual characteristics by blurring the male body, whereas a key aim of women's suits is to highlight her sexual body (Entwistle 2000). However, the confident exposure of the natural male body is a feature of neo-crosssexual suits today. Although suits with plunging necklines or tight-fitting silhouettes existed in the past, these are not as bold of an exposure as those found in suit designs now. This new boldness helps to draw attention to a man's distinct sensuality and permits him to attain self-confidence, as well as allows him to indulge in a convenient summer fashion.

Today, neo-crosssexual fashion is developing for men of various physical builds since the silhouette range has become so much more diverse. It follows, then, that many more men can explore and experiment with this fashion, compared to the more restricted silhouette of crosssexual styles.

#### **Details: structural or decorative**

With regard to structural or decorative details, neo-crosssexual fashion is first characterized by a proliferation of shawl lapels on jackets. Other brands have also frequently showcased them, but D&G especially adopted these lapels in more than 40% of the suits in their 2015 collections. Instead of linear peaked or notched lapels, which were used in more than 96% of the major global brands' suits from 2000 to 2009 (Lee 2010), the round shawl lapels are marked by their curvaceousness to bestow softness upon suits and, subsequently, their wearers. These lapels are further underlined by their expansion, making

<sup>14</sup> Yannis Vlamos (Indigitalimages.com), (2015). Look 43, Fall 2015, Menswear, Dior Men. *Vogue*. Please see: [<https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/fall-2015-menswear/dior-homme/slideshow/collection#43>]. Accessed 19 February 2019.

<sup>15</sup> Kim Weston Arnold (Indigital.tv), (2017). Look 16, Fall 2017, Menswear, Thom Browne. *Vogue*. Please see: [<https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/fall-2017-menswear/thom-browne/slideshow/collection#16>]. Accessed 19 February 2019.

<sup>16</sup> Yannis Vlamos (Indigital.tv), (2017). Look 47, Spring 2018, Menswear, Gucci. *Vogue*. Please see: [<https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/spring-2018-ready-to-wear/gucci/slideshow/collection#47>]. Accessed 19 February 2019.

<sup>17</sup> Yannis Vlamos (Indigital.tv), (2017). Look 19, Spring 2018, Menswear, Dior Men. *Vogue*. Please see: [<https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/spring-2018-menswear/dior-homme/slideshow/collection#19>]. Accessed 19 February 2019.

them even more curvilinear.<sup>18</sup> These decorative feminine details paradoxically draw attention to the male model's chest, especially since models with large pectoral muscles have been used, thereby also highlighting their toughness. Indeed, many other brands are also accentuating these lapels by imbuing them with a prominent high-chroma color, or with embroidery decorations such as floral and coral reef patterns.<sup>19</sup> They all attract focus to the bold, broad chest of a man, which makes him stand out with a confident or stately image.

There are also pronounced decorations across the entire surface of suits, such as bright red braids that have been sewn over completely, with some freely hanging and swinging as models walk.<sup>20</sup> However, these braids can be reminiscent of strong climbing ropes, enhancing a colorful, yet tough, charismatic image. Another example also conveys such an image, where a golden pattern-embroidered suit jacket is overlapped with colorful yarns, but these yarns are somewhat crude and coarse.<sup>21</sup> These refute the claim, asserted by crosssexual fashion studies, that decorative details are chiefly used to emphasize a small point on men's items, or a tight waist silhouette, and transform male images into just feminine ones.

In neo-crosssexual fashion, the structural or decorative details are skillfully adopted by men as a creative design means to communicate various visual identities, including and besides simply feminine identities.

### Colors

Color varieties and their application in neo-crosssexual fashion have developed from crosssexual usages. In the 2000s, men's suits were mostly solid achromatic colors, with fewer than 2% falling within the warm color range; occasionally feminine colors were added for small details (Bang 2009). In contrast, as demonstrated by the recent menswear trend keywords, 'Suits of Every Shade', neo-crosssexual suits present a vast range of warm, bright, pastel, tint or high-chroma colors on their entire surface, either as a solid color or as patterns allowing various colors to coexist<sup>22</sup>. All ten brands enthusiastically adopted solid suit colors from the warm color range, and by Spring/Summer 2018, over 53.4% of the entire men's suits utilize feminine colors such as pink, purple, scarlet, yellow, and pastel shades.<sup>23</sup>

Previous literature has restrictively interpreted feminine colors as only giving a soft or romantic image to men (An 2007), however it is arguable in neo-crosssexual fashion

<sup>18</sup> Yannis Vlamos (Indigitalimages.com), (2015). Look 58, Fall 2015 Menswear, Dolce & Gabbana. *Vogue*. Please see: [<https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/fall-2015-menswear/dolce-gabbana/slideshow/collection#58>]. Accessed 19 February 2019.

