

HOW GENDER IS NAMED IN UNISEX PERFUMES: A SOCIO-ONOMASTIC APPROACH

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Abstract

Perfume has long been used as a body fragrance, but in today's world, its role extends far beyond mere scent enhancement. It has evolved into a significant aspect of personal identity, self-expression, and lifestyle. In fact, perfume is often perceived as a symbolic presentation of one's character, emotions, social status and even cultural identity. This article explored gender representation in unisex perfume names using a socio-onomastics approach. This study analyzed a dataset of 3,390 unisex perfume names from 2017-2024 sourced from Fragrantica. Sketch Engine toolkit was used to measure word frequency and concordance. Finally, the findings revealed five primary naming references: specific natural elements, inventors or manufacturers, places of origin, materials and identity-related and gender-stereotyped. Among the identified, material-based naming was the most dominant particularly through references to floral, fruity, and woody elements. Although no specific words explicitly indicated a unisex representation or any association, some findings disclosed that terms traditionally linked to either masculinity or femininity were not always intended exclusively for that particular gender. In short, this showed the effort to break traditional gender boundaries. Nonetheless, it was found that names referring to males had a higher frequency compared to names referring to females, meaning that gendered elements in naming unisex perfume names remain exist.

Keywords: *fragrance; gender representation; naming; perfume; unisex*

1. Introduction

Perfume is a fragrance that has become an inseparable part of everyday life. Its use not only functions as a body fragrance, but also plays a role in forming an impression on others. In addition, the application of perfume as a body fragrance can also complement a person's appearance (Tsani & Zulfiningrum, 2024). Thus, the use of perfume is not just a habit, but also a form of self-expression that reflects the individual's personality and preferences. Mortelmans even mentioned that in the Western world, perfume is positioned as a luxury item, so it is often associated with aspects of prestige, sensuality and emotional appeal. This makes perfume more than just a daily necessity, but rather a part of a lifestyle that reflects an individual's character and image in various social situations.

Currently, the perfume industry continues to grow by presenting various aroma variants that are tailored to existing needs and trends. Reported from the *Fragrances - Worldwide | Statista Market Forecast* (n.d.) survey site graph, as of February 2025 the perfume industry in Indonesia and globally is projected to experience continuous growth every year. According to their report, this increase is driven by two trends: One is celebrities advertising perfume and the trend towards individually made fragrances made from natural and environmentally friendly ingredients. Moreover, the trend of perfume use is also increasingly diverse, offering a variety of aroma choices, distinctive naming style, and innovative packaging designs that are tailored to suit individual tastes and preferences. This certainly gives individuals the freedom to express themselves through the fragrances they use. However, on the other hand, many consumers face difficulties in determining the perfume that best suits their personality, especially since each aroma can give a different impression, both positive and negative. According to Tsani & Zulfiningrum (2024), the many variations of perfume available on the market can confuse consumers in choosing a scent that truly reflects their identity.

Given this phenomenon, this study aims to analyze the names of perfumes that are claimed to be unisex or gender neutral. Specifically, we are interested in exploring whether perfume names categorized as “unisex” truly reflect gender neutrality or still contain linguistic elements that are more inclined to the feminine or masculine category. Thus, this study is expected to reveal the extent to which the gender-neutral concept is applied in perfume naming and whether there is still gender bias in its classification. Understanding this is essential, especially considering that many perfume markets continue to label their products based on traditional gender associations. The feminine and masculine categories in perfumes are often viewed as two opposites within the same olfactory dimension (Lindqvist, 2013). Perfumes labeled as feminine typically feature floral or fruity scents, while masculine fragrances are characterized by stronger and spicier notes. Lindqvist (2012) added more details to the classification of feminine and masculine perfumes, including oriental floral, oriental vanilla, floral fruit gourmand, while masculine perfumes come more from the woody group.

