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***Glossy* representations of nationality and culture across popular magazine
websites: A comparative analysis.**

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree:

Bachelor of Arts (Masters) in Linguistics

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Declaration

I Farhaanah Hassim hereby declare that *Glossy representations of nationality and culture across popular magazine websites: A comparative analysis*, is my own unsupported work that is being submitted to the degree of Master of Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand and has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university and that all sources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Signature:  Date: 30 April 2021

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Abstract

Regarding magazines as a significant source of data explicating the performances of social factors such as gender, race, and class amongst others, this study explored the discursive constructions of nationality and culture on the homepage of four multinational magazine websites. Arguing for the recognition of nationality and culture as significant social characteristics of identity.

Based on a review of the literature, this study collected screenshots of the homepage of Cosmopolitan, Elle, Harper's Bazaar, and Vogue magazine websites. The screenshots were then analysed using multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) focusing on the manifestations of nationality and culture

A mixed-method social constructionist research paradigm demonstrated that aspects of identity represented across the magazine websites including nationality and culture were consistently enclosed in discourses of beautification fuelled by capitalist practices. Revealing that capitalism ultimately determines the regulatory standards of society. This study was however limited to geographical regions wherein English editions were published.

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Glossy representations of nationality and culture across popular magazine websites: A comparative analysis.

1 Introduction

Magazines are deemed as an abundant space for the manifestation of social philosophies due to their significance and influence in the everyday life across class, race, and gender (Rooks & Weekley, 2016). As a result, magazines are important guides on what it means to be a member of certain societal groupings (Rooks & Weekley, 2016). While still present in print formats, magazines have progressed and developed an online presence.

Paying attention to language in the media reveals a wealth of data concerning representations of the self, due to the pragmatic and social functions of language being able to mark social membership and belonging (Johnson & Ensslin, 2007). Focusing on the online presence of magazines, this study attributes nationality and culture as valuable inquiries of the self, as it allows one to define oneself as a member of a particular nation and culture. Considering the multinational characteristic of magazine brands demonstrated through their presence in many geographical regions, this study posits magazines as a significant site for the expression of nationality and culture.

Research on magazines has yielded insightful evidence on the dominant discourses of society. Particularly in reference to physical and social characteristics of identity through consumerist practices. Identity, as a socio-cultural phenomenon, develops in consonance with other social beings and structures. Thus, identity is a combination of defining factors pertaining to physical, biological, and social factors.

Magazines have been argued to 'sell' identities through the various advertisements transmitted between producers and consumers (Matheson, 2005), leading to the argument that individuals identify themselves through consumption (Holt, 1995). Due to the cross-

national and cross-cultural characteristic of magazines as a result of their extensive global reach, magazines serve as a fertile space for the recognition of consumer culture.

In view of magazines as one of the oldest forms of print media that continue to adapt and grow in popularity for the aim of economic consumption, this study analyses the semiotic manifestations of nationality and culture through an analysis of the homepage of four popular multinational magazine brands: Cosmopolitan, Elle, Harper's Bazaar and Vogue.

Guided by Sociolinguistic theories concerned with language in the media, representation, and consumption, this study will conduct a comparative analysis of the symbolic manifestations of nationality and culture across magazine brands in aims to establish a relationship between nationality, culture, brand identity, and consumption.

In pursuing the goal of this study, I begin with a discussion of the aim and objectives in chapter 1. Followed by a review of the relevant literature informing the debate between nationality, culture, language in the media, and consumption presented in chapter 2. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the theoretical framework, followed by chapter 4 serving an overview of the guiding research design and methodology employed. Chapter 5 introduces and presents the data, with chapter 6 housing a discussion of the overarching themes communicated in the data. Chapter 7 concludes the results yielded.

1.1 Aim and objectives.

Magazines as a communicative form of media have long been a rich and significant source of data, due to their ability to influence the views and attitudes of their readers (Vybíralová, 2009). Magazines provide readers with a regular dose of celebrity gossip, fashion, health and fitness, sports, or automotive trends to name a few from the array of magazines that speak to the desires of the consuming public.

The media has a great influence on the construction of the world and oneself through the use of language, signs, and images, used to represent reality (Govender, Rawjee, & Govender,

2014), hence the media has been considered a powerful tool, as it serves as an “agent of socialization, a carrier of culture and a way of communicating ideology” (O’Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2006, p. 327).

Woman’s lifestyle magazines as a modern form of popular culture helps readers transform by morally scrutinizing the lives of celebrities and further gives its readers the ability to develop into a “more moral, knowledgeable, (feminine) ideal person” (Fairclough, 2008, p.19). Making woman’s lifestyle magazines a key site for the legitimization and reproduction of acceptable social identities.

Born in the 1960s, accompanied by the improved accessibility of alternate visual media forms such as television (Murphy, 2013), magazines had to compete with other forms of visual media in terms of their advertising ability, as their existence relied heavily on their ability to influence the consumption of commodities. Making magazines an essential component in the global economy. Iqani (2012) emphasises this as the author states that magazine producers experienced a considerable economic gain in exchange for the dissemination of advertisements, ultimately establishing magazines as an intermediary between producers and consumers.

Okazaki, Mueller, & Taylor (2010) states that the development and acceptance of advertising are dependent on the extent to which it relates to the values, norms, and goals of its target market, essentially requiring the producer to acknowledge the culture of the consumer. The success of a magazine depends on its attention to the culture of its readers, focusing on the “needs, desires, hopes, fears and aspirations of the reader” (Holmes, 2008, p.5). Leading to the formation of a community between the reader and the producers of the magazine, deeming the magazine as a product of the community and therefore a product of culture (Hofstede, 2011). Thus, the analysis of social factors such as class, race, gender, and sex within the media has yielded insightful conclusions, illuminating hidden practices, values, and morals of societies.

However, with the advent and success of the internet, magazines experienced a similar challenge as before, as the internet afforded producers multiple avenues of advertising. Thus, initiating the online presence of magazines that often involved the online production of content while maintaining their traditional print editions.

This study aims to explore the discursive representations of nationality and culture, as overlooked aspects of identity (Kramer, 2017). Nationality and culture contribute to an individual's identity, as it allows one to define themselves as members of nations and cultures.

De Celia, Reisigl, & Wodak (1999) states that "Identity is always and necessarily a politics of the creation of difference" (Reisigl, & Wodak, 1999, p.2), and that it is through language that difference is manifested, it is essentially the '*difference*' that this study aims to shed a light on through the lens of nationality and culture.

The goal of this study is to comparatively analyse the homepage of four multinational magazines across three different countries. This study compares the discursive constructions of nationality and culture through the analysis of multimodal semiotic resources, as concepts such as nationality and culture take on different forms depending on the context in which they emerge. This study, therefore, questions how nationality and culture are semiotically represented by magazine brands across the digital space, an "increasingly globalized developing market where nationalism is on the rise" (Liu, Tao & Tsai, 2017, p. 352). Illuminating the presence of national and cultural forms on magazine websites as well as their relationship. As nationality and culture have been argued to be inextricably linked to one another (Kramer, 2007), this study questions if there are differences in their semiotic manifestations across the digital space.

Through an analysis of digital data, this study discusses online multinational brand identity as represented on the homepage, concentrating on the consistency of the perceived online brand of magazines across the countries under analysis. In doing so, this study further investigates to what extent the identity of a brand can be considered flexible to resonate with

an audience of a different nationality and culture for economic gain. This study additionally questions if the brand identity of the magazine is consistent cross-nationally and cross-culturally.

This study fundamentally focuses on the ideologies that are carried within semiotic modes of expression and illustrates that it is through a critical discourse analysis that ideologies communicated by the brands can be investigated.

This research contributes to the existing research literature concerning the online presence of one of the oldest forms of print media, magazines. Sociolinguistic research on magazines has predominantly focused on the representation of social identity with respect to discourses surrounding class, race, gender, and sexuality. This study attributes concepts of nationality and culture as important analytical inquiries, vital for debates regarding identity.

The digital space is described as a cultural meeting place, aiding in the process of globalization with increased internet access across the globe and its ability to make the global, local (Pauwels, 2012). The digital space frees one from geographic confinements, creating a “community” that is not confined to any place (Dentzel¹). This is further emphasized by Thompson (1995), who states: “We feel ourselves to belong to groups and communities which are constituted in part through the media” (Thomson, 1995, p.35). Thus, used as a means of differentiation and identification, notions of nationality and culture become significant inquiries on the digital space, positing websites as a fresh form of data in analysing identity.

The websites of the magazines are thus of particular significance, due to the multinational distribution, and further, the presence of social factors such as gender, race, and sex to name a few as revealed by longstanding research. This study, therefore, analyses the homepage of the magazine under the same critical lens commonly applied to magazine covers, intending to uncover national and cultural forms of representation.

¹ <https://www.bbvaopenmind.com/en/articles/internet-changed-everyday-life/>

Schroeder (2015) states that it is often a comparative analysis that draws one's attention to different 'modes', illuminating great similarities and differences that serve as a branding technique. As this study aims to analyse the consistency of brand representation across multinational boundaries, a comparative analysis will provide insight into the similarities and differences of semiotic resource use across mass media forms such as magazines based on a difference of geographical region and thus nationality and culture.

Drawing upon multimodal critical discourse analysis, this study further explicates the significance of visual structures as vessels for meaning as well as their role in the formations of identity, as a tool in the economic market, and further how meaning is dependent on the context in which they emerge.

2 Literature review

In the review of existing literature serving as the driving force behind the conception of this study, I will discuss nationality touching on arguments made by Billig (1995) in addition to Anderson (2006). Hereafter I discuss ideologies surrounding culture guided by arguments put forth by Hofstede (2011) amongst others. Followed by a discussion of concepts relevant to language in the media, taking note of arguments put forth by Johnson & Ensslin (2007). Hereafter I review the history of magazines, explicating their importance within society. Where after I discuss woman's lifestyle magazines and their online equivalent. A discussion of theories of consumption influenced by Holt (1995) and Iqani (2012) concludes the section.

2.1 Nationality

Due to technological advancements and stronger economic relations because of globalization, businesses are no longer limited by borders (Block, 2004, p. 14). Giddens (1990)

defines globalization as the process whereby the expansion of worldwide social relations exerts an influence of global events on local events and vice versa (Giddens, 1990, p. 64). Globalization is said to have increased with the emergence of capitalism and the introduction of new communication technologies (Pieterse, 1997). Many scholars of the social sciences have argued that globalization could have detrimental effects on culture through homogenization (Ritzer, 1998; Barber, 1995) arguing that everyone will soon have the same values, morals, and behaviour.

Homogenization has similarly been disputed by scholars, with Robertson (1995) arguing that globalization primarily portrays the collaboration of the global with the local and vice versa, operationalizing this argument with the concept of glocalization in the economic context wherein global products are marketed with local preferences.

As a transnational form of media and product, magazine brands are symbolic of globalization fuelled by consumerist practices. Vogue, an American fashion magazine, illustrated this by extending its readership and geographical footprint by releasing the “British (1916), French (1920), and even Argentinean (1924) editions.” (David, 2006, p. 14). Elle a French fashion magazine similarly demonstrated this by releasing USA and UK versions in 1985 (Nömm, 2007).

Magazine brands are often tasked with aligning their product with the target audience. Similarly, multinational magazine brands must therefore correlate with their global audience, differentiated by geography and nationalities. Concepts of the nation, nationality as well as nationalism have all proven difficult to define, states Anderson (2006), apart from their discursive constructions (Vessey, 2013). Theorists of nationalism characterise it as a socio-cultural concept arguing that “in the modern world everyone can, should, and will have a nationality, just as he or she has a gender” (Anderson, 2006, p. 5) attributing nationality as a part of an individual’s identity, national identity.

Vessey (2013) provides a discussion on the influence of language on the conceptualizations of Canadian national identity within different contexts: Quebec national identity, English Canadian national identity, and pan-Canadian national identity through a comparative content analysis of English and French-Canadian newspapers. The author argues that the nation has been legitimized through the usage of a common language and that nationalism is due to the dispersion of language awareness.

Anderson (2006) defines nations as imagined political communities, 'imagined' as members within a nation will never know most of their fellow members. The bond of nationhood is only realized "through practices in which individuals imagine connections between themselves" (Vessey, 2013, p. 39), Anderson argues that this is largely due to a result of language. Pickel (2013) further emphasizes this as he argues that language serves as a prerequisite for the acquisition of culture.

Vessey (2013) further states that the printing press has also contributed to the spread of national ideologies, as individuals found that they can relate to one another despite geographical locations. Arguing that "since they could read and understand the same language and material, they imagined themselves being connected through language" (Vessey, 2013, p. 39-40).

A nation is thus described as a group of individuals who share the same mental representation of national language/ languages through which a connection is established (Vessey, 2013, p. 40). As a result, the media is considered to be vital for the emergence of the national consciousness of an 'imagined community' (Vessey, 2013, p.49).

Vessey (2013) argues that the concept of nationalism serves as an unconscious understanding of the nation, "a system of shared beliefs regarding the nation" (p. 36). The media has long been wealthy in resources pertaining to nationalism as well as language ideology as revealed by Johnson & Ensslin (2007). Vessey (2013) further provides an argument stating that due to the cumulative and repetitive distribution of information in the media, the media constructs

the representation of, and the reproduction of society and ultimately the nation (p. 41), and further that this information carries significance as it is authoritative and widely distributed, thus enabling the media to function as “ideological brokers” between society and the consumers. Illustrating that traditional media is crucial for the implicit and explicit constructions of nations and thus nationalism.

Billig (1995) provides a riveting discussion of the subtle reproductions of nationalism within the media, revealing that national identities are fixated in routines of social life (p. 175). Billig (1995) questions how individuals maintain their national identity outside of state ceremonies, sporting events as well as national triumphs presenting the waving of nationalist flags, and thus argues that national identity is more than an “inner psychological state” (Billig, 1995, p. 69).

Billig (1995) states that national identity is a conceptualization of life experienced in a world of nations, a conceptualization that is often overlooked. The author argues that it is not that national identity is no longer deemed relevant but that “the symbols that ‘flag’ the nation daily no longer register as significant” (Skey, 2009, p. 332). Surveying British newspapers, Billig (1995) describes how the newspapers characterize the world as an assortment of nations, ascribing this to the use of categorizing terms such as ‘home’ and ‘foreign’ communicated in accordance with its relevance to its readers.

The author further illustrates that the media addresses a national audience using deictic expressions including ‘we’, ‘our’, ‘us’, and ‘here’ to signify the nation (Billig, 1995, p.105). Billig (1995) further discusses globalization and rejects arguments that state globalization serves as a threat to nations. Instead, Billig (1995) parallels globalization with Americanisation (p. 153), due to the dominance of American culture and thus urged other theorists to analyse the most powerful nationalism in the world, that of the United States (Billig, 2009, p. 351). The author argues that there is a “global transmission of American culture” (Billig, 1995, p. 150), however, a study describing the quality and quantity of this is yet to be done.

As is common in the world of Academia, Billig's work has experienced scrutiny, many of which argue that Billig (1995) has not invested much space in his book to discuss the relationship between the media and nations and nationalism, he does, however, acknowledge the implicit role that it plays in the reproduction of banal nationalism. Billig's work on banal nationalism has paved the way to the empirical exploration of the reproduction of national identity through daily practices (Skey, 2009, p. 334). Daily practices that Chaney (2002) argues forms the infrastructure for social reality.

Discussing the relationship between the media and the constructions of nationalism, Szulc (2017) provides a compelling discussion of the liaison between online media and thus online constructions of nationalism. Szulc (2017) states that the "internet serves as a new archive, mirror and laboratory for the negotiation of national identity" (Diamandaki (2003) as cited in Szulc, 2017, p. 2). The internet further has the ability to transgress territorial boundaries, making them meaningless. Szulc (2017) thus aims to illustrate to what extent nationality is reproduced on the internet.

The author begins by questioning if it is possible to identify a website as a national website in a similar way to traditional media, and thus makes reference to Rogers (2013) who argues that there are numerous ways to identify the nationality of a website such as through the language used, where the website is registered as well as subject matter. However, Szulc (2017) argues that Rogers assumes that nationality can be identified on all websites and thus imposes a "national framework on the web without explaining why such a framework would be relevant to the web in the first place." (p.4).

Szulc (2017) then discusses the content on the internet as an indicator of banal nationalism such as hyperlinks which were categorized by country in Szulc (2016), who conducted an analysis of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) websites in Poland and Turkey. Szulc (2016) additionally noted that country maps and national symbols and colours used, all served as cues for nationality.

The author further states that the internet structure can also serve as an indicator of nationality, Szulc (2017) illustrates this by discussing the domain name system (DNS). The DNS is further divided into two domains: 1) top-level domain such as '.com' and 2) country-code top-level domain such as '.uk' used for the UK (Szulc, 2017, p.6). McDowell (2003, as cited in Szulc, 2017, p.6) argues that the internet was instilled as an "arena that would transcend territorial divisions of the world, the domain name structure reproduces these divisions" the author thus argues that these domains reproduce nationality in a banal way as they often go unnoticed.

Szulc (2017) therefore serves as a note-worthy resource as the author discusses some of the ways in which nationalism is represented in a banal way across the internet. The author further serves as a notable resource for the semiotic constructions of nationality across multinational magazine websites, aiming to highlight the difference in the constructions of nationalism and culture due to differences in magazine brands, within different countries and thus different discourse communities.

The concept of nationality has long been associated with the concept of culture, Kavoori & Chadha (2009) argues that culture "operationalizes issues of nationalism and capitalism" (p.336), arguing that culture serves as the traditional signifier and discursive representation of national identity, intensifying the concept of global ethnicities such as Asian, Latino, and Arab, etc. For this reason, culture serves as the next concept of inquiry.

2.2 Culture

It has been argued that due to mediated globalization, culture operationalizes capitalism through the cultural value of consumption (Kavoori & Chadha, 2009). This is explicated by Holt (1995) who describes consuming as a method by which: "objects- viewed as vessels of cultural and personal meanings act to classify their consumers." (Holt, 1995, p.2).

Hofstede (2011) defines culture as “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others” (Hofstede, 2011, p. 3). Culture thus serves as a factor of similarity as well as differentiation, and further guides our daily actions (Hillier, 2003).

Hofstede (2011) states that communicative practices are influenced by cultural factors, hence producers rely on their cultural norms in the creation of mediated material, especially material that serves to persuade consumers. Okazaki, Mueller, & Taylor (2010) States that advertisements that are in line with cultural values are more effective than those that are not, with research confirming that advertising content varies according to culture (Cheng & Schweitzer, 1996). Advertisements and the platforms through which they are transmitted, are thus expected to reflect the realities and norms of society culture.

Advertising allows for the permeation of culture, as individuals have different needs, values, beliefs, and lifestyles. Pollay (1986) states: “advertising reflects certain attitudes, behaviours, and values. It models and reinforces certain lifestyles and philosophies, those that serve the seller’s interests. It displays those values that are most readily linked to the available products that are easily dramatized in advertisements. Advertising is, therefore, a “selective reinforcement of only some behaviour and values” (Pollay & Gallagher, 1990, p. 360).

As magazines have been described as a product that promotes the consumption of other products, it is thus drenched with advertisements. The development and acceptance of the advertisements are dependent upon the culture in which they emerge. In essence, establishing magazines as a material extension of culture.

Kress & Van Leeuwen (2003) have illustrated that visual structures act as vessels for interpretations of experience and social interaction, arguing that meaning belongs to culture, therefore meaning is culturally specific. Research on magazine covers has illustrated the cultural norms concerning gender, race, sexuality, and other social factors through the close analysis of the semiotic resources carefully employed with the goal of consumption.

As stated previously, this study aims to discuss the discursive constructions of social membership through the critical analysis of national and cultural values across the homepages of multinational magazine brands within different countries. The last generation has witnessed drastic media developments, such as the online presence of traditional print media; Magazines, which serve as the data set for analysis in this study.

As magazines are drenched with consumerist practices, their online equivalent is no different. Consumption practices reflect societal values, thus “effective advertising and marketing are linked to the underlying culture of its target market” (Singh, Zhau & Hu, 2005, p. 130) hence making culture a significant concept of analysis in this study.

Previous cross-cultural research across the digital space has predominantly concerned themselves with website interactivity, site quality, and usability (Luna et al., 2002; Simon, 2001; Tsiriktsis, 2002), all of which conclude that consumers prefer localized content. However, Singh & Pereira (2005) argue that no study offers a framework to attain website localization. This study, however, aims to identify the discursive construction of website localization manifested through cultural and national elements.

Describing the internet as a rich cultural source, Luc Pauwels (2012) argues that the analysis of cultural signifiers within the rich multimodal characteristics of websites uncovers the implicit and explicit meaning with regards to norms and values around social factors such as race, class, and gender to name a few, and thus regards the media space as a source of significant social and cultural data.

Due to language in all its multimodal forms being central to the media and its influence on the circulation of symbolic representations of society, language in the media serves a vital distinct field in Sociolinguistics, whose concepts inform the progress of this study. Therefore, language in the media is discussed in the section to follow.

2.3 Language in the media

The media serves as a large repository of language, making it an important linguistic institution (Bell, 1995). The media, more specifically, the Language in the media forms a large part of the language that people are exposed to in their daily lives, therefore the media is often argued to reflect and influence language within communities and further society at large (Bell, 1995). Language in the media is significant within the field of Sociolinguistics as the media is- to a large extent, a social institution that has the power to influence society (Bruce, Schramm, Schiller, Lufts, Adley, Hurst & Hale, 1974).

The study of language in the media has yielded insightful results, with findings describing the media as a mirror of society to itself (Matheson, 2005), as the media symbolizes reality through the use of language, signs, and images (Govender, Rawjee, & Govender, 2014). Analysing media texts wherein language is explicitly thematized, Johnson & Ensslin (2007) look at the function of the media in the representation and construction of language, providing a collection of essays discussing language use in the media.

The authors argue that the media is a highly diversified organ of dissemination that incorporates a range of unique material that shapes practices of the production and reception of this material. The authors further argue that our lives are inherently influenced by the production and consumption of these mediated meanings (Johnson & Ensslin, 2007). Individuals are thus subjected to and in control of “medial informational flows that both construct and transfer ideologies between individuals, producers, and consumers” (Johnson & Ensslin, 2007, p. 11).

Media is defined as any medium wherein meaning is produced and transferred, at a micro-cultural level: through clothes, hair, and body language, and a macro-cultural level: posters, road signs, architecture, and advertisements (Johnson & Ensslin, 2007, p. 12). Language operates within both micro and macro cultural levels.

Johnson & Ensslin (2007) describe language together with the visual image as “the most powerful tool available to social actors” (Johnson & Ensslin, 2007, p. 12). The media is a substantial purpose-driven social system cooperating with other social systems. The media “mirrors and promotes a dynamic set of ideologies” (Johnson & Ensslin, 2007, p. 11) constituting it as a significant space of analysis.

Johnson & Ensslin (2007) further states that meaning is also sought in the representation and construction of language itself, as language is a “discursive construct, product of social interaction, it reflects the ideologies of those who engage with it discursively and performatively” (Johnson & Ensslin, 2007, p. 14).

The media is of significance due to its ability to “unify the marginal with the dominant, the parochial with the cosmopolitan and the local with the global” (Conboy, 2003 *as cited in* Johnson & Ensslin, 2007, p. 14). The advancement of global technologies has allowed for an expansive symbolic network, able to create ‘novel realities’ extending the local with a global reach, enabling pragmatic and social functions of language to mark social membership and belonging. It is precisely this characteristic of the media that this study aims to investigate, looking at the discursive construction of social membership and belonging in the form of national and cultural elements.

Through the print media, the voices of the social actors become public voices who aim to create a “*regime of representation*” concealed as common sense, thus strengthening a set of political proposals (Johnson & Ensslin, 2007, p. 127). This study aims to analyse the national and cultural elements present in what Johnson & Ensslin, (2007) term as the “*regime of representation*”.

Horner discusses the relationship between language and ideology, questioning how the print media produces and reproduces nationalist language ideologies in Luxembourg. The author discusses this in relation to a multilingual education system. The author states that “language and nationalist ideologies are intertwined” thus complicating their differentiation and as a

result, the differentiation between ethnic and civic nations (Johnson & Ensslin, 2007, p. 144), illustrating the relation between language and nationality. Johnson & Ensslin (2007) thus serves as a notable source in reference to language and the media making it an invaluable resource to this study.

As this study focuses on print media in the form of women's magazines, the next section will provide a brief history of magazines, initiating a discussion on lifestyle magazines as well as magazine websites.

2.4 History of Magazines

Making their debut in the 19th century, magazines are known as one of the original modes of print media (Iqani, 2012). However, the average person was not able to read magazines due to their income limitations. In the 20th century, producers offered their pages to advertisers and as a result, experienced more financial gain from advertisements, allowing prices to drop, leading to an increased circulation (Iqani, 2012, p. 5) and as a result introducing magazines into the market system.

The success of magazines as a commodity was therefore dependent on their ability to influence the consumption of other commodities, establishing magazines as intermediaries between producers and the consumer public. The 20th century gave rise to one of the most iconic individuals in publishing: William Randolph Hearst who owned an array of print media forms including newspapers, and further expanded into the magazine publishing industry, creating the well-known *Housekeeping*, *National Geographic*, and the first fashion magazine: *Harper's Bazaar* (Hofstede, 2011). Shortly after, the magazine industry welcomed publications such as Conde Nast's *Vogue*, *Vanity Fair*, *Life*, *Sports Illustrated* as well as a news magazine: *Time*, created by Henry Luce (Peterson, 1975).

In 1945, France, Helene Gordon Lazareff launched *Elle* magazine which served as a guide on how to be attractive for French women (Demarest & Garner, 1992). The magazine grew in

success as Lazareff promoted various designers such as Dior in 1945 and Brigitte Bardot in 1950. She then employed a feminist, Françoise Giroud who would later run the popular French political: *L'Express*. In 1958 Lazareff further promoted the coming back of the famous Mademoiselle and Coco Chanel (Demarest & Garner, 1992).

Across the Atlantic, the USA experienced an increase in magazine production due to a creative revolution. However as there were no computers or visual enhancing programs such as *Photoshop*, the magazine sector was a difficult industry to be involved in, as each stage of production was done manually, taking four months to produce one issue (Peterson, 1975).

Celebrity magazines emerged in the 1970s, birthing one of the most selling women's magazines to date: *Cosmopolitan*, initially introduced as a family magazine, *Cosmopolitan* was then refocused into a magazine that conversed openly about sexuality (Peterson, 1975).

With the increase of technological advancements and changes in the economy, the advertising of consumption goods significantly increased, making the publishing of magazines a profitable business to be involved in (Peterson, 1975). Leading to the creation of more visually attractive magazines appealing to more and more consumers.

Magazines have ultimately become a medium that shapes lives through the process of telling consumers what to wear, what to eat, persuade thinking patterns about oneself and the world around us with respect to various topics of interest. One such magazine type that has been known to exert such influence is that of lifestyle magazines.

2.5 Lifestyle magazines

Emerging in the 19th century, Lifestyle magazines refer to a genre of women's and men's magazines that denote a style of living (Peterson, 1975), with content speaking to a range of factors within the popular culture such as health, travel, leisure, décor, and fashion. Lifestyle magazines predominantly portray the lifestyles of the leading social class and thus serve as a

guide to its attainment (Matheson, 2005), this is further echoed by Pollay (1986), stating that advertising acts out a sequence of behaviour patterns that often display the ideal lifestyle.

As a commonly available media genre bathed in semiotic resources and commodities, its very existence is due to consumerist practices. Magazines are an incredible site for data concerning the ideal societal constructions of the self. Magazines thus carry symbols that have social meaning. Research has shown that their analysis yields spectacular findings concerning the representation of social factors such as class, gender, femininity, masculinity as well as sexuality to name a few.

The media has evidently become global as “the same films and TV shows are screened all over the world and the same news footage is shown everywhere” (Machin & Van Leeuwen, 2007, p. 1) however in localized forms. Similarly, with magazines, various magazine brands are globally distributed likewise with localized content. It is argued by Machin & Van Leeuwen (2007) that many nation-states have strived to preserve the “unity of their national media and keep out what they regard as a threat against their beliefs and ways of life” (p. 1). Illustrating the practice of localizing content according to local consumerist practices, which this study aims to illustrate across the digital space, guided by Sociolinguistic thought as well as theories of language in the media.

Bell & Miic (2002) analyzed advertisements within Australian magazines to identify gender stereotypes using semiotic resources, focusing on “perspectival angle, the plane of composition and gaze to investigate stereotyped portrayals of males and females.” (Bell & Milic, 2002, p. 1). Seeking to illustrate that Goffman’s propositions concerning gender representation within advertisements can be operationalized using the framework proposed by Kress and Van Leeuwen on contemporary advertisements.

Han & Rudd (2015) analysed magazine covers of *Vogue* and *GQ* across the USA, England, Korea, and Japan, comparing constructions of the ideal woman and man regarding sex, occupation, race as well as age within the western and eastern culture. The authors concluded

that the models appearing on the *Vogue* magazine covers had similar characteristics in comparison to *GQ*, stating that this is due to ideal women's social standards being narrower for women than it is for men (p.47).

With reference to sex, Han & Rudd (2015) illustrated that almost all *Vogue* magazine covers across all four countries, featured women models. This, however, was not the case with *GQ* magazine covers, as the western cultures (USA and England) featured 20% more women models on their covers, while the eastern cultures (Korean and Japanese) featured no women models. The authors attribute this to the reader's preferences or the editor's taste (p.56).