<sup>19</sup> Kim Weston Arnold (Indigital.tv), (2017). Look 22, Spring 2018, Menswear, Paul Smith. *Vogue*. Please see: [<https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/spring-2018-menswear/paul-smith/slideshow/collection#22>]. Accessed 19 February 2019.

<sup>20</sup> Yannis Vlamos (Indigital.tv), (2016). Look 21, Spring 2017, Menswear, Dior Men. *Vogue*. Please see: [<https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/spring-2017-menswear/dior-homme/slideshow/collection#21>]. Accessed 19 February 2019.

<sup>21</sup> Kim Weston Arnold (Indigital.tv), (2017). Look 34, Spring 2018 Menswear, Alexander McQueen. *Vogue*. Please see: [<https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/spring-2018-menswear/alexander-mcqueen/slideshow/collection#34>]. Accessed 19 February 2019.

<sup>22</sup> Yannis Vlamos (Indigital.tv), (2017). Look 77, Fall 2017, Menswear, Dolce & Gabbana. *Vogue*. Please see: [<https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/fall-2017-menswear/dolce-gabbana/slideshow/collection#77>]. Accessed 19 February 2019.

<sup>23</sup> Yannis Vlamos (Indigital.tv), (2017). Look 67, Spring 2018 Menswear Gucci. *Vogue*. Please see: [<https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/spring-2018-ready-to-wear/gucci/slideshow/collection#67>]. Accessed 19 February 2019.



that the connotations of these colors can extend far beyond those previously established meanings. In fact, D&G has emphasized a stately image with their army of twenty-three suited men in solid reds and pink roses in the 2015 collections (Blanks 2014), while Thom Browne has shown summer cut-off suits with yellow tone-on-tone coloration to highlight a cool, refreshing image.<sup>24</sup>

Another feature of neo-crosssexual color applications is the use of colorblocking; a contrasting color placed in each jacket, pants, and dress-shirt, to transform the suit, reminiscent of Color Field paintings.<sup>25</sup> The Color Field movement of the 1950s and 1960s experimented with the expressive power of colors by arranging color in large fields. It is noteworthy that with these paintings, their color meanings are to be reflected upon relatively freely by the viewer or interpretive agent, rather than assigned by the artist (Zegeye 2018). This concept can also be applied to these colorblocked suits, in that each wearer can flexibly impart an original meaning to their colors. With such color deployments, multifarious bright or high-chroma hues have often been selected; for example, a color contrast of a bright purple jacket and yellow pants can indicate a confident and relaxed personality<sup>26</sup>. This has created a leisurely look, as though the wearer is going to a casual lounge or bar, or even a seaside resort. This signifies that the narrow limits of the traditional TPO (Time, Place, Occasion) of men's suits are collapsing, which is enticing men to perceive suits' function as versatile.

Overall, the use of colorful hues in range, degree, and frequency has become more prevalent in neo-crosssexual suits. Furthermore, it is now possible to display and communicate various images due to the introduction of diverse color deployments and usages, and as a result, more men can wear suits on multiple TPOs.

### Fabrics

In the 2000s, crosssexual menswear design used feminine fabrics and materials to either highlight a tight-fitting silhouette or to draw attention to a small specific detail. Silk or lace was especially used for a small decorative detail. However, in the Spring/Summer 2015—Spring/Summer 2018 collections, design techniques are employed in order to emphasize the fabric itself more, in its entirety. For instance, silk has been amply used throughout the entire suit for it to flow smoothly, as if it would billow in a breeze. Suits made entirely of velvet or lace are also seen. Furthermore, designers are introducing various traditionally feminine materials to coexist in one item, such as colorful silk and organza, or silk and velour.

Many brands, such as Paul Smith and Gucci, have exploited silk abundantly in their boxy suiting; because of the ample drapery, it gives an impression of the male model wearing a long silk skirt.<sup>27</sup> Silk conventionally alludes to a romantic image, but here

<sup>24</sup> Yannis Vlamos (Indigital.tv), (2016). Look 6, Spring 2017, Menswear, Thom Browne. *Vogue*. Please see: [<https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/spring-2017-menswear/thom-browne/slideshow/collection#6>]. Accessed 19 February 2019.