The categorization of perfume indicates that fragrances are always associated with gender. As if feminine fragrances are considered to represent softness, elegance and beauty (e.g., *“A Floral Verse”*, *“Vanilla Vibes”*, *“Cherry Ink”*). While masculine fragrances are assumed to have masculine characteristics because they give the impression of dominance, toughness and authority (e.g., *“This Is Him!”*, *“Black Tie”*, *“A*Men Fantasm”*). This association, although it seems like a stereotype, has long been embedded in the culture and fragrance industry. However, with the growing awareness of gender inclusivity, the fragrance industry has begun to introduce gender-neutral perfumes. This breakthrough challenges traditional boundaries while providing space for individuals to choose fragrances that are more in line with their identity and personal preferences. Furthermore, this shows that perfume is not just a cosmetic product, but also a social and cultural phenomenon that is interesting to study further. Moreover, the gender-neutral category is something new in the fragrance industry.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Gender-related Studies

Talking about gender, it is important to know that gender and sex are two different things. In the context of gender, this term can be interpreted as a social construction that includes aspects of behaviour, roles, and a person's identity in society. Wardhaugh & Fuller (2015) believe that gender is a perception of masculinity or femininity that varies in each society, depending on prevailing social norms and values. They also argue that gender is a social construction.

Gender, especially in the linguistic realm, has been widely studied. Some of them prove that gender has a relationship and influence on language use and vice versa (for further reviews, see Lakoff, 1975; Thomson, Murachver, & Green, 2001; Romaine, 2003). The consequences of these gender differences give rise to gender stereotypes in language. Salsabila et al. (2024) state that gender stereotypes refer to views or beliefs that develop in society regarding the roles and characteristics that are considered appropriate for each gender. Therefore, there are many studies that examine this in various contexts (see Pikuliak et al., 2023; Alam & Haque, 2021; Lewis & Lupyan, 2020).

Although language forms or even reinforces stereotypes, it also functions as a broader representational tool, such as reflecting culture (see, Yule, 2006), social status and concepts in society (see, Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015). Most importantly, language also represents a commercial product. Even though there is a rich literature on representation of gender in brands and ads (e.g., Dewi & Miranda, 2024; Rahmah & Wibowo, 2023; Szabó, 2022; Zuhri, Teendrata, & Meinawati, 2024; Torres et al., 2020), they are rarely examined from a unisex naming perspective. In fact, the objectives were different; most of them were looking for gender representation and gender stereotypes in ads. The methods and the data they employed were also different. One from Nemcoková et al. (2021) is similar but still different due to their focus on perfume descriptions. Therefore, the novelty of this study lies in the unisex perfume names from a socio-onomastic lens.

2.2 A Socio-onomastic Approach

In this study, a socio-onomastics approach is applied. Socio-onomastics, rooted in sociolinguistics, offers a powerful lens for analyzing names in all their forms—whether “place names, personal names, commercial brands, names of ships, pet names” (Ainiala & Östman, 2017: 7). More than just labels, names are deeply embedded in social, cultural, and situational contexts which are believed in shaping and reflecting identity. By applying socio-onomastics approach, we could uncover the profound ways in which names function beyond mere identification.

A lot of researchers have applied a socio-onomastics approach (for example, see Bozkurt & Mohammadi, 2023; Olimat, Mahadin, & Olimat, 2023; Lombard & Du Plessis, 2019). However, none of those researchers take the naming of perfumes variable into consideration when analysing data. Until recently, studies on perfume naming that specifically focus on products labeled as unisex or gender-neutral are still very limited. In fact, perfume names in this category have great potential as analytical tools to reveal how gender identity is formed, negotiated or even questioned through language. Naming is not just about labeling, but also plays important role in shaping perceptions and directing how the product is understood and used. As expressed by Hough (2016), the naming process has

a direct impact on the formation of identity and social perception and can even strengthen the identification process for its users. In the context of unisex perfumes, the choice of name can reflect an effort to break down conventional gender boundaries or implicitly still maintain traditional gender constructions. Therefore, analysis of unisex perfume names is important in understanding gender representation in the real, of consumption and contemporary popular culture.

3. Research Method

In this study, Unisex fragrance names (n=3930) were collected from the Fragrantica Awards at www.fragrantica.com. The samples analyzed included products marketed to both women and men. The online database of information related to unisex fragrances from (2017-2024). This study is devoted only to unisex fragrance names, so other gendered fragrance names or brand names will not be studied. It should be noted that [fragrantica.com](http://www.fragrantica.com) is a perfume encyclopedia that provides a list of various fragrance names from various brands around the world. This site was chosen because it actively updates information about perfumes and fragrances so that it can help answer the questions in this study. In addition, [Fragrantica.com](http://www.fragrantica.com) also involves a community of perfume lovers by allowing users to share their reviews and opinions about various fragrances. Another uniqueness of this site is the award system for the best and worst perfumes based on user votes. For example, [Fragrantica.com](http://www.fragrantica.com) presents an award for the best unisex perfume category annually, which has been running from 2017 to 2024. These selected perfume names serve as the primary data set for analysis. After collecting the data, the Sketch Engine word list toolkit was used to determine the most frequently used words and their concordance in the perfume names due to the patterns in the naming we wish to see.

