

An Analysis of the Methods of Gender Expression in the Field of Fashion Design

- A Case Study of Wedding Dress

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Abstract: Nowadays, the trend of clothing is developing rapidly and becoming more and more advanced, and there are many new styles of clothing with a sense of technology and a sense of the future. But there is one garment that has been around since ancient times and has profound meaning, which is wedding cloth. Many scholars have written papers on wedding clothes, but most of them deal with the design of wedding dresses and explain the meaning of male or female clothes separately, but there isn't a study about the differences between male and female wedding cloth. This paper will then focus on the comparison between wedding dresses and wedding suits based on four aspects, which is color, style, comfort level, and brands. Since these four aspects are the main consideration of both female and male when buying clothes, it becomes the main perspectives of the paper. The method that this paper will be analysed is through media analysis, which is finding pictures to provide examples and help to explain each perspective. Therefore, The method of graphic combination will also make the whole paper more vivid and easy to understand.

Keywords: wedding dress, feminism, patriarchy

1. Introduction

A wedding ceremony is a time-honored tradition that symbolizes the union of two individuals, typically a man and a woman, in the sacred bond of marriage [1]. Its roots can be traced back to ancient history, with the earliest recorded wedding ceremony dating as far back as 2350 B.C. in Mesopotamia. This historical longevity underscores the enduring significance of the wedding ceremony across cultures and civilizations [1].

Over the millennia, the wedding ceremony has traversed the globe, adapting and evolving to incorporate the unique customs and traditions of various societies. These adaptations have given rise to a rich tapestry of diverse wedding practices, each marked by distinctive procedures, attire, and cultural rituals. Notably, the wedding ceremony often serves as a reflection of the broader cultural values and norms of the society in which it is held.

One intriguing facet of the wedding ceremony is the role of clothing, which not only adorns the bride and groom but also communicates deeper messages about gender roles and societal constructs. In this report, we delve into the intricate relationship between wedding attire and the expression of

gender identity. Our analysis centers on the contention that wedding clothing can simultaneously embody both femininity and patriarchal influences. To substantiate this assertion, we explore four key dimensions of wedding attire: color, style, comfort, and brand.

By examining these aspects, this study aims to shed light on the nuanced interplay between clothing and gender within the context of the wedding ceremony. Through this investigation, we seek to provide fresh insights into the dynamics of this age-old tradition, highlighting the ways in which it reflects and challenges prevailing gender norms. Ultimately, this exploration of wedding attire will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the broader sociocultural implications of this celebrated rite of passage.

2. Color Difference in the Design of Wedding Dress

The first aspect is color. Color plays an important role in fashion. Color is not just a decorative element; it is a powerful communication tool that can convey emotions, culture, identity, and personality. In clothing, color can convey messages to clients by offering different characteristics, emotional appeal, and attractiveness. Each color can have its own meaning. For example, “people will find black neat, red romantic and dark blue businesslike [2].” In Wedding clothes, the colors of women’s dresses and men’s suits are different from each other. Usually, wedding dresses for the bride are in White, off-white color, which is often in light color. This is because the white color can emphasize the innocence and purity of the bride’s characteristics and expectations towards love and the future [3]. Moreover, wedding dresses usually contain less than two colors, mostly pure white with lace or other embellishments. This design of color will make the bride’s body curve stand out and highlight the characteristics of the body instead of people focusing on the complex design of the dress. On the other hand, Wedding suits for the groom have many different colors, such as light blue, red, black, white, and grey. At the beginning of wedding dress design, men had a higher status in the family and society, so their clothes had more color options to highlight their character traits and yearning for marriage. There are two groups of celebrities in their wedding ceremonies that can reflect the differences in color between men and women in wedding clothes.



Figure 1: Laurinda He and Shawn Dou in their wedding ceremony [4].

From Figure 1, this is the daughter of Casino King of Macau Stanley Ho, Laurinda He and famous actor Shawn Dou in their wedding ceremony. The bride is wearing a pure white wedding dress with flower lace decoration, and the groom is wearing a dark red suit. Red represents fiery and passionate love. It can be seen that the groom wants their love to be long-lasting and steady, and the dark red suit shows that the groom is a generous and steady person.



Figure 2: Lola Xie and Jason Wu in their wedding ceremony [5].

This is a famous martial arts actor, Jason Wu, and compare Lola Xie in their wedding ceremony (Figure 2). The bride is wearing a pure white wedding dress with silver embellishments on her waist and shoulder. The groom is wearing a blue suit and white pants. The color blue gives people a calm and deep feeling, which can reflect the groom's loyalty and full love in a relationship. When the groom wears a blue dress, it gives a sense of stability and security.

