

How do stereotypical portrayals of men and women in various fashion magazines have changed?

By

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## **Declaration**

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of the MA in Journalism & Media Communications, is my own; based on my personal study and/or research, and that I have acknowledged all material and sources used in its preparation. I also certify that I have not copied in part or whole or otherwise plagiarised the work of anyone else, including other students.

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'PB' with a stylized flourish underneath.

Philipp Baumhöhn

**Dated: 08.08.2024**

## **Abstract**

The event of occurring gender stereotypes in fashion magazines during the last decades has questioned the way how the media portrays men and women. Therefore, the interest of this study lies in the question whether or not stereotypical portrayals of men and women in various fashion magazines have changed? After elaborating on previous findings on mass media, feminism and the representation of gender in contemporary media, the study will focus on two magazines, GQ and Cosmopolitan, and intends to reveal proceeding stereotypes or shifts. Within a time period of eight years, between 2015 and 2023, eight fashion magazine covers will be analysed through the method of a content analysis as proposed by Hansen and Machin (2019) and Rose (2016). Hence the study will reveal changes in the depiction of men and women in terms of the use of colours or the body poses of the models for example but it will also uncover that some stereotypes are still maintained or even reused today through the use of certain dress styles or themes. As a consequence, the implications of this research allow strong interferences about the fostering of gender stereotypes within western cultures. On the other hand, suggestions are made for future scholars to widen the sample of this study and to include the effects of stereotypes towards a young audience as another component of research.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Within the media, the portrayals of men and women have long been reflecting societal norms and cultural ideals. With that they have created stereotypes over the decades by their coverage and content, including films, advertisements and even magazines. Especially fashion magazines have been leading in their influence on the public and the way gender types are seen nowadays through the establishment of a held and fixed image of men and women. This also includes their social role and status as well as their physical characteristics. As previous studies were able to investigate, even though societal changes occurred in the recent years, gender stereotypes and gender-linked attributes remain stable and are quite independent of social changes. In other words, the beliefs about men and women are still the same as the stereotypes did not change over the last decades (Haines *et al.*, 2016) because “women continued to be rated as more communal than men, and men continued to be rated as more agentic than women” (p.358). This consistency of stereotypes highlights that gender perceptions seem to be deeply rooted within society and that the media and fashion magazines play a significant role in shaping and maintaining these long-standing views through their representation of gender (Wood, 1994). As a result, these stereotypes continue to influence individual behaviour, expectations, and opportunities throughout various aspects in life (Wood, 1994), strengthening traditional gender roles that have long been established.

Being aware of the fact that media and society are closely related to each other, its influence is “rooted in the fact that it can provide information in a way that enhances coordination on a norm or action” (Arias, 2019, p.564). That means that media is meant to serve several aspects within our lives and our culture. This includes, among other things, the provision of

an outlet for the imagination, education and information and the action as a public forum for the discussion of important issues, as suggested by the University System of New Hampshire Pressbooks (n.d.). Especially in a mass media context it is important to know that the products, such as films and magazines, are intended to give shape and structure to a society by transmitting a special message. Moreover, they also need to resonate with the audience and potential readers in order to guarantee success and prove their viability (Poepsel, 2018). Considering fashion magazines therefore as a part of the (mass) media because they are both, cultural products, and commodities, and are therefore similar to other mass media productions (Moeran, 2006), the role they have in public is significant. Fashion magazines have a severe impact on society and its norms and values in profound ways because they are operating in a communications context. As a result, they have the ability to produce a special meaning by their contents and covers in particular. This is also pointed out by Ismaeil *et al.* (2019) because covers can serve different kinds of functions through the images and texts such as the transmission of information or they can “make the addressee react” (p.260). Additionally to that, it deserves mention that fashion magazines combine both, a media outlet and the purpose of fashion by relating to the social agendas of fashion, which serves another cultural component that is able to affect societal structures. Even in the past, clothes and fashion have been a common way for the representation of identity and social status. Whether it was focused on the dress, the colour, or the garment it created special symbols that were related to a culture and gender as well. As pointed out by Nihan Akdemir (2018) “cloth(e)s can carry many significant signs according to their shape, colour, surface decoration, embroidery techniques etc. and each one can be the expression of identity over ethnicity, religious beliefs, age, education and social class” (p.1389). That means that through fashion and the coverage of fashion it is possible to communicate

identities and feelings as well as stereotypes in terms of gender identity and the question how a man or woman looks like or is supposed to look like. This would affect the way men or women define and express themselves because the clothes are a visible representation of their sexuality and gender identity. It is “continuously negotiated via a visual language or symbols such as dress” (Akdemir, 2018, p. 1395). In combination with a media outlet such as a magazine it can be determined that the long-term exposure of stereotypical portrayals fosters the connotation of gender and strengthens its boundaries and presumed perceptions.

In this context it is important to notice that gender stereotypes are not only relating to social roles and characteristics but also to the perceptions of how men and women are expected to appear in a visual sense. This includes the hair, clothes, and potential make-up as well.

Through the establishment of specific physical attributes, fashion magazines are able to stereotype assumptions of beauty. While lots of magazines deal with the relationship between appearance and the inner self, where the real beauty is supposed to come from (Moeran, 2010), they also create so called beauty dilemmas which are designed to keep the recipients in “a permanent and continuous state of concern” (Moeran, 2010, p.8). This includes a certain depiction of the physical appearance such as the face, eyes and even arms and fingernails which affect women in particular as they feel their “social value is seen in terms of their attractiveness and ability to appeal to men” (Moeran, 2010, p.11). But also, men are often represented with an athletic body as the highest value in terms of their optical characteristics. This fosters the idea of having a beautiful and fit body show “the external consequence of self-discipline, effort, and commitment” (Rubio-Hernández, 2010, p.65). As a consequence, the exposure of beauty dilemmas through the creation of certain physical attributes can help stereotyping within society and furthers instrumentalization and

objectification of both, males and females with special regard to their overall perception of self-appearance. Nevertheless, the recent years showed that several media organisations and fashion magazines tried to break gender stereotypes in very multilayered approaches, including a new gender coverage and gender-fluid fashion that is intended to blur the binary boundaries of males and females (Vidyarthi, 2024).

While talking about stereotypical portrayals and stereotypes in general the definition of what a stereotype is and how it functions is very complex. Besides the general definition that often appears in dictionaries, which is stated as “a fixed general image or set of characteristics that a lot of people believe represent a particular type of person or thing” (Collins, 2024), a stereotype can be very multilayered because it produces an individual image of a person or even gender in people’s mind. This happens because it simplifies our environment and helps us to think in simple cognitive structures which tend to allow a more efficient processing of information. According to other researchers, stereotypes are “thoughts and expectations people have about a person based on his/her (perceived) membership in a given social group” (Sibley and Osborne, 2015, p.1). With that in mind, it could be determined that stereotypes amplify systematic differences between groups, are context dependent and distort a reaction to information (Bordalo *et al.*, 2016). This proves that they have many different functions and effects because once they are activated in people’s mind, they have the ability to establish an allegedly identification process. On the other hand, it can also lead to incorrect conclusions and justifications as people tend to ignore inconsistencies within stereotypes. However, they are of course adaptable and can change through the provision of new information and viewpoints if they change the most prominent feature. If this is maintained and they actually recreate themselves they are in parts related to reality and not deeply rooted in the past anymore as scholars suggest

(Bordalo *et al.*, 2016). Nevertheless, even though stereotypes are very complex it is important to point out that especially gender related stereotypes are highly influential and common because they can be easily recognised and remembered and therefore they can be leading in affecting the role men and women enact within society. Consequently, contemporary gender stereotypes show that there are still traditional distinctions that are made between men and women even if they do not always embrace this stereotypical view themselves. Currently, men are still expected to be strong, masculine, and agent with a high coverage in professional roles while women are expected to be polite, feminine, and even portrayed as “the queen of the home” (Santonniccolo *et al.*, 2023, p.4) with a focus on recreational roles.

With special regard to magazines, it is therefore necessary to concentrate on all those different aspects and look specifically at the portrayals they use on the covers. This is important because magazine covers serve important roles for an audience as they combine visual and verbal elements together. Moreover, magazine covers are intended to “represent a complex form of advertisement” (Held, 2005, p.1) with visual-verbal rhetoric and an appealing arrangement of images and texts that encourages the reading of the content. Hence the main goal of covers is to capture the public’s attention on the one hand and to promise the reader subconsciously that he or she is going to profit from the consumption of the magazine’s content (Held, 2005). Magazines also make special use of models who are able to emotionally involve the recipient in combination with connecting adjectives and thus activate psychological processes such as “identification, self-definition and participation” (Held, 2005, p.8). The function is both, a guiding and directing function as well as an attracting function which makes a magazine cover impactful, also with regard to the

portrayals of stereotypes. As an effect, the covers have a severe impact on the audience and thus on society as well as they serve a certain depiction of cultural elements.

After having defined what is considered to be a stereotype and how it relates to gender, the question that arises is how successful have fashion magazines been in changing gender stereotypical portrayals? In order to consider this hypothesis, the following research questions will be asked:

1. Who appears on the covers?
2. How is the visual appearance of the models? (e.g. dress, face expression, use of colours)
3. From what angle is the photo shot?
4. What linguistic elements are used on the covers besides the photograph?
5. Have the portrayals changed over time?

To find an answer to those questions the current study will focus on men's and women's fashion magazines in the British media landscape and will analyse the covers during a time period of eight years, between 2015 and 2023. These years are chosen as scholars suggest that in 2015 the fashion industry firstly tried to address gender fluid fashion. This allows an analysis on how the magazines dealt with that topic in relation to the portrayals and a first attempt to break stereotypes and gender boundaries. On the other hand, the year 2023 is the most recent year with the full provision of magazine issues for each month which ensures the actuality for this research. Furthermore, the British media landscape has been chosen because it is the largest English language-based media landscape in western Europe and because of the fact that the study is focused on western based magazines and cultures it has proven to be the most suitable segment for this research. The focus on men's and

women's magazines is set in order to be able to make strong conclusions about the portrayals of both types of gender and to investigate if there is a certain stereotype created both dependently and independently of the two genders.

In addition, the magazines will be analysed through a content analysis of the visuals and language of the covers. This shall ensure that a sufficient number of magazine covers can be analysed properly. Within the content analysis the research will continuously adhere to the mandatory steps including the finding of the content, the coding and an analysis, which will be further examined in chapter three. Those steps need to be maintained in order to find a meaningful answer to the research objective.

## **Chapter 2: Literature review**

### **2.1 A short introduction to Mass Media and the role of emotional propaganda (in the west)**

In order to understand how mass media developed and why it is important to have a look at what mass media really is. According to Viswanath *et al.* (2007) mass media are characterised as organisations that are structured to “create, or gather, generate, and disseminate, news and entertainment” (p.277) through different media. Furthermore, as Viswanath *et al.* (2007) point out, they follow organisational structures and processes and therefore strive for efficiency and profit making. As a result, the authors conclude that mass media, which also includes magazines, basically rely on subscription services and advertising. Especially with regard to advertising they outline that it has “a direct influence on consumer behaviour” (Viswanath *et al.*, 2007, p.279) and endows the production of media content. However, they argue that within mass media there are different segments of the same industry that work in a symbiotic relationship with each other.

Sjøvaag and Ohlsson (2019) determine some key developments of mass media over the last centuries. Stating that in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries newspapers were mostly owned by families or local businesses, the first private enterprises began to emerge in the 1920s with the distribution of radio broadcasting. Later on, the authors investigated that advanced capitalist economies began to rise in the 1960s which has led to foreign investments (Sjøvaag and Ohlsson, 2019, pp.4–5). With that they note the event of private ownership through the invention of private broadcasting in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century which is also a consequence of emerging democracies that strive for liberal corporatist models. Being aware of the impact of private ownership they argue that it is “problematic because

proprietors can use it for private interest” (Sjøvaag and Ohlsson, 2019, p.14) which can have an effect on journalistic autonomy and freedom of expression. According to them, owners therefore have the power to use the media to push society in a certain direction.

In addition, Bernays and Miller (2005) work on the consequences of factors like ownership and come up with the term ‘propaganda’. They argue that propaganda can be any institution for propagating a doctrine or system, public support for an opinion or even principles advanced by propaganda (p.49) even the word itself is neither good nor bad. In this context they also focus on its impact and state that by playing with or manipulating an old cliché “the propagandist can sometimes swing a whole mass of group emotions” (Bernays and Miller, 2005, p.74). Later on, the authors refer to magazines and say that they are building up the prestige of this development which allows them to cultivate certain values and emotions. This makes them an invisible government in the context of mass media that “dictates our thoughts, directs our feelings, and controls our actions” (Bernays and Miller, 2005, p.82) which has made the public more receptive.

## **2.2 Fashion magazines and feminism – a short historical overview**

The rise of fashion magazines could be determined at a very early historical stage, according to Nelson Best (2017). Stating that the epicentre of women’s fashion was Paris, the very first magazine to report about fashion was already invented in 1672 (Nelson Best, 2017, p.17).

However, during the 18<sup>th</sup> century the author points out that it was characterised by a growing appetite for fashion which has led to the first fashion magazine in history in 1785, ‘Le Cabinet de Mode’ (Nelson Best, 2017, p. 15). Even advances in print technology allowed the production of coloured magazines and an expansion of fashion magazines in several countries, such as Britain and Germany as the author investigated. Moreover, she also puts a

focus on the 19<sup>th</sup> century and argues that there was an “explosion in the number of fashion magazines” (Nelson Best, 2017, p.16) and a growth in female literacy at the same time. The sharing of fashion magazines within societies and throughout different countries was “instrumental in the growth of the fashion press” (Nelson Best, 2017, p.27). With that, the author illustrates that fashion also became important to definitions of gender and played a key role in making fashion a central element of feminine identity (Nelson Best, 2017, p.30). Having a closer look at imagery and covers in fashion magazines she detects that photography was firstly used in the last quarter of this century. In the end she refers to the male fashion press as well and examines that they did not emerge until the 1920s because until then fashion magazines “had become exclusively aimed at women” (Nelson Best, 2017, p.37).