<sup>25</sup> Yannis Vlamos (Indigital.tv), (2016). Look 3, Spring 2017 Menswear, Gucci. *Vogue*. Please see: [<https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/spring-2017-menswear/gucci/slideshow/collection#3>]. Accessed 19 February 2019.

<sup>26</sup> Kim Weston Arnold (Indigital.tv), (2017). Look 35, Spring 2018 Menswear, Paul Smith. *Vogue*. Please see: [<https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/spring-2018-menswear/paul-smith/slideshow/collection#35>]. Accessed 19 February 2019.

<sup>27</sup> Yannis Vlamos (Indigitalimages.com), (2014). Look 36, Spring 2015, Menswear, Paul Smith. *Vogue*. Please see: [<https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/spring-2015-menswear/paul-smith/slideshow/collection#36>]. Accessed 19 February 2019.

the man exudes more of a relaxed, easygoing impression with the silk in harmony with the boxy silhouette. Lace has also been utilized to create an entire suit, which imparts feather-like lightness to male models in the collections. In particular, Thom Browne has contrived a unique short-sleeved jacket design, made of lace exclusively with hibiscus flower and surfboard motifs embroidered, to underline a cool, lively image.<sup>28</sup>

By 2018, suit forms are boldly modified to let various fabrics coexist. For example, Dior Homme has replaced a black jacket's sleeves with comfortable, rounded, wine-colored velveteen ones, to add a more easygoing, casual look.<sup>29</sup> Gucci, too, has presented a male model wearing a thin, glossy sweater made of velour, with hotpants-like suit pants and a matching suit jacket held casually over his shoulder.<sup>30</sup> These are again a dramatic experiment with suit forms and fabrics, further emphasizing male sensuality and/or informal relaxation.

Neo-crosssexual fashion is also revealing that strong, tough images can be portrayed by men even when selecting feminine materials. For instance, in Fall/Winter 2015, Zegna's lustrous solid velvet suits are matched with a large leather bag placed frontally on the wearer's chest, to give an overall impression of a body-armor and thus embody a powerful image.<sup>31</sup> Louis Vuitton has shown a colorful, patterned dress-shirt overlapped with organza, which, combined with a boxy jacket, capacious silk pants and open-toe sandals, highlights a sense of carefree charisma.<sup>32</sup>

Taken together, neo-crosssexual fashion explores a more diverse range and usage of fabrics in men's suits, enabling men to freely try them in various situations, without thinking they might be perceived as too effeminate.

### Patterns

The most salient features of neo-crosssexual fashion are the introduction of flamboyant patterns on the entire suit surface, together with the variety of silhouettes. In the 2000s, patterns did not make an important appearance in menswear, and suits were primarily limited to nonpatterns, or occasionally stripes (Bang and Ha 2010). However, today there exists a myriad of colorful patterns, such as floral, animal print and artwork inspired motifs.

Firstly, it is significant that many designers are applying patterns inspired by original artworks on their suits. In Spring/Summer 2018, D&G presented a full-patterned romantic suit with cherry-blossoms and portraits of beauty from the Japanese ukiyo-e woodblock prints.<sup>33</sup> However, there are alternative options, which denote a different

<sup>28</sup> Yannis Vlamos (Indigital.tv), (2016). Look 11, Spring 2017 Menswear, Thom Browne. *Vogue*. Please see: [<https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/spring-2017-menswear/thom-browne/slideshow/collection#11>]. Accessed 19 February 2019.

<sup>29</sup> Yannis Vlamos (Indigital.tv), (2017). Look 29, Spring 2018 Menswear Dior Men. *Vogue*. Please see: [<https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/spring-2018-menswear/dior-homme/slideshow/collection#29>]. Accessed 19 February 2019.

<sup>30</sup> Yannis Vlamos (Indigital.tv), (2017). Look 87, Spring 2018 Menswear, Gucci. *Vogue*. Please see: [<https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/spring-2018-ready-to-wear/gucci/slideshow/collection#87>]. Accessed 19 February 2019.

<sup>31</sup> Marcus Tondo (Indigitalimages.com), (2015). Look 21, Fall 2015 Menswear, Ermenegildo Zegna. *Vogue*. Please see: [<https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/fall-2015-menswear/ermenegildo-zegna/slideshow/collection#21>]. Accessed 19 February 2019.

