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Fashion Positioning Discourse in Professional Publications and Media

Sabiha Gannat^{*1}; Maymuna Akter¹; Kazi Abdul Mannan²

This study examines fashion positioning discourse as articulated in professional publications and media platforms, focusing on how brand identities are constructed, communicated, and legitimised within the contemporary fashion system. Drawing on an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that integrates branding theory, semiotics, and critical discourse analysis, the research investigates the strategic, symbolic, and discursive dimensions of fashion positioning. A qualitative methodology based on secondary data is employed, analysing texts from fashion magazines, industry reports, and digital media sources. The findings reveal that fashion positioning is shaped through narrative construction, value-laden language, and the co-creation of meaning by media actors, including influencers and consumers. Key themes such as sustainability, inclusivity, and innovation emerge as dominant meta-discourses influencing brand identity. The study further demonstrates that professional publications and consumer media operate in a complementary manner, translating strategic positioning into culturally resonant narratives. By highlighting the interplay among strategy, symbolism, and communication, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how fashion brands maintain competitive advantage in a dynamic, mediated environment.

Keywords: fashion positioning; media discourse; branding strategy; semiotics; critical discourse analysis; sustainability; fashion communication

¹Department of Fashion Design & Technology

²Department of Business Administration

Shanto-Mariam University of Creative Technology. Dhaka, Bangladesh

*Corresponding author: Sabiha Gannat, Email: shuchona261@gmail.com

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1. Introduction

The global fashion industry operates within a highly competitive and symbolically dense marketplace, where brands are not merely evaluated based on functional attributes such as quality or price but are primarily assessed through meanings, identities, and narratives constructed around them. In this context, fashion positioning-the strategic effort to establish a distinctive place in the minds of consumers-has emerged as a critical area of scholarly and professional inquiry. Increasingly, the discourse surrounding fashion positioning is shaped not only by brand managers and marketers but also by professional publications and media platforms that mediate, interpret, and amplify brand narratives.

Fashion positioning discourse refers to the structured communication and representation of brand identity, value propositions, and symbolic meanings within professional and media texts. These discourses are disseminated through a wide range of channels, including fashion magazines, trade journals, digital platforms, influencer content, and industry reports. As such, the study of fashion positioning discourse offers insights into how meanings are constructed, circulated, and legitimised within the fashion system (Kawamura, 2005).

In recent decades, the role of media in shaping fashion narratives has intensified due to digital transformation and the proliferation of social media platforms. Traditional gatekeepers such as fashion editors and critics now coexist with digital influencers,

bloggers, and algorithm-driven content systems. This transformation has democratized fashion communication but has also introduced complexities in how positioning messages are produced and interpreted (Rocamora, 2017). Consequently, fashion positioning is no longer a unidirectional process controlled solely by brands; instead, it is co-constructed through interactions between brands, media institutions, and audiences.

Professional publications, including industry reports and trade journals, play a significant role in codifying and legitimising fashion positioning strategies. These texts often employ specialised language, analytical frameworks, and market insights to articulate trends and brand identities. At the same time, consumer-facing media, such as magazines, blogs, and social media, translate these professional narratives into more accessible and emotionally resonant forms. This dual-layered communication process highlights the importance of discourse analysis in understanding how fashion positioning is constructed and maintained.

From a theoretical perspective, fashion positioning discourse can be examined through the lenses of branding theory, semiotics, and discourse analysis. Branding theory emphasises the importance of differentiation and value creation in competitive markets (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Semiotics, on the other hand, focuses on the symbolic meanings embedded in fashion products and communications (Barthes, 1983). Discourse analysis provides tools to examine how language, imagery, and narratives shape perceptions and social

realities (Fairclough, 1995). By integrating these perspectives, scholars can develop a comprehensive understanding of how fashion positioning operates at both strategic and communicative levels.

The significance of studying fashion positioning discourse is further underscored by the increasing importance of intangible assets in the fashion industry. Brand equity, reputation, and cultural relevance have become key drivers of competitive advantage (Kapferer, 2012). Media representations play a crucial role in building and sustaining these intangible assets by framing brands within specific cultural and social contexts. For example, sustainability narratives, inclusivity discourses, and heritage storytelling have become central themes in contemporary fashion positioning (Joy et al., 2012).

