

Performativity of gender identities in fashion. Stereotypes' impact in Vogue and GQ

Performatividad de las identidades de género en moda. Impacto de los estereotipos en Vogue y GQ

Performatividade das identidades de gênero na moda. Impacto dos estereótipos na Vogue e GQ

Concha Pérez-Curiel, Universidad de Sevilla, Sevilla, España (cperez1@us.es)

Paloma Sanz-Marcos, Universidad de Cádiz, Jerez de la Frontera, Cádiz, España (paloma.sanz@uca.es)

Ana Velasco Molpeceres, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Madrid, España (anamavel@ucm.es)

ABSTRACT | The objective of this paper is to study diversity, inclusion, and stereotypes in international fashion magazines aimed at female or male audiences, analyzing the representations and discourse conveyed in them. It is an analysis that aims to uncover the stereotypes and ambiguities of current social changes. In a first phase (F1), we applied a mixed content analysis methodology to the cover images (n1=120) disseminated in 2020 through the Instagram accounts of Vogue and GQ, in the context of the United States and Europe. In a second one (F2), we structured an expert panel (n2=14) consisting of designers with their own brand, members of creative teams from international firms, and directors of modeling agencies to discuss the results obtained in the first phase. A preliminary analysis of the results showed, on the one hand, that beauty stereotypes continue to dominate the covers of fashion magazines, although there is certain openness towards inclusivity and diversity, especially in female publications, while male magazines continue to show an image of man subject to the classic canon, but with a tendency towards change.

KEYWORDS: Fashion; inclusion; gender; masculinities; femininity; stereotypes; queer, fashion magazines.

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RESUMEN | *El objetivo de esta investigación es estudiar la diversidad, inclusión y los estereotipos en las revistas de modas internacionales, destinadas al público femenino o masculino, analizando las representaciones y el discurso derivado de sus publicaciones. Se trata de un análisis que pretende descubrir los estereotipos y las ambigüedades de los cambios sociales actuales. En una primera fase (F1), aplicamos una metodología de análisis de contenido mixto sobre las imágenes de portada (n1=120) difundidas en 2020 a través de las cuentas de Instagram de Vogue y GQ, en el marco de Estados Unidos y de Europa. Posteriormente, (F2) diseñamos un panel de expertos (n2=14) en el que participaron diseñadores con marca propia, miembros de equipos creativos de firmas internacionales y directores de agencias de modelos para debatir los resultados obtenidos en la primera fase. Un avance de los resultados constata, por un lado, que los estereotipos de belleza continúan copando las portadas de las revistas de moda, aunque se detecta cierta apertura hacia la inclusividad y la diversidad, especialmente en las publicaciones femeninas; las revistas masculinas siguen mostrando una imagen de hombre sujeta al canon clásico, pero con tendencia al cambio.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Moda; inclusividad; género; masculinidad; feminidad; estereotipos; queer; revistas de moda.*

RESUMO | O objetivo desta investigação é estudar a diversidade, a inclusão e os estereótipos nas revistas de moda internacionais, destinadas ao público feminino ou ao masculino, analisando as representações e o discurso derivado de suas publicações. Esta é uma análise que pretende descobrir os estereótipos e ambigüedades das atuais mudanças sociais. Na primeira fase (F1), aplicamos uma metodologia de análise de conteúdo mista sobre as imagens de capa (n1=120) divulgadas em 2020 através das contas do Instagram da Vogue e da GQ, no contexto dos Estados Unidos e da Europa. Na segunda fase (F2), projetamos um painel de especialistas (n2=14) no qual participaram designers de marca própria, membros de equipes criativas de empresas internacionais e diretores de agências de modelos para debater os resultados obtidos na primeira fase. Um avanço dos resultados constata, por um lado, que os estereótipos de beleza continuam dominando as capas das revistas de moda, embora se detecte, certa abertura para a inclusão e diversidade, especialmente nas publicações femininas. Frente a isto, as revistas masculinas ainda mostram uma imagem de homem sujeita ao cânone clássico, mas com tendência à mudança.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Moda; Inclusão; Gênero; Masculinidade; Feminidade; Estereótipos; Queer; Revistas de moda.*

INTRODUCTION

Cultural studies, on identities, stereotypes, and identities' performativity, open a specific perspective on gender research and a debate on issues such as androgyny, a-gender, or the beauty canon in fashion media (Eisend, 2016, 2019): the traditional binary male-female social division, genders, and how identity is expressed, constructed or performed, both to accept the status quo and to challenge it (Griffin, 2017) are questioned. Fashion is key in that process (Åkestam et al., 2017), as gender is a social construction (de Beauvoir, 1949). For Lipovetsky (1999), fashion is also a political space from which to combat ideals of heteronormativity or the Western beauty canon (sexualization of young, very slim and fit, conventionally attractive physiques, with balanced faces of Caucasian features). Nowadays, the need to include diverse profiles, excluded from society, is becoming more and more important.