<sup>32</sup> Yannis Vlamos (Indigital.tv), (2017). Look 20, Spring 2018, Menswear Louis Vuitton. *Vogue*. Please see: [<https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/spring-2018-menswear/louis-vuitton/slideshow/collection#20>]. Accessed 19 February 2019.

<sup>33</sup> Yannis Vlamos (Indigital.tv), (2017). Look 85, Spring 2018 Menswear Dolce & Gabbana. *Vogue*. Please see: [<https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/spring-2018-menswear/dolce-gabbana/slideshow/collection#85>]. Accessed 19 February 2019.

kind of image and signification, for men who might still be burdened by such romantic ones. For instance, Dior Homme's suits in Spring/Summer 2015<sup>34</sup> look as if they have been splashed and dripped with colorful paints of red, yellow, blue, and white, reminiscent of Jackson Pollock's abstract expressionist paintings, to highlight an image of strong dynamism, power and energy. Furthermore, on many of D&G's suits, what simply looks like rich decorative motifs are actually Napoleon's imperial emblems, a bee and crown, embroidered all over.<sup>35</sup> These heraldic symbols emblemize 'immortality and resurrection' and 'royal dignity' respectively (Markham 2003), signifying bravery and toughness.

Secondly, there is a prominent use of vegetal and floral motifs, adopted by all ten brands. However, these motifs in neo-crosssexual suits do not only give feminine romantic connotations. Alexander McQueen's innovative pattern designs are just a few examples out of many that demonstrate how flower and plant patterns can be utilized to give an image of awe-inspiring, strong, unpolished masculine charisma to men. In Fall/Winter 2017, flower inspired motifs are randomly deployed on the entire surface of a suit, in colors of slightly toned-down red and olive-green.<sup>36</sup> They look as if they are 'tough' flowers growing in wilderness or on moorlands. Such portrayals of imposing charisma and rugged toughness are further highlighted in the Spring/Summer 2018 collection. There are ingeniously patterned suits with a prodigious 'tree of life' motif embroidered frontally in gold.<sup>37</sup> From each of the branches and roots of this tree hang long fringe decorations made of coarse black yarn. Evidently, any men donning these flamboyantly patterned suits display an aura of grandeur and strength.

Numerous brands have also utilized creative animal prints, such as snake-skin, peacock, and leopard motif variations, big animal forms inspired by African fauna, or soaring birds to symbolize men's liberation.<sup>38</sup> In particular, Louis Vuitton has presented male models wearing a shirt with savannah-inspired giraffe patterns, casually carrying the same patterned suit jacket draped over their carryall.<sup>39</sup> These patterns overall impart a wild carefree charm and relaxed mood to men, as if they are going on safari or a trip to a holiday resort.

Taken together, the use of vibrant, colorful patterns in neo-crosssexual fashion invites men to experiment with a much wider range of image choices. This has enabled men's suits to become an item that can be adapted for various TPOs, not simply limited to formal ones.

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<sup>34</sup> Yannis Vlamos (Indigitalimages.com), (2014). Look 45, Spring 2015 Menswear, Dior Men. *Vogue*. Please see: [<https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/spring-2015-menswear/dior-homme/slideshow/collection#45>]. Accessed 19 February 2019.

<sup>35</sup> Yannis Vlamos (Indigitalimages.com), (2015). Look 26, Fall 2015, Menswear, Dolce & Gabbana. *Vogue*. Please see: [<https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/fall-2015-menswear/dolce-gabbana/slideshow/collection#26>]. Accessed 19 February 2019.

<sup>36</sup> Courtesy of Alexander McQueen, (2017). Look 24, Fall 2017 Menswear, Alexander McQueen. *Vogue*. Please see: [<https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/fall-2017-menswear/alexander-mcqueen/slideshow/collection#24>]. Accessed 19 February 2019.

<sup>37</sup> Kim Weston Arnold (Indigital.tv), (2017). Look 39, Spring 2018 Menswear, Alexander McQueen. *Vogue*. Please see: [<https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/spring-2018-menswear/alexander-mcqueen/slideshow/collection#39>]. Accessed 19 February 2019.