The data analysis process involves several steps. First, all collected unisex fragrance names are compiled into a spreadsheet. Then, it is processed using the Sketch Engine word list toolkit to generate frequency lists and its concordance. The frequency analysis identifies the most commonly occurring things within the dataset; meanwhile, the concordance analysis helps to specifically observe how words appear in different sentences. The findings are then interpreted based on categories that emerged inductively during the analysis process, as recurring themes were identified in the perfume names.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Mentioning the Specific Nature

The first reference mentions a specific nature. This means that unisex perfume names are taken from the character of the material or ingredient used. From the analysis, 325 unisex perfume names were found that contained elements of specific nature or references to color in their names. The findings are presented below:

No	KWIC in Unisex Perfume Names	Example	Frequency
1	black	" Black Tie" "Back to Black " "The Black Knight"	44
2	<i>noir</i> 'black'	" <i>Poivre Noir Serge Lutens</i> " " <i>Noir Exquis L'Artisan Parfumeur</i> " " <i>Serge Noire Serge Lutens</i> "	38

3	<i>rouge</i> 'red'	<i>"Rouge Velours"</i> <i>"Baccarat Rouge 540"</i> <i>"Rouge"</i>	33
4	blue	<i>"Blue Moon"</i> <i>"Blue Hope"</i> <i>"Blue Sapphire"</i>	31

Table 1. Mentioning the Specific Nature of Unisex Perfume Names

Data 1 shows that the word *black* has a high frequency in perfume naming, with 44 perfume names using it. Then, data 2, the word *Noir* in French, which has the same meaning as "black" in English also appears with a significant frequency. If we look at some examples of perfume names such as "Black Tie" and "The Black Knight," it appears that the color black is often associated with a masculine image. However, further analysis of the word "noir" in data 2 reveals that this word does not always refer to men. For example, the perfume "Poivre Noir Serge Lutens" uses the word "noir" to refer to the main ingredient, which is black pepper (*poivre noir*). In addition, the perfume "Serge Noire Serge Lutens" uses "noire," the feminine form of "noir" which shows that the color black is not exclusive to masculine representation. Interestingly, the color "black" in perfume naming is not always associated with men, but can be neutral or even have different meanings depending on the context of its use. This finding is also reinforced by Frank's (1990) statement which states that black is a gender-neutral color.

Next, data 3, *rouge*, which comes from French and means "red" in English, appears in 33 perfume names. Based on the example column, the use of the word "rouge" in perfume naming generally refers to the base material or elements related to the color red. For example, in "Baccarat Rouge 540," the word *Baccarat* refers to a luxury French crystal company known for its high-quality products, while *Rouge* symbolizes luxury and warmth, in line with the concept of this perfume. Humeniuk (2020) also said that the color "red" has a strong association with luxury, power and majesty. Thus, the use of the word "rouge" in perfume naming is more related to aesthetic aspects and symbolic meaning than gender representation.

The following is *Blue*. Data 4 shows that the word "blue" is often used in unisex perfume names, with 31 perfume names containing the word. According to Elliot & Maier (2014), blue is associated with calmness, introspection, and stable and calm actions. This is reflected in examples of perfume names such as "Blue Hope," which depicts the sky and the sea—two elements that also symbolize vastness, calmness, and infinite possibilities that are also associated with hope. Thus, the color "blue" in this context does not represent a particular gender, but is neutral. This finding is in line with Hallock (2003) research in "Color Assignment", which shows that both men and women choose blue as their favorite color, so this color no longer has a specific gender association. In addition, Pastoureau (2023) also revealed that blue is the most peaceful and neutral color compared to other colors. The presence of these elements shows that unisex perfume names tend to utilize natural and visual aspects to create a unique and attractive identity. These findings suggest that although color is often associated with gender, in this study, color was more often associated with the underlying material or the symbolic meaning behind it.

