

2015

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Recommended Citation

Boyd, Kayla C. (2015) "Democratizing Fashion: The Effects of the Evolution of Fashion Journalism From Print to Online Media," *McNair Scholars Research Journal*: Vol. 8: Iss. 1, Article 4.
Available at: <http://commons.emich.edu/mcnair/vol8/iss1/4>

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DEMOCRATIZING FASHION: THE EFFECTS OF THE EVOLUTION OF FASHION JOURNALISM FROM PRINT TO ONLINE MEDIA

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ABSTRACT

Traditionally, women have turned to fashion magazines to know what is trending, how they should dress, and what beauty tips they should try. In our current generation, however, print magazines as a whole are becoming less relevant due to blogs, smartphone apps, social media, and other digital sources. “The web has made it possible for ordinary consumers to reach a mass audience” (McQuarrie, Miller, & Phillips, 2013); thus fashion influence no longer comes only from advertisers and models with unrealistic features—it now reflects the tastes and appearance of ordinary people. Through a literature review and content analysis, this research demonstrates how the evolution of fashion journalism from print to online media is creating a more diverse marketplace, in which young women are making uniquely individual fashion choices.

INTRODUCTION

Fashion magazines have dictated what women perceive as “fashionable” for decades, but as print media become less popular and less abundant, digital sources have begun to satisfy this generation’s desire for fashion advice and other topics, ranging from skincare, make-up, and hair tutorials, to do-it-yourself projects and celebrity news. This research will focus on the genre of fashion journalism generally, and more specifically, how new media

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such as blogs, social networking sites, and video blogs (often referred to as “vlogs”), are affecting young female users in today’s culture.

According to Rocamora (2012), the fashion blogosphere, including both independent and corporate sites, has rapidly expanded since young American women began using the genre in 2003. “Twitter has 500 million registered users” (Rousseau, 2012), whereas Facebook has close to “850 million people using it each month” (Warren, Sulaiman, & Jaafar, 2014). This means that not only are people using social networking platforms to communicate, but women are sharing their personal style through blogs at an ever-increasing rate. Both fashion journalism and journalism as whole have been forced to adjust and adapt to these new media platforms.

A result of this evolution in journalism is the concept of “citizen journalists.” As the public becomes less clear about who actually is a professional journalist and what qualifications professional journalism requires, “[t]he very status of the journalist as reporter or opinion maker has been put into question, as the bar to entry for creating a mass media audience has lowered dramatically, which was first noticed when bloggers of all types rose to prominence” (Hansen, 2012). So what does this mean in terms of fashion journalism? Since fashion advice is not based on fact, but rather on taste and opinion, there is more room for conflict over what constitutes a “credible” source.

According to Hansen (2012), blogs constitute a new platform in which non-professional writers are able to reach a larger audience, resulting in an attention-getting space that was previously monopolized by mass media. Fashion magazines, part of traditional mass media, are no exception to this: “[w]e can all agree that today’s digital environment has transformed the print-based, one-way nature of journalism” (Bird, 2009). Through blogs and networking, news has become a conversation. The traditional method of purchasing a print magazine or newspaper to gain access to information on the topic of the reader’s interest is becoming obsolete for younger generations, who now rely almost solely on receiving data on a real-time basis: “[i]n their constant, often daily, updating of sites with new posts, fashion blogs feed into this tyranny of the new, constructing, more than any other media, fash-

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ion as transient, passing, already gone” (Rocamora, 2012). People once communicated by traditional mail; then the telephone and email developed a quicker and cheaper way, and now text messaging is common practice. The same evolution has occurred within journalism. Why would readers want to pay for a print magazine once a month when they can check their smartphone and receive moment-to-moment “trending” information for free?

Another challenge that professionals in the field face is that the vast majority of online news consists of commentary written by a declining number of professional print journalists (Bird, 2009). When looking at fashion journalism, these same concerns apply. According to research done by Pham (2011), people do not want to wait for print magazines, whose publication is slowed because editors actually fact-check their stories. In addition, Pham discusses the concern that many bloggers may not be offering any unique expertise or perspectives that contribute to meaningful fashion dialogue (2011).

