

Fixing the Identity Gap in Fashion: Magazines' Role in Consumption of Clothes

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Abstract : A dress has, since times immemorial, been used to communicate the wearer's identity. When a new trend is born, fashionistas buy it not only with the purpose to beautify themselves, but also to acquire the collective identity. Fashion has become a means of narrating one's stance and status. Thus, when one spends money on a brand, one pays for some unmaterial components associated with it. This paper will present some ways in which fashion magazines promote consumerism by drawing on women's craving for collective identity and need to fill in their identity gap by means of a purchase. By applying the method of critical discursive psychology, it will present layers of ideology and positions that become visible in framing of the message in U.S. Harper's Bazaar. In this context, fashion decisions that are presented to its readers will be critically evaluated from the gender perspective. It will be demonstrated that what is presented as a postfeminist choice in the neoliberal society is still, to a considerable extent, oppressive and driven by the male gaze. As the findings show, the contemporary female identities in fashion are still built on the principles of traditional femininity. Magazines and fashion discourse train women that they should fear being left out of fashion and, by extension, out of the category of the sexually appealing (from the male perspective).

Keywords : collective identity, critical discursive psychology, fashion discourse, identity gap

Conference Title : ICFTR 2019 : International Conference on Fashion Theory and Research

Conference Location : Barcelona, Spain

Conference Dates : December 16-17, 2019