UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA PORTUGUESA

THE IMPACT OF *VOGUE GERMANY'S* FASHION IMAGES ON FEMALE READER'S WELL-BEING

Internship Report submitted to Universidade Católica Portuguesa to obtain a Master's Degree in Culture Studies

By

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Abstract

This internship report will discuss my experience as a trainee in the magazine *Vogue Germany* in Paris between September 2020 and May 2021. As an operational assistant in the fashion department, I was directly involved with the production of *Vogue Germany's* fashion images, mostly picturing women. During the preparation for the shoots, the contact with multiple experts in the fashion industry made me aware of and impressed by the impact fashion paper magazines have on the configuration of women's identity, and consequently, on their well-being. In this report I seek to understand how the processes underlying the production of fashion images representing women have psychological and behavioral implications for female readers. Drawing on neurological and sociological principles, I focus particularly on how images can reinforce society's preconceived representations of and prejudices against women. Neurological principles have demonstrated the potential impact of images on well-being. Thus, through a selection of case studies found in the issues of *Vogue Germany* published during periods of confinement due to Covid-19, I examine how and to what extent the representation of women in the production of fashion images can lead to psychological changes in female readers, thereby impacting their well-being. To understand how women would like to be represented in fashion photography, I adopted the use of qualitative research through focus group interviews. Neuropsychological principles of mental imagery informed the causal link between the representation of women in fashion magazines and their impact on women's identity.

KeyWords: fashion images; women's well-being; fashion magazines; fashion industry; *Vogue Germany.*

Resumo

O presente relatório de estágio visa discutir a minha experiência como estagiária na revista *Vogue Germany* em Paris, de setembro de 2020 a maio de 2021. Como assistente operacional no departamento de moda, estive diretamente envolvida com a produção das fotografias de moda da *Vogue Germany*, a maioria das quais representando mulheres. Na preparação das sessões fotográficas, o contacto com vários especialistas da indústria da moda tornou-me consciente do impacto que as revistas de moda em suporte de papel tem na configuração da identidade das mulheres, e, consequentemente, no seu bem-estar. Neste relatório, procuro compreender como os processos subjacentes à produção de imagens de moda que representam mulheres têm implicações de ordem psicológica e comportamental para as leitoras. Lançando mão de princípios neurológicos e sociológicos, examino como as imagens podem reforçar representações sociais pré-concebidas e preconceitos vários contra as mulheres. Os princípios neurológicos têm demonstrado o potencial impacto das imagens sobre o bem-estar. Assim sendo, através de uma seleção de estudos de casos retirados dos números da *Vogue Germany*, que foram publicados no decorrer dos períodos de confinamento devido a Covid-19, reflito sobre como e em que medida a representação das mulheres na produção de imagens de moda pode levar a alterações psicológicas nas leitoras, com implicações no seu bem-estar. Para compreender como as mulheres gostariam de ser representadas nas fotografias de moda, utilizei como instrumento metodológico a investigação qualitativa através de entrevistas em *focus groups*. Princípios neuropsicológicos relativos a imagens mentais informaram o elo causal entre a representação das mulheres nas revistas de moda e o seu impacto na identidade das mulheres.

Palavras-chave: imagens de moda; bem-estar das mulheres; revistas de moda; indústria da moda; *Vogue Germany*.

Acknowledgments

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Introduction

Condé Nast, a global media company, is the parent company of several publications, published in 32 countries globally. Among these countries is Germany, where *Vogue Germany*, a monthly publication dedicated to high fashion that has translated the favorite trends and fashion preferences of the German-speaking world since 1924, is published. The publication is overlooked by some, and considered of utmost importance by others. Who are the readers to whom *Vogue Germany* is selling its monthly issues? According to Condé Nast's website, approximately one million hard copies are sold per month and the online version counts 1,9 million unique users.[1] The magazine provides readers with insightful fashion advice and may contribute to their level of well-being.

Based on my internship experience within *Vogue Germany* in Paris from September 2020 to March 2021, this report constitutes a reflection on the aforementioned international professional experience that allowed me to discover the backstage of the fashion magazine production. It also discusses one of the aspects that most attracted my attention during my traineeship: the impact that fashion images have on the female audience's well-being and how they may affect women's identity. I have observed that a monthly edition contains an average of forty fashion images[2]. These images depict women in various contexts and layouts.

In my reflection on how images affect the readers' moods and attitudes, the images found in *Vogue Germany* are divided into categories. I conducted three focus groups[3] to understand how women want to be seen today, and, according to my findings, categories were established in order to classify *Vogue Germany*'s images. These categories enabled me to understand if the published images are in line with how women would ideally like to be represented in fashion magazines. The analysis of the gap between how women are actually depicted and how they would like to be represented raises the issue of how fashion publications in general, and *Vogue Germany* in particular, impact female readers in

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[1] https://www.condenast.com/brands/vogue#Germany

[2] By fashion images I refer to all pictorial content produced by *Vogue Germany*, within the framework of visual stories picturing the actual fashion trends.

[3] The focus groups will bring together 4 to 7 women and will last about 45 minutes each. I have organized three focus groups, with participants representing the female readership of *Vogue Germany* from Germany, Austria and the Swiss German speaking part. The chosen participants are readers of fashion magazines and will include all ethnicities, age groups and body types. I will lead the conversation on ideal visual female representation and let the discussants develop their opinion on the subject.

psychological terms, resulting in an array of implications on consumer's well-being. I became aware of this gap during my internship because of the dual position I found myself in, at the same time helping to produce the publication's pictorial content and being a reader of the magazine. It is my contention that the different ways through which fashion images are conceived, produced and circulated have a psychological impact on readers' well-being. Hence, the goal of this internship report is to depart from my experience as a trainee to examine which type of impact *Vogue Germany* may have on the well-being of its female readership and on their identity.

As Binnie (2010) notes, the attempt to engage readers with images that connect to art and well-being has proven beneficial to personal well-being.[4] Conducting research in the field of fashion photography may provide photographers and photo editors with scientific evidence on the potential of images to generate a feeling of happiness and prosperity. Therefore, I examined the fashion pictures published in the monthly issues of *Vogue Germany* between May 2020 and May 2021 and analyzed those that could trigger a positive mental response of comfort, trust, and positivity. The reasons that led me to select this period are related to my experience during the traineeship and the exceptionality of the pandemic context due to the prolonged lockdowns and all the associated disruptions people have had to endure since the initial emergence of the pandemic.

Even though different people may have conflicting ideas about what constitutes a positive experience, my claim is that certain types of images are widely perceived as positive after comparing them with images generally characterized as negative. In my analytical attempt to identify which images can be categorized as positive, neutral or negative, I focused my attention on the preferences of German speaking women, as they are *Vogue Germany*'s primary target audience. The target countries of *Vogue Germany* are Germany, Austria, and the German-speaking part of Switzerland. With the help of existing literature on fashion magazines and photography, the focus groups I have prepared analyzed female opinions and expectations on visual representations of women and discussed how and to what extent these views were translated into fashion photography depicting women. The findings resulting from this attempt to understand how women would like to be represented in fashion photography enabled me to create a scale, through which I was able to measure

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[4] Binnie, Jennifer. 2010. "Does Viewing Art in the Museum Reduce Anxiety and Improve Wellbeing?" *Museums & Social Issues*, 5(2), 191-201.

the impact that pictures might have on people's well-being. The most well-known scale analyzing the representation of women in images up to this day was created by Erving Goffman in 1976 in his volume entitled *Gender Advertisements*[5]. In his book Goffman produced a scale with six distinct categories: (1) relative size (2) feminine touch (3) function ranking (4) ritualization of subordination (5) licensed withdrawal and (6) body display. Each of these categories analyzes the distribution and/or dispersion of stereotypical portrayal of women in advertisement pictures[6] in the USA in the 1970s. Many studies have refined Goffman's scale to apply it to modern research. Despite being inspired by Goffman's work, I propose my own scale of analysis in this internship report that is based on the findings resulting from the discussions of the focus groups. This methodology has allowed me to question and discuss modes of production of pictorial content that may have a positive impact on reader well-being. In other words, I do not aim to offer a plain critique of the existing pictures.

As Cultural Studies is an area of research that problematizes the role of culture and of cultural products in the discussion of societal matters and power relations, the world of fashion constitutes an inspiring and rich field to examine identity configurations, societal changes and disciplinary relations of power in terms of the impact of issues such as gender, race, class, and age, among others, mainly when considers the nomative dimension of the fashion industry. Inspired by Foucault who asserts that "power is everywhere" and "comes from everywhere"[7], my aim is to discuss potential power relations that result from the impact of printed images in *Vogue Germany* on female readers during the timeframe under analysis.

Current studies[8] have demonstrated the power images can have on viewers. Firstly, when compared to words, images have privileged access to the semantic system, which stores affective information.[9] If the spectator is confronted with a picture-word stimulus, the brain will first process the image and the resulting emotions. Secondly, images have an impact on psychological well-being. It has been shown that images perceived as positive can

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[5] Goffman, E. 1976. *Gender advertisements*. London: Palgrave.

[6] Kang, M. E. 1997. "The portrayal of women's images in magazine advertisements: Goffman's gender analysis revisited." *Sex roles*, *37*(11): 979-996.

[7] Foucault, M. 1991. *Discipline and Punish: the birth of a prison*. London, Penguin.

[8] Authors such as Arnaud Pictet, Grazia Ceschi or Simon Blackwell made some of the latest significant contributions to the field.

[9] Houwer, J. D. and Hermans, D. 1994. "Differences in the affective processing of words and pictures." *Cognition & Emotion*, *8*(1): 1-20.

be protective against the mood-deteriorating effect of stressful encounters[10]. Positive pictures can help viewers to engage in goal-oriented behaviors and, in general, pictures have an amplifying effect on emotions as Holmes and Pictet (2013) observe.[11]

The responsibility of the producer of the image sends us back to *Vogue Germany,* the production of fashion images, and to the psychological impact of the latter on female readers' well-being. Below I describe how this report is organized, with the goal of discussing the potential positive effect of fashion images on readers' psychological well-being.

The first part of the report offers a description and an analysis of my six-month internship at *Vogue Germany* in Paris. In other words, my aim is to present a critical overview of what has been learned, to comment on the main discussed issues and obstacles associated with the internship, and to make some suggestions about how the internship can be improved bearing in mind future trainees' participation. The second part of the report offers a reflection on concepts from the field of visual sociology and of cognitive neuroscience on visual mental imagery, the visual representation of women and the power of images, all being concepts that are of use in the analytical part of the report. In the third part, I provide a quantitative and qualitative analysis of a collection of selected images from *Vogue Germany* that cover a period of one year and 11 editions. Images were divided into categories according to the potential psychological effect they might have on female readers. This division rests on a scale built on the results of the review of the existing literature and the discussions held in the focus groups. I decided to start the selection of my corpus with the first monthly edition produced under Covid-19 circumstances. I believe this period is particularly interesting because of the lockdown situation. I hypothesized that people reading the magazine during this timeframe were probably more focused on its content as they experienced less distractions when reading it. The lack of distraction, provided by the Covid-19 circumstances, gave images more power over the readers' well-being than before the lockdown situation. The fourth part of the report consists of an analysis of the collected data, according to the neurological principles outlined in the contextualization part. This part enabled me to determine the potential effect of *Vogue Germany'*s images on female readers.

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[10] Holmes, Lang and Shah. 2009. "Developing interpretation bias modification as a "cognitive vaccine" for depressed mood - Imagining positive events makes you feel better than thinking about them verbally". *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 118, (1), 76-88.

[11] Pictet, Arnaud and Emilie Holmes. 2013. "The powerful impact of mental imagery in changing emotion." *Changing Emotions*: 187.

In the last part of the report I return to the gap between the pictorial representations of women and the female reader's expectations in terms of their representations. With the results of my research[12] I aim to propose some ideas on how fashion photographers and photography editors of *Vogue Germany* can take the best profit of the aforementioned gap to influence readers in a positive way, thus increasing their well-being.

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[12] To my knowledge, no other study has analyzed this issue.

My internship *in Vogue Germany*

My internship at Condé Nast Germany took place in one of the publisher's branches, the office in Paris. The internship lasted 6 months, from September 2020 to March 2021. During this time, I played the role of fashion department assistant in the Paris correspondence office. Condé Nast Germany in Paris is responsible for two publications: *Vogue Germany* and *Glamour Germany*. As *Glamour Germany* represents a minor publication of the group, the majority of my work was dedicated to *Vogue Germany*. My responsibility for both publications was to assist the stylists in the production of the ongoing fashion shoots in which the fashion images were produced for the upcoming editions. The requirement for my internship position was to speak three languages: French, English and German. I spoke French and English with all the external contacts, and German with the *Vogue Germany* collaborators. In the Paris branch, I worked with my supervisor who was the head of the Paris office, and one fellow intern who had to perform the same tasks that I had. The fellow intern left the company in December 2020, and from that period onwards I worked by myself until my last three weeks at Condé Nast Germany, when the intern who would replace me joined the team. Besides doing my work, I trained her to replace me after the end of my internship.

Condé Nast Germany has branch offices in Paris, Milan and New York. All of them consist of small teams that communicate with local fashion brands. The headquarters of Condé Nast Germany is located in Munich, where *Vogue Germany*'s and *Glamour Germany*'s fashion department is located as well. I was in contact with them on a daily basis. My main task was to coordinate the clothes which the stylists requested for the shoots. This task implied a constant communication with the person in charge of press relations for each fashion brand. The difficulty in this task was to assure the availability of the press kit. The press kit is a one-time produced collection produced by fashion brands exclusively for the press. This means that all press-related coverage, including publications and VIP departments worldwide, are required to share the same press kit. In order to coordinate the press kit and assure its availability, various people are involved in the process. My role was to make an inquiry about the garments which the Condé Nast Germany stylists requested for their shoots. This request was then answered by the person responsible for press relations at

the individual fashion brand. This task required me to negotiate with the press relations departments, in order to assure a satisfying selection of garments for the Condé Nast Germany stylists. Because Condé Nast Germany does not pay for borrowing garments, this meant that I had to build a professional yet friendly relationship with the press relations team of each fashion brand in order to be prioritised when I made the inquiries. These contacts were made mainly via mail or, should the stylist request for garments urgently, via phone. Due to the Covid-19 situation, I was only allowed to go to the office when I had to send out the garments and accessories via postage to the shoots or when the clothes came back from a shoot and I had to arrange their return to their designated press relations team.

Managing the transfer of the items was another important part of my job, as I was responsible for the clothes' condition. To minimize costs, all the clothes coming from PR offices in Paris were sent to our Paris office by courier. I centralized them into one international shipment via DHL after checking that nothing was missing or damaged in order to not be held accountable for damages. Even if Condé Nast Germany was insured in case something got damaged or lost during the shipment or on the shoot sets, it was of the utmost importance to verify the clothes and to protect them during the transfers. For each shipment we worked with Condé Nast Germany's global shipping team based in Munich, exchanging tracking numbers and inventory to ensure the traceability of every item being sent.

Before Covid-19 many shoots took place in Paris and my job would have been to assist stylists and photographers on-site. Because of the pandemic, Condé Nast minimized travelling and most shoots took place in Munich or in special locations with exceptional scenery. Only once was I able to assist at the shoot on site and follow the production of the images. In Zurich, Switzerland, the publication prepared a 3-page story about a local emerging artist. On that occasion, I helped the team to prepare the selected clothes and accessories, organizing all the return transfers afterwards. The pandemic also affected my internship as far as networking opportunities were concerned. Almost all fashion shows were held online, and the few that happened in person had a very restricted capacity. I was only able to attend two fashion weeks in-person: in September 2020 for the Spring-Summer 2021 collection and in February 2021 for the Fall 2021 collection. My involvement in the organization of the fashion weeks was thus minimal. It was limited to a few visits to showrooms to see the latest collections of labels and to network with the PR team.

I applied for this internship because I wanted to learn more about the internal organization of the publication group, as it is a highly respected and relevant name in the fashion industry. Moreover, I was interested in understanding how printed magazines such as *Vogue* and *Glamour* survive in a modern digital environment. The internship was very beneficial, as I have developed soft skills, particularly in the area of communication and stress management. I would argue that my organizational, multi-tasking and communication skills were highly improved throughout the internship. The six months I stayed in Paris, which were heavily influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic, taught me that the fashion world is a very cost-demanding industry and that its global functioning is not always well adapted to its consumers. I reached this conclusion firstly because of the cost management of the fashion department. Each fashion shoot requires a very large selection of looks from several brands. However, only a small portion is in fact used in the end to appear in the publication. This mode of operation implies high shipping costs, and it is also environmentally harmful. Integrating new artificial intelligence technologies or working with second-hand clothes can minimize the volume of clothes shipped around the world, ultimately becoming a positive long-term investment. Secondly, I noticed that both publications and especially *Vogue Germany* struggled to build their identity while avoiding any kind of political and/or social engagement. *Vogue Germany*, as described previously, stands for high fashion and advertises products that the average consumer can hardly access. According to information provided by the PRs from fashion houses that I contacted, the fashion images published in the magazine are mostly of high artistic quality. However, the situation is quite different when the five daily publications on *Vogue Germany*'s Instagram account are taken into account. If, as it would be expected, the topics are related to fashion, pictures are not interesting and they mostly address subjects such as the British royal family or upcoming Netflix series, for example. It is evident that editors try to avoid posting politically connoted and possibly controversial information, which may explain the lack of artistic relevance or investment. In my opinion, these elements render the Instagram account superficial and uninteresting. Taking into consideration the importance of social media, digitalization and the increasing preference of some readership for digital means, I claim that a revision of materials to be posted on Instagram can be a relevant issue for the long-term prosperity of the publication.

Having opted for analysing the printed issues of *Vogue Germany*, the images produced have the following characteristics: (i) most of them have high artistic quality (ii) they are thematic, and (iii) they photograph nature as an unrealistic decor. Because in the last decades art directors, photographers and stylists have blurred the line between commercial images and contemporary art, the produced images have been increasingly more complex. Consequently, fashion imagery has been recognized as a form of art and a powerful element of cultural heritage and identity, having thus been converted into the object of numerous significant exhibitions and books.[13] Fashion images are key to the notoriety of the fashion industry and its commercial dimension. They create a symbiotic relationship with economy, reader's senses of esthetics, and social matters. During my internship, I became particularly interested in the potentialities of the impact of fashion images on readers, a topic that I examine in more detail in the next section of the report. In that section I bring a neurological perspective to the discussion to analyze how and to what extent images associated with well-being can affect the representation of women and the configuration of their identity.

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[13] De Perthuis, K. 2019. "Fashion's Image: The Complex World of the Fashion Photograph." *A Companion to Photography*: 253-274.

Contextualization

I. The influence of images on well-being

A picture is worth a thousand words, or so it has been advertised within the marketing and advertising community in the last decades. Even if this formulation corresponds to a popular saying or a cliché, scientific experiments[14] have demonstrated that images affect people's brains differently than words do. The first and most notorious study is the Stroop phenomenon observed in 1935. In the Stroop experiment, subjects were asked to name the color in which various words were written as fast as possible. Stroop showed that the response rate for naming color patches went down drastically if the words written designated other colors, e.g.- the word "blue" written in red.[15] This first experiment comparing people's reaction to visual components, the colors, and words might seem quite simple because it only involved three variables: (i) the reading speed, usually unaffected by the word's color (ii) the speed difference between naming and reading, and (iii) the possible delay if there was conflicting information between the process of reading the word and the information associated to the color in which the word was written. Even if the experiment was quite simple, it consisted of three significant processes: reading, naming and selective attention. All three mental processes are also used by *Vogue Germany*'s readers when they encounter the magazine's fashion images.

Forty years later, Dyer decided to use the so-called "Stroop phenomenon" to investigate the three underlying mechanisms identified in the 1935 experiment. Dyer's work led to two generalizations about Stroop's effect. First, the word/color combination was perceived as the limiting factor of double stimulation.[16] A long series of experiments showed that the double stimulation technique with a diversified stimulus gave similar results to Stroop's findings. Secondly, it was proven that naming the picture or reading the word of a

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[14] See Pictet (2013), among others.

[15] Stroop, J.R. 1935. "Studies of interference in serial verbal reactions." *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 18: 643-62.

[16] Dyer, F.N. 1973a. "Interference and facilitation for color naming with separate bilateral presentations of the word and color." *Journal of Experimental Psychology, 99*, 314-17.

word-picture stimulus replicates the reaction time pattern found in the color-word/color stimuli.[17] Dyer's experiment and all the other so-called "Troop-like experiments" have examined the possible relations between the stimulus component controlling the subject's response and the parts that have to be ignored. The relationship can be on several levels: functional, semantic, linguistic, associative, temporal and spatial. These all depend on the reaction time of the subject. To measure the relationship between the stimulus component, also called the "target", and the "distractors", otherwise known as the parts that must be ignored, the experiments studied the reaction time when confronted by a distractor. The distractor could either be neutral, delay the reaction time and be an "inhibition", or help the process and be a "facilitator".

Without going into too much depth regarding the Stroop-like experiments, the main concern that is to be remembered is the processing asymmetry in the word/picture reading/naming task. There is indeed physiological evidence that the lexicon and semantic memory are not located in the same parts of the brain, but rather are functionally and physically separated subsystems of the brain.[18] The lexicon itself has absolutely no semantic capability, and investigations[19] have shown that the semantic system controls the perception of objects and pictures, as well as actions on physical objects. The outcome of these studies proves that the understanding of pictures is faster and more effective than that of words.[20] During my internship at Vogue Germany, I learned that a substantial part of the magazine's budget was dedicated to the production of the pictures, rather than to the editorial team. This is due to images' tremendous impact on readers, which is more important than the editorial columns.

The semantic system and the semantic memory that constitute the brain refer to long-term memory, which involves the recollection of ideas, concepts and facts, commonly understood as general knowledge.[21] The semantic network at large coordinates the relationships we make between various concepts into a wide graphic network.[22] We now

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[17] Wilhelm R. Glaser and Margrit O. Glaser. 1989. "Context Effects in Stroop-Like Word and Picture Processing." *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General 1989*, 18(1): 13-42.

[18] D.A. Allport and E. Funnell. 1981. "Components of the mental lexicon." *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, Series B(295): 397-410.

[19] See Martin and Chao (2001), Saitta and Zucker (1998) or Thompson-Schill (2003).

[20] M.C. Potter. 1976. "Short-term conceptual memory for pictures." *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Learning and Memory*, 2: 509-22.

[21] Reisberg, D. 2013. *The Oxford handbook of cognitive psychology*. Oxford University Press.

[22] Sowa, J. 1992. *Encyclopedia of Artificial Intelligence*. 2nd edition, Wiley.

know that images relate directly to the semantic system, that semantic memory is responsible for the recollection of concepts, and that the semantic network can create neurological bridges between concepts. We should therefore examine if images and pictures have the power to impact viewers from memory. Within the framework of this internship report, what interests me the most is the impact of images on behaviour and emotions. I therefore examine the impact of images on attitudes to understand if the semantic system triggers the activation of attitudes from memory. This implies that attitudes can be activated whenever the spectator encounters an image. This activation should be spontaneous and happen without any conscious effort. The activation can also be mindful, thus requiring a conscious engagement on the part of the viewer who would reflect on his/her feelings towards the image, as there are two possibilities regarding attitude activation.[23]

I chose to focus this internship report on the analysis of automatic activations. Automatic activations are triggered through an inescapable automatic process. According to Shiffrin and Dumais (1981), the automatic process is triggered "[w]henever a given set of external initiating stimuli are presented, regardless of a subject's attempt to ignore or bypass the distraction".[24] The spectator would therefore, upon presentation of a picture, experience an activated attitude despite the lack of any reflection on his/her part. The occurrence of an automatic activation relies on pre-learned sets of associations and/or responses. The existence or non-existence of the pre-learned set of associations related to a certain image determines the strength of the automatic activation for each spectator, because of the association's accessibility from memory. The accessibility of an attitude from memory and therefore the likelihood of its activation depends on the associative strength upon individuals encountering the picture.[25] The associations' strength varies between nonexistent in the case of a non-attitude, a weak association which is unlikely to trigger an automatic association, and a strong association that was activated automatically. Each individual has a different attitude activation when encountering a potential activation object. In the case of this study, the activation objects are the fashion pictures found in *Vogue Germany*. In order to determine the power of *Vogue Germany*'s images as attitude activators, focus groups and the pre-

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[23] R. M. Shiffrin and W. Schneider. 1977. "Controlled and automatic human information processing: II. Perceptual learning, automatic attending, and a general theory." *Psychological Review*, 84: 127-90.

[24] S.T. Dumais and R. M. Shiffrin. 1981. "The development of automatism." *Cognitive skills and their acquisition*: 111-40.

[25] Russel H. Fazio, Frank R. Kardes and Martha Powell. 1986. "On the Automatic Activation of Attitudes." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 50(2): 229-38.

existing literature have established the potential attitude activation of the pictures and the resulting affective linkage for readers. If the attitude is activated after consulting the magazine – the attitude object – it is likely to result in some selective processing of the information available in the magazine. As a consequence, the reader's definition of the "*Vogue Germany* experience" is more likely to be congruent with his/her attitude towards images if they employ strong object-evaluation associations opposed to cases with weak associations. Thus, the reader's behavior is most likely to be influenced by implicit biases related to the content in conveyed images. An automatisation of behavior frees the reader from the effort of engaging in a deliberate reasoning process before behaving towards a particular picture. My traineeship was in *Vogue Germany'*s fashion department, therefore I only helped with the production of fashion images and did not intervene in the production of fashion texts. Thus, focusing on the automatic behavior activated by *Vogue Germany*'s fashion images relates to what I did during the traineeship.

The outlined concepts and principles to keep in mind for the development of this report are primarily the fact that pictures are processed faster than words, because our brain treats the resulting visual information with our semantic system. Secondly, the automatic activation of attitudes depends on the strength of pre-associations related to the image, which is specific to each individual. Finally the pre-learned associations influence the spectator's attitude towards a picture and determine which information will be extracted from a given situation.