Within the field of feminism Margaret Walters (2005) concentrates on its historical development. Outlining that in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century women were mostly related to their household, they were also subordinated to their husband (Walters, 2005, p.45). She ascertains that in this century even marriages remained a central theme for women. According to her, those circumstances slightly changed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when women demanded reforms of laws that would allow more equality. This has led even magazines to think about the role of women in society. Walters argues that in the 1920s magazines started to target women with housekeeping and home on the one hand and with a call to act independently in life on the other hand even though they portrayed feminists as frustrated (Walters, 2005, p.88). Later on, she comes up with second wave feminism which she characterises as diversity of feminism because men and women got equal rights to marriage for instance. Within this second wave feminism, the MS magazine published its first issue in 1970 and showed expressions of feminism (Walters, 2005, p.105). The magazine

deals with women's rights and independence and has become a landmark institution for feminist journalism since this first issue. She further notes that these circumstances have caused several movements of women where they try to clearing up their stereotypes and call for changes in terms of "woman's rights over her own body" (Walters, 2005, p.110). As she points out, even lesbian feminism in the 1980s has questioned stereotypical assumptions of heterosexual households and partnerships.

As a consequence, Tilton (2019) notes that feminism has also influenced fashion and is influenced by fashion at the same time. While she argues that in the 1990s third wave feminism has caused significant transformations in the relationship between fashion and feminism (Tilton, 2019, p.750), fourth wave feminism in the 2010s has led more fashion designers expressing their solidarity with it (Tilton, 2019, p.748). United by common themes, fourth wave feminism has "committed to find collective solutions to structural problems" (Tilton, 2019, p.753) such as gendered racism. The author elaborates on this by referring back to fashion and saying that fashion can be an expression of protest and therefore "contributes to the circulation of radical feminist messages in everyday life" (Tilton, 2019, p.754).

### **2.3 Representation and gender in contemporary media**

To understand how and why men and women are portrayed in a particular way in magazines it is important to get to know the way people look at them. John Berger (1972) established several concepts about the relation between what we see and what we know. In his book "Ways of seeing" (Berger, 1972) he acknowledges looking as an act of choice where the relation between things and ourselves is always maintained. By referring to images he states that an image is a "sight which has been recreated or reproduced" (Berger, 1972, p.9) and

that every image is a way of seeing from both, the viewer's point of view and from the photographer's perspective. With regard to men and women in photographs he also identifies that the perception of how they appear depends on learned assumptions and our own way of seeing. Thus, women tend to turn themselves into an object, and "most particularly an object of vision: a sight" (Berger, 1972, p.47). Even for sexually connotated images the way of seeing is affected by deeply embedded structures within a society and it is argued that, as a consequence, the way of seeing women has not changed since they are portrayed in images because "their spectator is always assumed to be a man and her image is meant to flatter him" (Berger, 1972, p.64). This emphasises that men act, and women appear in the context of image making as women turn themselves into an object of vision and men are assumed to be the spectator, an active gazer. According to Berger, women survey their femininity and try to appeal to men as an expression of responding with "calculated charm to the man whom she imagines looking at her" (Berger, 1972, p.55).

In addition, the images try to represent certain meanings and characteristics through our way of seeing. Stuart Hall discusses and defines representation by saying that "representation is the production of meaning through language" (Hall *et al.*, 2013, p.2) which also involves signs and images. To understand them and to allow them to fulfil the role of representation, images must be put into a system of meaning, such as a language and a relation needs to be established between them, things and concepts. Furthermore, Hall states in this context that "meaning can never be finally fixed as conventions change over time" (Hall *et al.*, 2013, p.9). This applies to images and magazine covers as well as they have to be interpreted and do not have a fixed meaning. In relation to stereotypical portrayals Hall continues by saying that stereotyping is a signifying practice which establishes a connection between representation, difference, and power because it

represents someone in a certain way and is therefore able to produce a symbolic power through representational practices (Hall *et al.*, 2013, p.249). In terms of fashion magazines and their covers it can be argued that the model on the image represents cultural characteristics on the one hand through the clothes, the pose, and the setting in which he or she is situated. On the other hand it also represents a certain meaning of beauty standards as it features physical attributes and therefore might lack the representation of diversity which is stated in Hall's different approaches of meaning (Hall *et al.*, 2013, pp.10–11). Magazine covers can therefore produce particular cultural meanings to the audience and strengthen stereotypes.

Susan Bordo (2003) puts a special focus on the depiction of the body and considers it as a medium of culture (p.165). In this context she refers to femininity as well and acknowledges that through the pursuit of an ideal femininity, "female bodies become docile bodies" (Bordo, 2003, p.166). With that in mind she applies her assumption to magazines and argues that they promote traditional gender relations on the one hand and connotations of lack of power towards men on the other hand which can cause psychological diseases. Additionally, the author determines media imagery of beauty, also in magazines, as "crucial in maintaining gender domination" (Bordo, 2003, p.166) and connects those findings to the objectification of the female body. Thus, fashion magazines contribute to femininity and beauty standards in different ways according to Bordo. However, she also notes that there are some magazines such as 'Essence' that even tried to promote diverse images and challenge hegemonic notions (Bordo, 2003, p.263). Bordo concludes by emphasising an awareness for consequences of images because they can influence the audience's imagination. As she ascertains, "what the body does is immaterial, as long as the imagination is free" (Bordo, 2003, p.275). This also might give an answer to the research

objective of this study in order to investigate if fashion magazines still contribute to body objectification or if they stopped to promote them over time.

Those concepts are also supported in the article “Gender in magazine advertising: Skin sells best” (Thompson, 2000). Written by Mary J. Thompson, she argues that advertising in magazines has the power to change values and the image of bodies, including the perception of gender in terms of their sexiness (Thompson, 2000, p.178). In an analysis she investigated that there was an overall increase in sexually explicit fashion ads for both, men’s and women’s images. Over a time period of three decades, sexual appeal images could be determined to be higher in Vogue than in GQ according to the author, “consistent with the more traditional objectification of women’s bodies” (Thompson, 2000, p.180). Those findings provide an insight into the change of portrayals over a long period of time, as they were different in 1964 than in 1994. They also give an outlook on how they might have changed on magazine covers as well as covers can be seen as an advertisement of the magazine itself and focus on a relevant aspect of this study because it questions if stereotypes have been created in and through magazines.

Conley and Ramsey’s (2011) work on how men and women are portrayed in fashion magazine advertisements underlines some of these larger concepts as well. Within their study they were able to find out that female models were more often portrayed in passive positions than in active positions and “women were dismembered (i.e., by showing only one body part) significantly more often than men” (Conley and Ramsey, 2011, p.472). They also concluded that while contemporary advertisements in women’s fashion magazines depict women as flawless, men’s magazines tend to “portray women as silenced and to trivialize or glamorize violence against women” (Conley and Ramsey, 2011, p.474). Further, Conley and

Ramsey argued that advertisements would strengthen the idea that women should take up less space, accompanied by symbolic or explicit messages. This has led them to the assumption that men who see these images may be more inclined to adopt unrealistic standards for the female body and stereotype women. The findings show that those different kinds of gender representation affect the production of meaning as argued by Hall *et al.* (2013) and raises the question if magazines establish and teach certain assumptions in terms of gender that might affect the way of seeing according to Berger (1972) with which this piece of study deals as well.

Apart from images in magazine advertising, Naomi Wolf (1991) focuses on the women's perspective as well by pointing out that women are still willing to believe in created images of beauty. In "The beauty myth: How images are used against women" (Wolf, 1991) she firstly defines the beauty myth by characterising it as images of female beauty that are used as a political weapon against women's advancement. This includes the suggestion that "women must want to embody beauty and men must want to possess those women" (Wolf, 1991, p.10) which makes beauty a currency system, according to Wolf. Within this beauty myth she later refers to fashion and fashion magazines for women and illustrates that they reproduce images of how women should look like. As a consequence, she says that women are deeply affected by magazines and by what they tell them through their images and content. On the other hand, she argues that women's magazines are powerful in changing women's roles in society and reflecting historical changes. This means that the magazines are taking up the beauty myth in their own content by establishing a new formula. Wolf identifies this formula as "an aspirational, individualist, can-do tone that says that you should be your best and nothing should get in your way" (Wolf, 1991, p.34).

Even though Wolf's findings cannot be considered to be contemporary anymore with regard to the date it was published, her research still has a significant impact today. Her arguments about the influence of beauty ideals in combination with social norms play an important role in contemporary society and media as well because she examines the negative psychological effects for women in particular when they are not satisfied with the way they look. Applied to the overarching objective for this research it sets a focus on the analysis of the beauty myth on contemporary magazine covers with regard to their portrayals and texts.

Contrarily, Tim Edwards (2009) deals with portrayals of men and male magazines and considers them as designed to target "men's interest without targeting men themselves" (Edwards, 2009, p.462). However, he examines that the portrayals of men are mostly used to advertise products and to illustrate fashion and style content. Stating that men are looking at themselves as objects of desire he points out that fashion magazines intend to mainstream hetero masculinity and a distinctive lifestyle or identity, which would lead to a series of stereotypes. He particularly considers the content, consisting of texts and images, to be responsible for a certain construction of maleness which causes "a matter of how one looks and not what one does" (Edwards, 2009, p. 465). Through an analysis he concludes that while 'GQ' portrayed the "suit-wearing, swaggering and narcissistic lover of money" (Edwards, 2009, p. 468) other magazines focused on sexual politics and even increased the use of images of semi naked women. According to him, this shifts "a self-conscious and narcissistic masculinity" (Edwards, 2009, p. 471) which illustrates again how magazines can foster the creation of stereotypes and a distorted self-image which is important for the upcoming analysis in this study as it focuses on the effects of men's depiction in texts and images.

Being aware that specific portrayals of men and women have created stereotypes over decades, Eagly *et al.* (2019) investigated how gender stereotypes have changed over the time period of 1946 and 2018. Therefore, they first refer to the creation of stereotypes and say that “individuals receive extensive information about women and men from direct observation as well as indirect observation through social sharing and cultural representations” (Eagly *et al.*, 2019, p.301) which is ubiquitous. After that, they analysed opinion polls within their study and revealed that generally gender stereotypes for communion, agency and competence were still maintained and women were assumed as the more communal sex. The authors also examine a change of stereotypes in the year of 2018 where male respondents assumed that women have a higher competence than men themselves (Eagly *et al.*, 2019, p.310). According to them the overall study reveals “gender stereotypes’ remarkable consensuality across respondent sex, education, employment, marital status, race, ethnicity, and generation” (Eagly *et al.*, 2019, p.311) although it could be investigated that the stereotypes have changed for both genders over time. This can also be applied to magazines with a focus on how they implement societal changes in terms of stereotypes on their covers as it provides information on how they have changed to date which is to be analysed in this study and therefore of importance.

Criticism may arise about these sources in terms of some inconsistencies they have in order to answer the overarching objective for this piece of research. One could argue that if scholars such as Thompson (2000) focus on advertisements and not on magazine covers their findings are not that powerful, even with regard to the time it has been published. But as magazines can be seen as an advertisement itself for the magazine in order to attract readers and increase their sales the study remain meaningful. Additionally, some analyses were either focused on magazine subscribers only or on US related polls and therefore do

not answer the question of fashion stereotypes in terms of gender through their limited choice of methodology. Even Hall's (2013) theoretical framework questions the way images can be interpreted for the analysis in this study as meaning cannot be finally fixed. However, although the sources provide partially weak points they still allow to make strong conclusions and offer a deep insight into this field of study by answering questions such as how stereotypes have changed within society or even if the portrayals in the magazines are a demand of women themselves as a reflection of society?

#### **2.4 Masculinity and femininity in the mass media**

While talking about the establishment of a certain masculinity and femininity, also within the media, one phrase that is often used to give an understanding of how those terms work is the concept of hegemony. Inspired by the ruling class and the ruling ideas of Marx and Engels, Gramsci (2006, p.13) has defined hegemony as the way "how a dominant class in society is organised and how a class can become dominant". He also states that ideologies operate within hegemonic groups because they "organise human masses, and create the terrain on which men move" (Gramsci, 2006, p. 15). Furthermore, in terms of hegemony, the author points out that the press would be the most prominent and dynamic part in a dominant class and therefore, the media as a whole as well because "everything which influences or is able to influence public opinion, directly or indirectly, belongs to it" (Gramsci, 2006, p.16). In relation to fashion magazines, hegemony can be seen in the portrayals of men and women on the covers as well as the magazines are able to establish a dominant gender image in terms of gender roles and beauty standards. This justifies Gramsci's relevance for this work because it provides an overview of how images reinforce dominant cultural characteristics.

In her book 'Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity' (Butler, 1990) Judith Butler questions women as the subject of feminism and focuses on gender complexity in terms of their limits of identification. She argues that there is little agreement on the exact categorisation of women and that the qualifications for being a woman, a subject, must first be clarified before representation can happen. Moreover, the author finds that the term 'women' has become troublesome because it suggests a common identity but "gender is not always constituted coherently" (Butler, 1990, p.4). According to her, gender is culturally constructed and it is "neither the causal result of sex nor is it fixed as sex" (Butler, 1990, p.8). Later on, she also thematises multiple and coexisting identifications and states that they have the potential to produce conflicts within a binary system because they contest "the fixity of masculine and feminine placements" (Butler, 1990, p.91). Finally, she puts a special focus on the body in relation to gender and notes that it has become a sexed surface that represents a sign for a natural identity and desire as well. Hence Butler's research offers the possibility to apply it to the upcoming analysis because she provides an understanding of how fashion magazines can contribute to and strengthen gender representations through their images and how they might establish them within a society.