Despite the growing importance of fashion positioning discourse, there remains a gap in the literature regarding its systematic analysis within professional publications and media. While existing studies have examined branding strategies and media influence separately, fewer studies have explored the intersection of these domains. This research seeks to address this gap by analysing how fashion positioning is articulated and disseminated through professional and media texts.

The study adopts a qualitative research methodology based on secondary data, including articles from fashion magazines, industry reports, and digital media content. By employing discourse analysis, the research aims to identify recurring themes, linguistic patterns, and narrative structures that characterise fashion positioning

discourse. This approach allows for an in-depth exploration of how meanings are constructed and negotiated within the fashion system.

The objectives of this study are threefold. First, it aims to examine the conceptual foundations of fashion positioning within professional and media discourse. Second, it seeks to analyse the role of language and narrative in shaping brand identities. Third, it aims to explore the implications of media-driven positioning for fashion brands and consumers. Through these objectives, the study contributes to both academic scholarship and industry practice by providing a nuanced understanding of fashion positioning discourse.

In conclusion, the study of fashion positioning discourse is essential for understanding the contemporary fashion landscape, where meanings and narratives are as important as products themselves. By analysing the interplay between professional publications and media representations, this research offers valuable insights into the mechanisms through which fashion brands establish and maintain their positions in the market.

2. Literature Review

The concept of positioning originates from marketing theory and refers to the strategic process of creating a distinct image and identity for a product or brand in the minds of consumers (Ries & Trout, 2001). In the context of fashion, positioning extends beyond functional differentiation to encompass symbolic and cultural meanings.

Fashion brands are often positioned through narratives of identity, lifestyle, and aspiration, making them deeply embedded in social and cultural contexts (Kapferer, 2012).

Kotler and Keller (2016) define positioning as the act of designing a company's offering and image to occupy a distinctive place in the target market's mind. In fashion, this process is influenced by factors such as aesthetics, heritage, innovation, and social values. For example, luxury brands often position themselves through exclusivity and craftsmanship, while fast fashion brands emphasise affordability and trend responsiveness (Joy et al., 2012).

The symbolic nature of fashion positioning is further emphasised by semiotic approaches. Barthes (1983) argues that fashion operates as a system of signs, where garments and accessories convey meanings beyond their practical functions. These meanings are constructed through language, imagery, and cultural codes, which are often mediated by fashion publications and media.

2.1 Role of Media in Fashion Discourse

The media plays a central role in shaping and disseminating fashion positioning discourse. Traditional fashion media, such as magazines and newspapers, have historically acted as gatekeepers, determining which trends and brands gain visibility and legitimacy (McCracken, 1986). Editors and critics have the power to influence consumer perceptions by framing fashion narratives in specific ways.

With the rise of digital media, the landscape of fashion communication has undergone a

significant transformation. Social media platforms, blogs, and online magazines have democratized fashion discourse, allowing a wider range of voices to participate in the construction of brand narratives (Rocamora, 2017). Influencers, in particular, have emerged as key actors in fashion positioning, often bridging the gap between brands and consumers.

Digital media also enables real-time interaction and feedback, making fashion positioning a dynamic and evolving process. Consumers are no longer passive recipients of brand messages; they actively engage with and reinterpret these messages, contributing to the co-creation of brand meanings (Jenkins, 2006). This participatory culture challenges traditional notions of top-down communication and highlights the importance of discourse analysis in understanding contemporary fashion positioning.

2.2 Professional Publications and Industry Narratives

Professional publications, including trade journals and industry reports, play a crucial role in shaping fashion positioning discourse. These texts provide analytical insights, market data, and strategic frameworks that influence how brands are perceived within the industry. They often employ specialised language and terminology, reflecting the professionalisation of fashion communication (Kawamura, 2005).

Industry reports, such as those produced by consulting firms and market research organisations, contribute to the construction of fashion narratives by identifying trends

and forecasting future developments. These reports often emphasise themes such as sustainability, digital transformation, and consumer behaviour, which are then incorporated into brand positioning strategies (Deloitte, 2020).