The role of the media in these issues is crucial, as they are key in the creation of public opinion (Groeneveld, 2020), although sometimes this stereotypes rupture is only economic (Varghese & Kumar, 2022). In the case of fashion magazines, their promotion of aesthetics and canons is very important and it becomes necessary to study the mechanisms and discourses that perpetuate or combat inequality (Gill & Kanai, 2019). This research aims to study the treatment of stereotypes and their construction and deconstruction in the field of fashion magazines (Groeneveld, 2020; Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2021).

Media and fashion: gender and industry

There are numerous studies in the framework of advertising and fashion journalism on the definition of stereotypes and identity models in the fashion socioeconomic system (Treviños-Rodríguez & Díaz-Soloaga, 2021, Spinner et al., 2022). Sociocultural theory (Wertsch, 2017) points to the media's influence and notes that the repetition of themes and stereotypes in the media leads to the cultivation of beliefs coinciding with those contents (Spinner et al., 2022). A conservative ideology has generally been found, due to the brands' interest (Entwistle & Slater, 2012; Entwistle, 2009; Mears, 2011; Åkdemir, 2018), and linked to gender roles and the male-female dichotomy (Volonté, 2019; de Freitas et al., 2017). Recent studies (Spinner et al., 2022) confirm this binary and stereotypical construction of male-female identities.

However, there are also changes (Treviños-Rodríguez & Díaz-Soloaga, 2021) and, as Pompper and colleagues (2009) point out, a long-term look at the media is necessary to inquire into the (de)construction of stereotypes and the social changes that the fashion press has undergone (Velasco Molpeceres, 2022; Baxter, 2016; Åkestam et al., 2017).

In women's fashion magazines, the covers begin to disseminate an image of a woman-subject and to incorporate different ethnicities and sexual orientations (Díaz-Soloaga et al., 2010). The same occurs in the men's press, although gender stereotypes linked to heterosexuality and powerful masculinity remain present (Karaminas et al., 2022). Thus, although the media continue to rely on stereotypical representations (Mazahir et al., 2020), a critical discourse (Baxter, 2016) towards this heteronormative and patriarchal gender binarism is emerging, and identity and identities are debated, encouraging other representations and expanding traditional images (Eisend, 2022) or typical ascriptions of clothing/styles to femininity or masculinity (Read et al., 2018).

Nevertheless, we consider it relevant (Antoniou & Akrivos, 2020) to study stereotypes and their construction or deconstruction in women's and men's fashion magazines in terms of their content (Lynge-Jorlén, 2017), marked by editorial decision, as opposed to issues derived from advertising (Kitch, 2015).

Objectives and research questions

The main objective is to know what male-female profile/portrait is projected on the covers of men's and women's fashion magazines, to identify gender stereotypes, and to analyze inclusiveness and diversity as factors that may favor equality. The following research questions are proposed:

RQ1. Do the covers of women's and men's fashion magazines published in Europe and North America reflect the traditional beauty canon?

RQ2. Are gender stereotypes considered to be a characteristic of magazine covers?

RQ3. To what extent do new gender identities that enhance the social discourse of inclusiveness and diversity have a presence on fashion covers?

METHODOLOGY

In a context of citizen mobilizations for equality and the incorporation in fashion magazines of new subjects, images, and messages that break with the classic molds of beauty, it is appropriate to study the trend towards inclusive gender communication models (Nguyen, 2021). In this vein, the fieldwork responds to a mixed method that combines content analysis (Neuendorf, 2002; Krippendorff, 2004; Flick, 2004) and a panel of experts (Gideon, 2012; Finch & Lewis, 2003).

The first phase (Ph1) is a comparative mixed analysis study (Bryman, 2016; Franklin et al., 2005;) applied to 120 covers of *Vogue* and *GQ*, women's and men's fashion magazines, respectively, of European and world benchmark (Morris

& Nichols, 2013; Morris, 2014). The reason for selecting the covers is that, in journalism, there is an information hierarchy and the cover acts as the editorial synthesis of the magazine's issue.

To enrich and contrast the results of the first methodological phase, we propose a second phase (Ph2), based on a panel of experts with the participation of a series of professionals linked to brands and international fashion communication who will discuss the report of the results of the first phase (Ph1).

Sample and analysis indicators

The main criterion to establish the selection of magazines is based on the number of readers, both in print and digital. *Vogue* is the number one women's magazine worldwide (the print version targets women aged 35 to 50, and the digital one, between 25 and 35 years old, upper-middle class), and *GQ* has the highest rates in men's fashion (its audience are men aged 30 to 45 years old, university students, upper class), which shows its relevance and also its binary orientation.