This research will attempt to inform readers about the various effects that new media and citizen journalism have on our generation of fashion consumers, as well as add to the research involving fashion media. Although there are many male fashion bloggers and consumers, this research will focus on female-focused fashion blogs and sources. Through this literature review, personal interviews, and observations, this research will analyze the effects of the fashion media on young women, the evolution and development of new media, the structure of the fashion blogosphere, and what the democratizing of fashion means for this generation.

I. The Fashion Media’s Effects on Young Women

Davis (2007) found that women read an average of three magazines on a regular basis and spend an average of two hours a week reading magazines. According to Malachowski and Myers (2013), a common explanation for eating disorders amongst young women is exposure to underweight models depicted and promoted in the fashion media. Showcasing and endorsing slender individuals can result in distorted or negative body image perceptions among female adolescents and college women (Malachows-

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ki & Myers, 2013). “While non-White women weigh more than White women, White women exhibit greater body dissatisfaction, feel more pressure to conform to thin images in media, and display greater risk of eating disorders” (Davis, 2007). What is depicted in the fashion media directly affects those women who feel the need to live up to such images. Davis (2007) also states that non-white women were found to moderate the effects of media-internalization, body dissatisfaction, and the pressure to conform to magazine images.

This calls attention to the lack of non-white models in the fashion media. Research done by Frith, Shaw, and Cheng (2005) found that the general lack of non-white models in U.S. advertisements (91% of the U.S. models were of European descent), suggests reluctance on the part of U.S. advertisers to depict the full range of beauty types in their ads. Frith et al. (2005) state that, “[e]ven after 30 years of criticism by feminist scholars, advertisers in the U.S. still seem fixated on whiteness.”

According to Englis, Solomon, and Ashmore (1994), cultural representations of beauty often result from the stereotypes held by media “gatekeepers.” Such gatekeepers influence the selection of beauty types thought to appeal to a mass audience. Englis, Solomon, and Ashmore (1994) state that:

Although it may have been possible historically to identify a popular figure who personified beauty (e.g., Grace Kelly, Marilyn Monroe), we are now confronted with multiple ideals of beauty reflecting the proliferation of lifestyles, cultures, and ethnic groups that comprise American culture. Reflecting this cultural diversity, media vehicles have become increasingly fragmented.

Audiences turn to magazines for tips, examples, and even prototypes of beauty, which they may then use as benchmarks for evaluating themselves. “Fashion magazines are a potent means of socializing young consumers about beauty and fashion and for advertising beauty-and fashion-related products” (Englis, Solomon, & Ashmore, 1994).

II. The Evolution of the Media

According to Palfrey and Gasser (2008), when it comes to the transfer of information, this is the most rapid period of technological transformation ever seen. The World Wide Web debuted in 1991; search engines, portals, and e-commerce sites appeared in the late 1990s, and by the turn of the millennium, the first social networks and blogs appeared online (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008).

According to Pham (2011), techno-enthusiasts view the widespread access of new technologies as having a democratizing effect, while techno-skeptics perceive the availability of knowledge and communication through these technologies as a danger to the overall quality of public communication. This can be compared to the idea of “citizen journalism,” where instead of news coming from a trained reporter, it can come from almost anyone with Internet access: “[t]he only credential needed for creating a blog is access to the net” (Hansen, 2012).

Hansen (2012) states that the established media were slow to catch on to the blog format, while others, like academics, low-level journalists, and college students, engaged in blogging. The opportunity to upload one’s writing to a potentially international audience revealed the desire to write and be read by hundreds of thousands of users: “[t]he traditional (pre-internet) journalistic institutions, after initially either ignoring or deprecating the blogosphere, then began trying to incorporate Internet platforms into their standard operating procedures” (Hansen, 2012). Now, the vast majority of journalistic institutions have web-based publication platforms, either exclusively or as a supplement to their print formats. This makes it possible for media outlets that were originally print-based to produce content within interactive, multi-mediated, and hyperstructured presentation forms (Hansen, 2012).