Examining the contrast in color choices between men's suits and women's dresses, it becomes apparent that color plays a pivotal role in influencing clothing selections. The inherent limitations imposed by color in women's dresses contribute to a narrower range of choices compared to men's attire. While men have the freedom to select from a diverse spectrum of colors that align with their individuality and style preferences, women's options are often confined to a predominantly white or off-white palette. This disparity in color choices stems from the historical association of dresses with femininity and the conventional gender norms that have prevailed over time. Dresses, being a staple of women's fashion, have been ingrained with a societal expectation of adhering to a particular aesthetic. This, in turn, reflects a patriarchal undertone in the design and perception of dresses, as it limits women's choices and self-expression compared to their male counterparts. In essence, the restricted color choices for women's dresses underscore the broader issue of gender-based clothing constraints, which can perpetuate traditional gender roles and expectations. Analyzing these limitations within the context of color sheds light on how fashion can inadvertently reinforce and perpetuate patriarchal ideals. As we delve deeper into the world of fashion and its impact on gender dynamics, it is crucial to recognize and challenge these inherent biases to foster a more inclusive and diverse fashion landscape.

3. Style Difference in the Design of Wedding Dress

The second aspect is style. "Style is the ability to distinctively sort through the maze of things, make a selection and do so in a way that is in keeping with how we see ourselves." [6]. There is a variety of style in a fashion which shapes the distinctive appearance of each cloth and help to stamp people's personality and identity. Most people will buy styles of clothes that fit their personality or the image they want to present to others [6]. In fashion, there are many clothing styles, such as sporty, classic,

streetwear, casual, grunge, punk, and so on. These different styles have their own characteristic that shapes wearers' identity; for example, sporty clothes are similar to athletic wear, including leggings, shorts, oversized shirts, and yoga pants [7]. Another style of punk came from punk rock fashion, and this style includes clothes like a leather jacket, skinny jeans, fishnet stockings, and other clothes that look bolder [7]. In wedding clothing, the most striking stylistic difference is the dress of men and women. The dressing style for the bride is dresses and longuettes. In fact, dresses are often feminine clothing items. In modern society, dresses often symbolize women. Additionally, the style of dresses is designed for women to wear instead of men [8]. Therefore, dresses became the common wedding clothing for the bride. On the other hand, the clothing for the groom is suits and pants. Since a wedding is a serious ceremony, the clothing needs to fit the atmosphere of the ceremony. Suits are formal and could add more temperament to the groom. As a result, suits and pants became the clothing for the groom in a wedding ceremony.



Figure 3: Model wearing a wedding dress from Justin Alexander [9].

This is a model of the brand Justin Alexander wearing a strapless mermaid wedding dress (Figure 3). The wedding dress can make her body curve stand out. Without straps, the shoulder and upper arm will be uncovered, showing her elegant charm [9]. Moreover, the details tightened at the waist accentuate the model's slender features as well as body proportions. Furthermore, the wedding dress has a design called a mermaid tail at the bottom; it creates a contrast with the tightened design in the upper body, so the wedding dress won't look monotonous. Also, there are lace and other embellishments on the wedding dress, which makes the dress look fancier. All the designs in wedding dresses magnify the characteristic and body curve of the bride. Therefore, the style "dress" is designed for women to wear.



Figure 4: Model wearing Tuxedo [10].

This is a type of cloth called “Tuxedo,” which is one type of wedding cloth for men (Figure 4). Usually, a tuxedo is the most common type of clothing men wear during their wedding ceremony, and it is different from normal men’s suits. A tuxedo is the most formal suit that men can wear during events [10]. There are some characteristics of a tuxedo that make it formal and graceful, for example, waistcoat, suspenders, self-tied bowtie, white shirt with wing collar, and black dress shoes [10]. These fixed combinations of the tuxedo make this wedding cloth more luxurious and formal, not as casual as a casual suit. Due to the strict rigidity of the production of the tuxedo and the fixed collocation, this dress can better reflect the male’s dependability and practical character so as to show their more attractive characteristics at the wedding.

By looking at the differences between men and women in wedding dresses, it can be seen that the wedding dress styles of men and women are different because men and women need to be shown different characteristics, needs, and different statuses in marriage. Therefore, wedding dresses are more suitable for women to make their body curves stand out and be more attractive, and suits such as tuxedos are designed for men to magnify their dependability.

4. Comfort Level in the Design of Wedding Dress

The next aspect will be comfort level. Comfort levels usually are in the first place when people consider buying clothes. This is also the key to judging whether this cloth is good or not. The comfort level of wedding dress and wedding suits are not the same. For the bride, the wedding dresses are usually not comfortable due to the weight of the dresses itself being heavy. The main cause of the high weight of wedding dresses is the length of the dress [11]. The common and modern wedding dresses have very long trains. This is because the wedding dress isn’t a daily cloth that women will wear; it is used as a functioning cloth that will be worn during the wedding ceremony, so comfort isn’t the first aspect to consider. Unlike wedding dresses, wedding suits for the groom are often comfortable since most people will choose to customize a suit only for themselves and fit their body [12]. Since a customized suit will often measure the person’s body shape, posture, shoulder slope, height, and so on. Moreover, tailored suits can show the person’s own identity because the person

can decide the color and the decoration of the suit. Also, wedding suits are similar to men's formal suits worn in daily jobs, so the suit are more comfortable.