The authors concluded that the models featured on the *Vogue* magazines across all four countries were of Caucasian descent. However, with reference to *GQ* magazines, this was true for the USA, English as well as Korean issues, while 80% of the Japanese issues featured Asian models. Han & Rudd (2015) describe Japan and Korea as being characterized by Confucian beliefs originating in ancient China concerned with personal ethics and morality (Yao & Yao, 2000).

However, Han & Rudd (2015) differentiates the two: Japan is attributed as being a more masculine society that values ambition and material success (Hofstede, 2001, p. 297 *as cited in* Han & Rudd, 2015, p. 56) while Korea is predominantly feminine. As a result, the Japanese *GQ* magazine covers featured celebrities who are well acclaimed for their ambition and professional success. Han & Rudd (2015) thus argue that the criteria for male models on the Japanese issue of *GQ* are dependent on the individual's power and ability instead of physical characteristics.

Han & Rudd (2015) has therefore provided a compelling illustration of the ideal women and men constructions on magazine covers cross-culturally, illustrating the influence of culture on the representation of the magazine brand across expanse geographical locations and further, nations.

2.6 Magazine websites

The development of computers and the World Wide Web has changed the ways in which information can be displayed and communicated. Websites are fundamentally defined as a mode of communication that allows users “to control their interaction with a brand in the virtual world” (Jones, 2009, p. 265). Research within literacy studies has compared the computer screen with the printed page, the authors conclude that in comparison to the printed page, the computer screen makes use of more visual data and allows the integration of various modes of display including text, images, videos, as well as audio (Kress, 2003b; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001).

The digital place has transcended the notion of a medium of communication and has become a marketing space of consumption (Ricciuti, 1995). Kanso, Leblanc & Nelson (2005) provide potential benefits of the webpage as a marketing tool as opposed to traditional forms of advertising, stating that a webpage allows for “company information richness, ease of updating, features information richness, allows for global exposure, customization, enhances relationships between the consumer and the company” (p.46).

The digital space thus serves as a virtual world of commerce; however, it has become difficult for companies to reach their target markets without a market segmentation strategy. A market segmentation strategy can be defined as the “process of dividing the market into subsets of consumers who share similar needs and wants” (Singh, 2011, p. 55). Herein the focus will be on the localization of online multinational brands.

Consumers are categorized according to their geographical location: country, city, and zip code, etc. producers then make use of geographic segmentation through geographic information systems which serve to locate target consumers across the globe (Singh, 2011). The use of geolocation allows producers to “effectively present localized offerings for their multinational consumers” (Singh, 2011, p. 55).

Geolocation is defined by Yunker (2008) as the process whereby the user's Internet Provider (IP) address is used to determine their location, a process implemented in favour of multinational companies. Geolocation gives producers the ability to provide their customers with country-specific customized content sensitive to language, ethical considerations as well as cultural aspects. Geolocation is often combined with demographic segmentation strategies; a process whereby consumers are differentiated based on age, gender, nationality, and religion to name a few. Market segmentation strategies allow for tailored content, resulting in improved customer experience and ultimately, economic gain.

Websites can thus be differentiated based on geographical location if concepts such as nationality and culture can be differentiated based on geographical location as discussed previously, the argument put forth is that websites can be differentiated based on nationality and culture through a close analysis of semiotic resources.

In line with the growth of the web-based market, online presence has become vital for brand survival as it allows additional forms of social interaction (Jones, Chik, & Hafner, 2015). Research on magazine covers has yielded interesting insights on multimodal representations of discourse concerning societal values and norms as discussed previously. This study aims to illustrate the presence of discourse on the websites of magazines, as the digital space has created new ways of engaging with discourse (Barton & Lee, 2013) that is often driven by the money-making and ideological agendas of producers and advertisers.

Hanely (2010) states that the intimate relationship the reader has with a magazine has distinguished it as a media form. However, many theorists contest the online development of magazines such as Kaiser (2004), who argues that the establishment of a magazine website serves as a medium of competition for traditional forms of print, describing the internet as cannibalistic. Ellonen, Tarkiainen & Kuivalainen (2010) researched magazine loyalty using the webpage of magazines. Hanely (2010) argues that the digital presence of magazines strengthens the intimate relationship between the consumer and the magazine. Thorburn and Jenkins (2003) further emphasize this argument stating that traditional media prints

rarely die, they are adapted and absorbed by new media forms, “mutating into new cultural niches and new purposes” (p.12). Using the homepages of multinational magazine websites, this study aims to contribute to this argument, analysing the symbolic constructions of nationality and culture.

2.7 Media consumption

Consumption has long been discussed in relation to the consuming object. Magazines have been described as a hedonistic escape, enabling consumers to visualize themselves elsewhere and consume in a virtual commodified world (Vessey, p.35), websites have similarly been discussed as a virtual world of consumption, making the concept of consumption a vital concept worthy of further explication.

Holt (1995) states that from an economic viewpoint, products are described as objects that produce certain benefits, from a symbolic viewpoint, products are described “as vessels of meaning” (Holt, 1995, p.1). As there are a variety of ways in which consumption objects are consumed amongst different groups of consumers, this study is concerned with consumption from a symbolic viewpoint. Consumption has been defined as a “social action wherein consumers make use of objects in a multitude of ways” Simmel (as cited in Holt, 1995, p.1).

Schroeder (2002) serves as a contribution to marketing research as the author coins the concept visual consumption referring to both visual-oriented consumer behaviour (window shopping, watching videos, interacting with adverts) as well as the theoretical approaches to consumption. Schroeder (2002) aims to discuss “how visual images function within a cultural system of meaning influenced by advertising, consumption, marketing, and mass media” (Schroeder, 2002, p. 3). Ultimately describing visual consumption as “a way of thinking about, understanding, and researching consumer behaviour” (Schroeder, 2002, p. 4).

Iqani (2012) provides a compelling discussion set in London, on how multimodality distributes a range of meanings and the influence of these meanings on the identity and lifestyle choices of individuals, through an analysis of magazine covers in news-stands.

Employing a multimodal ethnographic approach, the author appeals for a cultural critique of the individual within an economy conditioned by consumerism. Iqani (2012) aims to illustrate the intricacies involved in the production and consumption of magazine covers in a seemingly banal context such as news-stands.

The author provides a discussion of theories concerning the public, identity, and power within the context of consumption, arguing that any investigation of consumerism should be mindful of “the nature of public life, identity and power relations shaped by neo-liberalism” (Iqani, 2012, p.13). As the media is largely influential on the range of images and ideologies that jointly constitute culture and separately constitute individual lifestyle, revealing that the economy outlines many aspects of life. Illustrating the need for an understanding of the public and identity to gain an understanding of consumerism, both of which posit questions of power (Iqani, 2012).

The author thus reveals three essential components of a consumerist society: consumers, consumption, and commodities and discusses these components in relation to the public, identity, and power. Iqani (2012) characterizes media texts as public due to their sole purpose being to propagate information and ideologies to the public, making the public a pertinent component in the theorizing of media spaces. Revealing that the media is characteristically, a space of appearance and visibility.

Iqani (2012) further states that the commodity culture constructs “a world of shared things” (Iqani, 2012, p.38), as the possession of ‘things’ enable a relationship between those who own them, making the commodities a quantifiable representation of consumer culture. Ultimately introducing the concept of materiality within consumer culture. Iqani (2012) states that

commodities serve as a symbolic representation of culture and that it is through their consumption that their meanings are realized in society.

However, commodities are not limited to materiality, as objects are also characterized as immaterial, as meaning can transcend objects, emphasizing the significance of the visual (Iqani, 2012, p.24), introducing the concept of hyper-reality. Hence commodities are characterized in terms of their ability to be symbolic, informational as well as an aesthetic commodity. As stated earlier, magazines are considered a material extension of culture, however as websites cannot be described with materiality, the website hence becomes an extension of materiality and further nationality and culture.

Notions of identity are discussed by Iqani (2012) in relation to practices of interacting with goods: consumption, a practice which can be characterized as physical as well as visual (Iqani, 2012, p.26). Practices of consumption lead to the personal creation of a 'world of goods' reflective of an individual's experience, self, and the world McCracken (as cited in Iqani, 2012, p.29) revealing that the cultural signs within the economic market are crucial to the construction of consumer identities. As a result, the author describes consumption as a practice that gives individuals an array of lifestyle alternatives, aiding in the formation of self-identity. Labelling commodities as a tool in the construction of identities.

The relationship between the consumer and the commodity is complex, with the consumer defined as the subject and the commodity as the object. Iqani (2012) highlights the debate regarding the presence of meaning in the subject or object and mentions two theories of the flow of meaning. First, the liberal-utilitarian and positivist, argues that meaning flows from the world to the object, and from the object to the subject (Iqani, 2012, p.30). Secondly, the dialectical argument posits that meaning flows simultaneously between subject and object, and it is this argument that Iqani (2012) accepts, as consumers "engage in and are engaged by consumption activities, objects, and meanings that have the potential to create, transform, or question consumer subject identity" Borgersen (as cited in Iqani, 2012, p.32).

The final concept of power, in relation to a consumerist society, is now discussed as Iqani (2012) states that notions of self-identity through consumption practices are shaped by power relations (Iqani, 2012, p.33). The author discusses power relative to two concepts: manipulation and empowerment of human freedom in relation to the politics of what is made visible and what is not within public retail spaces (Iqani, 2012).

News-stands are described as consumption-scapes dependent on merchandising policies and politics of distribution, as the news-stand managers are given the power to decide which magazines are made available to the consumer public and those which are not. In doing so magazines create a paradox on the freedom of consumers, as consumers are given a range of optional cultural signs which are manipulatively chosen by the news-stand manager. Iqani (2012) hence argues that news-stands serve as a contradiction to the neo-liberalist concept of freedom of choice, as the consumer's choices are in reality determined by the merchandising policies and politics of distribution.

Holt (1995) discusses consumption through metaphors: “consuming as experience, consuming as integration, and consuming as classification” (Holt, 1995, p.1). Consuming as experience involves the subjective and emotional relation consumers have with consumption objects, and consuming as integration describes the acquisition of meaning through consumption and finally consumption as classification regards products as vessels for cultural meaning which serve to classify consumers (Holt, 1995, p. 2).

Within the context of concepts such as nationality and culture, consuming as integration and classification serve as ideas worthy of a discussion. Holt (1995) states that consuming as integration refers to the process whereby consumption “is a constitutive element of identity” (Holt, 1995, p. 6), this reiterates the argument put forth by Iqani (2012) discussed previously, whereby consumption creates a collection of goods reflective of ones “experience, self and world” (Iqani, 2012, p.29). Marx has argued that “our sense of self takes shape within the economic and political context of our society” Marx (as cited in Matheson, 2005, p. 58) commonly transmitted through mass media forms, including magazines.

Lifestyle magazines sell identities through consumption practices; “the idea that to have is to be” (Matheson, 2005, p. 65), revealing the symbolic use of an object (Holt, 1995). Furthermore, consuming as classification refers to the use of consumption to identify the self “in relation to relevant others” (Holt, 1995, p. 10), in this context, as members of the same nation and further, culture. This study posits the analysis of magazine websites as a product and tool of consumption, as a symbolic representation of national and cultural elements of identity.

Based on the review of literature, this section has discussed the importance of nationality and culture in the formation of a national consciousness of an imagined community. The review has further touched on the significance of language in the media as the means through which an imagined community is portrayed across the media space organized according to geographical nations. The review has also discussed language in the media as a distinct subfield of inquiry in Linguistics before consulting literature on the influence of women’s lifestyle magazines, magazine websites, and lastly media consumption. The following chapter will discuss Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) as a research tool and theoretical framework guiding this study.

3 Theoretical framework

The theoretical backbone of this study is drawn from a multi-semiotic approach, multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) developed by Machin and Mayr (2012) in combination with Kress and van Leeuwen’s (1996) work on social-semiotic systems. MCDA is often considered to be an extension of critical discourse analysis (CDA), wherein the analysis is concerned with the implicit meanings of text carried within “the word, sentence, and passage” (Brabham, 2012, p. 398), ultimately illuminating ideologies transmitted through language.

Machin and Mayr (2012) highlights language as an instrument for social and cultural construction and further argues that “language shapes and is shaped by society” (Machin &

Mayr, 2012, p. 5). As a result, the authors demonstrate that the analysis of language reveals that linguistic elements often serve as vessels for social and cultural processes.

Through an analysis of everyday texts, CDA uncovers the seemingly banal strategies involved in the representation of ideologies, events, and people, Fairclough (1989) states that CDA involves an understanding and manifestation of the “connections between language, power, and ideology” (as cited in Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 5). Meyer (2001) states that research guided by the many facets of CDA share an interdisciplinary approach, a focus on social integrity, language as the key unit of analysis, the argument that language cannot be isolated from its context as well as the significance of the historical and cultural context.

MCDA, however, focuses on the ways in which images in addition to text, intersect to produce meaning, and further how these meanings either serve to maintain ideologies and power relations or destroy them (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996). Jones (2012) describes MCDA as involving the collaboration of multiple modes, just as face-to-face communication involves the co-operation of an array of communicative methods ranging from “gestures, gaze, facial expression, posture, dress, and how close or far away they stand or sit from each other” (p. 598). MCDA thus serves as a toolkit for the understanding of how multiple modes collaborate in discourse. MCDA has proven to be a beneficial framework and methodology in research across disciplines, including Media studies (Pauwels 2012), Linguistics (Kress & van Leeuwen 1996), and most importantly, both (Machin & Mayr, 2012).

Many scholars have illustrated the vast applicability of MCDA across digital content. Upton (2010) employs MCDA through an analysis of the hyper-modal representation of language on the homepage of the BBC Voices website aiming to highlight the ideological components of multimodal sources. Phillips (2013) similarly utilizes MCDA in the analysis of race, class, gender as well as sexuality across the YouTube ‘it gets better project’. Gibson, Lee, & Crabb, (2015) further analyse the representation of breast cancer online with MCDA, with the results revealing that health was constructed as a commodity.

In this study, interest is placed on the collaboration between semiotic resources in aims to identify the relationship between social practice and discourse (Meinhof & Richardson, 1994). This will involve a critical understanding and appreciation of semiotic resources as a tool of inquiry, as semiotic resources have been described as “systems that constitute the reality of culture” Halliday (1978, p.123, as cited in Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, p.3).

Kress & Van Leeuwen’s (1996) work on social-semiotic systems, concerns the meaning potential of text, images, and auditory resources based on Halliday's social metafunctions. The authors argue that language serves three functions in society: ideational, the interpersonal, and textual metafunction. Wherein the ideational metafunction concerns the representation of objects and their correlation. The interpersonal metafunctions project the interaction between the producer of signs, receivers of signs as well as the object. Lastly, the textual metafunction refers to the culmination of representation and interaction into communicative events (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996).

Kress & Van Leeuwen (1996) extend the above metafunctions to images, resulting in a framework and tool of interpretation. The authors however refer to the three metafunctions as representative, interactional and compositional. The representational metafunction refers to the visual elements that serve ideological and symbolic roles in images. While the interactional metafunction concerns the interpersonal aspects of multimodal communication, and the compositional metafunction is concerned with the components of the image including information value, framing, and salience (Wang, 2014).

The informational value concerns the placement of components, with different values attributed to different regions of semiotic space as displayed in diagram 1 below.

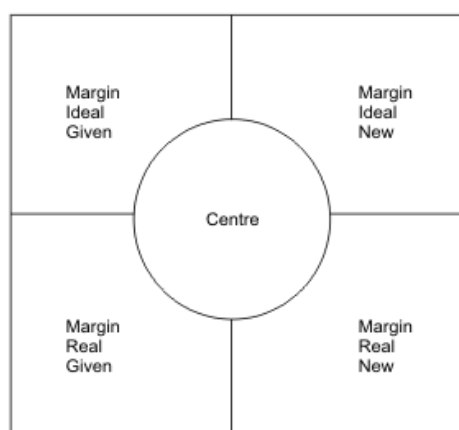


Diagram 1: Kress and Van Leeuwen's Visual Grammar spatial map (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996, p.208)

The 'given' refers to known informational components placed on the left while 'new' refers to unknown informational components appearing on the right of the spatial map. The 'ideal' refers to the upper part of the spatial map and is often occupied by aspirational and idealized content while the 'real' refers to the lower part, containing factual and practical content. The informational components placed at the centre is often considered the fundamental aspect of the informational component being communicated. Lastly, the margin refers to informational components placed on the perimeter of the spatial map and often contains supportive and complementary information (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996).

Framing considers the interaction between media messages and the receiver and further infers the extent to which these messages are to be received in connection with each other and share meaning or as separate independent entities. Framing, therefore, allows producers the ability to shape the thoughts and beliefs of viewers through the presence and prominence of certain media messages or lack thereof.

While salience refers to the presentation of visual elements with the purpose of fascinating the viewer using size, colour, and hierarchical placement (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). As multiple modes of resources are used "to present, to realize, at times to (re)contextualize social positions and relations, as well as knowledge in specific arrangements for a specific audience" (Kress, 2010, p.139) MCDA serves as the ideal framework of analysis.

4 Research design and methodology

A research design refers to the various frameworks of inquiry a researcher could use to analyse data (Bryman & Bell, 2014). The research process involves a series of steps which often begins with identifying a research problem, followed by the formulation of research questions, hereafter data is collected, whereafter data analysis is performed allowing the researcher to report on their findings (De Vos, 2000).

A research design further involves the consideration of various components, such as the purpose of the study, the nature of data, the source of data, as well as the method of data collection (Collis & Hussey, 2013). A research plan and design will further influence how the researcher will report on the findings and answer the proposed research questions.

There are various types of research, including experimental which refers to cause-and-effect relationships; correlational which aims to investigate relationships between variables; descriptive which involves the description of existing phenomena and qualitative which aims to interrogate human behaviour in social, cultural, and political contexts (Salkind, 2006).

A research design is influenced by certain quantitative and qualitative paradigms namely: the positivist which refers to a quantitative rationalistic inquiry; the interpretive qualitative paradigm which concerns a contextual naturalistic inquiry and the constructionist qualitative paradigm that concerns a discursive inquiry (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006).

“Quantitative research is just one approach to science: manipulating, measuring, and specifying relationships between certain variables to test hypotheses about causal laws. While qualitative research lays down its claims to acceptance by arguing for the importance of understanding the meaning of experience, actions, and events as these are interpreted through the eyes of participants, researchers, and (sub) cultures, and for a sensitivity to the

complexities of behaviour and meaning in the contexts where they typically or 'naturally' occur" (Henwood, as cited in Richardson, 1996, p.25).

As this study is concerned with the social construction of reality through an investigation of discourse and power relations, the social constructionist qualitative paradigm serves as the best suitable approach for this study. The social constructionist approach focuses on aligning subjective experiences with social systems and advocates for their deconstruction as a path to understanding.

However, I also made use of quantitative methods as the women represented on the respective websites were analysed and recorded based on an array of characteristics adapted from a study conducted by Yan and Kim Bissel (2014). Therefore, a mixed-method approach was taken, involving the combination of a quantitative method to gain insight whereafter a qualitative approach was employed.

To proceed with this study, screenshots of the homepages of four multinational fashion magazine websites were collected and served as the primary form of data. A qualitative approach was followed as it exposed the implicit ideologies carried within the magazine content. A qualitative approach, also known as an interpretivist, humanistic and subjectivist paradigm allows for an in-depth interrogation of social ideologies in media content (Janus,1977).

A multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) was performed on the collected screenshots, revealing how semiotic resources were employed to convey the dominant social narratives, while paying close attention to the manifestations of nationality and culture, and any further recurring themes.

Using MCDA as a guiding theory and research tool encompassed a critical stance in the examination of the multitudes in which meaning can be manifested. This is further emphasized by Cook (1992) who argues that "advertising, operates in all modes and media at

once, and must be treated accordingly” (Cook, 1992, p. 44). MCDA thus allows the analysis to transcend the description of the semiotic representation of nationality and culture and include an explanation and discussion of their inherent ideologies.

Online media houses many semiotic resources that serve as vessels for discourse. This study will analyse how the combination of semiotic resources constructs nationality and culture differentiated by geographical location and magazine brand and will thus shed light on the consumption of online media. Consumption of the homepages of the respective magazines under analysis has the power to liberate or constrain national and cultural identity and further the success of the magazine brand.

The following chapter expands on the primary source of data that will be analysed in this study, the homepage of four multinational women magazine websites.

5 Data

The homepage of any website serves as the primary source of information across the digital platform, thus making it the primary source of data in this study. The homepage will further allow for an accurate description of the identity of the respective magazine brands as Boardman (2005) argues that the homepage of an organisation reifies their identity (Boardman, 2005, p. 106).

This study analyses four popular multinational magazine brands listed as the top fashion magazines in the world, as rated by the website *stylecraze*²: *Cosmopolitan*, *Elle*, *Harper’s Bazaar*, and *Vogue*. Chosen due to their many geographical editions advantageous for a comparative study. Collected by taking screenshots of the respective homepages, limited to countries wherein the English editions are distributed.

² <https://www.stylecraze.com/articles/top-fashion-magazines/#gref>

The salient aspects on the websites to be analysed and compared will refer to the multiple significant modes of expression, including and not limited to text, images as well as semiotic resources such as “layout, colour and typography” (Van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 139).

The visual properties of the textual content serve as an additional feature to be analysed, such as typographic features pertaining to font choice: formal or informal, elegant, or playful. Font-size: salience, shouting or not; font style and font direction (Van Leeuwen, 2005). Van Leeuwen (2005) argues that the analysis of typographical elements illustrates the inseparable unity between visual communication and writing.

Pauwels (2012) states that one should pay close attention to the material characteristics of the image including texture, colour, and image form to name a few; the composition of the image; editing choice, and lastly post-production digital effects (Pauwels, 2012, p.255).

The layout of the website will also be under analysis as Pauwels (2012) states that the layout serves as a “tool used to attract, direct and invoke the desired effect on, or response from website visitors” (Pauwels, 2012, p.255). In a similar vein, the analysis will further convey the goal and opinions of the producers. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2002) argue that a website guides consumers through multiple compositional choices such as “themes, colour schemes, backgrounds, columns and position” amongst others (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2002, p. 255).

The analysis will further pay explicit attention to the interaction between the above-mentioned features, as meaning is often influenced by the interplay of modes (Pauwels, 2012). For example, the relationship between text and images and further sound and images could be insignificant in some instances, illustrative in others, or just serve as a complementary relationship in others (Hocks & Kendrick, 2003). Following the maxim of Watzlawick et al.’s (1967) “one cannot not communicate” (p. 48) the analysis will also pay attention to features that are meaningfully absent which further aids in the realisation of meaning across websites.

In line with the aim of this study to analyse and compare the semiotic manifestations of nationality and culture through a qualitative study of the afore mentioned elements as presented on the magazine websites, I begin with a brief introduction of each magazine brand below.

5.1.1 Cosmopolitan

Famous for its vast array of topics including beauty, careers, health, sex, relationships as well as fashion, *Cosmopolitan* magazine is a well-known multinational fashion magazine. Founded by the publishing company Schlicht & Field in 1886 as a family magazine, formerly known as “*The Cosmopolitan*”, was originally targeted at women who had an interest in fashion, décor, cooking, and childcare (Landers, 2010). In 1905, *The Cosmopolitan* was bought by the famous publisher, William Randolph Hearst who altered the content of the magazine to include articles of an investigative nature as well as short stories (Aksdal, 2018).

The success of the magazine declined in the 1950s partly due to the introduction and popularity of alternative forms of media such as television. In 1965, Hearst then appointed Helen Gurley Brown as the new editor in chief, a writer who gained popularity with the success of her book ‘*Sex and the single girl*’ (Landers, 2010).

Due to changes in the economy involving women moving out of the homosocial world by acquiring jobs, the target market of the magazine now took the form of financially independent women who were urged to recognize themselves as sexual agents (Aksdal, 2018). Foregrounding the importance and freedom of women sexual desire made *The Cosmopolitan* magazine unique, as many recognised the magazine as a media form that promoted women empowerment thus contributing to the success of the magazine brand we know today (McMahon, 1990). This study will be concerned with the online editions published in India, South Africa, and the United Kingdom.

The homepage for *Cosmopolitan India* revealed a young aesthetic, realized through the usage of various bright colours on the initial introductory page, with the remainder of the homepage

dominated by a bright pink theme. The layout and design proved to be conventional, in that the content was represented in a “standard” one after the other style as shown in image 1 below:

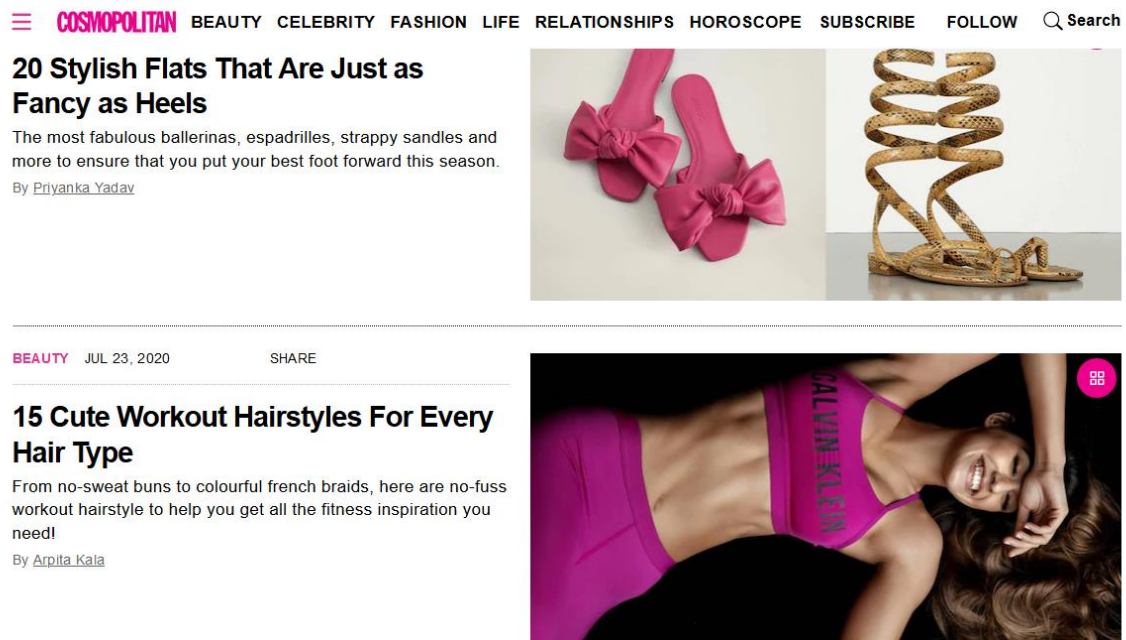


Image1

Cosmopolitan South Africa similarly employed a young aesthetic realized through the usage of soft pastel colours as well as the bright eye-catching tones present throughout the homepage. The layout and design differed from that of *Cosmopolitan India* as the “standard” approach mentioned previously were not used. The content was placed next to each other as represented in Image 2 below.

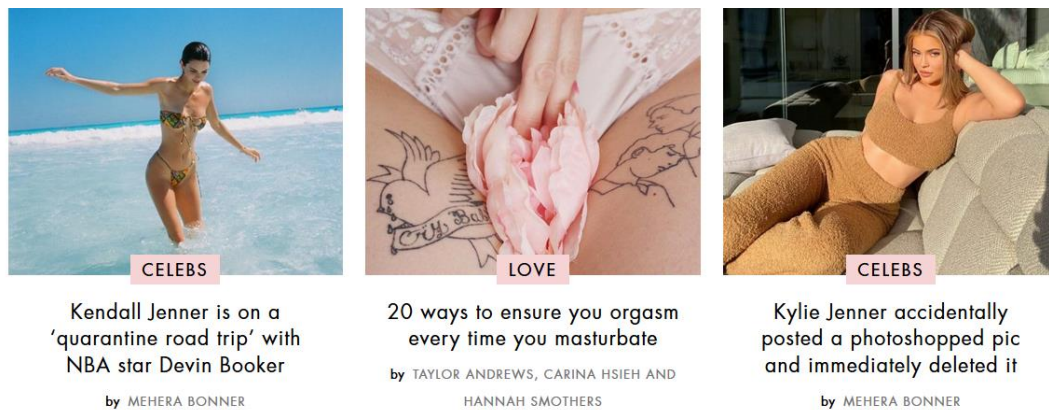


Image2

The *Cosmopolitan UK* website similarly employed a playful, young aesthetic realized through the usage of soft pastel colours as well as the bright eye-catching tones present throughout the homepage. The layout and design reflected that of *Cosmopolitan South Africa*. The curvy lines underneath the subheadings further infer the playful theme and informality of the topics discussed as illustrated by the indiscreet content, this further reveals that the magazine goes against the traditional norms of a women's magazine as represented in Image 3 below:

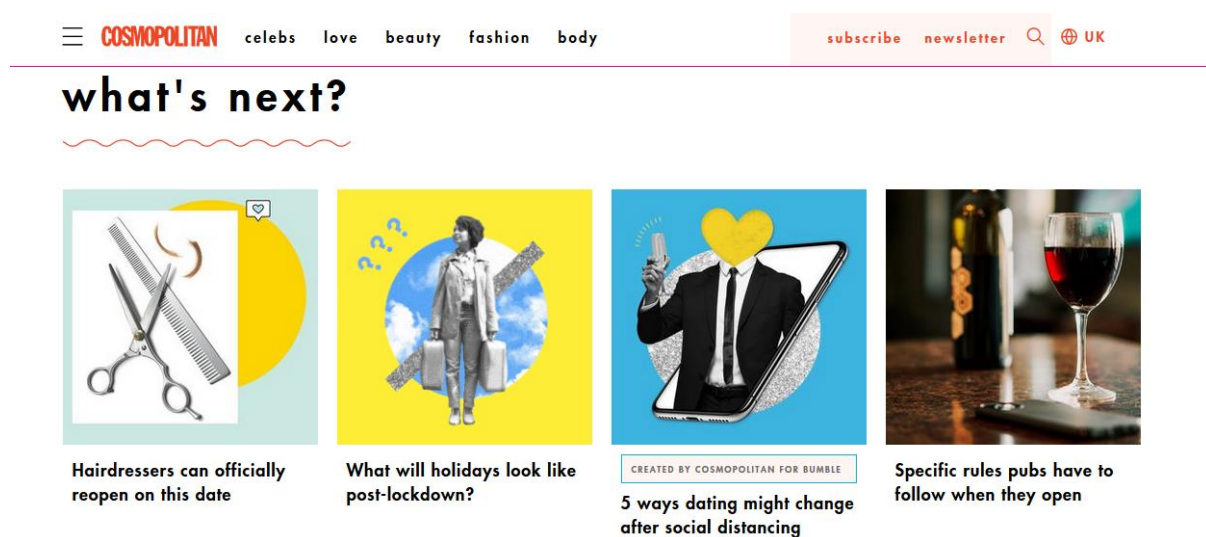


Image 3

5.1.2 Elle

Focusing on fashion, beauty, health, and entertainment, *Elle* is a multinational magazine founded in France in 1945 by Hélène Gordon-Lazareff, originally published by the Lagardère Group. *Elle* magazine stood out in the industry as a publication which in addition to fashion, spoke on topics promoting feminism, freedom, and the consumer society (Demarest & Garner, 1992).