The new media phenomenon has had some negative effects on professional journalists. According to Bird (2009), the rise of the citizen-journalist is accompanied by a decline in jobs for trained journalists, with massive layoffs striking newspapers and TV news organizations. Fashion or other lifestyle topics were sometimes considered less newsworthy by traditional journalism; however, these topics are becoming more and more popu-

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lar amongst consumers. Folker writes, “[i]ncreasingly, it seems, newspapers, magazines, radio, television and the internet are pre-occupied with what is generally referred to as ‘soft news,’ rather than the hard, political news which many commentators and scholars would like to see journalists producing” (Folker, 2012).

Not only are consumers becoming more interested in softer news stories, but it is also more attractive for advertisers. This is especially true in fashion media, where the content of the story or photograph serves as advertising for the brand, commodity, or designer. Folker (2012) states that the rise of a consumer culture in the West, in addition to increased amounts of individual leisure time, have led to a demand for information about how to best spend one’s free time. This has allowed news media to attract new markets for audiences and advertisers. Lifestyle journalism benefits from advertisers’ support and eases financial burdens on news outlets, thus rendering this type of journalism more profitable and more easily supportable from a management perspective (Folker, 2012).

According to McQuarrie et al. (2013), the blog posts, reviews, and user-generated content of interest are primarily concerned with consumption objects: fashion, food, and home decor. Consumer bloggers attract an audience that could only be gained by professionals in the past: “[t]hey achieve this audience by means of publicly consuming: choosing, evaluating, and engaging with clothing (in our focal example), and posting accounts of this consumption that garner a large audience of strangers” (McQuarrie et al., 2013).

Relating the concept of citizen journalism to fashion journalism can be complicated by the idea that fashion and style are not based upon factual information, but rather on trends and tastes. Although democratizing the news may be threatening to what people currently consider “real” journalism, democratizing fashion could be very beneficial to its consumers.

III. The Structure of the Fashion Blogosphere

Social networks and blogs have become a regular way for people to receive information and express themselves by tweeting, posting, or Instagramming their daily activities. A blog functions like a diary that multiple users may access. The overall theme and

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aesthetic of an individual's blog is entirely self-determined, and "there is no strict or universally standardized definition for the varieties of fashion-themed blogs" (Pham, 2011). As of July 2007, more than two million bloggers were listed by Blogger.com as members of "an industry of fashion" (2007).

Rocamora (2011) states that fashion-related blogs could be split into two main categories: "independent blogs," and "corporate blogs." According to Pham (2011):

Blogs might be personal, informal, public, referential, and participatory (through link trackbacks and reader commentary), or they might be commercial devices of promotion and marketing operating as information clearinghouses that are restricted to registered users, or they might encompass some combination of these qualities.

Independent blogs are usually run by one individual and tend to focus on street fashion, celebrities, or a particular type of commodity, while corporate blogs are the voice of a magazine, brand, or store (Rocamora, 2011). Since their appearance, fashion blogs have become important in the field of fashion, especially personal fashion blogs, in which bloggers post pictures of themselves documenting their style (Rocamora, 2011).

The blogosphere is a "hypertextual" platform; Rocamora (2012) writes that "[h]ypertextuality has come to commonly refer to the electronic linking of a wide range of written texts and images, brought together in a constantly shifting configuration of networks" (Rocamora, 2012). By using hyperlinks and hash tags, one fashion blog can lead to another, or to a social networking site, an online shop, or any site the blogger wishes to share with the reader. A magazine is constrained by its materiality and the limits of its pages, but with fashion blogs a broad range of texts related to a post can be made accessible by the "here and now" of the Internet (Rocamora, 2012). This constant craving for more sources of information can be satisfied by the availability of increasing amounts of content, and it only makes sense that electronic media would be appealing in a fast-paced environment such as the fashion industry.

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Although the fashion blogosphere is thought of as “democratizing the fashion industry” (Pham, 2011), it still contains hierarchical features. According to Chittenden (2010), as part of this online community, bloggers form links with other bloggers and acquire followers who subscribe to and comment on their blogs. The word “follower” is meant to signal a certain kind of relationship: “[o]n other social network sites, the term ‘friend’ denotes someone the individual has linked with, and whom they may know offline or only via mediated contact. The term ‘follower’ suggests a hierarchy, almost a religiosity, in the relationship” (Chittenden, 2010). This structure breaks down, due to the fact that many bloggers are themselves followers of other bloggers. However, some bloggers are still considered more “famous” than others (Chittenden, 2010).