The discourse in professional publications is characterised by a focus on strategic and analytical perspectives, contrasting with the more emotive and aesthetic narratives found in consumer media. However, these two forms of discourse are interconnected, as professional insights are often translated into consumer-facing narratives.

2.3 Discourse Analysis in Fashion Studies

Discourse analysis provides a valuable framework for examining how fashion positioning is constructed and communicated. Fairclough (1995) defines discourse as a form of social practice that shapes and is shaped by social structures. In the context of fashion, discourse analysis can reveal how language, imagery, and narratives contribute to the construction of brand identities.

Previous studies have applied discourse analysis to various aspects of fashion, including advertising, media representation, and consumer culture. For example, Barnard (2014) explores how fashion communication constructs meanings through visual and textual elements. Similarly, Entwistle (2000) examines the social and cultural dimensions of fashion, highlighting the role of discourse in shaping dress practices.

Discourse analysis also allows researchers to identify power relations within the fashion

system. Media institutions, brands, and influencers all play roles in shaping dominant narratives, while marginalised voices may struggle to gain visibility. This perspective is particularly relevant in discussions of inclusivity and diversity in fashion positioning.

2.4 Branding, Identity, and Narrative Construction

Branding theory emphasises the importance of storytelling in creating emotional connections with consumers. In fashion, narratives are used to convey brand values, heritage, and identity (Fog et al., 2010). These narratives are often constructed and disseminated through media channels, making them a central component of fashion positioning discourse.

Kapferer (2012) highlights the role of brand identity in positioning, arguing that successful brands maintain consistency between their internal values and external representations. Media plays a key role in ensuring this consistency by reinforcing brand narratives across different platforms.

Narrative construction is also influenced by cultural and social factors. For example, sustainability has become a prominent theme in fashion discourse, with brands positioning themselves as environmentally responsible (Joy et al., 2012). Similarly, inclusivity and diversity have gained importance, reflecting broader societal changes.

2.5 Gaps in the Literature

Despite extensive research on branding and media in fashion, there is a lack of integrated studies that examine fashion positioning

discourse across both professional publications and media platforms. Most studies focus on either strategic branding or media representation, without exploring the interplay between these domains.

Furthermore, there is limited research on the linguistic and narrative structures used in fashion positioning discourse. While semiotic and discourse analysis approaches have been applied, they are often limited to specific case studies or media formats. This highlights the need for comprehensive research that examines multiple sources and perspectives.

3. Theoretical Framework

The present study adopts an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that integrates branding theory, semiotics, and critical discourse analysis to examine fashion positioning discourse in professional publications and media. This integrative approach enables a comprehensive understanding of how fashion brands construct, communicate, and sustain their identities through language, symbols, and narratives across different communicative platforms.

3.1 Branding Theory and Strategic Positioning

Branding theory provides the foundational lens for understanding how fashion brands strategically position themselves within competitive markets. Positioning is conceptualised as the deliberate effort to create a distinct and desirable image in the minds of target consumers (Kotler & Keller, 2016). In the fashion industry, positioning

extends beyond functional differentiation to include symbolic, emotional, and cultural dimensions.

Kapferer's (2012) brand identity prism offers a useful model for analysing fashion positioning discourse. The model comprises six facets-physique, personality, culture, relationship, reflection, and self-image-which collectively shape brand identity. Professional publications often articulate these facets through analytical narratives, while media platforms translate them into visual and textual representations that resonate with consumers. For example, a luxury brand may be positioned through discourse emphasising craftsmanship (physique), heritage (culture), and exclusivity (relationship), all of which are reinforced through media storytelling.

Furthermore, the concept of brand equity highlights the importance of intangible assets such as reputation, recognition, and emotional connection (Aaker, 1996). Media discourse plays a critical role in building and maintaining these assets by consistently reinforcing brand narratives. Thus, branding theory provides a strategic perspective on how positioning is constructed and communicated.

3.2 Semiotics and the Construction of Meaning

Semiotics, the study of signs and symbols, offers a critical framework for understanding how fashion positioning is encoded and interpreted. Barthes (1983) conceptualises fashion as a system of signs in which garments, accessories, and styles function as signifiers that convey cultural meanings.