As demonstrated above, pictures do have an impact on spectators' attitudes, and therefore on their behaviour and emotions as well. The impact on well-being depends on the categorization of images in the eyes of spectators. If the picture is perceived as positive, rather than neutral or negative, exposure to this type of image can possibly positively impact spectators and their well-being. Numerous studies[26] have examined the impact of mental imagery on well-being, emotions and psychology. Mental images are an "experience of perception in the absence of concurrent sensory input".[27] Studies on mental imagery are useful to this internship report because of the resemblance between the mental impact of images, such as *Vogue Germany'*s pictorial content, and the impact of mental images, which

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[26] See Holmes et. al. (2008), Berntsen and Jacobsen (2008) or Kosslyn et. al. (2006).
[27] Kosslyn, S.M, W.L. Thompson and G. Ganis. 2006. *The Case of Mental Imagery.* Oxford Press, Oxford, UK.

is analyzed in the chosen studies[28]. Furthermore, as previously indicated, the impact of images on readers' attitudes depends on pre-set associations with a certain image. This set of associations sends the readers back to related mental images. The recollection of images from memory overlapping with the content of *Vogue Germany*'s pictures is commonly called "mental time travel"[29]. This process of re-playing and re-experiencing occurences from the past has been argued to play an important role in the regulation of people's emotions.[30] In the case of *Vogue Germany*, the interaction with images is mostly perceived as involuntary, because readers do not know in advance if the images they will encounter are positive, neutral or negative to them, even if the act of reading the publication is a voluntary one. Therefore, the unfolding emotional, behavioural and psychological responses to an image and their related associations cannot be controlled and planned.

I first examined the impact of repeated exposure to positive images in everyday life on readers' well-being. In order to deconstruct the researched effect, there is the need to define what the main components of well-being are. Blackwell and Holmes (2017) conducted a case study in which they induced positive images on a daily basis to an individual affected by severe depression. They wanted to improve the general mental state of the subject, and the results of the case study showed an improvement in terms of mood and behavior, especially when making future decisions.[31] In my analysis I concentrated my attention on the effects of images on readers' moods, behaviour and decision-making abilities, as they are the three key components of well-being. My internship taught me that *Vogue Germany*'s stylists and editors mainly focus on the effect of their pictures on the brands they are advertising, and sometimes on the model if they are photographing a celebrity. I would like to bring the interests of female readers to the forefront. As the fashion pictures can impact readers' well-being, I believe they should be considered as important as the economical impact when collaborating with brands.

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[28] Holmes, E.A., A. Matthews, B. Mackintosh and T. Dalgleish. 2008. "The causal effect of mental imagery on emotion assessed using picture-word cues." *Emotion*, no. 8: 395-409.

[29] Berntsen, D. and A. S. Jacobsen. 2008. "Involuntary (spontaneous) mental time travel into the past and the future." *Consciousness and Cognition*, 17(4): 1093-1104.

[30] Barsics, C., M. Van der Linden and A. D'Argembeau. 2016. "Frequency, characteristics, and perceived functions of emotional future thinking in daily life." *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 69(2): 217-33.

[31] Blackwell, Simon and Emily Holmes. 2017. "Brightening the day with flashes of positive mental imagery: a case study of an individual with depression." *Journal of clinical psychology: in session*, 73(5), 579-89.

Mood change and positive images are correlated, as the exposure to positive images had a positive impact on the subjects' mood. A study researching the impact of movies and/or film clips on mood change found that if emotion was induced by movies' pictures, a number of involuntary recollections of images from the movie during the week following the viewing would happen. In addition, the more involuntary memories of the film's clip came back to the subject, the greater the mood change was, always following a pattern of positive correlation.[32] The results of this experiment have demonstrated a relationship between emotion and the recollection of memories, but they have not led to a conclusion between the intensity of the experienced emotion and the number of recollected memories. Another experiment led by Berntsen and Staugaard in 2014 found a relationship between the emotional valence and the occurrence of involuntary memories, in this case pre-learned sets of associations. An interesting aspect of this study is the fact that the involuntary memories occured after the test was conducted, ranging from 24 hours later to even a week afterwards.[33] This emphasizes the major role sleep plays in the consolidation of memories when an individual is exposed to stimulus. As far as the case of *Vogue Germany* is concerned, these findings suggest that the impact of fashion images can have a relatively long-term effect on readers. As my traineeship taught me, *Vogue Germany* publishes its magazine once every month and sometimes every second month when it produces a double issue covering two months instead of one. Therefore, the fashion magazine could influence their regular readers all year long if the effects of fashion images are long lasting. In addition, the physical distance between the reader and the picture places the reader in a field-perspective, which has been proven to be experienced as more emotional than the observer-perspective.[34]

Blackwell *et al.* published a study in 2020 in which they examined the impact of brief exposure to positive imagery in everyday life and the role of emotion in the process. The study successfully proved that positive imagery enhanced the level of positive emotion for the subjects. On the other hand, the results showed no significant relationship between the amount of positive emotion generated after the stimulus and the amount of involuntary

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[32] Clark, I.A., C. E. Mackay and E. A. Holmes. 2013. "Positive involuntary autobiographical memories: You first have to live them." *Consciousness and Cognition*, 22(2): 402-6.

[33] Bernsten, D and S. R. Staugaard. 2014. "Involuntary memories of emotional scenes: The effects of cue discriminability and emotion over time." *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 143(5): 1939-57.

[34] Kamboj, Sunjeev and Sophie Wallace-Hadrill. 2016. "The impact of perspective change as a cognitive reappraisal strategy on affect: A systematic review." *Frontiers in psychology*, 7: 1715.

memories, addressing the gap of the study conducted by Clark's *et al.* (2013). These findings presuppose that the amount of pre-learned associations between an image and its viewer did not positively influence the viewer's mood, but rather the intensity and importance of the pre-learned associations impacted the level of mood enhancement.

A detail to take into account while elaborating on these concepts is the importance of the amount of attention given by the reader to the publication. It has been proven that conducting tasks, such as playing Tetris or even performing an horizontal eye movement while engaging with images, reduced the number of both positive and negative recollected memories.[35] It has also been proven that engaging in a demanding task, again such as playing Tetris right after the exposure to the positive pictures, also diminished the amount of spontaneous positive images experienced afterwards.[36] When readers of *Vogue Germany* are taken into account, it is not possible to measure in real time how much of their attention they are willing to give to the magazine's content, as it depends on numerous factors such as their environment, which cannot be controlled. However, I assume that elements such as the content – in this instance being the fashion imagery – receive the audience's full attention. *Vogue Germany's* artistic directors, stylists and photographers worked to achieve a high level of perfection in each detail, suggesting that to them the readers also gave the fashion magazine their full attention. To sum up the relevance of mood enhancement and positive imagery to my analysis, it is worth remembering that mood enhancement happens through the recollection of positive memories, which is possible with the pre-learned sets of associations. The more vivid the recalled memory is, the greater the mood enhancement will be. The fact that there is a possible long-term effect makes the research even more significant for readers' well-being.

The two remaining components of well-being are behavior and decision-making. I have addressed both in one section as the decision-making process is the core mechanism which helps determine future behavior.[37] To measure behavior and decision-making, researchers mainly mention "behavioral activation", which refers to an individual's potential

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[35] Engelhard, I. M., S. I. van Uijen and M. A. van den Hout. 2010. "The impact of taxing working memory on negative and positive memories." *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*, 1: 5623-30.

[36] Blackwell, Simon E., Charlotte Davies, Emily A. Holmes, Aiysha Malik and Arnaud Pictet. 2012. "Involuntary Memories after a Positive Film are dampened by a Visuospatial Task: Unhelpful in Depression but helpful in Mania?" *Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy,* 19: 341-51.

[37] Zhong, C.-B. 2011. "The Ethical Dangers of Deliberative Decision Making." *Administrative Science Quarterly,* 56(1): 1–25.

to engage in a given activity.[38] Engaging in certain types of rewarding activities such as social engagement can have a direct impact on anxiety levels and neurosis.[39] Mental images are once more the cognitive link between behavior, decision-making and images. A depressed individual is more likely to be unable to imagine the positive aspects of an upcoming event or even envisage positive future occurrences. Imagining future events increases the likelihood of the said event to occur in the eyes of the individual, who will therefore evaluate the potential outcomes of a course of action accordingly. To suffer from an impaired judgement can be misleading and hinder positive and proactive decision-making. Therefore, being unable to generate positive mental images can increase a sense of distress about the future and reduce motivation to engage in proactive activities.[40]

Another component influencing decision-making and behavior is the interpretation of information. Our state of psychological well-being influences our absorption capacity, which can range from optimistic, to realistic, to pessimistic. Information treatment has a similar process as the one mentioned above, and depends substantially on the type of mental images the subject generates after taking the information into account. Impacting someone's well-being by influencing his behavior means impacting the mental images generated prior to the decision-making process. Being able to generate future-oriented mental images is tightly linked to an individual's optimism, as it has been tested that increasing optimism through BPS ("Best Possible Self") imagery exercises in depressed subjects helps lower symptoms of depression.[41] Optimism has been proven to be manipulable in experimental settings[42], but most importantly optimism can be immediately impacted by imagery exercises rather than only after a long time period of repeated exposure to positive images.[43]

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[38] Kanter, J. W., Mulick, P. S., Busch, A. M., Berlin, K. S., & Martell, C. R. 2007. "The Behavioral Activation for Depression Scale (BADS): Psychometric properties and factor structure." *Journal of Psychopathology and Behavioral Assessment*, 29: 191–202.

[39] Blackwell, Simon and Emily Holmes. 2017. "Brightening the Day With Flashes of Positive Mental Imagery: A Case Study of an Individual With Depression: Positive Imagery Case Example." *Journal of Clinical Psychology,* 73.

[40] Blackwell, S. E., S. Burnett Heyes, E. A. Holmes, F. Renner, and F. Raes. 2016. "Mental imagery in depression: Phenomenology, potential mechanisms, and treatment implications." *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*, 12: 249–80.

[41] Meevissen YM, Peters ML, Alberts HJ. 2011. "Become more optimistic by imagining a best possible self: effects of a two week intervention." *J Behav Ther Exp Psychiatry*, Sep;42(3):371-8.

[42] Fosnaugh, Jessica, Andrew Geers and Justin Wellman. 2009. "Giving Off a Rosy Glow: The Manipulation of an Optimistic Orientation." *The Journal of social psychology*, 149: 349-64.

[43] Peters, Madelon, Ida Flink, Katja Boersma and Steven Linton. 2010. "Manipulating optimism: Can imagining a best possible self be used to increase positive future expectancies?." *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 5: 204-11.

A neurological link between the exposure to positive images, increased optimism and positive decision-making and information treatment has been established.[44] The improvements of the subject's wellbeing has been measured comparing imagery vividness, likelihood and pre-experiencing. This means that after the exposure to positive imagery, the participant's positive mental images were more vivid, more likely to occur in a near future and also the participant was more inclined to "pre-experience" an upcoming event. The strongest correlation with optimism has been established with the image's vividness, meaning that increased optimism will have an impact on the vividness of the recalled set of pre-learned associations for *Vogue Germany*'s readers. All the three factors listed above have a direct impact on the decision-making process and the resulting behavior and can be, as demonstrated, impacted and enhanced by the exposure to positive images. In a nutshell, positive images impact spectators through the strong cognitive link between a subject and the pre-learned sets of associations he/she holds. They can enhance a person's mood and increase the subject's level of positivism, thus promoting proactive decision-making and positive behavior.

I have studied the impact of positive images on the different components of well-being in order to understand the psychological impact that *Vogue Germany*'s fashion pictures can have on its readers if the images are perceived as positive, thus evoking positive associations. The impact of negative imagery is examined below. The effect of neutral pictures on viewers' psychological well-being has not been considered, as neutral images never demonstrated any impact in lab-controlled environments. What defines a positive picture is a rather personal matter. Even if some categories of images are mostly perceived as positive, their categorization still depends on each person's experience and preferences. Negative pictures do follow the same pattern, but there is an additional component to the personal experience. Depending on readers' cultural background, certain topics, such as gender classifications and roles, racism, stereotypes, drug addiction, and others[45] may be considered negative and therefore cannot be addressed easily. My internship taught me that

[44] Blackwell, Simon, Yvonne Schulte-van Maaren, Ingrid Carlier, Victor Middelkoop, Frans Zitman, Philip Spinhoven, Emily Holmes and Erik Giltay. 2012. "Optimism and mental imagery: A possible cognitive marker to promote wellbeing?." *Psychiatry research*, 206.

[45] Manders, Gary and Sarah Galvani. 2015. "Learning from the Research Process: Discussing Sensitive Topics as a Cultural Outsider." *Social Work Education*, 34:2, 199-212.

a magazine such as *Vogue Germany* is not associated with any specific political or societal position, therefore it is not possible to define in clear terms what its readership is like and its readers' tastes and opinions can considerably differ. When the readership is not homogeneous as it happens with *Vogue Germany,* the use of controversial pictures may cause unpredictable reactions. In other words, pictures associated to political and/or societal taboos tend to be mostly considered as negative depending on the readers' cultural background and mindset. The effects of negative pictures are explored more in depth in the following section about the representation of women. As I outline some neurological concepts related to the impact of negative pictures, I have attempted to focus on images perceived as negative more as a result of personal experiences rather than of moral standards, even if the latter can impact the former.

As observed when positive pictures are analysed, negative images also operate as "emotional amplifiers" when examined from the perspective of neuroimaging principles.[46] If negative pictures operate in the same way as their positive counterpart, the exposure to negative images will trigger the emergence of negative associations as mental images in spectators' minds. When one compares the impact of negative and positive mental images, the latter can be more significant for the viewer than the former. If positive pictures can enhance the subject's well-being, negative pictures can have a serious impact, even if the portrayed concepts are not necessarily associated with a traumatic experience. For example, intrusive negative memories are common in cases of depression, and these intrusions generally provoke feelings of sadness, fear or anxiety in depressed subjects[47]. This is due to the fact that mental images usually critically influence the affective characteristics of depression.[48] Furthermore, the vividness of the recalled memories is also positively correlated with the intensity of depressive symptoms.[49] Even if exposure to negative images does not necessarily cause a severe depression or another type of neuropsychosis, exposure can trigger these illnesses if symptoms are already present. This fact stresses the importance of understanding the mechanism that underlies the exposure to images perceived as negative.

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[46] Holmes, E. A., J. R. Geddes, F. Colom, and G. M Goodwin. 2008. "Mental imagery as an emotional amplifier: Application to bipolar disorder". *Behaviour Research Therapy*, 46(12): 1251–8.

[47] Birrer E, T. Michael, S. Munsch. 2007. "Intrusive images in PTSD and in traumatised and non-traumatised depressed patients: a cross-sectional clinical study." *Behaviour Research Therapy*, 45(9):2053–65.

[48] Holmes EA., TJ. Lang and C. Deeprose. 2009. "Mental imagery and emotion in treatment across disorders: using the example of depression." *Cognitive Behaviour Therapy*, 38: 21–8.

[49] Holmes EA, TJ. Lang, ML. Moulds and AM. Steele. 2008. "Prospective and positive mental imagery deficits in dysphoria." *Behaviour Research Therapy*, 46(8):976–81.

In order to develop this hypothesis in my analysis, I assume that the readers of *Vogue Germany* consider the portrayed images as positive pictures by principle, without any negative bias.

As explained above, negative mental images can have a tremendous impact on the subject experiencing them. To understand the effect of the exposure to negative images on well-being, I have resorted to studies about the psychological effect of images depicting very thin models on female viewers' self-esteem and mood. The images found in magazines, advertisements or on social media platforms use models which are usually 20 percent underweight and their weight has decreased in the last 40 years while the average woman's weight has increased.[50] These images convey a standard ideal of beauty composed of tall, very thin and young women, who are mostly of Caucasian ethnicity. My internship at *Vogue Germany* taught me that the fashion magazine mostly uses models identifying with the standard ideal of beauty described above. When a model differed from the sample size, I was asked to order clothes for a plus-size model, the model was then mostly a size EU38 and not above. Otherwise, all clothes came in the traditional size 0, without the model being able to try them on before the shoot. Only a small minority of the population is represented and normal-sized women cannot identify with these models. The images can be labeled as negative for the viewer because of the discrepancy between the bodies of models and of the average woman, leading to distorted and unattainable beauty standards impacting psychological health.[51] It is important to consider that if these images can have long-term effects on viewers, they may have immediate short-term effects on viewers' psychological health.[52] Regardless of long-term or short-term effects, women exposed to such images felt worse after being exposed to them.[53] Studies found significant higher levels of anxiety on subjects after being exposed to pictures with traditionally skinny models, while the exposure to plus-size models of equal beauty had almost no impact on subjects' anxiety level. These

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[50] Wiseman, C.V., J.J Gray., J.E. Mosimann, and A.H. Ahrens. 1992. "Cultural expectations of thinness in women: An update." *International Journal of Eating Disorders,* 11(1): 85-89.

[51] Jacobi, L., and T.F. Cash. 1994. "In pursuit of perfect appearance: Discrepancies among self-ideal percepts of multiple physical attributes." *Journal of Applied Social Psychology,* 24: 379-396.

[52] Grogan, S., Z. Williams, and M. Conner. 1996. "The effects of viewing same-gender photographic models on body-esteem?" *Psychology of Women Quarterly,* 20(4): 569-575.

[53] Groesz, L.M., M.P. Levine, and S.K. Murnen. 2002. "The effect of experimental presentation of thin media images on body satisfaction: A meta-analytic review." *International Journal of Eating Disorders,* 31: 1-16.

results were found to be constant, regardless of women's age or body mass index.[54] The impact of these pictures on viewers was translated into body dissatisfaction, self-consciousness, negative mood and decreased perception of one's own attractiveness, which therefore allows researchers to definitely categorize them as negative images for their public. The causal link between the listed impacts and the exposure to pictures is the development of post-exposure mental pictures. In contrast with positive pictures, the mental images developed are negative, explaining the deteriorating effect on the subject's mood and well-being.[55] As indicated above, negative mental images induced by the exposure to negative pictures can have a considerable negative impact on someone, and long-term effects can go much further than mood deterioration.

The exposure to negative pictures also has effects on viewers' behavior, involving the decision-making process as it happens with positive pictures. It has been established that exposure to negative pictures results in an untimely presence of negative mental images. Therefore, in order to understand the effect of negative images on *Vogue Germany*'s readers, I focused my attention exclusively on the impact of negative mental images. Negative mental images might be rooted in past traumatic experiences or future catastrophic outcomes. In both cases they represent critical information about one's self-perception.[56] The intrusion of such images can be seen as a form of self-harm[57], especially if they contain an aspect of immediacy, as opposed to the characteristics of a memory.[58] Such intrusions can have an effect on the broader concept of emotion regulation, which is an ability necessary to adaptively respond to daily external solicitations.[59] Emotion regulation is an automatic process which most people use daily to resist giving in to emotional impulses. The whole mechanism happens mostly subconsciously, as it enables one to act according to social and moral codes one believes in, without bringing them to our memory each time we encounter

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[54] Halliwell, Emma and Helga Dittmar. 2004. "Does Size Matter? The Impact of Model's Body Size on Women's Body-Focused Anxiety and Advertising Effectiveness." *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 23: 104-22.

[55] Tiggemann, M. 2002. *Body image: A handbook of theory, research and clinical practice*. New York: Guilford.

[56] Holmes, E., and A. Hackmann. 2004. "A healthy imagination? Editorial for the special issue of memory: mental imagery and memory in psychopathology." *Memory*, 12(4): 387–88.

[57] Dargan, P., G. Reid, and S. Hodge. 2015. "Exploring the role of mental imagery in the experience of self-injury: an interpretative phenomenological analysis." *Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapy*: 1–12.

[58] Holmes, E. A., C. Crane, M.J. Fennell, and J. M. G. Williams. 2007. "Imagery about suicide in depression—"Flash-forwards"?" *Journal of Behavior Therapy and Experimental Psychiatry*, 38(4): 423–34.

[59] Aldao, A. 2013. "The future of emotion regulation research capturing context." *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 8(2): 155–72.

a frustrating situation.[60] For example, emotion regulation allows one to behave properly at the grocery store even if the person in front of us at the checkout decides to pay a large sum entirely with coins. Even if the mechanism itself is automatic, humans do not generate emotions passively, instead employing emotion regulation to choose which emotions to have at a certain moment.[61] If negative mental images can impact this process, it means that they indirectly impact the experience of a situation, the withholding of information, the subject's behavior, or even the subject's physiology in a given context.[62] Even goal-oriented behavior is known to be activated through the automatic emotion regulation process, without the subject exerting any conscious effort to engage in such behavior, giving one more reason to avoid the intrusion of negative mental images as much as possible.

The impact of positive and negative pictures is always a delicate issue to evaluate, whether the image is classified as positive or negative, the magnitude of its impact on the individual's well-being depends on the pre-learned set of associations. What can be assessed with certainty is the existence of a cognitive link between images, mental images and well-being. In the next section I reflect on how this cognitive link affects the representation of women and the configuration of their identity.

II.   The representation of women

Magazines such as *Vogue Germany* rely on the production of fashion images. Fashion heavily relies on pictorial content in order to convey its ideas. Fashion creations are a form of art with fleeting life-cycles. Their ephemeral features denote fashion pictures as "restless images"[63], repudiating the near past and ignoring the close future, thereby encapsulating the essence of the present moment[64]. Images of fashion have always dictated ideals and prescribed how people are supposed to look. Roland Barthes aptly pointed out that even in the Renaissance, "as soon as one got a new costume, one had a portrait done"[65], to capture the fashion statement. Going back to fashion images found in fashion publications,

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[60] Mauss, I.B., S.A. Bunge and J.J. Gross. 2007. "Automatic Emotion Regulation." *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 1: 146-67.

[61] Gross, J. J. 2007. *Handbook of Emotion Regulation*. New York: Guilford Press.

[62] Bargh, J. A., and L.E. Williams. 2007. "The case for nonconscious emotion regulation." In *Handbook of emotion regulation,* 429–445. New York: Guilford Press.

[63] König R. 1973. *The Restless Image: A Sociology of Fashion*. London: Allen & Unwin.

[64] Wilson E. 2003. *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity.* London: I.B. Tauris.

[65] Barthes R. 1983. *The Fashion System*. Berkeley. CA: University of California Press.

it is worth considering how fashion images have an underlying creative component that goes far beyond the commercial aspect of selling magazine issues,[66] as fashion images confer more value and power to these publications than generic advertising campaigns.[67] Fashion needs pictorial content, as images tend to preserve and represent fashion ideas better than clothes. Fashion images mostly portray an idealised version of fashion, which is perceived as true and irrefutable by viewers because of the authority conferred to fashion magazines such as *Vogue Germany*. The subtle blend of artistic production, function, and commodity found in the images showed for decades a glamorous world of luxury and desire portrayed by models in designer creations. In this "world without men"[68], the photographed models appear as the only ones worthy of wearing the worshipped creations.

Fashion images place models on a pedestal and give them the power to dictate how women should aim to look like. Due to the influence of fashion images, a debate started in the 1970s on the representation of women within the fashion world and has continued ever since. Fashion images blur the line between commercial images and contemporary art because of the intertwining between their commercial value and the artistic work of the directors and photographers producing them. Thus, it is difficult to set guidelines on how women should be portrayed in those pictures since art answers to different rules.[69] An artistic creation cannot follow specific rules as it would hinder and limit the creative process needed in its production. Nevertheless, fashion images are disseminated globally and have at the same time an economic and a social dimension. In the case of fashion publications, most images produced by magazines in order to sell the monthly issue have a common pattern.[70] As this study aims to understand which patterns shape/inform how women are portrayed in fashion pictures, I review the latest materials analyzing the representation of women in mainstream media and titles. Since *Vogue Germany* is part of this media category, I am not able to consider independent magazines such as *i-D* or *The Face* because of the limited length of the study. One last precision to be made before I explore the representation of women in these mainstream magazines is the dichotomy between fashion photographs in magazines

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[66] Maynard M. 2008. "The fashion photograph: an "ecology"." In *Fashion as Photograph: Viewing and Reviewing Images of Fashion*, 54-69. London: I.B. Tauris.

[67] Hall-Duncan, N. 2010. "Fashion photography." *The Berg Companion to Fashion*: 300-3.

[68] Newton H. 1984. *World Without Men*. New York: Xavier Moreau.

[69] de Perthuis, Karen. 2019. "Fashion's Image: The Complex World of the Fashion Photograph." In *A Companion to Photography*, 253-274. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.

[70] Aspers, P. 2001. "A market in vogue Fashion photography in Sweden." *European Societies*, *3*(1): 1-22.

and mainstream representations of fashion. With the expansion of the internet, every look from a designer catwalk is only a few clicks away and street style from celebrities and bloggers are submerging social media platforms. The fashion photographs which constitute a monthly fashion publication have a specific narrative constructed by editors and art directors, and nothing in those pictures is left to chance. By contrast, in the "decentralised universe of endless blogs and platforms"[71], the content doesn't follow a specific organization, quality standard or style. These differences confer power and legitimacy to fashion images produced by professional art directors and editors to portray the idealized fashion environment, as opposed to amateur pictures portraying people wearing fashionable clothes. This power translates into persuasive power over the readers, which is why the representation of the "fashion woman" in fashion publications should be analyzed and understood.

In order to understand how women are portrayed today in mainstream media such as *Vogue Germany,* there must be a consistent method to understand and compare these different images. Most studies use a scale, such as Goffman's work, as presented in the introduction of this internship report. Such scales categorize the images according to the model's physical features, but also according to stereotypes or the model's behavioral characteristics. When an image is published on a large scale in a magazine covering the market for a whole country, the men and women photographed in a specific issue are often perceived as representing the whole population. The model's physical attributes should be an inclusive representation of the country's population, or it might marginalize minorities even more.[72] A similar mechanism operates with stereotypes. If the photographed subject seems to be going along with a stereotype shown in the picture, even if it is staged, it automatically validates it for the viewer. We can even speak of "silent stereotypes"; if a specific segment of the population or body type is never pictured in a fashion magazine it silently implies that these people are not "worthy" of the glamorous fashion world. Both

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[71] Kansara, V.A. 2012. "Fashion 2.0: the next chapter of content commerce integration." The Business of Fashion. Accessed June 20, 2020.