Applied to the media, several different outlets and types of media affect and depict a certain kind of femininity. Focussing on films and cinema in general, Laura Mulvey (2008) emphasises the assumption that it structures the ways of seeing. Therefore, she also defines scopophilia, the pleasure in looking, as one of the central instincts of sexuality by taking persons as objects (Mulvey, 2008, p.17). Consequently, she examines that women are often displayed as sexual objects and passive while men are characterised as active. According to her, the female body has become industrialised by a mandatory look of femininity "which is the guarantee of visibility in sexist society for each individual woman" (Mulvey, 2008, p.56).

Later on, she also puts a special focus on magazines and argues that they have the know-how and expertise that is required in order to affect the association of woman and sexuality in women's minds themselves (Mulvey, 2008, p.57). This happens as well when magazines portray a supposed femininity in their images which proves the relevance for this piece of research because it shows how magazines can teach women to see themselves in relation to sexuality and how magazines can pressurise them to stay visible.

In addition, it is striking that other scholars share the opinion that women learn a specific version of femininity directly from the media through advertisers. In her article, Victoria Velding (2017) states that within the media hegemonic femininity occurs very often where males are dominant and women are meant to be subordinate. As a result, the feminine standard that is portrayed shows thin, young, white and heterosexual women (p.508) and any attempt to masculine attire "should be accessorized with feminine details such as the wearing of make-up" (Velding, 2017, p.508) in order to not resemble masculinity. According to Velding, these feminine standards are primary components for magazines as well and their long-time exposure can result in body dissatisfaction for the recipients. Through an analysis of magazine advertisements the author concludes that they are "upholding traditional ideologies and reinforcing inequalities" (Velding, 2017, p.523), including hegemonic beauty norms, whereas they encouraged the readers to adopt non-normative behaviour such as male characteristics. Consequently, consumers may receive conflicting messages about femininity as it is not clearly defined even though the magazine positively outlines several ways of femininity. This illustrates the relevance for this piece of research as it shows to what extent fashion magazines can contribute to the creation and abolition of stereotypes at the same time which suggests the inclusion of both fields to this study.

With regard to men and how media depicts masculinity several researchers investigated different representations. Kevin Goddard (2000) for example argues that a masculine identity is closely related to men's perception of what they think women expect of them and is thus linked to the "social image of femaleness and to the image of men that femaleness projects" (Goddard, 2000, p.24). The author also defines this as the masculine gaze which he considers as a social construct. However, this gaze represents the expression of the ideal each gender has for others and for itself. With the rise of economic forces the author also reveals that they have reconstructed masculinity and have formed it into a more active role, including the acceptance of fatherhood which is pointed out as "one of the highest points of masculinity" (Goddard, 2000, p.38). Increasing economic forces also include a growing power of women which has led men to redefine their roles as a response to this change. Hence gender roles are changing, and men do not only accept the traditional female gaze, they also subject themselves to it which provokes to investigate within this study how magazines portray diverse representations of men and masculinity as there have been significant societal changes.

Notably, masculinity in the media is sought to be constructed as a product for consumption through brands and advertisements, according to an article written by Alexander (2003). In particular the author outlines the importance of culture in the construction of gender through advertisements and elaborates that the image of masculinity "also shapes the way men see themselves and others" (Alexander, 2003, p.536). She refers to magazines and says that they often deal with men's body concerns. This aims "to shape the reader's view of masculinity" (Alexander, 2003, p.540) by pretending that the male gender resocialisation is the product. Considering covers themselves as advertisements that are intended to increase the sales she determines covers therefore as agents for this mentioned gender socialisation.

This assumption proves to be of high relevance for this study's objective because it provides an insight on what psychological effect magazine covers have towards their recipients and how they might affect stereotypical thinking as well. Concluding that masculinity is portrayed with a message to the reader to build and maintain a stylish and hard body, the author uses the term branded masculinity which "is not defined by what a man produces but by what he consumes" (Alexander, 2003, p.551). According to her this allows multiple masculinities through the consumption of any number of styles.

In contrast to the provided findings and frameworks, the sources show signs of inconsistency. Even though some of the authors like Velding (2017) make strong conclusions about the creation of femininity in the media and magazines, her study is mainly focused on 'tweens' which might question the viability of her arguments for adults. Regarding the fact that other scholars such as Laura Mulvey (2008) use films to undermine the arguments, evidences in terms of magazines are lacking and scrutinise if the author can make general conclusions about women and sexuality in magazines for example. Nevertheless, even though some of the sources are older as well, they are still written by important researchers in this field and are able to answer essential and significant questions for the objective in this study like how masculinity and femininity is shown in the media and what effect imagery and portrayals have on the viewers and how this 'hegemony' is organised and defined.

### **2.5 Diverse representations and subversion in fashion and the media**

While talking about subversion in fashion and fashion magazines Tyler (2001) notes that there have been magazines that already began to portray taboo depictions of women decades ago. By referring to the 'Vanity Fair' magazine the author illustrates that in 1991 the magazine was the first publication that showed a pregnant model, Demi Moore, on their

cover (Tyler, 2001, p.69). As this represents a new depiction of the female body the author argues that this cover “was a catalyst for a new visibility of pregnant women” (Tyler, 2001, p.69) which established a new notion of flexible subjectivity in terms of the body and identity. Furthermore, she suggests that the image of Moore “constructs the tight external surface of the pregnant body as an idealised desirable sign of female subjectivity” (Tyler, 2001, p.71) which competes with popular representations of the maternal female body. This shows how powerful magazine covers are in establishing cultural theories and new notions through their portrayals, which will be analysed within this study, and underlines their ability to break boundaries with supposedly tabooed depictions on their covers.

Despite the portrayals, fashion has long been seen as a representation of gender identity and sexuality. Barnard (2002) argues in this context that in order to subvert it is possible to refuse the kind of fashion that constructs that identity and established the term ‘anti-fashion’ (p.142). He continues by saying that some strategies try to reverse a certain gender structure by “encouraging women to be more active and by placing men in more passive roles” (Barnard, 2002, p.144). Even magazines began to portray a self-conscious man and created an image of a caring, crying and cosmetic buying masculinity (Barnard, 2002, p.149). This illustrates that in order to change stereotypical portrayals, with which this study deals, even fashion magazines can take up the issue and try to strive for more diversity within their content pages. As he points out later on, this also offers the possibility of an active female gaze where “men appear and women are the active spectators” (Barnard, 2002, p.149). Because gender identities can be reversed, the author argues that to be able to do this it is important to leave the original structure of gender oppositions untouched. Once this is maintained, fashion can challenge dominant gender conceptions “by reversing class and gender identities” (Barnard, 2002, p.154) or by escaping them.

Additionally, Joanne Entwistle (2015) puts a special focus on how clothing can change the way bodies are gendered and states that clothing is the only signifier of difference (p.141). According to her, clothing has the ability to transcend items of the biological body because there is a “close relationship between gendered codes of dress and ideas about sexuality” (Entwistle, 2015, p.142). Moreover, she refers to the term ‘transsexuality’ and states that on the one hand it proves the discontinuity between gender and sex and on the other hand clothing can be a significant feature for its production (Entwistle, 2015, p.143). Entwistle (2015) also mentions the term ‘cross dressing’, which is a recurrent theme even in the lesbian community, and notes that it challenges the notions of binarity by “putting into question the categories of female and male” (Entwistle, 2015, p.176). The author elaborates on fashion and fashion magazines as well by pointing out that through clothes they can play at the boundaries of sexuality. As a conclusion, for Entwistle, dress plays an important role in “articulating sexual identities that would otherwise be invisible” (Entwistle, 2015, p.206) which justifies why they are crucial for gay and lesbian people and answers the question for this study of how fashion magazines can contribute to a subversive representation of gender on their covers through clothing.

While talking about the subversion of gender identity in fashion and the blurring of gender boundaries, one term that is often used is ‘queer’. McCann and Monaghan (2022) note queer as an ambiguous term that operates as a wish for a different kind of thinking, including the questioning of sexuality and gender. Within this definition they also pay special attention to what is called ‘Queer Theory’ and have a closer look at how this can be applied to contemporary societal structures. Stating that queer theory is a “concept that prominently insists on the radical unknowability of its future formations” (McCann and Monaghan, 2022, p.1) the authors note that it consists of many different voices. It also

questions given terms and “the foundations of sexual identity” (McCann and Monaghan, 2022, p.4) at the same time. Applied to mass media they elaborate existing issues of the policing of sexuality and outline that through the use of queer theory it is possible to resist fixed characteristics of persons (McCann and Monaghan, 2022, p.15). Consequently, this framework advises fashion magazines to break binary gender stereotypes through the inclusion of models that represent a queer identity and raises the question if contemporary magazine issues apply queer theory in their work, such as on the covers, in order to achieve this approach.

In her article, Vänskä (2005) analyses the depiction of lesbian portrayals in magazine advertisements. Saying that fashion magazines “produce and reproduce women’s views of themselves” (Vänskä, 2005, p.70) she also considers them as a production of knowledge about heterosexual femininity and less about lesbian gazing. However, in relation to fashion images like covers the author notes that they have the ability to disrupt heteronormative gazing systems and to “represent transgressive scenes in relation to female sexuality” (Vänskä, 2005, p.71). Furthermore, in her analysis she found out that some advertisements “blur the boundaries between femininity and masculinity, activity and passivity” (Vänskä, 2005, p.75). In contrast, she also investigated that the lesbian portrayals in the images rather discard masculinity than heterosexuality with no overlapping gender characteristics (Vänskä, 2005, p.76). Hence Vänskä (2005) concludes that the advertisements failed to include feminine subjects without recourse to masculinity. Nevertheless, her analysis proved to be relevant for this piece of research as it shows how advertisements and images can function as a tool for a diverse representation of gender and sexuality and provides an outlook on how successful magazines are in shaping non-binary portrayals.

In contradiction to these findings, Clark and Rossi (2020) investigated that in 2015 the fashion industry in particular took up the issue of transgender identities, with the first feature in the May issue of Vogue. With regard to those findings, they argue that fashion has the power to make and unmake genders. In addition, they observed that "fashion discourse and fashion design are extending their binary-based vocabulary of gender" (Clark and Rossi, 2020, p.203) which allows more flexible and plural gender definitions. Equally important, Clark and Rossi (2020) found out that in 2015 there was a new notion of the terms 'feminine' and 'masculine' established. They also determined three streams of gender fluidity in fashion, including more unisex clothes, a higher accessibility for feminine styles for men and vice versa less production of gender defined fashion (Clark and Rossi, 2020, p.213). Pointing out that media has a key role in those changes as well the authors offer an insight on how fashion contributes to the process of gender making which can be applied to fashion magazines and their covers in this work in order to analyse the portrayals of modern gender types.

Apart from the findings the authors provided there might appear some inconsistencies within their works. Clark and Rossi (2020) for example only focus on a really short period of time for the analysis and they are less concentrated on statistics or studies which might question their credibility. Other scholars, however, are not clearly referring to fashion and magazines or even media which can be seen as too general for this field of study.

Nevertheless, all of the sources can be applied to fashion and magazines and provide partial information that answer important questions for the overarching objective of this research like how fashion magazines can portray non-binary models and how successful they are in breaking boundaries and taboos.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **3.1 Overview**

The interest of this study lies in the making and producing of stereotypical portrayals of men and women on fashion magazine covers, a topic that raises issues of equality, gender fluidity and tolerance. Within this study it is intended to investigate how fashion magazines portray men and women, how they appear, and if a stereotype is created or not. Thus, based on the findings previous literature revealed and with regard to this research objective, the model of a content analysis is used for the purpose of this study in order to analyse both, texts and images equally. It has been chosen because it allows a clear, reliable and objective research with large amounts of texts and images in a communications and mass media context as pointed out by Hansen and Machin (2019). Moreover, it combines several characteristics including its systematic, quantitative, highly flexible and adaptive nature which also makes it easy to use and understandable. However, regarding the fact that a content analysis was originally created for text analyses only it is important to include the research and analysis of visual materials and semiotics into this model as well to make interferences about the images on the magazine covers. Gillian Rose (2016) uses content analysis for analysing visual images and suggests that a special focus needs to be put on the compositional modalities of the image itself. In addition, attention needs to be paid to the frequency of those modalities in order to be able to count and analyse them properly. For this study it is therefore necessary to be clear about the modalities of an image to conduct the content analysis adequately.

In general photographs and images are created to communicate a certain message, reaching from a non-verbal communication to the angle the image was shot from (Lacey, 1998). As a

consequence, methodological choices will be made within content analysis in relation to what the images depict, what ideas and values they communicate and what messages their subjects carry (Hansen and Machin, 2019). This is made in order to determine what meaning they produce with regard to the objective which will be further examined at a later stage. It also includes the awareness of the fact that the content analysis is done in a fashion context which Roland Barthes (1990) notes as an environment in which messages are not always presented in a declared manner, especially in fashion magazines which can construct strict systems of meaning. For this reason, the content analysis will focus on texts and images to avoid any misleading manner of the images on the one hand. On the other hand, this choice has been made because the fusion and interaction of words and photographs are “one of the basic elements of visual culture” (Bull, 2010, p.39) and therefore also need to be considered in relation to each other.