“Blogs support a fluid notion of identity, as bloggers experiment with various looks, play with representations of themselves, and use various affinities with followers to build social capital” (Chittenden, 2010). Blogs have become an important medium through which teens and young adults, especially young girls, learn about themselves and their relationship to others. Chittenden (2010) suggests that when teens are reserved or have poor social capital in their offline relationships, the mediation of the blog creates a distanced space where they can build self-confidence by exploring their identity with like-minded others. If a blog focuses on fashion and beauty and uses those key words in its content or hyperlinks, then it attracts other fashion and beauty bloggers, creating an online community that may not have been possible in the past.

Although fashion bloggers may appear as amateurs when compared to *Vogue* and other prominent fashion magazines, they offer fluidity to their consumers. However, fashion magazines are not by any means obsolete in the fashion industry. Consider the many aspects of fashion magazines that are conveyed in successful blogs. One of the biggest examples of this is photography. McQuarrie et al. (2013) write that, “[a]esthetically pleasing clothes cannot look their best unless effectively photographed.” They add that as soon as the blogger begins to be photographed modeling

clothes, he/she must deal with the visual and aesthetic vocabularies already established by the fashion system, in which both bloggers and their followers are culturally situated (2013).

IV. The Democratization of Fashion

According to Pham (2011), the blogosphere is much more racially and ethnically diverse than print fashion magazines, and Pew Research has found that bloggers are less likely to be white than the general Internet population (Pham, 2011). Citizen journalists of any race, ethnicity, gender, or body type have access to an online platform, which contrasts with the images shown in the majority of fashion magazines. Since so few people are successful in the mainstream fashion industry, the Internet has provided a means for anyone with a blog, an Instagram account, or a Facebook page to share his or her own style, photograph, or designs to an international audience. Fashion and style bloggers, no matter what their style or approach may be, share in the enjoyment of producing, consuming, and exchanging both the material and immaterial goods of fashion and beauty (Pham, 2011). Pham writes, “[d]espite the relatively small number of fashion-themed blogs in the blogosphere, their impact on the fashion media complex and the larger fashion world is undeniable” (Pham, 2011).

Fashion companies are increasingly turning to bloggers for advertising, promotion, and trend forecasting. Pham (2011) asserts that bloggers provide fashion houses and their designers with inexpensive and global public relations and marketing. It has become common for “famous” fashion bloggers and other social media icons to be invited by high-end fashion brands to their events and shows. In addition to attending runway shows and events, fashion bloggers often receive samples of fashion or beauty products that a brand wants the blogger to advertise, and it is the blogger’s choice to post comments about the product on their blog or website. There are full websites dedicated to bloggers requesting and receiving samples from brands, such as etailPR’s Blogger Network and The Blogger Programme. According to McQuarrie et al. (2013), economic rewards for fashion bloggers include gifts of branded fashion clothing and other merchandise, paid ad place-

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ments on the blog, and paid sponsorship of blog contests. Other paid assignments can include modeling branded clothing, designing clothes and accessories, and guest articles in actual magazines.

New media fashion gurus have not only become leaders in the fashion industry, but also business moguls and role models for their peers, Chiara Ferragni, known for her fashion blog *The Blonde Salad*, has used the fame gained from her blog to publish a book, develop a shoe line, become a Guess model and spokeswoman and appear as a guest judge on *Project Runway* Season 13. Publishing books has become a current trend for other bloggers, such as Emily Shuman from the blog *Cupcakes and Cashmere*. YouTube fashion and beauty vloggers Bethany Mota, Zoe Sugg, and Michelle Phan have gained millions of viewers over the last few years, resulting in several projects contributing to their online fame. Mota has a clothing line at fashion retailer Aeropostale and appeared as a contestant in Season 19 of *Dancing With The Stars*. Phan has published a book entitled *Make Up: Your Life Guide to Beauty, Style, and Success—Online and Off* (2014), and has her own makeup line, “Em Cosmetics,” which is owned by L’Oreal. Zoe Sugg, also known by her YouTube name, “Zoella,” published the novel *Girl Online* (2014). Sugg writes in the About Me section of her blog “zoella.co.uk”: “I chose to write about the things I liked, the things I’d purchased and other opinions on products in general. Before long, I had a small following of people that enjoyed reading what I’d written, and this was amazing in itself, as really, I’d never expected anyone to enjoy anything I’d written in my own little space on the Internet.” These bloggers represent only a few examples of how young women have unintentionally transformed the industry of fashion and fashion media.