[72] Lindner, K. 2004. "Images of Women in General Interest and Fashion Magazine Advertisements from 1955 to 2002." *Sex Roles,* 51: 409–421.

aspects listed above, the representation of a population and the validation of stereotypes, stress the importance of an accurate representation of women with moral sensitivity.[73]

Former studies, such as those carried out by Sullivan and O'Connor (1988) and Ford *et al.* (1991), pointed out that women are often depicted engaging in no activities at all, contrary to men who are mostly shown in activity.[74] Women also appear to be portrayed less in housewives' roles but increasingly through sexualized images and a level of mental absence.[75] These studies demonstrate how the objectification of women from houseworkers has shifted to sexualized subjects, which does not necessarily improve their representation. Both studies illustrate scholars' initial attempts to examine the condition of women in printed advertisements. My study mainly focuses on modern literature published in 2000 and onwards to better understand the current status of the representation of women in fashion publications. However, I do not ignore previous findings in order to make comparisons between the decades whenever it is possible and to understand how patterns of women's representation have evolved. During my traineeship at *Vogue Germany*, I came to understand that very little thinking was put into the choice of which model to photograph for a fashion shoot. Thus, I believe that the editors unconsciously chose models based on the current beauty ideals, which stresses the importance of understanding the evolution of beauty patterns in fashion photography.

Before moving forward with my analysis, it is worth recalling Goffman's scale as it was presented in his volume *Gender Advertisements*. The scale is composed of 6 categories: (1) relative size (2) feminine touch (3) function ranking (4) ritualization of subordination (5) licensed withdrawal and (6) body display. Most of the works reusing and refining Goffman's scale are attempts to statistically measure a possible prevalence of gender patterns in printed advertisements. Nicoletta Signoretti's study made in 2006 analyzed Italian printed advertisements, finding that the classic stereotypes studied in 1976 remained relevant in 2006.[76] The classic stereotypes embody several of the aforementioned categories, including "relative size", meaning that women are shown shorter in comparison to men, unless they

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[73] Kang, ME. 1977. "The portrayal of women's images in magazine advertisements: Goffman's gender analysis revisited." *Sex Roles,* 37: 979.

[74] Umiker-Sebeok Jean. 1996. "Power and construction of gendered spaces." *International Review of Sociology*, 6: 389-403.

[75] Kang, ME. 1977. "The portrayal of women's images in magazine advertisements: Goffman's gender analysis revisited." *Sex Roles,* 37: 979.

[76] Signoretti, Nicoletta. 2017. "A Study of Gender Advertisements. A Statistical Measuring of the Prevalence of Genders' Patterns in the Images of Print Advertisements." *Proceedings* 1, 9: 947.

are from an upper social class. The size difference between men and women, even if biologically accurate, tends to be manipulated in man-made advertisements in order to suggest social power over women. Another embodied category is "function ranking" where men are mostly portrayed performing an executive role when completing a task in the presence of a woman. "Feminine touch" has also been found to be a valid category in 2006, as women in pictures touch, caress or cradle objects, surfaces or themselves in unnatural ways which wouldn't realistically occur in everyday life. More categories show that advertisements have not evolved much since Goffman's study (1979), all being to the detriment of women's representation and of their societal position in contrast to that of men. The few categories that disappeared from the advertisements produced before the year 2000 pictured women as entertaining and emotional. The "modern fashion woman" appears to be more serious than before.

Signoretti's study is one among many others that illustrates that the representation of women has not undergone a fundamental change in the last 40 years in mainstream media. Gendered stereotypes such as those described above often objectify women and their bodies by focusing on their attractiveness, from the perspective of the male gaze.[77] This omnipresent characteristic does not suggest any improvement in terms of attitudes and support in favor of gender equality that might have happened in the last decades[78], even if the line between masculinity and femininity seems to be thinner than ever. Interestingly, the most beautiful women found in publicity are present in content targeting women rather than men. The same phenomena can be observed as far as the other gender is concerned. Women's exposure to unattainable levels of beauty is known to increase levels of anxiety, low self-esteem and low self-confidence.[79] Taking into account the psychological impact of such pictures, their usefulness can be questioned. *Vogue Germany*'s fashion pictures are not advertisements per se, but a similar phenomenon can be observed.

Other scholars researching women's representation within the fashion industry have addressed the subject of racial and physical diversity. I present a brief summary of their findings to better understand this topic. While the expression of racial diversity usually

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[77] Fredrickson, B. L., and T. A Roberts. 1997. "Objectification theory: Toward understanding women's lived experiences and mental health risks." *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 21: 173–206.

[78] Bolzendahl Catherine I. , Daniel J. Myers. 2004. "Feminist Attitudes and Support for Gender Equality: Opinion Change in Women and Men 1974–1998." *Social Forces*, 83(2): 759–89.

[79] Britton, Ann Marie. 2012. "The Beauty Industry's Influence on Women in Society". *Honors Theses and Capstones*, 86.

includes racial inequalities, where each race is generally studied as a single unit, there are also cases of within-race inequalities, which are considered cases of the so-called "colorism". Colorism refers to the "process of discrimination that privileges light-skinned people of color over their dark skin counterparts"[80](Hunter 2007, 237). In the fashion world, colorism occurs, for example, when black models with lighter skin tone and/or straightened hair are more represented in magazines that have a black audience as their target group.[81] However, colorism does not exclusively occur in magazines targeting a particular audience. Numerous cases of this trend have been found in mainstream media that attempt to appeal to a more general audience.[82]

Another component that has to be taken into account regarding racial inequalities is the intersectionality theory. The intersectionality theory discusses how gender and race tend to intersect, with a particular focus on the situation of black women. Rooted in feminist theories, it argues that the experiences black women go through cannot be fully understood by considering the racial dimension and the gender dimension individually. Advocates of the intersectionality theory argue that the gender dimension is mostly studied by white women concerned with white women while the race dimension is mostly examined by black men concerned with black men.[83] In this study, intersectionality was used to guide the preparation and management of focus groups, in order to assess if there is a hierarchy between gender and race components. Scholars who have studied racial diversity in feminine fashion publications argue that there has been a preponderance of white models,[84] while other ethnicities are subject to colourism, especially in the case of black models. Lighter skinned models tend to be preferred by the fashion industry[85], with a majority of women having their hair straightened[86]. None of the studies could explain why fashion directors and

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[80] Hunter, M. 2007. "The persistent problem of colorism: Skin tones, status, and inequality." *Sociology Compass*, 1: 237–54.

[81] Leslie, M. 1995. "Slow fade to? Advertising in Ebony magazine, 1957-1989." *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 72: 426–35.

[82] Keenan, K. L. 1996. "Skin tones and physical features of Blacks in magazines advertisements." *Journalism Quarterly*, 73: 905–12.

[83] Crenshaw, K. 1991. "Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color." *Stanford Law Review*, 43: 241–99.

[84] Jung, J., and Lee, Y. 2009. "Cross-cultural examination of women's fashion and beauty magazine advertisements in the United States and South Korea." *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 27: 274–86.

[85] Hunter, M. 2007. "The persistent problem of colorism: Skin tones, status, and inequality." *Sociology Compass*, 1: 237–54.

[86] Byrd, A., and Tharps, L. 2001. *Hair story: Untangling the roots of Black hair in America.* New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

editors preferably chose white models, because they all lacked the necessary interviews. Consequently, it is not possible to assert if the fashion industry consciously prefers white people to convey images of beauty. The representation of minorities in Western fashion magazines does not correspond to the percentage of these minorities in the population.[87] In my knowledge, all *Vogue Germany's* employees involved in the production of fashion images are of white-Caucasian ethnicity, which is also not an accurate representation of Germany's, Austria's and Switzerland's demographics. From an anti-racist perspective, which this study supports, a diminished representation of certain ethnicities or racial groups compared to their actual percentage in the population suggests that a concious or unconscious choice has been made to actively marginalize these groups. The representation of racial and ethnic groups in fashion magazines is a subject that needs further development and that goes beyond the scope of this report.

As far as this internship report is concerned, I contend that racial discrimination can influence readers through the "silent stereotype" theory[88]. Regardless of whether a reader belongs to an underrepresented racial group, is aware of the unequal model selection between ethnicities, or prefers to see only her ethnicity represented when reading a fashion magazine, it is likely that the choice of the model's race influences the reader's perception of the fashion pictures as positive or negative. Examining how women are represented today through a racial lens in the fashion industry, even if it suggests a division of women into categories, helps us to understand the fashion profile of women in the Western world.

The expression of physical diversity covers several aspects. Among them, the ones that interest me the most within the framework of this report are body sizes and models' ages. As far as body sizes are concerned, it is important to consider the psychological impact they may have on women who are exposed to images that value and praise skinny bodies, as there is a correlation between the development of eating disorders and the consumption of media conveying skinny bodies as a beauty standard. For the majority of the female population, the average body size displayed in the fashion industry (i.e. skinny bodies) is not

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[87] Reddy-Best, Kelly L., Eunji Choi, and Hangael Park. 2018. "Race, Colorism, Body Size, Body Position, and Sexiness: Critically Analyzing Women in Fashion Illustration Textbooks." *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal,* 36(4): 281–95.

[88] The symbolic annihilation of a segment of the population reinforces isolation and invisibility. This phenomenon has been named "silent stereotype".

an achievable goal while maintaining a healthy diet and lifestyle.[89] When the ages of models are taken into account, it is observed that there is a marginalization of women above a certain age in Western culture.[90] This marginalization plays a consequent role in how women anticipate and experience aging, again embodied by the phenomenon of the "silent stereotype".

Body size has been a variable widely examined in previous research. What has been found, as expected, is that fashion pictures almost exclusively use skinny models.[91] Clothing sizes of skinny models generally range from 1 to 3 in US sizes, with 1 and 2 being labelled as underweight and 3 being the lower end of thin. Converted into the French feminine clothing charts, this spans from 32 or XXS to 36 or XS-S. In mainstream printed fashion media, the body mass index does not appear to vary with the ethnicity of the models, with the prevailing body type remaining skinny.[92] A comparison over time even showed that the ideal female body has become thinner and leaner.[93] While the general population is becoming heavier and bigger, around 70% of the models in the fashion industry appear to be underweight.[94] Even if there has been a tendency in recent years to educate women about the risks these fashion images represent, a skinny body remains a general beauty standard.[95] The lack of diversity in terms of body types associates the idea of fashionable beauty with the necessity of maintaining a certain clothing size.[96] As mentioned above, this association has a psychological impact sometimes with health implications especially for women identifying with the fashion industry, such as the readers of *Vogue Germany*.

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[89] Spettigue, W., and Henderson, K. A. 2004. "Eating disorders and the role of the media." *The Canadian child and adolescent psychiatry review = La revue canadienne de psychiatrie de l'enfant et de l'adolescent*, 13(1): 16–19.

[90] Lemish, Dafna. and Varda Muhlbauer. 2012. ""Can't Have it All": Representations of Older Women in Popular Culture." *Women & Therapy*, 35(3-4): 165-80.

[91] Sypeck, M. F., J. J. Gray., and A. H. Ahrens. 2004. "No longer just a pretty face: Fashion magazines' depictions of ideal female beauty from 1959 to 1999." *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 36: 342–47.

[92] Reddy-Best, Kelly L., Eunji Choi, and Hangael Park. 2018. "Race, Colorism, Body Size, Body Position, and Sexiness: Critically Analyzing Women in Fashion Illustration Textbooks." *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal,* 36(4): 281–95.

[93] Guillen EO, Barr SI. 1994. "Nutrition, dieting, and fitness messages in a magazine for adolescent women, 1970–90." *J Adolesc Health*, 15: 464-72.

[94] Katzmarzyk PT, Davis C. 2001. "Thinness and body shape of Playboy centerfolds from 1978 to 1998." *Int J Obes Relat Metab Disord*, 25: 590-2.

[95] Gladstone, J. 2016. "The skinny on BMI-based hiring: an assessment of the legality and effectiveness of Israel's weight restriction law." *Wash. U. Global Stud. L. Rev.*, *15*: 495.

[96] Apeagyei, P. R. 2008. "Significance of body image among UK female fashion consumers: The cult of size zero, the skinny trend." *International Journal of Fashion Design, Technology and Education*, *1*(1): 3-11.

The phenomena of body dissatisfaction and weight-related concerns are risk factors for developing eating disorders, and exposure to media has proven to raise appearance-related anxieties, especially in the case of women.[97] On a side note, experiments found that adolescent girls are the most prone to be affected by images, as they have more difficulties than adults in differentiating what is real from what is a retouched picture[98]. It is known that eating disorders have a tendency to develop at two main stages in a woman's life cycle, namely adolescence and old age. Therefore exposure to triggering images during adolescence multiplies the chances of developing a condition which could handicap a girl for years. Several countries have tried to regulate the BMI of models for health reasons, such as Israel who requires a medical certificate no older than 3 months stating that the model's BMI is a minimum of 18.5 kg/m2, in order to prevent body dissatisfaction and health issues. According to Spettigue and Henderson (2004),[99] mainstream media have a direct influence on the expansion of eating disorders amongst women.

Considering that the implications for "senior" women are difficult in the fashion industry due to the usually very young age of the models, I speak of "older" women rather than "senior" because of the impossibility of knowing a model's exact age. A model is considered as older if she has apparent signs of aging, such as wrinkles or greying hair. A study focused on Australian fashion magazines found that the appearance of models showing signs of aging ranged from 0% to 5% in the eleven magazines studied, with samples including a total of 1182 images with 1534 models.[100] In contrast to BMI, the age of the models is not regulated at all in many countries and there are no specific high fashion magazines targeting an elderly audience by using a majority of older women in the pictures, unlike race-specific magazines. In the US, 20% of the whole population are women 50+ years old, indicating that the proportion of models showing signs of aging is much smaller than the proportion of the magazines' readers. The small proportion of "older" women in fashion photos conveys anti-aging messages that harm everyone because they reinforce the

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[97] Groesz LM, Levine MP, Murnen SK. 2002. "The effect of experimental presentation of thin media images on body satisfaction: A meta-analytic review." *Int J Eat Disord*, 31: 1-16.

[98] Morris Anne M , MBBS MPH FRACP, Debra K Katzman and MD FRCPC. 2003. "The impact of the media on eating disorders in children and adolescents." *Paediatrics & Child Health*, 8(5): 287–89.

[99] Spettigue, W., and Henderson, K. A. 2004. "Eating disorders and the role of the media." *The Canadian child and adolescent psychiatry review = La revue canadienne de psychiatrie de l'enfant et de l'adolescent*, 13(1): 16–19.

[100] de Freitas, Catarina, Helen Jordan, and Elizabeth K. Hughes. 2018. "Body image diversity in the media: A content analysis of women's fashion magazines." *Health Promotion Journal of Australia*, 29(3): 251-56.

fear of aging.[101] Therefore, the "silent stereotype" conveyed by fashion images that marginalizes older women has a negative impact on the readers.

According to the studies reviewed (see footnotes n. 97, 99, 100), there is a similar trend in the majority of Western countries in the way women are portrayed in fashion magazines. The modern woman fashion is usually white, shows no aging signs and is underweight. Regarding her attitude, she is mostly serious and shows little facial expression, which is the biggest evolution on Goffman's scale compared to a couple of decades ago where she was shown as socially entertaining. Otherwise, the models are still being photographed in sets and body postures which would not occur naturally. As fashion photography is considered an art form[102], it can be argued that the result of a fashion shoot should not necessarily be an accurate reflection of reality. While photographs do not have to convey authentic life situations, this fact does not justify why there is a tendency to portray women in a way that does not positively reflect their reality or condition. The focus groups discussed how women feel about the type of images they can encounter in *Vogue Germany*.

The focus groups did not confront participants directly with fashion images at first, but translated what can be found in the photographs in everyday situations. I chose to adopt this approach because the peculiarities of fashion images such as skinny bodies, the absence of older models, or racial homogeneity have been normalized. Furthermore, the abnormal attitudes of models, such as sexualized attitudes with objects or themselves, might not stand out anymore. Scenarios were staged with women cradling objects unnaturally or insisting on the height difference between men and women for example, as well as exclusive storylines staging race, body size and age inequalities. Participants' reactions in the focus groups enabled me to understand how the pictures can be labelled and characterized. During the *Vogue Germany* fashion shoot I could assist in Zurich, I learned that the clothes were planned in advance, as well as the location and the model. On the other hand, the model's posing and her interaction with the environment were decided in the moment and were directed by the photographer. My traineeship taught me that the unnatural behaviour occurring in fashion images has been automated, and photographers and models tend to produce the unnatural behaviour by default.

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[101] Lewis, Denise and Katalin Medvedev and Desiree Seponski. 2011. "Awakening to the desires of older women: Deconstructing ageism within fashion magazines." *Journal of Aging Studies*, 25: 101-09.
[102] Maynard, M. 2009. "The mystery of the fashion photograph." In: *Fashion in Fiction: Text and Clothing in Literature, Film, and Television*, 54-69. Oxford: Berg.

I studied the existing literature to understand how women would like to be photographed and represented in the fashion world. My aim was to understand if a power relationship exists between *Vogue Germany*'s female readers and its fashion images. According to Bryson *et al.* (1994), images are by default feminine and the bearer of the look is masculine, so understanding what pictures mean is a way of knowing what women want.[103] In the case of this report, as my focus is on *Vogue Germany*'s feminine audience, my interest lies in the feminine gaze. It is my contention that Bryson's claim is partially correct in the case of *Vogue Germany* (and also of other fashion publications) because the male gaze does shape the way women behave and think in Western society.[104] A tale written by Chaucer imagined the term "maistrye" to describe a woman's true desire. The expression is an amalgam between "mastery" and the idea of super strength or cunning. It proposes that women want to obtain "maistrye" by right or consent because they lack power and take whatever they can get.[105] Translated into pictures, women want to have some kind of power over the viewer. Fashion pictures do not necessarily confer power on photographed women as they are staged to showcase garments. Through the review of existing literature on what women actually want and search for regarding the ways they are represented enabled me to propose categories that may empower women in fashion photographs in opposition to Goffman's scale.

The ways through which women want to be seen and represented today started with the first of the three feminist revolutions[106] society has experienced in the last decades. The third and last revolution which women are still experiencing nowadays started in the late nineties and has been described as a movement of liberation. As Schneider notes, "This movement is concerned not simply with the social, political, and economic equality of women with men but with a fundamental reimagination of the whole of humanity in relation

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[103] Bryson N., M. A. Holly, and K. Moxey. 1994. *Visual culture: Images and interpretations*. Wesleyan University Press.

[104] Cahill, A. J. 2003. "Feminist pleasure and feminine beautification". *Hypatia*, *18*(4): 42-64.

[105] Mitchell, W. 1996. "What Do Pictures "Really" Want?" *October,* 77: 71-82.

[106] The first feminist revolution (1910-1930) mainly focused on providing women with the same political rights as men. The second feminist revolution (1960) fought for the right to control motherhood through the use of contraception and abortion. The third wave of the feminist revolution (1990 - today) fights for diversity (sexual orientation, racial diversity, integration of prostitutes…) and uses modern media to preach its ideas. On the feminist revolution, see Johnson, Tayllor Blair. 2017. "Waves of Feminism and the Media." *Lewis Honors College Capstone Collection*. 32.

to the whole of reality, including non-human creation."[107] (Schneider 2000, 2) What the author stresses is that the third wave feminism expanded the notion of femininity beyond perspective barriers. Feminism is put in relation with pictures, and thus with the question of what pictures should mean to women and for women. One of the goals of the third wave has been to suppress the categories surrounding womanhood as a solution to remove stereotypes by stopping to classify them.[108] Feminism, and especially the third wave as it is the longest feminist movement up to this day, shapes women's expectations and desires from their peers.[109] In line with this assumption, I contend that the fashion woman being predominantly white, skinny and young does not fit into the ways women would like to be represented nowadays, as this kind of characterization clearly categorizes and excludes a significant proportion of the population.

The first assertion from the third feminist wave is the wish for diversity in terms of physical attributes. Feminism, at least until the third wave, is known to have mainly been operated by white women for white women, clearly keeping a distinction between the rights of the rich and white and the poor and colored. The third wave is the first prone to inclusivity and to see women as one, thereby erasing ethnic differences.[110] A significant change since the second wave is the movement's openness to incorporate men into the feminist agenda, extending the inclusivity to the other gender.[111] Thus the wish for diversity in terms of physical attributes extends to the racial component, while obviously also including the body type category, as well as the age component. In terms of behavior, what most characterised the third wave is a "can do" attitude, which embodied women who excelled at work and in the educational field, distancing from the traditional housewife role.

A few precisions are necessary to correctly understand why and how I chose to study this movement. The above mentioned attitude is one of the many facets of the latest large-scale feminist movement. Because of the movement's magnitude, some of its ideas can seem

[107] Schneiders, S.M. 2000. *Oil in Their Lamps: Faith, Feminism, and the Future.* New York: Paulist Press.
[108] Ghorfati, A., and R. Medini. 2015. "Feminism and its Impact On woman in the Modern Society." Master Degree Diss., University of Tlemcen.
[109] Fernandes, L. 2010. "Unsettling "Third Wave Feminism": Feminist Waves, Intersectionality, and Identity Politics in Retrospect." In *No Permanent Waves,* 98-118. Ithaca, NY: Rutgers University Press.
[110] Zack, Naomi. 2007. "Can Third Wave Feminism Be Inclusive?." *Feminist philosophy*: 193.
[111] Dean, J. 2009. "Who's afraid of third wave feminism? On the uses of the 'third wave' in British feminist politics." *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, *11*(3): 334-52.

contradictory with others.[112] I would also like to specify that social change is an ongoing process and so the characteristics of the beginning of the third wave might have already changed and be somewhat outdated.[113] Nevertheless, understanding the beginning of the current feminist era enabled me to better assess how women evolved into what they want today. This report also discards the theory that a fourth wave started with the expansion of social media.[114] I would like to argue that social media platforms are integrated in the third wave as an instrument rather than representing a new movement. While my analysis is by no means exhaustive, I highlight relevant changes to expose and reflect on the gap between the way women are portrayed in fashion photography and their evolution in Western society. Entities which were developed under the third wave such as the Riot grrrl movement[115] or the *BUST* magazine[116] used cultural production as key sites of struggle for the injustice they denounced. Third wave feminists often chose to use desire and pleasure as well as anger to trigger their audience and fuel struggles for injustice[117], and cultural entities were optimal media to do so.

The differences between a magazine like *BUST* and a magazine like *Vogue Germany*, both still in operation nowadays, emphasize how a women's lifestyle magazine can convey different images of women. While not going into more depth regarding third wave feminism because of its density, the central arguments of the movement are its inclusivity and an independent attitude. Third wave feminism, still being active and very popular today, suggests that the majority of women in Western countries support the ideas conveyed by the movement. The photographs found in the selected *Vogue Germany* issues can therefore, among other variables, be examined according to the ideals of third wave feminism. As a conclusion to the contextualization of the representation of women in magazines and in society, I would like to point out a detail that struck me during my research. To my

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[112] Aune, K., and R. Holyoak, R. 2018. "Navigating the third wave: Contemporary UK feminist activists and 'third-wave feminism'." *Feminist Theory*, 19(2): 183-203.

[113] Kinser, Amber E. 2004. "Negotiating Spaces For/Through Third-Wave Feminism." *NWSA Journal*, 16(3): 124–53.

[114] Chamberlain, Evans, Elizabeth and Prudence. 2015. "Critical Waves: Exploring Feminist Identity, Discourse and Praxis in Western Feminism." *Social Movement Studies*, 14(4): 396–409.

[115] Riot grrrl is a punk rock music movement from the 1990's which exposed issues such as rape, domestic violence, sexuality and celebrated the empowerment of women.

[116] BUST is a women's lifestyle magazine, its slogan is "For women to get something off their chest." It started in 1993's and has the mission to be pro-female, by aligning their ideas within the feminist movement.

[117] Heywood, L., and J. Drake. 1997. *Third wave agenda: Being feminist, doing feminism*. University of Minnesota Press.

knowledge, no study has been conducted yet to understand how women would like to be seen in photographs. When studying the existing literature, researching terms such as "likings", "representation", "image" and "women" mostly resulted in finding studies about women and food intake or sexual desire. Besides the homogeneity of the recent research, none of the studies I read included a woman's opinion on the matter. This internship report is dedicating a substantial part to the discussion of how women would like to be represented in fashion magazines. This explains why I interviewed women rather than elicited assumptions based on the existing literature. By doing so, I hope to contribute to the existing academic research on fashion and to translate women's wishes in terms of representation and identity in fashion photography.

The case of *Vogue Germany*

I.   The research method

In this internship report I present an analysis of fashion images published in the various issues of *Vogue Germany* between May 2020 and May 2021. This temporal delineation has been chosen to include issues solely published and produced under Covid-19 lockdown circumstances. As the German lockdown started in March 2020 and a *Vogue Germany* issue is usually produced two months in advance, the first issue meeting both criteria is May 2020. This internship report focuses on the Covid-19 period because of two reasons. First, I completed my internship under the period under analysis when I assisted personally in the production of some of the fashion images. Second, the lockdown conditions during the Covid-19 period implied very limited human interaction and stimuli from external factors. Therefore, any type of stimulus would have had more impact as less distractions were present.

In this internship report I attempt to examine the correlation between *Vogue Germany's* fashion images and well-being. Primary data were collected using a non-standardised, semi-structured focus groups technique. Secondary data were collected on the selected *Vogue Germany* issues using a standardised category technique.

An inductive approach was chosen to understand the results of the primary data collection and an exploratory course of action was used to identify the background and the context of events related to the production of fashion images and their impact on readers.

This approach rests on the review of existing literature, so that a deeper understanding of neurosciences and the evolution of women and subsequently of the relationship between consumers of fashion images and well-being can be achieved. The aim of the contextualization chapter is not to review each detail and/or to provide a summary of all findings, but rather to explore the most relevant and important literature on the topic and to identify important gaps in the research developed thus far. To fill in the gaps, data were collected through focus-group interviews, and as a result of thorough data analysis, a hypothesis was formulated.

A deductive approach could not be used as it was not possible to carry out neurological laboratory tests to test the correlation between the fashion images and well-being. A focus group research method was adopted as it allows the researcher to work with[118] open questions and capture the attitudes and expectations of the participants. Initial questions that determined the readers' interest were:

- What is the reason that leads you to buy *Vogue Germany*?
- Which are the most important attributes in a fashion magazine?
- Which types of fashion images do you prefer and why?
- How would you picture your female role model in a photograph and why?
- Do you compare yourself with the women portrayed in fashion magazines?
- How do you believe women are seen in Western society? What is your opinion about it?