Critiques towards this type of methodology may arise in terms of its lack of clarification of how to interpret the meanings and categories. Nevertheless, it offers clear guidelines for dealing with large numbers of media content, in this case fashion magazine covers, in a systematic, consistent, and reliable way. That is the reason why the content analysis has proven to be the most relevant methodology because it serves the purpose of identifying and counting the occurrence of specified characteristics (Hansen and Machin, 2019, p.92) in texts and images with a high degree of objectivity. It is therefore well suited for this study as it intends to investigate the occurrence of stereotypical portrayals of men and women on fashion magazine covers. Other methodologies such as interviews or surveys are not considered to provide useful answers to the overarching objective as they are not useful to analyse messages on a magazine cover objectively and are at higher risk of social desirability bias and missing relevant data.

### **3.2 Gathering and organisation**

To ensure a comprehensive analysis within the chosen methodology there are several key steps that need to be maintained, proposed by Hansen and Machin (2019). Those key steps are:

1. Define the research problem
2. Select media and sample
3. Define analytical categories
4. Construct a coding schedule and protocol
5. Pilot the coding schedule and check reliability
6. Data preparation and analysis

#### **Define the research problem**

Based on the objective of this study the research questions to be addressed, as already mentioned in chapter 1, are:

1. Who appears on the covers?
2. How is the visual appearance of the models?
3. From what angle is the photo shot?
4. What linguistic elements are used on the covers besides the photograph?
5. Have the portrayals changed over time?

Those questions have been set in order to be able to make conclusions about the ways in which men and women are portrayed differently or equally by the photograph itself and through textual elements and if there can be a stereotype detected or not.

### **Select media and sample**

Hansen and Machin (2019, p.94) state that a content analysis “must start with the selection and narrowing down of the type of coverage to be analysed” including a representative sample, time period and a definition of the body of media to be analysed.

For this study, the focus was put on two men’s and women’s fashion magazines within the British media landscape, GQ and Cosmopolitan. The focus on men’s and women’s magazines has been chosen in order to be able to clearly analyse how both genders are depicted and if stereotypes are created dependently and independently of the magazine and the genders. On the one hand, the British media landscape has proven to be the biggest English language-based media landscape in Europe and is therefore well suited for this study as it concentrates on western culture based magazines. On the other hand, GQ and Cosmopolitan are considered to be high appropriate bodies of media because they reach different generations and demographics within society and are stated as fashion magazines as well. Cosmopolitan for example is considered to reach one in four millennials and one in five of Gen Z (Hearst UK, n.d.) whereas GQ has a readership of 212.000 monthly customers (Condé Nast, 2022) which illustrates their impact on an audience and makes them important for the inclusion within this research.

Additionally to the selection of the body of media, the magazines are analysed only by their front covers as the message unit during a time period of eight years between 2015 and 2023. They are an important source because they reflect the construction of gender

difference in contemporary western societies. Moreover, a magazine cover establishes a first contact with the audience and provides an insight of their content and is therefore able to attract the reader. Noted by Alexander (2003) in the literature review, covers can be seen as advertisements to attract the audience and consequently serve several psychological effects which makes it highly influential in terms of a gender socialisation and considerable for this research. As suggested by scholars like Clark and Rossi (2020), mentioned in the literature review as well, in 2015 the fashion industry established a new way of portraying genders including gender fluid fashion. Thus, this year is chosen to investigate how fashion magazines dealt with that topic and if they attempted to break stereotypes and gender boundaries. The year 2023 provides the most recent issues of an entire year and therefore secures the study's actuality.

Furthermore, eight magazine covers are chosen in total with two covers for each year and each magazine. This amount of covers shall ensure a sufficient number to be analysed that is representative and significant as they represent 12,5 % (n=40) of all magazines within the time period. To sample them it is intended to use a random sampling. This includes the use of a random number generator that objectively picks out the number of magazines to be analysed (Rose, 2016). This shall ensure that each issue of the magazine has an equal chance of being included in the sample. That minimizes bias and allows reliable inferences about the entire population based on the sample data.

### **Define analytical categories**

In their model for conducting a content analysis Hansen and Machin (2019) state that the content needs to be classified according to a number of predetermined dimensions and characteristics, units of meaning and categories, which are relevant for the study. Applied to

this research the units of meaning that were chosen are the frequency of words and phrases, the angle of the images, the characteristics of the model, the use of colours and the treatment of stereotypical male and female themes. The phrase ‘stereotypical’ in this context is based on the findings presented in the literature review that revealed strong, masculine and agent portrayals of men and subordinated, feminine and polite portrayals of women. The units of meaning are meant to determine the level at which the magazine covers are going to be analysed and have been used to answer the addressed research questions in relation to the categories. Those are the following:

<b>01</b> Medium	<b>12</b> Facial expression	<b>23</b> Model’s use of make-up/cosmetics
<b>02</b> Date	<b>13</b> Camera angle	<b>24</b> Male hair appearance
<b>03</b> Position within the medium	<b>14</b> Distance	<b>25</b> Female hair appearance
<b>04</b> Genre classification	<b>15</b> Setting	<b>26</b> Non-binary hair appearance
<b>05</b> Gender	<b>16</b> Group size	<b>27</b> Male hair colour
<b>06</b> Age	<b>17</b> Male nudity	<b>28</b> Female hair colour
<b>07</b> Skin colour	<b>18</b> Female nudity	<b>29</b> Non-binary colour
<b>08</b> Body type	<b>19</b> Model’s use of accessories	<b>30</b> Font style
<b>09</b> Gaze of person(s) photographed	<b>20</b> Dress style	<b>31</b> Font colour
<b>10</b> Gestures	<b>21</b> Cloth colour	<b>32</b> Themes
<b>11</b> Body pose	<b>22</b> Background colour	<b>33</b> Frequency of words

**Table 3.1:** *Coding categories.*

The coding categories aim to be exhaustive, exclusive and enlightening as suggested by Rose (2016) and include identifier categories, an analysis of the characters depicted and a lexical choice. The categories 01-04 presented in the table above can be seen as identifier categories. They have been chosen in order to clearly identify details such as the type of magazine, the page and time on which the content appeared and contribute to the exclusion

of the content that is not of relevance for this study. This ensures the thoroughness and reliability at a very early stage.

The categories 05-08 and 23-29 analyse the character on a superficial level which allows to make interferences about standardised or diverse representations of the models while the categories 09-12 go more into detail. They have been chosen and supplemented by sub-categories, which will be examined in the next step, because Hansen and Machin (2019) note that a certain attitude towards the viewer can be transported by the gaze, gesture and pose they strike. An example they provide in this context are images of “women staring at the camera with their head slightly to one side and hands on hips” (Hansen and Machin, 2019, p.172) that transport confidence. As a consequence, those categories have proven to be important to include within this research as they allow the researcher to draw conclusions about the extent to which the model depicted shows signs of physical proximity, looseness or even confidence. Those are important variables to identify whether stereotypes are created or not.

Moreover, the categories 13-15 have been considered to be important variables because they provide information about if the magazine portrays the model as having power or a subservient position and if distance or proximity is created towards the viewer, as Nick Lacey (1998) points out in his media studies as well. Equally important, male and female nudity are also included as categories in order to investigate if the covers emphasise an idealised image of the female and the male body.

Including the model’s use of accessories and the dress style offer the possibility to identify changes in fashion such as gender fluid clothing. This contains the wearing of a skirt as a

male model for example or the wearing of a suit as a woman. Those components can therefore answer the question if the portrayals have changed over time.

Furthermore, the use of colours and the font style as set out in categories 21-22 and 30-31 were chosen because they are important in analysing if a model or a theme is given particular salience. While saturated colours for example are associated with “emotional temperature and exuberance” (Hansen and Machin, 2019, p.189) monochrome colours tend to give a timeless or classical feeling. Consequently, they can help to answer the addressed research questions.

The lexical choice includes the categories 32-33 and intends to analyse the occurrence of specific words within the headlines on the cover. A focus was put on those specific categories to be able to find out whether or not the magazine covers tend to characterise the models in separate ways, depending on their gender by emphasizing specific words and themes. This also allows to highlight a potential presence and tendency of framing in the creation of a stereotype and an image of men and women.

### **Construct a coding schedule and protocol**

After the classification of categories, a coding schedule and a code book were constructed. The coding schedule was created in Microsoft Excel for easy operation purposes and was divided into two schedules to be able to stay in a codable form. Hence the first table ranged from V0 to V29f and the second table from V30a to V33k. This distinction was made as the first 29 variables and categories focus more on the characteristics of the model and the angle of the image, the visual appearance, while the other categories concentrate on the frequency of words and phrases and the treatment of particular themes, the texts. As this

needs a different kind of precision regarding that a greater focus needs to be put on each word and/or phrase on the cover, the coding schedule consists of those two tables.

Before the coding schedule could be pilot tested, a code book was created as well. Within this code book, clear and unambiguous instructions are provided to ensure that the analysis is replicable and other researchers can arrive at the same results. As documented by Hansen and Machin (2019) it sets out what variables are to be coded and provides several definitions. In the code book for this research, there are also examples given to some extent in order to clarify the accompanied variables which ensures a well-functioning coding process. Hence the used terminology makes sure that the codes can be clearly understood by the researchers and in consequence by the audience. Those guidelines and definitions are therefore set out in a comprehensive way which minimises confusion during the analysis process and maximises that all magazine covers can be coded in the same way. This could also be secured by explaining and titling the categories as specifically as possible which prevented the content from ending up in just one single category.

The code book and the coding schedule can be found in the Appendix as Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

### **Pilot the coding schedule and check reliability**

Before the content analysis could be done properly the coding schedule was pilot tested to ensure a reliable coding process. Therefore, a small sub-sample was used to identify possible gaps within the coding process and check the practicability. This helps to reveal inadequacies and inconsistencies that might come up during the analysis as confusing categories result “in the loss of ability to relate different categories and dimensions to each other” (Hansen and Machin, 2019, p.109). A small sub-sample was undertaken for both the GQ and

Cosmopolitan magazine to check if the coding process is reliable for male and female fashion magazines equally. Thus, the pilot study concentrated on the following dates/issues: May 2015 Cosmopolitan, January 2015 GQ. To increase the reliability of the coding schedule, an external researcher was consulted to test the coding schedule as well. By conducting the same pilot study with the exact magazine issues, inconsistencies of the coding schedule could be revealed. Consequently, confusing categories have been redrawn and redefined which affirmed the study's reliability with the content to be analysed and ensured a greater transparency of the coding schedule and the code book.

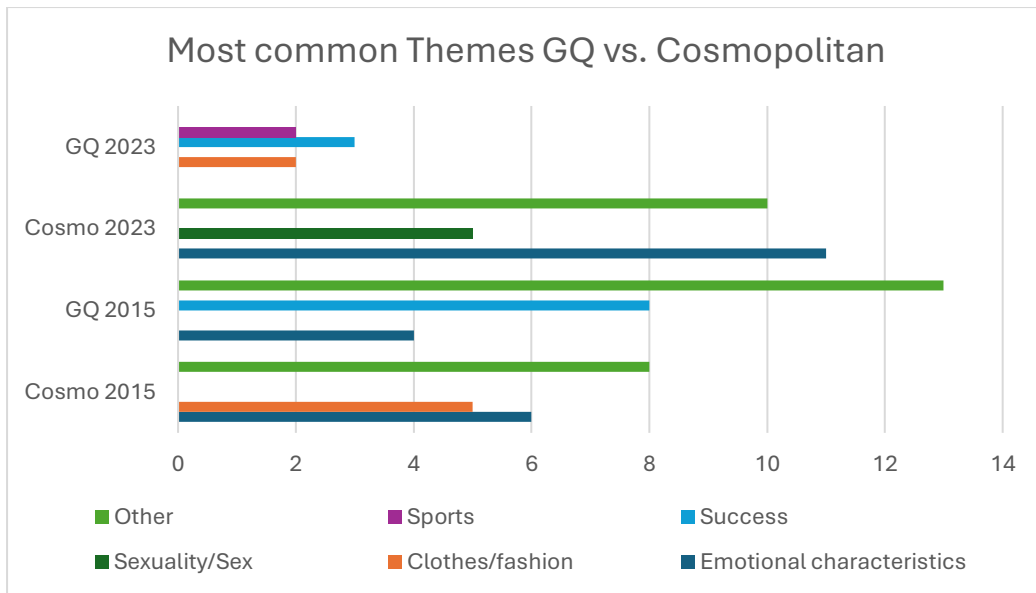
### **Data preparation and analysis**

As mentioned before, the coding schedule was constructed in Microsoft Excel for an easy and efficient operation process. Within the random sample method, as outlined above, the following dates have been determined by a generator:

Cosmopolitan: March 2015, August 2015, June/July 2023, October/November 2023.

GQ: September 2015, February 2015, March 2023, February 2023.