4.2 Mentioning the Inventor or Manufacturer

The second reference is mentioning the inventor or manufacturer of the perfumes. The results of the analysis show that as many as 836 names of unisex perfumes use the name of the inventor or manufacturer. The findings are resulted below:

No	KWIC in Unisex Perfume Names	Example	Frequency
1	<i>guerlain</i>	" Guerlain Homme Intense" "Guerlain Homme Eau de Parfum" "Imagine Guerlain "	132
2	<i>dior</i>	"Dior Homme Cologne" "Gris Dior New Look Limited Edition" "Dioriviera"	80
3	<i>hermès</i>	"Voyage d' Hermès Parfum" "Hermessence Myrrhe Eglantiner" "Hermessence Poivre Samarcande"	74
4	<i>chanel</i>	"Les Exclusifs de Chanel Cuir de Russie" "Chanel N°19"	50
5	<i>lattafa</i>	"Khalta Blend of Lattafa "	41
6	<i>kilian</i>	"Love by Kilian Rose and Oud"	37
7	<i>calvin klein</i>	"CK One" "CK Be" "CK One Summer"	26

Table 2. Mentioning the Inventor or Manufacturer of Unisex Perfume Names

In data 1, *Guerlain*, a French perfume house known as "A House of High Perfumery" since 1828, appears with the highest frequency, namely 132 in the category of "best unisex perfume." The next position is occupied by *Dior*, *Hermes*, *Chanel*, *Lattafa*, *Killian* and *Calvin*. In the book *The Power of Brands*, it is stated that a brand is not just a name or symbol, but an identity that distinguishes a product in the market. Furthermore, a well-known brand name is a valuable asset for a company because it provides a strong distinguishing feature in an industry—in this context the perfume industry. In addition, the use of the name of the inventor or manufacturer in naming a perfume makes it easier to pronounce, recognize and even remember, thus strengthening the appeal and credibility of the product in the eyes of consumers ("Fragrances - Worldwide | Statista Market Forecast," n.d.).

An interesting finding from data 7 shows that the word *Lattafa*, which is a brand name originating from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), is also used in the naming of its products, such as "Khalta Blend of Lattafa." In this context, *Khalta* uses non-Latin alphabets on its packaging, but still presents the Latin form in its products. This strategy reflects the global cultural power of the Latin alphabet that allows brands to reach international markets without losing their local identity. This is also mentioned in *Socio-onomastics: The Pragmatics of Names*, names can still maintain their original alphabets (Ainiala & Östman, 2017).

Table 2. shows that the naming of unisex perfumes is often based on the name of the inventor or manufacturer. This trend is in line with a report from “Fragrances - Worldwide | Statista Market Forecast,” (n.d.) published in 2024, which revealed that the current fragrance industry is driven by two main factors. One is the role of celebrities in marketing, as well as well-known brands collaborating with public figures to advertise or even release perfumes with their names. Therefore, the findings that mention the inventor or manufacturer do not represent gender in the naming of unisex perfumes.

4.3 Mentioning the Place of Origin

The third reference is mentioning the place of origin of the perfumes. The results of the analysis show that as many as 125 unisex perfume names use the name of the place of origin in naming unisex perfumes. The findings are below:

No	KWIC in Unisex Perfume Names	Example	Frequency
1	paris	“ Croissant Café” “ Paris - Venise Chanel” “What We Do in Paris Is Secret” “Midnight in Paris ”	61
2	libre	“l'esprit Libre ”	34
3	arabian	“ Kashmir Arabian Oud” “ Shaghaf Oud Tonka Swiss Arabian” “ Kalemat Arabian Oud”	11
4	dubai	“Ajayeb Dubai Portrait Lattafa Perfumes” “Amber Oud Gold 999.9 Dubai Edition Al Haramain Perfumes” “ Ajyal The Spirit of Dubai”	7
5	switzerland	“ Edelweiss ” “Lake Brien z”	4
6	ibiza	“Paula’s Ibiza ”	3
7	havana	“ Havana Rain”	2
8	chelsea	“ Chelsea Morning Lush”	1
9	bali	“Les Nuits de Bali ”	1
10	carbonara	“ Carbonara ”	1

Table 3. Mentioning the place of origin of Unisex Perfume Names

Data 1, *Paris*, appears with the highest frequency, namely 61 times in the naming of unisex perfumes that refer to a location or place. In the example column, the perfume *Croissant Café* uses an implicit reference to a place. *Croissant* itself is a classic French pastry that is famous for its crispy butter layer and crescent shape. When someone hears the word

“croissant,” the association that spontaneously arises is France. The same thing is also seen in the perfumes “Midnight in Paris” and “What We Do in Paris Is Secret,” which explicitly mention the name of the city of Paris. The names of perfumes that also explicitly mention a location or place are *Dubai*, *Ibiza*, *Havana*, *Chelsea*, and *Bali*.