In qualitative research and specifically focus groups, it is stated that small sample sizes are more effective for qualitative data collection[119]. The research, therefore, carefully selected a non-probable sample in order to recruit *Vogue Germany*'s female readers. A survey was sent to around ninety people (mostly friends and fellow students) in German-speaking countries to assess potential focus groups participants, taking into account the attributes describing *Vogue Germany*'s female readers. The survey comprised questions such as:

- Do you read *Vogue Germany*? If yes, how often?

In total, nineteen people were identified to participate in the focus groups. In order to be selected for the focus groups, participants had to be women, read *Vogue Germany* at least every three months and be willing to participate in the focus group interviews. To ensure the participants anonymity, I will not disclose the individual survey responses. The survey sample can be found in appendix A.

All participants received an online Google hangout link for the focus groups. Due to the current COVID-19 situation and the international profile of participants, the focus groups

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[118] Saunders, Mark N. K., P. Lewis and A. Thornhill. 2017. *Research Methods for Business Students*. London: Pearson Education Limited.

[119] Saunders, Mark N. K., P. Lewis and A. Thornhill. 2017. *Research Methods for Business Students*. London: Pearson Education Limited.

were conducted online, using a predetermined list of themes, including guiding questions. In total I conducted three focus groups, with a total duration of approximately forty-five minutes per focus group.

The data were recorded and transcribed using the "Descript software". Transcribing data from the audio recording was the first step for the qualitative data analysis. The entire transcript of the three focus groups can be found in appendix B. Mayring's proposal[120] was then adopted to examine qualitative data through the use of the inductive category development method. The approach follows a predefined process by analysing the material step by step. Figure 1 shows the step model of inductive category development.

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[120] On content analysis, see Krippendorff, K. 1980. *Content analysis: an introduction to its methodology*. California: Sage publications. p. 363.
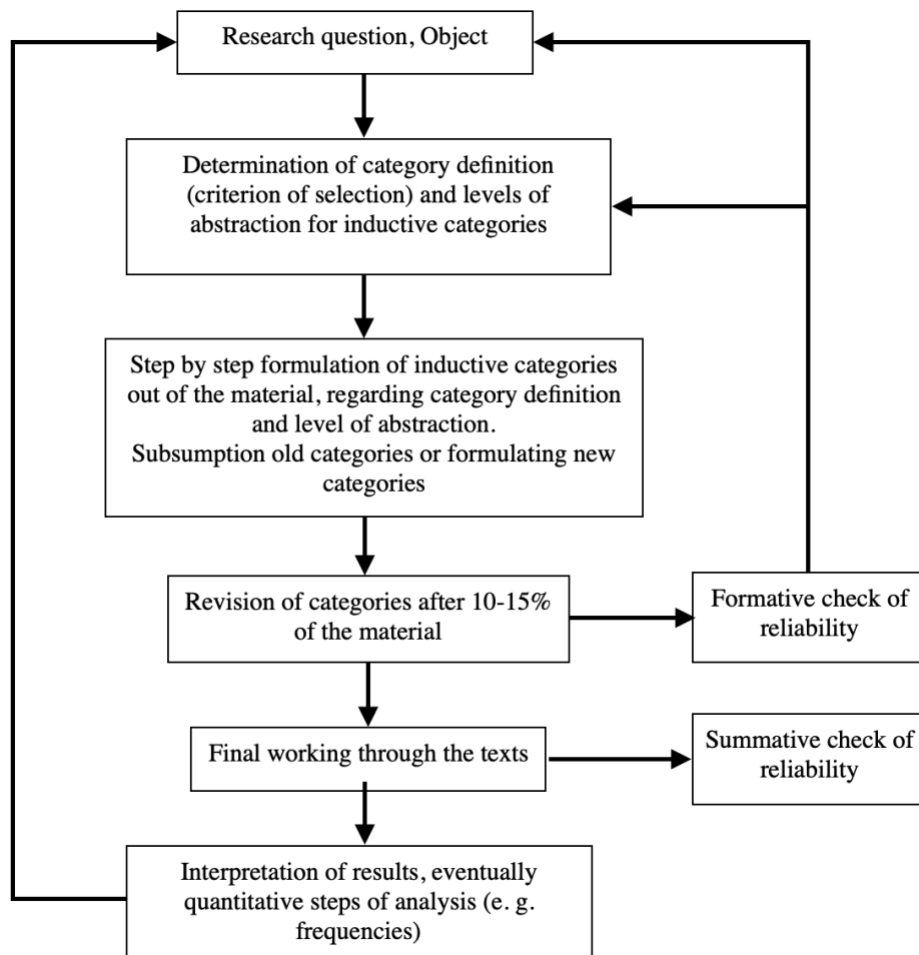
Figure 1: Step model of inductive category development[121]

According to Mayring (2000), the foundation of the analysis is the underlying research. This internship report aimed at responding to the following question: "How do *Vogue Germany'*s fashion images influence the female readership's well-being?"

Step 1: In the first step, each sentence was segmented into analytical units. For each segment, a purely descriptive category was chosen. The segmented data were transferred to Quirkos, a software used for data analysis. This can be found in appendix C. The approach was inductive, which means that categories were formulated after carefully reading the material.

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[121] Mayring, P. 2000. "Qualitative Content Analysis." *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 1(2).

For each analytical unit, a category was chosen. New analytical units were either categorised drawing on existing ones, or new categories were formulated.

Step 2: According to the step model by Mayring (2000), and after reviewing 10 - 50% of the data, the established categories needed to be checked. This process involved verifying if the categories reflected the content appropriately. Moreover, similar categories were put together.

Step 3: This step involved finalising the data analysis which included the determination of the categories and the interpretation of the results.

Ethical guidelines informed the writing of this internship report and the research carried out. All participants of the focus group signed a form, which included the agreement of taking part in the study, the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered, as well as the right to withdraw at any time without a given reason. In order to protect the anonymity of the participants, I do not disclose information about their identities. Participants were informed that the discussed information would not be disseminated without permission. In order to guarantee confidentiality, the names of the participants in the form were anonymised and participants are referred to by the letters A, B, C, D, E, in the following chapter[122].

When it comes to collecting data in qualitative research, there are concerns about reliability and validity. It is often criticised that during a semi-structured interview, the intent of a participant might be misunderstood, as the researcher does not fully understand the participant's knowledge and experience[123].

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[122] Wiles, R., G. Crow, S. Heath, and V. Charles. 2006. "Anonymity and Confidentiality." ESRC National Centre for Research Methods. NCRM Working Paper Series 2/06. University of Southampton.
[123] Saunders, Mark N. K., P. Lewis and A. Thornhill. 2017. *Research Methods for Business Students*. London: Pearson Education Limited.

II. Focus groups findings

This section outlines the results of the qualitative data analysis and discusses its findings. Nineteen *Vogue Germany* female readers participated in three different focus group interviews. The first focus group included six participants, the second had seven participants and the last one had six *Vogue Germany* readers.[124] All participants were women and active readers of the fashion magazine (see Appendix A). All focus groups were conducted online and lasted around forty-five minutes each. Primary research of the focus group has been analyzed using Marying's methods of inductive content analysis. Altogether, eight parameters were identified as contributing to making an image positive for women readers. Categories were sorted along the participants' views on female representation. To gain a comprehensive overview of the focus group findings, the following frameworks have been conducted:

> Left: Verbatim/ Quote from the participants.
> Right: Corresponding category.

Each category is structured by presenting the findings of primary research. Finally, using Marying's method, the interpretation of the results is presented. I would like to emphasise the purpose of this research, i.e. to understand which type of images can contribute positively to the female readers well-being of *Vogue Germany*. Therefore, the categories deriving from the primary research are oriented towards this research goal.

For the following categories, the research aimed to find the information related to the physical attributes of the models. Various questions were asked throughout the interviews (see Appendix B for the transcript). Similar wants and behaviours have been grouped and formed a category.

Category: Celebrating a woman's body

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[124] Effective focus groups tend to have between six to eight participants, according to Cyr, J. 2017. "The unique utility of focus groups for mixed-methods research." *PS: Political Science & Politics*, *50*(4): 1038 - 42.

Fashion photography in female magazines mostly produces images with models or images called "still life", which put objects and garments in scenery without a model being present. Usually when a model is present, she wears and/or comes in contact with the garments. The photographer can choose to use her body in the image's composition in numerous ways. She can either disappear under the clothes and be used as what is popularly called a "coat hanger" and be passively involved. Her body can also be an active part in the composition and nurture a relationship with the reader. In the case of models being an active part of the picture, the participants of the focus group were asked what kind of photography celebrated a woman's body. Primary research found that celebrating women's bodies resulted in positive feelings about oneself, even if the model's body differed in body type or body mass from the reader's. The findings are presented in Figure 2.1.

Verbatim/ Quotes	Category
Participant 6: "A woman who is not trying to please the person who is going to look at the picture." Participant 3: "It is about body acceptance [...] it's really empowering." Participant 3: "Women showing their bodies [...] it is even more impactful if the model is not looking absolutely perfect." Participant 5: "I believe my mood would be at least the same if not better after seeing those pictures."	Celebrating a woman's body

Figure 2.1 Category: Celebrating a woman's body

In order to determine what is understood under the celebration of the female body, participants were asked to describe a scenery where the body of the model would make them feel empowered about their own. Interestingly, nudity was listed as empowering in the case of bodies showing "imperfections". A model not posing in traditional postures meant to

please the male gaze or defying classic "stretching" positions used to hide body fat has also been described as empowering. Concluding the primary research about the female body, the information suggests that a model who accepts her body and who seems to be proud of it is considered to be an empowering characteristic by the female readership.

Category: Physical attributes

Secondary research emphasized the lack of physical diversity amongst the models in fashion photography. Fashion models have been found to be mostly white, young and slim. Less highlighted in the contextualization section of this study is the physical homogeneity of the models. Physical attributes such as haircuts or freckles do not differ substantially between the photographed women. For example, models' hair is usually long and straightened. To understand if the homogeneity of physical attributes reflected a preference of the readers, participants were asked to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of physical diversity. For this study, it was essential to understand which physical attributes contribute to increase physical diversity amongst models.

Participants were asked to describe how they would expect a model to look like in a fashion magazine such as *Vogue Germany*. All of them imagined a white, young and slim model with mid-long to long straight hair and with a hair color ranging from hazelnut to blond. No distinctive features came to their mind such as tattoos, freckles or body hair. The existence of possible peculiar physical attributes among models were introduced in the conversation. Participants were asked to name distinctive physical attributes they encountered in their social circle aside from ethnicity. The listed attributes were the following: tattoos, piercings, untraditional haircut and/or coloring, out of the norm body shape, and skin conditions such as acne, freckles or moles. Participants highlighted that physical attributes that are out of the ordinary are more regularly picked on, in contrast with attributes that are smaller than the average. For example small ears will not be as noticed as particularly large ears.

Verbatim/ Quotes	Category
Participant 5: "I would say a lot of people have tattoos	Physical attributes

and piercings." Participant 5: "Big ears or a very big nose [...] are the distinctive features that come to my mind or a lot of freckles." Participant 4: "I would very much like to see the models a bit more "human" [...] because I also have distinctive futures that come to my mind when I think about myself." Participant 4: "And maybe for my insecurities personally [...] it would definitely make me feel better about myself." Participant 1: "I notice the different body shapes and body sizes." Participant 1: "I don't think that only skinny girls should be seen as beautiful, I think I would also feel better about myself because I do not fit the model sample size and sometimes I feel unconfident about my body." Participant 4: "The fashion industry should normalize skin conditions, like acne or moles or eczema, cellulite also being in that category."	

Figure 2.2 Category: Physical attributes

The aim of this focus group was to understand how the presence of heterogeneous physical characteristics in photographs could influence *Vogue Germany*'s readers. Further primary research has suggested that photographs picturing models with distinctive physical attributes were more likely to catch the reader's attention. Findings are presented in table 2.2. Furthermore, the findings suggested that the readers feel better about images when the models display heterogeneous physical features. This has been analyzed while taking into consideration the personal preferences of each participant.

Category: Physical diversity

        The construction of the physical diversity category from the results of primary research is to be found in Figure 2.3. Evolving from the physical attributes category, the focus group interviews directed their attention to diversity in a broader sense. Secondary research found that numerous segments of the population were underrepresented in fashion photography. All participants mentioned a lack of ethnic diversity and of body types. Seven participants have noted the lack of diversity in terms of the age of the models.

Verbatim/ Quotes	Category
Participant 6: "There's definitely a problem with ethnicity [...] they have big, big improvements to make on that side." Participant 1: "I think I would very much prefer, um, if the magazine would just include everyone because all ethnicities have beautiful women and all body sizes and all body shapes have beautiful women." Participant 1: "I would feel better about that, even though I don't come from a minority, I don't necessarily feel that exclusivity makes people feel good." Participant 6: "Vogue Germany tries to make some efforts to include more ethnicities even if it's very far from being an equal distribution between all ethnicities." Participant 6: "I don't recall seeing an older model in the magazine, besides maybe celebrities. [...] when I read Vogue Germany it sometimes makes me feel old." Participant 1:	Physical diversity

"Even as a student I would prefer to see older models. A lot of girls are afraid of aging."	

Figure 2.3 Category: Physical diversity

The focus groups were unanimous in declaring that diversity mattered when creating an inclusive environment for all *Vogue Germany* readers. Participants evoked testimonials from their social circle who felt marginalized by fashion photography or who did not buy magazines such as *Vogue Germany* because they did not feel represented by them. Primary research suggests that including all segments of the population contributes to the readers' well-being. This is especially important if the reader is part of a group which is normally underrepresented in fashion photography.

Category: Challenging gender stereotypes

Secondary research showed that fashion photography tends to reinforce gender stereotypes through its images. Gender stereotypes can be present in multiple forms. If, for example, we look at Goffman's scale, it will include the ritualization of subordination, function ranking, relative size and licensed withdrawal.[125] The reason behind fashion photographs and editors publishing such images remains unclear. However, primary research found that the female readers of *Vogue Germany* do not believe gender stereotypes contribute to fashion images in any way. The findings are presented in Figure 2.4.

Verbatim/ Quotes	Category
Participant 2: "Sometimes I notice it (gender stereotypes) and I definitely don't think that it contributes in any way to fashion images." Participant 2: "When I think of gender stereotypes, what pops into my mind is a woman in a housewife role or a woman as being an object of desire, a woman being overly sexualized."	Challenging gender stereotypes

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[125] Goffman, E. 1976. *Gender advertisements*. London: Palgrave.

Participant 2: "If I could see a picture that challenged gender stereotypes [...] I would say that I would feel empowered as a woman." Participant 6: "The fashion industry shouldn't embrace gender stereotypes which are often detrimental to women."	

Figure 2.4 Category: Challenging gender stereotypes

Participants were asked if they believed that fashion photography contained gender stereotypes. Subsequently, they were asked if they thought that gender stereotypes are a necessary component of fashion photography today. The exact definition of gender stereotypes differed slightly among participants. Nevertheless, they all agreed that being confronted with gender stereotypes in fashion images is not desirable. On the contrary, participants were asked to imagine how they would feel if they were confronted with fashion images that challenge gender stereotypes in a respectful and appropriate manner. Nine out of nineteen participants mentioned it is important to be reminded of the existence of such stereotypes as they often go unnoticed, and all participants said it would leave them feeling empowered as women. The result suggests that pictures challenging gender stereotypes can have a positive effect on female readers.

Category: Unretouched pictures

Retouched images are common in fashion photography. There are two main types of image retouching. The first category is high-end retouching, with a purpose of maintaining the picture as natural as possible by keeping the details and the texture intact while making it look polished and clean. The second category consists of altering the photographed elements. Recently, some countries, such as France, decided to oblige images picturing models whose appearance has been altered through image processing to be accompanied by the slogan "retouched image". Secondary research found that the representation of women in media tends to encourage a distorted body image and resulting eating disorders and lower self-esteem. One aim of the focus groups was to understand whether participants were aware

of the pictures being retouched. I also tried to understand if seeing unretouched pictures would enhance *Vogue Germany*'s readers' experience. Figure 2.5 includes the obtained data.

Verbatim/ Quotes	Category
Participant 3: "I don't think I recall seeing cellulite or some irregularities on a model's leg. [...] I must say I had some moments where I kind of felt a bit bad about myself." Participant 5: "I think that seeing some signs of, for example cellulite [...] or body fat, even skin irregularities I would say, like acne scars or a pimple or maybe a little wrinkle. I think if I saw that in a picture, then I would not think that it has been altered. [...] I think I would even prefer it that way because we all have those imperfections." Participant 7: "I must say that even if I know that images are probably being photoshopped, I would prefer if they did not do it, because it just adds to the pressure of how you are supposed to look like. [...] we as fashion industry consumers should not be blinded by perfect pictures which do not represent reality."	Unretouched pictures

Figure 2.5 Category: Unretouched pictures

Primary research found that a picture is seen as unretouched when it displays physical features such as signs of cellulite, wrinkles, body fat or skin irregularities. Participants mentioned that it is nearly impossible to know if a picture has been processed to alter the model's body size. Nevertheless, if the photographer chooses not to hide the irregularities of a model's body, primary research found that the readers would most likely feel better about

their own bodies. No participant mentioned that an "unpolished" picture would reduce the model's attractiveness or lower the artistic and commercial value of the image.

Category: Signs of personality and culture

Figure 2.6 shows the category "*signs of personality and culture*". Thirteen participants out of the focus group interviews mentioned that they would like to have more information communicated about the personality and the culture of the photographed model. All participants said that they disliked when models were exclusively used as coat hangers to display the garments. Five of them stated that such use of the models made them feel bad about themselves. Seven participants also said they prefer when the name of the model was written distinctively at the beginning or at the end of the photo story.

Verbatim/ Quotes	Category
Participant 5: "I think it could definitely be beneficial to be able to interpret the personality of a model and know more about her. [...] I would prefer to know more about a model's life and personality because to me that's how you connect with someone." Participant 2: "First I think that it's very important to know the name of the model. [...] models could be allowed to keep certain personal items like jewelry or signs of their cultural beliefs or religious beliefs. [...] I would argue that seeing her name, and not written in a very small font at the end of the image series, personal items that she was allowed to keep in the pictures are a good starting point." Participant 7: "I would love to see some of her personal items on the shoot. Even if it's just her holding the book she is currently reading or a little bracelet that she's usually wearing every day. [...] I said just before it makes me feel bad to see a model being used as a coat hanger."	Signs of personality and culture

Participant 1: "If she kept a religious sign."	

Figure 2.6 Category: Signs of personality and culture

Primary research suggested that if readers can relate to the model by knowing more about her personality and culture it would allow them to connect with the model. Focus group findings have indicated that this can be achieved, for example, by seeing the model reading a book, keeping certain personal items on the image or showing signs of religious beliefs. As far as this aspect is concerned, primary research suggests that *Vogue Germany*'s readers seek personal information about the people they see in the fashion stories, in particular female readers in relation to female models. Taking this into consideration can possibly help to enhance the reader's well-being as it increases positive feelings towards the models.

Category: Display of positive emotions

Participants mentioned they had a tendency to be influenced by the emotions of other people around them. Thirteen participants have said to be impacted by the display of positive emotions. Secondary research suggested that one of the latest evolutions in fashion photography is to minimize facial expression. Models are less likely to show emotion today and adopt a neutral expression rather than smiling or laughing. Furthemore, it has been proven that humans have a tendency to mimic the emotions they encounter. To increase positive feelings of well-being, *Vogue Germany* should publish images showing happy models (see Figure 2.7).

Verbatim/ Quotes	Category
Participant 4: "I think it's well known that the people around us have a direct influence on our state of mind. [...] we tend to reproduce the emotions we see."	Display of positive emotions
Participant 4: "If I see models smiling and laughing, and if it looks authentic obviously, I would be	

Verbatim/ Quotes	Category
positively influenced by it." Participant 1: "It (the emotions) has to look authentic otherwise it could have the reversed effect."	

Figure 2.7 Category: Display of positive emotions

Findings of primary research suggest that laughing and smiling are the most powerful display of emotion to positively influence *Vogue Germany's* readers. Images of models laughing and smiling are powerful mood enhancers, according to the findings of focus group interviews. Six participants highlighted that the display of positive emotions in an unspectacular setting, such as at home or in a common setting, would be more impactful to them. An impressive location or luxurious items such as expensive cars or gourmet food can be interpreted as the cause of the positive emotion. The positive emotion is more powerful when the reader can relate with it.

Category: Scenery

The findings of the primary research in the category "*display of positive emotions*" led the focus group interviews to the "*scenery*" category. As six participants mentioned the benefit of unspectacular scenery, the aim was to understand the different types of possible sceneries in fashion photography and their impact. Secondary research found that commercial photography had a tendency to depict women in traditional housewife roles, but also in settings where women would unnaturally cradle, touch, or caress objects with a focus on the object. The focus group interviews found that it is essential for female readers to be able to relate to the model in the picture. Therefore, participants were asked to describe settings they could not relate to and ones which they could. The questions were directed to understand if the current sceneries were beneficial to the readers (see Figure 2.8).

Verbatim/ Quotes	Category
Participant 5: "It would make it harder to relate with the model if you see her in a setting that you could never afford, or that is not your	Scenery

everyday life."	
Participant 1: "I don't even know if it's setting could be positive, but maybe it could help me relate to the picture. [...] So, I guess to me to be able to relate with a picture the easiest way would be to produce images in an everyday scenery." Participant 2: "Common settings would allow the readers not to feel that they are excluded from the fashion world because it's too luxurious for them."	

Figure 2.8 Category: Scenery

No participant said that they could be negatively impacted by a fashion image because of its setting. An inappropriate setting could at most make the picture neutral and impossible to identify with. Primary research found that everyday sceneries are the most impactful for *Vogue Germany*'s readers. Participants referred to common situations everyone could encounter on a daily basis. Ten participants mentioned that they felt more connected to the beauty of the model, the garments and photography in general if they could imagine themselves in the given setting. The findings suggest that sceneries exempted from abundant luxury or spectacular elements most benefit the reader's well-being. Based on these findings, the following hypothesis is raised: "It is important to publish pictures which the *Vogue Germany* reader will be able to relate to. If the reader can relate to the picture and the model(s) in it, there is a higher chance the image can positively impact the reader's well-being."

In general terms, the results of this research are unique as no study has used the focus group method to assess the relationship between the fashion images published by *Vogue Germany* and the well-being of *Vogue Germany*'s readers. Additional data about *Vogue Germany* were collected in eleven monthly issues. The fashion images collected in the eleven monthly issues can be found under the QR code in Appendix four. The study relates the findings of the focus groups and the data collected in the magazine. Therefore, based on the model specifications used for this study, findings were discussed and related to current research.

III.   The imagery found in *Vogue Germany*

The scale

Additional data were collected from eleven monthly *Vogue Germany* editions (please see Appendix four). The analysis of fashion pictures has been based on the findings of the primary research. To ensure a coherence between the focus groups' findings and the collected data, the pictures were sorted according to the categories found in the primary research. The findings of the secondary research were used to discuss the results of the data collection. As previously mentioned, this study did not use a scale already in existence, such as Goffman's work for example. An original scale has been created to sort the fashion pictures found in the selected *Vogue Germany* issues. Eight distinctive categories emerged from the focus group interviews, on which the scale is based. The aim of the scale is to translate the eight categories from the primary research into tangible elements in order to sort the data.

The first category is "celebrating a woman's body". The keywords of this category were "empowering", "defying the male gaze", "imperfect nudity" and "body acceptance". A picture belongs to this category if the model translates a sense of authenticity and is not groomed to look pleasing according to societal norms. Images with models defying the norms established by the male gaze are what this rubric scale is grading. Within the framework of this report, to defy the male gaze, assert body acceptance and celebrate a woman's body is embodied by the rejection of the traditional erotic criteria. The body positioning of the model and her appearance are both taken into account. Traditional erotic criteria include the objectification of women, signs of fetishism and loss of identity.[126] It is important to mention that the male gaze does not necessarily only construct a negative version of women. The scale has solely been established on the findings of primary research and on what body acceptance means to *Vogue Germany*'s readers.

The second category is "physical attributes". The title of this category speaks for itself. As primary research showed, the presence of heterogeneous physical features in fashion images can positively influence the readers. Therefore, the scale is based on the

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[126] On the male gaze see: Snow, E. 1989. "Theorizing the male gaze: Some problems." *Representations*, *25*: 30-41 and Oliver, K. 2017. "The male gaze is more relevant, and more dangerous, than ever." *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, *15*(4): 451-55.

number of heterogeneous physical attributes found amongst the photographed models. Any physical attribute deriving from the stereotyped fashion model counts as a heterogeneous trait. The stereotyped fashion model has been described as the following: thin, white, young and with no unconventional physical attributes (hairstyle, tattoo, skin condition...). Elements related to ethnicity, age and body size were not taken into account here as they are relevant features of another category.

"Diversity" represents the third element of the scale and is the last category focusing exclusively on the model's physique. Primary research found that certain segments of the population were underrepresented in fashion photography. Diversity in terms of age, ethnicity and body size can increase the reader's well-being. Therefore, the diversity category takes note of the signs of aging in models, non-white ethnicities and diverse body types. Any body type that differs from the models' usual slim body have been considered.

"Challenging gender stereotypes" is the first category on the scale built around a societal issue that cannot be solely translated into physical features. Primary research showed that gender stereotypes have a different definition for each *Vogue Germany* reader. Nevertheless, being confronted by an image challenging the aforementioned stereotype can positively impact the reader's well-being. Stereotyping how women think and behave can usually be divided into three categories: women in a sexualized role, women in a domestic environment and women as a passive element of the photographic composition.[127] The findings of the primary research are consistent with the secondary research. According to this definition, the scale evaluates if the picture challenges gender stereotypes. The aim of the scale is not to highlight when a picture contains a gender stereotype.

The fifth category is called "Unretouched picture". The "Unretouched picture" category has several similarities with the first category, "Celebrating a woman's body". It also involves the sense of authenticity previously mentioned. The difference between the "Celebrating a woman's body" category and this one is the notion of imperfection. Primary research found that if the readers are looking at an image which has not been retouched, it will make them feel better about themselves and increase their sense of well-being. To determine if an image has not been retouched, the scale evaluates if imperfections are visible in the model's body. The imperfections can be cellulite, body fat, wrinkles, or skin

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[127] Windels, K. 2016. "Stereotypical or just typical: how do US practitioners view the role and function of gender stereotypes in advertisements?." *International Journal of Advertising*, *35*(5): 864-87.

irregularities, for example. The participants of the focus group interviews believe that all women have visible body imperfections.