Due to the political ambiance at the time, and the influence of Françoise Giroud, *Elle*, through their articles and content urged women to vote and recognise their reproductive rights thus appealing to many French women, ultimately leading to the success of the magazine.

Featuring icons such as Christian Dior and Brigitte Bardot, the magazine increased in popularity resulting in the multinational publication of *Elle* in 1985 beginning in the United States of America and the United Kingdom. Today, published in over 39 countries, *Elle* magazine is known as the world's largest fashion magazine (Nömm, 2007). This study will analyse Australia, India, and the United Kingdom issues.

On *Elle AU's* homepage, at first glance, the viewer is immediately welcomed by the crisp and neat design appearing against a white background. The homepage employs a creative layout as the content is spread out across the homepage in different spaces, varying in size. The homepage is, however, "cluttered" with google adverts as these follow the user throughout their experience of the homepage, this can be seen in image 4 below. Inferring that *Elle* does indeed value the consumer society and aims to promote consumption as previously mentioned.

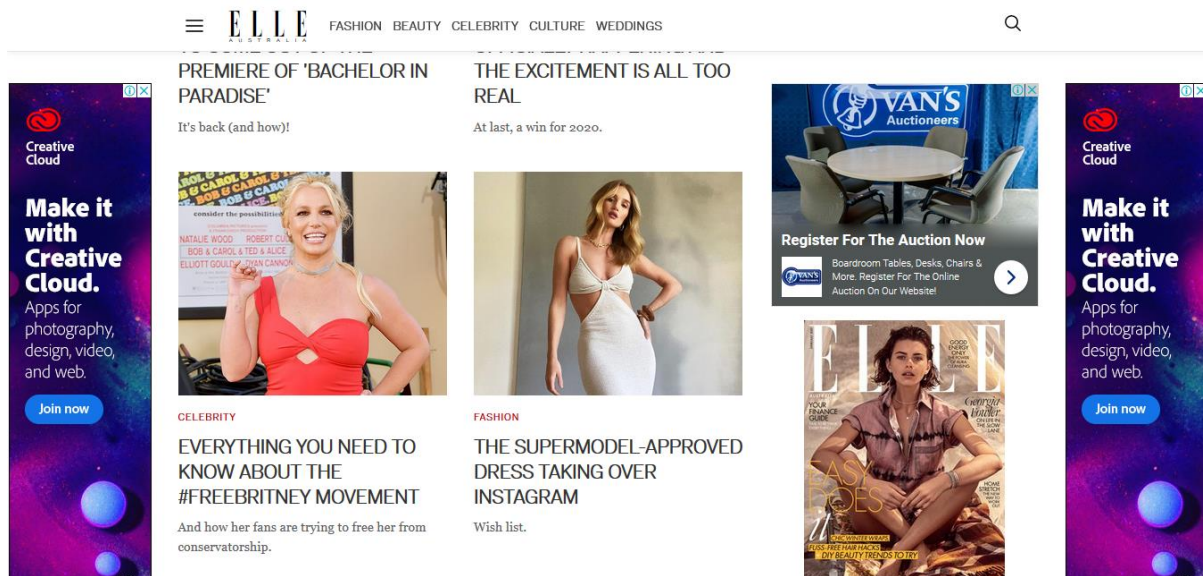


Image 4

Elle India differs almost completely in font, layout, and design when in comparison to *Elle AU*, the producer employs an elegant look and feel using black accents employed throughout the homepage as seen through the black header whereon the various tabs are placed. The content displayed appeared relatively large in rectangular placements, spanning horizontally across the homepage as represented in Image 5 below.

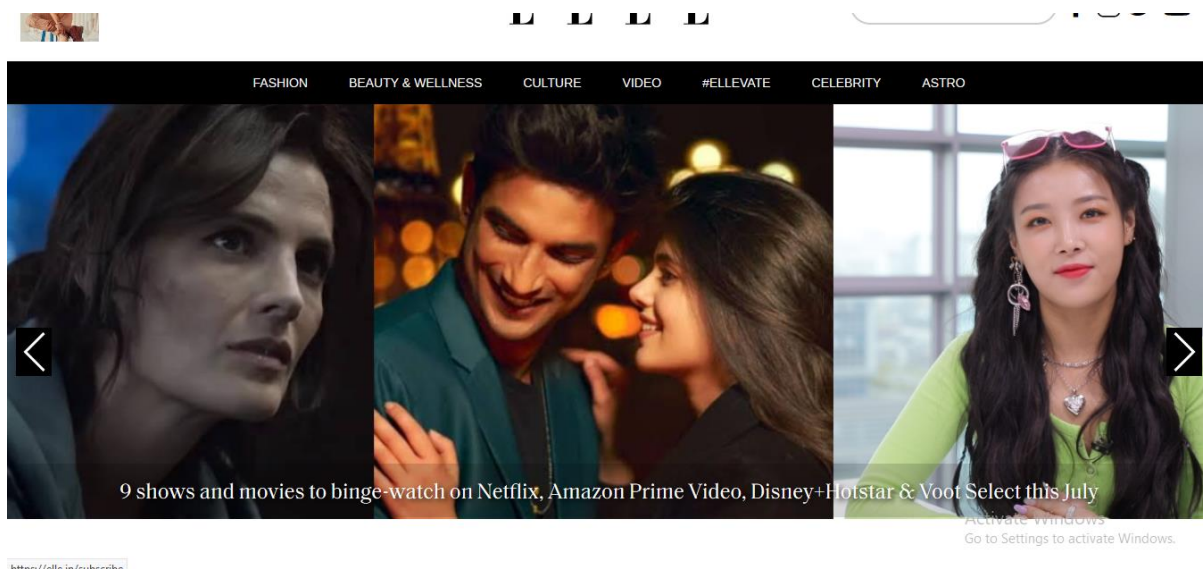


Image 5

The homepage of *Elle UK* differed in font, layout, and design in comparison to the *Elle AU* and the *Elle India* homepage. The homepage of *Elle UK* has a neat, elegant, and feminine aesthetic

realized through the presence of pink accents used in the header throughout the homepage as represented in image 6 below.



Image 6

5.1.3 Harper's bazaar

Founded in 1867 and published by the American mass media publication: Hearst, Harper's Bazaar is one of the oldest fashion magazines aimed at affluent women in society. *Harper's Bazaar* serves as a guide on how to live and live well in the modern world (Mooalllem³). The first issue of the magazine mapped out the goal of the magazine to be a "vast repository of rare and costly things of earth, things that can comfort the heart and delight the eye" (Mooalllem⁴).

³ <https://www.harpersbazaar.com/culture/features/a18658/history-of-harpers-bazaar/>

⁴ <https://www.harpersbazaar.com/culture/features/a18658/history-of-harpers-bazaar/>

Speaking to an array of topics including, fiction, literature, work, and family, in addition to fashion *Harper's Bazaar* was more than a fashion magazine. The magazine aimed to be a forward-thinking, fashionable product engrossed in culture, thus becoming the first publication to support the women's suffrage effort. In 1869, the magazine aimed to increase conscience, and thus content was based on the importance of work, and opportunities of education for women.

Harper's Bazaar thus established its brand as a magazine designed for women and their needs further leading to the success of the magazine today. *Harper's Bazaar* is published in print and digital formats across 44 countries (Hearst⁵) in this study, the analysis will be made across the Arabia, Australia, and the United Kingdom issues.

The homepage of *Harper's Bazaar Arabia* revealed a very elegant and classy look and feel through the use of black and gold accents used in the font present throughout the homepage as revealed in image 7 below. The content appeared in a structured format, alternating in size from large pictures to smaller pictures as is common on the homepages previously discussed. The colourful content appeared against a white background, allowing the images to stand out and grab the attention of potential readers and consumers.

⁵ <https://www.hearst.com/magazines/harpers-bazaar>

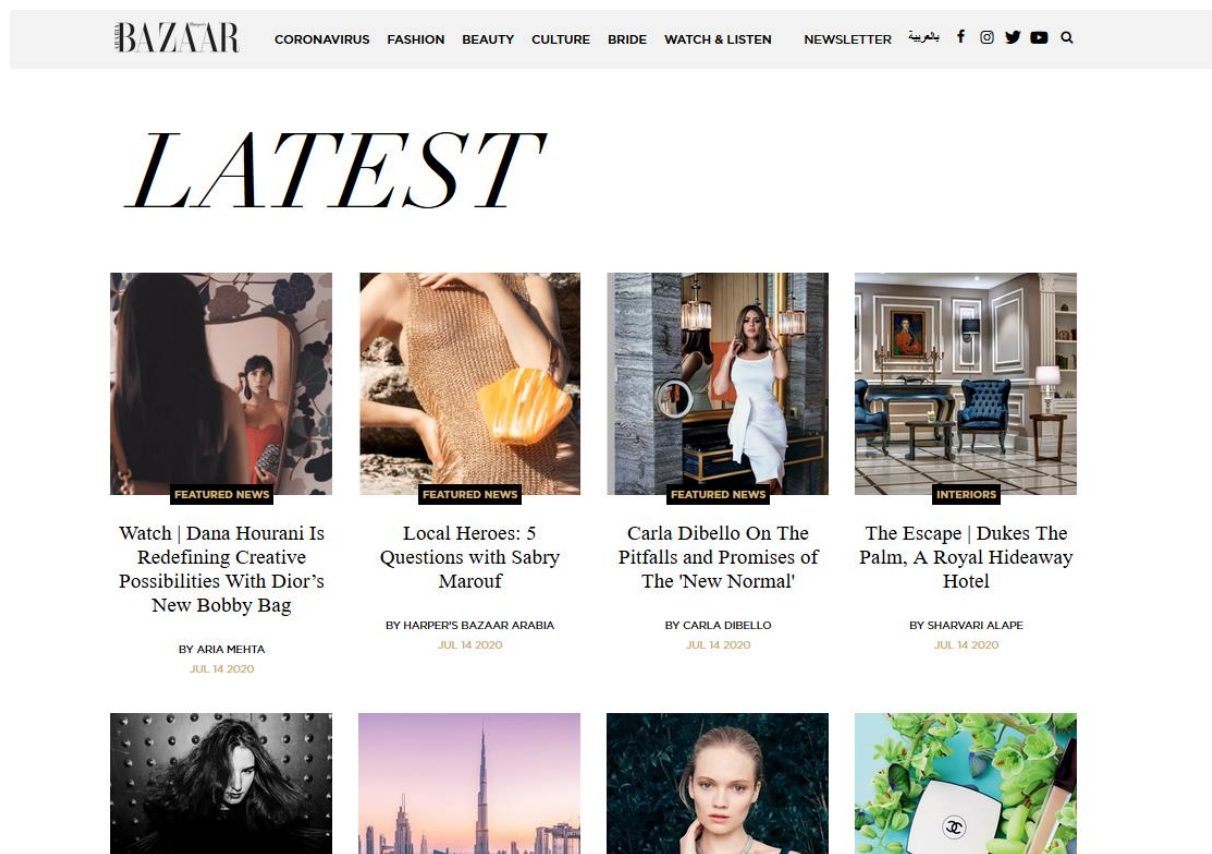


Image 7

Harper's Bazaar Australia similarly had an elegant look and feel. However, the font, layout, and design were quite different in that the content appeared larger in comparison to *Harper's Bazaar Arabia*. The homepage similarly employed black accents throughout as represented in the fonts, headers, and tabs. The content appeared against a white background, with colourful images used to catch the eye as demonstrated in image 8 below.

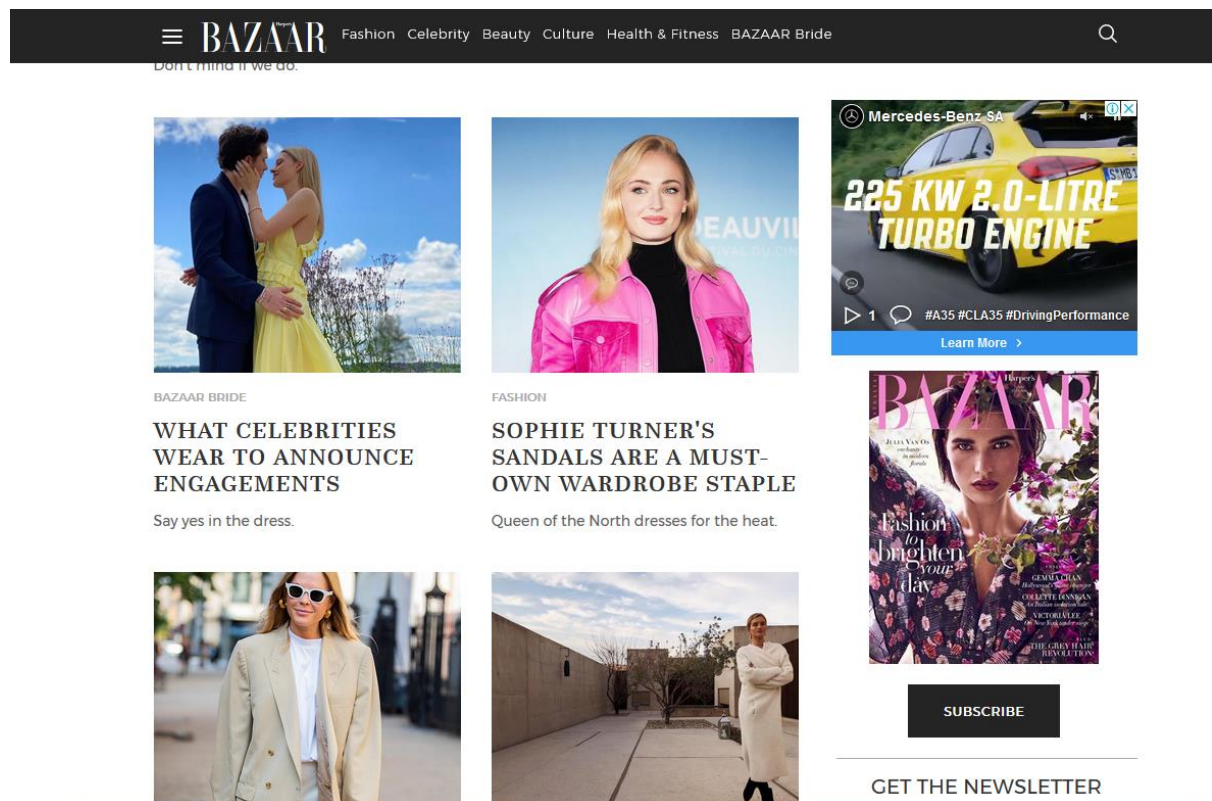


Image 8

Harper's Bazaar UK similarly employed an elegant and classy aesthetic. The homepage displayed the use of black and red accents in its theme present in the header and titles as represented in image 9 below. The font used was similar to *Harper's Bazaar Arabia* however the placement of content differed, alternating in size and positioning of the captions. The content was similarly categorised to *Harper's Bazaar Arabia* appearing in a large black font horizontally placed across the screen.

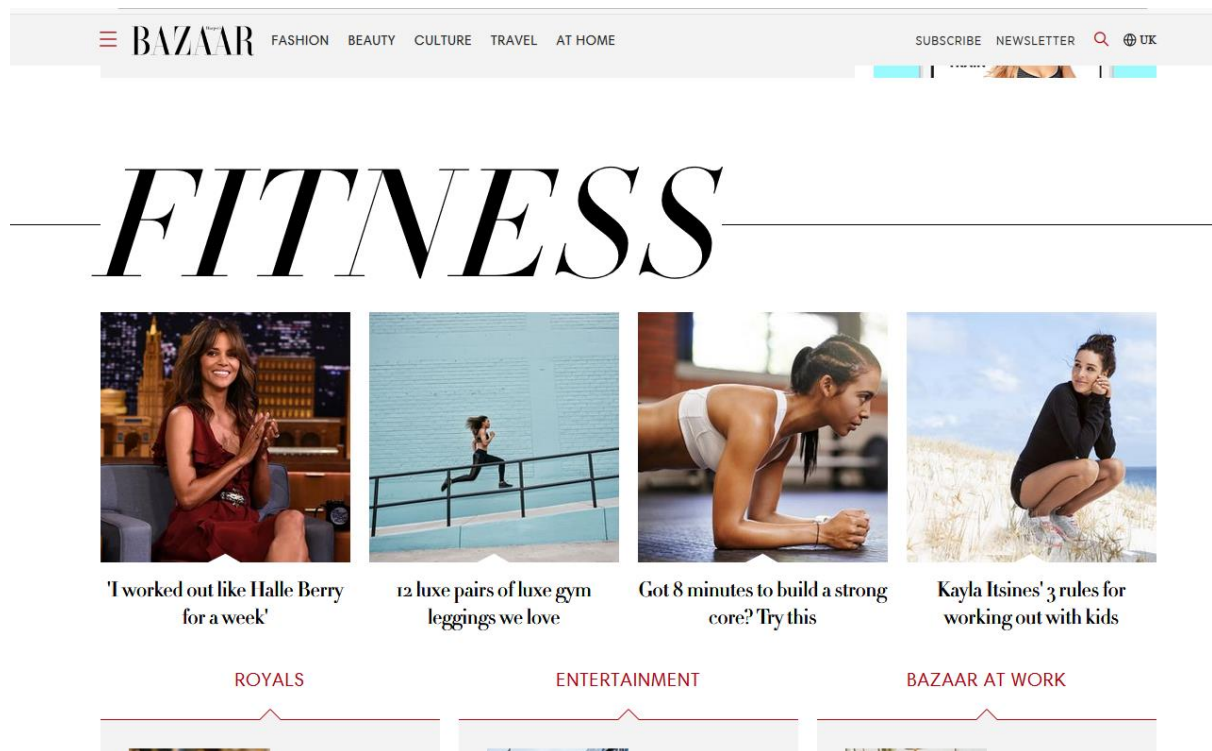


Image 9

5.1.4 Vogue

Known as one of the most influential fashion magazines, *Vogue* has often been described as a trendsetter in the fashion and magazine industry (David, 2006) with a feature regarded as a milestone in the careers of photographers, models, editors, and the like.

First established as a weekly gazette in 1892, *Vogue* is an American magazine founded by Arthur Baldwin Turnure (smith⁶). In 1909, *Vogue* was bought by Condé Nast, a professional publisher who would further lead to the success of the *Vogue* magazine brand we know today (David, 2006). *Vogue* as a brand, has become synonymous with prestige and affluence and thus serves a defining role in the lives of many, speaking to an array of topics in relation to lifestyle such as culture, beauty, and of course, fashion.

⁶ <https://web.archive.org/web/20131007130257/http://acculturated.com/2012/06/26/the-early-years-of-vogue-magazine/>

Extending its readership and geographical footprint, *Vogue* exported American fashion by releasing the “British (1916), French (1920), and even Argentinean (1924) editions.” (David, 2006, p. 14). Today, *Vogue* is issued across a total of seventeen countries in print and digital formats. The issues this study will be concerned with are Australia, India, and the United Kingdom issues.

The *Vogue Australia* homepage has a clean and elegant theme, and similarly employs the usage of black and gold accents (appearing before the name of the editor) used throughout the homepage as illustrated in image 10 below by way of example:

Celebrity

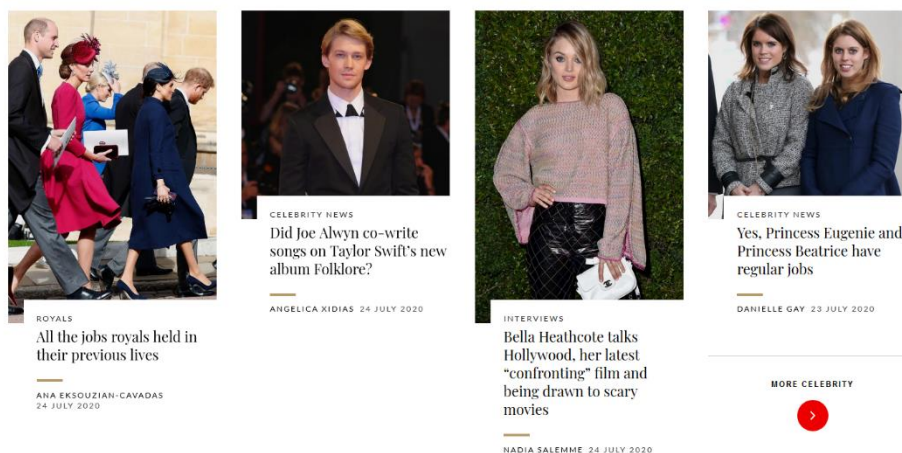


Image 10

The images provide pops of colour as they appear against a white background. The layout, design, and placement of content are creative in that each subsection is categorised by one main image accompanied by various other smaller images differing in size. *Vogue India* employed the same design, layout, and placement of content used in *Vogue Australia*, revealing the consistency of the brand website identity across the two regions. *Vogue UK* similarly employed the same theme as per *Vogue AU* and *India* replicating the clean and elegant theme, revealing that *Vogue's* website identity was consistent across all regions under study.

Discussing the homepages of the magazine brands as the primary source of data, this chapter has identified the English editions of Cosmopolitan, Elle, Harper's Bazaar, and Vogue as the brands of inquiry due to their popularity and geographical reach. In aims to highlight and represent the core findings derived from the application of the theoretical framework, research design, and methodology to the data set the overarching themes inherent in the data, have allowed the data analysis section to be organized into three chapters. Beginning with the hegemonic woman, wherein I discuss the hegemonic representations of women relative to each magazine brand. Followed by a chapter dedicated to health and appearance wherein I discuss the semiotic representation of health and a healthy lifestyle. The data analysis section is concluded by a chapter dedicated to the relationship between consumption practices and identity.

6 Data analysis

6.1 The hegemonic woman

The media produces and transmits commonly shared meanings (Rocha, 2013), ultimately providing a multimodal framework of the culture that exists to regulate social practices (Foucault as cited in Kates & Shaw-Garlock, 1999, p. 33) creating stereotypes and hegemonic representations. Hegemony refers to naturalized dominant social, cultural, and ideological practices (Lears, 1985).

The representation of women across the media realized through an analysis of social ideologies pertaining to beauty, fashion, intimacy, and work amongst others is argued to be a "collective classification" of women "constituted through similar social values" (Rocha, 2013, p. 3) and cultural understandings.

The chapter begins with a brief discussion of the gendered body, with the help of arguments made by Butler (1986), and Lorber & Martin (2012). Hereafter I discuss the concept of the

social body, followed by a discussion of hegemony as theorised by Antonio Gramsci, followed by an exploration of the hegemonic woman perpetuated by the magazine websites.

This chapter aims to extract salient differences between the brand representations of the hegemonic woman, and each geographic issue sensitive to nationality and culture as the social body has different meanings cross-culturally. The chapter concludes in an investigation of the working body in aims to identify the expected economic role the hegemonic women occupy in society.

6.1.1 The gendered body

Gender refers to the social “hierarchical division between men and women embedded in both social institutions and social practices” (Jackson & Scott, 2002, p. 1). Gender can further be described as the embodied social and cultural definition of a woman and a man, and as the differentiation between masculinity and femininity (Lorber & Martin, 2012). Consequently, gender is a core concept within our social biographies as it serves as a “social status that organizes almost all areas of social life” (Lorber, 1996, p. 146).

Gender serves as a social construct learned through socialization and enculturation. Butler (1986) provides an insightful differentiation between sex and gender attributing the body as a natural entity, and gender as a social construct, thus unnatural and learned, arguing that we perform our gender according to a set of cultural conventions wherein nothing is ordained by nature, but rather seems normal and ‘natural’ (Butler, 1986).

Butler (1986) further states that the world is culturally constructed, therefore we cannot know the body in its pre-cultural state, but only as an entity with cultural significance. As the media serves as an “agent of socialization, a carrier of culture and a way of communicating ideology” (O’ShAughnessy & Stadler, 2006, p. 327), it creates an arena for the explication of concepts of the self as well as its embodiment. As a result, the gendered representation of women in women’s magazines significantly influences the gendered perception of the self

that is often governed by societal gender stereotypes consumed and perpetuated in the media.

Berger, Bloomberg, Fox, Dibb & Hollis (1972) attests to this and argues that “masculinity and femininity are constructed by our societies” (Berger, Bloomberg, Fox, Dibb & Hollis, 1972, p. 10), this is further echoed in the below statement:

“Members of society construct their bodies in ways that comply with accepted views of gender—that is, norms of masculinity and femininity. they try to shape and use their bodies to conform to their cultures’ or racial-ethnic groups’ expectations of how a woman’s body, a man’s body, a girl’s body, or a boy’s body should look. This point does not deny the distinctiveness of material bodies, with varying physical shapes, sizes, strengths, and weaknesses. It does emphasize, however, that members of society, not genes or biology, determine the “proper” shape and usage of women’s, men’s, boys’, and girls’ bodies.”

- (Lorber & Martin, 2012, p. 251)

The behaviours and norms that determine what counts as ‘masculine’ vs. ‘feminine’ are culturally specific. Dominant cultural views serve as moral judgments as well. When an individual strays from social norms they may be labelled as lacking in self-control and self-respect (Lorber & Martin, 2012). However, when one complies with the social norms they are praised and admired, in this way it is members of the society “who coerce each other to construct socially acceptable bodies” (Lorber & Martin, 2012, p. 254).

Prinsloo (2003) further describes gender as a process that creates divisions of inclusion and exclusion through the distinction of masculine and feminine identities. Wherein a masculine identity is favoured and praised, referred to as hegemonic masculinity which precedes secondary masculinities and all femininities (Connell, 1987 as cited in Prinsloo, 2003, p. 56). While the equivalent emphasized femininity is argued to be constructed in relation to submissiveness and its coordination to the desires of men (Prinsloo, 2003) as debated in the following section.

6.1.2 The hegemonic body

The body as a culturally constructed entity simultaneously serves as a rich source of symbols that creates meaning and has thus been described as “a model for society” (Delaney, 2017, p.229). The woman body provides the symbolism for the nation as seen from the commonly used noun “Motherland”, illustrating the link between the social body and its symbolic realisation of the national body. Delaney (2017) further states that women carry significance for societal reproduction and further the reproduction of the nation. As a result, the representation of the hegemonic women across media platforms- explored below, mirrors the reproduction of the ideal nation (Delaney, 2017).

First used by Antonio Gramsci and later developed by Stuart Hall, hegemony refers to powerful ideologies -and seeks to remain powerful, that influence “the economic, political and cultural direction of a nation” Gramsci (as cited in Elyamany, 2018, p. 53). As a Marxist arguing that the ideas of the ruling class control society, Gramsci argued that the ruling class maintains power through ideological power as opposed to economic power as is the common Marxist ideology (Boggs, 1976). Gramsci linked the concepts of power and consciousness, with culture serving as its repository. Gramsci believed that material power had to be reinforced by culture and thus ideological power to remain dominant (Boggs, 1976).

Mass media often reflects the hegemonic norms of society due to the strong ideological influence it has within society. Advertising and ultimately consumerism provide consumers with the blueprint for attaining and maintaining the hegemonic and ideal social position in society, this is particularly evident in women's magazines.

Lewis (as cited in Ouellette & Gray, 2017) describes hegemony as “soft” power due to it being attained by consent and maintained by ideology embedded in “words, images, rituals, and practices rather than weapons, courts, and prisons.” (Ouellette & Gray, p. 88), making the magazine space a significant working ground for hegemony.