Data 5, *Switzerland*, also appears as a reference in the naming of unisex perfumes. One example is “Edelweiss,” a flower name that implicitly refers to *Switzerland*, a country known for its natural beauty and the Alps. In addition, this perfume is produced by a Swiss company, so the name “Edelweiss” further strengthens its association with the country. Another example is *Lake Brienz* which refers to a lake in Switzerland. The use of these names shows that the naming of unisex perfumes can be inspired by geography.

Table 3. shows that the naming of perfumes in the unisex category has no tendency towards a particular gender. This finding indicates that the perfumes above are gender neutral, with no linguistic preference that leads to masculinity or femininity. Thus, the use of names in unisex perfumes focuses more on universal elements that can be accepted by all genders.

4.4 Mentioning the Materials

Of all the perfume names analyzed, perfumes with ingredient references were the most dominant category. A total of 1,170 perfume names used the main ingredient as the inspiration for their names. The findings are shown in the table below:

No	KWIC in Unisex Perfume Names	Example	Frequency
1	<i>eau</i>	“ Eau de Narcisse” “Smolderose Spray Eau de Parfum” “Madame X Eau de Parfum”	212
2	<i>oud</i>	“Velvet Desert Oud ” “ Oud Satin” “ Oud and Zagara”	131
3	<i>rose</i>	“ Rose Roche” “Mysterious Rose ” “Ethereal Rose ”	98
4	<i>leather</i>	“ Leather Blend” “Tuscan Leather ” “Stallion Leather Suede”	52
5	<i>vanilla</i>	“Black Flower Mexican Vanilla ” “ Vanilla Royale Sugared Patchouli” “ Vanilla Vibes”	51
6	<i>orange</i>	“ Orange Sanguine” “ Orangerie Venise” “ Oranges Bigarades”	39
7	<i>wood</i>	“Silky Woods Elixir” “Oud Wood ” “Cocoa Woods ”	38

8	musk	" Musk Lave" "Rosendo Mateu Nº 8 Fruity, Amber, Exotic Musk " " Musk Tuberose"	34
9	patchouli	" Patchouli Paris" "Behold, Patchouli " "Fleur de Patchouli "	31
10	iris	" Iris Eau de Parfum" "Full Iris " "Eau Triple Iris de Malte"	30
11	santal	"Lotus Santal " " Santal Sohar" " Santal Royal"	28
12	tobacco	" Tobacco Mandarin" "Red Tobacco Intense" "Oud Tobacco "	27
13	<i>cuir</i> 'leather'	" Cuir Amethyste" " Cuir " " Cuir InfraRouge"	27
14	cherry	" Cherry Cherry " " Cherry Ink" "Electric Cherry "	26
15	tonka 'beans'	" Tonkade " " Tonka Bodykon 31" "Myrrh & Tonka "	25

Table 4. Mentioning the Materials of Unisex Perfume Names

In naming unisex perfumes, some frequently used ingredients come from woods, plants, fruits and other versatile materials. Among the wood-based ingredients, *Oud* has the highest frequency. 131 unisex perfumes include the word "oud" in their names. Furthermore, the word *Wood* appears in 38 perfumes, indicating the use of wood-based ingredients in general. Meanwhile, *Santal* which is a synonym for sandalwood is used in 28 perfumes. The naming *Santal* means that the perfume only uses sandalwood as the main ingredient in the composition of the fragrance.

Several types of plant materials are used as inspiration in naming unisex perfumes. Data shows that *Rose* has the highest frequency (98), followed by *Vanilla* (51), *Patchouli* (31), *Iris* (30), *Tobacco* (27) and *Tonka* or black seed (25). These materials are not only the inspiration for the name but are also used as the main composition in the fragrance formulation.

The next ingredient in perfume is fruits. Although the naming of fruit-based perfumes varies greatly, we will discuss those with a frequency of more than 20. As for the fruit ingredient category, the one with the highest frequency is *orange*. *Orange*, with 39 other

perfumes containing this composition, is one of the main ingredients. In addition, *Cherry* is also often used as a main ingredient in fragrances.