"Signs of personality and culture" are the most subjective elements of the scale. Primary research suggests that *Vogue Germany*'s readers wish to relate to the model on a personal level. This is partly possible if "Signs of personality and culture" are to be found in an image. This category is highly subjective because of two components. Firstly, the elements giving information on personality and culture differ for each reader. Secondly, it cannot be known if an element is part of the photographic composition or reflects a personal choice from the model. Primary research found that personal objects allow *Vogue Germany*'s readers to connect with the model, as well as knowing the name of the girl being photographed. The scale is therefore based on the number of personal items kept in a photograph and on the readability of the model's name. When a personal object appears in fashion images it is clearly stated so in the footnotes. Regarding the model's name, the scale determines if it is to be found at all, if it is in the footnotes or if it is written in a visible font at the beginning or at the end of the fashion story.

The seventh category is about connecting *Vogue Germany*'s readers with the model's mood and emotions. The category "Display of positive emotions" is based on the findings of primary and secondary research. Focus group participants unanimously agreed that they are influenced by the emotions they encounter. Secondary research has proven that we tend to unconsciously mimic the emotions we are exposed to. Primary research suggests that laughing and smiling have the most impact on *Vogue Germany*'s readers well-being. Therefore, the scale takes into account the display of positive emotions in the fashion stories, with a focus on models laughing and smiling.

The last category is called "Scenery". Once more, the aim of this category is to identify in fashion images the elements *Vogue Germany*'s readers can relate to. In this case, it is about the scenery in the photographs. The focus group interview findings suggest that a relatable setting can have a positive impact on the readers' well-being. For the scenery to be realistic to the reader, it has to be exempted from signs of abundant luxury or be set in an exotic environment. The scale grades how common the scenery can be to the average reader. The scale also takes into account both the surroundings and what the model is doing, in the case of the model engaging in an activity. In order not to interfere with the category "Challenging gender stereotypes", environments showing women in gender stereotyped

roles do not count. The scale differentiates between common daily situations such as cooking at home without further indications and situations depicting a gender stereotype such as cooking at home for the family, stereotyping the housewife's role.

The scale is built around the findings of the primary research. This study used it to categorize the images found in the selected *Vogue Germany* issues. The aim is to understand if *Vogue Germany's* fashion images can have a positive impact on the reader's well-being. The scale exclusively focuses on the positive impact of images on well-being. Therefore, the results are either positive or neutral but cannot be negative. If the results were not positive, they revealed a gap between how women would like to be seen in *Vogue Germany's* fashion photographs and how they are actually portrayed. The results are discussed in the section following the data collection.

The imagery found in *Vogue Germany* during a one-year time frame

This study analyzes the fashion images found in eleven monthly *Vogue Germany* issues. The first issue is the one of May 2020 and the last one is the one of May 2021. There are only eleven issues during this one-year timeframe because the July-August 2020 issue covers two months instead of one, as well as the January-February 2021 issue. The standardized scale established from the findings of the three focus group interviews was used to categorize secondary data. The results are presented according to each category of the scale. This study chose to present results per published fashion story[128] and not each published fashion photo. All the images in a fashion story follow the same thread, which makes an analysis by story more relevant than an analysis per image.

The following charts give an overview of the results of the secondary data collection. The results are presented per category and per fashion story for each edition. Each column is named after the fashion story it analyzes. The fashion stories are presented under the name they were published in *Vogue Germany* (such as Bling Big, Respekt!...). As previously mentioned, this study exclusively analyzes the content of fashion shoots. Therefore, the beauty and culture shoots[129] have not been taken into account.

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[128] A fashion story is the compilation of all published fashion pictures from one single shoot.
[129] Vogue Germany also produces images in the "beauty" pages, and in the "culture" pages of the magazine. As I worked for the fashion department, I was only involved in the production of the fashion images.

	May 20				June 20	
	Bling Big	Respekt!	Shine a Light	Morgen Sterne	Tony & Alex	All about Love
Celebrating a woman's body		X		X	X	X
Physical attributes		X			X	X
Diversity in terms of ethnicity						X
Diversity in terms of age		X		X		X
Diversity in terms of body size						X
Challenging gender stereotypes		X		X	X	X
Unretouched pictures	X	X		X		X
Display of personality and culture					X	X
Visible name	X	X	X	X	X	X
Display of positive emotions	X	X		X	X	X
Scenery			X		X	

Figure 1: Results of the May 2020 and the June 2020 edition

	July - August 20			September 20	
	Heimspiel	Intimacy	Im Wald leben	Basic reloaded	Lust for Life
Celebrating a woman's body			X		X
Physical attributes			X	X	X
Diversity in terms of ethnicity				X	X
Diversity in terms of age					
Diversity in terms of body size					X
Challenging gender stereotypes			X		X
Unretouched pictures					X
Display of personality and culture	X	X			X
Visible name	X	X	X	X	X
Display of positive emotions	X				X
Scenery	X		X		X

Figure 2: Results of the July-August 2020 double edition and the September 2020 edition

	October 20				November 20		
	Talk of the Town	Shades of Grey	Take it Easy	Der Wertschätzer	Raquel	Wie Gemalt	Kalt Warm
Celebrating a woman's body			X				X
Physical attributes			X			X	
Diversity in terms of ethnicity			X				X
Diversity in terms of age							
Diversity in terms of body size							X
Challenging gender stereotypes	X		X	X			X
Unretouched pictures							X
Display of personality and culture							X
Visible name	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Display of positive emotions							X
Scenery	X	X	X	X			X

Figure 3: Results of the October 2020 and the November 2020 edition

	December 20				
	From Russia with Love	Seelenwaderung	Winter is coming	Scheinwerfer	White Heat
Celebrating a woman's body		X		X	
Physical attributes		X	X		
Diversity in terms of ethnicity		X			
Diversity in terms of age					
Diversity in terms of body size					
Challenging gender stereotypes			X		
Unretouched pictures					
Display of personality and culture					
Visible name	X	X	X	X	X
Display of positive emotions					
Scenery					X

Figure 4: Results of the December 2020 edition

	January - February 21				March 21			
	Heidi & Leni	New Classics	Sun Kissed	Shape of You	Starker Auftritt	Jugend-Stil	Ready to Gou?	Salon Berlin
Celebrating a woman's body						X	X	
Physical attributes					X	X		X
Diversity in terms of ethnicity		X			X	X	X	X
Diversity in terms of age								
Diversity in terms of body size				X				
Challenging gender stereotypes	X					X		X
Unretouched pictures								X
Display of personality and culture						X		
Visible name	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Display of positive emotions					X	X		
Scenery						X		

Figure 5: Results of the January-February 2021 double edition and the March 2021 edition

	April 21					
	Cover Stars	Showtime	Guinevere & Friends	Plus One	Bildend Schön	Gute Arbeit
Celebrating a woman's body	X		X	X		
Physical attributes	X		X	X		
Diversity in terms of ethnicity		X		X		X
Diversity in terms of age			X	X		
Diversity in terms of body size			X			
Challenging gender stereotypes	X		X	X	X	X
Unretouched pictures			X	X		
Display of personality and culture			X	X	X	
Visible name	X	X	X	X	X	X
Display of positive emotions			X	X		X
Scenery	X			X	X	X

Figure 6: Results of the April 2021 edition

	May - June 21				
	Coming soon	Viva la Vida!	Mut-Moment	Le sleek c'est chic	Island in the Sun
Celebrating a woman's body	X				
Physical attributes	X				
Diversity in terms of ethnicity		X	X		X
Diversity in terms of age					
Diversity in terms of body size	X				
Challenging gender stereotypes		X	X		
Unretouched pictures	X		X	X	
Display of personality and culture			X		
Visible name	X	X	X	X	X
Display of positive emotions					
Scenery	X		X	X	

Figure 7: Results of the May-June 2021 double edition

Primary research indicates that the eight categories used in the scale are contributing factors to the well-being of *Vogue Germany*'s readers. The data collection of the eleven *Vogue Germany* issues suggest that the pictures published in the magazine do not meet the well-being criteria found during the focus group interviews. The following chart is a summary of the seven previous figures. It condenses all the results from the data collection into percentages representing the number of fashion stories meeting the scale's criteria.

Summary	May 20	June 20	July-Aug 20	September 20	October 20	November 20	December 20	Jan-Feb 21	March 21	April 21	May-June 21	Total
Celebrating a woman's body	50,00%	100,00%	33,33%	50,00%	25,00%	33,00%	40,00%	0,00%	50,00%	50,00%	20,00%	**41,03%**
Physical attributes	25,00%	100,00%	33,00%	100,00%	25,00%	33,00%	40,00%	0,00%	75,00%	50,00%	20,00%	**45,55%**
Diversity in terms of ethnicity	0,00%	50,00%	0,00%	0,00%	25,00%	33,00%	20,00%	25,00%	100,00%	50,00%	60,00%	**33,00%**
Diversity in terms of age	50,00%	50,00%	0,00%	50,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	33,00%	0,00%	**16,64%**
Diversity in terms of body size	0,00%	50,00%	0,00%	50,00%	0,00%	33,00%	0,00%	25,00%	0,00%	17,00%	20,00%	**17,73%**
Challenging gender stereotypes	50,00%	100,00%	33,00%	50,00%	75,00%	33,00%	20,00%	25,00%	50,00%	100,00%	40,00%	**52,36%**
Unretouched pictures	75,00%	50,00%	0,00%	50,00%	0,00%	33,00%	0,00%	0,00%	25,00%	33,00%	60,00%	**29,64%**
Display of personality and culture	0,00%	100,00%	67,00%	50,00%	0,00%	33,00%	0,00%	0,00%	25,00%	50,00%	20,00%	**31,36%**
Visible name	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%	**100,00%**
Display of positive emotions	75,00%	100,00%	33,00%	50,00%	0,00%	33,00%	0,00%	0,00%	50,00%	50,00%	0,00%	**35,55%**
Scenery	25,00%	50,00%	67,00%	50,00%	100,00%	33,00%	20,00%	0,00%	25,00%	67,00%	60,00%	**45,18%**

Figure 8: Summary of the results, translated in percentages

The summary of the collected data indicates that all criteria, besides the "visible name", are not even met by 50% of the pictures. The criteria listed as following, from the weakest presences in the pictures to the strongest: (1) Diversity in terms of age (16.64%); (2) Diversity in terms of body size (17.73%); (3) Unretouched pictures (29.64%); (4) Display

of personality and culture (31.36%); (5) Diversity in terms of ethnicity (33%); (6) Celebrating a woman's body (41.03%); (7) Scenery (45.18%); (8) Physical attributes (45.55%); (9) Challenging gender stereotypes (52.36%); (10) Visible name (100%). The scale is composed of ten elements, as the category "signs of personality" has been broken down into two distinctives features, the visibility of the name and the display of personality and culture. As the two criteria have very different results, I decided not to merge back the two elements as this could be misleading for the analysis of the findings. The low scores of *Vogue Germany's* pictures indicate that there is a gap between the readers' expectations and what is being published. A dichotomy between expectation and reality highlights the presence of a gap, the latter suggests the existence of a power relationship. In the case of this study, there is a power relationship between *Vogue Germany's* readers' expectations about fashion images and the fashion images produced by *Vogue Germany*. Put in another way, *Vogue Germany's* power lies in the perceived identity of its female readership. Female readers' well-being can be affected by the magazine's power on female identity.

Based on the model specifications used for this study, in the following section, findings are discussed and related to current research.

Analysis of the effect of *Vogue Germany*'s contents on their readers

The underlying question of this internship report is "*How can Vogue Germany produce fashion images that contribute positively to their female readers' well-being?*" To fill in the remaining gaps of information in order to answer the report's question, conclusions are drawn between the findings of primary research and the secondary research based on existing scholarship.

I. Evaluation of *Vogue Germany*'s influence over female readers

According to Foucault (1991), "power is everywhere" and "comes from everywhere"[130]. Power is certainly present in *Vogue Germany*'s fashion pictures, one form of which exists in the gap between how the female readers would like to be represented and how the fashion images picture them. The gap creates a power relationship between Vogue Germany and its female readers around the concept of female identity. Primary research allowed me to understand how *Vogue Germany*'s female readers would like to be represented in fashion images. The analysis of the eleven editions gave a clearer overview on how *Vogue Germany*'s fashion images correspond to female readers' expectations in terms of representation and identity. Consequently, *Figure 8* gives an overview of the percentages of fashion stories meeting readers' expectations. It is worth mentioning that if a *Vogue Germany* fashion story meets one of the scale's criteria, it does not mean that every picture in the fashion story does. One picture of the fashion story suffices for the whole story to meet the scale's criteria. I chose to use this categorizing technique because images classified as positive tend to have more power than neutral ones. This aspect of the power of images will be discussed in more depth later on.

The findings of primary research provided guidelines about the necessary elements that have to be present in pictures, so that they can be experienced as "positive" by a majority

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[130] Foucault, M. 1991. *Discipline and Punish: the birth of a prison*. London, Penguin

of *Vogue Germany*'s female readers. The information provided in *Figure 8* allows us to understand if the fashion images composing the several fashion stories can be labelled as positive, neutral or negative, according to the findings of primary research. The only criterion which is present in more than 50% of the fashion pictures is the "*visible name*" of models. Ironically, it is also the only criterion involving the presence of words. As explained in the contextualization part, images are processed faster than words due to the role of the semantic system. As a reminder, the semantic system stores affective emotions, and when compared to words, images have privileged access to them. Thus, images are more effective and powerful than words as far as the impact on well-being is concerned. Due to this particularity, I have not considered all *Vogue Germany*'s fashion images as "positive" images for female readers, even if they score a 100% on the "*visible name*" criterion. Regarding the remaining criteria, *Vogue Germany*'s images score a maximum of 52,36% and a minimum of 16,64%. Those numbers indicate how the fashion images scored on the scale developed from the results of the focus groups interview, in order to identify which fashion images have a positive impact on female readers' well-being.

On average, a monthly *Vogue Germany* edition contains around forty fashion images and 4 fashion stories. Two distinctive elements motivated my choice to not analyze each image individually. First, most fashion stories use the same model(s) throughout a story, the same scenery and the same photography style.[131] Therefore, it made sense to analyze each fashion story as one big picture rather than several ones. The second argument resides in the power of pictures. Positive pictures are correlated to a positive impact on the readers' well-being, while negative pictures have a negative impact on well-being. Researches[132] demonstrated that the power affecting well-being is determined by the strength of the pre-learned set of associations related to a certain image. The pre-learned set of associations can be positive, negative, neutral or non-existent. If a picture is considered to be neutral by the readers, it means that the pre-learned set of associations is either neutral or non-existent. Thus, these images do not impact readers' well-being and they do not necessarily have to be taken into account during the analysis. Primary research found that the content of *Vogue Germany*'s fashion images is most likely to be experienced as neutral rather than negative.

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[131] The term "photography style" encompasses the model's attitude, the poses, the general aesthetics used in the picture and the used techniques to alter the fashion image in order to make it more "appealing" and "beautiful".

[132] See Shiffrin and Schneider (1977), Dumais and Shiffrin (1981) or Fazio et al. (1986).

This phenomenon is, according to the findings of primary research, due to the content of the pictures.

Vogue Germany's images also contain silent stereotypes rather than images with an explicit negative connotation such as violence or inappropriate behavior. The lack of explicit negative connotation does not mean that the picture is not experienced as negative if the reader is aware of the presence of the silent stereotype, but it increases the picture's chances of being experienced as neutral. Going back to the analysis of *Vogue Germany*'s fashion stories, if a picture within the fashion story meets one of the scale's criterion, it is most likely, according to the findings of primary research, that the remaining pictures are experienced as neutral rather than negative. Thus, the pictures do not impact the female readers' well-being and the images of the fashion story can be analysed as one meta-picture because of the major similarities between all the pictures of one fashion story.

In order to better understand the results of the data collection analyses, I chose to look at them through two distinctive categories. The first category groups all physical criteria[133] of the scale, which are "*celebrating a woman's body*", "*physical attributes*", "*diversity in terms of ethnicity*", "*diversity in terms of age*", "*diversity in terms of body size*" and "*unretouched pictures*". The second category is composed of behavioral criteria, including "*challenging gender stereotypes*", "*display of positive emotions*", "*visible name*", "*scenery*"[134].

On average, the behavioral category obtained higher scores from participants than the physical criteria category, even without taking the "*visible name*" criterion into account, which scored 100%. Findings of primary research suggest that the criteria which have the most impact on female readers' well-being are the "*display of positive emotions*", "*celebrating a woman's body*" and all criteria from the "*diversity*" category. "*Celebrating a woman's body*" has the highest score of all three criteria, with a score of 41.03%. Meanwhile, the silent stereotype phenomenon is highly applicable in the case of the "*diversity*" category. According to primary research, female readers who belong to a group which is normally underrepresented in fashion photography would most likely experience

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[133] All physical criteria imply social issues, as the focus group participants rightly mentioned. The criteria are grouped as physical criteria, and not as social criteria, because the underlying social problems are reflected in physical details of the photographed models.

[134] "*Scenery*" is categorized as a behavioral criterion because it refers to the concept of wealth and social classes.

Vogue Germany's fashion pictures as negative. The three criteria from the "*diversity*" category analyzed the presence of diverse body types, diverse ethnicities and diverse age groups. All three criteria scored lower than the average.

Overall, the scores of the data collection and analysis are too low to meet *Vogue Germany*'s female readers' expectations on how women should be portrayed in fashion photography. This implies the presence of a gap, and thus of a power relationship influencing the well-being of female readers. This internship report initially was intended to focus on the positive impact of Vogue Germany's pictures on well-being. In light of the results of the data collection, the potential presence of negative impact on female readers' well-being cannot be ignored. The two following sections discuss the possible impact of images experienced as positive, and images experienced as negative on well-being. All assumptions are hypothetical as no experiment could be conducted under lab conditions.

II. Potential effects of negative imagery on well-being

The effect of images on well-being impacts two distinctive psychological components. First, the mood of the viewer, and second, the behavior and decision-making process. To make an accurate assessment of the potential effects of *Vogue Germany*'s fashion images on female readers, both psychological aspects are examined individually.

The impact of negative images on the mood of the magazine's readers depends on the pre-learned associations related to a certain image. The criteria which obtained the lowest scores during the data analysis are those concerning diversity, which are all within the psychological category, with the lowest being the age criterion (16,64%), followed by body size diversity (17,73%) and then ethnicity diversity (33%). Primary research suggested that readers are aware of the models' tendency to follow the Caucasian-young-skinny body type. Even if the female readers are educated about this tendency, the focus group findings indicated that feeling underrepresented in a fashion magazine such as *Vogue Germany* can lead to mood deterioration and a feeling of exclusion. As mentioned in the contextualization section, the study by Spettigue and Henderson (2004)[135] underlines the impact of media on

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[135] Spettigue, W., and Henderson, K. A. 2004. "Eating disorders and the role of the media." *The Canadian child and adolescent psychiatry review = La revue canadienne de psychiatrie de l'enfant et de l'adolescent*, 13(1): 16–19.

the expansion of eating disorders amongst female readers. Participants of the focus group indicated having experienced a lower self-esteem after feeling excluded from the fashion magazine. Spettigue and Henderson's study (2004) is one example that stresses the impact of negative imagery on behavior and decision-making processes. In this specific case, negative imagery leads to self-destructive behavior in the form of an eating disorder. Generally, lower self-esteem tends to provoke dysfunctional behavior.[136] The fact that physical criteria regarding diversity obtained the lowest results on the scale indicates that the fashion industry dictates how women should look. Given the societal impact of fashion, and thus of fashion magazines such as *Vogue Germany*, *Vogue Germany* holds immense power over the construction of the female physical identity. The findings of primary research are in line with the findings of secondary research and suggest that *Vogue Germany* has to improve its inclusivity in terms of age, body size and ethnicity, in order to positively impact female readers.

In the behavioral category, the lowest scores were obtained on the "*display of positive emotions*" (35,55%) and "*display of personality and culture*" (31,36%) criteria. According to primary research, the former has more impact than the latter. This is due to the fact that participants of the focus groups are aware of the difficulty of keeping personal items or displaying signs of religious or political belongings during fashion shoots. Secondary research found that a recent evolution of fashion photography is the disappearance of emotions amongst models. This phenomenon can be looked at from two different perspectives. In the foreground, this evolution implies a detachment from the male gaze. The male gaze conventionally pictures women as objects of desire, and thus showing less emotion establishes a distance between women, and women seen through the male gaze. On the other hand, the model's emotional shift implies a negative change for *Vogue Germany*'s female readers. Primary research results are in line with the findings of secondary research[137] on this issue; the use of female models as "coat hangers", and thus as passive elements of the photographic composition contributes to the models' loss of identity. The dichotomy between women's emancipation from the male gaze and the presence of women as passive

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[136] Leary, M. R., L.S. Schreindorfer , and A. L. Haupt. 1995. "The role of low self-esteem in emotional and behavioral problems: Why is low self-esteem dysfunctional?." *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, *14*(3): 297-314.

[137] Oliver, K. 2017. "The male gaze is more relevant, and more dangerous, than ever." *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, *15*(4): 451-55.

elements of a photographic composition resides in the attitude of the model. Even if a model defies the male gaze, she can be photographed as a passive element of the image and therefore not have an identity. Primary research findings express the need to be able to connect with the model(s), which is an impossible task if the model is being objectified. As passive elements of fashion photography, models do not express signs of emotions. Otherwise, emotions would be perceived as actions[138] by the readers and would give them an opinion, a personality, and shift their role in the photography from passive to active. The emotional emptiness of models has the power to influence *Vogue Germany*'s readers negatively. The focus groups' findings stress the need for models to display positive emotions. Most people, and thus a majority of *Vogue Germany'*s female readers, are subject to the mechanism of mimicry[139]. Publishing pictures where models do not display any positive emotions and/or feelings might inspire female readers to reproduce (consciously or unconsciously) a similar emotional attitude[140]. To impact their female readers positively, *Vogue Germany* should try to include displays of positive emotions into its fashion images. This could positively influence the reader's well-being through the mimetic mechanism, and through the ability to connect emotionally with models.

III.   Potential effects of positive imagery on well-being

This section lays out the potential effects of positive imagery on well-being. As for the previous section, the well-being of *Vogue Germany's* female readers is analyzed by looking at the effect of images on mood and on behaviour.

Looking first at the physical attributes criterion, the best scores were obtained on the "*celebrating a woman's body*" (41,03%) criterion and on the "*physical attributes*" (45,55%) criterion, the latter obtaining a higher score than the former. The scores do not suggest that every *Vogue Germany* fashion picture scores positively on the listed criteria. Thus, the possibility of negative impact on the readers' well-being as a result of a failure to comply with the scale's criteria remains a possibility. I propose to examine the hypothetical cases

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[138] Scarantino, A. 2017. "Do emotions cause actions, and if so how?." *Emotion Review*, *9*(4): 326-34.
[139] An unconscious or automatic imitation of gestures, behaviours, facial expressions, speech and movements.
[140] Arnold, A. J., and P. Winkielman. 2020. "The mimicry among us: intra-and inter-personal mechanisms of spontaneous mimicry." *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior*, *44*(1): 195-212.

where *Vogue Germany*'s fashion images meet the listed criteria. "*Physical attributes*" is the criterion which is most likely to be found in fashion images, what, according to the findings of primary research, highlights the presence of heterogeneous physiques among fashion models. This finding clashes with the low score *Vogue Germany*'s fashion pictures obtained on the several diversity criteria. Nevertheless, the "*physical attributes*" criterion references the presence of atypical physical attributes, such as unusual haircuts, tattoos, piercings, which are distinctive to a certain model. Focus groups findings suggest that seeing distinctive physical attributes amongst models allows female readers to feel better about themselves, which is a direct mood-enhancement indicator. As with several other factors, this mood-enhancement is a direct consequence of female readers being able to connect with the model.

Making female readers feel good about their own body and about their own self is also a direct consequence of the criterion "*celebrating a woman's body*". Primary research is consistent with the findings of secondary research. Both suggest that fashion images including body-positive pictures can have positive psychological effects on female readers.[141] Brathwaite *et al.* (2021) point out that over-sexualizing women and digitally modifying pictures complying with the "*celebrating a woman's body*" criterion reduces their positive effect.[142] This internship report does not examine the cross effects of the scale's criteria on well-being, which is a limitation of this study. While all three focus groups participants were active *Vogue Germany* readers, secondary research found that women with a positive body image are critical of the media they choose to engage with.[143] Increasing the presence of pictures celebrating women's bodies could also increase *Vogue Germany*'s female readership.

The highest scores in the behavioral category were obtained in the "*challenging gender stereotypes*" category (52,36%) and in the "*scenery*" category (45,18%). Primary research found that the definition of challenging a gender stereotype probably slightly differs among *Vogue Germany*'s readers. However, as half of the fashion stories contains at least one image empowering women, most female readers would feel empowered by them.

[141] Drake, V. E. 2017. "The impact of female empowerment in advertising (femvertising)." *Journal of Research in Marketing*, *7*(3): 593-99.

[142] Brathwaite, K.N., D. C. DeAndrea and M. A. Vendemia. 2021. "Objectifying the body positive movement: The effects of sexualizing and digitally modifying body-positive images on Instagram." *Body Image*, *38*: 137-47.

[143] Poulter, P. I., and G. J. Treharne. 2021. ""I'm actually pretty happy with how I am": a mixed-methods study of young women with positive body image." *Psychology & Health*, *36*(6): 649-68.