Both are led by Anna Wintour, who in 2020 was elected Global Chief Content Officer of Condé Nast. Her commitment to inclusive ideals was referenced in *Vogue* a few months before her global takeover and in the context of Black Lives Matter. *GQ* is considered emblematic of new masculinities (Simpson, 1994; Sixsmith, 2019). Therefore, both publications are conducive to develop a comparative mixed content analysis, attending to geographical criteria (editions from five countries, international fashion spotlights, and the context of global society) and thematic criteria related to indicators such as gender stereotypes, inclusivity, and diversity in fashion magazines.

The overall sample period comprises all covers published on Instagram by both magazines (Spiker, 2015; Jenkins & Tandoc Jr, 2017) in 2020 ($n_1=120$) in the United States, England, France, Italy, and Spain. The sample extraction is performed through a specialized tool created by Digitonomy, which accesses the data through the Instagram Application Programming Interface (API). The program chosen for data processing is IBM SPSS Statistics, version 25.

Analysis indicators

Phase I

The data is processed using a comparative content analysis sheet with different types of indicators, applied to each cover published on Instagram by *Vogue* and *GQ* in each country:

- Spatio-temporal indicators (STI). These are time and space location variables that contextualize the images through the registration of a system of categories (Franklin et al., 2005), including the magazine's name (1), platform (2), edition (3), and month of publication (4).

- Gender stereotypes indicators (GSI). It includes variables related to elements that generate gender stereotypes (Treviños-Rodríguez & Díaz-Soloaga, 2021; Akdemir, 2018) on the cover: size (1), clothing (2), hair and makeup (3), age (4), and ethnicity (5).
- Gender identity indicators (GII). It refers to categories related to social values (Bryman, 2016; Mauriès, 2017) such as diversity (1), inclusiveness (2), and equality (3).

The three categories of indicators respond in turn to the three research questions posed. The first block (STI) concerns the treatment of the beauty canon by magazines in Europe and North America (RQ1). The second (GSI) focuses on the analysis of the use of gender stereotypes on the covers of *Vogue* and *GQ* (RQ2), while the third (GII) analyzes features related to traits and trends towards new gender identities in fashion (RQ3).

To clarify the suitability of this phase in relation to the theoretical framework, the following table connects the research questions posed to the analysis indicators.

Indicators	Research questions
(STI) Spatio-temporal (Franklin et al., 2005).	(RQ1) Reflection of the traditional beauty canon.
(GSI) Gender stereotypes (Treviños-Rodríguez & Díaz-Soloaga, 2021; Akdemir, 2018).	(RQ 2) Consideration of gender stereotypes as a characteristic of magazine covers.
(GII) Gender identity (Bryman, 2016; Mauriès, 2017).	(RQ 3) Presence of new gender identities that enhance the social discourse of inclusiveness and diversity.

Table 1. Approximation to the theoretical framework operationalization

Source: Own elaboration

Phase 2

Regarding the second methodological phase (Ph2), we designed an expert panel (Gideon, 2012; Linstone & Turoff, 1975), based on the interpretation and discussion of the results of the first phase. To transfer the results, we produced a report with data mining to facilitate discussion. In our study, this technique consists of an iterative process in which 14 professionals linked to the fashion industry sector assess a series of questions focused on the canon of femininity and masculinity, stereotypes, and the tendency towards inclusiveness. The final goal is to reach a consensual response (Barrios et al., 2021) about possible changes in the gender discourse of these magazines, as well as to contrast the previous results of the content analysis.

For the experts' selection, we applied the non-probabilistic convenience sampling technique. Based on criteria such as consolidated professional experience in the fields of design, styling, advertising, photography, modeling, and communication agencies, we selected a group of professionals from the fashion industry in each of the countries analyzed. To comply with a safe ethical protocol, participants were informed of the panel's process and execution through a clarification document and frequently asked questions. Through a signed consent form, we collected the data from the experts shown in table 2, who agreed to have their names included in this publication.

The purpose of the panel, composed mostly of sources and providers of fashion magazines, was to know their assessment of the treatment of gender in these publications, i.e., to see if, in their opinion, stereotypes are maintained or if there is a trend towards change and the visualization of new characters, objects, and there is more inclusivity and diversity. The questions are organized in three thematic blocks.

	Expert	Brand	Area	Country
Experts panel	Edward Cuming	Edward Cuming	Design	United Kingdom
	Erika Maish	Erika Maish	Design	United States
	Julio Barga	Marni	Design	Italy
	Carmen Xan	Maison Margiela	Design	France
	Ernesto Naranjo	Ernesto Naranjo	Design	Spain
	Paula Cánovas del Vas	Paula Cánovas del Vas	Design	United Kingdom
	Daniel Rabaneda	Ángel Schlessler	Design	Spain
	Silvana Trevale	Silvana Trevale	Photography	United Kingdom
	Marcos Llorente	The Life Crew	The Life Crew communication agency	Spain
	Alicia Padrón	Alicia Padrón	Styling	Spain
	Mirna Serrano		Modeling	Spain
	Luis Domingo		IMG Modeling agency	United Kingdom
	Charo Izquierdo		Director of Grupo Prensa Ibérica	Spain
	Daniel Alarcón		Metal Magazine journalist	Spain

Table 2. Categorization of experts, area and brands by country

Source: Own elaboration.