Other ingredients used in perfumes are versatile. *Leather* is a key ingredient and often inspires the naming of unisex perfumes. In fact, there are 52 unisex perfumes that use *leather* as a key element. Meanwhile, the French term *Cuir*—which means leather in English—is used in 27 perfume names.

Based on the findings above, naming unisex perfumes that refer to their ingredient references makes it easier for consumers to know the ingredients or contents contained in them and (Nikitina, 2024) have a view of the smell produced by the perfume. Klink (2001) has a similar view. He argues that product names that contain product information can reduce uncertainty and increase the likelihood of being accepted by consumers. Nevertheless, apart from its names or references, Sczesny and Stahlberg agree that certain scents are often associated with certain genders. Perfumes with floral or fruity scents tend to be associated with women, while perfumes with spicy and strong scents are more often associated with men (in Nemcoková et al., 2021). This shows that gender perceptions in fragrances are not only influenced by the composition of the scent, but also by the social and cultural constructions that shape preferences and expectations for perfume.

4.5 Mentioning the Identity or Gender-stereotyped

The last reference refers to the identity or stereotype formed through the naming of unisex perfumes. The results of the analysis show that as many as 187 perfume names tend to represent a certain gender. The findings are shown in the table below:

No.	KWIC in Unisex Perfume Names	Example	Frequency
1	intense	"Play Intense " "Homme Intense " "Goddess Intense "	62
2	<i>homme</i> 'man'	"Pour Homme " " L'Homme Idéal Platine Privé" "Light Blue Forever pour Homme "	36
3	man	"Rochas Man " "Reflection 45 Man " "Gold Man "	23
5	<i>femme</i> 'woman'	"La Femme Absolu" "Pour Femme "	9
6	boy	"Toy Boy " " Boy Eau de Parfume" "Pony Boy "	9
7	extreme	"Noir Extreme Parfum" "Lavender Extreme " "Homme Extreme "	8
8	sweet	" Sweet Xplosion" " Sweet leaf"	7

9	him	"This is Him !" "One Shock for Him "	7
10	absolute	"Black Vanilla Absolute " " Absolute Pour Femme"	6
11	girl	"That Girl " " Girl " "Good Girl Gone Bad"	5
12	woman	"God Is a Woman " " <i>Epic Woman</i> " " <i>Lyric Woman</i> "	5
13	floral	" Floral Blend" "A Floral Verse"	5
14	men	"A* Men Fantasm" " <i>White Musk for Men</i> " " <i>Gentlemen Only</i> "	3
15	her	"Musc Noir For Her " "For Her Pink Edition"	2

Table 5. Mentioning the Identities and Gender-stereotyped of Unisex Perfume Names

In this analysis, we classify perfumes based on word classes: nouns, pronouns, and adjectives. The most dominant noun is *Homme* in French, which means "man" and refers to a single adult male. This word often appears in perfume names, such as "Pour Homme", which means "For Man," and "L'Homme Idéal", which translates as "The Ideal Man." Likewise, the name *Men* in the perfume name "Gentlemen Only." The use of *Homme* and *Men* shows that masculinity in perfumes is often communicated through language that directly affirms a man's identity. Furthermore, the name *Boy* also appears in several unisex perfume names, such as in the example of "Pony Boy." In this context, "Pony Boy" can be interpreted as a man with characteristics like a horse—tough, agile, and full of energy. However, on the official website of Jurom Studio, the producer of Pony Boy perfume, this name is not just a representation of masculinity, but a form of identity transformation and their innovation in gender deconstruction and ancient mythological traditions. This shows that although the word "Boy" is often associated with a certain gender, its meaning is more open to a more inclusive interpretation. While in the female category, the noun *Femme* (French for "woman") appears 9 times, followed by *Girl*, which is the antonym of "boy." For example, the name "Good Girl Gone Bad" represents the transformation of a woman's character from "good" to "unpleasant" (Source: Cambridge Dictionary). In addition, the word *woman* - adult women-is found 5 times, such as in the perfumes "God Is a Woman" and "Epic Woman", which imply the strength and toughness of women.