<sup>38</sup> Courtesy of LeRoy Grannis, (2016). Look 21, Spring 2017 Menswear, David Hart. *Vogue*. Please see: [<https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/spring-2017-menswear/david-hart/slideshow/collection#21>]. Accessed 19 February 2019.

<sup>39</sup> Yannis Vlamos (Indigital.tv), (2016). Look 17, Spring 2017 Menswear, Louis Vuitton. *Vogue*. Please see: [<https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/spring-2017-menswear/louis-vuitton/slideshow/collection#17>]. Accessed 19 February 2019.

### Accessories

Even with women's accessories, it is now possible for men to reappropriate them and communicate a wider variety of images depending on their coordination in neo-cross-sexual suit fashion. For example, there is a wide adoption of long colorful silk scarves that stand out themselves, naturally and casually hung over a capacious flowing silk suit to embody men's comfort and relaxed spirit.<sup>40</sup> Added to this coordination is a patterned silk bag and matching trainers, exuding an overall lightness so that the new suit style can even be worn as a beach- or resort-wear. It is also significant that designers are embellishing their suits with bright orange accessories. For instance, in 2017, Dior Homme presented fluorescent orange gloves to be worn by men with their suits<sup>41</sup>. However, as *Vogue* underlines 'Orange is the new Black' for menswear, this orange is now being perceived by men to impart that charismatic strength (Compain 2016). By Spring/Summer 2018, numerous brands are introducing more daring accessories to men's suits, but in a self-assured manner according to men's own unique combinations. Brands such as Louis Vuitton, Calvin Klein, and Zegna have come up with looks where a small clutch bag in a bright feminine color is harmonized with a pastel-shade boxy suit, colorfully decorated open-toe sandals, and/or a baseball cap.<sup>42</sup> These looks overall convey men's relaxed, carefree confidence, as if they were going to an informal meeting or even to a grocer's shop.<sup>43</sup> These new combinations of accessories, and the diverse images such combinations create, are bringing a compelling change to the conventional restrained formality of men's suits, thereby ensuring suit fashion can transcend the old, outmoded TPO barriers.

Considered as a whole, the analysis of the silhouettes, details, colors, fabrics, patterns and accessories in neo-crosssexual fashion, in comparison with crosssexual fashion, can be summarized in Table 2:

Overall, contemporary neo-crosssexual fashion adopts a much greater variety and, with that, diversity of design elements, forms, combinations and visual identities than crosssexual fashion of the 2000s. This has made fashion more accessible to a greater number of men, as well as broken down the traditional TPO limits of men's suits. Cross-sexual fashion studies to date describe and interpret men's adoption of crosssexual fashion as only wanting to convey feminine visual identities, revealing that some scholars are still unconsciously trapped in binary interpretive frameworks, perhaps resulting from a heteronormative, patriarchal society. In light of this, it is important to assert that men now have total freedom to choose to portray whatever image of themselves they desire, untethered from earlier binary constraints. Contemporary neo-crosssexual fashion achieves this, granting men increased fluidity by offering a wider selection of clothing

<sup>40</sup> Yannis Vlamos (Indigitalimages.com), (2014). Look 3, Spring 2015 Menswear, Paul Smith. *Vogue*. Please see: [<https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/spring-2015-menswear/paul-smith/slideshow/collection#3>]. Accessed 19 February 2019.

<sup>41</sup> Yannis Vlamos (Indigital.tv), (2017). Look 42, Fall 2017 Menswear, Dior Men. *Vogue*. Please see: [<https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/fall-2017-menswear/dior-homme/slideshow/collection#42>]. Accessed 19 February 2019.

<sup>42</sup> Marcus Tondo (Indigital.tv), (2017). Look 14, Spring 2018 Menswear, Ermenegildo Zegna. *Vogue*. Please see: [<https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/spring-2018-menswear/ermenegildo-zegna/slideshow/collection#14>]. Accessed 19 February 2019.

<sup>43</sup> Yannis Vlamos (Indigital.tv), (2017). Look 67, Spring 2018 Menswear, CALVIN KLEIN 205W39NYC. *Vogue*. Please see: [<https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/spring-2018-ready-to-wear/calvin-klein/slideshow/collection#67>]. Accessed 19 February 2019.