These meanings are not inherent but are constructed through discourse and interpretation.

In fashion media, semiotic processes operate through both visual and textual elements. Images, colours, and styling choices serve as signifiers that communicate brand identity, while accompanying texts provide anchorage and relay functions that guide interpretation (Barthes, 1977). For instance, a minimalist aesthetic in a fashion editorial may signify sophistication and modernity, aligning with a brand's positioning strategy.

Professional publications also employ semiotic strategies, albeit in a more analytical form. Terms such as “timeless elegance,” “disruptive innovation,” or “sustainable luxury” function as symbolic markers that position brands within specific conceptual categories. These terms are not merely descriptive but carry connotative meanings that shape perceptions.

Semiotics also highlights the role of cultural codes in fashion positioning. Meanings are derived from shared cultural understandings, which can vary across contexts. As such, fashion positioning discourse is inherently contextual and dynamic, reflecting broader social and cultural trends (Barnard, 2014).

3.3 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) provides the methodological and theoretical tools to examine how language and communication practices shape social realities and power relations. Fairclough (1995) conceptualises discourse as a form of social practice that both reflects and constructs social structures.

In the context of fashion, CDA enables the analysis of how positioning narratives are produced, circulated, and legitimised.

CDA focuses on three dimensions: text (linguistic features), discursive practice (production and consumption of texts), and social practice (broader societal context) (Fairclough, 1995). Applying this framework to fashion positioning discourse allows for a multi-layered analysis. At the textual level, researchers can examine vocabulary, metaphors, and narrative structures used in professional publications and media. At the discursive level, the focus shifts to how these texts are produced by institutions such as magazines, brands, and influencers. At the social level, the analysis considers how these discourses relate to broader issues such as consumer culture, globalisation, and sustainability.

CDA also emphasises the role of power in shaping discourse. In the fashion industry, media institutions, elite brands, and influential individuals often dominate the construction of positioning narratives. These actors have the ability to define what is considered fashionable, desirable, or valuable. At the same time, alternative voices—such as independent designers or marginalised communities—may challenge dominant discourses, leading to shifts in positioning narratives.

3.4 Integrative Framework

By combining branding theory, semiotics, and CDA, this study develops an integrative framework for analysing fashion positioning discourse. Branding theory provides insights into the strategic intentions behind

positioning, semiotics explains how meanings are constructed and communicated, and CDA examines the broader social and power dynamics involved.

This integrative approach is particularly suited to the study of professional publications and media, where strategic, symbolic, and discursive elements intersect. Professional texts often articulate positioning strategies in analytical terms, while media texts translate these strategies into culturally resonant narratives. Together, these discourses contribute to the construction of brand identities and consumer perceptions.

The framework also allows for the identification of recurring themes and patterns in fashion positioning discourse, such as sustainability, innovation, heritage, and inclusivity. These themes can be analysed in terms of their strategic significance, symbolic meanings, and discursive functions.

In summary, the theoretical framework provides a comprehensive lens for understanding fashion positioning discourse as a multidimensional phenomenon that encompasses strategy, symbolism, and communication. It underscores the importance of examining both the content and context of discourse to fully capture the complexities of fashion positioning in contemporary media environments.

4. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore fashion positioning discourse in professional publications and media. Qualitative research is particularly

suitable for examining complex, context-dependent phenomena such as discourse, where meanings are constructed through language, symbols, and social interactions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research focuses on secondary data sources, enabling a comprehensive analysis of existing texts and narratives within the fashion industry.

The study employs a discourse analytical approach, drawing on principles of critical discourse analysis (CDA) to examine how fashion positioning is articulated and disseminated. This approach allows for an in-depth exploration of linguistic patterns, narrative structures, and underlying ideologies within the selected texts.

4.1 Data Sources and Sampling

The research is based on secondary data collected from a range of professional publications and media platforms. These include:

- **Fashion magazines** (e.g., *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar*), which provide consumer-facing narratives and visual representations.
- **Industry reports and trade journals**, which offer analytical insights and strategic perspectives.
- **Digital media platforms**, including fashion blogs, online magazines, and social media content, which reflect contemporary discourse and audience engagement.