Empowering women by challenging controversial stereotyped behavior[144] increases the likelihood for female readers to experience positive mental images. Mental images can influence readers' decision-making process and lead to a positive and proactive behaviour, as well as fight an impaired judgement about females and society. To engage in a proactive behaviour against gender stereotypes can increase *Vogue Germany*'s female readers' well-being. These assumptions are based on evidence found in secondary research, suggesting that women challenging societal norms experience positive changes in their well-being.[145] When *Vogue Germany* chooses to associate fashion with gender nonconformity, the magazine transmits a powerful message to their readers. The shift to a gender-neutral fashion supports the overcoming of gender stereotypes in society.[146]

The second best score obtained in the behavioral category is on the "*scenery*" criterion. Scenery is a behavioral criterion because it addresses social classes. Almost half of *Vogue Germany*'s fashion stories complied with this criterion. As fashion stories mostly use the same scenery for all of their pictures, this means that 45,18% of *Vogue Germany's* fashion images comply with the "*scenery*" criterion. Primary research found that a non-impressive scenery impacted readers positively, as it did not correlate fashion to luxury, making fashion more approachable. It is important to note that a non-luxurious/impressive scenery depends on the publishing country. A southern beach is considered luxurious and impressive for *Vogue Germany* as it implies going on vacation in a foreign country, while it will not be the case for *Vogue Portugal* as it is part of the local landscape. Secondary research found that associating luxury and fashion through luxury goods is a signal of status rather than a fashion statement.[147] Secondary and primary research both found that social pressure is a stress factor, and does not affect well-being positively.[148] *Vogue Germany*'s choice of scenery can impact readers' well-being positively when it does not pressure them to be part of a certain social class in order to be part of the fashion industry.

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[144] Kollmayer, M., B. Schober, and C. Spiel. 2018. "Gender stereotypes in education: Development, consequences, and interventions." *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*, *15*(4): 361-77.

[145] Ellemers, N. 2018. "Gender stereotypes." *Annual review of psychology*, *69*: 275-98.

[146] Markova, I. 2021. "The elimination of gender stereotypes in fashion." In *2021 Joint Virtual Conference,* p. 9.

[147] Drèze, X., Y. J. Han and J.C. Nunes. 2010. "Signaling status with luxury goods: The role of brand prominence." *Journal of marketing*, *74*(4): 15-30.

[148] Dolan, P., T. Peasgood and M. White. 2008. "Do we really know what makes us happy? A review of the economic literature on the factors associated with subjective well-being." *Journal of economic psychology*, *29*(1): 94-122.

The editors, photographers and stylists contributing to *Vogue Germany*'s fashion pictures are not necessarily aware of the gap between women's expectations and the produced fashion images. However, the effect obtained by fashion images through this gap does impact female readers' well-being. As demonstrated in the two previous sections, the fashion magazine probably already impacts its readers' well-being, both positively and negatively. The results of the primary research provide suggestions on how to change fashion images to reduce the gap with readers' expectations.

Conclusion

When I first started this internship report, I wanted to highlight the influence the fashion industry could have on its consumers. Having completed a six-month internship in Paris at *Vogue Germany*, I chose to work on the impact fashion images could have on the magazine's female readers. My aim was to understand how fashion images produced by fashion magazines such as *Vogue Germany* could influence female readers' well-being positively. While completing my secondary and primary research, I understood the complexity of the concepts of power, identity and especially of the concept of the power of identity. My internship report helped me understand the power relationship between identity and visual representation. It also made me realize that the respect of female identity should be a central concern of the fashion industry. The fashion industry should adapt itself to how women perceive themselves, instead of (consciously or unconsciously) trying to dictate their identity.

Secondary research findings highlighted the important connection between mental images and well-being. Mental images can directly be triggered by the encounter with physical images. The psychological processes influenced by mental images include people's mood changes, their decision-making processes, and therefore their behaviour, all three being factors influencing people's well-being. Additionally, secondary research outlined the current representation of women in mainstream fashion media. The findings of the research stressed the importance of respecting women's concept of identity in fashion photography and why the power held by the fashion industry over women's identity should be better understood. Throughout the years, the fashion industry obtained the right to dictate how women should look to reach beauty ideals. Women do not necessarily perceive themselves according to the fashion industry's beauty standards, which creates a dissonance between the concept of identity of women and what the industry dictates. This dissonance can impact women's well-being through the intrusion of negative mental images, as they could be under the impression that they are not meeting the beauty standards. Therefore, the fashion industry should align its production with women's concept of identity.

Throughout this study, I came to understand that the power of identity and representation resides in the common need to resemble our peers. Physical differences can

be the birthplace of insecurities and self-doubt, especially if someone's identity is not accepted by a given community. This has been highlighted by the findings of the focus groups, when participants stressed the need to find physical similarities between them and the photographed models. During her Ted Talk, Alma Zadic[149] described her own personal experiences with the phenomenon of non-acceptance of identity. Consequences of this phenomenon include a feeling of isolation and even the remodeling of personality. When identity, inclusive of physical features and psychological traits, is perceived as inferior, it can lead to overcompensation. Overcompensation can be positive when it translates into proactive behavior (i.e. development of a hardworking nature), but it can also result in negative outcomes (i.e. marginalization, hate of society, alienation). As far as Alma Zadic's experience is concerned, the consequences of a rejected identity can be overcome by two mechanisms. First, through the acceptance of the majoritarian side, and secondly through the education of the minotarian side can have the most profound impact on the attempt to heal a feeling of rejection.[150]

During my internship, I learned about different agencies trying to raise awareness about the negative effects fashion images can have (i.e. regulating models' BMI). In my opinion, educating *Vogue Germany*'s female readership about the dangers of fashion images on well-being is not a sustainable option. The focus groups interviews I conducted helped me realise that women, and in this particular study *Vogue Germany*'s female readers, are not fully aware of the stereotyping occurring amongst fashion models. The fashion industry has brainwashed women in terms of what is normal to see in fashion images. Therefore, I believe that consumers of fashion images can only be educated to a certain point about the impact of fashion images on their well-being. In order to ensure a positive impact on female readers' well-being, fashion magazines must produce inclusive fashion images.

Celebrating a diverse range of bodies will allow women to develop and embrace their identity. At first sight, focusing on the acceptance of diverse physical bodies can seem superficial, but body image and appearance are nearly universal shame triggers.[151] A feeling

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[149] Alma Zadic is a lawyer and an Austrian political figure. Her immigrant background from Bosnia-Herzegovina allowed her to understand the power of identity, and especially of the non-acceptance of identity. Today, she gives several talks on how to overcome this non-acceptance.
[150] Alma Zadic. 2016. "The power of identity." Ted Talk, Nov. 16, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mpiNFYTi8BM
[151] Brown, B. 2006. "Shame resilience theory: A grounded theory study on women and shame." *Families in Society*, *87*(1): 43-52.

of acceptance will allow readers to accept themselves, leaving room for the development of their identity. During my closer encounter with the fashion sphere in Paris, it struck me how much power the industry had over the construction of female identity. Secondary and primary research both confirmed that fashion consumers rather try to fit in the industry, instead of searching for brands that correspond to them. There is a dichotomy between this "fit in" attitude and the results of primary research, which emphasizes the desire of authenticity amongst fashion industry players. Interestingly, as Molly Bingaman's[152] expertise pointed out, authenticity is a key factor allowing people to connect with each other. The participants of the focus groups stressed the importance of connecting on a deeper level with the photographed models. To achieve authenticity, the development of one's identity and the development of human relations within the industry, fashion magazines such as *Vogue Germany* must use their power to support identity development for all of the industry's actors.

This internship report allowed me to reflect on the six-month internship I have carried out at *Vogue Germany* in Paris. Looking back at the numerous people I had the chance to work with, I realize today that nearly everyone in the industry has a biased perspective about what is acceptable to be seen in the industry. I believe that the biases are subconscious, but that they hinder true creativity of the industry's producers. As a master's student from the field of Culture Studies, I advocate for unbridled creativity, which is currently not the state of the fashion industry. *Vogue Germany*'s female readers well-being is not the only aspect that would benefit from the disappearance of the fashion industry's stereotypes about representation. In order to induce positive change, I believe that the revolution of stereotypes has to begin with a change on the part of fashion producers. The power they hold over the fashion consumers is too important for the consumers to induce change themselves. Women have been told for too long how they should look in order to naturally reverse the trend and dictate their own beauty standards. Thus, the fashion industry needs to induce change and help women regain power about their visual identity.

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[152] Molly Bingaman is a personal stylist who emphasizes the importance of authenticity and self-acceptance for the development of identity. She specialises in self-development through body image acceptance.

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Appendix

A.   The survey[153]

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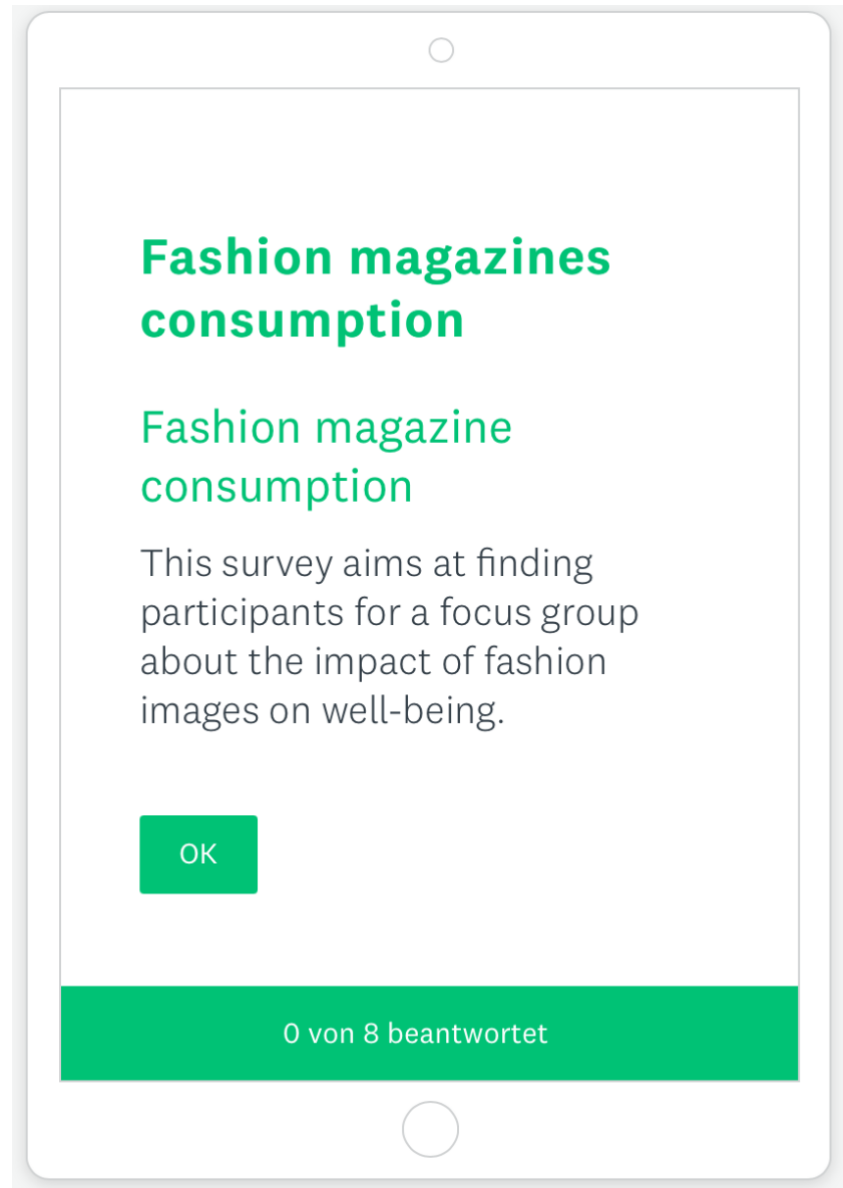
[153] The SurveyMonkey program did not allow me to extract the data of my analysis without paying a high subscription fee. The program did not warn me about their payment regulations when I first started using it, I was made aware of them when I tried to extract the data. Therefore, due to financial constraints, I cannot present the data collected during the survey in the internship report. The following images are screenshots of the survey which was sent to people through a link.

1. What gender are you? 💬

- ◯ Woman
- ◯ Man
- ◯ Prefer not to say

0 von 8 beantwortet

2. How old are you? 💬

- ◯ -18
- ◯ 18-26
- ◯ 27-35
- ◯ 36-45
- ◯ 46-60
- ◯ 60+
- ◯ Prefer not to say

0 von 8 beantwortet

3. What is your current occupation? 💬

0 von 8 beantwortet

4. Do you read Vogue Germany? 💬

- ◯ No
- ◯ Yes

0 von 8 beantwortet

5. If yes, how often? 💬

0 von 8 beantwortet

6. Do you buy the magazine yourself? 💬

◯ Yes
◯ No

0 von 8 beantwortet

7. Would you be interested in participating in a focus group about Vogue Germany's fashion images? 💬

◯ Yes
◯ No

0 von 8 beantwortet

8. If yes, please provide a contact number/ email where I can reach you. 💬

0 von 8 beantwortet

B. Transcription of the focus groups[154]

Focus group 1

Anaïs: Hello and welcome to our focus group. So I gathered all six of you here today because you all answered my survey and you mentioned that you all are readers of Vogue Germany. Some of you subscribe to the magazine, some of you are not buying it for yourself. I believe if I remember correctly, all of you read it at least four times a year. This makes you eligible to participate in the focus. If it's okay with everyone, I would like to record the session so I can use it later on in my internship report. I will not disclose your names in order to keep you anonymous, so if your name comes up in the transcripts I will erase it. Is this okay with everyone?

Participant 1: Yes.

P.2: Sure.

P.3: No problem.

P.4: Yes, yes.

P.5: No problem.

P.6: Sure.

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[154] The language found in the transcripts is mostly informal due to the oral discourse of the focus groups interviews. All focus groups were held in English to avoid translating them. As none of the participants are native English speakers, the vocabulary is limited and I had to adapt some answers to make them more comprehensible.

Anaïs: Okay, great. Thank you then. Uh, let's start. Um, so first question I have for you is what is the reason that leads you to read Vogue Germany? I don't know who, who would like to start.

P.2: Um, yeah, sure. I can go first. So for me personally, I buy the magazine, because I am interested in fashion and I believe that on the German market Vogue Germany is the best fashion magazine we have and, um, I read some English written magazines, but personally I like to sometimes also read the German version, um, even if I have to admit that Vogue Germany, maybe isn't the best out of all the magazines. Um, but I think it also reflects the German market pretty well. And since I live in Germany, it's interesting to see how the fashion evolves in the country.

Anaïs: Okay. Yes. Thank you very much. It makes a lot of sense. Would someone else like to tell us why you read the magazine?

P.4: Um, yeah, sure. So, to me personally, my mom has a subscription and so we always have it at home. And I don't, I don't really read it to be honest. Mostly I look at the pictures that are inside. I like the advertisement, you know, there's a big part of advertisement at the beginning of the magazine. And I really like to look at them and, uh, but yeah, I love to look at the images, like the fashion shoots, you know, the pictures from the fashion section. I don't really read the articles, but I guess they are good.

Anaïs: Okay. Thank you very much. We'll come back to the fashion images in a minute. Maybe one last answer, um, who would like?

P1: Yeah, sure. So personally, I buy the magazine myself. Um, maybe not every month. It always depends. I like to buy a magazine in Germany when I'm traveling. For example, if I have a long trip, if I'm going to have a long train ride, or if I'm in an airport, then I will buy Vogue Germany. I'm mostly flying from Zurich as I live in the German speaking part of Switzerland, so it's always available there. And well, it's definitely an entertainment to me to read the magazine. I don't, maybe I don't take it as seriously as someone who's a lot into fashion, but I do like to take a look at it every now and then because I sometimes like the articles they're writing, especially the lifestyle articles and lifestyle sections, it inspires me.

The fashion images also inspire me. Um, I see the upcoming trends and, uh, yeah, I like to shop, I'm a big shopper. So sometimes it can kind of enhance or let's say nourish my shopping spree creativity, I would say.

Anaïs: Okay. Thank you. Thanks to all three of you for your answer. Let's movie on, or if someone has something else to say or if someone has a complete different answer about why you buy or where you read the magazine please, let me know. Now, I mean some of you already answered, but maybe someone who hasn't spoken yet, why do you choose Vogue Germany? What is important in a fashion magazine? What makes it more than what makes it stand out? What makes it valuable? So maybe someone who hasn't spoken yet? Um, yes, please.

P.3: Hi. So, uh, to me, the fashion magazine is really defined by the images in it. Not because its texts are like all magazines. I don't believe that every magazine has its own editorial style. But to me, the images is what you see first. I believe that most, or at least a lot of people read the magazine the way I do that. First, they take a quick look at it and, they first look at all the pictures produced in the issue and then maybe they decide to buy it or not. Or if you have a subscription, first thing you do is you look at the pictures um, well at least that's how I read it. Afterwards, I pick and choose which article I want to read, but I think if the images in a fashion magazine are not good or appealing or not fashionable, um, then most people won't bother even looking at the articles. So, to me, it's really about the visual aspect.

Anaïs: Okay, great. Yes, I kind of agree with you to be honest. Uh, does someone think otherwise? Does someone maybe read the articles first and then looks at the pictures? Or does for someone, I don't know, does the cover make more sense?

P.6: No to me as well, it's also about the images and the visual attractivity, attraction. I don't know how you say it. Yeah, that makes more sense to me.

Anaïs: Okay, great. Then if everyone agrees, I guess we can say that pictures in a fashion magazine are maybe the most valuable asset, if we could say so, of a fashion magazine. So I didn't really tell you why we are having the focus group today because I wanted to leave it open, but we are going to discuss, uh, the fashion images produced by fashion magazines

and specifically by Vogue Germany. Why Vogue Germany? Because I did an internship, my master internship. And so now now to complete my master, I'm writing an internship report about Vogue Germany, obviously, and my subjects are fashion images and the impact of fashion images on readers and specifically on female readers. So this is why all of you are women, and we don't have men today among us. That's a personal choice because I believe that since most fashion images produced by Vogue Germany picture women, um, the images have the most impact on women and not on men. This is why you are all gathered here today and I'm very happy that you spoke about the importance of images even before I mentioned. Uh, so now going into more depth about those images, um, could maybe some of you discuss why are images so important? What type of images do you prefer? I mean, I know it's a very broad question, but what comes to your mind when you think of which images and what type of images do you prefer to see in a fashion. Yes, please.

P.1: So to me, uh, I really like long series of images. I don't know if you know what I mean, like, if it makes sense when, when there are very long shoots and a lot of pictures with a model or several models.

Anaïs: I think you mean a fashion story. That's how I call it.

P.1: Okay. Then the fashion story, I like it when it has come some kind of development, you know, and you see how the style evolves, um, throughout the shoot. Um, yes, I would say in a, in a very broad sense, that's what I personally like.

Anaïs: Okay. So from what I understand you like it when there are a lot of pictures from one specific shoot, rather than one or two from different photographers and directors put together. Is that correct? Does anyone disagree with it? No. Okay, great. Okay, sorry. I think we are back on, sorry. It's the first time I'm using this program. Before I cut program, we were speaking about the pictures.

P.3: Exactly.

Anaïs: And I'm was asking you guys, which type of pictures, images do you prefer? And you said that, you preferred, um, long publication, a lot of pictures from the same shoot. When

the picture, when it develops into that kind of a story, that kind of storytelling. And so also, um, put into fashion words, you prefer fashion stories directed by one stylist, one photographer, and one edit. Okay. Cool. That's very good. I would like to know, because, um, you already mentioned it a couple of times, the women in the picture, the woman who are being photographed. You said that you would like to see how the fashion story developed and I would like to know, um, do you compare yourself with the woman who are portrayed in the fashion magazine? Like, is it important how the models are being portrayed? Yes, please.

P.5: Um, yeah. So to me personally, uh, when I was younger, when I was, I don't know, when I was around 15, I would say I started reading fashion magazines. Um, and at this time I used to compare myself a lot with the girls in the pictures. Because you know, they are beautiful, they are stylish and the usually made to look very cool. Um, I think that no fashion images have been produced, displaying girls who who do not look cool in a way, even if they're made to look kind of ugly, because that is in fashion right now. So yeah, back then, I used to compare myself a lot, especially when you were young and uncertain about your body. Now it is a bit less, I focus more on the clothes and the setting and the whole atmosphere in the picture. But I have to admit that when I find, um, you know, for example, a dress that I really like, and of course most of the time I can't even afford what is being photographed in terms of the clothes. But when you look at a dress I want, I wonder if it would fit me, would I look good in it and stuff like that. So, yes, I guess there is some comparison that's being made. And especially if they choose a model who to me personally is very attractive, who kind of reaches s beauty ideal of mine, then I tend to wonder, oh, you know her hair, why does it sit like that? Or how does it look so neat? You know, could I achieve the same style?

Anaïs: Yeah, yeah. To me as well. I sometimes have had that sort of thought, oh, could I achieve this look? Could I look the same if I wanted to?

P.5: Yeah. Yeah, exactly. It's not really that I think that she's prettier than me because obviously, you know, she's a model and that's her job, and there is always a whole makeup team behind the model and then all of that, but it's more If I wanted to, could I be able to look like that?

Anaïs: Okay. Yes. Um, makes it a sense, it's kind of a healthy comparison, I would say. Um, so I'm just going back to my notes. It's, my first focus group, so I'm trying to, make it make sense for us and for my report later on. As you said, **** you sometimes compare yourself with the model and from what I hear, it's kind of a healthy comparison. It's not too much about, she's prettier than me and everything, but you are aware of the fact that it is another woman that is being photographed in a magazine. And what I find very interesting is that you said that fashion makes it look beautiful, that fashion makes it look cool. You actually don't know if the model, is cool or not in the end, I guess, but she looks cool, they almost always achieved that. So, do you believe that, um, what you said that the way models are looking in a fashion magazine reflects how women are looking or even behaving in our society? When I say our society, I speak of, um, Germany, Switzerland and Austria, because. Maybe, I didn't say that in the beginning, I should have, but, all participants here today, all six of you guys, are a mix between, uh, Swiss, Germans and Austrians. Because Vogue Germany covers all three countries, right, since we're all German speaking. So do you believe that the models and the picture you see are reflecting, what you see, um, in your surroundings and in everyday life?

P.2: Um, I would not say that no and personally I'm from Germany, I'm from the south part of Germany. We don't have that kind of glamorous lifestyle here, maybe more up in the north, like more Hamburg or Munich. And there, maybe you can relate a bit more to this like glamorous, cool lifestyle that is displayed in the pictures, but here in the south, it's not the case. Freiburg where I live is a student city and it's very low key, we're very close to the nature. So, yeah, it's not relatable even though it's inspiring and that's why I read the magazine, but I can't really relate to what I see in the pictures. Um, sometimes they do shoots which are more in the nature, like natural surroundings, um, where the model looks a bit more low key. And so I prefer that to be honest, but, yeah, this is why I would say personally, I can't really relate to it. To me, it doesn't reflect society because it's too glamorous.

Anaïs: Okay. So to you, it's really more about a lifestyle and also maybe about the social class, right?

P.2: Yes. I would say maybe also say that, I mean, social class. Yes. And especially where your values are.

Anaïs: Okay. Interesting. So you're speaking about values and maybe the values of how you live or how your friends are, the way you live is not really transcribed in the pictures. Okay, great. Um, anyone else has a different opinion maybe?

P.1: Um, yeah, so I'm from Switzerland, from the Zurich area and I don't really think that Vogue Germany reflect our society very well. Um, I mean Zurich is maybe a bit more glamorous than the part that you talked about. do go to events, especially with work where everything is more glamorous and you have to dress up and play nice and put on makeup and do your hair and so on and so forth. But to me it's maybe more physically speaking, I mean not all, but the majority of models are very slim, even maybe skinny. Young and slim and, and perfect skin. And well, it's not really how the average woman looks like, and it's not even how pretty women necessarily look like. I know a lot of beautiful women who just do not match this skinny and young type. I don't want to exaggerate, but most of the models are within those standards. And so, I believe it is a bit of a narrow view on beauty. It doesn't mean that models are not beautiful, there are, of course, but it doesn't really reflect society and it doesn't really reflect also what a society finds beautiful. Um, yes, that's what I would say.

Anaïs: Okay. So on one side we have the surroundings, and the societal issue surrounding the pictures and on the other hand we have what how the physiques look like.

P.1: Um, yes.

Anaïs: Does anyone else have to say something else, or do those two answers sum it up? Okay. I would like to go a bit more into depth because what we are trying to do here today is to understand how would you as Vogue Germany's readers, like to see women in images. How do you think that women should be photographed in the picture in order to make you the reader feel good about what you're seeing? I'm not necessarily suggesting that reading Vogue Germany makes you feel bad. Not at all. I don't think you would read Vogue Germany if it made you feel bad each time you opened the magazine, but my hypothesis is that there is room for improvement on the part of Germany to produce, um, fashion images that make female readers feel good and increase their wellbeing. Making them feel good about themselves or good about their situation and all that while keeping the fashion industry alive.

I don't think fashion should be undermined in the process, but maybe there is a way to make, both worlds get together. Sorry I'm losing my notes again. Okay. So, uh, I'm going to come back on what you said about, um, the physique of the model. And so. I believe that in order to feel good about yourself or the reader of Vogue Germany, there's a lot to say about how the model looks, and maybe also how she behave, and how she holds her body. So I'd like to know from you guys, um, what kind of photography in your opinion, celebrates a woman's body. Does the model's physic come to mind? When picturing her body in your head, what would make you feel empowered about yours? Yes, please.

P.6: So to me, I read the magazine because my mother has subscription, so I don't pay for it. Maybe I would pay for it if my mom didn't buy it. But yes that's a side note, but so, um, when I think of an image that screams body positivity I picture a woman who is not trying, like overly trying to be, you know, sexy and, uh, yeah, who's not necessarily cool. Who chose to be here for herself, you know, who's not trying to please someone. She is not trying to please the person going to look at the picture. It doesn't mean that she can't be sexy, but it's just, you know, she won't be in a weird position how you see sometimes models when they're trying to stretch their body to looks slimer or taller, um, things like that. Yeah. I would say it's a kind of a natural position. Um, she can, like, she can look at the camera or not, doesn't it it doesn't really matter to me personally. Just not a position where if you think of it, I'm not saying I think of it each time, but if you think of it, it's unnatural. I think that to me that's important.

Anaïs: Okay. Yes, absolutely I get you. Anyone else has another opinion?

P.4: Um, I would say absolutely. I agree.

Anaïs: Um, what do you mean with the stretching position?

P.6: What comes to my mind is this one, a Zara campaign, but it was mocked everywhere, where models were posing, like on a washing machine, kind of squating on the washing machine. And then there was one where the girl was lying between two chairs, and it looked very cool. It had this effect like, a cool girl who doesn't give a F***, but, at the same time,

it was so unnatural that it was kind of, you know, you couldn't take it seriously. You couldn't take most of it seriously.