**Table 2 Crosssexual fashion vs. neo-crosssexual fashion**

	Crosssexual fashion	Neo-crosssexual fashion
Silhouettes	Tight-fitting, skinny; X-silhouette with an emphasis on the waist; narrow, slim arms and/or shoulders; forceful projection of ideal feminine figure line on menswear and male models	Diversity of silhouettes, co-existing with novel design elements; by 2018 new experimental suit forms and silhouettes; providing the foundation for men of various body types to try them and create various sartorial images
Details (structural or decorative)	Detail decorations (frill, ribbon, etc.) usually used to emphasize a small point or a tight waistline. Not much emphasis on prominent decorative details on suits, compared with casualwear	Colorful braids, yarns and much more decoration across the entire suit to highlight a strong, charismatic image; creative embellishments such as prominent shawl collars—these can draw attention to the broad chest of men
Colors	Diverse colors primarily limited to casualwear; usually solid achromatic colors, navy or sometimes brown/beige used in suits; feminine colors used for point details or for dress-shirts/neckties	Every shade colorfully used in solid color suits; a myriad of hues co-exist through flamboyant patterns; New coordinations for men who might fear such colors; Creative deployment of colors on the entire suit; diverse images
Fabrics	Feminine fabrics (fur, knit, velvet, etc.) mainly used to help emphasize a tight waistline or to give an accent point; silk particularly used for a point detail; endowing men with effeminate moods	More diverse fabrics amply used throughout the whole suit without restriction to a tight silhouette; Co-existence of several materials due to creative changes in suit form; Can even emphasize a tough or cool image
Patterns	Hardly any emphasis of patterns on suits, stripes occasionally; even on casualwear, studies often excluded pattern in their analysis, apart from some floral or dot patterns	A staggering increase in the use of flamboyant patterns on suits; great varieties inspired from vegetation, floral, animal, artwork motifs, etc.; decorating the entire suit to exude confidence and/or strong charisma
Accessories	A high-waist or ribbon belt emphasizing the waist, rings, earrings, necklaces, etc.; usually with casualwear; With suits, limited to small inconspicuous scarves, bracelets, necklaces, etc	Use of more daring accessories such as a colorful clutch bag, scarf, bright sandals, shoes, etc.; now perceived simply as creative or functional design items by men; a variety of images made by men's own combinations
Sartorial identities (images)	Simply emphasizes a feminine image or images related to women: romantic sensibility; softness; sensual image through imposing a curvaceous figure on the male model and his clothes	Men can now select an image from much more diverse choices: carefree and relaxed; confident, Tough and Charismatic; artistic image; Sensual image through revealing the man's build naturally, etc
Target	Limited to those men who have a slim body or those who can achieve such a body; difficult to extend the target, to even men of average build	Can be more universally adopted by a greater number of men because it can embrace a wider variety of silhouettes, designs and images, than crosssexual fashion
TPOs	Feminine design elements primarily shown in casualwear; a clear division that delineates casuals for informal occasions and suits for formal ones	Due to innovative design forms, combinations, and possible pursuit of manifold images accordingly, suit fashion can now also be worn on informal TPOs, even as a resort wear
Definition and implication	Men enjoying feminine design elements and accessories, even though they regard their sex/gender as male; Seek images related to women traditionally such as romanticism, softness, delicacy and effeminacy; this fashion is possible only for few men as limited to one silhouette (skinny) and image type	Though conventionally classified as feminine design elements and accessories, men are now perceiving them as creative or functional elements, thus enjoying and adapting them into men's own unique designs and combinations; can pursue various images besides feminine ones; large expansion of TPOs and men who can wear it

designs with endless, innovative and varied combinations of silhouettes, details, colors, fabrics, patterns and accessories to choose from.

Consequently, neo-crosssexual fashion can be defined as a new tendency in menswear, where men now naturally and adeptly accept diverse design elements and accessories—conventionally interpreted as feminine ones—as either genuinely creative or functional forms and means in design. These elements and accessories, removed from their conventional interpretive frameworks, allow men to derive pleasure through the act of selection and self-creation, and draw from a novel visual vocabulary that does not strictly adhere to past binary distinctions. Neo-crosssexual fashion allows for the skillful selection of design elements with meanings that are open to interpretation, and men's application of such design elements to their own unique combinations allows them to convey any image they desire, according to their new fashion taste.