Block 1 (RQ1) (RQ 2)	Gender stereotypes (GSI)	Presence/absence
Block 2 (RQ1) (RQ3)	Inclusiveness and diversity features (GII)	Comparison of women's fashion magazines/men's fashion magazines.
Block 3 (RQ2)	Gender equality discourse (GSI)	Social projection of gender equality in the fashion industry.

Table 3. Thematic categories and discussion variables in relation to the research questions and indicators

Source: Own elaboration.

ANALYSIS

The results obtained after the content analysis showed that the methodological design was adequate to obtain results of interest for the research. At the same time, the participants showed no signs of confusion or problems understanding the questions posed and demonstrated a broad knowledge of the subject, shedding light on the objectives set. The use of a combined methodology for the study of the behavior of specialized fashion magazines, the research's comparative nature, and the analysis of the opinion of expert sources on the model of gender identity that prevails in these fashion publications requires a process of treatment of results. The mining and interpretation of data aims to answer the research questions and, therefore, they are arranged in blocks in order to present the findings in the most illustrative way possible according to the methodological phases and the proposed research questions.

Phase 1

Block 1. Comparison of features and beauty canon on the cover

We applied spatio-temporal indicators (STI) and gender stereotypes (GSI) to detect the presence of features linked to the traditional canon of Western beauty (attractive, white, slim, young, and fashionably dressed men or women in a sexualized manner) on the covers of both magazines.

As the data indicate (table 4), the size most used by *Vogue* for men (66%) and women (53%) is skinny, which is smaller than normal. The men's magazine *GQ* opts for a standard size for men (81%) and women (83%). Therefore, in women's magazines, slimness continues to prevail (Volonté, 2019).

Other mined data related to the clothing variable show that *Vogue* and *GQ* resort to gender stereotypes related to the heterosexual male-female cisgender binarism (table 4). This dynamic is altered when they exceptionally incorporate male (*Vogue*) or female (*GQ*) characters on their covers, different from their usual profiles, in which clothing not linked to gender codes predominates (67%), as opposed to the traditional canon (33%).

Magazine		Size				Clothing		Hair and makeup	
		Standard	Skinny	Plus-size	None	Gender	No gender	Gender	No gender
Vogue	Man	33%	67%	0%	0%	33%	67%	33%	67%
	Woman	38%	53%	9%	0%	80%	20%	69%	31%
	Other	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	100%	0%	100%
GQ	Man	81%	12%	0%	7%	70%	30%	86%	14%
	Woman	83%	0%	17%	0%	33%	67%	67%	33%
	Other	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	100%	0%

Table 4. Contingency of size, clothing, hair and makeup features

Source: Own elaboration.

In these covers, we observe a type of wardrobe of unmarked gender identity in the case of GQ or of masculinity translation on a female body, which can lead to confusion by identifying the character’s gender, without sexualization. From this perspective, we can glimpse an attempt to vindicate equality and the meaning of inclusiveness and diversity, as illustrated in figure 1.

The results on the age, gender, and ethnic origin of the people appearing on the covers are shown in table 5. As shown in that table, an adult male profile predominates in GQ (65%) and an adult female profile, in *Vogue* (62%), in line with the ages of their public; however, it should be noted that the young person variable is imposed for the opposite gender in each publication, although some covers break the code by incorporating older celebrities, writers, artists, etc.



Figure 1. Clothing on the cover

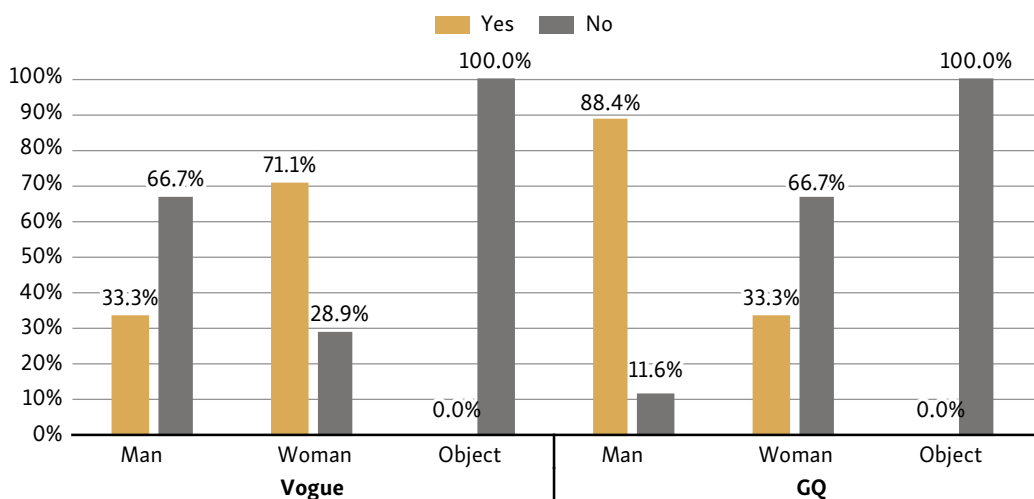
Source: GQ France (09/2020) and Vogue UK (07/2020).