Women magazines are a medium that can perpetuate frames of the ideal woman through content that often details how to be “a woman dependent on time and place” (Ballaster et al. 1991, p.45). The ideal woman is often a restricted reading of femininity, referred to as hegemonic femininity (Schippers, 2007). Consumerist ideologies often encourage consumers to attain and maintain this ideal construction of femininity (Zukin & Maquire, 2004).

Velding (2017) discusses the representation of hegemonic femininity through a pictorial and content analysis of a magazine targeted at teenage girls, providing insight on the representation of femininity premised on appearance by looking at aspects such as clothing, makeup, and body type. Magazines and advertisements have been a significant sight of exploration of ideal beauty within various disciplines. As expected, there are cultural and national variations of what the “ideal” is. This is precisely what this chapter aims to interrogate, as each magazine will perpetuate ideals fit for the local culture (Abdullah, Wahab, Noor & Selamat, 2019). However, De Cort (2009) reveals that advertising agencies may also incorporate cultural and global beauty ideals simultaneously.

McRobbie (1999) states that the work of a magazine is to “naturalize and universalize meanings and values that are socially constructed” (McRobbie, 1999, p.48) with this often being the hegemonic norms of society. Subsequently, magazines are influential agents that normalize the hegemonic manifestations of social identity (Sanger, 2009). Following this Donnelly (2008) highlights that when a concept like femininity occurs in magazines, its representation becomes generalized and thus normalized and accepted. Donnelly (2008) argues that this is when femininity’s “ideological pinning’s are most powerful” (Donnelly, 2008, p. 33) rendering their representation and ideological work across the magazine space significant.

Existing research on the representation of women in the media has revealed common patterns. For example, the hegemonic woman is often stereotypically portrayed using hyper (hetero)sexual femininities (Sanger, 2009). The hegemonic woman is passive, dependent, emotional, reproductive, nurturing, supportive, all of which link to her desirability for the

male gaze (Prinsloo, 2003). Traditional notions of the hegemonic woman have often been equated with beauty (dress, and physical appearance) as well as sexual attractiveness. Beauty has thus become synonymous with a thin body and western facial features packaged in white skin (Moeran, 2010).

However, due to the media's influence in society, it can also alter the representation of the hegemonic woman and present it in a new modernized form, aligned to the dominant thought of the particular place and time, wherein the woman may be represented as "assertive, successful in the workplace and relationships, and demands the right to both equality and pleasure" (Gauntlett, 2002, p. 193).

Magazines have long been a site of tension regarding the contradictory definitions of femininity favouring traditional forms, as described previously, but also presenting women with content serving as a mantra to oppose these norms (Velding, 2017).

As websites serve as products of editorial work and thus carry social meaning (Johnson & Christ, 1998) next we will discuss hegemonic representations of the women chosen to symbolize the respective geographical issue through an analysis of images. Women represented were analysed and recorded based on the following characteristics adapted from a study conducted by Yan and Kim Bissel (2014): the degree of femininity, referring to the extent to which they looked and dressed feminine or masculine. Glamorization, regarding a natural (no make-up visible) or a glamorous look (make-up clearly visible and fashionably dressed).

Clothing coded as fully covered, wherein full legs/arms/chest area is covered, or semi-covered that has parts of the body on display. Body type was coded according to body size ranging from thin, representing model-like characteristics, the average body type which refers to bodies that do not fit into the thin or larger category, or the large body type referring to the bulkier, rounder body types. And lastly, sexuality concerning the representation of the woman

in a relationship with a man (heterosexuality) or shown to represent the LGBTIAQ+ community.

6.1.3 Cosmopolitan

Famous for its vast array of topics including beauty, careers, health, sex, relationships as well as fashion, research has shown that *Cosmopolitan* targets the young financially independent women, who are urged to recognize themselves as sexual agents, foregrounding the importance and freedom of a woman's sexual desire (Aksdal, 2018).

The analysis of the women represented on all the *Cosmopolitan* websites are recorded in table 1 below, reflecting the most prevalent characteristics as previously defined.

Cosmopolitan				
femininity	total	India	ZA	UK
feminine	41	13	12	16
glamorization	total	India	ZA	UK
glamorous	37	12	12	13
clothing	total	India	ZA	UK
fully covered	28	7	7	14
body type	total	India	ZA	UK
average	42	12	7	23
sexuality	total	India	ZA	UK
Hetero	11	1	0	10

Table 1 Characteristics of the Cosmopolitan Hegemonic woman

Table 1 reveals that the hegemonic *Cosmopolitan* woman is feminine, glamorous, fully clothed, and of an average body type, she is also preferred to be in a heterosexual relationship. She is also one who takes pride in her appearance, who is up to date with the latest skincare and make-up trends. She is also fashion-conscious and speaks freely about intimacy with her partner.

There was a total of 24 images, with 19 representing women. Most women were represented as feminine and glamorous revealed through their visible make-up, characteristics consistent with the brand attributes of the ideal woman. However, *Cosmopolitan India* differed as women were predominantly semi-covered as many had skin on display. Furthermore, analysis of the body similarly revealed that the average body type held preference over the thin and large body type. Image 11 below encapsulates the characteristics of the hegemonic *Cosmopolitan Indian* woman.

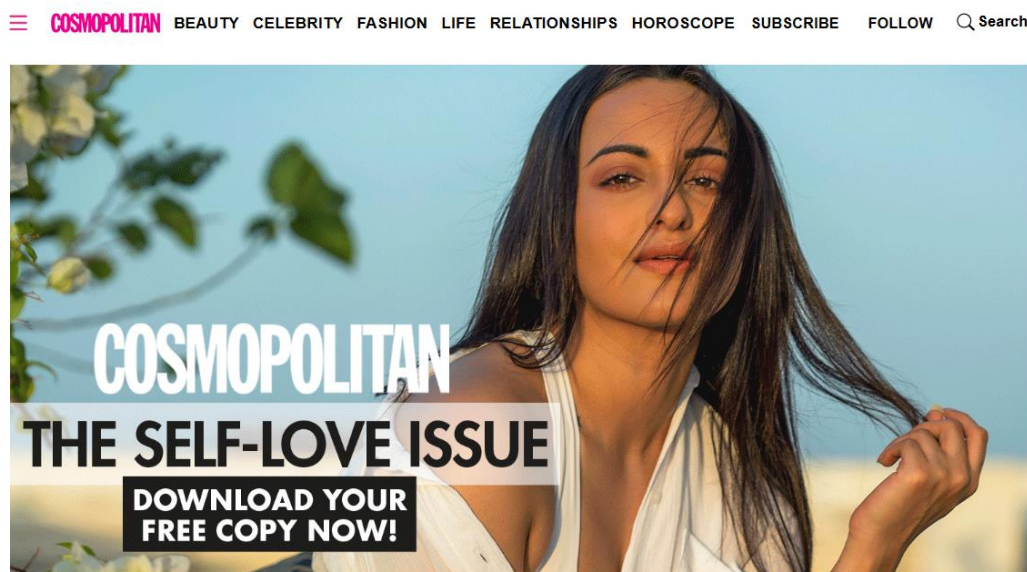


Image 11

The analysis of sexuality was quite weak in that one image represented a heterosexual couple lounging in a bathtub with flowers and rose petals mimicking a spa and connoting intimacy. The website further displayed one image of a non-binary individual representing the LGBTIAQ+ community, as illustrated in Image 12 below.



Image 12

Moreover, what is interesting to note is the representation of Sikhism on the magazine website. Sikhism, a worldwide religion native to India, serves as one of the country's prominent religions amongst Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity. Symbolized through the presence of the turban also known as a Dastar as well as the beard, two characteristics of the Sikh identity used to signify holiness and submission to God's will (Singh, 2011). Nesbitt (2016) reveals that the founders of Sikh emphasised the unimportance of gender, as gender is deemed insignificant for spiritual progress, and argued that this stemmed from their advocacy for equality between men and women.

Cosmopolitan India similarly conveys the brand ideals of physical appearance and beauty, symbolized through the presence of make-up, fashion as well as intimate content with the addition of religion, an important concept in India's culture, as India is commonly referred to as a land of religious pluralism. *Cosmopolitan India* represented the hegemonic woman as one who similarly takes pride in her appearance, fashion, and is religiously conscious.

South Africa

Displaying a total of 21 images, wherein women are represented in 13 with 2 serving as repetitions, the analysis of the images reveals that feminine and glamorous women took precedence similar to *Cosmopolitan India*, in accordance with the Cosmopolitan brand ideals of the hegemonic woman. The analysis of clothing revealed a balanced split between fully covered and semi-covered women as depicted in Image 13 below. Furthermore, the analysis of body type revealed that the average and thin body type were equally represented, this too, can be seen in the image below.

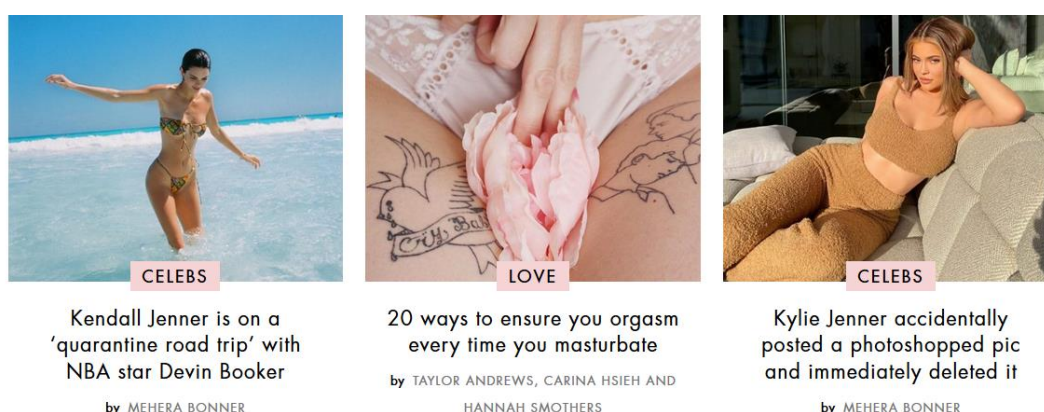


Image 13

However, when considering the presence of sexuality and intimacy, *Cosmopolitan South Africa* did not portray a woman with a man or with another woman with the aim to symbolize a relationship or infer sexuality. Nonetheless, the homepage did transmit content labelled as love as per the caption accompanying image 14 below. The content served to unambiguously promote self-sexual pleasure, as represented in image 14 below. The image also connotes the sexual liberation of women in line with the ideals of the Cosmopolitan brand urging women to recognize themselves as sexual agents.



Image 14

Cosmopolitan South Africa similarly conveyed the brand ideals of physical appearance and beauty, as women were predominantly represented as feminine and glamorous through the presence of visible make-up, and fashion content. *Cosmopolitan South Africa* further represented the hegemonic woman as one who values sexual pleasure, in accordance with the brand's representation of the ideal woman.

United Kingdom

The homepage displayed a total of 48 images, wherein 25 represented women and 6 of them were repetitions appearing at the end of the homepage. Most women present on the homepage were overtly feminine and glamorous, similar to *Cosmopolitan India* and *South Africa* consistent with the brand ideals of the hegemonic woman, as makeup and fashion served as a recurrent topic on the respective homepage as revealed in image 15 below:

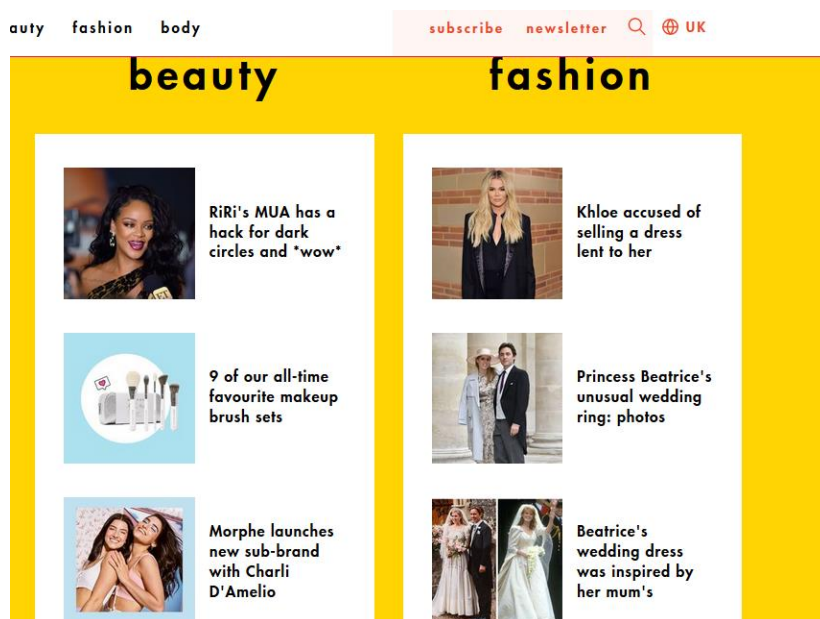


Image 15

The analysis of clothing revealed that the *Cosmopolitan UK* women wore more conservative clothing as most were represented as fully covered in contrast to *Cosmopolitan India*. This difference can be attributed to the different fashion trends in the different regions. The analysis of the body revealed that the average body type prevailed similar to *Cosmopolitan India*.

The content regarding relationships and intimacy appeared to be more prominent on the *Cosmopolitan UK* homepage when in comparison to the other geographical issues as depicted in Image 16 below. The content covered a broader range of the sex spectrum, including content pertaining to bisexuality, same-sex relationships, and most significantly the relationships of people with disabilities as revealed by the man with the almond-shaped, slanted eyes in the third image from the left, characteristics common with down syndrome, concluding in content regarding sexual pleasure.

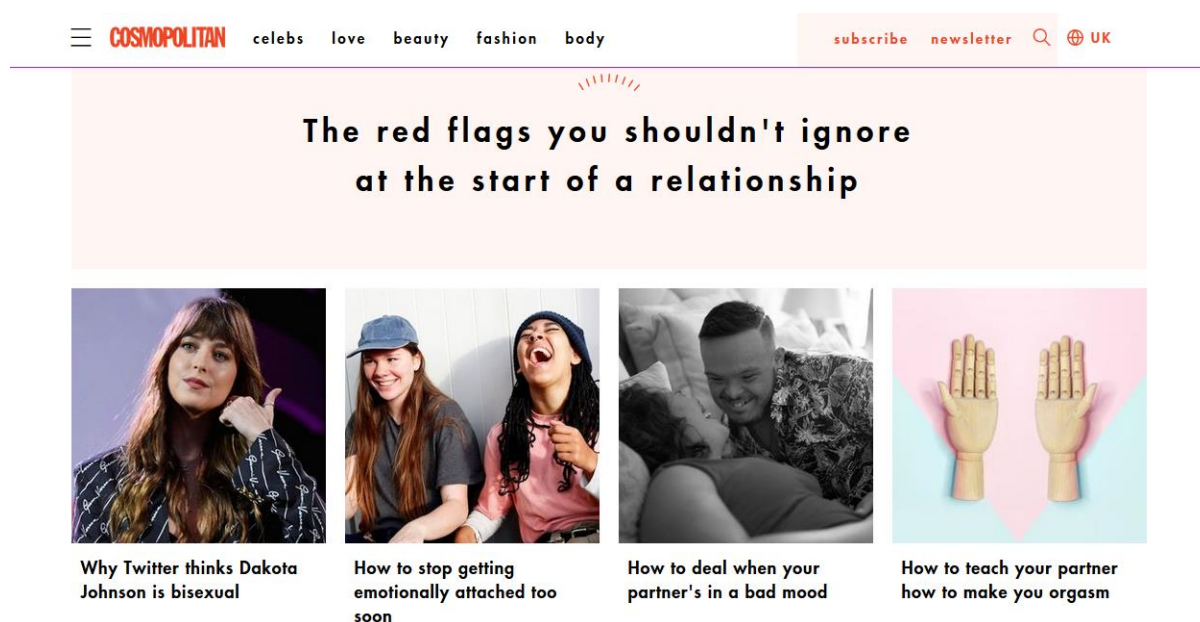


Image 16

As a result, *Cosmopolitan UK* similarly conveyed the brand ideals of physical appearance and beauty through the dominant presence of feminine, glamorous, and fashionably dressed women. *The cosmopolitan UK* issue differed, in that the hegemonic women were not represented as solely heterosexual as image 16 above revealed alternate sexualities. Nonetheless, the hegemonic woman was similarly represented as one who values sexual pleasure, in accordance with the brand's representation of the hegemonic woman as a result of the explicit intimate content presented.

6.1.4 Elle

Targeting the young, independent, and intellectual woman, *Elle* is well-known for promoting fashion, beauty, health, and entertainment content. *Elle* further promotes content in relation to feminism, freedom, and the consumer society (Demarest & Garner, 1992). The representation of all women on all the *Elle* websites are recorded in Table 2 below, reflecting the most dominant characteristics:

Elle				
femininity	total	AU	India	UK
feminine	58	13	20	25
glamorization	total	AU	India	UK
glamorous	36	9	13	14
clothing	total	AU	India	UK
semi-covered	35	10	11	14
body type	total	AU	India	UK
thin	36	9	11	16
sexuality	total	AU	India	UK
Hetero	8	3	1	4

Table 2 Characteristics of the Elle Hegemonic woman.

As suggested by table 2 above, according to the brand *Elle* the hegemonic woman is feminine, glamorous, semi-covered, and has a thin body type, she is also preferred to be in a heterosexual relationship and portrayed as one who is up to date with the latest fashion trends and celebrity gossip.

Australia

Having a total of 23 images with 17 representing women and 3 serving as repetitions, the analysis of women represented on *Elle AU* reveals that all women were portrayed as feminine, glamorous, and fashionable, with most of the women being semi-covered with the chest and arms left exposed as revealed in Image 17 below by way of example.

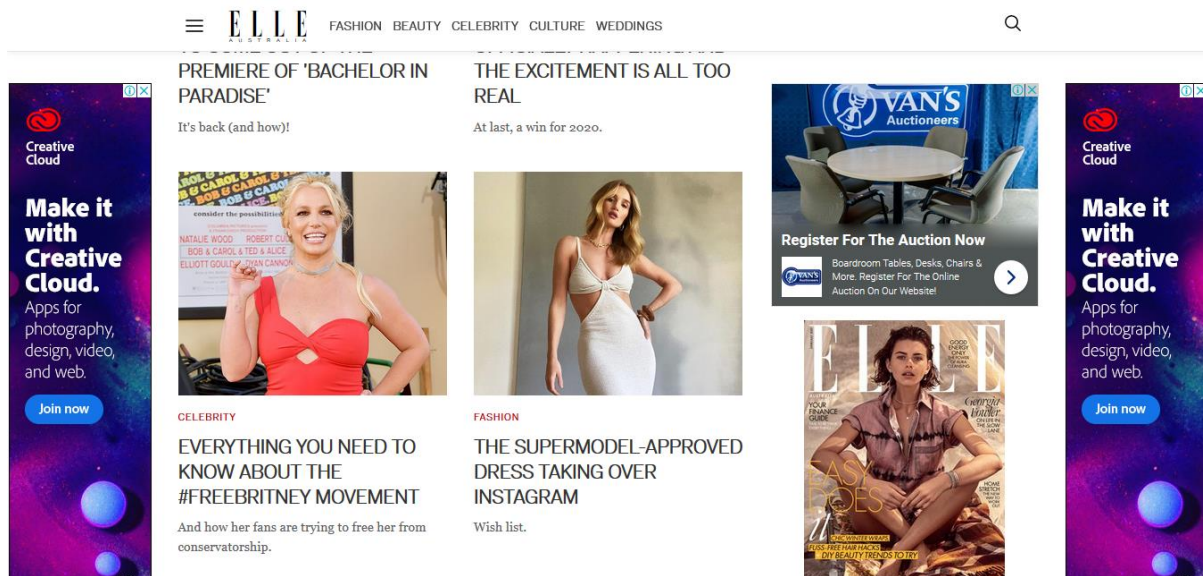


Image 17

The analysis of body type reveals that the thin body type was preferred, and the analysis of sexuality revealed that the heterosexual couple was hegemonic. As revealed by the presence of content representing a heterosexual marriage as represented in image 18 below, with no content representing alternative sexualities.



Image 18

Elle AU additionally provided the viewer with #BLACKLIVESMATTER content, boxed into a specific section as revealed by image 19 below. #BLACKLIVESMATTER refers to a global political social movement against white supremacy and advocates for the recognition of the black queer, trans, disabled, and ex-convict individual (Taylor, 2016). All content in image 18

below is labelled as 'news' inferring that the hegemonic woman is one who also keeps up to date with the news. A closer look further reveals that the content is directed at white women.



Image 19

The first image from the left serves as a helpful guideline for white women during conversations with an individual who argues that all lives matter, the second image explicitly refers to a white woman and further makes use of the plural pronoun “we”, denoting the target audience as white women. The last two images are concerned with support for anti-racist efforts.

As a result, *Elle AU* similarly represented the hegemonic woman as one who is feminine, glamorous, fashionable, prefers semi-covered clothing, and has a thin body type. The hegemonic woman is also engaged in a heterosexual relationship, all consistent with the brand characteristics of the hegemonic woman. *Elle AU* additionally represented the white hegemonic woman as one who is assertive and speaks out against racism during conversations, attends protests, and even socially across media platforms.

India

Displaying 28 images in total, wherein women are represented in 23. The images reveal that most women were represented as feminine with natural beauty realised through content serving as a guide to flawless skin. The analysis of clothing reveals that women were

predominantly fully covered on the *Elle India* homepage in contrast to being semi-covered as seen on the *Elle AU* homepage.

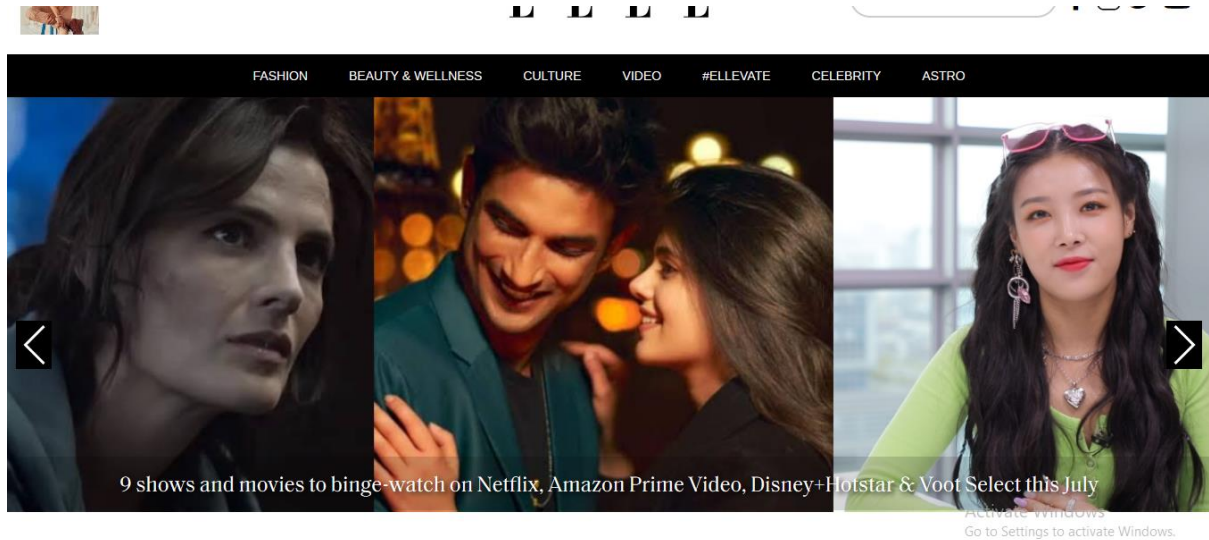


Image 20.

The analysis of the body reveals that the average type (neither thin nor large) was preferred similarly in contrast to *Elle AU* and the brand characteristics of the ideal woman as being thin. Lastly, the analysis of sexuality reveals that only one image represented a heterosexual couple as seen in Image 20 above featuring an exchange between a smiling man and a woman, with her hands rested on his shoulders as a subtle act of intimacy.

Content concerning beauty, particularly in the form of skincare and natural beauty (beauty products derived from natural ingredients) proved to be prominent on the *Elle India* homepage. As the viewer was provided with content that served as a guideline to achieving the no-makeup look, *how to keep one's skin flawless*, and further how to incorporate natural beauty and greener beauty into one's routine.

As a result, *Elle India* represented the hegemonic woman as one who is feminine, values natural beauty and flawless skin, prefers fully covered clothing, of an average body type, and engaged in a heterosexual relationship. *Elle India*, therefore, reflected the desired brand

characteristics of the ideal women in relation to femininity and sexuality while differing with body type and glamorization with a preference for natural beauty.

United Kingdom

Presenting the viewer with 51 images, with 27 representing women and 4 serving as repetitions. The representation of women on the *Elle UK* homepage reveals that women were predominantly feminine, glamorous, and fashionable with more women represented as wearing semi-covered clothing, consistent with *Elle AU* and the brand characteristics of the hegemonic woman. In addition, the analysis of body type reveals that most women had a thin body type, again, consistent with *Elle AU* and the brand characteristics of the hegemonic woman.

In terms of sexuality, the homepage of *Elle UK* illustrated that the ideal woman is to be engaged in a heterosexual relationship similar to *Elle AU*, *India*, and indeed the brand. As the viewer was presented with content wherein women and men are pictured in close proximity symbolic of an intimate relationship. However, the viewer was also provided with a section labelled “*The secret lives of women*” as pictured in image 21 below.

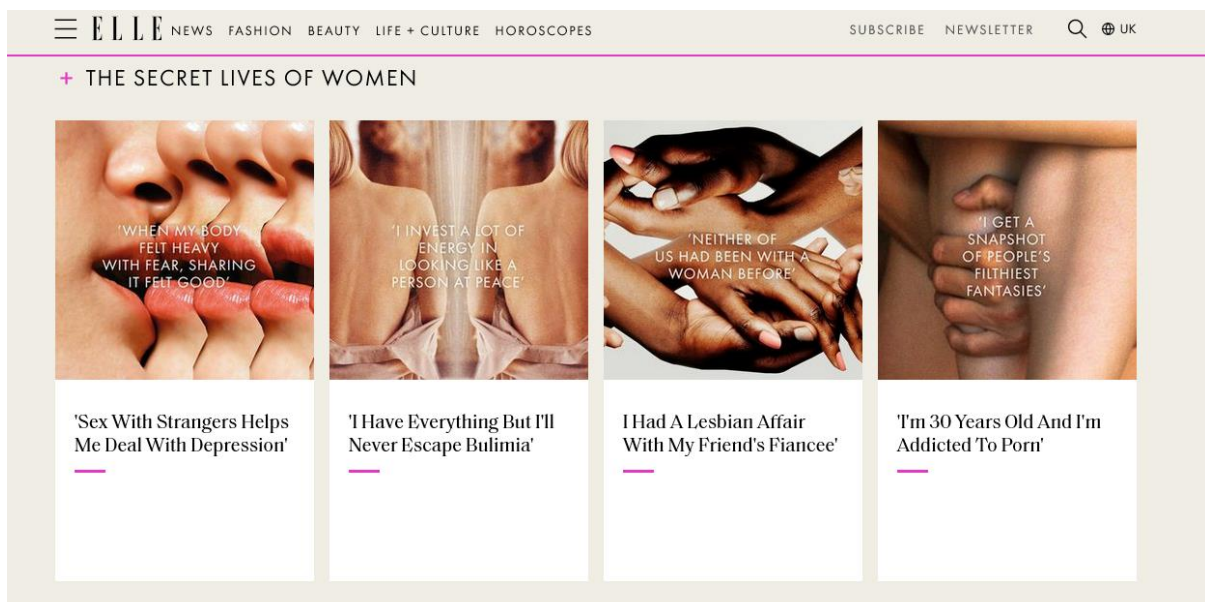


Image 21

The image reveals the presence of indiscreet sexual content including sex with strangers, lesbian affairs as well as content pertaining to pornography. Labelling such content as part of the secret lives of women reveals that the magazine still maintains the dominant societal preference for heterosexual relations while acknowledging the presence and acceptance of lesbianism and other forms of sexualities in the UK culture as overtly demonstrated on the *Cosmopolitan UK* issue.

Elle UK frequently provided the viewer with content referring to entertainment in the form of TV shows and films as represented in image 22 below. When looking at the type of TV shows represented, including *Little Fires Everywhere* and *I May Destroy You*, it is evident that they serve to represent ideologies the magazine wishes to convey. The American Drama, *Little fires everywhere* carries a strong theme of race and motherhood, while the British comedy-drama *I may destroy you* carries themes of sexual assault and race, themes that unite all women, internationally and locally.