However, this study has three main limitations. First, as an analysis of neo-crosssexual fashion demonstrated through suits, it is necessary to expand this research to investigate men's other fashion items, such as casualwear, which also exhibit similar trends. Second, by limiting the scope of men in this research to heterosexual cis-male, this study might seem to omit or overlook those whose sexual and gender identities do not fall within this category. That being said, neo-crosssexual fashion is not strictly the purview of heterosexual cis-males. The authors wished to respect earlier criticism aimed at the fashion press for labelling such non-conventional fashion on heterosexual models as misinterpreting the very real politics of sexual and gender identity, and also to illustrate that heterosexual men today are naturally and comfortably engaging with stylish fashion removed from implications that concern sexual orientation and gender identity. Finally, although the term 'crosssexual' was first coined in Korea, this study did not include any Korean brands. The global neo-crosssexual phenomenon shown in men's suits and fashion has also been reflected in at least three Korean menswear brands (Beyond Closet, Caruso, Ordinary People) shown during Seoul Fashion Week of Spring/Summer 2018 (Vogue 2017). Therefore, a universal neo-crosssexual trend analysis incorporating major international brands will need to incorporate more brands from other countries, including Korea, as follow-up studies.

## Conclusion

The term 'crosssexual' describes heterosexual men who identify as male (cis-male) and take pleasure in wearing clothing that incorporates traditionally feminine design elements. Crosssexual men are distinguishable from androgynous individuals and androgynous fashion, which, unlike crosssexual fashion, expresses complete gender ambiguity. The term 'crosssexual' is also distinguishable from numerous nonconforming gender identity-based terms mentioned in this paper—which should rightfully be reserved for individuals who identify as such—and from the term 'metrosexual', an outmoded word simply describing well-dressed men with money to spend. This research asserts that that the term 'crosssexual' is a worthwhile addition to English fashion vocabulary, best describing and defining fashion-conscious heterosexual men who choose to wear clothing with feminine design elements as a means of expressing their contemporary fashionability rather than their sexuality or gender.

This paper's analysis of traditionally feminine design elements, which recently featured in menswear collections produced by ten of the world's most notable brands, illuminates innovative changes that have occurred in crosssexual fashion since it first emerged as a trend in the 2000s. Therefore, this paper suggests that a new term must be used to define these noteworthy developments in contemporary menswear: 'neo-crosssexual'.

In the 2000s, crosssexual fashion focused on two design features: a skinny silhouette and tight fitting waistline. Apart from changes in silhouette, few transformations occurred in crosssexual fashion during this time, especially in men's suits. The crosssexual trend of the 2000s was more about men expressing traditionally feminine visual identities, stemming from an anxious desire to present a new, cultural challenge to the twenty-first century; its specific focus confronted the dominating power of hegemonic masculinity. However, this confrontation, combined with crosssexual fashion's obsession with skinny silhouettes, ultimately limited the trend's widespread adoption. Furthermore, the fact that crosssexual fashion studies to date only focus on one specific silhouette and body type, and on feminine visual identities, reveals that many scholars are still unconsciously limiting their academic analyses to binary frameworks of interpretation. This, then, paradoxically refutes scholars' claims that their research substantiates the existence of complete freedom of expression in men's fashion.

Suits deemed neo-crosssexual, designed since 2015, however, present male consumers with a larger, more diverse range of silhouettes, details, colors, fabrics, patterns, accessories and, more importantly, sartorial identities to choose from and present more varied combinations of design elements, sometimes covering suits' entire surface. Men who choose to wear suits born of neo-crosssexual fashion are not seeking to express hegemonic masculine power, which traditional suits have come to symbolize, nor do these men seek to fully confront hegemonic masculinity's dominating power. Men who wear these neo-crosssexual suits, rather, take a more superficial pleasure in the flamboyance of colorful design elements, for instance; a pleasure, which historically, traditionally and stereotypically categorizes women's general relationship to fashion. Even Foucault acknowledges that there 'seem to be a "multiplicity of pleasures" in itself (one's taste) which is not the effect of any specific discourse/power exchange' (Butler 2006). Today, designers of global menswear brands at the forefront of neo-crosssexual fashion, and their clients, view traditionally feminine design elements as pleasurable, creative or functional material means of expressing the immaterial, cultural value of fluidity. Key characteristics of neo-crosssexual fashion, as outlined by this paper, are summarized below.

