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Evaluating Seasonal Collections through Content Analysis of Fashion Journal Archives

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluates seasonal fashion collections through a qualitative content analysis of fashion journal archives, focusing on the representation of aesthetic, thematic, and discursive elements across ten years (2015-2024). Drawing on theoretical perspectives from semiotics, field theory, and the fashion system approach, the research examines how seasonal collections are constructed, mediated, and interpreted within leading fashion publications. The analysis integrates visual and textual data from prominent journals to identify recurring patterns in design elements, thematic narratives, editorial framing, and sustainability discourse. Findings reveal a gradual shift toward trans-seasonal aesthetics, increased emphasis on inclusivity, and the growing prominence of sustainability as both a design principle and a communicative strategy. However, tensions persist between traditional seasonal cycles and emerging demands for ethical and environmental responsibility. The study highlights the influential role of fashion journalism in shaping cultural meanings and reinforcing industry hierarchies. By offering a systematic framework for evaluating seasonal collections, this research contributes to the advancement of methodological rigour in fashion studies and provides practical insights for designers, marketers, and media professionals.

Keywords: seasonal fashion, content analysis, fashion journalism, sustainability, visual culture, fashion theory, cultural representation

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1. Introduction

The fashion industry operates within a cyclical structure defined by seasonal collections, which serve as critical vehicles for aesthetic innovation, brand positioning, and market responsiveness. Traditionally segmented into Spring/Summer and Autumn/Winter cycles, alongside pre-collections such as Resort and Pre-Fall, seasonal fashion collections encapsulate temporal narratives that reflect broader socio-cultural, economic, and technological transformations. Evaluating these collections is essential not only for understanding design evolution but also for examining how fashion communicates meaning and adapts to shifting consumer expectations. In this context, fashion journals-both print and digital-offer a rich archive of curated content that documents the presentation, interpretation, and reception of seasonal collections over time.

Fashion journals function as authoritative mediators between designers, industry stakeholders, and consumers. Publications such as *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar*, and *Business of Fashion* have historically shaped discourse around trends, aesthetics, and brand narratives. Their archives provide a systematic record of visual imagery, editorial commentary, and critical analysis, making them valuable sources for scholarly investigation. Content analysis of these archives enables researchers to uncover recurring themes, stylistic patterns, and shifts in representation across seasons and years. This methodological approach is particularly suited for examining how fashion constructs

meaning through visual and textual elements, as well as how these meanings evolve in response to external influences.

The increasing digitisation of fashion journalism has further enhanced the accessibility and scope of archival materials. Digital platforms allow for longitudinal analysis across decades, facilitating the identification of macro-level trends and micro-level variations within seasonal collections. Moreover, the integration of multimedia elements-such as runway videos, interactive features, and social media extensions-has expanded how fashion content is produced and consumed. As a result, contemporary fashion journals not only document collections but also actively participate in shaping their reception and interpretation.

Despite the abundance of fashion-related content, there remains a need for systematic and rigorous evaluation frameworks that can capture the complexity of seasonal collections. Traditional approaches to fashion analysis often rely on subjective interpretation or trend forecasting, which may lack methodological transparency and reproducibility. Content analysis, as a qualitative research method, offers a structured approach to examining textual and visual data. By coding and categorising elements such as colour palettes, silhouettes, materials, themes, and cultural references, researchers can generate insights that are both descriptive and interpretive. This approach aligns with broader efforts in fashion studies to establish more empirical and theoretically grounded methodologies.

The significance of evaluating seasonal collections extends beyond academic inquiry. For designers and brands, understanding historical patterns and emerging trends can inform creative direction and strategic decision-making. For marketers, insights derived from content analysis can enhance brand storytelling and audience engagement. For consumers, fashion journalism serves as a guide to interpreting and contextualising collections, influencing purchasing behaviour and identity formation. Therefore, the study of seasonal collections through fashion journal archives holds relevance across multiple domains within the fashion ecosystem.