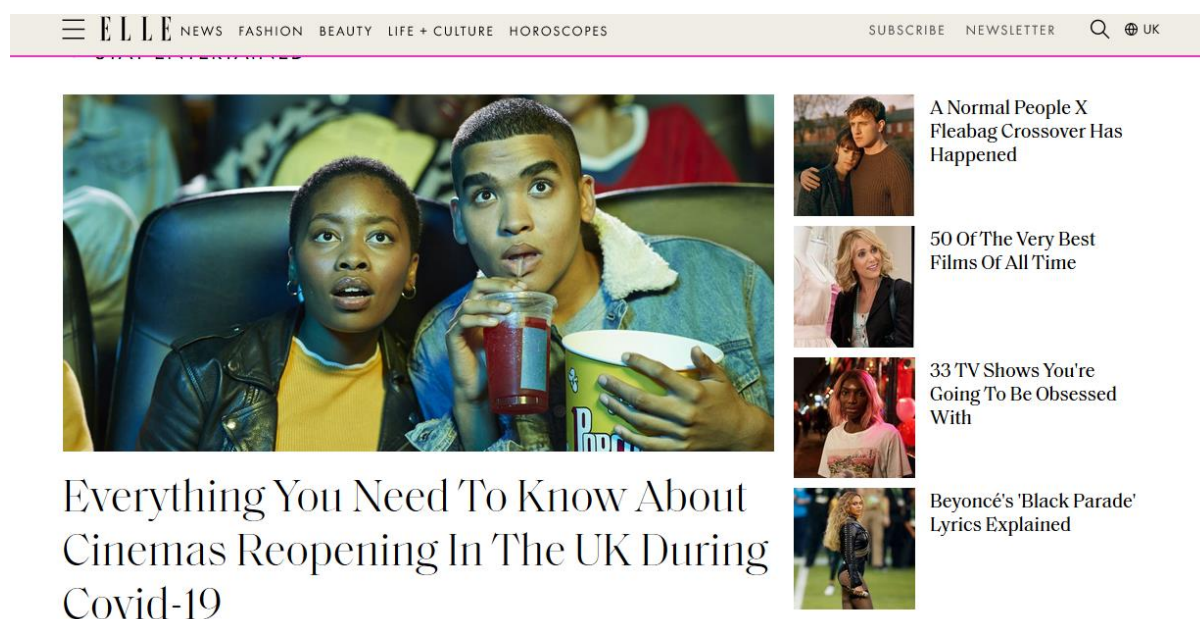


Image 22

As a result, *Elle UK* has represented the hegemonic woman as one who is feminine, glamorous, and fashionable, prefers semi-covered clothing, and has a thin body type, consistent with the Elle brand characteristics of the hegemonic woman. *Elle UK* further

represented the hegemonic woman as engaged in an overt heterosexual relationship while regarding alternative sexualities and indeed other forms of sexual pleasure contrary to societal norms, as a secret.

6.1.5 Harper's Bazaar

Well-known as one of the oldest fashion magazines aimed at affluent women in society, *Harper's bazaar* serves as a guide on how to live and live well in the modern world (Mooalllem⁷). The representation of women on *Harper's Bazaar* websites are recorded in table 3 below, reflecting the most dominant characteristics:

Harpers bazaar				
femininity	total	Arabia	AU	UK
feminine	64	26	13	25
glamorization	total	Arabia	AU	UK
glamorous	48	20	9	19
clothing	total	Arabia	AU	UK
semi-covered	32	10	3	19
body type	total	Arabia	AU	UK
average	38	17	5	16
sexuality	total	Arabia	AU	UK
Hetero	15	5	7	3

Table 3 Characteristics of the Harper's Bazaar Hegemonic woman.

As indicated by table 3 above, the *Harper's Bazaar* hegemonic woman is characterised as feminine, glamorous, wears semi-covered clothing, has an average body type, and is engaged in a heterosexual relationship. She is also well-travelled and thus affluent as previously mentioned. All homepages displayed content in relation to weddings including bride-to-be content, this can be attributed to the old-fashioned characteristic of the magazine being one of the oldest magazines in the corpus. Indicating that the hegemonic woman is further one who values and aspires to the institution of marriage.

⁷ <https://www.harpersbazaar.com/culture/features/a18658/history-of-harpers-bazaar/>

Arabia

Having a total of 48 images and 4 videos, allowing *Harper's Bazaar* to be the first brand in this study to provide the viewer with audio visual content on the homepage. Women were represented in 24 of the images including all 4 videos, with the analysis of woman representation revealing that all the women were displayed as feminine, glamorous, fashionable, and semi-covered. Consistent with the brand characteristics of the hegemonic woman.

In addition to reflecting the hegemonic woman as one who is glamorous, consistent with the brand ideal as previously mentioned, *Harper's Bazaar Arabia* simultaneously portrayed natural beauty as a characteristic of the ideal woman through the distribution of skin care and natural beauty content similar to *Elle India* discussed above. *Harper's Bazaar Arabia* served as the only edition to provide the user with a *Watch & Listen* section as illustrated in image 23 below. The section is composed of four videos with the most salient theme- portrayed in three of the four videos, concerning morning skincare routines.

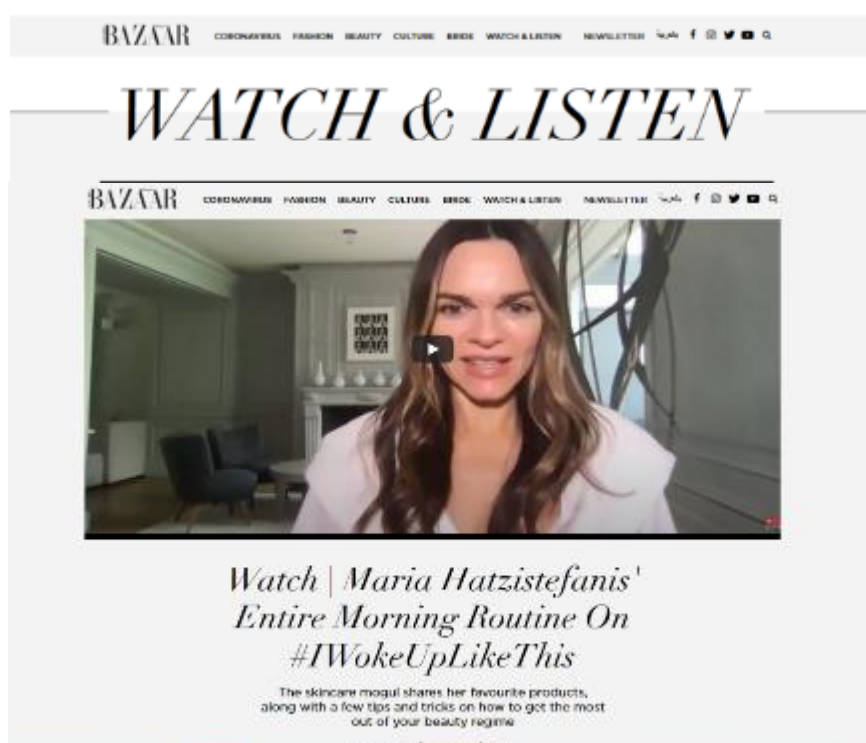


Image 23

The analysis of body type reveals that the average body type was preferred over the thin body type, again consistent with the brand characteristics of the hegemonic woman. Finally, the analysis of sexuality reveals that the heterosexual relationship was preferred as women were predominantly pictured with men in content concerning engagements and weddings.

As a result, the *Harper's Bazaar Arabia* hegemonic woman is feminine, glamorous, fashionable, wears semi-covered clothing, has an average body type, and is engaged in a heterosexual relationship, consistent with the brand ideals of the hegemonic woman. She also values natural beauty and therefore commits to a skincare regimen.

Australia

Holding 23 images, wherein women are represented in 13, with 3 of them serving as repetitions. The analysis of women's representation reveals that the hegemonic woman was represented consistently with the brand ideals, most of the women were feminine, glamorous, and fashionable. *Harper's Bazaar AU* did however differ in terms of clothing as preference was placed on fully covered clothing, this can also be seen in image 24 below.

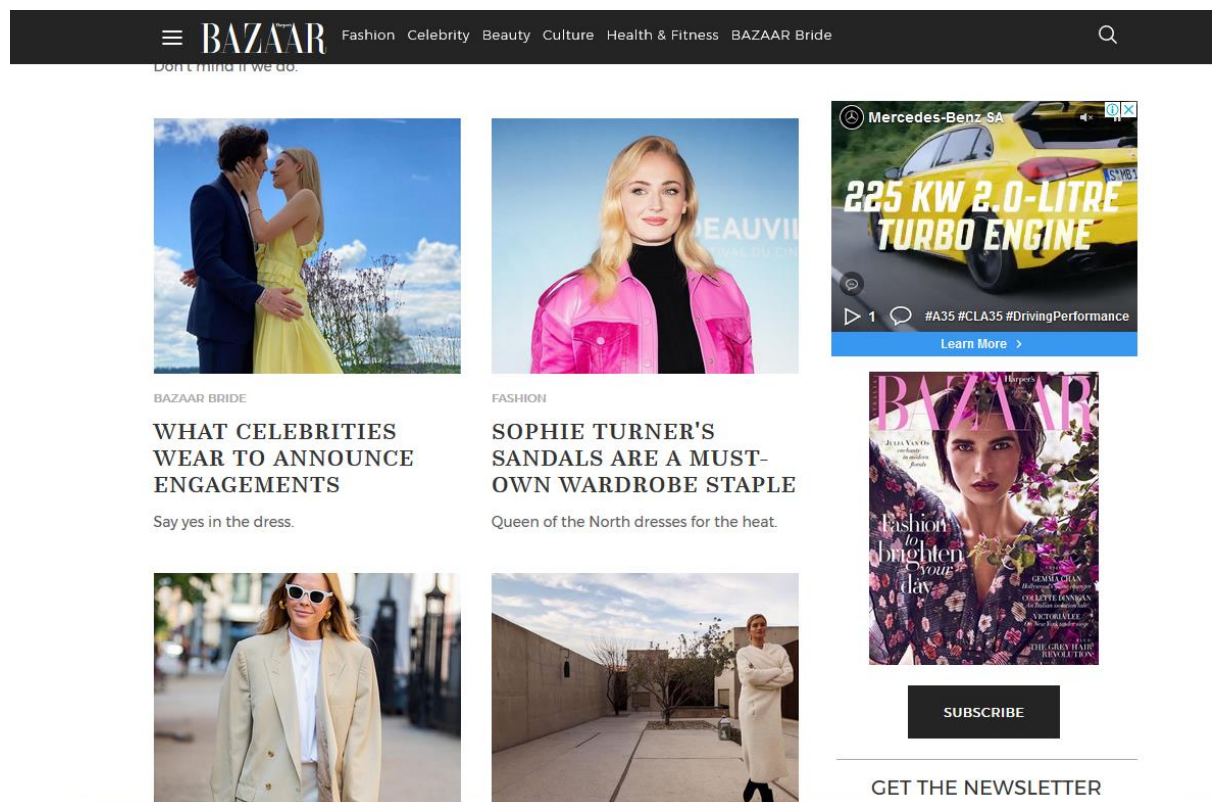


Image 24.

The analysis of the body inferred that the thin body type held preference over the average body type, in contrast to the brand ideal. While the analysis of sexuality similarly revealed that heterosexuality prevailed in accordance with the brand ideals.

As previously seen in *Elle AU*, *Harper's Bazaar AU* similarly provided the user with anti-racist content as represented in image 25 below. From the title and captions underneath the images, it becomes clear who the target audience is- the white woman. The section is a collection of content serving as a guide on *how to be anti-racist*, addressing words to understand during conversations about race, white privilege, and how the Australian white woman can support the Black Lives Matter movement.



Image 25

Harper's Bazaar AU further represented the hegemonic woman as one who defies social conventions through the content represented as images 26 and 27 below. Image 26 provides the user with a list of women celebrities who *are taller than their partners*, in opposition to the norm that favours the patriarchal line that men are to be taller than their woman partners. A practice that symbolizes power, strength, and indeed masculinity. The caption underneath the image *reaching new heights* thus carries a discourse of empowerment and upliftment for women, as it infers an alternative to the norm and hence improvement and success for women.



CELEBRITY

19 FEMALE CELEBRITIES WHO ARE TALLER THAN THEIR PARTNERS

Reaching new heights.



FASHION

VALENTINA SAMPAIO BECOMES THE FIRST TRANSGENDER MODEL TO BE FEATURED IN SPORTS ILLUSTRATED'S SWIMSUIT ISSUE

The model making history

Image 27

Image 26

Image 27 above similarly reveals an alternative to the norm regarding gender and provides content concerning the success of a transgendered individual. She is explicitly named and thus personalized and is now being praised for her feature on the *Sports Illustrated swimsuit*

magazine. Sports Illustrated is an American sports magazine, also well-known for its annual swimsuit issue which serves to present women models and athletes, often in a sexualized manner.

As a result, the above instances of social transgression are social obedience as the underlying discourse of heterosexuality still exists in image 26, and the common portrayal of women as an object for male desire as in image 27. Therefore, *Harper's Bazaar AU* represented the hegemonic women in accordance with the brand ideals as feminine, glamorous, and engaged in a heterosexual relationship, with the exception of clothing and body type. *Harper's Bazaar AU* additionally represented the hegemonic woman as an anti-racist.

United Kingdom

Occupying a total of 53 images, wherein women are represented in 39 with one serving as a repetition. The representation of women reveals that the majority of the women were portrayed as feminine with an equal balance between natural beauty and glamorous, similar to *Harper's Bazaar Arabia* previously discussed. Women were also predominantly semi-covered as opposed to being fully covered, again similar to *Harper's Bazaar Arabia*.

The analysis of body type reveals that the thin body type held preference over the average body type. While the analysis of sexuality revealed that the representation of the heterosexual couple took precedence. *Harper's Bazaar UK*, therefore, represented the hegemonic women in accordance with the brand ideals. However, similarly provided the user with content unique to *Harper's Bazaar UK* in comparison to the Arabian and Australian editions discussed above, such as a dedicated fitness and *Bazaar at work* sections demonstrated in image 28 and image 29 below.

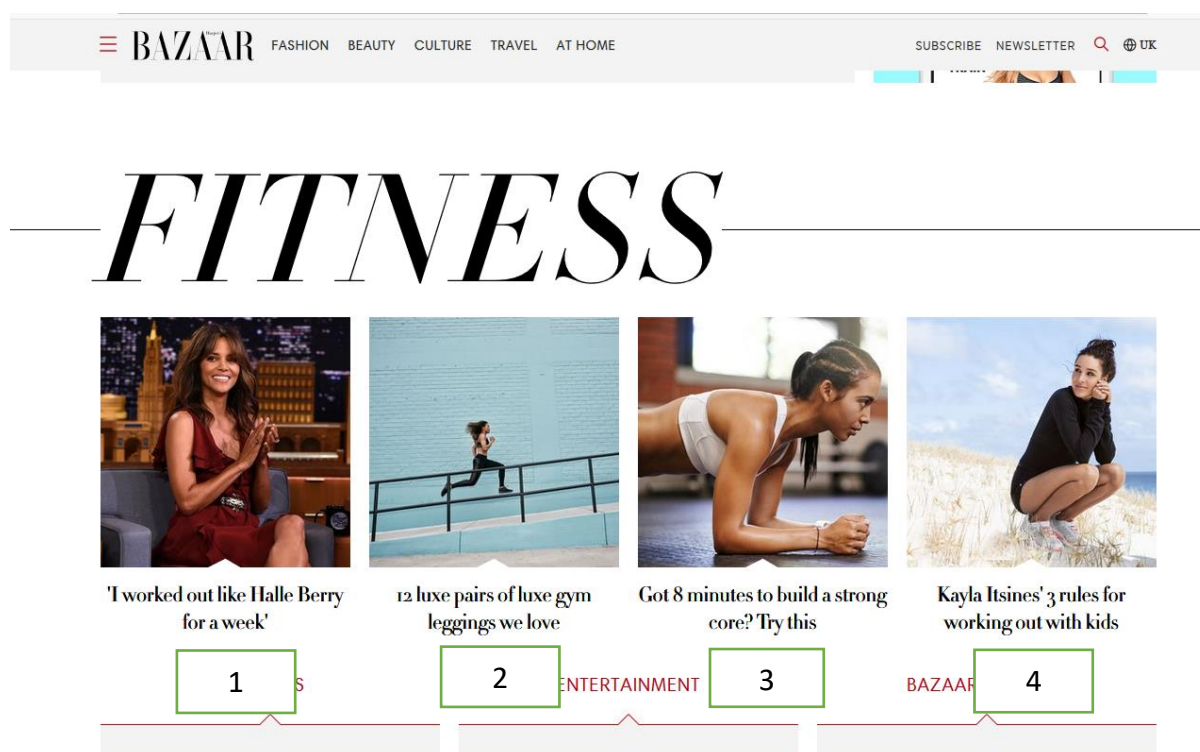


Image 28

As per image 28 above, it is evident that the content is aimed at two types of women, the first as indicated by images 1 and 2 from the left are dedicated to those who aspire to look and dress like affluent celebrities. While image 3 and 4 speaks to the reality of those women who do not have enough time to take care of themselves. Here, interpreted as keeping fit, due to one of their social roles further confirmed as motherhood in image 4. Thus, attributing an additional characteristic of the *Harper's Bazaar UK* hegemonic woman as one who keeps fit and adheres to the societal standards of beauty communicated through the celebrities while still adhering to their social role requirements, for example using the “3 rules for working out with the kids” as revealed in image 4.

The *Bazaar at work* section, represented in image 29 below, provides the viewer with content regarding post-lockdown burnout, workplace re-integration as well as how to increase productivity and motivation while working from home. In each of the images used it is evident that the women are represented as independent as they are pictured alone, however, only

two out of the four images (Images 3 and 4) connotes a working environment. As expected, the women are represented with a focus on being beautiful, glamorous, fashionable, thin, and white, while making no reference to what work is being done. As a result, women are represented as working independently but with a pretence as the emphasis is placed on the physical appearance instead of their intellectual abilities.

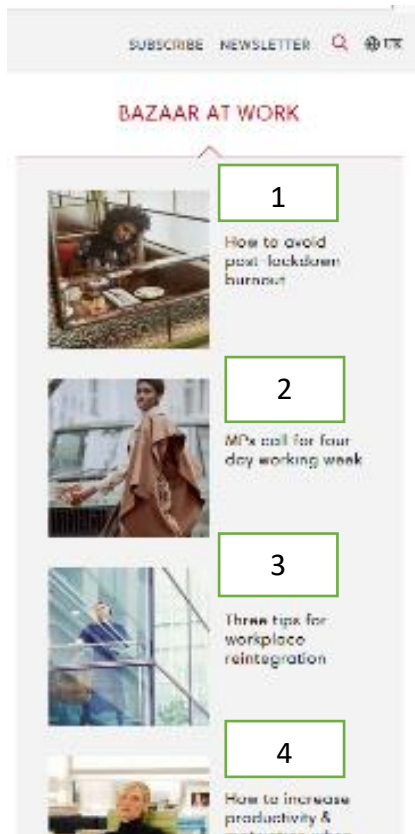


Image 29

Hence *Harper's Bazaar UK* represented the hegemonic woman in accordance with the brand characteristic as feminine, glamorous, wears semi-covered clothing, has a thin body type, and is engaged in a heterosexual relationship. The *Harper's Bazaar UK* hegemonic woman was further represented as one who keeps fit and looks good at work.

6.1.6 Vogue

Known as one of the most influential fashion magazines, *Vogue* has often been described as a trendsetter in the fashion and magazine industry often aimed at the wealthy, young and independent woman (David, 2006).

The representation of women on the *Vogue* websites are recorded in table 4 below, reflecting the most dominant characteristics:

Vogue				
femininity	total	AU	India	UK
feminine	62	21	12	29
glamorization	total	AU	India	UK
glamorous	43	14	6	23
clothing	total	AU	India	UK
semi-covered	35	9	8	18
body type	total	AU	India	UK
thin	35	8	5	22
sexuality	total	AU	India	UK
Hetero	7	3	1	3

Table 4 Characteristics of the Vogue Hegemonic woman.

As indicated by table 4 above, the *Vogue* hegemonic woman is characterised as feminine, glamorous, wears semi-covered clothing, has a thin body type, and is engaged in a heterosexual relationship. In each of the editions in this study, the hegemonic woman is given additional characteristics dependent on nationality and culture of the respective region, to be discussed below.

Australia

Holding 45 images, with women represented in 21 of them including 2 repetitions, the women represented were feminine and glamorous consistent with the hegemonic woman proposed by *Vogue* as a brand. However, the majority of the women on the *Vogue AU* homepage were fully covered in contrast to the semi-covered ideal proposed by the brand.

With reference to body type, *Vogue AU* revealed that the average body type was preferred over the thin body type, with only one woman represented as having a large body type, again in contrast to the brand ideals. While the analysis of sexuality illustrates that the heterosexual

couple took preference as the heterosexual marriage of Princess Beatrice was the only relationship present on the entire homepage as represented in image 30 below.

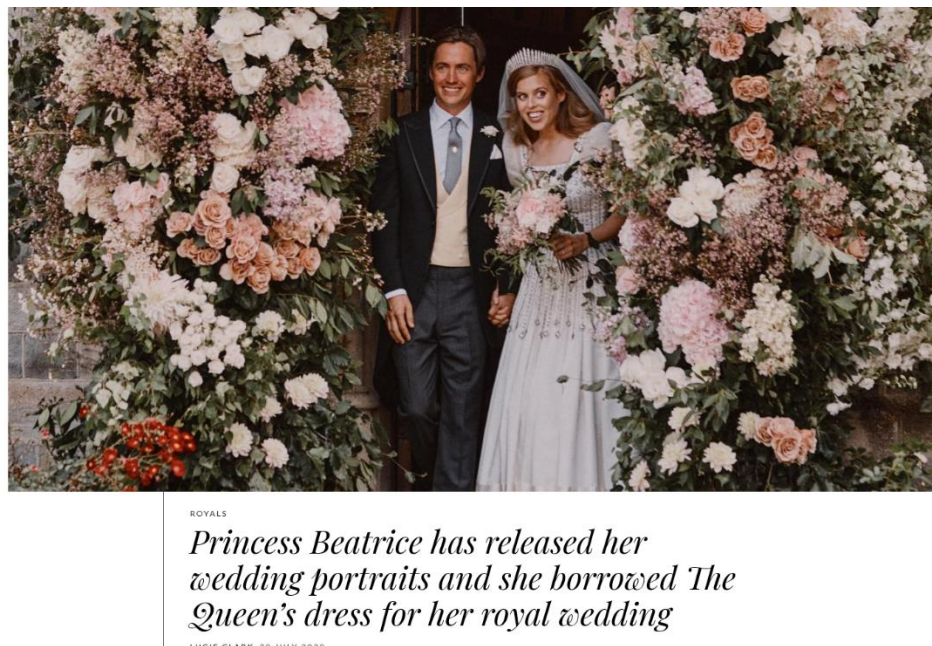


Image 30

Vogue AU additionally provided the viewer with a *Vogue Living, Travel, and Travel inspiration* section that was not present on the *Vogue India* and *UK* editions. As a result, *Vogue AU* additionally characterised the hegemonic woman as one who enjoys travel, and further characterising her as wealthy and affluent.

Image 31 below, represents the Travel section present on the *Vogue AU* homepage. As a result, it is evident that the producers aim to promote local travel as all the content serves as a guide on places to visit in Australia. The section carries a heavy discourse of luxury realised through the setting, such as the sunset, and travelling according to one's wine preference as opposed to budget, as seen in the caption of image 2 from the left.

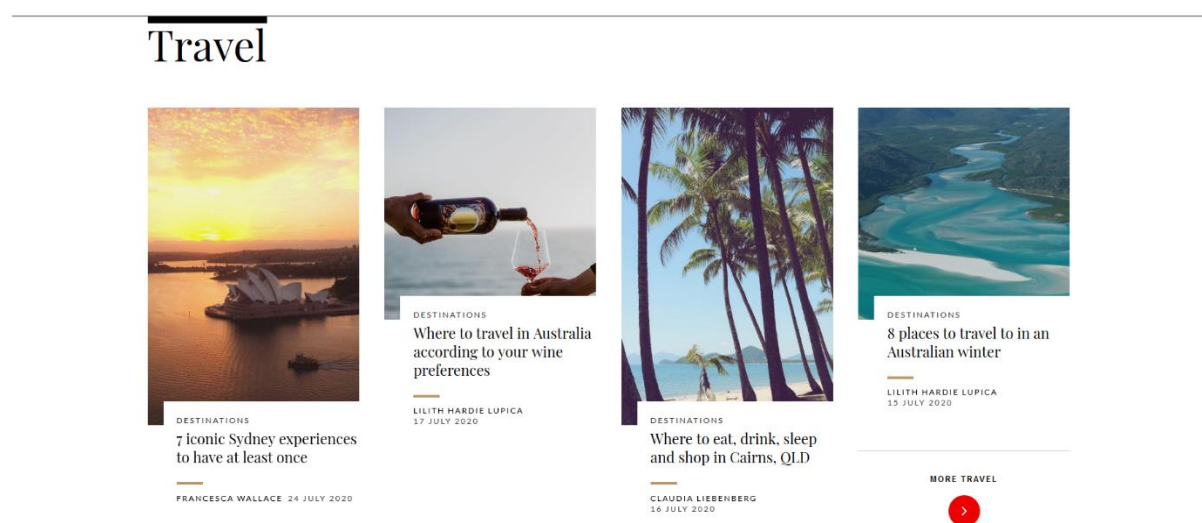


Image 31

As a result, *Vogue AU* represented the hegemonic woman in accordance with the brand ideals as being feminine and glamorous. The *Vogue AU* hegemonic woman was however more conservative in that majority of the women were fully covered and of an average body type in contrast to the brand ideals. Lastly, the hegemonic woman was also represented as heterosexual, affluent, wealthy, and enjoys travelling.

India

Holding a total of 19 images, with women represented in 13 of them, the majority of the women were represented as feminine with an equal balance between glamorous and natural beauty. As previously seen in *Harper's Bazaar Arabia* and in accordance with the *Vogue* brand ideals of the feminine and glamorous hegemonic woman. The women were also more semi-covered as per the brand ideal as seen in image 32 below.

1 BY AVANTI DALAL 19 JULY 2020

Culture & Lifestyle

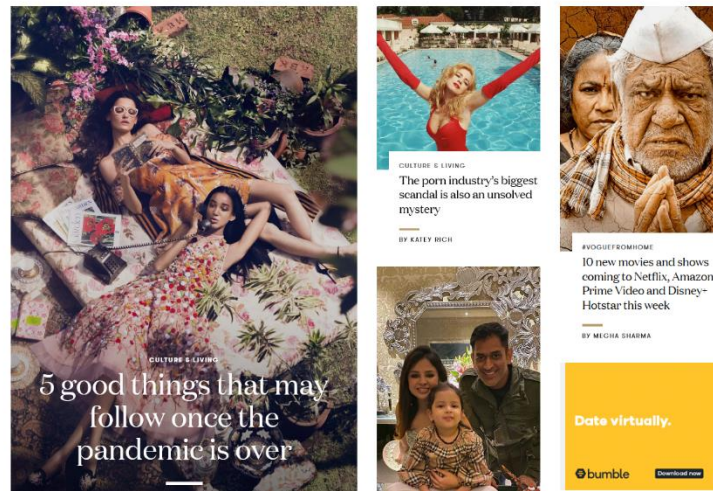


Image 32

The analysis of body type reveals that the average body type was favoured over the thin body type, with only one representation of a large body type. And lastly, with reference to sexuality, *Vogue India* represented one instance of the heteronormative family structure as seen in image 32 above. *Vogue India* also provided the viewer with content promoting the dating application- *bumble* through the representation of a gay couple as represented in image 33 below. Revealing that *Vogue India* recognizes the presence of homosexual men.

VOGUE

INDIA ▾ SUBSCRIBE

FASHION BEAUTY VOGUE CLOSET WEDDING WARDROBE HOROSCOPE WHAT'S NEW MAGAZINE

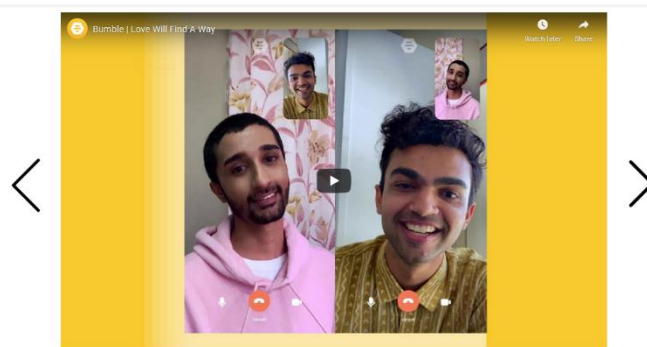


Image 33

The presence of homosexual men as opposed to homosexual women on a women's magazine is significant. It mirrors the argument made by Gadsden (2003) who states that when women are deviant to heteronormativity, they often face victimization. As a result, *Vogue India*

promotes the invisibility of alternative sexualities for Indian women. This is further emphasized as *Vogue India* represented the women bride in the traditional red lehenga as represented in image 34 below, revealing the hegemonic sexuality for women conforms to heteronormativity and the Indian culture.



Image 34

However, it is important to note that *Vogue India* also provided the viewer with content concerning the support for black trans people as represented in Image 35 below. Revealing that the magazine similarly recognizes the presence of gender struggles of individuals of other nationalities but does not promote and support them through the representation of Indian women.



Image 35

Thus, Vogue India has represented the hegemonic woman in accordance with the brand ideals of feminine, glamorous, and wears semi-covered clothing. *Vogue India* however displayed a preference for the average body type and heterosexual relationship. The *Vogue India* hegemonic women were further represented as one who is aware of alternative sexualities but does not transgress these social norms themselves.

United Kingdom

Holding a total of 51 images, and women represented in 36 of them. Most of the women represented were feminine, and glamorous in accordance with the brand characteristic of the hegemonic woman. *Vogue UK* did however present a balanced representation between semi-covered and fully covered women.