After entering all the relevant codes, the analysis and data preparation was set out in a manner that addresses the research questions to answer the overall objective. By starting to analyse the frequencies for each of the main categories, the following data could be examined:

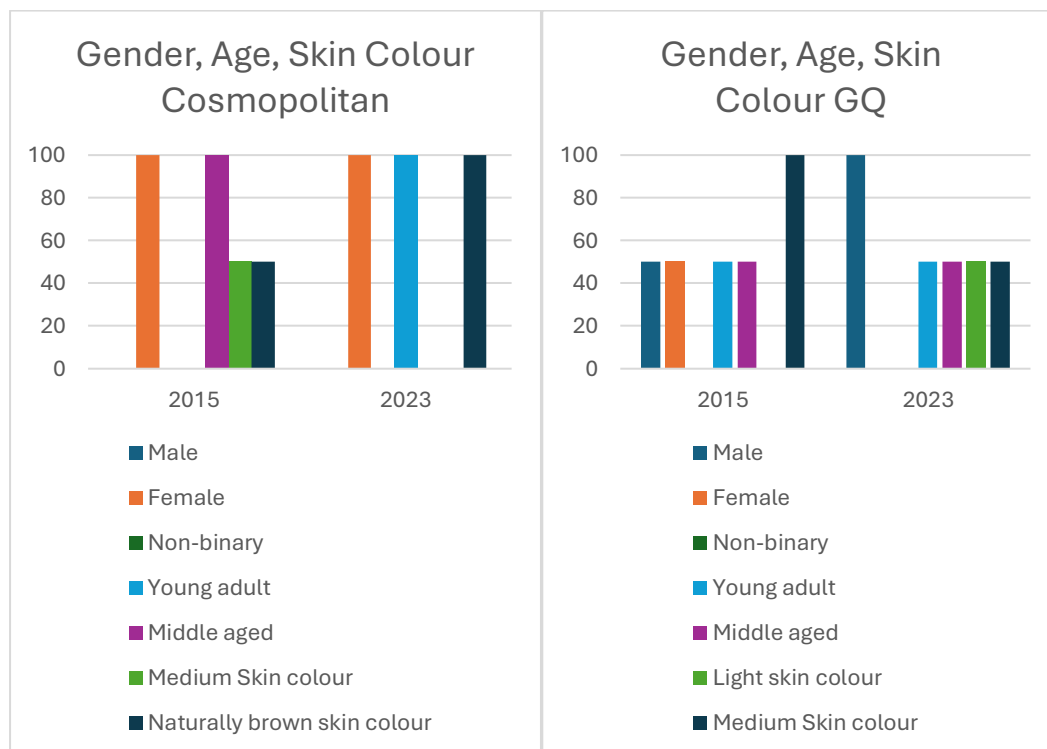


**Table 3.2:** *Most common Themes GQ vs. Cosmopolitan.*

Having a closer look at the treatment of stereotypical male and female themes the analysis revealed that while Cosmopolitan issues in 2015 dealt with emotional characteristics (n=6) and other themes (n=8) the most, they increased the treatment of emotional characteristics on their covers in 2023 (n=11) together with other themes as well (n=10) in 2023. GQ issues predominantly portray other themes (n=13) and themes dealing with success (n=8) for the year 2015 and firstly with success in 2023 (n=3) and clothes/fashion and sports equally (n=2). However, there was no clear frequency of words that could be investigated within the study and in relation to the themes.

In addition, the models depicted show some characteristics in terms of their visual appearance as tables 3.3 and 3.4 show. Within the study, 100% of the models covered in Cosmopolitan were female models in both 2015 and 2023. Nevertheless, middle aged models were overall portrayed in 2015 (100%) with both, medium and naturally brown skin colour (50% each) whereas young adult models in 2023 (100%) could be determined with a naturally brown skin colour only (100%). GQ portrayed the models slightly different as 50%

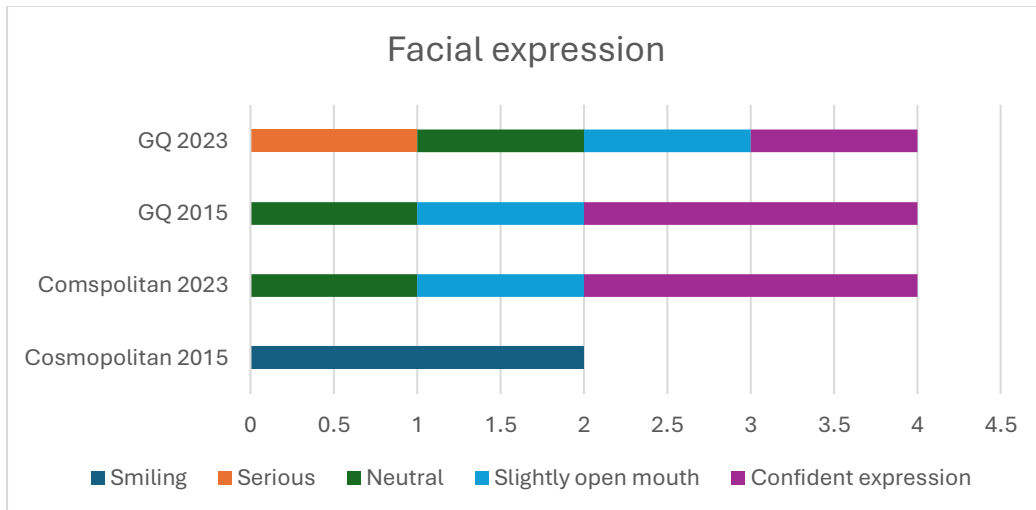
of the models were female and 50% were male in 2015. Moreover, the models could be assigned to young adults and middle aged equally (50% each) even though both issues portrayed models with a medium skin colour (100%). In 2023, only male models have been portrayed (100%) while they were different in terms of their age and skin colour. 50% of them showed a light skin colour and could be detected as being a young adult and 50% of them had a medium skin colour and were middle aged. However, all of the models on the covers, independent of their gender, either had a slim or average body type. Every magazine issue portrayed one model per cover only.



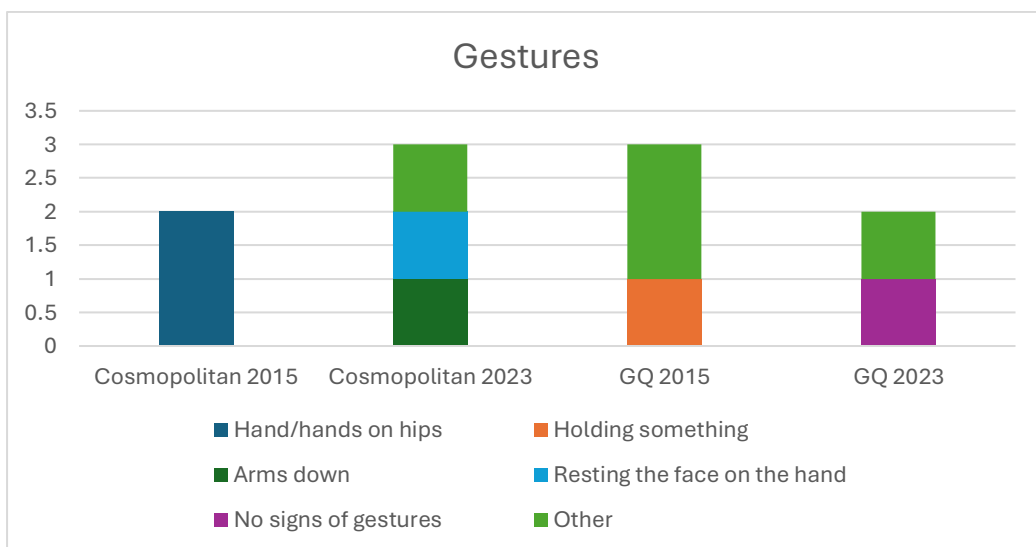
**Table 3.3 and 3.4:** Gender, Age, Skin Colour by magazine.

In relation to their gender, age and skin colour, the models on the covers exhibit several signs of facial expressions. While the Cosmopolitan in 2015 presents their models exclusively smiling (n=2) they predominantly depict them with a confident expression (n=2) and also with a slightly open mouth (n=1) or even with a neutral expression (n=1) in 2023. In contrast,

GQ models in 2015 already show the same expressions with the same amount as the Cosmopolitan in 2023. They supplement the facial expression in 2023 by showing a model with a serious expression as well (n=1).



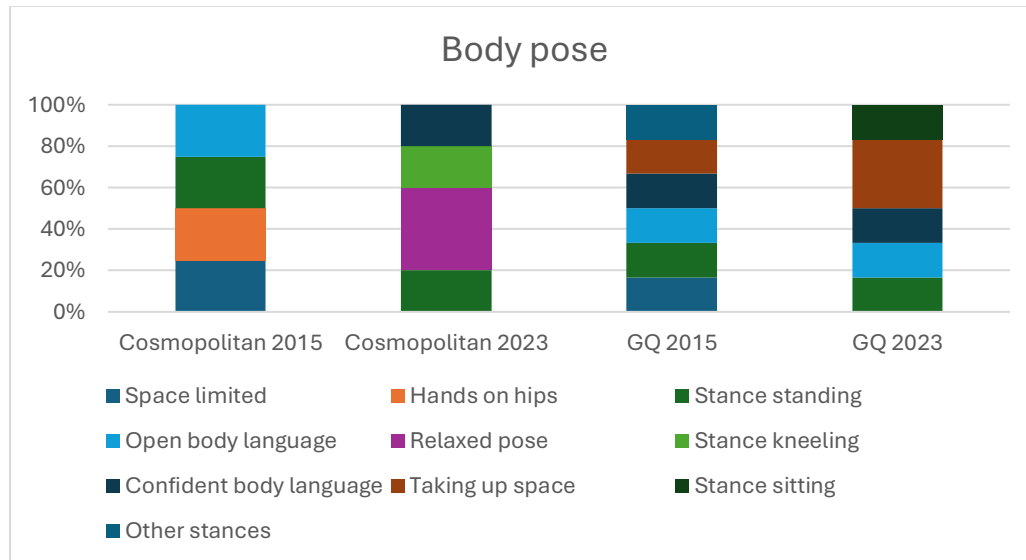
**Table 3.5:** Facial expression by year and magazine.



**Table 3.6:** Gestures by year and magazine.

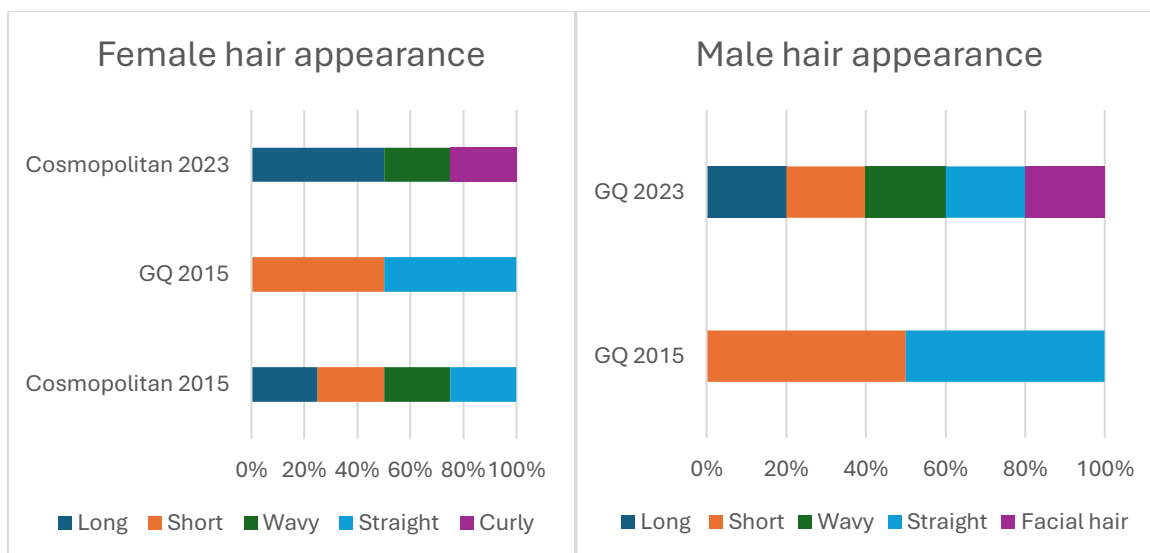
Equally important, the gestures used on the covers differ from each magazine and year as well as presented in table 3.6. In 2015 Cosmopolitan models only have their hands on the hips (n=2) whereas GQ models are holding something (n=1) or show other gestures (n=1). In

2023 the models in the Cosmopolitan magazine either had their arms down (n=1), rest their face on the hand (n=1) or show other gestures (n=1). In GQ, the models surprisingly show other gestures (n=1) or even do not show any signs of gestures (n=1).



**Table 3.7:** *Body poses by year and magazine.*

Considering the body poses, it can be noted that they vary from the year and magazine. As displayed in table 3.7, the body poses in 2015 in Cosmopolitan showed equal amounts of an open body language (n=1), a standing stance (n=1), a hands on hips pose (n=1) or a space limited pose (n=1). Contrarily, in 2023 the predominant body pose was a relaxed pose (n=2), along with a standing (n=1) or kneeling stance (n=1) and a confident body language (n=1). GQ on the other hand used multiple body poses in 2015 such as a space taking pose (n=1) and even other stances (n=1) and increases the use of space taking poses in 2023 (n=2) in addition to a sitting stance (n=1).



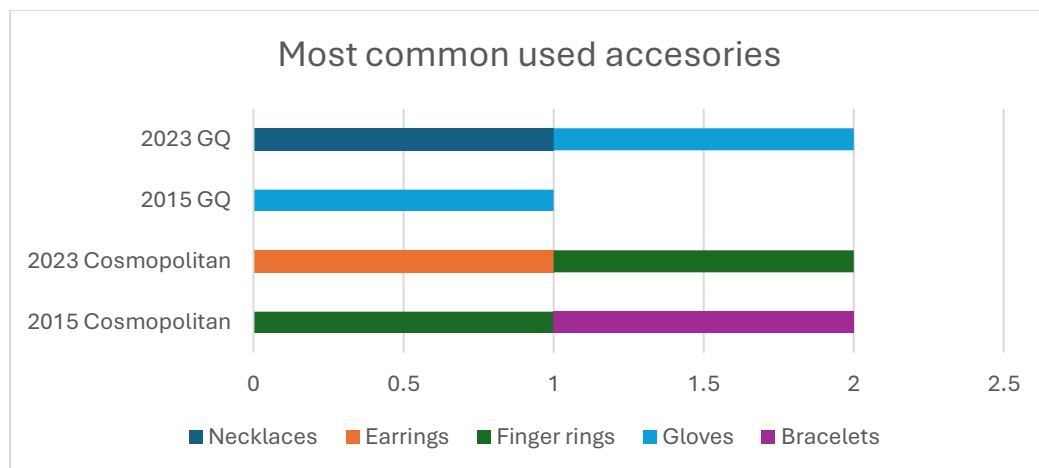
**Table 3.8 and 3.9: Hair appearance by gender and magazine.**

Having a closer look at the hair appearance and colour the content analysis revealed that female models in Cosmopolitan in 2015 are equally presented with long (n=1) and short hair (n=1) that is either wavy (n=1) or straight (n=1) while GQ portrays them with short (n=1) and straight hair (n=1). In 2023 all female models in Cosmopolitan have long hair (n=2) that is either wavy (n=1) or curly (n=1). Male models in 2015 in the GQ magazine have short (n=1) and straight hair (n=1) whereas in 2023 they are supplemented by long (n=1) and straight hair (n=1) and even showed signs of facial hair as well (n=1). Nevertheless, the female models in 2015 are overall 50% brunette and 50% with a black hair colour while they have 100% black hair in 2023. Half of the male models in 2015 have black hair (50%) and blonde (50%) or silver hair (50%) in 2023.