Magazine		Age				Ethnicity			
		Young	Adult	Old	Other	Caucasian	Black	Asian	Other
Vogue	Men	100%	0%	0%	0%	66%	33%	0%	0%
	Woman	36%	62%	2%	0%	69%	31%	0%	0%
	Others	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	100%
GQ	Men	28%	65%	7%	0%	82%	18%	0%	0%
	Woman	67%	33%	0%	0%	86%	14%	0%	0%
	Others	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%

Table 5. Contingency of age/ethnicity features

Source: Own elaboration.

The global analysis of all visual indicators (GSI) shows a format that continues to maintain a traditional Eurocentric canon of beauty (and power), white, thin, young, and sexualized, although the alteration of standards and the trend towards inclusivity in *Vogue* and *GQ* if the cover features a gender identity contrary to the magazine’s profile is noteworthy. In short, youth prevails over old age, thinness over the standard and curvy model, garments and makeup with a generic brand. The primacy of white versus black or Asian has been the constant of standardized beauty in fashion magazines, reflecting the aspirational values of luxury to consumers.



Graph 1. Gender stereotypes on the cover

Source: Own elaboration.

In a social context of change due to feminism and the emergence of new roles that blur the division between feminine and masculine, the data collected on the use of stereotypes (figure 1) indicate that both *Vogue* for women (71.1%) and *GQ* for men (88.4%) reach significant levels; these values decrease when the protagonist is of the opposite gender to the magazine's profile.

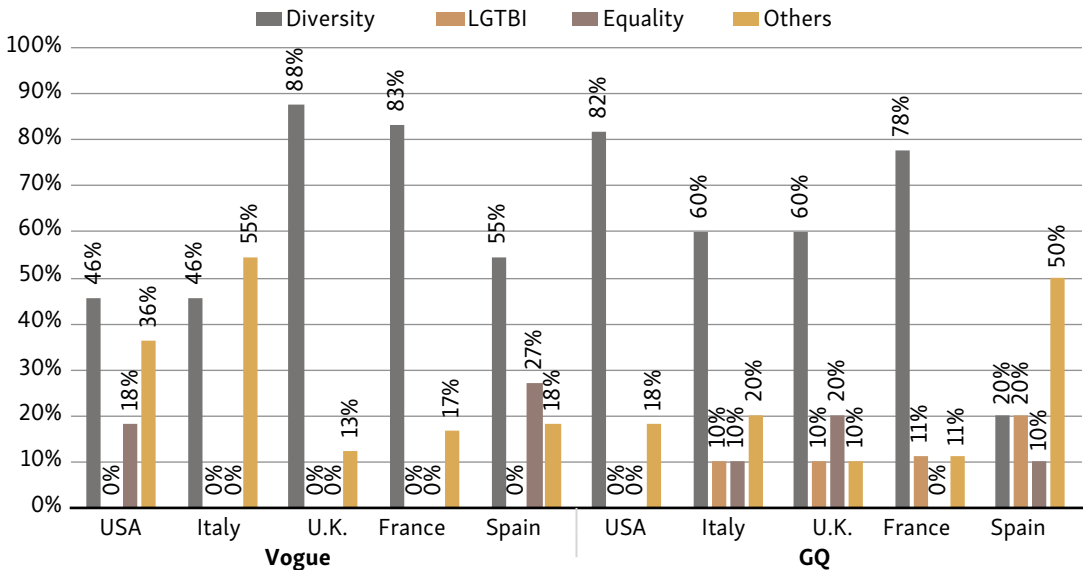
The trend towards inclusivity in *Vogue* and *GQ* begins by incorporating male or female characters on the cover, on which a lower level of traditional stereotypes prevails (66.7%). Added to this is the diversity discourse shared by celebrities such as Harry Styles (*Vogue USA*, 12/2020) and Billie Eilish (*GQ UK*, 08/09/ 2020), emphasizing values of gender contrast, although they are heterosexuals who do not question their sexuality or gender, which has been criticized.

Block 2. Paradigms of equality in fashion: between diversity and inclusiveness

The application of qualitative indicators (GII) to the sample provides data on the indices of diversity, inclusiveness, and equality on the covers of *Vogue* and *GQ* analyzed. Considering the results of block 1, which show the coexistence of gender stereotypes with the incorporation of new patterns of femininity and masculinity, the features of the images on the cover must be looked into. The codes taken into account to measure diversity-inclusiveness were the presence of male and female binarism on the covers, as well as standard and extreme size features (curvy, thick, slim, slender, thin), of age (young, adult, and old) and marks of ethnicity or race (Caucasian, black, Asian, and others).