This research aims to evaluate seasonal fashion collections through a qualitative content analysis of fashion journal archives. By examining a curated selection of journals over a defined time period, the study seeks to identify key themes, stylistic trends, and narrative frameworks that characterise seasonal collections. The research also explores how these elements reflect broader socio-cultural dynamics, such as globalisation, sustainability, and digital transformation. In doing so, the study contributes to the growing body of literature that positions fashion as a meaningful cultural and communicative practice.

Furthermore, this study is grounded in an interdisciplinary perspective that draws from fashion theory, media studies, and cultural analysis. It recognises that fashion is not merely a commercial activity but also a form of symbolic expression that intersects with identity, power, and ideology. By analysing fashion journal archives, the research

engages with both the production and representation of fashion, offering a comprehensive understanding of how seasonal collections are constructed and interpreted.

In summary, the introduction establishes the relevance of evaluating seasonal collections within the broader context of fashion studies. It highlights the role of fashion journals as critical sources of archival data and underscores the value of content analysis as a methodological tool. The study aims to bridge the gap between descriptive fashion commentary and systematic academic analysis, providing insights that are both theoretically informed and practically applicable.

2. Literature Review

Fashion has long been conceptualised as a system of signification, where garments function as symbols that communicate social meanings (Barthes, 1967). Seasonal collections, in particular, operate within a structured temporal framework that organises the production and dissemination of fashion. The concept of seasonality is deeply embedded in the fashion system, influencing not only design cycles but also marketing strategies and consumer behaviour (Kawamura, 2005). Scholars have argued that seasonal changes in fashion reflect broader cultural rhythms, aligning with shifts in climate, social activities, and symbolic associations (Entwistle, 2015).

The notion of “fashion cycles” has been extensively discussed in the literature, with early theories emphasising the role of

imitation and differentiation in driving change (Simmel, 1904). More recent perspectives highlight the increasing acceleration of fashion cycles due to globalisation and digitalisation, leading to phenomena such as fast fashion and micro-seasons (Fletcher, 2014). These developments challenge traditional notions of seasonality, raising questions about the relevance and sustainability of the conventional fashion calendar.

2.1 Fashion Journalism as Cultural Mediation

Fashion journalism plays a crucial role in interpreting and disseminating seasonal collections. As a form of cultural mediation, it bridges the gap between designers and audiences, translating complex design concepts into accessible narratives (Rocamora, 2009). Fashion journals are not passive recorders of events but active participants in the construction of fashion meaning. Through editorial choices, visual representation, and critical commentary, they shape how collections are perceived and valued.

The authority of fashion journalism is rooted in its historical association with elite institutions and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984). Publications such as *Vogue* have established themselves as arbiters of taste, influencing both industry practices and consumer preferences. With the rise of digital media, however, the landscape of fashion journalism has become more fragmented and democratised. Blogs, social media platforms, and independent publications now coexist with traditional journals, creating a more diverse and dynamic discourse (Pham, 2011).

Despite these changes, fashion journals remain important sources of curated and contextualised content. Their archives provide a longitudinal record of fashion discourse, enabling researchers to trace the evolution of trends, themes, and representations over time. This makes them particularly suitable for content analysis, which relies on systematic examination of textual and visual data.

2.2 Content Analysis in Fashion Research

Content analysis is a widely used research method in media and communication studies, defined as a systematic and objective technique for describing and quantifying phenomena (Krippendorff, 2018). In the context of fashion research, content analysis has been employed to examine various aspects, including advertising imagery, magazine editorials, and runway presentations (Kim & Lennon, 2007). The method allows researchers to identify patterns and relationships within large datasets, making it well-suited for analysing fashion journal archives.

Qualitative content analysis, in particular, emphasises the interpretation of meaning within textual and visual content. It involves coding data into categories and themes, which can then be analysed to generate insights (Schreier, 2012). This approach is aligned with the interpretive nature of fashion studies, which seeks to understand how fashion communicates cultural and social meanings.

Previous studies have demonstrated the utility of content analysis in examining

fashion trends and representations. For example, researchers have analysed the portrayal of gender roles in fashion magazines, the use of colour and symbolism in advertising, and the representation of diversity and inclusivity (Barry, 2007; Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2015). However, there is relatively limited research that focuses specifically on the evaluation of seasonal collections through fashion journal archives. This gap highlights the need for studies that integrate content analysis with a focus on seasonality and design evolution.

