

BEAUTY IN DIFFERENT CULTURES:

Representation of women through the editorial of the fashion editorial of vogue magazine in paris, america and brazil between 2006 and 2007.

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to present and discuss the representation of the beauty of women in different cultures through the fashion editorials of Vogue magazine published in the United States, France and Brazil between 2006 and 2007. The purpose is to question the role of the fashion in the construction of the concept of beauty. Women's magazines seduce and manipulate the readers with an idea. The methodology is based on the fundamentals of semiotics, with emphasis on Semiotics and Discourse 'École de Paris', made by Algirdas Julien Greimas. You can see that the three studied societies express favoritism by the Caucasian models, but also by the classical beauty.

KEYWORDS

Semiotics, beauty, culture, fashion, women.

INTRODUCTION (Calibri, 12 points, bold, line spacing single, space after 6 pt)

Women's magazines have been much discussed in the scientific field by several researchers such as Ferguson (1983), Winship (1978), Ballast and Beetham (1993). Through fashion magazines it possible to identify pictures of a society and culture in which they operate. According Ballast and Beetham (1993), these magazines are bright objects for analysis and criticism, an understanding of awareness of a group or society. In addition, many readers are attracted by the representation of women in magazines even when the female representation is a conservative or submissive ones. According to Ferguson, women's magazines are one of the most significant institutions of our days. The images of fashion and advertising, such as the textual universe contribute to change both psychological and social codes of human beings. Women, especially, according to Wolf (1992:81) "are deeply affected by what their magazines tell them because these publications are everything that most women have access when it comes to their own mass sensitivity". Magazines contribute to the evolution of beauty. An important tool for study of a magazine is the fashion editorials. A fashion editorial "is a composition that organizes elements in search of a style or more specifically in a global climate of the photo that reflects a style" (Joffily, 1991:103) that influences the behavior of the reader.

The images published are generally the claim of body and the essential beauty. It is possible that "women identify the outside world in themselves and for themselves in the world" (Ballast and Beetham, 1993:30). So the media is an important mean of communication to observe the habits and customs of a society as well as identify

the aesthetic standards prescribed in the period. The American edition is the most important publication, which generates more sales and profits. The covers made with celebrities or people in society increase the reader's interest and the trend spread throughout the world. The Vogue Paris has a sexy appeal, but at the same time romantic. The Brazilian edition shows an elegantly dressed body.

The object of study is the Vogue Magazine, one of the best known of the world fashion publications, which has eighteen different editions and is present in more than one hundred countries. The magazine appeared in late nineteenth century in the United States, but its notoriety came after the acquisition by Condé Montrose Nast in 1909. Vogue expresses a way of life, synonymous of good taste. Nast explored fashion, modern photography, art, typography and the visual fields of the new beginning of the twentieth century, revealing new talents. So wake up some questions about the portrayal of women in fashion editorials, for example: Will the types of beauty offered by the same magazine differ according to their country of origin? Just as magazines with the same editorial suffer interference from cultural issues in the construction of fashion editorials? As a result, this study aims to examine the similarities and differences in the construction of the communication role of fashion editorials, aiming to identify the idea of fashion and beauty in different cultures.

METHODOLOGY

In order to see how the concept of feminine beauty is built in the media the magazine's editorials are examined empirically through a comparative analysis of the analysis of Vogue's American, Brazilian and French editions, using as basis the editions published in March 2006 and August 2007. The editorials of fashion will be explored as an object of research through a qualitative research. We will analyze two editorials per issue.

The differentiation of domination of terms are based on the studies by Frith et al (2005) that can mean: sexy (sexually attractive, usually reveal the body, which shows arched, legs slightly open), classic / chic (women's body elegantly dressed, glamorous and sophisticated), sweet / nice / naive (youthful appearance, casual attire), trendy (the beauty that is in vogue at the time), fashion / exotic (alien-looking models, makeup, extravagant productions heavily full of information).

The discourse of Vogue magazine is aimed at female audiences, which reinforces the beauty and construction of the modern stereotype, and the ideal of luxury. It is possible to notice that the Brazilian edition, for example, brings international publishers, but these were not part of the study. In March 2006 the French magazine showed 24 files, 31 photographs. The American and Brazilian just brought 17 images. In the August issue of 2007, found 15 images in the French edition, 17 in the American magazine and 53 photographs published in the Brazilian version of the magazine. So were part of this study, 73 images and 84 photos.

The images were analyzed based on Discursive Semiotics or the theory known as "Ecole de Paris", formulated by Greimas that allows to study the images as object of communication or as objects of significance. That means that, the narrative structure manifests itself in any kind of text, verbal or visual. According to Eco, the advertisement works in two different ways: verbal and visual. The visuals insert drawings, photographs, engravings, films, in which objects and images are signs of the visual environment. On the opposite hand, the verbal record has the "primary function of anchoring the message, because visual communication is often ambiguous and presents itself conceptualized in different ways" (Eco, 2003:161).