Furthermore, the pronouns used in naming unisex perfumes are object pronouns. *Him* is found 7 times in naming unisex perfumes; this shows a tendency to use masculine pronouns in fragrance branding. *Him* is an object pronoun form of "he" which is explicitly used in perfumes such as "This Is Him!". This name clearly emphasizes that its target market

is men and strengthens the association with a scent that is considered masculine. The use of the pronoun *Her* in naming perfumes, although only found 2 times, still has significant meaning. Perfumes such as "Musc Noir For Her" and "For Her Pink Edition" explicitly mark that the product is intended specifically for women, as if categorizing certain scents as exclusively feminine. Both *Him* and *Her* indicate that perfume names containing pronouns are indicated for a particular gender. This finding is reinforced by Salsabila et al. (2024), also revealed that pronouns that specifically refer to men or women tend to reinforce the perception that gender roles and identities are binary and separate.

The last word class found in perfume naming is adjectives. The word *Intense* is the most dominant word appearing 62 times. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, *intense* means extreme and strong. The meaning of *intense* is often associated with masculinity. This finding is supported by Pikuliak et al. (2023), who stated that the word "strong" is linguistically more often associated with men. However, the assumption that intense always refers to masculinity is not entirely accurate. Examples such as "Goddess Intense" show that this word can also be used in a feminine context. Although "goddess" does not explicitly represent gender, many scholars identify it as a representation of women (for reviews, see Mandell, 2015). Furthermore, the adjectives *Extreme* and *Absolute* are explicitly associated with masculine traits, while *Sweet* and *Floral* are associated with feminine traits. This finding is in line with the study of Löckenhoff et al. (2014) who classified "extreme" and "absolute" as part of agentic and instrumental traits—characteristics that reflect the courage and certainty of masculinity. On the other hand, "sweet" and "floral" fall into the category of nurturing traits because they convey the impression of softness and beauty—these characteristics are socially constructed as feminine. Lakoff (1975), also added that one of women's languages is the word "sweet". In short, this finding proves that although the language in perfume often reproduces gender stereotypes, some perfume names challenge these boundaries by combining elements that reflect strength without being tied to a particular gender.