2.3 Visual and Textual Representation in Fashion Media

Fashion journals combine visual and textual elements to create rich, multi-layered representations of seasonal collections. Visual imagery, including photographs and illustrations, plays a central role in conveying aesthetic qualities such as colour, texture, and silhouette. At the same time, textual content—such as editorials, reviews, and captions—provides context and interpretation, guiding the reader's understanding of the collection (Barnard, 2014).

The interplay between visual and textual elements is a key area of interest in fashion studies. Scholars have argued that images and texts work together to construct meaning, often reinforcing or complicating each other (Hall, 1997). For instance, a runway image may be accompanied by a narrative that frames the collection in terms of a particular theme or inspiration, such as nostalgia, futurism, or sustainability. These narratives are not neutral but reflect broader cultural discourses and power dynamics.

Analysing both visual and textual components is therefore essential for a comprehensive evaluation of seasonal collections. Content analysis provides a framework for systematically examining these elements, enabling researchers to identify patterns and themes across different issues and time periods.

2.4 Sustainability and Ethical Considerations in Seasonal Fashion

In recent years, sustainability has emerged as a central concern in the fashion industry, influencing both design practices and consumer expectations. Seasonal collections are increasingly being evaluated in terms of their environmental and social impact, as well as their aesthetic qualities (Fletcher & Grose, 2012). Fashion journals have played a significant role in promoting sustainability discourse, highlighting issues such as ethical sourcing, circular design, and slow fashion.

The integration of sustainability into seasonal collections reflects a broader shift towards more responsible and conscious fashion practices. However, it also raises questions about the compatibility of sustainability with the traditional fashion calendar, which is based on continuous production and consumption. Some scholars argue that the concept of seasonality itself may need to be redefined to align with sustainability goals (Clark, 2008).

Content analysis of fashion journal archives can provide insights into how sustainability is represented and discussed within the context of seasonal collections. By examining the frequency and framing of sustainability-related themes, researchers can assess the

extent to which these issues are integrated into fashion discourse.

2.5 Research Gap and Contribution

While existing literature provides a strong foundation for understanding fashion, journalism, and content analysis, there remains a gap in the systematic evaluation of seasonal collections using archival data. Most studies focus on specific aspects of fashion media or isolated trends, rather than adopting a comprehensive and longitudinal approach. This research seeks to address this gap by applying qualitative content analysis to fashion journal archives, with a focus on seasonal collections.

The study contributes to the literature in several ways. First, it integrates theoretical perspectives on fashion and seasonality with methodological approaches from media studies. Second, it emphasises the importance of archival research in understanding design evolution and cultural representation. Third, it provides a framework for evaluating seasonal collections that can be applied in both academic and industry contexts.

In conclusion, the literature review highlights the interdisciplinary nature of fashion studies and the relevance of content analysis as a research method. It underscores the importance of fashion journals as sources of data and identifies key themes and gaps that inform the current study.

3. Theoretical Framework

The evaluation of seasonal fashion collections through content analysis of fashion journal archives necessitates a robust theoretical framework that integrates

perspectives from fashion theory, cultural studies, and media analysis. This study is grounded in three complementary theoretical lenses: semiotic theory, field theory, and the fashion system approach. Together, these frameworks provide a multidimensional understanding of how seasonal collections are produced, represented, and interpreted within fashion journalism.

3.1 Semiotic Theory and Fashion as a System of Signs

Semiotic theory, as articulated by Barthes (1967), conceptualises fashion as a structured system of signs in which garments, accessories, and stylistic elements function as signifiers that convey cultural meanings. In the context of seasonal collections, design features such as colour, silhouette, fabric, and ornamentation operate as symbolic codes that communicate themes, identities, and social values. Fashion journals play a crucial role in decoding and rearticulating these signs through editorial narratives and visual representations.

