

Men in skirts break fashion boundaries

By Caroline Kwok

In the 1960s, fashion designers such as Coco Chanel and Yves Saint Laurent introduced trousers and suits for women and it was a big [contribution](#) to the women's liberation movement. Since then, women wearing men's fashion were [generally](#) accepted and they were seen as unisex and androgynous.

Now, [two](#) men [from](#) Hong Kong thinks [that](#) high heels and miniskirts should no longer be exclusively for women. They believe men should not be [bound](#) to the rigid fashion varieties like women were 60 years ago.

"Otokonoko" refers to male [who dresses to resemble females](#). [The concept of otokonoko](#) first appeared in a Japanese manga series "Stop!! Hibari-kun!" by Hisashi Eguchi in 1981, [in](#) which a male character, Hibari Ōzora, goes to school as a female.

The character was created to mock the popular teen girl manga in the 1980s. Well-received, the manga series coined *otokonoko* and this genre of comics continued to gain popularity worldwide in the early 2000s.

[In recent years, otokonoko walked out of the two-dimensional world of comics and came into real life. For example, In May 1, 2009, otokonoko maid cafes such as "NEWTTYPE" arose in Japan Dec 2010, and online shopping website "Lagrangel", which sells clothing specifically for otokonoko, was founded.](#)

[Tsang Tsing, who refused to reveal his real name has been an otokonoko for almost six years. He enjoys being complimented on the female image he built through makeup and clothing rather than his inborn masculinity. "I want to be more feminine than women," said the 30-year-old man.](#)

Being in a stable relationship with his girlfriend Tsang said otokonoko did not change his sexuality because [it is just another way to express his freedom towards different fashion styles](#).

["It is strange that we can accept women wearing men's clothing but not the other way around," he said. "Clothing should not be limited to any gender, it has nothing to do with sexual orientation," he added.](#)

[However, Tsang showed his worries about the age limit of being an otokonoko. He explained that makeup would no longer look good with wrinkles or poorer skin conditions while men's body shapes will change and become difficult to mimic the female silhouette.](#)

Another man in skirt with the stage name Alisa Lau, 25, has been an otokonoko for about three years. He fell in love with women's fashion that has a wide variety of makeup and clothing styles ranging from sexy to cute.

Lau explained the challenges of being an otokonoko - not only do they invest a lot of money in clothing items, they also devote a lot of time into practising with makeup and staying slim to create the female figure.

Otokonoko is a luxurious fashion attitude - both Lau and Tsang have rented a storage unit in Diamond Hill and Kwun Tong respectively just to store their corsets, wigs, high heels, cosmetics products, body-shaping garments and hosiery that added up to more than \$30,000.

Therefore, Lau only dresses up as an otokonoko three to four times a month due to high costs and limited spare time. He said otokonokos have to resemble females from head to toe, from outerwear to undergarments.

At the beginning, Lau receives criticism on his poor makeup skills that fail to hide his masculinity. He said he likes criticism because it challenges him to improve and strive for a full resemblance of the female image.

Now, Lau said people on the streets often misunderstand him as female as long as he does not talk. However, he enjoys being misunderstood as female in public because it proves that he successfully blends in with his female friends.

Lau, who is also a heterosexual, said otokonoko is different from sexual fetishism. According to the Oxford dictionaries, fetishism refers to a form of sexual behaviour in which gratification is linked to an abnormal degree to a particular object, activity, part of the body. Lau said otokonoko is a full package of skills used to recreate the feminine shapes and image, but no sexual desire was fulfilled during the process.

Also different from cosplay, drag queens and gender minorities, otokonokos recognize themselves as heterosexual males who dress up neither as females for entertainment on stage like drag queens nor as costumes to mimic a certain anime character through cosplay. Instead, they treat their attire as a style of regular clothing.

Lau did not face objections from his parents after they were informed of his dressing preference because his sexual orientation will not stop him from carrying on his name for his family. Lau said some of his previous relationships did not work out because his partners did not accept his clothing style. "Now I would inform my prospective spouse of my otokonoko hobby right away and my future girlfriend has to accept it," he said.

Professional makeup artist Sharon Lam Yuk-kuen, 37, who specializes in special effect makeup said she has been doing male transformation makeup for almost six years. She **considered** *otokonoko* as a form of role play.

Most of these role play make up are for drag queens and cosplayers but sheldon for real life appearance like *otokonokos*.

Also as a female friend of Lau, Lam does not think Lau is any less macho than other men because though Lau has an appearance of a woman, his behaviour, his manner and his mindset are all very manly.

From a **Christian's perspective**, Lam sees Lau as a male **because she believed that** the Bible has a clear distinction between men and women. **"I do not discriminate *otokonokos* but I think overindulgence in *otokonoko* will cause confusion that harms gender relations, "** she said.

Lau and Tsang said they see the *otokonoko* community growing in Hong Kong due to the society's increasing acceptance to androgynous gender images. **They believe all male players should be able to dress however they like in public.**