METHODOLOGY

In order to better understand the changing field of fashion journalism, this research project analyzed a sample of 40 personal style female blogs and compared them with four of the best-known fashion magazines in the United States. **Table 1.** provides a list of the blogs used in this research. **Table 2.** lists the magazines, their publishers, and the particular issues analyzed in this project.

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BLOG	URL	AUTHOR
Sweet Magnolia Chic	http://sweetmagnoliachic.com/	Marcy B.
Fashion For Lunch	http://fashionforlunch.net/	Fashion For Lunch
A Daydream Love	http://adaydreamlove.com/	Rechael Roe
Say Hello to Gorgeous	https://sayhellotogorgeous.wordpress.com/	Vanessa
Make Me Up Marie	http://makemeupmarie.com/	Marie
Styled By Lauren	https://4everfashion.wordpress.com/	Lauren
Confetti and Curves	https://confettiandcurves.wordpress.com/	Karen
With All My Affection	http://withallmyaffection.com/	Arielle Tan
Sistas From Cali	http://sistasfromcali.com/	Jacki and Leslie
Chic of Everything	https://chicofeverything.wordpress.com/	Casady
Call Me Katie	http://callmekatie.com/	Katie Poole
A Model of Life	https://amodeloflife.wordpress.com/	Jerrica Patton
Style Dash Ish	https://styledashish.wordpress.com/	Kalieha
Pink Ruffles and Polka Dots	https://pinkrufflesandpolkadots.wordpress.com/	Medley
Ruby Madison LLC	https://rubymadisonllc.wordpress.com/	Ruby Madison
My Witchy Closet	https://mywitchycloset.wordpress.com/	Camille
Wanderlustts	http://wanderlustts.me/	Lisa Mao
Chroma Me Silly	http://chromamesilly.com/	Tiny Thalia

Table 1. List of blogs used in research sample.

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BLOG	URL	AUTHOR
Do You Even Style	http://doyouevenstyle.com/	Sheridan Hessing
Laura Ephemera	http://lauraephemera.com/	Laura Ephemera
Chez Bri	http://chezbri.com/	Brianna
EK's Daily Dress	https://eksdailydress.wordpress.com/	Eloise Kendrick
The Sparkle Days	http://thesparkledays.com/	Fiona Pswarayi
Morgan Brittany Marie	http://www.morganbrittanymarie.com/	Morgan Brittany-Marie
Casually Chic	https://candaceskaggs.wordpress.com/	Candace Skaggs
Alice in Liu-Liu-Land	https://aliceinliuliland.wordpress.com/	Alice
Not Central Fashion	http://notcentralfashion.com/	Sophia
Delightfully Kristi	http://www.delightfullykristi.com/	Kristi Peterson
The Oldest Fad	https://oldestfad.wordpress.com/	Lydia Devereaux
A Red Lip And A Nude Shoe	http://aredlipandanudeshoe.com/	Rosie Rockets
Ello Kelsey	http://ellokelsey.com/	Kelsey Noelle
Chiomastic	https://chiomastic.wordpress.com/	Chioma
Fashion Meets God	http://fashionmeetsgod.com/	Jireh DeJose
What Sass Says	http://whatsassays.com/	Sarah Bristo
TopKnots and PolkaDots	http://topknotsandpolkadots.com/	Chloe Warren
Vera Dulce	https://veradulce.wordpress.com/	Michelle and Natsumi
Charnelle Geraldine	http://charnellegeraldine.com/	Charnelle Geraldine
Chicly Cute	http://chiclycute.com/	Chiclycute
Unveiled Glamour	http://unveiledglamour.com/	Emily Wells
College Girl Dai	http://collegegirdai.com/	Daizchane Baker

Table 1. List of blogs used in research sample.

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MAGAZINE	PUBLISHER	ISSUE
Seventeen	Hearst	December/January, 2015
Elle	Hearst	January, 2015
Cosmopolitan	Hearst	January, 2015
Vogue	Condé Nast	January, 2015

Table 2. List of magazines used in research sample.