P.6: Yeah. You didn't look at it and say, well, look this woman, she's strong and beautiful, it was too much like, oh, this is just weird. Yeah, she's trying too hard.

P.3: Um, so I absolutely agree with you on that. Personally, it is definitely about body acceptance. If you see a girl who's comfortable in her body, it has a big impact on her aura. When a model is looking at the camera, but not in that necessarily "sexy eye contact" way, but more hi I'm here and I accept myself, I accept the camera on me and I just look at it because I can basically, that to me is, um, really empowering and it shows that the girl who's being photographed is aware of her body and accepts it, and doesn't try to hide.

Anaïs: Okay. Great. Thank you for your input. Um, anyone else? I'm sorry I have to move the focus group a bit faster, because I said it will last 45 minutes and we are already almost 30 minutes in. So, um, we talked a lot about how the girl looks, what she does with her body in the picture. Um, now I would like to know from you, uh, when you picture a woman in your head, not a woman that you know, but when you think about Vogue Germany's models, what comes to your mind? When you just imagined it. Yes, please, please.

P.3: When I think about Germany, maybe I'm a bit biased because I'm living in Austria, and well, in the part of Austria where I'm living, a lot of girls are blond with blue eyes, but I do feel that Vogue Germany likes to photograph this type of girls, like, you know, with long, straight hair and blue eyes and very slim, Sometimes I also find that the models look very young. I mean, I'm not old, I'm 35, but I feel old when I look at the magazine and that's not completely normal. But in general I would say that the models are blond, caucasian ethnicity, young and, obviously cool.

Anaïs: Okay. Yes. Yes, there is a pattern, indeed. Thank you. Someone else?

P.1: Hi. Yes. So I wouldn't have said necessarily blonde, um, but definitely young and skinny. There are two futures which come to my mind. I picture a girl that has this very long, straight hair, Caucasian ethnicity for sure. Um, yeah, that's, that's how I would picture them.

Anaïs: Okay. Does someone has a different answer? No. Okay. So, uh, from what I understand, um, all of you picture the models as very homogeneous, you don't really see a big diversity in the models. Am I correct? Does someone disagree? Okay. Um, I would like to know how, what in your social circle and your friends, um, people you see every day, um, what kind of very distinctive physical attributes do you encounter? Aside from an ethnicity because I think that's a whole different topic. But aside from ethnicity, what, when you think of your friends or your work colleagues of, uh, of your fellow students for those you were studying, um, what comes to mind? Yes, please.

P.5: So, in my age range, um, I'd say a lot of people have two tattoos and piercing, especially in the years for girls. Um, yeah, tattoos, like almost all of my friends have a tattoo and I feel like they are back in fashion right now, as in back from the nineties, you know? I think it is where it comes from.

Anaïs: Yes, absolutely. I do see this trend in my fellow students as well. Um, does someone else have another answer? Yes?

P.5: When I think of my friends, I think pretty much everyone in my circle looks similar I would say. I mean you said besides of the ethnicity. Um, I wouldn't say that someone looks very special, like a crazy style or something else in that direction regarding looks. I do have a friend who has, um, a very particular big nose. It's not ugly at all but it just kind of defines who she is, you know, it's very distinctive. Something that is also not really common in models are distinctive physical futures. I mean, some models have them, for example Ana Evers, from Germany, she has this hole between her teeth, but she's the only one I can think of. To come back to your question, I would say that something like a very big years or a very big nose or something like that are the distinctive features that come to my mind or a lot of freckles. Maybe that kind of details, is what's missing amongst models.

Anaïs: Yes, absolutely, I agree with you. Um, and so how. How would it make you feel as reader of Vogue Germany to see more physical diversity amongst models, like more freckles, more tattoos, more big noes? Not that it must become less glamorous or less, pretty, less beautiful to just that the models stand more out. Yes, please.

P.4: Uh, well personally I would very much like that, but I would very much like to see the models a bit more "human". Um, I think it would make them more human. Uh, not that they are not human obviously, but it is a kind of, you know, but they are in the fashion world and they are this kind of aliens from the fashion world and maybe it's because these distinctive futures like freckles or big noses are missing and it would make it easier to relate to them. And personally, I would very much like that because I also have distinctive futures that come to my mind when I think about myself. For example I have a tattoo and then I have freckles on my nose and I think it, it would make me feel, I don't know if I could say it would make me feel better about myself, but you know, sometimes I wonder, oh, should I put some makeup on my freckles when I go out to cover them up? Because I don't know if I would like people to see them tonight and things like that. Um, if everything was a bit less, polished in the pictures with the models, I think I would like that, it would just make it more relatable, more human, easier to connect with. And maybe for my insecurities personally, and I think everyone has insecurities um, it would definitely make me feel better about myself.

Anaïs: Okay. Yes. Great. So, um, does anyone think that having more physical diversity amongst the models would be a disadvantage, um, or do all of you agree that having more physical diversity in the fashion industry, could increase your self-confidence, increase a sense of wellbeing when you are reading the magazine?

P.2: Yes, definitely I agree. And I would like to specify that if diversity not there, it's not detrimental to my wellbeing. Um, but it would definitely, I think be a plus if I would see, uh, models and women who are a bit more, um, who also have something maybe to feel insecure about, it was something that was a bit more, um, you know, that you have to deal with it as your own.

Anaïs: Okay, great. Uh, so evolving from the physical attributes category, I asked you not to speak about ethnicity because I think that's a category of its own, but now how do you feel about ethnicity in the magazine? Do you feel that everyone is represented? Yes.

P.6: Um, no, not at all. And, uh, as you can see, like myself, I'm Caucasian and I still read Vogue Germany because I think it's a good magazine, but I do believe that they have big, big improvement to make on that side. Um, I think that it is getting better, they are trying to

be more inclusive, but there's a definitely a problem with ethnicity. Sometimes they put a black model and it's as if they tried to do tick of the boxes, like Netflix does. I feel that they try to be more inclusive, but you can see that it's not really natural in their choice of model to always include different ethnicity than Caucasian models.

Anaïs: Okay. Yes. Maybe on someone else? How would it make you feel to see different ethnicities more often in the magazine, would it make a difference to you?

P.1: Um, well I talked about that with friends and, um, we didn't talk about Vogue Germany specifically, but I know some people tend to avoid media which are not inclusive enough. And, uh, it's true that sometimes when I read Vogue Germany, I do feel like it's a very narrow-minded perspective on what is beautiful, also in terms of body size. Almost all models are very, very skinny and sometimes you see a plus size model, but you know, uh, um, I remember this one issue which wasn't that long ago, where there was a plus size model and the images were very blurry with this kind of artistic footage and it was almost like they were trying to hide the model's body as if it was a burden to photograph it. I think I would very much prefer, um, if the magazine would just include everyone because all ethnicities have beautiful women and all body size and all body shapes, have beautiful women. I would feel better about that, even though I don't come from a minority, I don't necessarily feel that exclusivity makes people feel good. So if I would see women from all backgrounds and body shapes and whatsoever, um, I think I would feel happier just because I would feel like we are one, you know, that actually all women can be beautiful and all women deserve to be represented in the fashion sphere and as I really value the fashion industry, so I would definitely prefer if it valued all women.

Anaïs: Okay. So does anyone has a different opinion? I yes why? Or do you all agree that being more inclusive in terms of body shape and ethnicity would increase your happiness and your fulfillment after reading the magazine?

P.1-6: Yes.

Anaïs: Okay, great. That's amazing. That's a big statement. Thank you. Um, So we have 10 minutes left. Okay. Then we will continue with the physical features of the model and we

will I think wrap this focus group up with the subject of retouched pictures and that's something that is very dear to me. I would like to know what is your stand on retouched pictures? I don't know if you know about this, but there are different ways of retouching a picture. You can completely change something, for example completely alter the background when for example a picture has been retouched in the background is a pink sky. And then theirs is another kind of retouching when the photographer tries to polish the picture, to make it look perfect. The first one you can obviously see and know it has been changed, and the second one, you don't necessarily see it and you don't necessarily know it, uh, because if it's done well, then you really can't tell. Um, so did you think that Vogue, Germany, retouches its pictures? Yes, please.

P.3: I didn't really think of it to be honest. Personally, I like fashion, but I don't know that much about it. Um, but now that you say it, it doesn't make sense that all the models look so perfect in the pictures. Like you never, ever see women looking like them in real life. I don't think I recall seeing cellulite or some irregularities on a model's leg. Um, I must say I had some moments where I kind of felt a bit bad about myself. You know, when I see a model was those long legs and with absolutely no sign of cellulite, which is kind of an issue to me. Um, but now that you said it, if it's a retouched picture, I just don't think it's fair. Um, I do understand that they're trying to make the pictures and the models beautiful, but it's not very fair to us. No?

Anaïs: Um, yeah, no, I agree. It's not necessarily fair because we are living in the real world, um, and that's the whole issue around fashion images. Are they marketing images or mass consumption images, or can you see as the form of art and then are you allowed to, retouch and alter, the picture? But that's another debate, but yes, it's true that it's not necessarily fair because we live in the real world where, so imperfections do exist. But then, would it make a difference if you knew that, um, the pictures are retouched. For example you said that cellulite is an issue for you, so would it make a difference on your well-being if you knew that the picture was alter and that maybe the model had cellulite and it's been erased.

P.3: Mm. Yeah, I guess I would maybe not ask myself, why me and not her, you know, because there would be the possibility that her imperfections have been erased. I mean, it

doesn't have to be, because I don't think they would make a list of what has been retouched, but if there is the possibility, I would like to know.

Anaïs: Okay. Does anyone have a different opinion on that topic? No? Okay. So we all agree that it's not necessarily fair that the alter the pictures without the readers knowing, in order to make them look perfect. And so what, um, to you, what would make a picture look more authentic? When would you argue that a picture has not been retouched? I would like to understand what elements make you think that a picture is a realistic representation of how a modern woman looks. Yes, please.

P.5: Uh, to me, um, because we don't really know what age the models are, even if we can guess that most of them are, are young, very young, but, I think that seeing some signs of, for example cellulite if they're showing the legs, or body fat in situations where there should naturally be some visible body fat. For example you get pictures where models are wearing very tight jeans, and then, there is absolutely no sign of body fat whatsoever. And even skin irregularities I would say, like acne scars or a pimple or maybe a little wrinkle. I think if I would see that in a picture, then I would not think that it has been altered. Not that each time I'm reading Vogue Germany I'm wondering if the picture has been manipulated or retouched, but I think seeing those little imperfections, um, would make the picture and the photographed model look more real. And I think I would even prefer it that way because we all have those imperfections. Also I think that if I see a model that's being photograph and her imperfections are not being erased then it would make me feel better about myself. I believe I would prefer those actually.

Anaïs: Yes. I agree with you. Actually some studies showed that seeing imperfections, um, helped with self-confidence, and I think we all have some issue about something in our body, almost everyone does and it's normal. But does anyone disagree in this focus group, and would it make absolutely no difference to your experience with Vogue Germany if you saw imperfections? Or if you saw imperfections, would it maybe make the picture look less nice, less attractive to you? What do you think? No? Okay. Um, that's great. So it means that, um, showing imperfections can make us feel good about ourselves, increase wellbeing without diminishing the glamour and the beauty of fashion images. That's a big plus for us. I think I'm already 15 minutes over time, well I thank you all for your time and I will cover the

other aspects of the fashion pictures in the next focus group. Otherwise, we are going to be sitting here for the next three hours. Okay thank you so much, everyone, I will let you know when I'm done with my report so if any of you are interested in my research, um, I would love to give you a copy. Thank you all for your time today. I wish you a lovely evening. And please text me on WhatsApp if you have any questions. Okay. Thank you. Bye-bye.

Focus group 2

Anaïs: Welcome everyone to our focus group. Today we have seven participants to discuss fashion and in particular fashion images. All of you have answered my survey and agreed to take 45 minutes of your time to help me collect data for my internship report, thank you everyone for that. If it's okay with everyone, I would like to record today's session in order to use it later on in the report as a transcript. I will not disclose your names and I will keep your identity anonymous, in the case your name is mentioned, I will erase it from the transcript. Is this okay with everyone?

P.1: Absolutely.

P.2: Sure.

P.3: Of course.

P.4: Yes.

P.5: Yes.

P.6: Yup.

P.7: Sure.

Anaïs: Okay thank you everyone for your trust. For today's focus group we are going to proceed in the following way. I will quickly brief you on what I am working on and then I will ask you some questions which I would like you to answer honestly and discuss amongst you if you want to or if you disagree with each other. So first things first, in order to participate in this focus group the requirement was to be a regular Vogue Germany reader and to be a woman. This is because I am currently my master work, which is an internship report about a 6 months internship I did in Paris at Vogue Germany. The subject of my research is the impact of Vogue Germany's fashion images on female reader's well-being,

which is why I only gathered women for today's focus group. I would love to know why you read the magazine and your general view on fashion but sadly in my previous focus group we focused a little bit too much on this aspect and did not have the time to cover everything. So let's get to the point straight away if this is okay with all of you? Does someone have a question or would like me to specify something? No? Okay great so first question about Vogue Germany's fashion images. We will first examine the physique of the models who are photographed in the magazine and I will try to understand how certain aspects of the model's physique could impact your well-being. First, I would like to talk about pictures which, in your opinion, celebrate female bodies. If you think of a picture that makes you believe that the model's body is being accepted and that makes you feel good about yourself, what do you see?

P.3: I can go first!

Anaïs: Yes please, thank you!

P.3: Well first hello everyone, happy to e-meet you! Hum so, to me personally when I hear the words like "celebrating female bodies", what comes to my mind is the Dove advertisement campaign from a couple of years ago which showed maybe 10 women in black underwear, all had different body sizes, shapes, looks, ethnicities and so on but they posed in the exact same way, were all aligned, wore the exact same underwear and looked happy and confident. I mean, the body positivity movement is older than this campaign, but I remember that it had a big impact on me because the models really looked happy and confident, regardless of the body they had. I think that the body positivity movement is very important and already achieved to change some things for women but to me, it is has a lot of impact when I see women showing their bodies, it can be while wearing underwear, naked pictures, clothes showing a lot of skin, and so on, and that the women in the pictures do not really seem to care that they are half naked because they embrace their body and like to show it to the world.

Anaïs: Could we then say that nudity is a factor that influences body positivity? If the model looks comfortable in her skin of course.

P.3: Yes! To me at least it is. I have to say that it is even more impactful if the model is not looking absolutely perfect, unlike in those Helmut Newton pictures for example. Because then it's a picture of a normal body, closer to what you can see when you look at yourself in the mirror and seeing a woman proud and happy with her body even if imperfections are showing, I think it's a powerful statement.

Anaïs: Okay then we can add the imperfections component to the nudity for the picture to have a positive impact on your mood. Uh, does anyone disagree with this statement or would like to, um, reformulate something that does not fit your opinion? No? Amazing then maybe if someone else who has, um, an opinion on the subject could tell me if they believe that seeing a picture showing nudity and body imperfections would have an impact on your, um, mood and, um, well-being in general? Or maybe what type of psychological effect would you expect after seeing those pictures?

P.5: Well, um if I imagine a picture showing nudity and where the models has physical imperfections, even though I do not really agree on calling cellulite, wrinkles and so on imperfections, um, well in that case I would definitely feel empowered as a women. My well-being, well um I don't think I will reflect on it at that moment but well yes I believe my mood would be at least the same if not better after seeing those pictures. I mean, um, seeing a woman proud of her body even if it has some features which are shamed by society is very empowering I would say.

Anaïs: Great, thanks to both of you for your input. Um, so nudity with imperfections, or we could even call it imperfect nudity, tends to have a positive impact on mood and well-being if I understood your point of view correctly. Please don't hesitate to interrupt me if you disagree or want to add something. So, um, I'd like to continue with something that you mentioned, you said that to you cellulite wasn't an imperfection because it's more a physical attribute of a person right?

P.3: Yes exactly I would say so.

Anaïs: Great okay because I would like to talk about the fact that most models employed by Vogue Germany tend to have a similar appearance. Uh, this is something we discussed in the first focus group and I would like to know what you picture when you think of Vogue Germany's lambda model. Yes please?

P.2: Hum I would say, white, blond, long hair, skinny. Maybe I'm exaggerating on the blond part but I do feel that they have a tendency to show blond girls. Yeah I think that's the generic model.

Anaïs: Okay so we have the same findings as in the first focus group. Does anyone disagree? Or has a different opinion? No? Okay great, you guys are making it easy it's great. Hum so now that we've established that models tend to have similar looks, I notice that none of you mentioned particular physical attributes that would make a model stand out. Do you think that models have them? That they have a physical attributes which are only that makes them unique or would you rather say that's there are meant to look alike?

P.7: I would definitely argue that the fashion industry tries to make the girls look all the same because then it's easier for them to swap clothes between all the models. So I don't think that it's a requirement the models to look distinctive.

Anaïs: OK great so this means that's we do not see particular physical attributes when we think of vogue germany's models. When you think of your social circle including friends, family, work colleagues, and so, on what particular physical attributes come to mind which are distinctive for a person which makes a person's stand out to you?

P.1: Well personally I'm a student, so I'm still in my early 20s and as a woman when I look at other women, my friends, I must admit that 1 thing that I notice are the different body shapes and body sizes. Maybe that's because I am still young, and still at an age where being in shape or being a certain body type and body shape is important, but this is definitely something that counts and defines someone I would say. Now we were talking about the fact that Vogue Germany's models usually look similar in terms of body size, and so I would argue that there is more much more diversity in the women I see every day, then in Vogue

Germany's models where their body size is not distinctive physical attributes because most of them are skinny.

Anaïs: Okay so body size is something that stands out to you when you think of the women you encounter on a daily basis but it does not necessarily apply to models because they tend to all have the same body. Correct?

P.1: Yes.

Anaïs: And how would it make you feel if Vogue Germany's models would reflect the diversity in terms of body sizes that you see in your everyday life? Or do you think that that's impossible because models could not possibly look glamorous or beautiful enough if they were not the sample size we see today?

P.1: Well I mean if from one day to the other I would see all types of body shapes and sizes in Vogue Germany's models maybe I would find it a bit strange at first because we have been programmed to think that skinny is beautiful, at least in the fashion world or for people who are interested in fashion. Hum yeah, but anyway I don't think that changing the model's sample size would necessarily mean that they would look less beautiful or less fashionable. It's true that usually models are very skinny because the clothes usually look better on skinny models because, well, they are used as living coat hangers, or at least that's how we are used to think about clothing. But I think that's changing as well, clothes are being more adapted to different body sizes and shapes. Sorry I got a bit lost in my explanation. Anyway, no I don't think that more diversity in terms of body sizes and shapes would make a difference to the beauty of the model. And personally, I would like if Vogue Germany made that change because I don't think that only skinny girls should be seen as beautiful, I think I would also feel better about myself because I do not fit the model sample size and sometimes I feel unconfident about my body.

Anaïs: Thank you so much for the detailed answer, I think you mentioned a lot of important aspects of the fashion industry. Does anyone have another opinion or thinks about another

type of physical attributes which make a person look distinctive? Which you maybe encounter in your social circle?

P.4: I remember the other day meeting this girl at a party and she had pretty bad acne, with scars and everything, but she didn't try to hide it with make-up, and you could sense that she was confident about herself even with this imperfection and it was very empowering. I think the fashion industry should normalize skin conditions, like acne or moles or eczema and so on, cellulite also being in that category, I guess. I don't think it will ever happen because the skincare industry makes way too much money from the whole "perfect skin" concept that's being sold to us. But I would like to see models with skin conditions, not that it has to become a requirement, but I don't think that it should be covered up with make-up. Personally I struggled a lot with acne in my youth and it would have helped me a lot if acne wasn't completely banished from the fashion and beauty industry, since I was always a big consumer of fashion magazines. And otherwise I like it when I see woman wearing crazy hairstyles or hair color, it always adds this extra spice and says a lot about the woman's personality in my opinion. To be honest I don't really understand why they tend to make the models look so generic, a woman with unusual physical attributes will catch more attention than common beauty. And I guess that's what a magazine like Vogue Germany should try to do, catch the reader's attention, to sell more copies,

Anaïs: Okay thank you, so we can add skin conditions to the list of physical attributes that could potentially contribute to the reader's well-being if it was displayed on the models, as-well as unusual hairstyles and hair color because it also allows you to relate with the model. Now that we spoke about physical attributes I would like to go more into depth about the diversity of the models. In the last focus group we found that we could make a difference between physical attributes and diversity. When I say the word diversity what comes to your mind? Yes please.

P.6: When I think of diversity and especially amongst women in Switzerland, I picture the woman I know, and I would say the first thing that comes to my mind is ethnicity. In Switzerland we have the chance to be a very multi-cultural country where people with different cultures and backgrounds live together. That to me would be the first aspect. Then

I guess the difference between the generations. I imagine you would like to know my opinion if the diversity I see everyday is reflected in Vogue Germany?

Anaïs: Yes exactly, and how you feel about it.

P.6: Well, Vogue Germany tries to make some efforts to include more ethnicities even if it's very far from being an equal distribution between all ethnicities. Obviously, most models are white, but not even German, or Swiss or Austrian, I feel that a lot of girls come from eastern countries which doesn't make sense. And so, in that case you might as well include everyone from every ethnical background. I noticed that there are more black models in the recent years, but I don't think it's enough, plus all other ethnicities are badly underrepresented. For example, Latinos or Asians, I feel like we almost never see models from those countries. And the second component that I mentioned is the generational differences in women, I guess I would call this age diversity maybe. I don't recall seeing an older model in the magazine, besides maybe celebrities like Heidi Klum lately but that doesn't really count because she is famous. When I think of myself I don't believe that I'm old, I'm in my mid-thirties, but I do have the first aging signs showing and when I read Vogue Germany it sometimes make me feel old. I cannot imagine how a woman with sixty-plus years feels when she reads the magazine. It's not fair to only represent a small age group, that gives the impression that any other age group is not beautiful enough to be in the fashion industry. But as you ***** mentioned it with the skin condition industry, the youth industry makes so much money that they would never allow age to be seen as beautiful. I believe that to include all age groups would be beneficial to our well-being, if you are in an age group that is currently never shown in the magazine.

Anaïs: Does everyone agree with this? Especially the participants who are over thirty?

P1: Even as a student I would prefer to see older models. A lot of girls are afraid of aging and already consider injections and plastic surgery. It's ridiculous and bad for your mental health to fear a natural aging process.

Anaïs: That's great, thank you for your input! Now moving on to another topic, I want to talk with you about the fact that magazines sometimes, if not often, retouch their images. What interests me is when a magazine retouches its picture in a way that goes unnoticed, in order to make the model better suit the beauty criteria. For example, the retouches can make the model appear slimmer, erase skin imperfections, erase tattoos, freckles, slightly alter her skin color, etc. I would like to know if you are aware of magazines retouching their images and also you feel about it. Yes please.

P.7: Personally I know that magazines retouch their images because my uncle used to work in fashion as a designer and he told me the craziest things when it came to photoshopping an image for an campaign. For example, apparently they even retouch the model's neck length, so I guess absolutely everything we see is fake. But this story is a bit old, he left the industry maybe ten years ago and I did wonder a couple of times during the last years if they still alter pictures as much as back then, since the body positivity movement is on the rise and in some ads they even specify if the picture has been modified. But anyway I still think that everything that is in a fashion magazine is modified to make the model look better, if it's not even the model herself who did some plastic surgery, but that's another topic. I must say that even if I know that images are probably being photoshopped, I would prefer if they did not do it, because it just adds to the pressure of how you are supposed to look like when someone takes a photo of you, and you know, even if you are naturally photogenic you will never look like what you see in a fashion magazine. If they would leave the pictures as they were it would be better for everyone I think, because models would not be ashamed of their imperfections and we as fashion industry consumers would not be blinded by perfect pictures which do not represent reality. I mean, I'm not 100% sure that models are ashamed of their imperfections, but I listened to some interviews and podcasts, vlogs etc of models who say that it took them a long time to accept their body and that they had big self-confidence issues. So, I'd say that it would also benefit them. Also one last thing I would like to mention is that even if I'm aware that a picture has probably been modified, I don't know what exactly has been changed, for example it's impossible to tell if they made the model look slimmer, taller, changed her hair, her skin tone and so on. I guess it would already be a plus if instead of only saying that the picture has been modified they said what exactly has been changed, but

I guess that could lead to some very big controversy if a magazine had to admit that they changed a skin tone for example.

Anaïs: Okay thank you very much! Amazing that you personally got the input of an expert from the fashion industry on that matter. Does anyone else want to say something? Maybe a different opinion?

P. 3: So I was not aware that fashion images were retouched to that extreme length but it when I think about it, it makes sense. For example there is this one Dutch model I very much like because she is not the usual size zero, has a lot of tattoos, has more body hair then the majority of women and is very confident in her skin. Recently I saw her in an fashion shoot in a fashion magazine I think, can't remember which one it was, and it struck me that her legs looked way slimmer than what I remembered from her Instagram. I guess the magazine took the liberty to slim her down. I wonder if the models have a say in this because I could not imagine that this particular model agreed to it, I can't recall her name just now but she is the one with short black hair who walked for Chanel last season at she was the first model with a size 40 to walk the Chanel catwalk in over forty years. She looked amazing, and honestly now that I think of it I didn't find a huge optical difference between her and other girls who were a size 0, so this whole focus on models having to be very skinny is not really worth it in my opinion.

Anaïs: It's a good question, it also makes me wonder now if models have to give there agreement if a magazine wants to photoshop them! Or maybe they just give the photographer and the editor the right to use the pictures as they wish for a certain period of time and so they don't even know in the end. We will now move to another topic if no one wants to add something to this part of the discussion? No? Okay great, so I noticed that in the focus groups I did so far participants tend to want to be able to relate to the model, for example they would like to know if the model also has cellulite like them, or to see more diversity in order to see themselves being represented in the fashion shoots and so on. It made me wonder if it is important to you to be able to establish some kind of connection with the model. We also spoke a lot about not hiding the imperfections and particular physical attributes of models, so from what I understand there is the wish to make fashion images more authentic for the

reader. If any one of you completely disagrees with what I'm saying right now please let me know! No? Amazing, then please tell me what, in your opinion could help you establish this connection with the model and make the picture more authentic, therefor also establishing a more authentic connection with the girl.