Data mining (figure 2) shows a predominance of diversity shared by both magazines in most countries. In *Vogue*, the UK edition (88%) and the French edition (83%) stand out, and in *GQ*, the United States (82%) and France (78%). The rest reach values close to or above the average (50%), except for *GQ* Spain (20%). The analysis of the covers reveals a tendency to break with the molds of classic Western beauty and, in turn, the prominent representation of feminine features in men and masculine ones in women, as part of the connotative discourse of change. To measure the LGTBIQ+ presence, we have considered only those characters who have made their gender identity public. Therefore, we obtained few references, specifically concentrated in *GQ* Spain (20%), *GQ* Italy and *GQ* UK (10%).

The metric (figure 2) also considered the gender equality code referring specifically to the frequency with which the male and female genders appear on the covers, the social status, and the treatment of the character's profession. The values of *Vogue* USA and Spain (18%) and *GQ* UK (20%) stand out. The majority of *Vogue* covers feature women, with the exception of *Vogue* USA December 2020, dedicated to Harry Styles, and *GQ* UK September, starring British footballer Marcus Rashford and English model Adwoa Aboah. In the case of *GQ*, the gender imbalance is greater, with the male image occupying practically all the covers.



Graph 2. Contingency and comparison of new gender patterns by country

Source: Own elaboration.

The exception is GQ UK, with three covers featuring women, representing masculinity (Billie Eilish and Daisy Ridley) or extreme femininity (Dua Lipa).

Finally, data mining confirms the primacy of traditional gender stereotyping (binarism and sexualization) in all publications, and a progressive trend towards an increase in inclusive and diverse visual discourse.

Regarding the diversity discourse on the covers of both magazines, figure 2 illustrates some of the editorial choices referred to in the previous paragraph, for both cases.



Figure 2. Diversity discourse on the cover

Source: Vogue USA (12/2020 and 08/2020), GQ Spain (10/2020), and GQ UK (09/2020).

Phase 2

Block 3. Inclusivity, diversity and gender in fashion through the professional perspective

The panel discussion was held in January 2021, once the previous content analysis had been conducted. Its development went smoothly, without difficulties as it worked with the preliminary report of the first methodological phase (Ph1). The experts' assessment yielded interesting data on the social projection of gender equality in the sector (GSI), as well as the general trend towards inclusiveness and diversity. First, they discussed generically about stereotypes in industry magazines. There was consensus about the presence of a marked tendency towards stereotypes. Some 87.5% said that stereotypes are "very commonly" represented on magazine covers, compared to 12.5% who see them as "common". On the other hand, there is a slight difference in men's magazines, with the majority (82%) stating that they appear "very commonly" and 18% saying they are reflected in a "moderate" way. According to the previous results, variables such as clothing and makeup reinforce the stereotyped message through these visual identifiers that are linked to binary gender codes. Regarding the beauty canons disseminated by the magazines, the professionals agree with the report and with the type of features represented in the magazines analyzed. Specifically, in the case of the use of certain characters on the covers, most of them are of the opinion that both female and male magazines are not faithful to reality since, as the analysis indicates, there is a wide tendency to use extremely thin and young bodies.

Regarding the inclusivity of the covers (GII), the experts are quite categorical in affirming that it is a reality in the editorial staff of the magazines, something that is hardly reflected in the data obtained from the covers' analysis. Considering this, they also assessed the possibility of a commoditization of inclusivity to gain readers. Along the same lines, in the fashion business sphere, they recognize the openness of brands towards an inclusive discourse. In general, they show a tendency to change, with 62.5% saying they "strongly agree", compared to 37.5% who say they "agree". The same is true for men's magazines, with the majority saying they agree with the change. However, these data again contrast with those obtained in the preliminary report, since the analysis of the covers reveals a slight and timid trend towards the representation of patterns of inclusivity as opposed to the traditional canon that has prevailed until now.

As for the reflection of sexual diversity (GII), professionals are of the opinion that, in both female and male magazines, there are references to homosexuality (98%). However, in transsexuality there is some difference between experts and the report presented. While the data from the first phase predict a trend towards its reflection with the inclusion of celebrities, the experts state that, in women's magazines, transsexuality is "barely" reflected on the covers (89%), compared to

11% who state that it “does not appear”. In the case of male magazines, 75% reiterate that it is “not at all” reflected and 25%, “very little”.

