**Fashion Discrimination - Homepage**

*Motivations*

In 1904, German sociologist and philosopher Georg Simmel published an essay about fashion, not only about clothing but about the whole phenomenon affecting all modern societies. It is a cultural process integrating the individual and the economy. Fashion is about identity and a need for individuality favoring novelty. It is a way to establish social difference either by being “in”, indifferent or rejecting it. Any object, clothes, idea and habit can represent fashion according to Simmel. In essence, it is any field of social action where the process of individual formation and collective integration is conspicuous. It holds a strong cultural meaning behind it that is worth the analysis. The fashion industry, as we refer to on this website, is the global enterprise of making and selling clothes. Its market value is estimated at 3 trillion dollars which is 2% of the world’s GDP. Fashion involves each and every individual and has a powerful impact on our society and economy.

*Inclusivity in fashion*

A picture is worth thousand words, we say. What we see on the covers of magazines, on TV screens and on the internet is a reflection of reality. Beauty, defined as a combination of shapes, colors or forms that pleases the aesthetic senses, especially the sight, is portrayed in the fashion industry more than in other industries. It reflects, in a way, our society’s expected beauty standards. We know that beauty is undefined and yet, its definition resorted to maintain the European domination in terms of beauty standards. There is no need to call the others ugly when the exclusion and underrepresentation is sufficient to convey the message and to reproduce racist ideologies. Representation matters as magazines, the avatars of the fashion industry, aspire to picture and define beauty. In 2013, Naomi Campbell along with Iman and fashion activist Bethann Hardison formed the Diversity Coalition and launched a campaign to end racism on the runway. In an open letter to major fashion houses such as Chanel and Saint Laurent, they blasted them for casting only white models and contributing to racism. This was one of the first calls to action aiming at ending discriminations. More recently, events going from the Black Lives Matter protests, charges of cultural appropriation to outright racism shed the light more than ever on the fashion world issues. We decided to investigate on this topic by analyzing 18 years of Vogue covers from the US edition and focusing on colorism, one facet of discrimination.

*The Data*

The Vogue covers data is collected from the website The Pudding [1]. We were able to perform the faces detection and skin tone extractions thanks to their open-source data and scripts. The data obtained are the covers of the Vogue magazine from January 2000 to December 2018 on the Vogue Archive Website. The covers are processed following those steps:

- Identification of model faces by facial detection using the OpenCV library

- Identification of the skin tone and the lightness values with k-means clustering

In the first article, skin colors are grouped using a k-means clustering algorithm with the average tone being the center of the cluster. In the third article, models’ birth countries are retrieved on Wikipedia with a scrapping algorithm using BS4. Figures about the 2020 Fashion Week are collected from the Business of Fashion website [2] where they provide insightful information about inclusivity during FW. Most of the events and facts described in our articles come from Wikipedia or diverse news sources and pages such as Diet Prada [3]. Flourish, Datawrapper, Plotly.js were used to create dynamic visualizations.

**19 Years of Vogue US covers**

*Vogue Brief History*

Vogue magazine, one of the most successful magazines to have ever been published, was created in 1892. The magazine has a total readership of 1,398,00 and is accessible to all ages. It is considered as one of the most influential publications in the world. Now owned by Conde Nast, the magazine is specialized in fashion and lifestyle for women and has 26 international editions. It is depicted as both a mirror and a shaper of modern life.

“Vogue has the power to make and break – whether it’s fashion trends, designers, models, and yes, even industry practices.” - Tyra Banks

Vogue is a substantial window on the fashion industry and therefore is an indicator for global beauty standards. We decide to investigate 19 years of covers from the US edition. On the left, the timeline spanning almost 2 decades from 2000 to 2018 is taking us through the variations of skin color representation and helping us comprehend the shift happening in the fashion industry. The century started off with mostly white and tanned representation on the covers. When 2010 began, only 2% of the models on the covers since 2000 were black. Even if this is far from rewriting the traditional diktats of fashion, diversity is appealing to fashion magazines, which do not hesitate to show clear improvements year after year. In 2018, the skin colors show to be more diverse with almost 20%M of brown and black skin colors on the covers. Despite this awareness, the profiles diversity is lacking. Except for the few colored models, most of the models have a white tanned skin color.

**Retrospective**

*Fashion week statistics*  **Application

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*Vogue Bad Press*

Vogue has a long relationship with scandals and diversity issues while the famous catchphrase “More issues than Vogue” makes more sense than ever. Condé Nast announced “Vogue Values” in December 2019, a major ideological rebrand for its most famous title that aims to act as a guide for editorial teams globally. A year later, Anna Wintour, the most famous editor-in-chief in the world, publicly apologized for not giving enough space to black people at Vogue and those people are waiting for this change. It is also about time to not only give space to black creators but also to black managers, leaders and voices. It is not enough to put up diverse covers, photoshoots and runways.

“Diversity is being invited to the party; inclusion is being asked to dance.” – Verna Myers

In 2021, in reaction to the Black Lives Matter protests and amid an outbreak of racist incidents in the fashion sphere, The New York Times released their own investigation. They asked a set of companies similar questions about the percentage of black people in their teams and boards and the lack of consistent answer is telling a lot. An article entitled “Fashion’s Long Road to Inclusivity” released in 2019 by Business of Fashion reported the lack of inclusivity by putting together an organizational chart with the executives of the biggest fashion houses in the world and the result is unmistakable (see [3]).

On the right we gathered BOF’s statistics about the 2020 Spring/Summer Fashion Week in Milan, London, New York and Paris showing the percentage of non-white designers hosting shows. With Paris being the most advanced city in terms of diversity, Milan really has a lot to catch up with 12% of non-white designers during the week. Before the 2021 Spring/Summer Fashion Week, Haitian-Italian designer Stella Jean’s announced that she would not participate in the FW and would join forces with other designers and fashion representatives to launch a working group called Black Lives Matter In Italian Fashion.

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**Models Race**

*Going Further*

Cover of magazines, collection campaigns, photoshoots etc. are only appearances. Even though the change of mentality is showing more and more in the industry, the concrete changes are still cosmetic. As stated in a Business of Fashion study, when looking at the chief executives and C-suites of the biggest fashion companies, white males are in a majority.

“Diversity is being invited to the party; inclusion is being asked to dance.” – Verna Myers

**DATES**

In 1974, Vogue became the first magazine to feature an African American model the cover.

In 2018, Tyler Mitchell became the first black photographer to shoot for a cover of Vogue US

In 2017, Edward Enninful become the first black Editor-in-Chief for Vogue British

**FROM THE PUDDING**

In 2014, Lupita Nyong'o, a Mexican-Kenyan actress and model, revealed that she used to pray for lighter skin. For most of her childhood, she saw her dark, “night-shaded” complexion as “an obstacle to overcome.”

Lupita was talking about a facet of racism called colorism. It’s the idea that, for people of color, lighter skin is more desirable. In the same way that white women will have an easier time than women of color, light-skinned women of color will have an easier time than dark-skinned women of color. So even though racial and ethnic diversity in fashion and the media is improving, dark-skinned women still aren’t getting the representation they deserve.

To investigate this, we looked at the covers of Vogue magazine, a bastion of fashion that has been reporting on and setting trends for over a century. Vogue may be hiring women of many races, but are they representing women of all shades? (Vogue did not respond to multiple requests for comment.)