P.5: I agree that establishing a brief connection with the model would be beneficial to my experience when I read Vogue Germany. At first I didn't really understand what you meant with establishing a connection with the model but then I thought of YouTube channels I follow because I think that I've established a certain connection with the people in those videos. When I think of it, they are all very different in term of physical characteristics so there is no reason why I could not have a deeper connection with a model. I guess it would not be as intense as with those youtubers, because you only look at images in a fashion magazine for a couple of minutes but I think it could definitely be beneficial to be able to interpret the personality of a model and know more about her. When I establish a good connection with a youtuber I usually often go back to the channel because it gives me a sense of safe-space and happiness, and usually I start to establish this connection after learning more about the youtuber's life and personal details. So going back to the fashion industry, I would prefer to know more about a model's life and personality because to me that's how you connect with someone. Now, it is very difficult to achieve that because they are not going to put a brief interview with each model at the beginning of each shoot, it would be too space consuming.

Anaïs: So this means that editors and photographers should find a way to let the models personality, preferences and lifestyle be visible in the pictures? Do you have something in mind?

P.5: Yes, ideally that would be the best solution. I guess that in order to see the model's personality photographers should give her some freedom in how she poses and interacts with the camera, but then it should also be written somewhere that she could choose this for herself. I'm not sure if that's a viable solution either, what I'm sure of is that I don't like it when I have the feeling that the girl is just being used for her looks.

P.2: I think I have some ideas of how this could be achieved, and I absolutely agree with everything that's been said so far. First I think that it's very important to know the name of the model, so if the reader wants to know more about her, we can find her Instagram etc. Then, and I'm pretty sure I've seen this before in some shoots, models could be allowed to keep certain personal items like jewelry or signs of their cultural beliefs or religious beliefs. I know Vogue Germany tries to always be politically correct and to not take a stand on religion, but I think it would actually be progressist to, hum, how do you say, embrace the beliefs of the model and not try to hide them and make her into a generic coat hanger. So yes I would argue that seeing her name, and not written in a very small font at the end of the image series, personal items that she was allowed to keep in the pictures are a good starting point.

P.7: I agree but I wonder if the model would even like that, maybe some of them are too shy or want to keep their private life completely separated from their work. But if a model agrees, I would love to see some of her personal items on the shoot. Even if it's just her holding the book she is currently reading or a little bracelet that she's usually wearing every day. I really don't like it when I get the feeling that the girl is being only used for her looks. I must say that I get this feeling more often when I look at catwalks than when I read a magazine such as Vogue Germany, but it does happen as well and I think that it's downgrading as a woman to see another woman only valued because clothes look good on her. I feel that we as society have evolved from that mindset.

Anaïs: Great thank you everyone for this discussion! So to sum up, if you had more information about a model you think that you could maybe establish a brief connection with her and you would prefer that because you think that it would make you feel better about yourself? I did not quite get that part, you spoke about youtubers and that you like to watch their channel because it gives you a sense of happiness, right? Could maybe someone elaborate on that?

P.7: Well to me, as I said just before it makes me feel bad to see a model being used as a coat hanger. If I get the feeling that I know a bit more about the girl who is being photographed I will of course get an impression of who she is as a person, I get a completely

wrong impression but that I will never know, and with this impression I will indeed either connect with her on a more personal level or on the contrary not able to relate to her at all. In both cases, this information will make her accessible as a human being and I think that we all said during this focus group that we like to be able to relate to the models in the pictures, through their imperfections, through physical diversity or now through information about the girls' personality, culture, likings etc. And being able to relate to a model who is pictures as beautiful and representing the fashion industry makes her beauty and the fashion world more accessible, I would say, and so what is more accessible also makes us feel that we could be a part of it as readers. We talked a lot about the influence on mood and well-being, I think that's where we could be influenced positively.

Anaïs: Amazing thank you for your answer. Connection equals accessibility which means that there can be influence on our well-being and on our mood, I must say that I agree with you on that. Does anyone disagree or has something to add? Okay then I think I would like to keep talking with you about how the model can influence your mood and well-being and the relationship you can have with her. We talked about connecting with the models through signs of personality and lifestyle choices, now I wonder if you recall seeing some display of emotions when you looked at Vogue Germany's fashion images and if those emotions had an impact on you. All of you stated that you didn't like it when models are being used as coat hangers, does this mean that you also care about her emotions and her mental state? I know that scientific studies found that an evolution of fashion photography is that models tend to show less emotions than before but maybe you can still remember seeing some emotions. And if not, let me know how you think it would make you feel to see emotions or even to not see emotions in fashion picture. Who wants to go first? Yes, please, thank you.

P.4: I think it's well known that the people around us have a direct influence on our state of mind, which is how we choose our friends and partners and why we also speak of toxic relations for example. I believe that we tend to reproduce the emotions we see, I guess there could be two reasons for that phenomenon. First, we are directly influenced if we are only surrounded by happy people and secondly there is a psychological mechanism which is called mimetics if I'm not mistaken, and basically it states that we tend to automatically reproduce what other people do around us, in terms of body language, because unconsciously

we want to fit in. So I think that if I would read Vogue Germany and only see models who look very happy it would be a factor that could enhance my mood. As you mentioned Anaïs, I don't think that a lack of emotions from the models would influence me at all because it's very common for them to not show any feelings nowadays. But I would say that if I see models smiling and laughing, and if it looks authentic obviously, I would be positively influenced by it. It would actually be a good change if Vogue Germany decided to shoot more "happy" models.

Anaïs: Okay thank you very much. Does someone else want to add maybe one last thing? I see that we are almost doing overtime already. Yes sure please!

P.1: Maybe one last precision from my side, you asked if cared about the emotion from the model right?

Anaïs: Yes exactly.

P.1: Well, as everyone else said it, I also don't like it when a girl is exclusively used as a coat hanger. Even if it's the girls' job to look good in clothes, I think we would all like it if we knew that models are treated correctly and enjoy their job. That is also why Italy for example decided to put a minimum BMI under which the girls are not allowed to work, to protect them. So yes I would definitely say that I care about them, maybe because I'm also a woman and so I'm more sensible to their well-being, and so seeing them happy in pictures would directly influence me. As you said, ****, it has to look authentic otherwise it could have the reversed effect.

Anaïs: So authentic positive emotions would influence your own well-being and could potentially enhance your mood, especially models laughing and smiling. Does anyone disagree or has another opinion? No? Okay thank you everyone for participating in this focus group! I would love to keep talking with you, but we are reaching the 45 minutes and so the end of our session. If you are interested about knowing more about the few scientific studies, I talked about please reach out to me I will be happy to send you the information. And if you

have any questions about today or about my work, please to do not hesitate to contact me via WhatsApp or email! Thank you everyone and have a lovely day.

Focus group 3

Anaïs: Hi everyone, welcome to our focus group. So today we are going to conduct the last focus group of my research, I'm excited to cover the last aspects I want to talk about with you today. Today's focus group has 6 participants, you were selected because of your answers in the survey I sent you. As you can see you are all women, that's because I am currently researching the effect of Vogue Germany's fashion images on female readers and in particular on female readers' well-being. All of you said that you read Vogue Germany regularly or at least every three month which makes you eligible for the focus group. So as I told you per mail, we will conduct today's focus group in English, even if we are all German speakers so sorry about that but it makes my life much easier, I will not have to translate the transcript afterwards. Is it okay with everyone if I record today's session in order to use it later on in my research?

P.1: Yes.

P.2: No problem.

P.3: Yes.

P.4: Sure.

P.5: Yes.

P.6: Of course.

Okay great thank you everyone, so let's start. In the previous focus groups we talked a lot about how the physic of Vogue Germany's models can influence the readers well-being and so today I would like to focus on how the models in the pictures can sometimes translate societal issues or how their behavior could influence your well-being. So, I would like to

start by discussing the potential presence of gender stereotypes in Vogue Germany fashion photography and I would like to know if you believe that the fashion images in Vogue Germany contain gender stereotypes. And then depending on your answer do you think that gender stereotypes are a necessary component of fashion photography today? Does anyone want to start? Yes please

P. 2: Hi so for me I can sometimes see a gender stereotype in Vogue Germany's pictures, but I mean it always depends I think if a man is also being photographed or if it's only a woman that is shown in the photography. Because often I feel that when a man is also being photographed, the way women and men interact in fashion photography can be a bit weird and often shows a power relationship between the two so I don't know if this directly counts as a gender stereotype but at least a power relation between men and women. Sometimes I notice it and I definitely don't think that it contributes in any way to fashion images. But so when I think of gender stereotypes, what pops into my mind is a woman in a housewife role or a woman as being an object of desire, a woman being overly sexualized and I think we can definitely see that sometimes in fashion photography even if a man is not portrayed in the image, I guess I would need to see a sample of Vogue Germany's images right now to give a clearer opinion about if there are gendered stereotypes to be seen in the images or not, but in any case I don't think that seeing gender stereotypes in fashion images contributes to the image in any way, because an image should be able to be fashionable and to represent the fashion industry well, without any awkward power relation between men and women or putting woman in a in a stereotyped place.

Anaïs: OK amazing thank you for your answer. So from what I understood you would say that you think there are some gender stereotypes sometimes in the images, but you will need a sample right now to point it out correctly which is absolutely understandable. And I would like to know now, because you say that you can't really recall when there is a gender stereotype or not. So, I would like you to imagine now how you would feel if you were confronted with a fashion image that challenged gender stereotypes, of course in a respectful and appropriate manner, we don't want the reverse effect of gender stereotyping men.

P.2: Yes so I believe that one big issue maybe that we have with fashion images or maybe even marketing images in general, but now we are talking about the Vogue Germany fashion images, is that some stereotypes like gender stereotypes are so common in fashion and marketing and so on that they probably go unnoticed and we just take it now as a code of conduct of like fashion photography even though there should be other options on how to photograph women and how to, you know, show clothes and everything so I think we should remind ourselves as readers of what a gender stereotype is and how we would actually like to see women in order to actually know what kind of picture would challenge a gender stereotype. But then again that is not really something you think of when you are reading the magazine, because yeah well I guess we've been a bit brainwashed and we kind of know what you expect to see in the pictures but it does not mean that it's right. I guess maybe Vogue Germany should take the initiative to photograph models differently and maybe to reflect on what is a gender stereotype. Anyway, if I would see a picture that challenged gender stereotypes, and right now on the spot it's hard to say what I would like to see in that picture exactly, because I would have to reflect on what is a gender stereotype to me personally, but I would say that I would feel empowered as a woman for sure. Especially maybe if it's a gender stereotype I feel that I have been stereotyped with, if it makes sense, then yes, I would definitely feel empowered as a woman. Especially because I do not believe that stereotypes help woman feel happy and accomplish what they want to accomplish because it still closes a lot of doors to puts women and men in distinctive categories about what they can do and say and achieve. So yes, this would be my opinion about this.

Anaïs: OK thank you very much, does anyone else want to add something does someone have a completely different opinion? Or maybe does someone agree with this? Is someone else aware of gender stereotypes? Yes?

P.6: Hi! So, I remember, it's not necessarily about a Vogue Germany fashion image. But I remember this Calvin Klein shoot or Dolce Gabbana campaign from a couple of years ago where a woman was half naked, so extremely sexualized, and all of the men around her looking at her like this object of desire and this whole controversy about it, that it almost mimicked a rape scene where the woman was seen as very vulnerable but it was trying to sell sex and sexiness but actually it was just sad because the men were only interested about the woman because she was there, half naked and she didn't really have anything to say about it and I guess that's the kind of gender stereotypes that sometimes happens in fashion photography where maybe the director or photographer is not really aware about the position of women in society and how some issues can be transcribed into pictures, and then well these kind of faux pas happen. But I absolutely agree with what you said XXX earlier, I also don't really know exactly what I would expect from a fashion picture that challenges gender stereotypes even though I definitely think that it's possible to achieve it. But that would require a bit more reflection and imagination from the photographers, stylists, and everything but I would also very much like to see that in fashion photography. Especially because a magazine like vogue Germany actually has a female readership, I think mostly, and so I think it shouldn't embrace gender stereotypes which are often detrimental to women. So, they should rather try to uplift and challenge women to overcome gender stereotypes or rather the constraints put in a woman's life through gender stereotypes. And I also definitely agree that we became unaware of how many stereotypes are in the pictures we see everyday and we see in fashion magazines. I don't even think, to be honest, that the photographers and the editors and whoever produces the images are aware of the gender stereotypes it puts in them because it's just so impregnated in the codes it became normal.

Anaïs: OK thank you to both of you for your input, uhm, I think it makes a lot of sense. Also, the part that you don't really know exactly what a gender stereotype is for you, but you agree that there are some. I guess it differs for every reader, every person what you define under a gender stereotype. Would anyone like to add something more? Or has a different opinion? No? Ok great then we can move on to the next question.

I would like to talk with you about the authenticity you can find in fashion pictures. Let me give you a quick recap where this comes from. So, in the previous focus groups we spoke a lot about the physique of the models, as I mentioned previously, and so we talked a lot about the fact that the imperfections of a model are usually hidden for example cellulite or special physical attributes like freckles or tattoos or you know, that there are no unusual hair styles that show that could maybe give a little hint about the model's personality or who she is. So it's all very generic and sometimes, from what we got from the previous focus groups, is that the images lack a sense of authenticity and therefore readers sometimes struggle to relate with the model. Because the models are very beautiful but also not necessarily very interesting as human beings, because they are used as coat hangers and so previous focus groups found that it was detrimental to mood and well-being to see models as coat hangers because it's not a valuable place for women. And so, they argued that there is a wish to have a sense of authenticity coming from the images and coming from the photographed models in the images. So I would like to know from you, first if you agree that if you feel that a picture has authenticity that you could be able to relate with the model and that if you would like that at all. And then I would, most importantly, I would like to know what could enhance this feeling of authenticity to you in the pictures. Maybe someone who hasn't spoken yet, it would be amazing. Yes? Thank you.

P.3: So yeah first I would like to start saying that I absolutely agree. That I do not like it when I get the feeling that the model is really only used as a coat hanger and that she's just a living object meant to make the clothes look good. I think I definitely agree with that. It does make me personally feel a bit bad about the position of women and everything. Because I also like to read sometimes GQ, which is another magazine from the Conde Nast group, and I do get the feeling that men are less used as just living coat hangers. In a male magazine, I don't really know why, maybe because I'm not a man so I can't relate that much to the model, like to the condition of the model but I feel that in a female fashion magazine, it's sometimes a bit extreme how little attention is given to the model as a as a person. So, you wanted to know how I felt about authenticity. I definitely think that when you see someone who looks authentic and you can actually relate to the person, or not if the person doesn't

really fit how you think and doesn't fit your values and so on, but at least you can issue a judgement. Maybe that's not the right word but you can like kind of judge who the person is a bit more. And so, I agree that if we want to be able to relate to the model we do need that authenticity and if I would see a model and that felt authentic to me and I would relate to her because I liked the person she would represent and everything, I definitely think that it would enhance my experience as a Vogue Germany reader. Since we are working on well-being, I would say that it would make me happy to see a woman I can relate to and therefore that I support, being photographed and looking beautiful. I think it would, yeah, make me happy because of this complicity between women that I usually embrace. And so now there's the complicated part of the question which is what could enhance the feeling of authenticity for me in a picture. I think it's a bit more complicated, because well, fashion photographers and directors do have a certain style of how the photographs should look and the model can't have too many liberties in what she does in a shoot. But I would say the first thing that is important, would be to know bit more about the girl something like her name at least. I guess we can't really know everything, like where like where she's born or what age she is something like that. But at least a name and a name that is traceable not just "photograph model Katya". Ok, great who is Katya, like a full name so you can actually research her if you're interested in knowing more about her. I think that would be the first I would say that is important. Then I guess in order to relate to someone you have to know a bit more who this person is and to know who someone is you need to get hints about personality, about lifestyle, about opinions and so on, which is definitely something hard to translate in a picture.

P.6: Yes, I think I don't really know how you could translate that in the picture but if maybe we could get an idea of who the model is, that would be great in order to be able to relate to her.

Anaïs: OK yes absolutely, the previous participants of the other focus groups said roughly the same and their opinion was that they suggested to maybe be able to integrate some of the

personal items of a model into fashion images. Does someone have an opinion on that? And also what kind of personal items would you think could fit into a fashion shoot?

P.1: Hi! Personally, I think it's pretty difficult to integrate personal items in a fashion shoot to be honest. Because you would mix with items from fashion brands and I don't really know how much they would like that, how they would like to be mixed with the model's personal items. But I would say that if it would be possible, it would be great to see items belonging to the model that maybe, you know, she kept on the shoot because they are dear to her. I think it's a bit complicated to achieve that, but if it's possible to get any information about her personality, about her lifestyle, what kind of cultural background she's from for example that would be interesting. I don't really think that it's possible, but for example if she kept a religious sign, a cross or something that lets you know "oh ok she's religious" but at the same time I can see that she's wearing this jewelry and I have the same kind of jewelry, that could be a way among many to relate to the model. For example if religion is also a big part of my family life and so maybe then I would be able to relate to the model and she wouldn't be just a generic model that I can see everywhere. In this case I could maybe connect with her, I could therefore like her and if I think that she's beautiful maybe this beauty could reflect on me and therefore make me feel better, and so enhance my mood. I think that being able to connect with the model on that level could be beneficial to Vogue Germany's readers well-being.

Anaïs: OK thank you for the great input. Would anyone else like to add something to the discussion? Otherwise, I would like to go more in-depth with the relationship you have with the photographed models. For example, you mentioned that you didn't like to see a model solely used as coat hanger, and so I wonder, do you care then about the emotion, or the state of mind of the model? And if you care about it or not, depending on your answer, do you think that the emotions that the model shows in a picture could influence you, could influence your emotions and therefore your well-being and your whole experience when reading vogue Germany?

P.4: So I can't say that I actively think about the fact that a model is only used as a coat hanger, but it's true that when I think of it, I really dislike the idea of a woman being treated like that and only used for her looks. But regarding her emotions, and the emotions the model will show in the picture, I think it has a big impact on me. I'm very sensible when it comes to visual representation, and so when I see in a picture people, in that case Vogue Germany's models, looking happy and smiling, well first of all I will pay more attention because it's a very powerful emotion. A model smiling, in contrast to a model gazing away, looking away, will catch my attention more and also I think it makes me happier. I don't know why but I'm influenced by emotions, by other people's emotions. Also in real life, it's something I noticed about myself, um but then of course if the emotion that is shown is negative, maybe if the model is crying, shouting at someone, if the model is fighting with another, that would also impact me. I don't know if it would really make me sad, because if I don't really understand why she's unhappy or what they're fighting about, things like that, I don't know if I could really relate and then I don't know if it would impact me. But weirdly I feel that a display of positive emotion would impact me more than a display of negative emotion, because you don't really need a reason to be happy you know, but you need a reason to be sad usually. So if the girl looks happy, is smiling, is laughing, is looking good, and if it looks authentic obviously, because a fake smile you know, a smile which is only with the teeth and the girl doesn't smile with her eyes, or the other way around, then unless you're completely gullible, you can't believe it's authentic. So if it's authentic, I think I would be positively impacted by a model showing positive emotions yes. Actually I don't really see why fashion pictures shouldn't mostly show happy pictures, because it really doesn't make a difference to how the clothes look or how cool the picture looks and everything, but maybe the producers think that it's uncool to look happy, that it fits the fashion industry better to not display any emotions and give the camera blank empty look. I really think that they should try to change that, also the models don't have to just smile at the camera and make it looks like kind of stupid, but I'm sure the producers can photograph models in ways where they would look just as cool and happy at the same time. I believe that would be a big plus for the industry.

Anaïs: OK thank you so much for your answer! Would someone like to add something?

P.5: Yes, I would like to add something. We talked about how emotions should look authentic so we can be able to relate to them and they can actually impact us, and I absolutely agree on that. Something that personally comes to my mind, is that if the model looks very happy but that around her the setting is for example extremely luxurious or she's eating in a Michelin star restaurant, if she's pictures in an expensive car, that kind of thing, I know the fashion world is usually glamorous, but I think just seeing the model in those kinds of settings and seeing her very happy at the same time, I mean it's absolutely normal that she looks happy, but to go back to the authenticity factor to be able to relate the model, I think that it would make it harder to relate with the model if you see her in a setting that, you could never afford, or that is not your everyday life. Of course you're happy when you are on your dream vacation, of course you're happy on Christmas, but I think it would be more powerful if the model looked happy and smiling and laughing in everyday life. For example if she's photographed in her office, or at home, at a café, on the street, with friends, or alone, but just everyday life situations. I don't expect to see her laughing and super happy in the metro on rush hour, because it would be, well it would loose again the authenticity factor. But I think that's something that should be kept in mind, for example when I think of those Victoria's Secret campaigns, and they always shot them in Saint Barth which is a paradise island, and then yes the models did look happy and even Victoria's Secret always tried to work with the personality of the model by marketing her, and working on her Instagram, and all that, if you remember the angels back in the day, but coming back to Saint Barth, the fact that they were on this dream island, well of course you expect them to be happy, to be feeling great, and I don't think that's necessarily the best influence for the reader. I mean it's inspiration for sure, inspiration for, for example life style inspiration, but it's not necessarily a very impactful picture for everyday happiness and well-being. So, in my opinion, for positive emotions to have the most impact on the reader it should be photographed in a, I would say humble setting if this makes sense, an unspectacular setting. Because otherwise, I think the surroundings like the super expensive and amazing food, the expensive car, the great location, could be interpreted as the source or the cause of the positive emotion, and so most

of the readers will not be able to relate to that, then they will not be able to relate to the positive emotion itself.

Anaïs: Yes absolutely I agree with you XXX that a humble setting would give much more power to the picture itself. Thank you everyone for the really interesting input about how positive emotions could impact our own as readers. I didn't really plan on speaking about that, but it's great that it came up, so I guess to wrap up this focus group I would like to talk about the scenery in fashion images. You just said that positive emotions could have more impact on the readers if the scenery isn't impressive or luxurious, in other words if it's accessible to everyone. So I guess scenery probably makes a difference to you, um and so I would like to understand the different possible types of sceneries that you have in mind for fashion photography and in your opinion how they can impact well-being, as always. As you said it's important for female readers to be able to relate to models in the pictures, so please if it's alright with you, describe settings you don't think you can relate to and the ones you think you can relate to. Maybe we can try to understand what kind of sceneries are most beneficial for the reader's well being.

P.1: I would like to start if that's OK it was you .

Anaïs: Yes, sure please.

P.1: So the first thing I would like to specify, is that I don't think that I could ever be negatively impacted by a fashion shoot setting. I mean maybe if the shoot take place somewhere where I've lived through a very traumatic experience something like that, then you I mean it would bring me back to experience and be negative, but otherwise I don't think I would ever be negatively impacted by an image because of its setting. So I guess the question is more how could I be positively impacted by the setting, so I would be able to identify with it. A setting would more likely be either neutral, in my opinion, or positive. I don't even know if it's setting could be positive, but maybe it could help me relate to the picture. I mean I'm now in my mid-40s, I'm still active, I work, I have a family life, and so

most of my days, I don't think I'm boring, but I think I have a very generic life. As for most people I'm at home, I go to the office, when it's not Covid obviously, yeah I see some friends and things like that, but I don't do anything I would say "crazy". Most of the days I will usually not go out to very fancy restaurants during the week, because I don't have the time to sit in a restaurant for three hours during a weekday, things like that. So, I guess to me to be able to relate with a picture the easiest way would be to produce images in an everyday scenery. I think that's how I could the easiest relate to a picture and therefore establish connection with the picture with the model and then connect with everything that we talked about before.

Anaïs: OK thank you for your input. So basically, the best would be sceneries reflecting your life on a daily basis, I understood it correctly. Does anyone want to add something, or does anyone disagree? Yes?

P.2: I think that one particularity of Vogue Germany is that they have a really broad spectrum of people when it comes to the readership. So I think that the daily life of one of the readers will not at all be the same daily life than another reader, and so I wonder if maybe the setting is not too common, but too "unluxurious", maybe then some part of the readership could maybe not relate with it. I do think that to photograph the models in a common setting would help most of the female readers to connect with the model and therefore, as we said before, if we can relate with the model, then we can also relate to her beauty, and the beauty of the garments that are photographed, and so the photography in general, if we are able to imagine ourselves in a given setting. Being able to relate with the beauty and to feel like we are part of the fashion world, I definitely think that it helps to give positive emotions to the readers. Common settings would allow the readers not to feel that they are excluded from the fashion world because it's too luxurious for them, that they can't really afford it, and that they are outsiders basically. The images' sceneries should definitely be inclusive and make people feel that they can be a part of the fashion industry, I think it will help increase the reader's well-being.

Anaïs: OK, thank you very much. So common scenery will help readers connect with the beauty of the fashion industry, and therefore it will help them feel included in the industry, and that's definitely a positive thing for the readers, I agree with you. Thank you very much. Does anyone disagree? Or can we say that some everyone agrees with those statements? Yes? From everyone? OK great, I can say that all of you agree that common sceneries are a plus for female readers' well-being. I think we're reaching the end of our focus group so thank you everyone for participating today. I hope all of you had a good time and enjoyed our discussion. If you have any questions or comments about today or about my work in general for my internship report, please do not hesitate to contact me via mail or via WhatsApp. I will make sure that your identity doesn't come up in the transcript, as I told you via email, the whole focus group interview is anonymous. I will erase your name from the transcript if it comes up. Thank you everyone and I wish you a lovely evening. Bye-bye.

C. Analysis of the transcripts

The following figure is a screenshot of my Quirkos program after analyzing all three focus groups. With the program I could divide the quotes from the different focus group interviews which I found relevant to the different categories. The number seen under each category (colored circle) represents the number of quotes attributed to the category in question.

D.   *Vogue Germany's* pictures

Due to the high volume of *Vogue Germany's* fashion images that I analyzed in the framework of this internship report and due to my environmental concerns, I chose to store the images under a QR code, rather than printing them all. When the QR code below is scanned, a Google Drive document with each *Vogue Germany* edition that has been analyzed in this report may be found. The material can be visualized through the web version of Google Drive, or the respective app (available in the app stores). If there are difficulties to access the material, an email should be sent to anais@gindrat.com.