Finally, in relation to gender equality (GII), the experts’ opinions were polarized, sometimes related to the preliminary report and sometimes, not. This trend is more pronounced in women’s magazines, as the professionals have not given a clear response. Some say that the trend sees little presence of equality features in the visual content of these magazines (25%), compared to 38.5% who see a moderate presence, and 36.5% who defend the clear reflection of this equality discourse on the covers. In men’s magazines, the trend is even clearer. Coinciding with women’s magazines, 62.5% state that gender equality marks are “hardly” reflected, compared to 25% who think that they are “not at all” or “very little” present, and 12.5% state that they are reflected in a “moderate” way. These data reinforce the difference with the results of the analysis of covers from the first phase, which, while confirming the primacy of the traditional gender stereotype, have a progression towards inclusiveness. It is debatable whether these practices are genuine, as well as whether they do not also contribute to equality, inclusion, and diversity by increasing their representation.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In a context of dysfunction of social and gender discourse, feminist mobilization, the fight against stereotypes, and the vindication of new identities, it is complex to discover whether fashion champions change or continues to reproduce the canon (de Freitas et al., 2017). Starting from the idea that magazines, in the first instance, are self-defined and directed towards a markedly binary and stereotyped public (*Vogue* to women and *GQ* to men, regardless of their readers), understanding the way in which publications embody change entails a great challenge. Similarly, ascertaining the equivalences and differences between women’s and men’s magazines has been an added objective to argue for the consolidation of traditional beauty stereotypes on the cover or, on the contrary, the dissemination of a visual narrative of inclusion and diversity.

In the case of women’s magazines, although there is a trend towards the inclusion of renewed and non-stereotypical profiles, the patriarchal heritage is still very visible. The tyranny of thinness, exacerbated youth, or the canons of beauty far from reality continue to represent the majority trend on the covers, confirming that there is, indeed, an ambiguity when it comes to the (de)construction of stereotypes and, of course, of gender identities. In light of these results, the represented fashion media industry does not seem to allow the real challenge of the binary social model (Velasco Molpeceres, 2022; Åkestam et al., 2017). Far from promoting it, it remains timidly cautious about showing other realities.

In contrast to the political and media narrative, the research uncovers significant percentages of Caucasian versus black or Asian minorities in magazines. Only in the US and UK editions of *Vogue* does the number of black ethnic profiles exceed that of white women. In the rest, the presence of black ethnicity is exceptional. In the *GQ* editions, the Caucasian man is the exponent, with a marked difference with respect to the black race and the non-presence of Asians.

Findings from previous studies on the reproduction of classic stereotypes are confirmed. The pervasive model of slim and slender women (Volonté, 2019) in women's magazines reaffirms the need to ensure profit production in the fashion industry (Entwistle & Slater, 2012; Entwistle, 2009), offering only a selection of successful products that reduce uncertainty in purchase (Mears, 2011), and to manipulate the models's physique, makeup, clothing, body language, consumption, and life choices (Wissinger, 2007).

The already consolidated trajectory of women's magazines sets the rules. However, and more significantly in the men's ones, issues such as androgyny, transsexuality, or homosexuality (Mauriès, 2017) are more periodic and enjoy greater freedom when it comes to their representation. In this vein, it should be noted that the covers of *Vogue* and *GQ* approach change through the inclusion of male characters on the covers of women's magazines, and vice versa. This situation, far from symbolizing transgression, perpetuates classic stereotypes, reducing the initiative to exchanging markedly binary codes.

The revolution is limited to presenting men in a medium traditionally aimed at women and vice versa, something that endorses the binary rigidity despite the contrary pretensions evidenced in the magazine redactions, as stated by the experts. From this, it is clear that, on the one hand, it is complex to abandon the classic canons and stereotypes of beauty (GSI) through this media format, but it also seems evident that the signs of change are questionable when their objective is to achieve a greater number of readers, making evident a commodification of gender identities at the disposal of the magazine. In this regard, it goes without saying that magazines tend to reflect the concerns of their target public in order to sustain themselves economically and with the aim of taking care of their readers. It is worth wondering about the value and interest of the audiences in accepting this change and rupture of the conventionally binary. In any case, and for both profiles, it is evident that the change is visualized more through prescribers and celebrities.

Those covers that have turned out to be more inclusive correspond to celebrities who have made their sexual identity public, thus highlighting that the prescriber (in this case, the celebrity) is the true protagonist who leads the change, relegating the magazine to the background. In short, this discussion shows that publishers

still do not have the capacity to escape from traditional values and emancipate themselves from the outdated canons, stereotypes, and signs of patriarchy. The need to count on the support of a prescriber/influencer evidences that these publications could still depend on the ideological position of large publishing groups or investing brands, sheltered by the dynamics of power, symbolic violence, and its transgression (Foucault, 2014). In the case of the latter, the tendency to change becomes much more present, as they share a message directed towards diversity and the use of fluid gender models. Some experts agree in interpreting the incorporation of non-binary, androgynous, agender, or transgender identities on the covers as an interest of magazines to produce commodification campaigns that attract audiences, in line with neoliberal ideology.

