**9. Language and Mass Media**

**TEXTUAL AND VISUAL CONTENT IN FASHION BLOGS**

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It is a truism to say that the Internet has profoundly changed the nature of human communication having shifted human interaction to a virtual dimension. As a result, virtual tools of communication like e-mail, chats, forums, instant messaging and blogging have supplanted traditional forms of verbal interaction. Of them, blogs prove to be the most rapidly developed segment of the internet community. Although blogging is a relatively new phenomenon within the cyberspace dating back to the late 1980s, it has immensely grown in popularity and has managed to dominate peoples’ lives.

This paper focuses on 30 randomly selected text-based fashion-blog entries written in English. It aims at exploring the correlation and interrelation of textual and visual content in English fashion blogs from the point of view of conveying information.

One of the most distinctive features of fashion blogs is the combination of textual and visual content. Visual content is defined as content that comes in many forms such as images, pictures, video, slideshows, inforgraphics, etc. [2]. Some of the features that make visuals essential in any blog are high-speed information processing, attention catching and high emotional appeal. To be more specific, visuals prove to be processed at the speed that is 60 000 times faster than that of the processing text [Ibid]. This means that visual images communicate information more quickly than text. Yet, the scope of information visuals can convey is quite limited in comparison with text. Therefore, visual formats are used to communicate the key points in the most appealing way to capture the attention of the audience at the initial stage. Additional and detailed information is provided in textual formats.

Colourful visual content is eye-catching, which makes it more efficient at capturing the attention of potential audience than text. Strong visual content is also a good way to make a strong emotional appeal to the audience and create a lasting impression.

Most textual content is visual, which means that text in a fashion blog differs from conventionally accepted text. Textual information is presented in visually rich formats that use a variety of visually salient elements. The research findings show that these elements are represented with a rich colour palette, the font size and positioning of both textual and visual elements.

A fashion blog typically contains a number of categories with the information about the author and the blog itself, categories allowing for social networking features, categories on different topics related to fashion and author’s posts. Let us consider the fashion and lifestyle blog *CANDICE NIKEA* as an example [1]. The blog consists of the main page which provides the following: at the top of the page there are a number of categories containing the information about the author, the facts about the creation of the blog, the topical diversity provided by the given blog. More specifically, the blog contains the following categories: *About; Fashion; Beauty; Travel; Let’s talk; Videos* and *Contact me*. Each of the categories provides at least three options for the reader to choose from: for example, the *Beauty* category contains sections dealing with make-up, skin and hair. Consequently, under these sections the reader can find the author’s posts on these issues. The selection of topics depends on blogger’s personal preferences and interests as well as the nature of the post which usually mirrors blogger’s personal beliefs and opinions.

 In the middle of the page there are the most recent blog posts each, accompanied by a colourful picture. Apart from photos, fashion bloggers use other elements of visual content: various multimedia like videos, sometimes music files and gifs also known as a graphics interchange format.

At the right side bar there is a profile photo of the blogger and underneath you can find categories which allow for social networking features, i.e. the authors’ links to the personal accounts in social networks: the categories *About me; Like me on Facebook; Follow me on Instagram* and *Snapchat me*. The right side bar also contains an archive of blog posts (the category *Recent posts*), and contact information. It provides the option for the reader to subscribe to the author’s newsletter as well (the category *Newsletter)*.

Each blog is followed by the readers’ commentaries. In order to be able to leave personal reflections about the information contained in the blog post readers have to sign in or become signed up to the blog. Relevant information is pinpointed by visual clues: font size, font style and positioning. The names of blogs are typically huge font size in relation to the rest of the text. In our example, the blog utilizes four font sizes. The font size is different depending on the logical structure of the blog, i.e. the sections it represents. The huge font size declares that the text it represents is the most important or renders the key points of information.

In our example, the name of the blog, which itself is the author’s name (Candice Nikeia) is set the largest font size. In comparison to the name of the blog, the headings of the posts are smaller font size followed by the names of the categories and then, by the text of the posts.

The headings of the posts as well as categories can be distinguished from the rest of the text due to the font style used. In the example, the name of the blog, the headings of the posts and the names of categories are written in different font style from the rest of the text to highlight them. The names of the blog and categories in the centre are in bold white on the black background; the names of the categories on the right side as well as headings of the post are in bold black on the light background usually white. In addition, all the names mentioned are in large cap style. Hence, the names of the blog, its structural units and posts can be quickly identified and distinguished from the rest of the blog content due to its visual prominence: font colour, size and positioning.

To manage the information of the blog posts bloggers structure their own blog by using some additional graphic features like bullet points, tools of the text division into paragraph, the availability of different sub-headlines as well as the use of devices ensuring coherence and cohesion of the text: the arrangement of topics, the proper use of images, fonts etc.

The success of a blog depends directly on the creativity of the blogger and the ability to intrigue the audience. This largely depends on the blogger’s ability to balance textual and visual content.

To sum up, fashion blogs communicate information by the combination of visual and textual content. The latter is distinct from the conventional text, since in fashion blogs textual content is visual. Fashion bloggers use a variety of visual tools to highlight both the structure and textual content of blogs: font size, font style, positioning and colour. In addition, bloggers utilize various forms of visual content. The basic function of visual content is to capture people’s attention, to create a positive appeal and communicate key points of information. The basic function of textual content is to provide further detailed information.

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