Following on from this, the use of make-up could only be determined in magazines that presented female models (Cosmopolitan 2015, GQ 2015, Cosmopolitan 2023). Magazines that presented male models (GQ 2015, GQ 2023) did not show any signs of the use of make-up on their covers. Comparable results have been investigated in terms of signs of nudity.

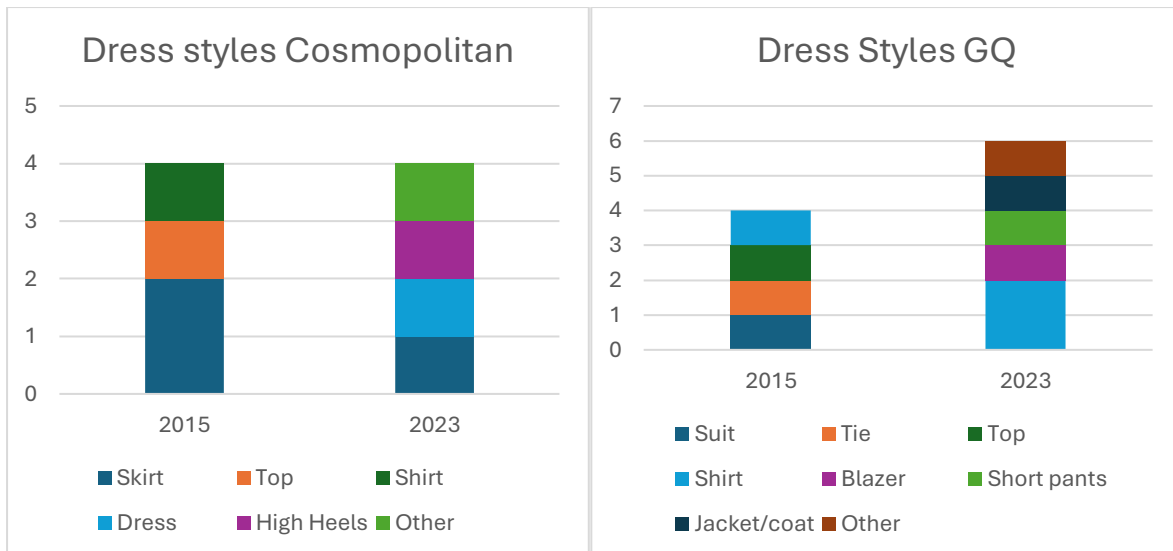
Male models depicted did not show any signs of nudity while female nudity could be determined in Cosmopolitan in 2015 (n=1) and 2023 (n=1) and also in a GQ issue in 2015 as well (n=1).

Other visual characteristics could be investigated with regard to the use of accessories as table 4.0 shows. The Cosmopolitan magazine used finger rings in both analysed years and made use of bracelets and earrings as well. In contrast to that GQ uses gloves as an accessory in 2015 and 2023 and supplements the use of necklaces for the models in 2023 (n=1).



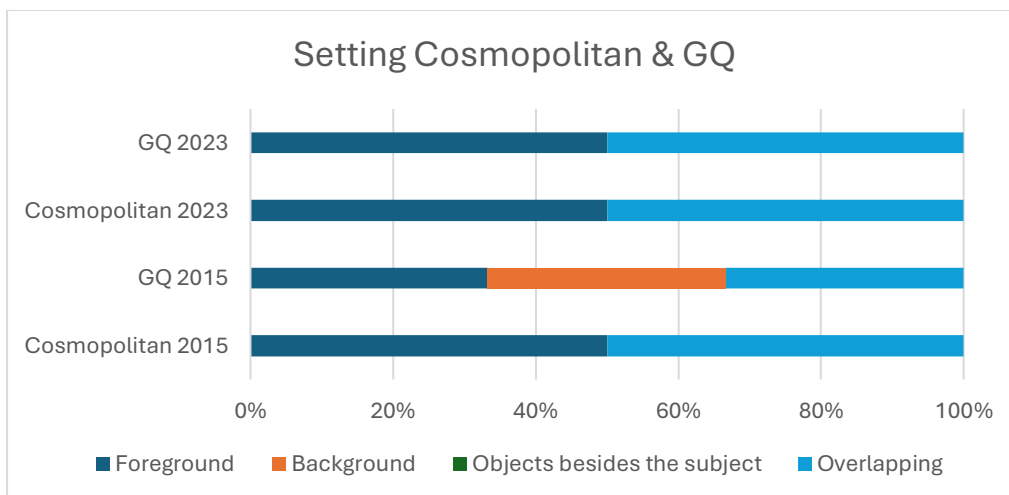
**Table 4.0:** *Most common used accessories by year and magazine.*

Equally important, dress styles that have been used differ from the year and magazine as outlined in Tables 4.1 and 4.2. In 2015, Cosmopolitan only used skirts for their models (n=2) and dressed them with shirts (n=1) and tops (n=1) while they made use of high heels (n=1) and dresses (n=1) in 2023. The magazines of GQ in 2015 used equal amounts of suits (n=1), ties (n=1), tops (n=1) and shirts (n=1) and dressed every model with a shirt in 2023 (n=2) in combination with a blazer (n=1), a coat (n=1), short pants (n=1) and even other dress styles (n=1).



**Table 4.1 and 4.2:** Dress styles by magazine.

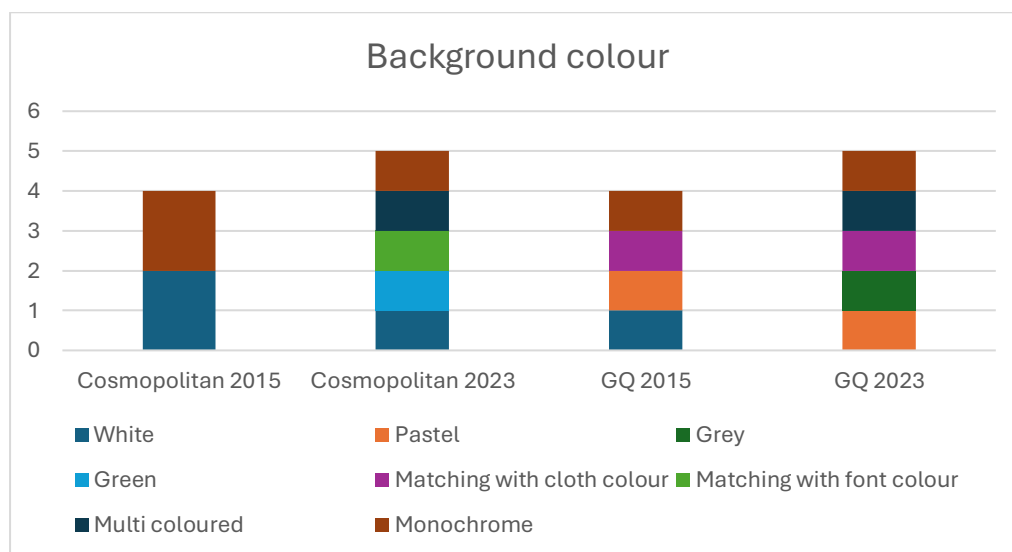
Furthermore, with a special focus on the setting in the images the study was able to find out that the Cosmopolitan magazine places their models in the foreground and with the use of overlapping objects, including headlines/fonts, in both analysed years equally while GQ does the same in 2023 but also makes use of background elements in 2015.



**Table 4.3:** Setting by year and magazine.

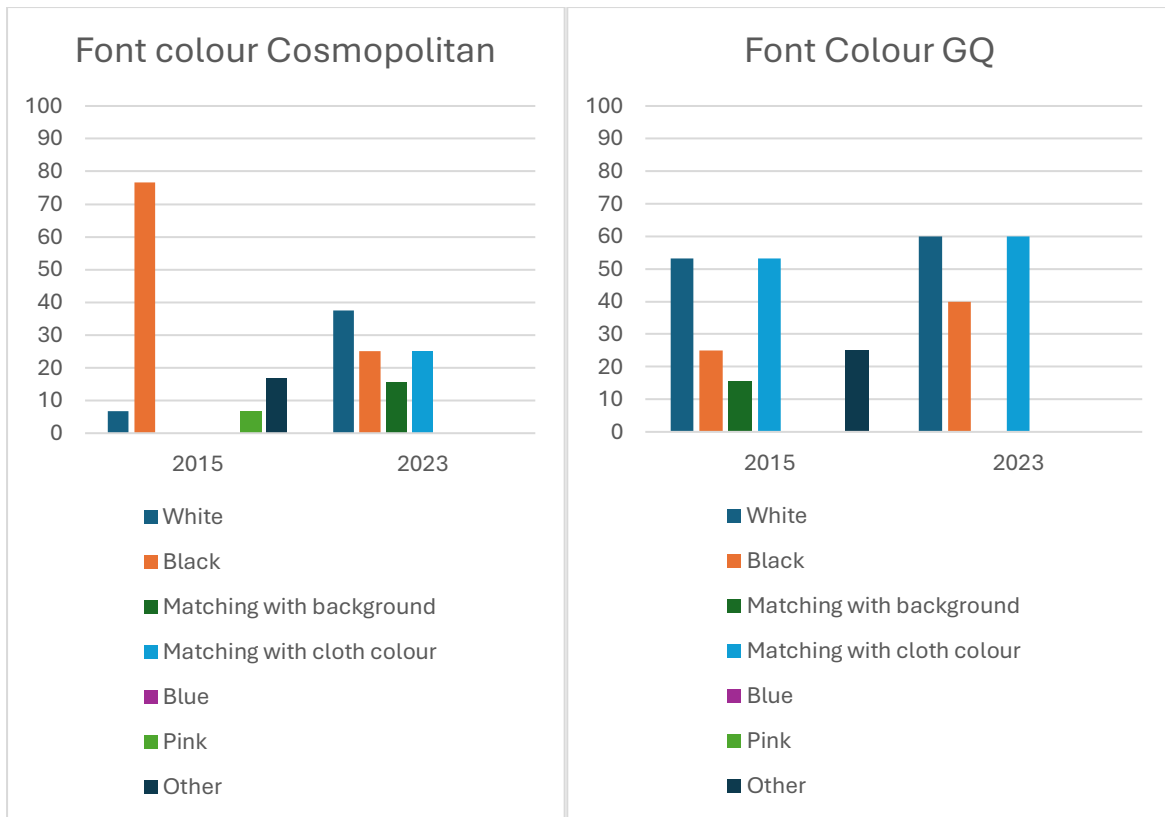
Accompanied by that the used background colours in the magazines could be investigated with some disparities. In 2015 Cosmopolitan only makes use of a white (n=2) and

monochrome background (n=2) whereas the magazine uses different background colours in 2023 that are monochrome (n=1), white (n=1), green (n=1), matching with the font colour (n=1) and multi coloured as well (n=1). In contrast, GQ has a slightly different approach as it is making use of different colours even in 2015, including pastel colours (n=1) and the matching with the cloth colour (n=1). In 2023 the magazine supplements the background colour by multi coloured (n=1) and grey backgrounds (n=1).



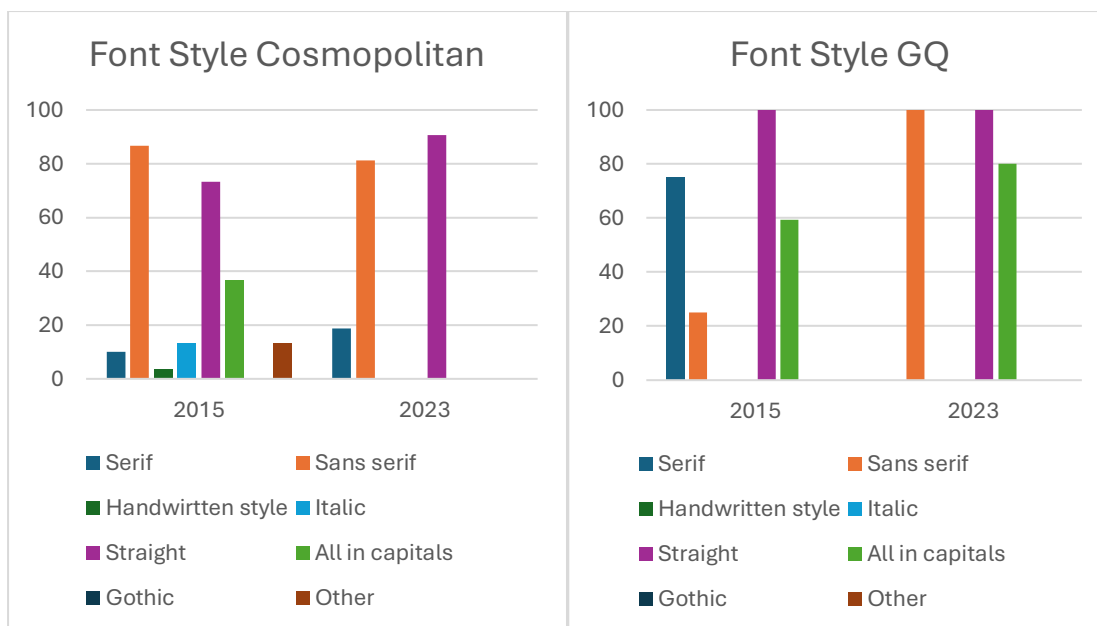
**Table 4.4:** *Background colour by year and magazine.*

In addition to the background colour, the font colours on the covers show some inconsistencies as well (see table 4.5 and 4.6). Cosmopolitan increasingly uses black as a font colour (76,67%) followed by other colours (16,67%) in 2015. This is changing in 2023 as the magazine uses white more often (37,5%) and even uses colours that match with the cloth colour in 25% or match with the background (15,63%). GQ in contrast has a slightly different approach because they use equal amounts of font colours that are white and matching with the cloth colour (53,13%) the most in 2015 and increase those colours by 60% in 2023 accompanied by an increase in black as a font colour (40%).



