

Public Abstract

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Graduation Term:SS 2014

Department:Textile & Apparel Management

Degree:PhD

Title:Looking at fashion through green-colored glasses: A multimodal critical discourse analysis of Vogue's sustainable fashion editorials

This dissertation explored the discursive practices employed by Vogue to construct sustainable fashion in its editorials between 1990-2013. These discursive practices revealed the ideological stance of Vogue regarding sustainable fashion. The research asked: (a) how Vogue explicitly and implicitly defined sustainable, ethical and eco fashion through discursive practice; (b) how it visually illustrated sustainable fashion; (c) how Vogue's sustainable fashion discourse changed over time; and (d) how Vogue's inclusion of sustainability challenged or supported its position of power in the industry. A discourse-historical approach explored how Vogue's conception of sustainable fashion changed over time. Additionally, thirty-seven "Style Ethics" editorials were examined using Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA). References to sustainably minded values and actions were found throughout the twenty-three years analyzed, though these were in direct competition with the dominant discourse of the 'new'. Though Vogue periodically engaged the works of a handful of designers and activists striving for better products and practices, it rarely discussed the issues that led to their necessity, particularly ignoring labor issues. By co-opting preexisting nomenclature of sustainability without formally defining the concepts, Vogue was able to appropriate incongruous terminology into the discourse on fashion. Vogue relied heavily on stereotypical imagery to demarcate sections featuring sustainable goods. Over time, the sustainable fashion discourse was dismantled, neutralized and appropriated; presented as one option among many. Furthermore, the few sustainably minded goods and services that were included were undermined by the magazine's general emphasis on the 'new'.