With reference to body type, most of the women represented were thin, again in accordance with the brand characteristics of the hegemonic woman. Lastly, *Vogue UK* only represented content symbolic of a heterosexual couple. As a result, *Vogue UK* represented the ideal women in accordance with the brand ideals. However, *Vogue UK* served as the only region to provide the viewer with a dedicated anti-racism section as represented in image 36 below.

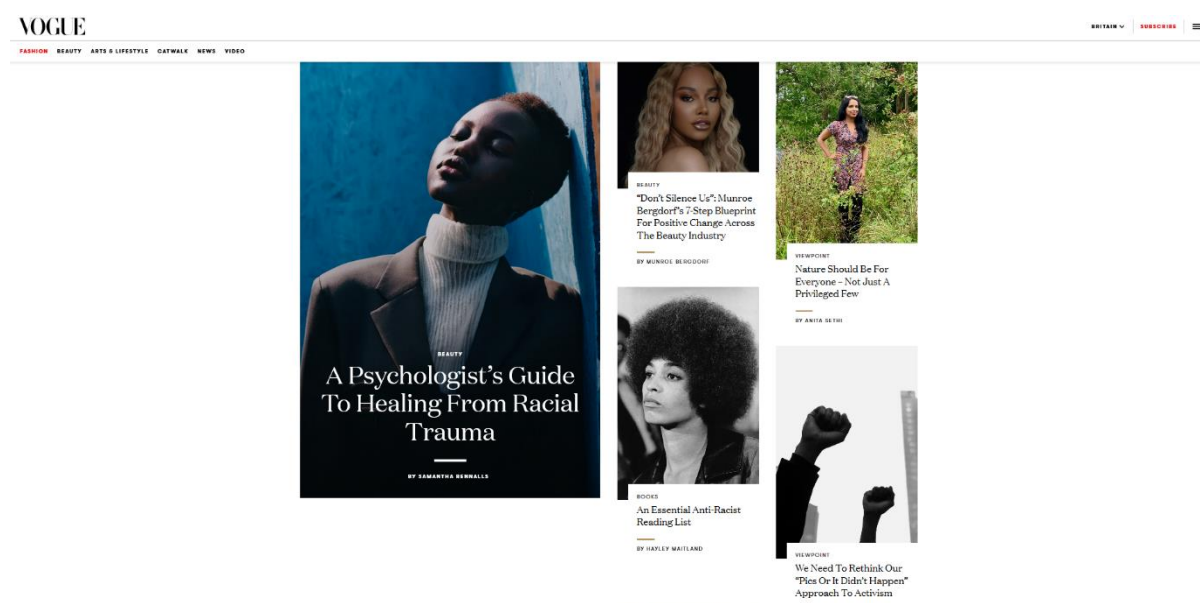


Image 36

The section provided the viewer with content concerning *racial trauma*, *racism in the beauty industry* as well as an *essential anti-racist reading list*. The images within this section

significantly only represented women of colour. On the one hand, representing women of colour as oppressed, and on the other liberating them as *Vogue UK* recognizes their struggle, and supports their fight against systemic racism through the promotion of the *anti-racist reading list*. *Vogue UK* therefore additionally characterized the hegemonic woman as an anti-racist similar to *Elle AU* and *Harper's Bazaar AU* previously discussed.

6.1.7 Discussion

Discussing the representation of women across the magazine websites to uncover the hegemonic representations sensitive to nationality and culture, it is evident that the ideal woman continues to be rooted in western ideals and notions of beauty. The hegemonic women across all magazine websites were portrayed as attractive, feminine and glamorous women who are constantly concerned with their appearance (Beuf, 1990). In this way revealing that the stereotypical representations of women in the media continue to prevail as previously shown by Bell & Miic (2002).

The analysis of clothing revealed that most women on the magazine websites wore semi-covered clothing and preferred to have some skin on display. A look at the ideal body type represented further reinforces the argument that Western notions of beauty continue to prevail as the dominant body type was thin across *Elle & Vogue* and the average body type was dominant across *Cosmopolitan & Harper's Bazaar*, illustrating that larger body types continue to face discrimination despite the various global social movements that promote body positivity.

Sexuality as the final coding category has long been a slippery slope with regards to the equal representation of its spectrum across media platforms. As discussed above, the conventional heteronormative relationship continues to prevail and occupy the ideal sexuality preference across all magazine websites in this study. Again, contrary to the various social movements that fight for the normalisation and freedom of alternative sexualities.

Although Western notions of beauty continue to shape the hegemonic women across magazine websites, some magazine websites added characteristics to their hegemonic women, sensitive to the local culture. This was predominantly evident across all the Indian and *Harper's Bazaar Arabian* editions. India and Saudi Arabia are known as conservative countries (Hancock, 2017) due to the great societal influence of religion specifically, Hinduism and Islam followed by the majority of their citizens.

The data above proved to reflect conservatism as these editions placed preference on natural beauty in the form of perfect skin and further did not represent any indiscreet content concerning intimacy, and other forms of sexuality. These findings demonstrate the presence of personal ethics and morality in media content as previously argued by (Yao & Yao, 2000) with reference to the Japanese and Korean cultures. While the United Kingdom expressed indiscreet content including intimacy and same-sex relationships quite overtly as seen in *Cosmopolitan* and *Elle UK* above.

However, representations of realistic forms of beauty that women can identify with, including larger bodies, and different sexualities have demonstrated to be minimal, revealing the cultural regression with the representation of all members as similar narratives of the hegemonic women dominate regardless of culture and nationality.

However, some websites have demonstrated progression and alliance with anti-racism. This was evident across the *Elle AU*, *Harper's Bazaar AU*, and *Vogue UK* editions as the hegemonic woman was further attributed an anti-racist characteristic. The viewer was provided with content that promoted anti-racism strategies such as “*words to use and understand in conversations concerning race, understanding white privilege, and how to be a better ally*”.

Although the content serves to uplift and empower women of colour through the recognition of their struggle, they are unfortunately still represented as the oppressed and marginalized form of femininity, while the social status of the white woman continues to be represented as the ideal through consumerist practices. This reveals the power of magazines and further

aligns with the finding of Iqani (2012), positing magazines as a medium that shapes lives through the process of telling consumers who to be as well as changing thought patterns about oneself and the world around us.

This is further emphasized by the large presence of the British Royal family on all the magazine websites. Their presence proved to “communicate ideals of beauty, wealth, and class” (Carelse & Evans, 2017, p. 134). The presence of the royal family explicates the fairy-tale ideal sold to all girls, allowing a window into the royal family's reality that will only ever be the fantasy of the viewer. And as such Donnelly (2008) perfectly describes magazines as:

Aspirational devices that present the reader with utopian lifestyle ideals, which offer an opportunity to fantasize about an ‘ideal self’. In this way, magazines provide readers with ‘moments of empowerment’ by encouraging fantasies that may strengthen particular identities (Hermes, 1995, p. 51). It is both the ‘taken-for-granted and ‘aspirational’ qualities of women’s magazines that point to their cultural significance.

-(Donnelly, 2008, p. 37).

The magazine websites further displayed a consistent presence of the Kardashian sisters; however, this will be discussed in relation to work, in the section titled “The working body.” that follows.

6.1.8 The working body

Women have traditionally been relegated to the home because of gender roles assigned and enforced through cultural and societal norms that promote patriarchy. However, with the advent of the feminist critique, many women have entered into the professional domain switching from being the dependent to the independent woman as the second wave of feminism advocated for women’s equality (Fraser, 2012). This section aims to focus on how well this shift in dependency is reflected across the websites under study through a discussion of the representation of work. As the representation of women “can both reflect and determine the economic roles women occupy in society” (Flora, 1979, p. 558).

McDowell (1999) states that there are structural, individual, and symbolic meanings of gender that shape the use of spaces and places from a local to a global perspective. The home, the company, public spaces, the labour market, the city, the nation-state; all these spaces are characterised by specific activities for women. As a result, women are segregated into different occupations, often jobs that emphasize their femininity.

As revealed in the previous section, women were predominantly represented as feminine and glamorous, concerned with the latest fashion and beauty trends. However, when searching for content relating to work and what the ideal occupation would be for the hegemonic women, content proved to be minimal with many magazine websites including *Cosmopolitan India* and *UK*, *Elle India* and *UK*, *Harper's Bazaar AU*, and *Vogue India* making no reference to work.

The magazine websites that displayed women in relation to work outside of their domestic social roles similarly represented these through global celebrities and local cultural icons well-known within the beauty and fashion industry. For example, *Cosmopolitan South Africa* placed significance on becoming an influencer and even provided the viewer with content that serves as a guide as represented in image 37 below. As *Cosmopolitan* targets the younger generation, the ideal job was predominantly represented as a social media influencer and model.

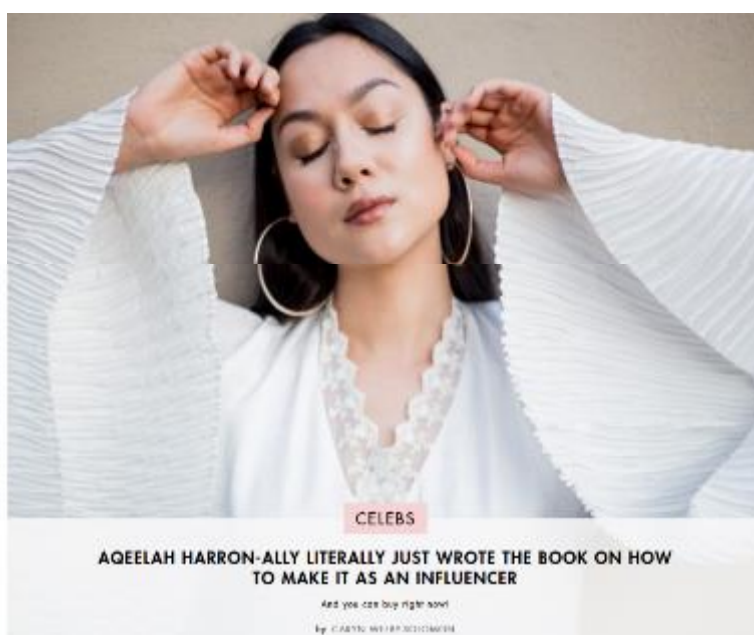


Image 37

While *Elle*, *Harper's Bazaar*, and *Vogue*, targeted at an older demographic, represented the ideal job as a business owner, with image 38 below promoting the launch of *Fenty Skin*, serving as an example taken from *Elle AU*.



Image 38

As a result, it has become clear that the beautiful woman aligned to the characteristics of the hegemonic women and is a social media influencer with an occupation that serves to improve physical appearance, in relation to fashion, skincare, make-up, and the like, serves as the ideal representation of success for women as this is portrayed across all magazine brands.

This is further emphasized through the repetitive presence of the Kardashian & Jenner sisters who promote the consumption of various products and lifestyles. The Kardashian & Jenner sisters are well-known for their long-standing reality TV show *Keeping up with the Kardashians* amongst others, and an array of successful businesses within the beauty industry. As a result, they have proven to be a great influence within the world of beauty and social media platforms emphasized through their extensive social media following.

As such their presence on magazine websites are expected, as they have branded themselves as sexy women, who do as they please, who are not apprehensive of their lives being in the public, and practice self-love (Maloney, 2017). Ideals that magazines exploit and exaggerate in order to promote acts of consumerism. Magazines often frame the aforementioned ideals in association with the consumption of various products and services.

In addition, it makes the job of the magazines incredibly easier as the Kardashian & Jenner sisters are synonymous with the perfect bodies, facial features, success, and family morals. As their purportedly natural, toned curvaceous bodies are often used (with a price of course) to promote high-end fashion, and their perfectly structured faces are used to promote the work and use of exclusive makeup artists and brands. Further, the discourse of success due to their businesses and family bond perpetuated in their reality TV show all serve to preserve the social obedience of women to the societal expectation of women as well as the appraisal of the ideal hegemonic woman.

Discussing identity based on gender differentiation, this chapter opened with a discussion of sex and gender. With sex referring to anatomical differences between men and women, while gender refers to the societal interpretation thereof. As members of society continue to conform to and maintain the culturally regulated behaviours deemed appropriate, the chapter has discussed the hegemonic representations of women across the magazine websites under study.

The results have revealed that similar narratives of western notions of beauty continue to be represented as the ideal and hegemonic form across media platforms. As revealed through the predominant representation of women who represent westernized versions of beauty. The hegemonic women are characterised as feminine, glamorous, prefers semi-covered clothing, has a thin body type, and is in a heterosexual relationship. She further aspires to be attractive to the heterosexual man, as she works out, has a set skincare routine, and commits to her domestic social roles.

In aims to uncover the influence that nationality and culture may have on the representation of the hegemonic women, it is evident that all magazines portrayed similar narratives but employed local cultural icons for this. For example, *Miss South Africa* on *Cosmopolitan SA*, and various Indian actresses across all Indian editions to localize the long-established representation of the white hegemonic woman. This finding correlates with Han & Rudd (2015) who touch on the narrow social standards of women.

However, the data shows some influence of religion as seen on the Indian and *Harper's Bazaar Arabian* editions who portray conservative, religious conscious women as hegemonic, while some countries hegemonize progressive women who speak overtly about their sexuality, intimacy, and speaks out against racism.

Furthermore, the websites provided the viewer with content that on the surface seemed to liberate women but instead promoted societal stereotypes. For example, the *Bazaar at work* section present on *Harper's Bazaar UK* represented women as beings that lacked the motivation to work accompanied by images that emphasized their appearance. Likewise, the "*female celebrities that are taller than their partner's*" content present on *Harper's Bazaar AU* served to promote heterosexual relationships, amongst other examples that underlyingly promoted social obedience, disguised as deviation and emancipation.

The chapter further presented a brief discussion of the ideal job occupation, revealing that success is portrayed in the form of business owners in the beauty industry that aims to help

other women meet the requirements of the hegemonic woman, ultimately illustrating the materialization and commodification of hegemonic femininity aiming to fuel patriarchal capitalism. The chapter ultimately revealed that the ideal woman continues to be encapsulated by her appearance.

The section to follow will discuss the framing and manifestation of health on the magazine websites through the perpetuation of the beauty ideals aligned with that of the hegemonic woman previously discussed.

6.2 Health and appearance

With magazines serving as a highly influential product in the lives of some women (Wood, 1994), they produce collective visuals for women to understand their personal experiences in relation to others, along with lifestyle and health advice (Fullager, Gattuso, & Young, 2005). In this chapter, the aim is to discuss how health and further a healthy lifestyle is semiotically represented and framed on the magazine websites, as health is often “framed, defined or examined” through beauty and physical appearance (Conlin & Bissel, 2014, p. 2). The chapter begins with a discussion on health and lifestyle, followed by an exploration of the significance of the presence of health in women’s magazines before going over some of the manifestations of health in the form of physical health, mental health, as well as wellness.

6.2.1 Health

Research has long revealed health and lifestyle practices to be approached simultaneously (Conlin & Bissel, 2014; Crawford, 2006; Jutel & Buetow, 2007). Known to denote the ideal style of living, women magazines are also well-known for their content concerning health as magazines offer sections dedicated to the pursuit of health. Some theorists even regard magazines as an important source of health for women (Zuckerman, 1998; Consalvo, 1997).

A healthy lifestyle is characterized as one wherein health risks are readily avoided (Korp, 2010). Health has been argued to be an elusive concept to define among theorists, however, health has been defined as a “normative set of functions within a given organism” (Boorse as cited in Noriega, 2012, p. 9). In some cases, health has also been attributed to the absence of illness and disease as the “feeling of health rarely impinges on consciousness except in its absence” (Edmonds & van der Geest, 2009, p. 8).

Some theorists have discussed health in relation to the social world, with Korp (2010) describing health as a resource used for the “fulfilment of desires and needs in everyday life” (Korp, 2010, p. 802). With the need for a comprehensive definition of health inclusive of the social influence, the World Health Organization (WHO) has defined health as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being (World Health Organization, 1948). As expected, this definition has also been critiqued as theorists believe that “well-being” demands a further explanation (Noriega, 2012). As a result, the value of health is differentiated based on different periods in history, differences in culture, and even social class (Gurung, 2013).

Government institutions similarly value the health of their citizens, with health serving as one of the crucial sectors of concern (Crawford, 2006). Nonetheless, individuals are encouraged to take responsibility for their health by adhering to strict self-care regimens transmitted across multiple platforms including magazine websites. Proactivity in one’s health is commonly referred to as ‘healthism’ and serves as one of the dominant methods of illness prevention (Noriega, 2012).

With the new health consciousness accompanied by healthism, it has been argued that health has become synonymous with beauty due to advertising practices (Featherstone, 1991). Therefore it is believed that beauty serves as a reification of one’s health. This has particularly been evident in the magazine space, a space created for advertising practices. Boorse (1977) echoes this sentiment and argues that not all instances of the absence of health, is due to the presence of a disease or illness, but rather influenced by the deficiency of certain physical

characteristics that are known to contribute to one's health including "Strength, speed and even beauty" (Boorse, 1977, p. 544).

Crawford (2006) further reveals that the promotion of self-care in mainstream media served as a strategy for government to cut costs in the healthcare division and further that "personal responsibility for one's health" is considered as an act of "good citizenship" (Crawford, 2006, p. 402). For this reason, the differentiation based on nationality, culture, and further geographical location are significant queries of insight in this study.

6.2.2 Health and magazines

Conlin & Bissell (2014) demonstrates that fashion/beauty magazines discuss health in relation to appearance and that health becomes synonymous with attractiveness. Arguing that fashion/beauty magazines continuously "fail to accurately frame health" and therefore disseminate "unattainable cultural beauty" and health ideals (Conlin & Bissell, 2014, p. 12).

The authors discuss this by revealing that the hegemonic women, often represented through models and celebrities in health magazine content, are repeatedly dressed in revealing clothing, young and thin, illustrating that health is inaccurately represented through the thin and glamorous ideal as opposed to being fit and healthy. Arguments that reflect the findings of the previous chapter titled the hegemonic woman. The author's further state that magazine content infers that a "better appearance would precede a better health and life" (Conlin & Bissell, 2014, p.4) as the representations of women are continually framed with a focus on a beautiful appearance and the thin glamour ideal.

Jutel & Buetow (2007) similarly mirrors this argument, stating that health is incorrectly manifested through appearance in the media space. In doing so, the authors refer to Elise Voirat (as cited in Jutel & Buetow, 2007) who states that "a well-ordered life maintains the flexibility of the organs, the free circulation of the humors, the perfect state of all the functions from which issues health, without which beauty cannot exist" (Elise Voirat as cited

in Jutel & Buetow, 2007, p. 67). Emphasizing the common misconception that the absence of illness and disease, and the presence of social well-being serve as prerequisites for beauty.

With magazines regarded as a trusted source of health for many women, the aforementioned framing of health deems to be problematic. As research reveals the inaccurate portrayal of health has increased the prevalence of eating disorders and body dissatisfaction (Bissel, 2006; Bordo, 2003, Chin-Evans, 2003). This is further emphasized by Corrigan (1997) who argues that women's magazines transmit the message that if one does not value the external appearance of their bodies through the adherence to diets, exercise routines, cosmetics, and fashion their bodies and therefore their self will decrease in societal value.

Nonetheless, health extends the health of the physical body and includes the presence of the various types of health such as physical health, mental health, emotional health, social health, and spiritual health. The remainder of this chapter aims to explicate how health is framed across the respective websites. The data has revealed that health was predominantly represented through physical health, mental health, and wellness, to be discussed in the sections to follow.

6.2.3 Physical health

Physical health refers to the engagement in physical activities to sustain fitness, increase endurance, muscular and body strength, and maintain body composition (Edlin & Golanty, 2015). Exercise is further great for its overall health benefits such as mood and sleep improvement (Youngstedt & Kline, 2006), and stress and anxiety reduction (Mead et al., 2009). As revealed by previous research exercise has commonly been represented in the media space to improve physical appearance (Brink & Ferguson, 1998; Putterman & Linden, 2004; Vartanian, Wharton & Green, 2012).

On the *Cosmopolitan UK* website, health was represented in the form of a graphic gif featuring a man and a woman dressed in sports attire jogging towards each other as represented in

image 39 below. In this instance, health is represented in the form of physical exercise. The content is in relation to a heterosexual couple, as seen through the words “*turbo dating*” displayed in the image, inferring that health is represented in relation to physical appearance and attractiveness to appeal to the opposite sex. The image further represents the heteronormative family structure as healthy and as the ideal structure and foundation of a “home” revealed by the graphic representation of the house in the image.



Image 39

The use of the abstraction in the image is seen through the use of graphic representations and the removal of the background is used to foreground the connotative meaning in images (Machin & Mayr, 2012).

On the *Cosmopolitan India* website, the viewer was provided with image 40 below. The title reads “*cute workout hairstyles*” inferring that women should always look attractive and ‘cute’ even when working out. Furthermore, the woman represented in the image is characterized as visibly thin, this further reinforces the common ideology that the ideal woman should always work on her body and maintain the ideal look regardless of her size. The use of the

black background in the image is used to further foreground her body and emphasize the femininity of the image revealed through the bright pink colors of her clothing. Her smile further reveals that she is happy because of her perfect body and her lack of gaze invites the viewer into her experience of happiness. Revealing that *Cosmopolitan India* represented health in relation to physical appearance and attractiveness.

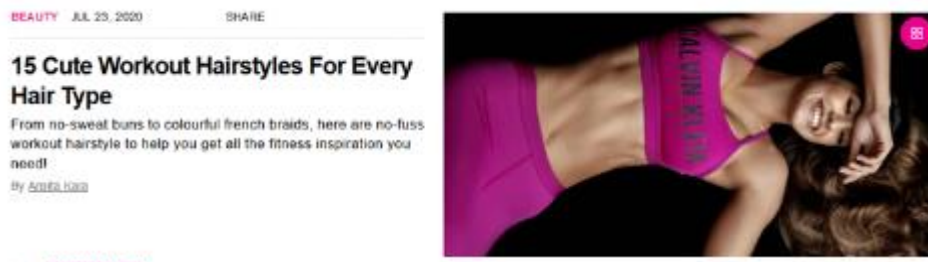


Image 40

Similarly, a look at *Elle India* reveals that this edition of *Elle* has a beauty and wellness tab, however, this study will only focus on content present on the homepage as it is believed that the homepage contains the most salient information the producer wishes to transmit. As previously mentioned, *Elle India* had the most data concerning health when in comparison to the other *Elle* editions, with health represented 3 times. Health was first represented in relation to physical exercise as revealed in image 41 below. The content served as a guide on “staying fit and healthy” by Milind Soman explicitly named and therefore personalized, an Indian celebrity well-known for acting, film producing as well as promoting fitness.



Image 41

In image 41 we see that he is engaging with the viewer by making direct eye contact, Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) refer to images wherein direct visual address occurs as a demand image. It can therefore be argued that he is demanding the viewer to be fit and healthy. However, his slight smile can alternatively be described as welcoming and inviting. A look at his pose, characterized by his hands on his hips, signifies that he is ready for action and therefore ready to train, reinforcing the demand in the image.

The use of the word “staying” in image 41 infers that one should further maintain this look. With exercise represented from a man’s perspective, this further reinforces the fact that a woman’s appearance should be for a man, similar to *Cosmopolitan India*’s representation of health previously discussed.

Health was also represented in the form of workout plans that the viewer may make use of, as seen on the *Harper’s Bazaar UK* website. The viewer is provided with an image that promotes a 12-week workout plan with Alice Liveing, a well-known UK personal trainer and blogger, as represented in image 42 below. The viewer is almost promised to “*Transform*” into a slim and fit body like hers, revealed through the salience of the text and the use of the arrow emphasizing her body illustrated in the image, upon downloading the workout plan.



Image 42

Ironically, this content is in relation to another magazine brand, *Women's Health*, and refers to the *WHtransform* mobile app. The app is described as being created for all women, claiming to provide workouts that allow one to "*Lose fat, tone-up all over and achieve your best self*" (Head, 2018). Reinforcing the misconception that a better self is achieved by being socially acceptable, with one of the avenues being to lose weight.

As per the eye contact, explicit naming, and stance in image 42, it is evident that there is a similarity to *Elle India* above. The image serves as a demand for the viewer to download the app, and a demand to transform into the body type emulated in the image. Her body is also slightly angled as to reveal the curvature of her body and further its femininity, a body all women should aspire to replicate.

Harper's Bazaar UK served as the only website that provided the viewer with a dedicated fitness section as illustrated in image 43 below. The content in relation to fitness is evidently in relation to physical appearance. As the first image features a smiling Halle Berry an American model and actress accompanied by the caption "*I worked out like Halle Berry for a week*" inferring that the goal of the workout is to look like her, and further this can be achieved quite quickly- in a week. The chosen picture of Halle Berry is used as an incentive, seen from the smiling applauding look, directed at the viewer, indicating that she is proud of someone who worked out like her and more significantly that she is happy because of her body.

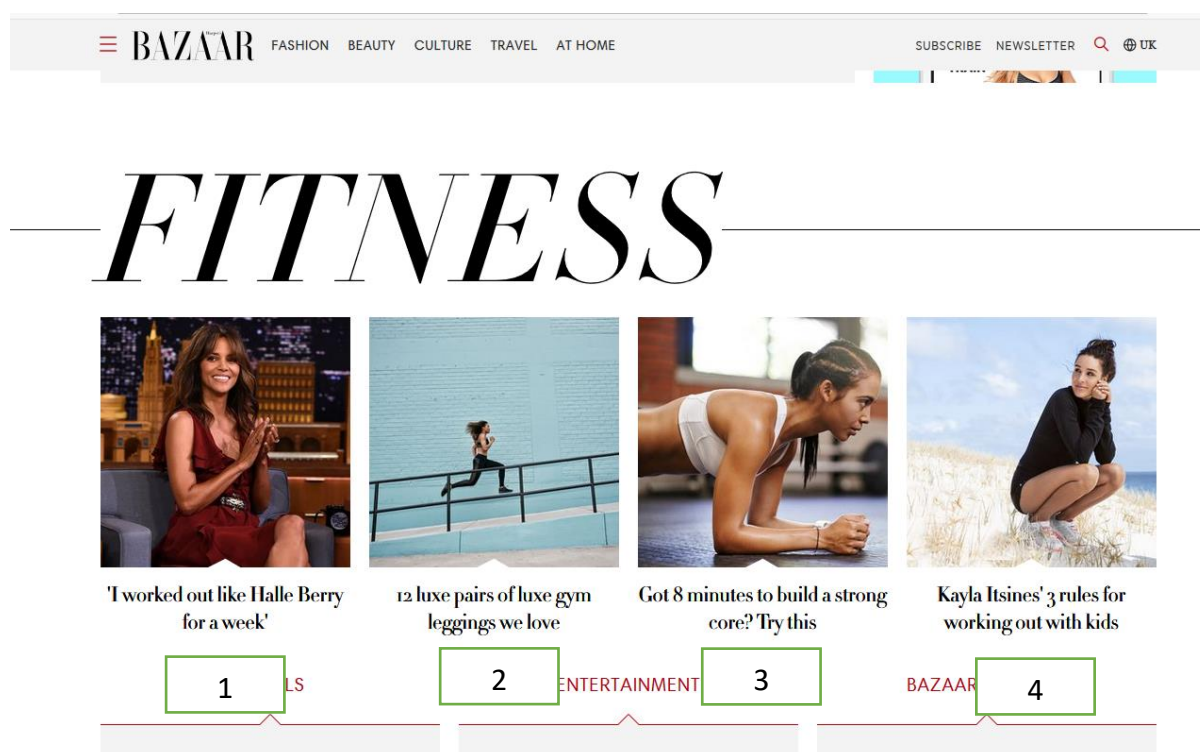


Image 43.

The next image relates to 'Luxe' gym clothing that one should wear whilst working out. The woman in the image is captured in the air, the image, therefore, connotes movement and activity. The use of the word luxe serves as an example of the luxury discourse magazines often sell to viewers, to attain and further maintain. The remaining images provide workouts for mothers who may not have time because of their adherence to their social roles.

In the last image, the woman is represented in a calm seated position, looking off frame, inviting the viewer to see that she is at ease and happy being a mom and working out at the same time, reinforcing the ideal standard that a woman should always work on her appearance and conform to her societal role of motherhood.

Vogue AU further replicated the luxury discourse as the viewer was provided with content that serves as a how-to guide for a stylish at-home gym. The content serves to promote a lifestyle wherein workouts are a part of everyday life. The author further refers to an in-home gym as a "*Wellness trend that isn't going anywhere soon*" (Vogue living, 2020). Inferring that the content is promoted with the aim of being on-trend as opposed to being healthy. In

addition, having an at-home gym is a luxury that not many can afford, therefore the website carries a strong discourse of luxury and further infers that the target audience are those in the upper class.

In addition to promoting health with the aim of promoting societal expectations of beauty, women's magazines as a commodity are further tasked with promoting acts of consumption. On the *Vogue UK* website, the viewer was provided with content that concerns sports attire as represented in image 44 below. The presence of the content in the beauty section similarly reinforces the common relation between beauty and health as previously mentioned. As the woman in the image is represented in a standing yoga position with her hands extended to the sky, looking up, this symbolizes upliftment and infers that she is happy as the result of the regular workouts that she does.

The content serves to promote "*7 of the best sports bras*" further implying that the recommended bras contribute to her contentment revealing how health can be framed with a consumerist discourse.