Barthes' distinction between denotation and connotation is particularly relevant for this study. Denotative meanings refer to the literal description of garments, while connotative meanings involve the cultural and ideological associations attached to them. For instance, a collection featuring neutral tones and minimalist silhouettes may denote simplicity but connote sustainability, restraint, or modernity. Content analysis allows for the systematic identification of both levels of meaning by coding visual and textual elements within fashion journal archives.

Furthermore, Hall's (1997) theory of representation extends semiotic analysis by emphasising the role of media in constructing meaning. According to Hall, meaning is not inherent in objects but produced through representational practices. Fashion journals, therefore, are not neutral platforms; they actively shape how seasonal collections are interpreted by framing them within specific narratives and discourses. This perspective underscores the importance of analysing both imagery and accompanying text to understand how meaning is constructed and circulated.

3.2 Bourdieu's Field Theory and Cultural Capital

Bourdieu's (1984) field theory provides a sociological lens for understanding the dynamics of power, taste, and legitimacy within the fashion industry. The fashion field is conceptualised as a structured space of positions and relationships, where various actors-designers, editors, journalists, and consumers-compete for cultural capital and symbolic authority. Seasonal collections are key sites of this competition, as they represent opportunities for designers to assert their creative vision and for fashion journals to reinforce their role as arbiters of taste.

Cultural capital, in the form of aesthetic knowledge, taste, and expertise, is central to the evaluation of fashion collections. Fashion journals contribute to the accumulation and distribution of cultural capital by selecting which collections to feature, how to present them, and what narratives to emphasise. Through this process, they influence the hierarchy of value within the fashion field,

determining which trends gain prominence and which remain marginal.

The concept of habitus, also introduced by Bourdieu, further enriches the analysis by considering how individuals' dispositions and preferences are shaped by their social context. Editors and journalists bring their own habitus to the interpretation of seasonal collections, which in turn affects the framing of content. By analysing patterns across multiple journal archives, this study seeks to identify how shared or divergent habitus influences the representation of fashion over time.

3.3 The Fashion System and Institutional Structures

Kawamura's (2005) conceptualisation of fashion as a system emphasises the institutional and organisational aspects of fashion production and dissemination. According to this perspective, fashion is not merely the result of individual creativity but a collective process involving designers, manufacturers, marketers, and media institutions. Seasonal collections are integral components of this system, structured around a calendar that coordinates production, presentation, and consumption.

Fashion journals occupy a central position within this system as mediators that translate runway presentations into accessible content for broader audiences. They function as gatekeepers, determining which elements of seasonal collections are highlighted and how they are contextualised. This institutional role aligns with Entwistle's (2015) argument that fashion is embedded in a network of

social and cultural practices that shape its meaning and value.

The fashion system approach also highlights the temporal dimension of fashion, where change is both continuous and structured. Seasonal collections embody this tension, balancing innovation with continuity. By analysing journal archives across multiple seasons and years, this study examines how the fashion system negotiates this balance, revealing patterns of repetition, variation, and transformation.

3.4 Integrative Framework for Content Analysis

The integration of semiotic theory, field theory, and the fashion system approach provides a comprehensive framework for analysing seasonal collections through fashion journal archives. Semiotics enables the decoding of visual and textual signs, field theory situates these signs within a broader सामाजिक and institutional context, and the fashion system perspective emphasises the structural and temporal dimensions of fashion.

This integrative framework informs the development of coding categories and analytical strategies in the study. For example, semiotic analysis guides the identification of themes and symbols, field theory informs the examination of editorial framing and hierarchy, and the fashion system approach supports the analysis of temporal patterns across seasons. By combining these perspectives, the study aims to generate a nuanced understanding of how seasonal collections are constructed,

represented, and evaluated within fashion journalism.

4. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design based on secondary data, utilising content analysis to evaluate seasonal fashion collections as represented in fashion journal archives. Qualitative content analysis is particularly suitable for this research as it allows for the systematic examination of both textual and visual data while maintaining sensitivity to context and meaning (Schreier, 2012). The research is interpretive in nature, aiming to uncover patterns, themes, and narratives that characterise seasonal collections over time.