In order to determine the sample of personal style blogs, a method similar to Chittenden's (2010) was used. The selection process was random and not determined by a third party, and the researcher does not personally know any of the bloggers. The bloggers were of no specific geographic location, and their number of subscribers or followers also varied. All blogs were selected through the hosting site Wordpress.

Not all bloggers disclose their real name or their full name online; therefore, the authors of the blogs in Table 1. are listed under the name provided on their blog and/or social media site. Bloggers generally use list a screen name, a real name, or the name associated with their blog.

For this content analysis a spreadsheet was developed to organize and compare different aspects of the personal style blogs. Recommendations offered by bloggers were followed to find other blogs with similar interests in fashion and beauty. All of the selected blogs were focused on young adult users from the ages of 17 to their late 20s. This age group was selected because according to Pham (2011), "[f]emales under the age of twenty-nine are the most prolific bloggers and maintain their blogs for longer periods of time."

All of the blogs focused on women's fashion or a combination of lifestyle, beauty, and fashion trends, and all posted "personal style" photographs, which are photos of the blogger wearing her own clothes and photographed in a manner that portrays her actual appearance and fashion sense. The subjects shown in the fashion blogs display their individual tastes through the textual content, self-stylized poses, and choice of accessories, making each the agent of her own representation (Pham, 2011). Blog-

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gers were excluded from the sample if the blog was not originally written in English, if the blogger did not post any personal style photos, and/or if she appeared to be, or stated that she was over the age of 30. The sample included blogs from the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia. None of the bloggers had published fashion-related books, created clothing lines, or made a living solely from her blog. Male fashion bloggers were not included in the sample.

In this analysis, each individual blog was assessed for (1) the ethnicity of the blogger; (2) the body image of the blogger; (3) the number of visible advertisements; and (4) whether the blogger appeared to accept advertiser samples of clothing, make-up or accessories, and public relations requests.

The content analysis of the fashion magazines was centered on four of the most recognizable titles written in English and distributed in the United States. All of the magazines have a focus on fashion and lifestyle, and all appeal to a target market of young adult women. None of the magazines had a specific focus on ethnicity or body type. The January 2015 issues of each magazine were used in order to maintain as much consistency in style as possible.

The analysis assessed the magazines for (1) the ethnicity of the models in the advertisements and fashion content, (2) the body image of the models in the advertisements and fashion content, and (3) the number of advertisements in the magazine. Fashion articles about celebrities were not included, unless the celebrities were models in an advertisement. Male models were not counted. A model's ethnicity was only counted if her face and at least a portion of her body were visible. Body type was also not counted if the model's photograph was only a headshot. If the same model appeared in a fashion spread or was found in multiple advertisements in the same magazine, she was counted only once. If fashion bloggers were featured in the magazines, they were counted as models.

When evaluating body type, it was difficult to define an exact size range for what is considered to be a "curvy," or "plus sized" model. Anthony Higgins, Director of MSA Models,

stated in NYCastings that “[a] plus sized model, in the past, was a size 10-12, up to a size 18 for fashion. Now, they are calling a size 8 ‘plus sized’” (Calabrese, 2014). Due to the lack of an exact definition, the models were evaluated by their appearance; those who appeared to be a size 8 or larger were counted as “plus sized.” The bloggers’ photographs were evaluated on the same basis.

RESULTS

In a comparison of body diversity among the models in *Vogue*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Seventeen*, and *Elle*, only *Seventeen* offered images of models who were “curvy” or “plus-sized,” with an appearance of wearing a size 8 or larger. In comparison, 17.5% of the blogs showed images of women who were “curvy” or “plus sized,” with an appearance of wearing a size 8 or larger.

Comparisons of advertising in the media platforms showed an average of 30.5 ads per magazine, compared to an average of 0.6 ads per blog. Out of the sample of bloggers, 22.5% contained advertisements, and 37.5% expressed a willingness to engage in brand collaborations.