Image 44

This was similarly evident on the *Elle AU* website wherein health was represented in relation to fashion through the wearing of face masks as per the current WHO regulation to curb the spread of Covid-19. The content concerning the wearing of face masks served as the main story as it was most salient in terms of size and placement on the first page of the homepage.

With lockdown restrictions imposed worldwide, individuals were concerned about contracting the disease as Covid-19 was and still is a topic of great concern. *Elle* however shed a different light on the wearing of face masks, one that would make sense to their brand and target audience and thus focused on the importance of fashion and shopping and further consumption as demonstrated in image 45 below.



Image 45.

As a result, physical health was represented with the underlying discourse of beauty and consumption as per the above. *Elle UK* managed to provide the viewer with health content that did not aim to promote physical appearance. The content concerned returning to the gym post-lockdown. The accompanying image represented below in image 46 features a relatively slim woman about to pick up some weights.

A look into the content served with the image reveals that it concerns the general health of individuals amid the relaxation of lockdown regulations. This is evident as it served as a guide on the prevention of contracting the virus in an area characterized as hot and sweaty due to physical exertion.



Returning To The Gym Post
Lockdown

Image 46.

Thus, physical health has been represented quite similarly across the websites with most supporting previous findings that exercise is framed with aims to promote beauty and consumption in women's magazines revealing the presence of cultural assimilation. *Elle UK* served as the only representation of physical health with the aim of general health. Next, we discuss the representation and framing of mental health.

6.2.4 Mental health

Mental health refers to one's emotional and psychological well-being (Walsh, 2011) and is essential to overall health as it influences one's behavior, decision making, perceptions, and further how well one may respond to stressors in the social environment (Alker, 1965). Garrity (2016) argues that women dominate men in the depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) categories of mental health due to biological factors, temperament, and level of social control (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Research has long revealed the representation of mental health across media platforms through "violence, dangerousness and criminality" (Foster, 2006, p.3).

On the *Harper's Bazaar UK* website, the viewer is provided with content in relation to separation anxiety as represented in image 47 below. Separation anxiety disorder (SAD) refers to the fear of being apart from individuals with whom one has an attachment (Lewinsohn, Holm-Denoma, Small, Seeley & Joiner, 2008).



Image 47

The content thus concerns anxiety that may be experienced because of spending too much time with a partner. A look into the content reveals that it serves as a 'How to' guide to "*cope with being apart after spending so much time together*" (Quilliam, 2020) with the help of a relationship coach. The content serves to promote '*a balanced healthy relationship*' that is framed as heterosexual, as demonstrated in image 47, one wherein women speak openly about their feelings, and one wherein women are not dependent on their partners but are not too independent as well.

Harper's Bazaar UK, therefore, promoted societal standards of a relationship through a health discourse, maintaining the dependent, childlike, and emotional portrayal of women in the media, as SAD is a common mental disorder in children (Lewinsohn et al., 2008).

Mental health was also represented in the form of severe distress for black women across *Vogue UK* and *AU* as well as *Cosmopolitan UK* due to racial trauma. Represented on the *Vogue UK* website, the viewer was provided with an anti-racism section. Herein the viewer was given content that concerns black consciousness serving as a guide to "*support and validate the*

experiences of a Black woman” (Rennalls, 2020). Image 48 below, features Adut Akech a fashion model pictured with her eyes closed, inviting the viewer to imagine the racial trauma experienced by many black women.



Image 48.

Her posture as leaning against the wall, head positioned upwards, directed towards the light symbolizes the healing because of support. It is interesting to note that a read into the content reveals that Image 48 was not taken for the purpose of highlighting Audt Akech personal experience of racial trauma as there is no reference made to her in the text. This reinforces the importance of the relationship between text and images and how the producer carefully selects each with the aims of doing ideological work and further transmitting a specific curated meaning.

Vogue AU similarly provided the viewer with content in relation to black mental health as represented in image 49 below. A look into the content reveals that it serves as self-care tips that include a social media detox, meditation, and rest for black women to feel at ease amid the recent Black Lives Matter protests. A movement that could further affect one's mental health when one considers the lived experience of systemic racism.



Image 49

Image 49 similarly serves as an offer image; the viewer is further invited to imagine what black women as a homogenized group are feeling and thinking. Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) reveal that gaze is a semiotic resource that producers use either to demand something from the viewer or to offer the viewer something or invite them into an imaginative feeling. Furthermore, the close shot encourages the viewer to focus on the detrimental effect this is having on the mental health of black women. Her posture as being face down reinforces the severity and serves to symbolize the feeling of being overwhelmed.

Self-care was similarly represented as a solution to black women's experiences on the *Cosmopolitan UK* website as illustrated in image 50 below. A read into the content reveals that it serves as self-care tips for black women amid the emotionally draining protests concerning black people. The caption alongside the image representing protesting women as seen by their raised fists serves as a demand and further as an instruction for black women to "*set boundaries, make space for black joy, find workplace allies and rest*" (Williams, 2020).



Image 50.

As per the above, the white woman's experience of anxiety is linked to her desirability to her heterosexual partner while the black woman requires validation from society at large for a healthy state of mind which further contributes to her self-worth and desirability in society. The presence of the content regarding mental health in beauty magazines reveals the relationship between health and beauty, revealing that women's mental health is similarly discussed with the aim of promoting their desirability instead of health.

The next section will now focus on the representation of health in the form of wellness content.

6.2.5 Wellness

As women's magazines represent the ideal lifestyle, content in relation to wellness also proved to be significant. Wellness refers to healthy lifestyle practices, and "embodies a way of living that encourages individuals to seek a lifestyle designed to improve their quality of life." (Renger, Midyett, Soto Mas, Erin, McDermott, Papenfuss & Hewitt, 2000, p. 402). Research has revealed that lifestyle changes can have a significant influence on health (Khaw et al. 2008, Pischke, Scherwitz, Weidner & Ornish, 2008).

In addition to physical exercise, regular meditation, and rest, healthy eating similarly serves as a variable in one's quest for a healthy lifestyle. However, the magazine websites failed to reflect this, as content in relation to nutritious food was minimal, only appearing on the *Cosmopolitan India* and *Vogue UK* websites. On the *Cosmopolitan India* website, healthy food was represented in the form of green tea as represented in image 51 below. The content concerns the benefits of green tea through the lens of a celebrity Indian macrobiotic nutritionist and chef Shonali Sabherwal.



Is Green Tea Good For You?

Image 51.

A read into the content reveals that it is framed in relation to the beauty benefits one could obtain from green tea. Due to its zero-calorie content and high level of antioxidants, green tea is said to decrease body fat, decrease cholesterol, and balance blood pressure. The nutritionist further praises the tea for its anti-aging properties and reveals that green tea could also be used as a household cleanser.

While on the *Vogue UK* website, healthy food was represented in the form of plant-based food such as the “*One-pot vegan dish*” represented in image 52 below. The content served to promote healthy eating, by providing “*ridiculously simple*” vegan recipes for viewers to try. A read into the content reveals various ‘easy’ vegan recipes that significantly failed to mention any health benefits one may achieve from the recipes.



Image 52.

As a result, the representation of food on the *Cosmopolitan India* and *Vogue UK* websites served to perpetuate the social and domestic roles of women. As green tea was framed in

relation to its beauty benefits and its use as a household cleaner and *Vogue UK* provided the viewer with recipes due to the common ideology that the kitchen is the women's domain.

Content in relation to natural physiological processes was also present, particularly on the *Elle India* and *Elle UK* websites. On the *Elle India* website, the viewer was provided with content concerning the significance of symptoms experienced during period mood swings (PMS) and what they might mean as represented in image 53 below.



Image 53.

A look further reveals that the content is indeed related to beauty as the author, Dr. Kiran Sethi states that several clients visit her with “*various skin complaints such as rosacea and acne that is often caused by hormonal variation that occurs during the menstrual cycle*” (Sethi, 2020). The content ultimately advises that such hormonal imbalances should be treated through diet, exercise, and lifestyle changes. Revealing how health in the form of balanced hormones is realized in the form of beauty, through the absence of the various skin complaints mentioned above.

Image 53 serves as a close shot, inviting the viewer to her experience. Furthermore, there is also a demand in the image as seen through direct eye contact that expects a response or reaction from the viewer. The woman is also depicted in the recovery position seen from resting her head and arms on her knees. This could infer that as a result of making the necessary changes to one's diet, incorporating exercise, and making lifestyle changes, those who suffer from PMS can also recover. Revealing that *Elle India* similarly represented health in relation to physical appearance.

On the *Elle UK* website, the viewer was provided with content that served as an informative piece on the abortion pill as illustrated in image 54 below. The content advocates for the right of women to make decisions about their bodies and further how one could access these resources. The content covered everything ranging from how one would take the tablets, their cost, side effects, and even laws concerning abortion in the UK.

When in comparison to the content concerning PMS on the *Elle India* website discussed above, we see a repetition of the presence of conservatism on the Indian websites as a result of a conservative culture, while the UK editions continually represent content that is not explicitly discussed such as abortion.



A Really Useful Explainer On The Abortion Pill

Image 54.

The content was made salient through the size of the image as it took up the whole screen. Inferring that information regarding abortion is significant and reinforces the freedom of topics on the UK editions. This was further emphasized by the pills and the glass of water being foregrounded in the image. The hands reaching out with the pills and a glass of water in the image reveals that this is an offer image, offering the viewer the “option” of control over their bodies in the form of abortion and further symbolizes support, care, and empowerment. Although the magazine speaks openly on abortion, the absence of a face and potential eye-contact in image 54 additionally represents the sensitivity of abortion.

On the flip side, the magazines also displayed content that discussed instances wherein there is a lack of health and the consequences thereof, this was particularly evident on the *Vogue*

UK website. This was in the form of content in relation to black mothers, as represented in image 55 below. A read through the content reveals that it concerns the permeation of systemic racism into the healthcare system which risks the lives of many black mothers.



Image 55

The downward gaze in the image further intensifies the negative thoughts and sensitivity black mothers may feel and further invites the viewer to imagine how this might feel. The downward gaze towards the pregnant belly further infers concern for the unborn child that is it be born into a world wherein their skin color serves as a determining factor for their health. The use of the words “Black mothers” serves as personalization (Machin & Mayr. 2012) as it refers to the collective of black mothers and thus reinforces the seriousness of the matter.

A scroll further and the viewer is provided with content that concerns domestic abuse appearing in the news section, as represented in image 56 below. The content sheds a light on the increase of domestic abuse experienced by many women and children because of lockdown enforced during the pandemic. The author touches on various instances of “*domestic violence, child abuse, restricted contraception use, and poverty*” across the globe and further argues that these could have lasting detrimental effects (Drexler, 2020).



Image 56.

As the woman is depicted as looking off frame, it similarly serves as an offer image, wherein the viewer is offered information to consider. The woman in the image is further portrayed as looking straight out this connotes the sense of dealing with these issues directly. Her body posture characterized by her crossed arms further infers her defensiveness and sternness regarding domestic abuse.

With the current pandemic, content in relation to Covid-19 was widespread across all websites. *Harper's Bazaar Arabia* provided the viewer with two instances of health content that concerned the coronavirus. The first was in relation to the testing of two coronavirus vaccines and the second in relation to treatment. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the *Harper's Bazaar Arabia* homepage had a section dedicated to coronavirus content as revealed on the banner that remained fixated at the top of the screen throughout the user's experience of the homepage.

A look further into the content reveals the presence of a nationalist discourse, as the content praised another country in the Arabian Peninsula, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as possibly paving the way for the invention of two covid-19 vaccines. The content further inferred that the UAE is ahead of other major research institutions including *Oxford University*, regarding

the human trials of the respective vaccines. However, the author confirms that no vaccine has proved to provide the desired immunity as yet.

Furthermore, the viewer was provided with content that proclaims that the only drug that has proven to be effective in treating Covid-19, Remdesivir has been approved in the UAE. This ties into the second piece of content that was in relation to health. The content reveals that Remdesivir is believed to dramatically reduce a patient's hospital stays due to the virus. The author also confirms that the presence of this drug is limited, but, reassures the reader that the UAE is to restock within the month. As a result, *Harper's Bazaar Arabia* framed health in relation to physical health as opposed to physical appearance similarly, to *Elle UK* above.

Conversely, on the *Vogue AU* website, the first content in relation to health concerns well-being as represented in image 57 below. The image appears in the beauty section, reinforcing previous arguments that beauty and health have become synonymous. A look into the content reveals that it concerns the importance of intuition amid "*Australia's summer bushfires, escalating concerns about climate change, COVID-19 chaos and stock market crashes*" (Scott,2020). The content further contains a compilation of scientific studies that provide information on how one can be more intuitive and trust the "*Gut feeling*" (Scott,2020).

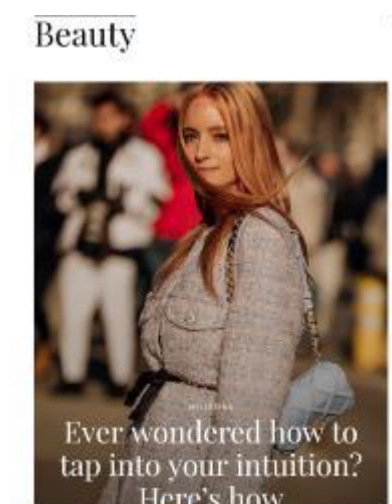


Image 57.

As the woman represented in image 57 is engaging in eye contact with the viewer, this type of engagement infers interest in the well-being of Australia's public. This is further emphasized by the soft gaze and slight smile on her face, appearing at ease. However, image 57 also carries a discourse of fashion as revealed by her clothing and accessories. This further creates the relationship between well-being and the brand of the magazine known to promote fashion and beauty content.

Also appearing within the beauty section, the viewer was also provided with content that concerned the wearing of protective face masks due to covid-19 as represented in image 58 below. A look into the content reveals that it serves as a series of questions and answers regarding the viability of Covid-19 regulations introduced in New York, in Australia and similarly represents the nationalist discourse, as the content is personalized to Australians.



Image 58.

As the image represents two women healthcare workers, the image serves to represent levels of authority and co-membership with the viewers. As the image symbolizes specialist knowledge, and their gender serves to align with that of the target audience as women (Machin & Mayr, 2012).

Finally, the last appearance of content in relation to health is represented in image 59 below. As per the caption, the content reinforces the assumption that health issues happiness. A look into the content reveals that it serves as a guide on "*Wellness rituals to feel balanced every day*" (Schroeder,2020). And further argues that the three requirements for a healthier and happier life are "Movement, Nutrition and mental fitness" (Schroeder,2020). All of which

were represented on the various websites in the form of physical exercise, plant-based foods, and mental health.



6 ways Elsa Pataky stays happy
and healthy

Image 59.

As Elsa is explicitly named in the caption, it personalizes the content, this is further reinforced by her gaze being off frame and thus invites the viewer to experience her happiness. It further serves as an offer image, an offer to wellness and thus happiness. The significant presence of offer images across all the websites reveals that magazines provide viewers with alternative idealistic snapshots of reality.

As per the above definition of wellness regarding the engagement in lifestyle practices with the aim of promoting a good quality of life, the data has revealed that a good quality of life is not self-determined but rather socially determined, with the '*quality*' influenced by beauty and appearance, as well as race.

Attempting to discuss the presence of health in women's fashion/beauty magazines this chapter has highlighted physical health, mental health, and wellness as overarching themes. The chapter has revealed that physical exercise continues to be represented with the aim of improving physical appearance as opposed to actual health benefits.

The websites also illustrated that that women's mental health is similarly discussed with the aim of promoting a woman's desirability, either in relation to her partner or in relation to society at large. The magazines have further perpetuated the gender roles of women through

the discourse of health, with content serving to idealize and maintain specific socially acceptable behaviors that were further framed as the ideal lifestyle, characterized as a life with quality.

Health was thus represented through discourses of beauty and happiness, with a nationalist discourse only present on the *Harper's Bazaar Arabia* and *Vogue AU* editions. The presence of content promoting self-care tips and extensive presence of offer images makes a healthy life and further ideal lifestyle more accessible to the viewer, represented through abstractions of a more beautiful, happier self. Characteristics that have been portrayed as contributing factors in one's health cross-culturally.

The following section will now discuss the significance of consumption in relation to national and cultural identity formation, through an analysis of consumption from a symbolic perspective.

6.3 Consumption and identity

After discussing the association between health and beauty in the previous chapter wherein it was found that health was predominantly discussed through an underlying discourse of beauty, this chapter will now compare the consumer culture transmitted by media and marketing professionals across an international product appropriated to different local interpretations for economic consumption.

Addressing consumption from a symbolic perspective, wherein commodities are seen “as vessels of meaning” (Holt, 1995, p.1) this chapter further aims to highlight the additional meanings and values attributed to consumer goods and further discuss their consumption and presence on the homepage for their cultural and symbolic value. The cultural value of commodities serves as the reification of an argument put forth by Iqani (2012) wherein it is argued that commodity culture creates a world of shared things, that enables a relationship between those who own them. Making the commodities an instrument of unification

(Debord, 1977), a representation of consumer culture (Iqani, 2012), and further nationality and culture.

It is for this reason that the cultural signs within the economic market are crucial to the construction of consumer identities. As a result, Iqani (2012) describes consumption as a practice that gives individuals an array of lifestyle alternatives, aiding in the formation of self-identity.

6.3.1 Magazines and consumption

A capitalist economy is always dominated by consumption, a practice that has spread and increased with the use of the internet (Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2010, p.14). Existing research by Parry & Block (as cited in Lunt & Livingstone, 1992, p. 13) revealed cultural variation in the uses of money, indicating the presence of cultural variation in consumption and further the aspect of culture in commodities.

Singh, Zhau & Hu (2005) have also discussed the presence of culture in consumption, however in relation to advertising, with the authors arguing that “effective advertising and marketing are linked to the underlying culture of its target market” (Singh, Zhau & Hu, 2005, p. 130). Culture is therefore argued to play a role in consumption. As a result, there are cultural practices inherent in the manufacturing, marketing, and consumption process of commodities giving rise to the term consumer culture.

Consumer culture is concerned with the norms, values, and meanings associated with a society that is dominated by consumption. The Globalization of commodities has explicated the presence of consumer culture as international companies using standardized advertising methods independent from the local culture, reveal that standardized advertising methods are not as successful as advertising strategies that reflect and align with the cultural norms and values of local consumers.

De Mooij (2000) argues that consumers often purchase products that are aligned with the self or those “that enhance the ideal-self” (De Mooij, 2000, p. 689). The ideal self is often carefully constructed and transmitted through advertisements with the help of semiotic devices as previously demonstrated in the previous chapter titled the hegemonic woman.

Elliott & Wattanasuwan (1998) states that “if the consumer has choices to consume, he or she will consume things that hold particular symbolic meanings.” (Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998, p. 134). Therefore, the options producers provide consumers with on the various magazine websites, hold considerable significance as they have symbolic significance as previously argued by Iqani (2012) regarding a consumerist society and power. Wherein what is made available to consume is dependent on merchandising policies and politics of distribution decided by the producers and thus serves as a contradiction to the neo-liberalist concept of freedom of choice. Women's magazines continue to guide and structure behaviour as they co-exist with social institutions such as the church, school, and family (Ferguson, 1983), as a result, magazines similarly guide one's consumerist actions.

The nature of the content transmitted by a magazine is dependent on the type of magazine that it is, therefore, fashion and beauty magazines will predominantly promote the consumption of products and services in this domain. The presence of fashion and beauty brands on the various websites further aids in simultaneously maintaining the popularity of the fashion and beauty brand as well as the magazine brand while increasing their reach in aims to benefit economically.

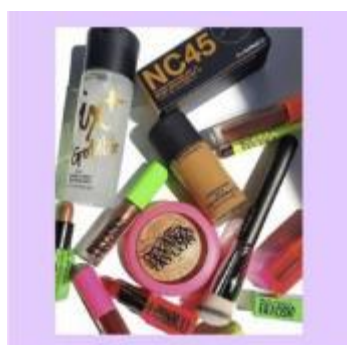
The remainder of the chapter will discuss the multimodal driven consumption of beauty in the form of Make-up and Skincare, followed by the consumer narratives represented in relation to fashion. The chapter is concluded in a discussion of the various social representatives used as advertising vessels to promote the consumption of makeup, fashion, and social ideologies as it is argued that the notion of the “self” is communicated through a system of signs, tied to “image, style, looks and hence consumption” (Kellner, 1995, p. 231).

6.3.2 Beauty

As previously seen in the chapter dedicated to the hegemonic woman, thinness, glamour, fashion ability, and makeup served as common characteristics of the hegemonic woman across all websites illustrating that a women's value is dependent on her beauty and physical artifice.

6.3.2.1 Makeup

On the *Cosmopolitan* UK homepage, Image 60 below reveals that the first exposure of consumerist content in relation to make-up concerns the launch of Mac, an international make-up brand at Boots- a beauty, health, and pharmaceutical retailer in the United Kingdom (Boots UK limited). The image features a pastel lilac background with bright neon coloured makeup products scattered across the image.



MAC is launching in Boots - Here's a list of where

Image 60

Boots is described and framed as a '*Beauty playground*' that stocks all the exclusive international makeup brands (Capon,2020). The use of the word playground infers that the store is dedicated to specific behaviour- that of beautification and that there are multiple products a potential consumer could be creative with. Masking the conformity to beautification as playful and something one does for fun. Image 60 can therefore be seen to

mimic the displacement of toys, tools, and resources in a playroom, the image, therefore, depicts a playful, creative '*Beauty playground*'.

The content further describes the *Cosmopolitan* UK consumer as someone who regards make-up as a monthly essential. Someone who buys make-up when they go for their "monthly cotton wool, body moisturizer, and toothpaste stockpile." (Capon, 2020). The use of the word stockpile referring to an accumulation of products, in combination with the word playground uncovers a luxury discourse as the stockpile of beauty products infers financial freedom and thus power in society.

This also indicates the presence of conspicuous consumption (Veblen, 1994). Conspicuous consumption is based on the ideology that one's material possessions determine social status and prestige in society, arguing that products are consumed for their social value as opposed to their usefulness (Mason, 2000).

The discourse of luxury is further emphasized as the content creator stipulates that *Boots* sells exclusive international make-up brands. Immediately making the store a *playground* of exclusion as it is only those who have comfortable pockets that may consume the internationally renowned makeup brands that are often expensive when in comparison to locally produced brands.

A scroll further down the homepage and the viewer is provided with "*MAC must-haves*" as represented in Image 61 below. The use of the demand in 'must-haves' reinforces the act of conspicuous consumption for the social value attributed to products by social institutions such as magazines. The image displays four products, each dedicated to the beautification of a specific region on the body: eyes, lips, face, and body. Underneath each product the viewer is provided with a description, link to purchase from Asos -a British fashion and cosmetic retailer and price in British pounds followed by a statement informing them what the respective products can do for them.

And if you need any help in writing your shopping list, here are my MAC must-haves:

			
MAC Eye Kohl in Costa Riche	MAC Powder Kiss Lipstick in Sultry Move	MAC Studio Face And Body Foundation	MAC Pro Longwear Paint Pot in Groundwork
MAC mac.com £16.00	MAC mac.com £19.00	MAC mac.com £27.00	MAC mac.com £17.50
BUY NOW	BUY NOW	BUY NOW	BUY NOW
Buy it from ASOS (£16.00), John Lewis & Partners (£16.00) or Amazon (£26.99)	Buy it from Lookfantastic (£17.50), Selfridges (£19.00) or ASOS (£19.00)	Buy it from Amazon (£16.99), John Lewis & Partners (£22.95) or Lookfantastic (£27.00)	Buy it from Amazon (£14.00), Boots (£14.87) or Lookfantastic (£16.50)
Without a doubt the BEST eyeliner for blue eyes	Gives you the fullest, velvety lips with zero dryness	The original skin tint, completely weightless on skin but gives maximum glow	Your eyelids but better and a staple in every makeup artist's kit

Image 61.

As a result, the consumption of the proposed makeup products serves to emulate the characteristics of the white hegemonic woman, realized by making reference to blue eyes, full soft lips, and skin that glows as the requirements for beauty, achieved as a result of their consumption.

This was similarly represented on the homepage of *Elle UK*, as represented in image 62 below. Focusing on the content that promotes the consumption of makeup products, the discourse of health emerges as makeup is further given the ability to slim one's face through a method of contouring that serves to foreground and even mimics socially desirable facial features. Such as a slimmer nose and sculpted cheekbones, physical characteristics associated with thinness, and thus the hegemonic woman. Health was further inferred through the presence of vegan makeup products. Vegan makeup refers to makeup products that do not contain any animal by-products. The products minimize one's chance of developing skin ailments that will further facilitate one's attainment of the ideal beauty.



Image 62

The presence of *Elle Edit* in the description of the images refers to the *Elle beauty team*, who based on their expertise make suggestions and recommendations which are then broadcasted across the magazine and disseminated into society. As a result, attaching social value to the consumption of products and authority to the magazine editors as previously noted in *Cosmopolitan UK* above. This was further replicated on the *Vogue UK* homepage as represented in image 63 below. The image serves as content that promotes *5 products Vogues beauty director needs you to know about this week*.



Image 63.

The use of magazine editors, the *Elle Beauty team*, and *Vogues beauty director* as the voice of the makeup advice and positive testimonials of the consumption of various makeup

products serves to legitimize the content on magazines due to their expertise and specialization in beauty and fashion. This similarly represents the power and policing of magazines in guiding what society deems as beautiful, and how this can be bought.

The content present on the magazine websites was further framed as new products revealed through the use of terms such as “this month” and “this week” in the images. As a result, the new products claim to provide the consumer with better chances of attaining ideal beauty and thus social value than previously featured products. This mirrors the argument of Wolf (1991), regarding the myth that beauty is something that can be obtained through acts of consumption and its never-ending cycle of economic gain for producers as a result of the power and significance of idealized representations that are distributed in women's magazines.

The UK magazine editions represented beauty through the consumption of makeup products, however, beauty was alternatively framed through abstractions of natural beauty and skincare regimens and treatments as will be discussed below.

6.3.2.2 Makeup free beauty

Elle India predominantly transmitted content that promoted skincare and natural beauty as represented in image 64 below wherein the caption, appearing at the bottom of the image reads “*Step-by-step guide to nail the no make-up look*”. The no make-up look refers to the bare minimum usage of makeup when in comparison to the full coverage glamorous look as represented across the UK editions.



Image 64

The image features well-known Indian actress and producer Deepika Padukone, in a swimsuit surrounded by water. She is pictured with wet hair and minimal skin showing. The presence of the water and wet hair emphasizes the naturalness of her natural makeup look the producers wish to convey and idealize to the viewers.

A look into the content reveals that it serves to promote the consumption of what the author terms "*regular make-up staples*" all women should have and serves as a guide on how to achieve the "*I-woke-up-like-this*" look by celebrity makeup artist, Sandhya Shekar. The presence of the "pop-iconic words I-woke-up-like-this" (Hill, 2019, p. 329) of the song *flawless* by American singer and actress Beyonce, represents the presence of the illusory discourse of perfectionism that magazines often perpetuate in aims to promote the consumption of makeup products.

However, the magazines also framed the attainment of beauty through culturally acceptable methods such as *DIY remedies* commonly represented across the Indian editions of the respective magazines as a result of their conservatism. This was similarly represented on the *Harper's Bazaar Arabia* homepage as natural beauty was valued over and above glamorized beauty. As the majority of the content in relation to beauty concerned skin care as well as teeth whitening.

Harper's Bazaar Arabia provided the user with a “watch & listen” section as represented in image 65 below. Herein the viewer was provided with 4 videos, the only *Harpers Bazaar* homepage to feature multimodal content of this nature.

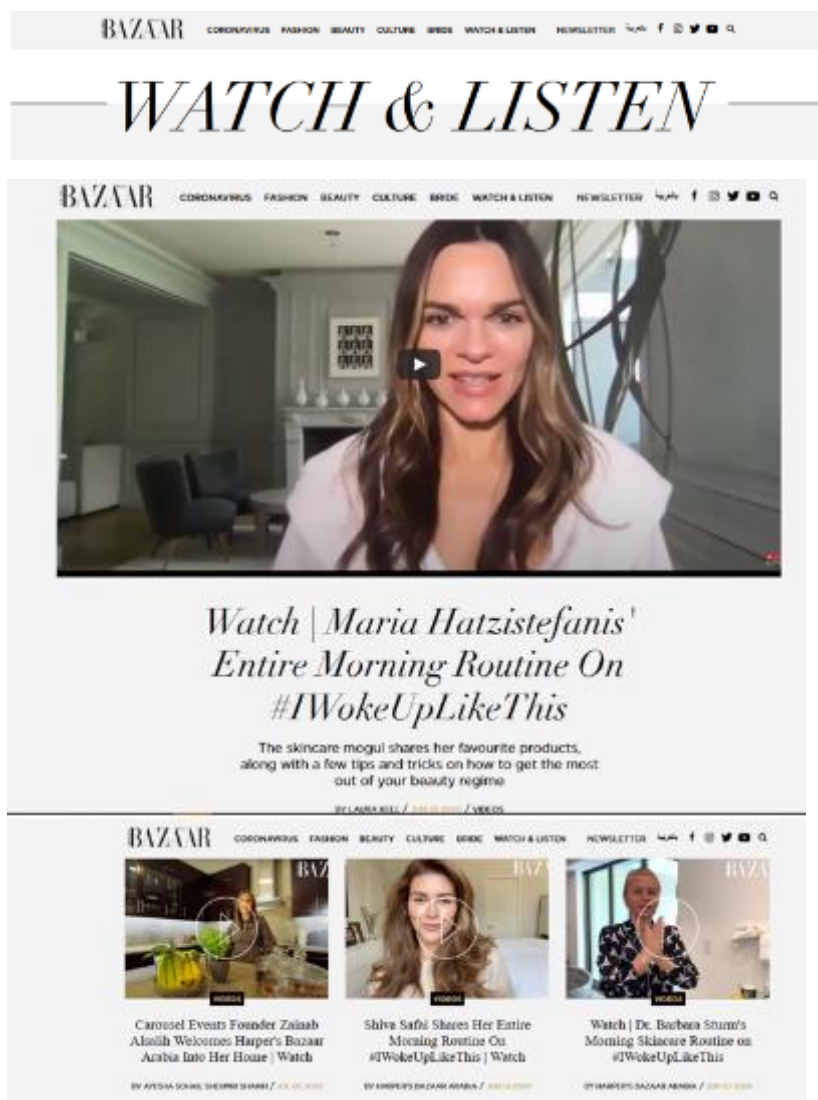


Image 65.