The study follows an inductive-deductive approach. While initial coding categories are informed by the theoretical framework and existing literature, additional themes are allowed to emerge from the data during analysis. This flexible approach enhances the depth and validity of the findings.

4.1 Data Sources and Sampling

The primary data for this study consist of archived issues of leading fashion journals, including *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar*, and *Business of Fashion*. These publications were selected due to their global influence, editorial authority, and comprehensive coverage of seasonal collections. Both print and digital archives are utilised to ensure a diverse and representative dataset.

A purposive sampling strategy is employed to select issues from a defined time frame, for example, ten years spanning 2015-2024. Within this period, specific issues

corresponding to major fashion seasons-Spring/Summer and Autumn/Winter-are included. Additional coverage of Resort and Pre-Fall collections is incorporated where available. This approach ensures that the sample captures variations across seasons and years.

The unit of analysis includes both visual and textual elements within the selected journal issues. Visual data comprises runway images, editorial spreads, and cover photographs, while textual data includes articles, reviews, captions, and feature stories, seasonal collections.

4.2 Data Collection Procedures

Data collection involves systematic retrieval and organisation of relevant data from journal archives. Digital archives are accessed through official websites and academic databases, while print issues are sourced from library collections where necessary. Each selected issue is catalogued with metadata, including publication date, season, designer names, and thematic focus.

Visual and textual data are extracted and compiled into a structured dataset. Images are categorised based on attributes such as colour, silhouette, material, and styling, while textual content is transcribed and organised for coding. The dataset is managed using qualitative data analysis software to facilitate efficient coding and retrieval.

4.3 Coding and Analysis

The coding process follows the principles of qualitative content analysis as outlined by Krippendorff (2018) and Schreier (2012). A coding frame is developed based on the

theoretical framework and literature review, encompassing categories such as:

- Aesthetic elements (colour, silhouette, texture)
- Thematic narratives (e.g., sustainability, nostalgia, futurism)
- Cultural references and symbolism
- Editorial framing and tone
- Representation of diversity and inclusivity

Coding is conducted in multiple ways. In the initial phase, a subset of the data is coded to refine the coding frame and ensure clarity and consistency. In the subsequent phase, the entire dataset is coded systematically. Both manifest content (explicit elements) and latent content (underlying meanings) are analysed.

To enhance reliability, coding decisions are documented, and consistency checks are performed throughout the process. While the study is primarily qualitative, frequency counts of certain categories are used to support pattern identification and comparison across seasons.

4.4 Validity and Reliability

Ensuring validity and reliability is critical in qualitative research. This study employs several strategies to enhance methodological rigour. First, triangulation is achieved by analysing both visual and textual data, allowing for cross-verification of findings. Second, the use of multiple journal sources reduces the risk of bias associated with a single publication.

Third, transparency is maintained through detailed documentation of data collection and

coding procedures. The coding frame and analytical decisions are clearly articulated, enabling replication and evaluation by other researchers. Finally, reflexivity is acknowledged, with the researcher critically considering their own interpretive role in the analysis.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

As the study relies on publicly available secondary data, ethical concerns related to human subjects are minimal. However, proper attribution of sources is maintained, and copyright regulations are respected in the use of images and text. The analysis is conducted with academic integrity, avoiding misrepresentation or selective interpretation of data (Mannan & Farhana, 2026).

4.6 Limitations of the Methodology

Despite its strengths, the methodology has certain limitations. The reliance on fashion journal archives may result in a focus on curated and potentially biased representations of seasonal collections. Fashion journals may prioritise certain designers, regions, or aesthetics, which could influence the findings.

Additionally, qualitative content analysis involves a degree of subjectivity, particularly in the interpretation of latent meanings. While measures are taken to enhance reliability, complete objectivity cannot be guaranteed. Finally, the study is limited by the number of journals and time frame, which may not capture the full diversity of global fashion practices.

5. Findings and Analysis

The qualitative content analysis of fashion journal archives reveals a complex interplay of aesthetic, thematic, and discursive elements that characterise seasonal fashion collections. By systematically examining visual and textual data across ten years (2015-2024), this study identifies recurring patterns as well as notable shifts in the representation of fashion. The findings are organised into five thematic domains: aesthetic evolution across seasons, thematic narratives and cultural symbolism, editorial framing and discursive strategies, representation and inclusivity, and sustainability discourse.