The analysis of ethnic diversity showed that white women dominated the samples both of magazines and blogs; however, the number of white models in the magazines exceeded the number of white women bloggers by 17.61%. The exact percentages of diversity found in both samples are represented in the following graph (**Figure 1.**)

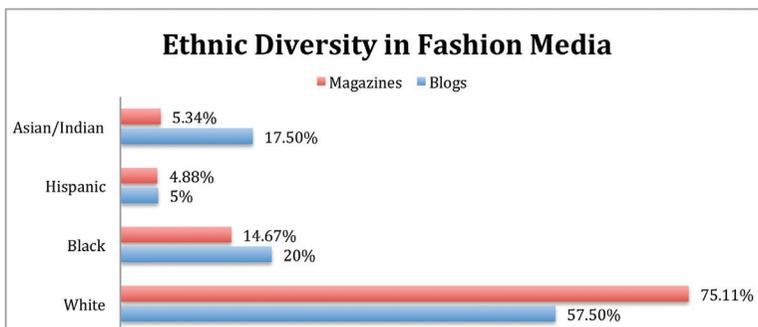


Figure 1. Diversity by ethnicity in sample of magazines and blogs.

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DISCUSSION

The results found in this study were as expected. Personal style blogs were found to be more diverse, both in representations of race and body type. The blogs included fewer images of white women, allowing for more images of minority women. As demonstrated in Figure 1., the sample of the personal style blogs offered a larger number of Black, Asian/Indian, and Hispanic women than the sample of fashion magazines.

The sample also revealed enormous discrepancies in the number of “curvy,” or plus sized women between the magazines and blogosphere. The only magazine offering larger models was Seventeen, whereas 17.5% of blogs included images of “curvy” women. These results do not even take into consideration the number of bloggers who had an “average” body type, which was still visibly larger than that of the models in the fashion magazines. This study did not analyze model height, either.

When comparing the role of advertisers or media gatekeepers in the two platforms, this research found that the magazines relied much more heavily on advertising revenue than the blogs. This may also result in a lack of diversity in the magazines, because the overall content of these magazines reflects what advertisers feel the public wants to see.

CONCLUSIONS

In comparison to magazines, bloggers appear to be less concerned with what advertisers think their viewers want to see. Instead, bloggers create content with little regard to the historical domination of white, slender models in the fashion industry. Blogs display fashion, beauty, and other lifestyle topics in a way that makes them relatable to any race, or body shape. Now that cosmetic brands and industry providers are beginning to embrace blogs as a means of advertising their products, “regular” women may feel a greater sense of inclusion in the fashion world.

This research calls to attention an issue that many American women, and women throughout the world, are aware of: the

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fashion industry offers images of an “ideal” woman that are unrealistic to the average woman. Fashion magazines lack representations of diversity in ethnicity and body type. However, personal style bloggers have created a more diverse industry by giving average women a platform where they can share their own sense of fashion and find style advice from women who resemble them.

This research, along with future research, seeks to have a positive impact on the way media gatekeepers portray women in advertisements and other aspects of the fashion industry. As advertisers recognize the impact of the fashion blogosphere, they may feature a wider range of women. More diversity in fashion advertising will support the possibility for young women to have more positive self-esteem, fewer insecurities, and a more realistic picture of what a healthy woman should look like.

LIMITATIONS

Limitations in this sample include the common industry standard of extensive photo editing, which may distort the true body appearance of both bloggers and models. It was sometimes difficult to distinguish the exact ethnicity of the models in the magazines, which may have influenced the accuracy of the data. All advertisement and model analyses were averaged across the sample of magazines in order to gain a general understanding and to reduce the margin for error. Also, inconsistencies in the number of pages of the magazines affected the number of advertisements and the numbers of models examined in the sample. In order to control for these inconsistencies, magazines with a page range of 120 -160 were used.

Future research will increase the samples of both blogs and magazines. Blogs on additional platforms, such as Google Blogger, should also be taken into consideration. Many other fashion magazines should be included as well, such as Marie Claire, InStyle, and other popular women’s interest titles in the United States. In addition, it would be beneficial to study this from a more global aspect. Internet users have access to blogs from around the world. It would make sense to compare magazines from other

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countries to determine whether idealized images of women are more common in the United States than in other countries, or if other countries with a large influence on fashion, such as France or Italy, have similar distinctions between print and online depictions of women.

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