Figure 5: Wedding dress of Kitty Spenser [13].

This is a typical wedding gown with a really long train (Figure 5). The train is very long, dragging on the ground, which is really heavy, even though there might be people to help the bride lift the train while she is walking. This shows how inconvenient this type of wedding dress is and the uncomfortableness. This special feature could add a special aesthetic feeling to the bride and also make the bride more appealing. However, this will make it difficult and inconvenient to move around, but some wedding dresses might be really tight in order to highlight the figure of the bride.



Figure 6: Three-piece mustard look wedding suit [14].

This is a wedding suit with a special yellow color, blue tie and some embellishments in front of the chest (Figure 6). This provides a general idea of customized suits and how they could be special

in color and decorations. Along with those external factors, the size and style of the suit could also be customized based on the preference of the groom.

Comparing the wedding suits and the wedding dresses, they are different in terms of comfort level. The wedding dress could be uncomfortable due to the style. Even though the wedding dress could also be customized, but the train and the gown could not be changed if the bride chose this type of style. However, the suits can be customized, and the style could be adjusted to best fit the groom's body and preference, which increases their comfort level. Therefore, it could be concluded that most wedding dresses have less comfort level compared to wedding suits.

5. Comparing Brands

The last aspect is the differences between brands for wedding dresses and brands for wedding suits. Among the fashion trend of wedding clothes, there are several brands that make wedding dresses for women, such as Kelly Faetanini, Pronovias, and Christian Siriano [9], and suits for men, such as Brooks Brothers, Brunello Cucinelli, and Jos.A.Bank [15]. In this paragraph, the focus will be on the two brands, Kelly Faetanini and Brunello Cucinelli. Kelly Faetanini, a wedding dress brand made for brides, was established in 2012. The brand contains many different styles of wedding dresses for different occasions, and their goal is to make the wedding dress more elegant and romantic so that the bride can have a better wedding experience [16]. Brunello Cucinelli, which is an old fashion brand founded in 1978, was a mixed brand that includes men's wedding suits such as tuxedos.



Figure 7: Wedding dresses from Kelly Faetanini.

This is one of the many wedding dresses in Kelly Faetanini brand, called “Oakley” style (Figure 7). It is a pure white dress with a deep V at the chest, skinny straps, a slight cinched waist, and a fishtail design at the bottom, which the whole dress presents a feeling of light on top and heavy on

the bottom [16]. A plain white dress will make the dress look boring because the dress has no other accessories, only accentuating the silhouette of the dress. But it also allows people to see more clearly the shape of the dress and the beauty of the woman's figure. This dress is designed to show the perfect line of a woman's figure and make a woman more attractive. However, although the design of thin straps helps to highlight the female line, it also makes women worry when attending activities because the characteristics of thin straps are not easy to fix, so women usually worry about the deformation of clothes and the naked situation. In terms of comfort, the material of this dress is crepe, which is very soft and comfortable, and the bride will not feel uncomfortable or tight in the dress. However, the upper body of this dress is very bare, and the entire arm and front chest are exposed, so that this dress cannot play a role in the warm level, thus limiting the dress in the season.



Figure 8: Tuxedos from Brunello Cucinelli [17].

This is one of the tuxedos in the brand Brunello Cucinelli. This tuxedo is in wine red color, made with cotton and velvet, and it also includes a design of peak lapels and white breast pocket (Figure 8). Due to the cotton material of this tuxedo and the texture of the velvet, which is very fur, the overall feeling is very comfortable. If the wedding ceremony is held during autumn or winter when the weather is cold, this design of a tuxedo will offer the groom warmth, making them energetic and engaging for the whole ceremony. Moreover, the combination of the color red and black also makes this tuxedo outstanding. Red and black have long been regarded as classic combinations in the clothing industry, and clothes with black and red usually look more elegant and noble [18]. Lastly, the style of this wedding suit is a tuxedo, which is the most formal suit that men wear. This style of suit gives other people a formal, successful, and graceful look to the groom, which helps to enhance the status and impression of the groom as well.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the wedding cloth for the bride and groom has a great difference since there are essential differences between feminine and patriarchal, which can be shown in four aspects, which

are color, style, comfort level, and brand. After the analysis, it was known that there are a lot of differences except the basic gender difference. However, this study has some limitations, such as the cultural difference within different countries. Therefore, more research and study could be added based on this.

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