Firstly, a multiplicity of silhouettes prevails in neo-crosssexual fashion, including even boxy ones, aided by incorporation of traditionally feminine design elements. This demonstrates how men are using fashion to appropriate conventionally feminine qualities while simultaneously being able to project a relaxed or strong masculine image, whichever they choose. By 2018, innovative suit forms developed, such as 'cut-off' trousers and jackets. These pioneering silhouettes formed the base upon which the potential to expand masculine sartorial identities through fashion was fully realized and established. Secondly, a noticeable change in structural and decorative detail must be highlighted: the prominent use of elaborately designed shawl collars. These collars serve to guide one's attention to their male wearer's broad chest, thereby portraying a strong, charismatic

image to the observer. Combinations of dimensional embroideries, braids, etc., decorate the suits' surfaces; exploiting thickness or coarseness, these materials convey an essential toughness. Thirdly, neo-crosssexual fashion uses multifarious hues and shades of color, creating a powerful visual impact, often similar to that of Color Field paintings. Menswear designers are exploring color much more freely through neo-crosssexual fashion, enabling its male consumers to interpret the semantics of color more flexibly based on the sartorial image of their choice. Fourthly, neo-crosssexual menswear employs various textiles more dexterously throughout entire suit ensembles, sometimes intermixing fabrics through innovations in suit design. Designers' more thorough use of fabric has expanded men's sartorial vocabulary, enabling them to look cool and relaxed, sensual, or even fierce and tough. Fifthly, conspicuous and frequent use of flamboyant patterns is one of the most salient features of neo-crosssexual fashion, especially visible in men's suits. A multi-hued riot of color enlivens these rich patterns, which include flower, plant, animal, and artwork inspired motifs. More colorful pattern variations have appeared since 2017, but images of rugged, wild, natural, unpolished masculinity are also being made fashionable through pattern. Finally, neo-crosssexual fashion uses a provocative plethora of accessories. For instance, a colorful, boxy suit is often paired with a small clutch bag and embellished sandals, conveying a comfortable, yet confident persona. Self-assured use of these accessories challenges the suit's formality and has encouraged fashion-conscious men to wear suits for casual affairs such as meeting friends or going grocery shopping.

In conclusion, neo-crosssexual fashion's innovative combinations of these diverse design elements, which contemporary men's suits exemplify, are not merely superficial. Rather, neo-crosssexual fashion ensures a greater number of men newly perceive these innovations as a means to express a wealth of different visual identities. Men can choose to look relaxed, carefree and comfortable, tough, confident and fierce, summery and cool, sensual and sexy, arty and creative, among many other looks, on any given day for any occasion. Therefore, 'neo-crosssexual' can be defined as a new trend in contemporary menswear and as a new type of contemporary man, meaning an individual who regards and proclaims himself as a heterosexual, cis-male man. Neo-crosssexual men recognize conventionally-classified feminine design elements as more creative or functional forms of fashion. Hence, menswear designers and consumers skillfully and intentionally select design elements that have fluidity in signification and apply them according to their own unique combinations in order to convey any image they desire. Thanks to the genuine freedom of choice that neo-crosssexual fashion provides, an increasing number of men embrace it, whereas, the original crosssexual fashion trend of the 2000s had a more limited response.

Innovative changes are appearing in men's suits on an international scale thanks to neo-crosssexual fashion, ensuring the suit continues to evolve into a garment that can be utilized and worn in various times and places today. These suits have eased formerly strict TPO barriers and become disassociated from the dominating symbol of hegemonic power traditionally associated with men's suits for the last 200 years. Neo-crosssexual fashion is invigorating the suit market, which otherwise declined prior to 2015 due to the popularity of casualwear.



Ultimately, this paper demonstrates how the designs and functions of contemporary menswear are now, more than ever, innovatively changing and laying the groundwork for an infinite variety of future trends. The increasing prevalence and popularity of neo-crosssexual fashion should be interpreted as proof that more men are enjoying wearing creative, thoughtful fashion designs, which reflect important contemporary sensibilities, specifically the cultural realization that men, too, want freedom to express their diverse interests in fashion through the clothes they wear. Neo-crosssexual fashion design has significantly reduced traditional hostility toward provocative experimentation in menswear. Overall, this must be viewed as a pivotal moment in the history of men's fashion. Designs that provide men with a greater variety of choice and, with that, an expanded meaning of masculinity along with the freedom to create whatever sartorial image they desire, surely bodes well for global society.

#### Abbreviations

D&G: Dolce & Gabbana; TPO: Time Place Occasion.

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#### Authors' contributions

HRL originated the research idea. HRL carried out the research and drafted the first manuscript. JK and JH helped with interpretation. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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#### Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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