A purposive sampling strategy is employed to select texts that are relevant to fashion positioning discourse. Purposive sampling allows the researcher to focus on information-rich cases that provide

meaningful insights into the research problem (Patton, 2015). The selection criteria include relevance to brand positioning, diversity of sources, and representation of different segments of the fashion industry (e.g., luxury, fast fashion, sustainable fashion).

The sample includes texts published within the last decade to ensure relevance to current industry practices. This temporal focus captures the impact of digital transformation and evolving media landscapes on fashion positioning discourse.

4.2 Data Collection Procedures

Data collection involves the systematic gathering of textual and visual materials from the selected sources. Articles, reports, and digital content are collected and organised into a corpus for analysis. The data is categorised based on source type (professional vs. media), brand segment, and thematic focus.

To ensure consistency, a standardised data collection protocol is followed. This includes recording metadata such as publication date, author, source, and context. The use of secondary data allows for a non-intrusive research process, minimising ethical concerns related to human subjects.

4.3 Analytical Framework and Procedures

The analysis is conducted using a qualitative discourse analysis framework, informed by Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model. The analytical process involves the following steps:

Textual Analysis: At the textual level, the study examines linguistic features such as vocabulary, tone, and rhetorical devices. Particular attention is given to keywords and phrases that signify positioning strategies, such as “luxury,” “innovation,” “sustainability,” and “authenticity.” Metaphors and narrative structures are also analysed to understand how meanings are constructed.

Discursive Practice Analysis: This stage focuses on the production and consumption of texts. The analysis considers how different actors-such as brands, editors, and influencers-contribute to the creation and dissemination of positioning narratives. It also examines how texts are adapted across different media platforms.

Social Practice Analysis: At the broader level, the study explores the cultural contexts in which fashion positioning discourse operates. This includes examining trends such as globalisation, digitalisation, and sustainability, and how they influence positioning strategies.

The analytical process is iterative, involving repeated reading and coding of the data to identify patterns and themes. Coding is conducted manually, with categories emerging inductively from the data.

4.4 Ensuring Research Quality

To ensure the rigour and credibility of the study, several strategies are employed. First, triangulation is achieved by using multiple data sources, including professional publications and media texts. This enhances the validity of the findings by providing diverse perspectives (Denzin, 1978).

Second, transparency is maintained through detailed documentation of the research process, including data collection and analysis procedures. This allows for replicability and enhances the reliability of the study.

Third, reflexivity is practised by acknowledging the researcher's role in interpreting the data. As discourse analysis involves subjective interpretation, it is important to critically reflect on potential biases and assumptions.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

The study relies on publicly available secondary data, minimising ethical concerns related to confidentiality and consent. However, proper citation and acknowledgement of sources are maintained in accordance with academic standards (Mannan & Farhana, 2026). The research also avoids misrepresentation of texts and ensures that interpretations are grounded in the data.

4.6 Limitations of the Methodology

While the qualitative approach provides rich and detailed insights, it also has limitations. The reliance on secondary data may limit the ability to capture real-time interactions and audience responses. Additionally, the interpretive nature of discourse analysis may introduce subjectivity.

Despite these limitations, the methodology is well-suited to the research objectives, as it allows for a comprehensive examination of fashion positioning discourse across multiple contexts and platforms.

5. Findings & Analysis

The analysis of fashion positioning discourse across professional publications and media platforms reveals a complex interplay of strategic, symbolic, and discursive elements. Through systematic qualitative examination of secondary data, several dominant themes and patterns emerge, reflecting how fashion brands construct and communicate their positioning in contemporary contexts. These findings are organised into key thematic categories: narrative construction of brand identity, discursive framing of value propositions, the role of media actors in co-creating positioning, linguistic and rhetorical strategies, and the emergence of meta-discourses such as sustainability and inclusivity.

5.1 Narrative Construction of Brand Identity

One of the most prominent findings is the centrality of narrative in shaping fashion positioning. Across both professional and media texts, brands are consistently represented through structured storytelling that integrates elements of heritage, innovation, and lifestyle. These narratives function as a means of translating abstract brand identities into relatable and compelling forms.