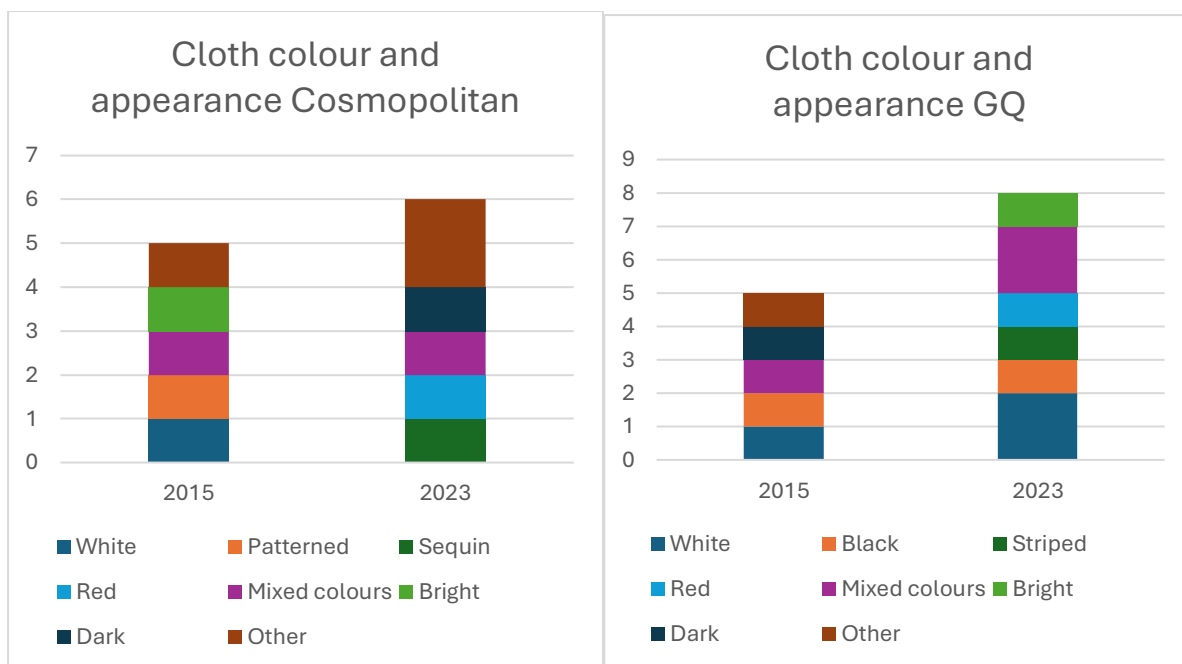
**Table 4.5 and 4.6:** *Font colour by year and magazine.*

Moreover, while some background colours are matching with the font colour as already mentioned, there could be different font styles detected by the year and magazine as well as the tables 4.7 and 4.8 present. The Cosmopolitan magazine on the one hand predominantly uses sans serif fonts (86,67%) that are straight (73,33%) and even only written in capital letters (36,67%) in 2015 whereas they increased the use of straight and sans serif fonts in 2023 with a number of 90,63% and 81,25%. On the other hand, GQ uses 100% straight fonts that are mostly presented in a serif style (75%) and with capital letters (59,38%) in the year 2015. Strikingly, they changed the style in 2023 by using 100% sans serif and straight fonts with a much higher percentage of fonts that are written in capital letters (80%).



**Table 4.7 and 4.8:** *Font style by year and magazine.*

With a higher focus on the clothing of the models there were also different results that could be found out during the analysis in terms of their colour and overall visual appearance as the tables 4.9 and 5.0 reveal. Models depicted in Cosmopolitan are portrayed in a multilayered approach as they are shown in clothes that are white (n=1), bright (n=1), patterned (n=1), with mixed colours (n=1) or even with other colours (n=1) in 2015. In 2023 they are supplemented by dark (n=1) and red colours (n=1) and appear to be sequin (n=1) with a higher amount of other colours (n=2). GQ's approach was determined to be similar for the year 2015. The clothes on the covers are black (n=1), white (n=1), dark (n=1), with mixed colours (n=1) or other (n=1). A higher number of white (n=2) and mixed colours (n=2) was contrarily detected in 2023 with a supplementation of bright (n=1), red (n=1) and striped clothes (n=1) as well.



**Table 4.9 and 5.0:** *Cloth colour and appearance by year and magazine.*

After having presented the findings of this study, a more detailed and sophisticated analysis and discussion will be presented in chapter 4.

### **3.3 Ethical dilemmas and challenges/limitations**

The general ethical principles that need to be applied during research include voluntary participation, knowing the benefits to participation, confidentiality and anonymity, informed consent, being aware of risks involved in participation and the right to withdraw. For the outlined methodology, a content analysis, the mentioned principles are not of high importance for this study as there are no participants involved and required. Nevertheless, those principles are significant in any case and have been taken into account during the entire research.

Some challenges and limitations for the research have been the relatively small sample used during the analysis. This was because the coverage and the number of issues for the years was limited to a maximum of 12 issues per year and magazine. Therefore, the overall

amount of magazine covers that can be analysed remained beyond control. However, the decision of that particular sample has been made with regard to the limited time for the study and because the chosen approach demands a very detailed analysis that tends to be time consuming. Regardless of this fact, the study has proven to be reliable and is still able to draw strong conclusions with solid results to the research questions posed which will be outlined and discussed in chapter 4.

## **Chapter 4: Analysis and discussion**

After having presented the outcomes of the content analysis for this study, the findings will now be taken into account in order to analyse and discuss them. The chapter aims to provide wide ranging aspects and information about the research questions and is intended to give a sufficient answer to the overarching objective of this entire study on how stereotypical portrayals of men and women in various fashion magazines have changed? Therefore, the different variables from the content analysis will be summarised and allocated to the corresponding research questions which are separated into five sections.

### **4.1 Persons appearing on the cover**

During the course of the content analysis within a time period of eight years, the findings suggest some changes in the coverage of the models and themes. Having a closer look at who appears on the covers you can say that Cosmopolitan only portrays female models whereas GQ portrays female and male models, even though this was only detected in the year 2015. However, it is arguable that Cosmopolitan intends to attract their readership by showing a high degree of femininity while GQ tries to attract them with both genders. Translating GQ then as 'Gentlemen's Quarterly' the magazine obviously has an overall male audience and tries to appeal to men by showing the opposite sex as well. This is consistent with the assumption by Tim Edwards (2009) that male magazines sometimes tend to portray women in order to foster the reader's masculinity. Even the fact that every image on the cover just shows one person leads the reader to get connected to the model in the image and his or her attitudes and interests. Added to this is the fact that none of the analysed magazines, neither in 2015 nor in 2023, showed any signs of gender fluid models or non-binary models. This contradicts the suggestion of Joanne Entwistle (2015) and Clark and

Rossi (2020) that on the one hand the fashion magazines play at the boundaries of sexuality and on the other hand it has proven to be wrong that the fashion industry, including fashion magazines, has broadly taken up the issue of multi gender identities. Consequently, it indicates that Cosmopolitan and GQ contribute to the fostering of typical, binary, genders and avoid the depiction of modern gender types which leads to the assumption that the magazines strengthen classical gender perceptions.

However, as the findings revealed, even though there could only be two genders investigated, it is striking that the models differ in terms of their skin colour. While in 2015 Cosmopolitan portrayed female models with naturally brown skin and medium skin, 100% of the models in GQ had a medium skin colour only. Changes have been found out during the time period when in 2023 Cosmopolitan only depicted models with a naturally brown skin colour and GQ had both, light skin colour and medium skin colour models. One could argue that in the context of ethnicity the magazines have undertaken some changes by showing different kinds of ethnicities and/or races which can indeed be seen as a diverse representation of people. This is contrarily to what scholars like Eagly *et al.* (2019) elaborated within their study as they revealed a strong gender stereotype in ethnicity among other aspects. Therefore, it can be ascertained that through the implementation of different ethnicities both magazines encourage changes in the portrayals of their models and present a diverse range of skin colours.

In terms of the models' ages it can be outlined that while GQ has not changed the ages of their models as they were all either young adults or middle aged, Cosmopolitan showed some differences. In 2015, the magazine portrayed 100% of middle aged models whereas they completely changed this and depicted 100% of young adult models in 2023. With the

fact in mind that the magazine only uses female models on their covers that are presented with different skin colours one can deduce that it is intended to create a young and modern experience within the magazine. As already outlined in chapter 3, Cosmopolitan has a readership with various age groups because they reach both, millennials and the gen z (Hears UK, n.d.). This illustrates that, among the other mentioned aspects, through the depiction of young adult models the magazine tries to attract more than one generation which makes it even more influential in terms of the distribution of gender roles than in 2015. This assumption is also shared by Katharina Sarah Müller (2014) who notes that a magazine with a focus on a female readership is subject to social changes and can either foster gender perceptions or can establish new gender interpretations, including the age.

Concluding the elaborated variables, it can be argued that the persons who appear on the covers are different depending on the type of magazine and year it has been published. For example, fashion magazines that have a female readership such as Cosmopolitan tend to depict female models only but show some variety in terms of the ages and skin colours of the models which has changed during the analysed time period. In contrast to that, male fashion magazines such as GQ have portrayed female models in the past as well even though they focus on male models in the recent year exclusively. Nevertheless, this magazine has also shown a variety of skin colours even if they are more focused on white ethnicities.

Surprisingly, it does not have changed the age of the models in any way. Thus, it can be said that the way how fashion magazines portray their models has been diverse in both analysed years, regarding only binary models, even though some transformations occurred. Both magazines have failed to include non-binary gender models on their covers.

The analysed findings will be taken into account at a later stage as well when it will be discussed whether or not stereotypical portrayals have changed.

#### **4.2 Visual appearance of the models**

As the basic findings of the models on the covers revealed some differences, a closer look at their appearance will now be taken. Therefore, several characteristics have been analysed in order to be able to draw strong conclusions. Aspects that are striking in this context are the facial expressions and the gestures of the models in relation to their gaze. Cosmopolitan as a female fashion magazine portrays their models smiling in combination with their hands on the hips in 2015 whereas they changed to models with a confident expression, defined in the codebook under V12, in 2023 that have their arms down or rest their face on a hand as tables 3.5 and 3.6 show. In contrast, GQ overall uses models with a confident expression in 2015 (n=2) but also supplements a serious expression in 2023 (n=1) while they are either make use of other gestures or holding something or do not show any gestures at all.

Regarding the fact that gestures and facial expressions can be seen as a form of non-verbal communication it is obvious that the different magazines communicate in separate ways with their audience depending on the gender of the readership. Cosmopolitan for example seemed to depict their models in a way that states that women are likely to be in a happy mood and tend to be likeable through a smiling face expression for example. Defined as “pleasant and easy to like” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2024), the term likeable is often used for women because they are expected to serve this characteristic in order to “express a desire to appear like the ideal female” ( Brooke Tompkins *et al.*, 2009, p.296) and to avoid social rejection. Moreover, they emphasise supposed characteristics of a female body by having their hands on the hips as part of an outlining process which highlights female body features

and thus promotes gender ideals. Having a confident expression then in the recent year with even the arms down for example underlines an ongoing process by the magazine that puts a higher focus on a neutral approach instead of communicating an importance of the female body and how it should look like. It can be argued that in this case the magazine adheres to modern beauty standards and contemporary female ideals within the so called fourth wave feminism, beginning in the 2010s, as outlined by Tilton (2019) in the literature review, which is also accelerated by the #MeToo movement in 2017 that “addresses grievances a person faces based on gender” (Leung and Williams, 2019, p.350) and challenges gender norms. Tilton (2019) ascertains that this period of feminism has led fashion designers and magazines to rethink their approaches and to find structural solutions in terms of gender stereotypes. However, GQ has a different approach and does not communicate a focus of the male or female body but instead communicates a more important focus on the characteristics such as the facial expression, gestures and even the dress style. In that case, both analysed years have proven to portray models on the cover that show a strong charisma and transport agency and confidence. This can happen because the models show serious facial expressions (n=1) along with a slightly open mouth (n=1) and a certain gaze and body language, which will be elaborated in the next paragraph. That analysis is also supported by the fact that there have been no signs of male nudity detected within the analysis while female nudity could be investigated in 3 of 5 cases (60%). This outlines once again that female models are more reduced on their body and male models more communicate their characteristics. That goes along with the findings of Bordo (2003) and Thompson (2000) and supports the argument that on the one hand in 2015 there was a higher objectification of the female body but shows on the other hand that female fashion magazines have questioned the way they portray women.