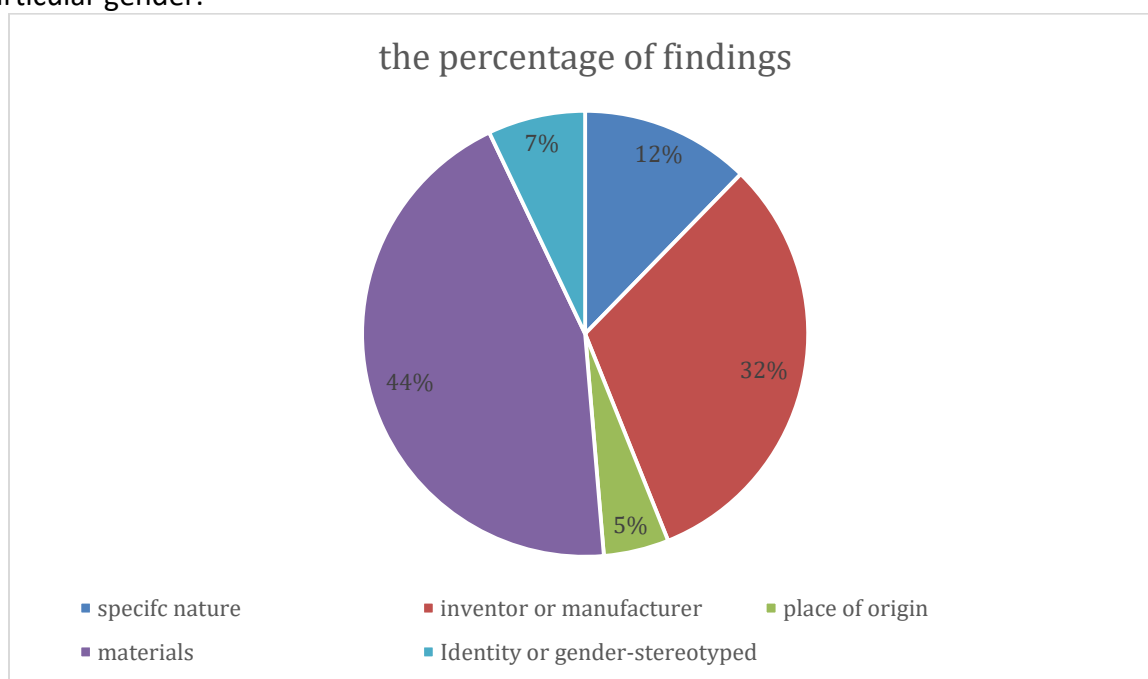


Chart 1. The Percentage of Findings

To sum up the findings, refer to Chart 1 for a visual representation of the distribution of references found in the naming of unisex perfumes. Among the five identified reference categories, 44% of materials-based reference data emerged as the most prevalent, indicating that many unisex perfume names are inspired by tangible substances such as natural ingredients, elements or even textures of their fragrance (e.g., "Cocoa Woods"). Following that, inventor or manufacturer-related references constitute approximately 32% of the data. These names often include brand affiliations, designer identities or creator signatures (e.g., "Dioriviera"). The third most frequent reference is specific natural imagery, particularly colors, which account for 12% of the names. Colors, according to previous literature, have specific associations with gender. Nevertheless, the findings showed that it actually refers to otherwise. Next, identity or gender-related reference terms appear in 7% of the sample. These include words that directly or indirectly reference concepts of gender (e.g., "Pour Homme," "Goddess Intense," and "That Girl"). Although less common, this category plays a significant role in reinforcing or challenging conventional gender associations in scent marketing. Finally, the least frequently observed reference is to the place of origin, found in only a small portion of the names. These include geographical references or culturally significant locations that lend a sense of uniqueness (e.g., "Havana Rain," and "Chelsea Morning Lush"). While rare, these names still contribute to the broader narrative and positioning of unisex fragrances.

In general, perfume names containing masculine elements have a higher frequency than those with feminine connotations. Then we suspect that there is a gender bias in the fragrance industry because perfume inventors or manufacturers tend to choose more neutral or masculine-oriented names to avoid overly obvious stereotypes, so that their products are more acceptable to various consumer groups. A study by Spielmann et al. (2021) supports this finding. They found that brands with masculine or neutral names generated higher purchase intentions than brands with feminine names. This indicates that names associated with masculinity have greater commercial appeal, while products with more feminine names do not get the same effect. This bias certainly reflects the social perception that still places masculinity as a symbol of strength and credibility in branding, while feminine identities tend to be associated with aspects of softness and are less associated with strong purchasing power. As a result, product naming strategies are not only aesthetic, but also reflect broader social dynamics in the market and consumption.

Basically, if we observe closely, unisex perfumes that are "claimed" as gender-neutral or unisex items in the "Best Unisex Perfume" award category on [Fragrantica.com](https://www.fragrantica.com) still reflect a certain gender representation. McIntyre (2013) highlights this paradox, where unisex products are supposed to break gender boundaries, but instead maintain gender categories through the naming of their perfume products. In addition, descriptions such as "suitable for men and women" are still often encountered, even though they are still within the framework of the masculine-feminine binary, not products that are truly free from gender construction.

5. Conclusion

The main findings in this study were that the named perfume did not perform well in unisex categorization. Through analysis, keywords were identified, which led to specific nature, materials, geographical, identities and gender-stereotyping references. Among

these, references to materials appeared most frequently, suggesting that unisex perfume names tend to focus on ingredients rather than explicitly leaning towards a particular gender. However, despite the neutrality in material references, the presence of gendered associations remains observable. This implies that while unisex perfumes aim to break traditional gender boundaries, linguistic choices in naming still subtly reflect societal perceptions of masculinity and femininity.

We acknowledge that this research has limitations. One of them is that we could not possibly validate the data due to its already generated. Second, *Fragrantica* users may randomly vote the products based on their experiences or opinions, thus data validation can be questioned for its accuracy. Therefore, further investigation could continue to expand this study by exploring how consumers perceive these gender-neutral perfume names—whether they truly interpret them as inclusive or still associate them with traditional gender norms. In addition, conducting a comparative analysis across different cultures and languages might provide valuable insights into how cultural contexts influence the interpretation and reception of perfume naming. This could hopefully enrich the discussion around global branding practices and the universality of gender-neutral language in consumer products.

Ethics Statements

This study draws upon publicly accessible data sourced from the perfume encyclopedia *Fragrantica.com*. As the data are already in the public domain and do not involve any personal or sensitive information, ethical approval was not deemed necessary. Nonetheless, all data have been utilized with due respect and in accordance with principles of academic integrity.

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