Professional publications often articulate brand identity through analytical narratives, emphasising strategic dimensions such as market positioning, competitive advantage, and brand equity. For example, luxury brands are frequently described using terms such as “timeless,” “iconic,” and “heritage-driven,” which align with Kapferer's (2012)

conceptualisation of brand identity as a multidimensional construct. These narratives are not merely descriptive but serve to legitimise the brand's position within the industry.

In contrast, consumer-facing media employ more emotive and experiential narratives. Fashion magazines and digital platforms often frame brands within aspirational lifestyles, using storytelling techniques that evoke sensory and emotional responses. This aligns with Fog et al.'s (2010) argument that storytelling is a powerful tool for creating emotional connections with consumers. For instance, editorial features may depict a brand within a narrative of travel, romance, or self-expression, thereby reinforcing its positioning.

The convergence of these narrative forms highlights the interdependence of professional and media discourse. While professional texts provide the strategic foundation, media narratives translate these strategies into culturally resonant stories, facilitating consumer engagement.

5.2 Discursive Framing of Value Propositions

Another key finding is the role of discourse in framing brand value propositions. Fashion positioning is consistently articulated through specific value-laden terms that signal the brand's unique attributes and competitive advantages. These include concepts such as "luxury," "sustainability," "innovation," "authenticity," and "craftsmanship."

The analysis reveals that these terms function as discursive anchors, shaping how brands are perceived and evaluated. For example,

the term "luxury" is often associated with exclusivity, high quality, and heritage, while "sustainability" conveys ethical responsibility and environmental consciousness (Joy et al., 2012). These associations are reinforced through repeated usage across different texts and platforms.

Professional publications tend to frame value propositions in analytical and data-driven terms, often referencing market trends, consumer behaviour, and industry benchmarks. For instance, industry reports frequently highlight the growing importance of sustainability as a key driver of consumer preference. This analytical framing provides a rational basis for positioning strategies.

In contrast, media texts frame value propositions in more symbolic and experiential terms. For example, sustainability may be represented through imagery of natural environments or narratives of ethical production, thereby enhancing its emotional appeal. This dual framing underscores the importance of both rational and emotional dimensions in fashion positioning.

5.3 Media Actors and Co-Creation of Positioning

The findings also highlight the significant role of media actors in co-creating fashion positioning discourse. Traditional media institutions, such as fashion magazines, continue to play an influential role in shaping brand narratives. Editors and journalists act as intermediaries who interpret and disseminate positioning messages.

However, the rise of digital media has expanded the range of actors involved in this process. Influencers, bloggers, and social media users actively participate in the construction of fashion positioning by creating and sharing content that reflects their interpretations of brand identity. This aligns with Jenkins' (2006) concept of participatory culture, where consumers are not merely passive recipients but active contributors to meaning-making.

The analysis reveals that influencer-generated content often emphasises authenticity and relatability, which can complement or challenge official brand narratives. For example, an influencer may reinterpret a luxury brand's positioning by presenting it in a more accessible or personalised context. This dynamic interaction between brands and media actors contributes to the fluidity of fashion positioning.

Moreover, algorithm-driven platforms play a role in amplifying certain narratives over others, influencing which positioning messages gain visibility. This introduces a layer of technological mediation that shapes discourse in subtle but significant ways (Rocamora, 2017).

5.4 Linguistic and Rhetorical Strategies

The analysis of textual data reveals distinct linguistic and rhetorical strategies used in fashion positioning discourse. These strategies include the use of metaphors, adjectives, and narrative structures that convey symbolic meanings.

Metaphors are frequently employed to enhance the evocative power of positioning narratives. For example, brands may be described as “architects of style” or “pioneers of innovation,” suggesting creativity and leadership. Such metaphors contribute to the construction of a brand's personality and identity (Fairclough, 1995).

Adjectives play a crucial role in shaping perceptions, with terms such as “elegant,” “bold,” “modern,” and “sustainable” serving as descriptors that encapsulate key positioning attributes. The repetition of these adjectives across different texts reinforces their association with specific brands.