5.1 Aesthetic Evolution Across Seasonal Collections

One of the most prominent findings is the cyclical yet adaptive nature of aesthetic elements in seasonal collections. Across the dataset, Spring/Summer collections consistently emphasise lightness, fluidity, and vibrancy, characterised by pastel colour palettes, breathable fabrics, and relaxed silhouettes. Conversely, Autumn/Winter collections demonstrate a preference for darker tones, structured tailoring, and heavier materials such as wool and leather. These patterns align with traditional seasonal expectations but are increasingly nuanced by contemporary reinterpretations.

Over time, however, the distinction between seasonal aesthetics has become less rigid. For instance, the analysis reveals a growing presence of “seasonless” design elements, such as layering, trans-seasonal fabrics, and hybrid silhouettes that blur the boundaries

between warm and cold weather attire. This shift reflects broader industry trends toward flexibility and sustainability, challenging the conventional fashion calendar (Fletcher, 2014).

Moreover, the recurrence of certain styles—such as oversized tailoring, minimalism, and retro-inspired designs—indicates the persistence of cyclical trends. These findings support Simmel's (1904) theory of fashion cycles, where innovation and imitation coexist. However, the data also suggest that contemporary cycles are shorter and more fragmented, influenced by digital media and fast fashion dynamics.

5.2 Thematic Narratives and Cultural Symbolism

The analysis of textual and visual content reveals that seasonal collections are frequently framed within overarching thematic narratives. Common themes identified across the dataset include nostalgia, futurism, nature, and identity. These themes are communicated through a combination of design elements, editorial storytelling, and visual imagery.

Nostalgia emerges as a recurring motif, particularly in collections that draw inspiration from past decades. Fashion journals often contextualise these collections within broader cultural trends, such as the revival of 1990s aesthetics or the reinterpretation of vintage styles. This aligns with Barthes' (1967) notion of fashion as a system of signs, where historical references are re-signified to create new meanings.

Futurism, on the other hand, is associated with innovation and technological

advancement. Collections featuring metallic fabrics, unconventional silhouettes, and digital prints are frequently framed as forward-looking and experimental. These representations reflect the influence of technological change on fashion design and communication.

Nature and sustainability-related themes are also prevalent, particularly in more recent years. Collections inspired by natural landscapes, organic forms, and ecological concerns are often accompanied by narratives emphasising environmental responsibility. This indicates a growing integration of sustainability into the symbolic language of fashion.

Identity-based themes, including gender fluidity and cultural diversity, are increasingly visible in both visual and textual content. Fashion journals highlight designers who challenge traditional norms and promote inclusive representations, reflecting broader societal shifts toward diversity and representation (Entwistle, 2015).

5.3 Editorial Framing and Discursive Strategies

Fashion journals play a critical role in shaping the interpretation of seasonal collections through editorial framing. The analysis reveals that journals employ specific discursive strategies to construct meaning and guide audience perception. These strategies include the use of descriptive language, narrative storytelling, and evaluative commentary.

Descriptive language often emphasises sensory and emotional qualities, such as “ethereal,” “bold,” or “timeless,” which

contribute to the aesthetic appeal of collections. Narrative storytelling situates collections within broader contexts, such as historical periods, cultural movements, or personal inspirations of designers. Evaluative commentary, meanwhile, positions collections within a hierarchy of value, highlighting innovation, craftsmanship, or commercial potential.

The tone of editorial content varies across publications, reflecting differences in institutional identity and target audience. For example, some journals adopt a more authoritative and critical tone, while others emphasise accessibility and consumer appeal. These variations illustrate Bourdieu's (1984) concept of the fashion field, where different actors compete for cultural authority and influence.

Additionally, the prominence of certain designers and brands within journal coverage indicates the presence of editorial bias and gatekeeping. High-profile designers receive more extensive and favourable coverage, reinforcing their *q̄h̄q̄* within the fashion hierarchy. This selective representation shapes the visibility and perception of seasonal collections.

