

Why I buy casual wear from the men's section

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Have you ever scoured the women's section at an apparel store looking for that perfectly sized denim or a T-shirt that fits you only to be disappointed? I have. When that happens, I make sure to look through the men's section. Men's casual wear has the upper hand in a few areas over women's casual fashion.

Here's what I've gathered from my experience.

FUNCTIONALITY

It's a constant tug-of-war between what's fashionable and what's functional. Most women's denims and pants lack pockets while some have seams designed to give a "trendy" illusion of pockets. If there are pockets, they're barely large enough to accommodate anything. It's an additional hassle to have to carry a handbag to accommodate bare minimums like money, keys, and your phone. Most attires also lack functional zippers.

Feminine tops meanwhile are comparatively sheer, which proves to be a discomfort in formal settings. Menswear is more versatile. Paired with the right bottoms, casual plaid shirts, crew-necks, turtle-necks or polo shirts make clever formal wear.

BETTER MATERIAL

Women's tees or tops can sometimes be borderline flimsy. The thin fabrics risk creasing, sweat staining or hitching up. Having to constantly pull down or adjust



PHOTO: **ORCHID CHAKMA**

the fabric defeats the purpose of casual attires. The fabric also deteriorates after a few washes. Cross points in my jeans appear and my tights happen to tear faster than in some of my brother's hand-me-downs.

Men's casual wear tends to be more durable. One reason being that there's a smaller manufacturing paradigm. They mostly adhere to the same kind of designs while making small tweaks for unique-

ness compared to the wide assortment of styles for women.

COMFORT

In designs for women, comfort is often sacrificed for conventions. Women's tops typically have a flare at the chest, lower necklines and a tapered waist to fit female curves. Be it travelling in crowded transports, working or visiting family members, wearing body-hugging clothing can be uncomfortable, awkward and

movement restrictive.

Women's denims chafe skin, especially in the inseams far more than guys' jeans. Men's casual wear is slouchier and shapeless which offers better coverage while staying airy and breathable.

SIZE OPTIONS

Buying jeans or t-shirts as a girl is never easy. Same sizes are labelled differently across different brands and even within the same brand there is little room for customisation. They're often non-inclusive to different body types.

It's fairly easier to navigate size inconsistencies in men's wear because their cuts are mostly loose fitting, straight and roomier. They're also free of constrictive tailoring unlike women's wear. I usually pick something a few sizes smaller in men's sizing in accordance to my height and waist. Bigger sizes can be pulled off as trendy oversized wear.

The men's section also has better prints, stripes and solids to choose from, at cheaper prices. You'll find a turtleneck is cheaper than a sheer cami or mesh dress. Besides the lack of functionality of women's wear, you also have to wonder why mass-produced clothing must be so harshly gendered to begin with.

Nuzha prefers wearing T-shirts for every occasion. Send her fashion advice at nuzhaoishee1256504@gmail.com

Do I need to be "that" girl?

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TikTok and Instagram have been bombarding me with tips on how I can become "that" girl for a while now and I am sick of it.

If you are not familiar with the concept, being "that" girl is essentially a watered-down version of the not-like-other-girls trope. While girls who-are-not-like-other-girls sport a more traditionally "masculine" energy and may even openly despise conventional femininity, the "that" girl trope has a more subtle and traditional aesthetic. She wears makeup (but only the no-makeup look), religiously maintains a lean figure, and has the most austere, surreally perfect daily routine. Put simply, that girl "puts in effort," while making it look effortless.

On the surface, the trend might appear to be a very idealistic and conventionally feminine vision board promoting physical and mental wellbeing for women. However, if examined closely, an overwhelming sense of exclusivity lurks behind the perfect shots of matcha latte and yoga mats that go hand in hand with this aesthetic. It mutely suggests that there is a superior way to live one's womanhood and pushes for a singular way of life to be adopted by all women.

But naturally, one lifestyle does not fit all. I myself have found structure and convenience in not being an early bird, my flexible daily schedule and working on projects on the fly. It is precisely the idea of waking up and making myself a green smoothie, doing an at-home workout, taking a bubble bath and journaling all the nitty gritty details, all before the clock strikes 7, that makes me feel drained.

Although content creators promoting the aesthetic appear to be eternally energised and overly organised "girl bosses," their stifling insistence on a certain way of life certainly does not feel very empowering or inclusive.

Similarly, the aesthetic encourages a very specific model of femininity: light, dewy makeup; tight-fitting, pastel outfits; well-toned bodies, paired with a nonchalant, happy-go-lucky attitude. Nothing too edgy, nothing too "crazy."

Given our society's history of constantly policing what women should look and act like, it does not seem to be a coincidence that the viral trend pointedly supports traits that align with conventional femininity.

At this point, I should make it clear that there is nothing wrong in finding conventional femininity, or "that" girl's

lifestyle appealing and wanting to adhere to the standards set by these ideologies. It is just that the choice has to be organic and self-determined – something that can become a little difficult for young girls or women on social media platforms that are saturated by only one section of a spectrum.

Why does there even have to be a motif for women's identity?

To see femininity politicised and

advertised as a means of gaining social validation is upsetting and it is high time mainstream media, social media platforms and content creators alike start acknowledging that femininity is a spectrum and that wherever one stands, they are valid.

Fabiha is secretly a Lannister noblewoman and a Slytherin alum. Pledge your allegiance and soul to her at afifafabiha01@gmail.com



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