Narrative structures also exhibit patterns, often following a trajectory from origin to evolution to future vision. This temporal framing allows brands to position themselves as both rooted in tradition and oriented toward innovation, thereby appealing to a broad range of consumers.

5.5 Emergence of Meta-Discourses: Sustainability and Inclusivity

A significant finding is the prominence of meta-discourses such as sustainability and inclusivity in fashion positioning. These themes reflect broader societal trends and have become integral to how brands define their identities.

Sustainability discourse is characterised by references to ethical production, environmental responsibility, and circular fashion. Professional publications often frame sustainability as a strategic imperative, supported by data and industry analysis. Media texts, on the other hand, emphasize its

ethical and emotional dimensions, often portraying them as a moral choice.

Inclusivity discourse focuses on diversity in terms of race, gender, body type, and cultural representation. This discourse challenges traditional norms and expands the scope of fashion positioning to include social values. Brands that successfully integrate inclusivity into their positioning are often portrayed as progressive and socially responsible.

These meta-discourses illustrate how fashion positioning is influenced by broader cultural and social dynamics. They also highlight the role of discourse in shaping not only brand identities but also industry norms and consumer expectations.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that fashion positioning discourse is a multifaceted phenomenon that operates at the intersection of strategy, symbolism, and communication. Professional publications and media platforms play complementary roles in constructing and disseminating positioning narratives. The interplay between these sources results in a dynamic and evolving discourse that reflects both industry practices and societal trends.

6. Discussion

The findings of this study provide significant insights into the nature and dynamics of fashion positioning discourse, highlighting its complexity and multidimensionality. By integrating perspectives from branding theory, semiotics, and critical discourse analysis, the discussion interprets the findings in relation to existing literature and theoretical frameworks.

6.1 Reaffirming the Centrality of Narrative in Branding

The prominence of narrative in fashion positioning discourse reinforces the importance of storytelling in contemporary branding. As identified in the findings, both professional publications and media texts rely heavily on narrative structures to convey brand identity. This supports Fog et al.'s (2010) assertion that storytelling is a fundamental mechanism for creating emotional engagement.

From a theoretical perspective, narrative functions as a bridge between strategic intent and consumer perception. While branding theory emphasises the importance of differentiation and value creation (Kotler & Keller, 2016), narrative provides the means through which these elements are communicated and experienced. The integration of heritage and innovation within narratives reflects the dual need for continuity and change in fashion positioning.

6.2 Semiotic Construction of Meaning

The findings also underscore the relevance of semiotics in understanding fashion positioning. The use of symbols, metaphors, and visual elements demonstrates how meanings are constructed and communicated. This aligns with Barthes' (1983) conceptualisation of fashion as a system of signs.

The analysis reveals that semiotic processes are not limited to visual representation but extend to language and discourse. Terms such as “luxury” and “sustainability” function as signifiers that carry complex connotations.

These signifiers are reinforced through repeated usage, creating stable associations that shape consumer perceptions.

Furthermore, the interplay between denotation and connotation highlights the layered nature of fashion positioning. While denotative meanings provide basic information, connotative meanings evoke emotional and cultural associations. This duality is central to the effectiveness of fashion discourse.

6.3 Power and Mediation in Fashion Discourse

The role of media actors in co-creating positioning discourse raises important questions about power and mediation. Traditional media institutions have historically held significant influence over fashion narratives, acting as gatekeepers that determine which brands gain visibility (McCracken, 1986). However, the rise of digital media has redistributed this power, enabling a more diverse range of voices to participate.

This shift aligns with Fairclough's (1995) view of discourse as a site of power struggle, where different actors compete to shape meanings. Influencers and consumers, through their content and interactions, contribute to the negotiation of brand identity. This participatory dynamic challenges the notion of centralised control and highlights the fluidity of fashion positioning.

At the same time, the influence of algorithm-driven platforms introduces new forms of power, as visibility is determined by technological systems. This adds complexity

to the analysis of discourse, as it requires consideration of both human and technological actors.