Three out of the four videos represented concerned the skincare routines of celebrities and varied in duration. Here, the focus will be on the video that was displayed with the most salience, as seen by the amount of coverage allocated to this video as represented in image 65. The video regards the morning routine of beauty entrepreneur and founder of Rodial skincare, Maria Hatzistefanis. The video serves as a guide to the ideal skincare routine using

only Rodial skincare products, as a result, the video promotes the economic consumption of Rodial, a luxury international skincare brand.

Similar to the images promoting the consumption of products, the video did not provide the viewer with a price or link, only the names of the respective products. Due to the large informational value of a video, serving as a demonstration on how to use the respective products, the producer was now able to communicate more ideals in a shorter period of time.

With the setting of the video being in a homelike space as seen by the background in the video, this allows the routine to appeal more to the viewers in that the perfect morning routine can be achieved in the comfort of their homes, a space that society has relegated to the woman. Furthermore, the luxury setting of the background as seen by the modern décor and furniture emphasizes the luxury discourse and high social value associated with the project of beautification.

As seen in the caption of the video, it further promotes the “*I-woke-up-like-this*” look similarly seen on *Elle India* previously discussed. *Harper’s Bazaar Arabia* differs in that they promote it as a hashtag and further a guide available for the user to search on an online video platform such as YouTube.

It is important to note that Maria Hatzistefanis made use of lighting in the video, this is evident as her face appeared to be lit differently in comparison to the natural lighting of the background. The use of lighting aids in creating the illusion of the perfect skin in this instance. As a result, one would equate the perceived clear skin to the usage of the products mentioned. In this way, the video has been carefully crafted with the aim to promote the consumption of Rodial skincare products and the illusion of perfection. Furthermore, the title of the video “Watch & Listen” appearing in a large uppercase font represents a demand made by the producer.

As previously seen with health discussed in the previous chapter, beauty is similarly represented through abstractions of happiness as featured on the *Vogue AU* homepage. The content concerns skincare as explicitly mentioned in the title displayed in image 66 below.



Image 66

The image serves as a headshot of two women, both appearing to be happy as seen from their smiles and as a result of the exchange of information regarding *ways to get glowing skin*. The interaction between the two women mimics the desired relationship between the viewer and the magazine, a relationship wherein the magazine conveys the information on how one could achieve the ideal skin, and as a result, the viewer experiences happiness and social acceptance.

A look into the data reveals that it serves as a collation of the "*Best new formulas*" for one's complexion, wherein the viewer is provided with a list of products that aid in boosting the skin's "*Natural Glow*". Describing the proposed products as "*Best new formulas*" serves to illustrate the use of pseudoscience and technological terms used to persuade women that beauty and the perfect glowing skin is possible and available through consumption of the products.

As a result the magazine websites symbolically represented the commodification of beauty through the dissemination of the various products that claim to make one's task of alignment

to the hegemonic woman, easier. The culture of thinness, flawless skin, and feminine beauty, was represented through makeup products across UK editions and as natural beauty and skin care regimens across the Indian, Arabian and Australian editions. All of these displayed the common ideology that a woman's worth and social value is determined by her exterior beauty and that the consumption of the proposed products serves to compensate for the physical characteristics she may lack. In the section to follow, the consumption of fashion will be discussed as the self is also communicated through styling the self (Reddy, 2009).

6.3.3 Fashion

Analysing identity through practices of consumption, here fashion is regarded as a communicative tool and material extension of identity (Twigg 2007) that serves as a symbolic resource that individuals employ in the embodied representation of the self.

As previously noted, magazines provide consumers with a map to the illusory attainment of an ideal self. In this section, the focus will be on fashion as the magazine websites proved to display a great presence of fashion content. However, due to the nature of the data being an international product appropriated to local interpretations, the magazine content displayed fashion in aims to promote support for local brands or predominantly promote the consumption of international brands, both of which will be discussed below.

6.3.3.1 Local brands

Across the *Cosmopolitan India* homepage, the consumption of fashion was promoted in the form of “*Homegrown labels*” and thus concerned the support for local Indian designers as represented in image 67 below. The producer aims to persuade the consumer to “*consider one of these LOVE-FOREVER buys.*” The use of the adjective *homegrown* is employed to locate the manufacturing of the brand in the home country of the viewer and appeal to the viewer. This is further emphasized by the description *Love forever buys*, with salience placed on the potential love for the products as realized through the capital letters.



FASHION JUN 20, 2020

SHARE

#CosmoShopsLocal 71 Homegrown Labels You Need to Know: Part 1

Our exhaustive list of homegrown labels and products curated by Cosmo Ed Nandini Bhalla. Whenever you decide to shop next, do consider one of these love-forever buys.

By Team Cosmo

Image 67.

The content contains a list of designer labels of clothing, shoes, and jewellery *Curated* by the *Cosmopolitan India* editor. Under each image, the editor describes what she appreciates and admires about the designer and their collection, followed by a price in Rupees. The presence of the currency similarly infers who the target audience is. The editor additionally advises on how she would wear and style the clothing item. Image 68 displayed below serves as an example promoting the local brand *the summer house*:



1. The Summer House

"If there's one thing I love more than the classic trench, it's an updated version. This one, in denim or medium T.O.D. recycled fabric and features a belting collar and statement collar. I would wear it with a slip dress underneath, and brown, slouchy boots for a retro-modern vibe." Stockholm Jacket, ₹2,000. Ottawa Pants, ₹4,000.

Image 68.

The use of the word *Curated* infers that the content is carefully put together with specialist knowledge conveying authority which serves to legitimize the content and ultimately influence consumption of the product as noted in the previous section. A look into the data reveals that the editor is promoting a certain kind of fashion, fashion characterized by bright colours and printed flowy fabrics, replicating traditional Indian clothing (Sharar, 1973). In-effect accommodating the style and taste of the editor, and what she regards as the best attire for the ideal Indian woman. A social practice she seeks to legitimize and maintain.

In addition, the majority of the models represented in the images promoting the designer labels are of Indian descent, revealed through their medium to dark skin tones with black straight hair. The use of Indian models is specifically employed to establish co-membership with the viewer in aims to promote the consumption of clothing and fashion brands that *all other Indian women are wearing*.

On the *Harper's Bazaar UK* homepage the viewer was provided with a section dedicated to brides as represented in image 69 below. The bride section comprised of 4 sects of content, 2 of which served to influence economic consumption, namely the second and third image from the left as represented in image 69 below.

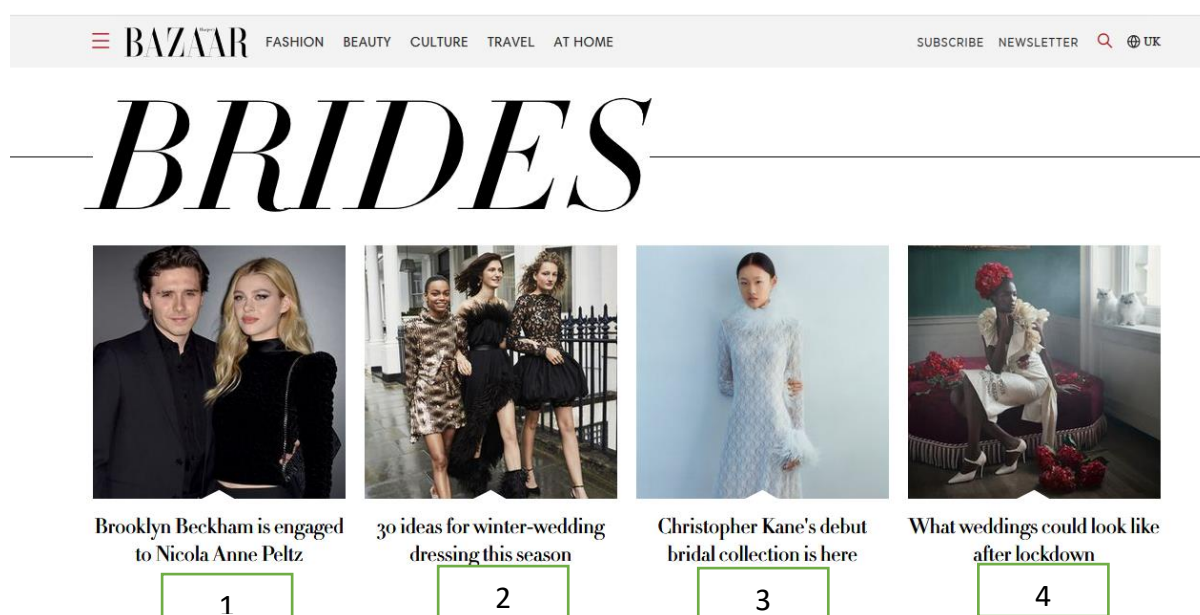


Image 69.

The second image representing three glamorized women as seen by their dresses serves to provide the user with ideas for “*Winter-wedding dressing this season*” as stated in the title. A look into the data reveals that it serves as a list of products including dresses, shoes, bags, and accessories the user may purchase from the link provided at the price conveyed in British pounds “*to be the most stylish guest*” while conforming to social heteronormative standards of dress.

Furthermore, the majority of the brands promoted were local brands with few mentions of international luxury brands including *Gucci* and *Alexander McQueen*. As the producer represented local UK brands such as *Theodora Warre* and *Ghost* amongst others, alongside luxury international brands, this reveals that the magazine aimed to increase the consumption of local brands by equating them to the same standard as a luxury international brand such as *Gucci*.

This is further emphasized by the third image in image 69 above, wherein the collection of Christopher Kane, a Scottish fashion designer based in London is promoted. A look into the content reveals that it only serves as an informative piece regarding the brand, as no prices and links were provided with the aims of influencing consumption. The representation of a foreign Asian model further establishes his brand as an international brand and therefore increases the brand's popularity within the domain of the viewers- London, United Kingdom.

Image 69 reveals that the producer aimed to convey the magazine as a product that can provide the viewer with an abundance of ideas- as seen from “*30 ideas*” to dress as a guest, as represented in the second image, or as a bride as represented in the third image. As a result, *Harpers Bazaar UK* revealed to value the consumption of local luxury fashion brands, similarly to *Cosmopolitan India* previously discussed.

Vogue India similarly favoured content regarding the consumption of local fashion. The content appearing within the fashion section proved to be significant in that it represented the people of India. Image 70 below, represents the Hindu ancient tradition of Raksha

Bandhan. A tradition wherein the sister ties a bracelet known as the rakhi around her brother's wrist, an action that is to symbolize her need for his protection and his duty to defend her (Chopra & Driver, 2020).



Image 70.

A look into the data reveals that it serves as a list of Instagram accounts where one could purchase various kinds of Rakhis online. The viewer is however not provided with a price of any sort, the viewer is only provided with a link to the Instagram page. As previously mentioned, Image 70 serves to represent the people of India in that the prevailing religion is Hinduism and therefore serves to uphold and maintain its practice. The content, therefore, reflects the culture of the target audience and as illustrated by previous research, the target audience is more likely to purchase products that are aligned to their self-identity.

On the *Elle Au* homepage, content serving to influence economic consumption more specifically the wearing of face masks is illustrated in image 71 below. A look into the data reveals that it promotes the wearing of face masks in aims to reduce the transmission of Covid-19. Image 71 is a mid-shot of celebrity model and actress Emily Ratajkowski, wearing a mask and sunglasses while out shopping, this is evident as she is walking on a sidewalk as seen with people fading out in the background.



Image 71

Within the data, the author states that the wearing of face masks for Australians (Clearly indicating who the audience is) has been ubiquitous. The content thus serves to promote the wearing of face masks, emulating Emily Ratajkowski, while emulating consumption. The content, therefore, serves to promote health, with an underlying consumerist discourse.

The use of the word *reusable* in the title, aids in making the practice of wearing a mask convenient and appealing to the user through an ecological discourse. The producer aims to provide a list of face masks that the user can buy in Australia and serves to promote localized consumption similarly to *Elle India* and *Harper's Bazaar UK* and *Vogue India* discussed above.

In addition, underneath each image, the viewer is provided with a description, price in Australian dollars, link to purchase, and further a footnote. Many of the options made available to the user also proclaim that a percentage of the proceeds will be donated to various international charities used as an incentive to further influence the act of consumption.

As a result, the above has revealed the presence of symbolic consumption, which refers to the consumption of products for their cultural symbolic value (Holt, 1995). Represented through the consumption of *homegrown labels* across *Cosmopolitan India*, through aims to elevate the social status of local brands and appeal more to local consumers on the *Harpers Bazaar UK* website and the promotion of content that strengthens religious ideologies and practices as seen on the *Vogue India* website. Or the associated acts of consumption with

good such as international charity drives as seen on the Elle AU homepage, all of which allow viewers to feel bound to a “community in the virtual meta-space” (Diamandaki, 2003, p.3) through acts of local consumption.

However the *Vogue AU* and *Vogue UK* websites provided the viewer with content that promoted the consumption of international exclusive brands as previously seen in relation to makeup, in the section to follow, the consumption of international fashion brands will be discussed.

6.3.3.2 International brands

International brands refer to the various brands that are easily accessible and available for consumption in multiple countries. This was predominantly present on the *Vogue AU* and *Vogue UK* websites.

On the *Vogue AU* website, Image 72 displayed below serves as the most salient representation of economic consumption as seen by the large size of the image when in comparison to its surrounding content.

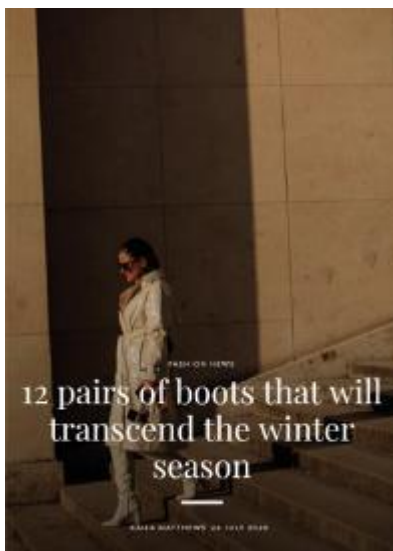


Image 72.

Image 72 features an extensively glamorized woman walking down the stairs. Her glamour is realized through the red lipstick and large sunglasses worn, in combination with her sleeked back hair, long leather coat, and leather knee-high boots used to connote wealth and luxury with the look completed with a camera in her hand. The camera and further her attire infer that she has been at a fashion show of some sort, recording the new fashion trends through the use of her camera as is common practice. As a result, the image serves to represent how the external glamourization and fashioning of the self, serves to elevate one's social status in society.

A look into the data reveals that it serves as a list of 12 luxury boots all from international brands such as *Burberry*, *Gucci*, and *Prada*, amongst others, that according to the *Vogue* editors, are timeless boots argued to be “*Worth the investment*”. The use of the word *investment* serves to influence the user into purchasing an investment, making one think that the purchase of the boot as prescribed by *Vogue*, will benefit them in the future and therefore makes the purchase more appealing to the viewer. Image 72 further represents what the viewer could look like in the future, provided the investment into the ideal self is made.

This was similarly represented on the homepage of *Vogue UK*. *Vogue UK* however focused on the promotion of accessories such as Jewellery and bags as seen in Image 73 represented below. The image represents a woman walking on the pavement dressed in black, accessorized with a bright pink bag. As per the title, the content serves to provide the user with a list of bags that will provide a “*Colour pop*” to their wardrobe and further allow them to stand out in society and be more noticeable because of their fashion sense.



Image 73.

A look into the data reveals that the content creator discusses the presence of various luxury branded bags in the wardrobes of celebrities such as Kylie Jenner, Kendall Jenner, and Bella Hadid as seen on Instagram. The content further provides the user with a list of luxury international brands including Burberry, Alexandra McQueen, and Fendi amongst others that the viewer could purchase. The viewer was similarly provided with a price in British pounds and a link to the dedicated website where a purchase can be made.

The data further intensified the luxury theme carried throughout the homepage as the content did not serve to promote the consumption of local designers and brands, as the entire list promoted international brands with some originating in Paris, Mexico, and Italy. The magazines have also illustrated a pattern with regards to the use of celebrities to promote consumption practices, this will be discussed in the section to follow.

6.3.4 Celebrities

Celebrities are often used as a marketing strategy as producers make use of their social value and hegemonic power in society to promote the consumption of products (Agrawal & Kamakura, 1995). Celebrities refer to those famous and well-known individuals who are either locally or internationally celebrated.

Research has shown that this method of advertising has provided producers with considerable gains (Heath, McCarthy & Mothersbaugh, 1994; Kamins, Brand, Hoeke & Moe, 1989) often through “secondary association” as proposed by Keller (1993). This method influences the attention, evaluations, and ultimately the decision of the potential consumers to make a purchase or not (Atkin and Block, 1993; Walker and Dubitsky, 1994).

Producers, therefore, make use of celebrities who have specific characteristics they wish to associate with their brand and product. Revealing that the social value and worth of the celebrity are used to gain trust in the consumer, credibility in the product, and further strengthen the social ideology it serves to represent and maintain.

This was predominantly present throughout the magazine websites in this study, as each homepage featured a combination of local and international celebrities as predicted by De Cort (2009) mentioned earlier regarding the simultaneous incorporation of the local and global. On the *Cosmopolitan SA* homepage, this was done through the representation of the former Miss South Africa 2019 as seen in image 74 below, the content served to promote the consumption of her *Cosmopolitan* cover looks as mentioned in the title.



Image 74.

Zozibini Tunzi is explicitly named in the title, and therefore individualized, employed to bring her closer to the viewer and potential consumer in aims to increase chances of consumption. As Miss South Africa 2019 and further crowned Miss Universe 2019, Zozibini serves as a cultural icon for South African women, as these titles have allowed her to become a “*champion of women’s rights, thought leader and savvy career woman that inspires other*

young South Africans to fulfil their potential, recognize their self-worth and find their place in the world.” (misssa,2020). The producers, therefore, use her cultural significance to influence acts of consumerism.

Elle AU also serves as a notable example, as the website promoted the brand *Cult gaia* through various images of celebrities wearing the brand, followed by a price in Australian dollars as well as a link to make the purchase. Illustrating how celebrities are used to influence consumption and further how celebrities serve as the embodiment of who consumers should aim to emulate.

Across The *Harpers Bazaar AU* homepage, the viewer was similarly presented with content that serves to promote the consumption of fashion, as represented in image 75 below. The image features a midshot of a smiling Meghan Markle, as explicitly mentioned in the title.



Image 75

The use of the words “*latest look*” connotes that the magazine is on-trend and is up to date with the current fashion trends, and thus appeals more to the viewer. This is further reinforced by the words “*new summer dressing*”. Furthermore, the use of the word “Masterclass” refers to a lesson taught by an expert, in this case, Megan Markle and the other featured celebrities as well as the magazine serve as the expert. This further reifies the magazine's aim to propagate an ideal persona that often mirrors those with high social standing.

The data confirms that it serves as a fashion guide for the summer, recommending clothing, shoes, and accessories as worn by many celebrities and models. The viewer is further provided with a price in Australian dollars and a link where the purchase can be made.

As a result, social membership was evidently represented through the consumption of products such as makeup, skincare products, and fashion brands that producers and editors align with the culture of the respective geographical issue. Consumption practices were further represented as communicative signs of identity. Explicating the dialectical argument by Iqani (2021) who states that meaning flows simultaneously between subject and object, as consumers “engage in and are engaged by consumption activities, objects, and meanings that have the potential to create, transform, or question consumer subject identity” Borgersen (as cited in Iqani, 2012, p.32). This argument also relates to consumption as classification as framed by Holt (1995) previously discussed.

The morals and values infused in products are often those of the ruling upper class, available to those who seek it at a price that is often crafted to suit the pockets of the wealthy. As a result, producers promoted consumption through the use of celebrities that embody the standard common consumers strive to achieve.

Furthermore, through the repetitive nature of magazines, the act of consumption intensifies and further distributes the inherent social ideologies in society. It is primarily society that informs individuals what deficits in appearance are, for example, the dark under-eye circles, large pores, and even something as natural as wrinkles and it is also society that serves to provide the solutions to these perceived problems using the various media platforms that aim to reflect and reinforce “selective behaviour and values” (Pollay & Gallagher, 1990, p. 360) as well as a selective appearance. As a result, women have been represented as engaging in a constant project of the perfect self in line with the illusion projected by the websites in aims to promote the consumption of various products as demonstrated above.

Noting that women are endowed with the capacity to participate in the creation of social meaning presented on magazines and their websites raising the question how does the *utopian* representation of the hegemonic woman, women’s health, and identity all framed in reference to aesthetic appearance affect readers? The wealth of literature disputing this utopian representation of women highlighting the sexualisation, objectification and

subservient representation of women in the media (Balasmo, 1996; Banner 1983; Chemkin, 1981; Lock, 1993; Mazer,2001) infers that many seek to overturn and dismantle the misrepresentation of women in the media.

However, as these mediated social constructions of the ideal woman seek material grounding in the body (Jordanova, 1980), Women are the vehicle for resistance. This resistance has been explicated in academic literature as briefly mentioned above, as well as modern social movements in the form of protests and the various online forums including blogs such as the well-known *Vegenda*- a feminist online magazine.

The opposition to the misrepresentation of women explicates the agentic capability of the body, specifically the women body, as “the body is not only a symbolic field for the reproduction of dominant values and conceptions; it is also a site for the resistance to and transformations of these systems of meaning” (Crawford, 1984, p.95). The traditional role of women in the media has proven to be dynamic as it has shifted alongside societal changes as a result of various women movements prompted by feminist and post-feminist theory establishing the evolution of the mediated women from the domestic, sexualized space to occupying a professional, desiring role. Simultaneously revealing the ability of magazines to “mutate into new cultural niches and new purposes” (Jenkins, 2003, p. 12) as previously mentioned.

The negotiation of the representation of women in mainstream media continues to marginalize many women as the majority of women selected to represent women in the media (both in a negative or positive light) are white cis-gendered women. The lack of representation of the intersectionalities of women, women of colour, women of a different sexual preference, different religious and cultural backgrounds leads to the distorted perception of reality.

Conversely, Post-feminist theory serves as a reflection against feminism, arguing that feminism has achieved its primary goals such as the right to vote, reproductive agency for

women, and an increased representation of women in positions of power as mapped out in the first, second, and third waves of feminism (Rampton, 2015). Inferring that “in the current era, the success of the movement means that feminism is no longer needed” (Hall & Rodriguez, 2003, p.879). The post-feminist theory rejects the notion that women are passive victims of patriarchy and instead, posits that the aesthetic labour and hyper-feminine beauty ideals, as represented in the media serve to empower women.

This is echoed by Gill (2007) who argues that post-feminism has a set of stable characteristics: manifests as bodily property; creates an intensification of self-surveillance by women on their bodies through the “*how to*” discourses distributed on the magazines; represents a shift from the sexualization of women, to the sexual agency of women and further that women play an active role in the sexualization of culture. Gill (2007) also argues that post-feminism focuses on the individualism, choice, and empowerment of women.

The entanglement of feminist and post-feminist notions are at play in the corpus of this study as seen with the hegemonic women characterised as feminine, glamorous, thin, heterosexual, heterosexually attractive, and committed to domestic social roles, characteristics that have been disputed in many feminist movements. However, as seen in the discussion of *the working body* the corpus illustrated women in positions of power such as business owners, in this way reflecting post-feminist sentiments of empowerment. The negotiation aligns with the argument put forth by Velding (2017) stating that magazines are a site of tension with contradictory definitions of femininity favouring traditional forms, as seen in the Hegemonic woman, but also presenting women with content serving as a mantra to oppose these norms.

7 Conclusion

Regarding the media space as a network of data concerning representations of the self, this study set out to explore the semiotic expression of nationality and culture across four multinational magazine websites. Taking a multi-semiotic approach, using multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) developed by Machin and Mayr (2012) in combination with Kress

and van Leeuwen's (1996) work on social-semiotic systems. The strategy of inquiry followed a constructionist mixed-method research paradigm.

Aiming to describe the semiotic realisation of nationality and culture displayed by magazine brands across the digital space, the findings have revealed the patent presentation of nationality on all magazine websites save two. Nationality was often relayed through text in a variety of forms, either indicated by way of location appearing on the header, through the IP address, currency, or through the content that referred to the target audience through ethnic nominalizations.

Culture was often inconspicuously realised through multimodal content in the form of images that served to represent cultural icons in the form of local and global celebrities; Content outlining fashion and beautification practices that either reflected radical socialist or conservative ideals; Content with religious references as well the presence of content that served to express experiences and social roles legitimized by gender, class, and race. As a result, the findings have further explicated the independent manifestations of nationality and culture across the digital space.

With magazines established to promote consumption practices, an investigation on the extent to which the identity of a magazine brand can be considered flexible to resonate with an audience of a different nationality and culture for economic gain has revealed the presence of cultural diffusion as the magazine brand identity as advisory guides to the embodiment of societies high-culture proved to be consistent throughout.

The data analysis has allowed the recognition of patterns of identity in the form of nationality and culture encapsulated in appearance. Discussing the hegemonic representation of women in section 6.1. followed by section 6.2 dedicated to the relationship between health and beauty. Concluded by section 6.3 allotted to the discussion of consumption and identity.

Section 6.1 administered for the hegemonic woman revealed that Eurocentric notions of beauty continue to be represented as the ideal and hegemonic form across media platforms. The hegemonic women were characterised as feminine, glamorous, thin, heterosexual, heterosexually attractive, and committed to domestic social roles. In aims to uncover the influence that nationality and culture may have on the representation of the hegemonic woman, it is evident that all magazines used local cultural icons, to localize the long-established representation of the white hegemonic woman. Explicating that similar narratives of hegemonic femininity dominate cross-nationally and cross-culturally, packaged in local cultural icons, laced with capitalist notions aiming to promote economic consumption fuelled by globalisation. The section further presented a brief discussion of the ideal job occupation, revealing that success is portrayed in the form of business owners in the beauty industry that aims to help other women meet the requirements of the hegemonic woman, ultimately illustrating the materialization and commodification of hegemonic femininity.

Section 6.2 has attempted to discuss the presence of health in women's fashion/beauty magazines, highlighting physical health, mental health, and wellness as overarching themes. The chapter has revealed that physical exercise continues to be represented with the aim of improving physical appearance. With mental health framed through aims of promoting a woman's desirability in relation to her heterosexual partner or society at large. The magazines have further perpetuated the gender roles of women through the discourse of health, with content serving to idealize and maintain specific socially acceptable behaviors disguised through notions of the perfect lifestyle. Health was thus represented through discourses of beauty and happiness. Characteristics that have been portrayed as contributing factors in one's health cross-culturally.

Section 6.3 discussed social membership through the consumption of products such as makeup, skincare products, and fashion brands. Revealing that the repetitive nature of magazines intensifies and further distributes inherent social ideologies in society. It is primarily society that dictates what deficits in appearance are and further advises on their solutions. As a result, the presentation of the self is a constant project influenced by illusions

projected across media platforms in aims to promote the consumption of values and ideals through the economic consumption of various products and personas.

However, it is important to note that women are active contributors to beauty and health content present on magazines and their websites as consumers often buy the magazine that portrays the lifestyle and ideals they wish to pursue. The framing of beauty, health and consumption “appear to activate and reinforce existing beliefs and cognitions” But producers continuously represent these ideals in unrealistic and unattainable versions.

This study has contributed to existing research on print media’s presence across the digital space. In doing so, this study has achieved the objective of positing nationality and culture as significant characteristics of identity, illustrating the independence between the two concepts as well as the inextricable link between consumption practices and nationality and culture.

This study has exemplified that analysis of the magazine website yields insight into the social contexts wherein they are created and reveals that the cross-national framing of women and their concerns (domestic roles, motherhood and appearance) continue to hold significance. Despite the many social and political movements criticising the media for their perpetuation of gender norms and ideals that serve patriarchy and the white ruling class, the media continues to perpetuate stereotypical and limiting perspectives of women. Framing the unobtainable ideal as outlets in aims to promote acts of consumption and ultimately collective identities.

The limitations of the investigation naturally include the language medium as this study only focused on the English editions. Another limitation involves the scope of this study limited to the homepage of the respective websites. Future research could explore the manifestations of nationality and culture independent of the language of transmission and explore the website in its entirety, including the various tabs in aims to yield richer conclusions. Although the constructionist qualitative research paradigm proved to be a suitable research design for

the research questions of this study, an alternative research design could allow for an expansion of the findings independent of human judgment.

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