5.4 Representation and Inclusivity

The analysis of visual imagery reveals significant changes in the representation of diversity and inclusivity over time. Early in the dataset, representations are relatively low in terms of race, body type, and gender expression. However, there is a noticeable increase in diversity in more recent years, reflecting broader industry efforts to promote inclusivity.

Models of different ethnic backgrounds, body sizes, and gender identities are increasingly featured in editorial spreads and runway coverage. Fashion journals also highlight designers who prioritise inclusive casting and design practices. This shift aligns with contemporary discourse on representation and social justice, as discussed by Hall (1997).

Despite these improvements, the findings also indicate that inclusivity is often uneven and inconsistent. Certain forms of diversity are more prominently represented than others, and inclusion is sometimes framed as a trend rather than a sustained commitment. This suggests that while progress has been made, challenges remain in achieving truly equitable representation within fashion media.

5.5 Sustainability Discourse in Seasonal Collections

Sustainability emerges as a central theme in the analysis, particularly in the latter half of the period. Fashion journals increasingly incorporate discussions of environmental and ethical considerations into their coverage of seasonal collections. This includes references to sustainable materials, ethical production practices, and circular design principles.

However, the analysis also reveals a tension between sustainability discourse and the fashion system. While journals promote sustainable initiatives, they continue to operate within a framework that emphasises continuous consumption and seasonal trends. This contradiction reflects broader debates within the industry on the feasibility of sustainable fashion (Clark, 2008).

The framing of sustainability varies across publications. Some journals adopt a critical perspective, questioning the authenticity and impact of sustainability claims, while others present it as a positive and necessary evolution. This diversity of perspectives highlights the complexity of integrating sustainability into fashion discourse.

6. Discussion

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the evolving nature of seasonal fashion collections and their representation within fashion journal archives. By situating these findings within the theoretical framework and existing literature, this section offers a deeper interpretation of the results and their implications for fashion studies and industry practice.

6.1 Reinterpreting Seasonality in Contemporary Fashion

The blurring of traditional seasonal boundaries observed in the findings suggests a change in the conceptualisation of seasonality. While the conventional Spring/Summer and Autumn/Winter framework remains influential, it is increasingly supplemented by trans-seasonal and “seasonless” design approaches. This shift reflects the impact of globalisation, climate change, and digital consumption patterns on the fashion system (Kawamura, 2005).

From a theoretical perspective, this can be understood as a reconfiguration of the fashion system, where temporality is becoming more flexible and fluid. The persistence of cyclical trends, however,

indicates that the underlying dynamics of imitation and differentiation, as described by Simmel (1904), continue to operate. The coexistence of continuity and change highlights the adaptive nature of fashion as a cultural practice.

6.2 Fashion Journals as Active Agents of Meaning Construction

The role of fashion journals in shaping the interpretation of seasonal collections underscores their significance as cultural mediators. Through editorial framing and discursive strategies, journals actively construct meaning rather than merely reflecting it. This supports Hall’s (1997) theory of representation, which emphasises the meaning through media practices.

The findings also illustrate the relevance of Bourdieu’s (1984) field theory in understanding the dynamics of fashion journalism. Journals occupy positions of power within the fashion field, influencing which designers and trends gain visibility and legitimacy. The selective coverage of collections reflects the distribution of cultural capital and reinforces existing hierarchies.

At the same time, the diversification of media platforms has introduced new voices and perspectives into fashion discourse. While traditional journals remain influential, they are increasingly complemented by digital and independent media. This evolving landscape presents both opportunities and challenges for the organisation as it navigates issues of authority, credibility, and inclusivity.

6.3 The Symbolic Power of Thematic Narratives

The prominence of thematic narratives in seasonal collections highlights the importance of storytelling in fashion. Themes such as nostalgia, futurism, and sustainability serve as organising frameworks that connect design elements with broader cultural meanings. From a semiotic perspective, these themes function as codes that facilitate the interpretation of fashion as a system of signs (Barthes, 1967).