6.4 Strategic Implications for Fashion Brands

The findings have important implications for fashion brands seeking to position themselves effectively. The integration of strategic, symbolic, and discursive elements suggests that positioning cannot be achieved through isolated efforts. Instead, brands must adopt a holistic approach that considers both internal strategy and external communication.

Consistency emerges as a key factor in successful positioning. As noted by Kapferer (2012), alignment between brand identity and representation is essential for building credibility. The analysis shows that this consistency is achieved through the reinforcement of narratives across multiple platforms.

However, flexibility is equally important, as brands must adapt to evolving discourses and societal trends. The prominence of sustainability and inclusivity highlights the need for brands to align their positioning with broader cultural values. Failure to do so may result in a disconnect between brand narratives and consumer expectations.

6.5 The Role of Meta-Discourses

The emergence of sustainability and inclusivity as dominant themes reflects the increasing importance of ethical and social considerations in fashion positioning. These meta-discourses extend beyond individual

brands, shaping industry-wide norms and expectations.

From a theoretical perspective, these themes can be understood as part of the broader social practice dimension of discourse (Fairclough, 1995). They illustrate how fashion positioning is influenced by external factors such as environmental concerns and social movements.

The integration of these themes into positioning strategies also raises questions about authenticity. While some brands genuinely commit to sustainability and inclusivity, others may engage in superficial or performative practices. This highlights the need for critical analysis of discourse to distinguish between substantive and symbolic actions.

6.6 Contributions to Knowledge

This study contributes to the literature by providing an integrated analysis of fashion positioning discourse across professional publications and media platforms. It addresses the gap identified in previous research by examining the interplay between strategic branding and media representation.

The use of an interdisciplinary framework allows for a comprehensive understanding of fashion positioning as a multidimensional phenomenon. By combining branding theory, semiotics, and CDA, the study offers a nuanced perspective that captures both the content and context of discourse.

6.7 Limitations and Future Research

While the study provides valuable insights, it is not without limitations. The reliance on

secondary data limits the ability to capture real-time interactions and audience responses. Future research could incorporate primary data, such as interviews or surveys, to complement the findings.

Additionally, the study focuses on a specific set of sources, which may not fully represent the diversity of fashion discourse. Expanding the scope to include different cultural contexts and emerging platforms could provide a more comprehensive understanding.

7. Conclusion

This study has explored the complex and evolving nature of fashion positioning discourse within professional publications and media platforms, demonstrating that positioning is not merely a strategic marketing activity but a multidimensional communicative process. By integrating branding theory, semiotics, and critical discourse analysis, the research provides a comprehensive understanding of how fashion brands construct and sustain their identities through narrative, symbolism, and mediated communication.

The findings highlight that narrative construction plays a central role in translating abstract brand strategies into meaningful and engaging stories. Professional publications articulate positioning through analytical and strategic frameworks, while media platforms reinterpret these strategies in more accessible and emotionally resonant forms. This dual-layered discourse underscores the interdependence between industry

knowledge production and consumer-oriented communication.

Moreover, the study emphasises the importance of value-laden language and symbolic representation in shaping brand perceptions. Concepts such as luxury, sustainability, and inclusivity function as powerful discursive tools that position brands within broader cultural and social contexts. These themes reflect not only market trends but also evolving societal values, indicating that fashion positioning is deeply embedded in social dynamics.

The role of media actors, particularly in the digital environment, further illustrates the participatory nature of contemporary fashion discourse. Influencers and consumers actively contribute to the co-creation of brand meanings, challenging traditional top-down communication models. At the same time, the influence of algorithm-driven platforms introduces new forms of mediation that shape the visibility and impact of positioning narratives.

From a practical perspective, the study suggests that fashion brands must adopt a holistic approach to positioning that integrates strategic consistency with discursive adaptability. Aligning brand identity with emerging meta-discourses such as sustainability and inclusivity is essential for maintaining relevance and credibility in an increasingly conscious consumer landscape.

In conclusion, fashion positioning discourse represents a dynamic intersection of strategy, culture, and communication. By examining its manifestations across professional and

media texts, this research contributes to both academic scholarship and industry practice, offering valuable insights into the mechanisms through which fashion brands achieve and sustain differentiation in a competitive and rapidly changing environment.

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