However, the experts' vision opens a path towards the transgression of traditional values. Brands have identified a renewal that is becoming more palpable in the sector in general, to the detriment of publications. The day-to-day work of these professionals demands an attentive look at social trends that they then present in collections, photography, or modeling. However, these opinions contrast with the findings. The new gender schemes seem to coincide more with the brands' purposes than with the editorials' reality. Considering that fashion creations are close to art, the environment favors a greater creative and expressive freedom that does not correspond to the editorial economic dependence of many media. That is why perhaps there is still a long way to go to affirm that this type of publications are the protagonists that lead the change towards diversity.

It is still complex to find associations of the social gender discourse in the field of fashion, despite what it represents within the codes of art and culture. The results of the study raise a reflection on the dominance of archaic patterns of femininity and masculinity in an advanced technological society. The sociology of fashion reveals a slow process of change and empowers the symbolism of a beauty canon that causes harmful effects on the imaginary of consumers and on their aspirational concept of luxury (Boselli, 2012).

The findings confirm the preeminence and continuity of the classic canon of beauty and gender in women's and men's fashion magazines (RQ1), with the presence of values such as old age, the curvy typology, or the black and Asian race being considered exceptional and not significant. Similarly, clothing characteristics govern (Wisinger, 2015) that further emphasize binary gender stereotypes. The tyranny of thinness, which stifles the creativity of exclusive design (Volonté, 2012), refers to a behavior initiated in brands and derived to magazines that converges in the triangle of white, young, slender woman (Díaz-Soloaga & Muñoz-Muriel, 2011), an erotic and patriarchal symbol.

In the face of the potential for gender stereotypes as an inherent feature of the covers (RQ2), no planned strategy is detected that shows intentionality or possibility of change in the editorial framework, something that other studies have also found in fashion advertising (Mazahir et al., 2020). The expert panel contradicts this behavior in the creative design sector, which they see as a germ of reaction against gender classicism, advocating an a-gender, non-sexualized, non-binary policy that distinguishes the person ahead of the feminine or masculine.

This necessary translation of the values of inclusivity and diversity to the realm of fashion magazines (RQ3) converges with a multiple scenario, conditioned by the social norm, by feminist activism, and by the values of the collective imaginary (Akdemir, 2018). The exceptionality of codes that reinforce the discourse of gender equality, inclusive and diverse, is a defining feature of fashion covers. Despite everything, women's magazines champion an openness to change that contrasts with the position of male magazines, more inclined to represent the values of patriarchy, inherent to their gender idiosyncrasy.

In any case, it is key to consider limitations related to a sample composed of only two magazines of the same publishing group, within a broad sector, which also reproduce homogeneous social trends, in addition to the impossibility of studying the perspective of inclusiveness and diversity on all the sources featured on the covers, given the anonymity of their sexual condition. These are aspects that correspond to future research lines, the expansion of the sample of magazines, and experts operating in other international markets, directly related to the publishing sector. Likewise, broadening the sample through the analysis of other publications, as well as extending the study to other international markets, could lead to very interesting experiences and considerations regarding the gender's performativity, even enlightening the consumers' perspective if the research is extended to a study of audience reception or public opinion. Last but not least, it remains to know if there are sociocultural elements that affect each country at the national level (Scalisse, 2021), and to know the digital context of magazines (Cristófol Rodríguez et al., 2017; Sanz Marcos et al., 2020).

The assumption that fashion magazines can be responsible for leading the necessary change in social reality is still questionable. The combination of all the factors in the study confirms a product that continues to reproduce the stereotype, conditioned by the universal rules of marketing, advertising, and the market, in a global dynamic marked by the ambiguities of identity politics in neoliberal socioeconomic dynamics (Coulter & Moruzi, 2022).

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

CONCHA PÉREZ-CURIEL, tenured professor of the Department of Journalism 2 at the Universidad de Sevilla. She belongs to the Communication and Social Sciences research group (SEJ-619). She participates as a researcher member in R+D+i excellence projects. Her lines of research are framed in political communication, political journalism, and communication and fashion. She has published in scientific journals of international reach.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1888-0451>

PALOMA SANZ-MARCOS, professor of the Department of Marketing and Communication at the Universidad de Cádiz. Ph.D. in Communication (international mention from UC Berkeley, California), she holds a degree in Advertising and Public Relations, and combines her teaching activity in several Spanish universities with research in the area of communication. Her lines of research focus on branding and digital communication, especially in the field of risk sports and popular culture.

 <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6103-6993>

ANA VELASCO MOLPECERES, professor of the Department of Journalism and New Media at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid. Ph.D. in Communication, with extraordinary doctoral award. She holds a degree in Journalism, is graduated in Art History and Geography and History, and master in Communication Research. Her lines of research focus on fashion, politics and identities.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0593-0325>