The visual record of the editorial was written by analyzing the environment composition and shapes, psychological analysis of colors, body position and the look, style of the parts used as well as the texture and accessories chosen. The verbal record is the introductory text of the editorial, so it is a comparison between the two records. In this context, it is important to note the differences, if they exist, among the narrative programs of women's magazines in different cultures.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We can observe differences between the fashion editorials of France and the two other countries. The images in magazines of the United States bring personalities of the American world, a game of power

and seduction. In Brazil, editorials follow a line of elegance and a well-dressed body. In contrast, in the French edition the picture has much more sex appeal.

Only three ethnic groups are represented in the editions of Vogue magazine according to this study. These included the Caucasian models, black and mixed ethnic groups. The Caucasians is the most present ethnic group in all three societies. The French edition had 100% of Caucasian models in both periods studied. The United States, according to this study, was the only company to present black models. In the first year showed 33% and 25% in the second year. In 2006, Brazil showed 100% of preference for the Caucasian group. On the other hand, in 2007, showed the same model in all editorials representing several and different ethnic groups.

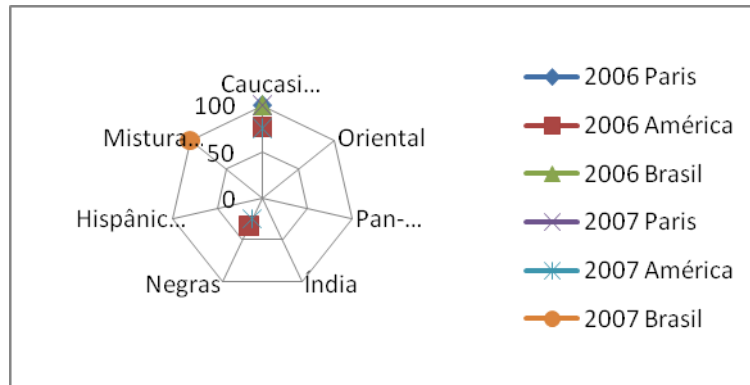


Figure 1: Type of Etnia

The types of beauty prevalent in editorials were sexy, classic / chic, sweet / naive and fashion / exotic. As Etoff cites (1999:11), "beauty is composed of equal parts flesh and imagination: we impregnated with our dreams, saturate of our expectations".

Preferably, the classic beauty is the most displayed in Vogue magazine which reinforces the discourse of the magazine followed by the beauty fashion. In 2006, the editorials of Vogue Paris, were more diverse, contemplated the patterns: classic / chic, sexy, sweet / naive and fashion / exotic. . On the opposite hand, only in 2006 Vogue Brazil has had the largest interest in the beauty chic (67%) and the last interest for the sexy approach. During 2007, they emphasized the fashion (67%). On the other part, in 2007, showed greater interest to an elegant and sophisticated woman with the classic pattern (67%) and by a small percentage out of the ordinary, such as the exotic style (33%). The same evaluation happened in America in 2006 Vogue. In the second year, divided equally between the sweet beauty and fashion (25%) and other values for the classic.

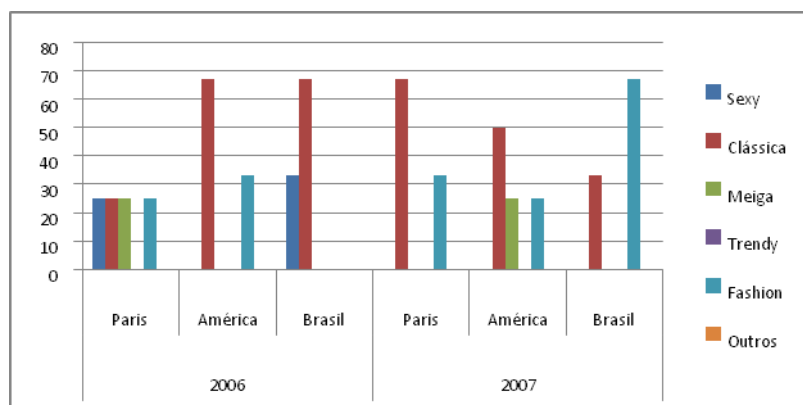


Figure 2: Type of Beauty

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The investigation has allowed achieving the assumptions made at the beginning of work. Undoubtedly the preference for the Caucasian ethnic group in the publications of Vogue Paris, America and Brazil is remarkable.

The survey revealed resistance to other ethnic groups, but does not interfere in the types of beauty raised. It may be concluded that the U.S. and Brazilian companies are more open to the unexpected. Only the U.S. market showed black models and the Brazilian market presented models with different features.

The standards of beauty differ from one society to another, despite the three companies tended to incorporate the classic / chic. Beauty is predetermined by the society in which it operates. Within this context, women's magazines are a good tool for research in different cultures. The Brazilian publication presented the beauty in a sexy dress elegantly. In contrast to Paris edition that depicts a classic pattern, which usually shows naked body parts.

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