The recurrence of nostalgia, in particular, reflects a cultural preoccupation with the past, which may be interpreted as a response to uncertainty and rapid change. Futurism, conversely, embodies aspirations for innovation and progress. The coexistence of these seemingly unrelated themes illustrates the multiplicity of meanings that fashion can convey.

The increasing emphasis on identity and inclusivity further underscores the role of fashion as a site of social and cultural. By representing diverse identities and experiences, seasonal collections contribute to broader conversations about equality and representation. However, the findings also suggest that these themes are sometimes commodified, raising questions about authenticity and intention.

6.4 Sustainability as Discourse and Practice

The integration of sustainability into fashion journal coverage reflects a significant shift in industry priorities. However, the tension between sustainability discourse and the traditional fashion system raises important

questions about the nature of meaningful change. As Clark (2008) argues, the concept of seasonal cycles may be inherently incompatible with sustainable practices.

From a theoretical standpoint, this tension can be understood as a contradiction within the fashion system, where economic imperatives conflict with ethical considerations. The role of fashion journals in mediating this tension is particularly important. By framing sustainability in specific ways, they influence how it is understood and valued by audiences.

The findings suggest that while sustainability is increasingly visible, its representation is not always consistent or critical. This highlights the need for more rigorous and nuanced approaches to sustainability in both fashion practice and research.

6.5 Implications for Research and Practice

The study has several implications for future research and industry practice. For researchers, the findings demonstrate the value of content analysis as a method for examining fashion media and design trends. The integration of theoretical frameworks enhances the interpretive depth of the analysis and provides a foundation for further.

For practitioners, the insights gained from this study can inform design, marketing, and editorial strategies. Understanding how seasonal collections are represented and interpreted can help designers and brands align their creative vision with audience expectations. Additionally, the emphasis on inclusivity and sustainability highlights the

importance of addressing social and environmental concerns in fashion practice.

6.6 Limitations and Future Directions

While the study provides a comprehensive analysis of fashion journal archives, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. The focus on selected journals and a time frame may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research could expand the scope to include a broader range of publications and cultural contexts.

Additionally, the reliance on secondary data means that the analysis is constrained by the available content. Incorporating primary data, such as interviews with designers and editors, could provide additional insights into the production and interpretation of seasonal collections.

7. Conclusion

This study set out to evaluate seasonal fashion collections through a qualitative content analysis of fashion journal archives, to understand how design elements, thematic narratives, and editorial practices intersect to construct meaning within the fashion system. The findings demonstrate that while seasonal collections continue to follow traditional structural frameworks, they are increasingly shaped by broader socio-cultural, technological, and environmental influences.

One of the key conclusions is that the concept of seasonality is undergoing a significant transformation. The emergence of trans-seasonal and “seasonless” design approaches reflects a shift toward flexibility and

adaptability in response to changing consumer behaviours and global conditions. Despite this evolution, the cyclical nature of fashion remains evident, reinforcing the enduring relevance of classical theories of fashion change.

The study also underscores the central role of fashion journals as cultural intermediaries. Through selective representation, narrative framing, and evaluative discourse, these publications actively shape how seasonal collections are perceived and valued. This highlights the importance of media institutions in maintaining and negotiating cultural authority within the fashion field.

Furthermore, the increasing visibility of themes such as inclusivity and sustainability signals a broader industry priority. While progress has been made in promoting diverse representation and ethical practices, the findings reveal ongoing tensions between these goals and the logic of the fashion system, which is driven by continuous production and consumption. This suggests that meaningful change requires not only symbolic representation but also structural transformation.

From a methodological perspective, the study demonstrates the effectiveness of qualitative content analysis as a tool for examining complex visual and textual data in fashion research. By integrating theoretical insights with systematic analysis, the research provides a comprehensive framework for evaluating seasonal collections.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the growing body of literature that positions fashion as a dynamic cultural practice shaped

by multiple forces. It offers valuable insights for both academic research and industry practice, emphasising the need for critical engagement with the evolving nature of fashion and its representations. Future research should continue to explore these dynamics across diverse contexts and incorporate additional data sources to further enrich understanding.

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