To contextualise this in a more sophisticated way it is necessary to mention that the gaze of the models in Cosmopolitan in 2015 was 100% slightly turned and with a 100% direct look into the camera for all other analysed magazines and years. Equally important, the body poses presented in the previous section connote very significant meanings in relation to the gaze. While a slightly turned gaze transports a feeling of distance and absence, the direct look into the camera addresses the viewer and creates proximity through which the audience is more receptive to the content and the messages as the viewer is acknowledged by the model. Hansen and Machin (2019) also note that in this context because they found out that a direct look into the camera asks for an imaginary relationship between the viewer and the model and invites to identify with it whereas the turned gaze neglects that contact and thus loses the direct interaction. The poses then transport ambivalent meanings as in 2015 Cosmopolitan models posed with limited space as well which conveys a certain kind of vulnerability and suggests timidity because the depicted women indicate that they are not able to take up space through a lack of confidence according to Hansen and Machin (2019). In 2023, however, they were presented with relaxed poses, standing or kneeling stances which created an overall confident body language not least due to the fact that they showed more signs of taking up space and were looking directly into the camera. This shows that the magazine indeed changed the way how attitude is depicted and suggests that the models nowadays convey stability and confidence but also looseness at the same time, characterised through dropping shoulders and a kneeling stance, even though the creation of curvature is more given in Cosmopolitan than in GQ and perpetuates a conventional understanding of femininity. This is also acknowledged by Hansen and Machin (2019) who have dealt very closely with the semiotics of an image by an analysis on how ideas, values and objects are depicted and what they denote and connote, including so called carriers of

connotation such as the pose. For GQ you can say that the male models have a space taking and open body language in both analysed years which indicates that the magazine fosters an image of a confident man that might also be, according to Hansen and Machin (2019), able to deal with leadership and control but only if he is situated in a business context which has been the case in 50% of the analysed images. Similar to Cosmopolitan, the female model in the issue of 2015 was also presented in a space limited pose which reveals that regardless of the magazine and the readership in this case, female models have been depicted in a feminine way along with timidity and vulnerability.

Nevertheless, a look at the hair appearance and the use of make-up indeed reveals the creation of a stereotype which is the overarching question of the entire research. Even though Cosmopolitan had equal amounts of female models with short and long hair in 2015 they exclusively portrayed them with long hair in the previous year. This suggests the fact that the fashion magazine might recreate a stereotype that establishes and connects femininity and a female body to long hair that is either straight, wavy, or curly. In this context it deserves mention that no hair that can be described as 'afro' could be investigated during the analysis. This might be an indicator for the argument that not just a certain stereotype has been created where straight or curly hair has been standardised as feminine but also that other types of hair has been sorted out. Even the hair colour is very standardised with brunette or black hair for all female models and supports this argument although the normal hair colour that has been considered to be beautiful in the past was blonde because there was a broad cultural imagery of the "smiling blond goodness" (Theory Teacher's Blog, 2015). Contrarily, GQ only depicts their models with short and straight hair in 2015 independent of the gender but even supplements the hair appearance by the use of long hair and facial hair for a male model as well in 2023 as table 3.8 shows. In relation to the findings that the

models do not only have black and brunette hair but also blonde and silver hair suggests the argument that male models in fashion magazines are of higher diversity in terms of their hair appearance. It indicates that male magazines have several approaches for how they depict their models while female fashion magazines more tend to rely on a fixed and rigid approach. This is congruent with the analysis of scholars like Velding (2017) who revealed the depiction of feminine standards in magazines such as the hair appearance and notes that these standards are able to uphold traditional ideals, including long hair, a slim or average body and a medium to light skin colour.

Another aspect that deserves a discussion is the use of make-up. While all female models in both analysed fashion magazines and years showed signs of make-up such as eye liner or nail polish, no obvious make-up could be detected for male models at all. These outcomes indicate a consistent stereotype likewise that connects female models and femininity to a compelling use of make-up and suggests that masculinity only works without any make-up. Furthermore, it contradicts the assumption that fashion magazines increase a gender fluid depiction of their models and play at the boundaries of what is supposed to be feminine and masculine. In other words, one could argue that both fashion magazines did not question the “foundations of sexual identity” (McCann and Monaghan, 2022, p.4) as elaborated by scholars presented in the literature review.

Equally important to the question how the visual appearance of the models is, is an elaboration of the used accessories and dress styles. Here it is interesting that in both years the female models wore finger rings and either bracelets in 2015 or necklaces in 2023. They were also completely dressed in skirts (n=2) in 2015 and wore dresses and high heels in 2023. However, the cloth colour and its appearance was very multilayered in both analysed

years as table 4.8 presents with different colours and styles such as patterned or sequin. Striking is that the models in GQ had gloves on in both analysed years that appeared to be either fingerless latex gloves or gloves made from bandages and also necklaces in 2023 as well while they were equipped with suits, ties, shirts or a blazer, coat and short pants. All of the clothes appeared to be more coloured in a basic style with more black, white and dark colours, even though they were also striped and with mixed colours in 2023 accompanying with a slight change to more bright colours. While Cosmopolitan as a magazine with female models therefore only presents them in a very stereotypical feminine way in terms of their accessories and with a limited range of dress styles it is noticeable that they use a wide range of colours and designs for their clothes which underlines the fostering of a clear feminine image on the one hand but also the diverse representation of a 'feminine style' in terms of the design and colour. Revealed within a study by researchers like Jonauskaitė *et al.* (2019), a feminine style includes colours within a red and blue colour palette which the current analysis has proven to go beyond that. The male models in GQ are similarly presented in a stereotypical masculine style which is suggested and supported by the suits and shirts and through the lack of a colourful design as the colours are plain and simple.

Summing up, the question of how the models visually appear can be answered by saying that while female models are more objectified in terms of their visual appearance male models tend to be portrayed with a higher focus on their personality, although some changes in the objectification could be identified. Hence this is supported by the models' poses and gazes because women have taken up less space in the past which means that they transport timidity and vulnerability on the one hand but also assumes women to be more communal, according to Eagly *et al.* (2019). In contrast, they nowadays strike poses that transport confidence and thus dissolve certain gender ideals. Male models contrarily have

consistently shown poses that convey confidence and power. Both magazines overall let their models directly look into the camera which created a sense of affiliation and appealed to the viewer. Even the use of make-up, nudity and the hair appearance have strengthened this argument as nudity and make-up for example could only be detected for female models and in Cosmopolitan the most. Equal results have also shown the accessories and dress styles which revealed a very feminine and therefore stereotypical presentation of female models in Cosmopolitan and likewise a very masculine depiction of male models in GQ through suits and simple colours.

#### **4.3 Angle and setting of the image**

To provide a sufficient answer to the third research question, from what angle the photo has been shot, it could be revealed that the setting plays a significant role in relation to the angle and the production of a certain meaning and connotation. Hence every analysed magazine placed their models in the foreground and with overlapping objects such as the fonts/headlines except from GQ in 2015 because they also made use of background elements. In addition to that, the used colour for the background of the setting was 100% monochrome and white for Cosmopolitan in 2015 (see table 4.4) while they changed it in 2023 with more coloured backgrounds. GQ in contrast even uses wide ranging background colours in 2015 and continues to do so in 2023. However, both of the magazines made use of stylistic devices such as a colour that matches with the font colour or cloth colour. By placing every model in the foreground, it can be argued that the magazines characterise them as the most salient elements within the image even though the overlapping fonts signalise a specific hierarchy between the model and the themes, which will be outlined at a later stage. Moreover, the fact that Cosmopolitan only uses a monochrome background in

2015 reveals that the magazine has decontextualised the setting in the past which puts a greater emphasis on the model and has a higher symbolic power than images with objects or different colours as previous academics like Hansen and Machin (2019) have noted. Being aware that Cosmopolitan changed this strategy in 2023, and GQ even did it in 2015 means that the symbolic role is decreasing, and a higher focus is put on the context of the image in connection with the themes and vibrant and saturated colours. This could be an indicator that the magazines have changed their strategy from a more symbolic connotation to a more sophisticated approach where the model is not seen as an object anymore but instead as a part of the whole scenery in accordance with the themes. For a better contextualisation it can be noted that this change of strategy is an answer to cultural and social processes as Berger (1972) has already found out with regard to the fact that the way we see the model depends on learned assumptions within a culture and thus the magazine reacts to those cultural changes. The above argument is also supported by Barnard (2002), presented in the literature review, who assumes that fashion and therefore fashion magazines can challenge popular gender conceptions and escape an objectification of the model through a different depiction of them.

Added to this is now the angle of the image. Within the analysed issues, 100% of the Cosmopolitan 2015 and 2023 and of the GQ 2015 used a level shot whereas 50% of the GQ 2023 used a level shot and 50% a low angle shot. With that in mind, it can be concluded that through the level shots the magazines communicate with their audience at eye-level and imply equality between them and the model which helps to establish a connection and simplifies the deliverance of potential stereotypes or even their abolition. The low angle shot contrarily creates a hierarchy where the model is ascribed a certain power and confidence that looks down to the spectator. This is similar to what Nick Lacey (1998) and

Hansen and Machin (2019) investigated because they were able to elaborate that a lower angle indicates a position of power and control towards the viewer while an eye-level shot causes a feeling of equality and could be detected as the most common used angle.

A connection to the viewer is also created through the use of distance. All analysed magazines either had a medium or medium close up shot except for one issue of the Cosmopolitan in 2023 which used a long shot (n=1). While the medium shot and medium close up suggest involvement and even intimacy, the long shot creates social distance and objectivity where the viewer is just an observer. This is similar to Hansen and Machin's (2019) findings which state that the feeling of distance between the viewer and the model is based on real world experiences and cultural associations where one is required to interact or seen as the onlooker, depending on the situation.

Thus, both magazines and types of models have overall proven to establish a connection with its audience through the use of a certain distance and angle as well as through the setting and background colours. On the one hand, the analysis revealed a more sophisticated approach in terms of the depiction of the models and provided insights on how the magazines create a connection to their audience and involve them. This allows the magazine to establish certain values and emotions and is consequently congruent with the results of Bernays and Miller (2005) in terms of propaganda within the mass media. As already uncovered in the literature review, they conclude that magazines often build up on the establishment of emotions and values in order to control the audience's actions and make them more receptive. However, the question from what angle the photos has been shot does not clearly provide an answer whether or not stereotypes have changed because this variable cannot stand alone in this context. Nevertheless, it is indeed necessary in order

to make inferences about the overarching objective and will be considered together with the other findings in the following sections.

#### **4.4 Linguistic elements**

By finding an answer to the question what linguistic elements are used on the covers besides the photograph the content analysis revealed significant insights on how men and women are portrayed. Firstly, it could be investigated that the magazines treated some stereotypical themes for males and females. Cosmopolitan as a female fashion magazine ascribed the most themes to emotional characteristics and other themes as well in 2015 and even increased the treatment of those topics in 2023 as table 3.2 shows. GQ in contrast thematised success and other themes the most in 2015 while they portray success, fashion and sports the most in the previous year. This clearly indicates traditional and stereotypical roles that are connected to men and women. While women are brought into connection with emotionality and personality skills and are therefore suggested as a communal sex, GQ in particular connects males with agency and competence and even a fit body. This clearly shows that both fashion magazines have undergone less implementations of societal changes in terms of breaking stereotypes and have actually reinforced them over the time period. It is therefore consistent with previous researched stereotypes for both genders as outlined in the introduction and by scholars like Eagly *et al.* (2019) as well who ascertain that gender stereotypes for communion and agency for example are still maintained. However, it is striking that fashion plays a superior role in GQ in 2023 (see table 3.2) as they are dealing with fashion items like bags, shoes, or jewels for example. This leads to the assumption that, nowadays, they presuppose a higher fashion awareness to males than to women which on

the other hand questions the stereotype of the so called fashion addicted and shopaholic female.

In addition, it deserves mention that no frequency of words could be detected during the course of this study within the topics covered. In fact, it can be argued that there are of course stereotypes occurring in both types of fashion magazines and for both genders through the treatment of certain topics but they are not caused by a specific vocabulary and lexical choice. With that in mind, it can be highlighted that there is a presence of framing in the creation of a stereotype in the magazines through the use of high frequent themes in relation to a particular gender although certain vocabulary cannot be identified.

The presence of framing and the implementation of stereotypical themes is also supported by different font styles and their colours. While Cosmopolitan for example predominantly uses straight and sans serif fonts that are likewise written in capital letters (see table 4.7) they mostly colour them as black and with other colours for the year 2015 (see table 4.5). The number of straight and sans serif fonts has increased for 2023 alongside with a higher use of white font colours and colours that match with the cloth colour or the background (see tables 4.7 and 4.5). Conversely, GQ only uses straight fonts in 2015 accompanied by serif fonts and more capital letters (see table 4.8) that are predominantly coloured in white or matching with the cloth colour (see table 4.6). For the recent analysed year, they increased those colours up to 60% (see table 4.6) with a 40% use of black together with a 100% use of sans serif and straight fonts and a high increase of capital letters as well.

Considering the themes in relation to the fonts and their colours as 'signs', a certain cultural meaning is produced and consequently intends to represent a particular characteristic and message as Hall *et al.* (2013) generally investigated. Furthermore, it can be noticed that the

fonts in Cosmopolitan suggest a clean and straightforward design that makes the audience more receptive for the covered topics within the magazine or even illustrates a high importance towards some themes through the use of capital letters. By using font colours that match with the cloth or background colour for the recent year the magazine shows changes in design in order to create a more connecting experience because matching colours reduce the level of contrast and consequently evoke associations of optimism and positivity according to Hansen and Machin (2019) even though the themes remain stereotypical. GQ on the other hand has obviously changed its strategy from a more serif orientated design to a more non serif orientated design. This outlines that in the past GQ has connected their stereotypical male themes with a traditional use of fonts and colours whereas the increasement of sans serif fonts and capital letters, accompanied by more white, black and matching cloth colours, emphasise a modern approach that reflects the magazine's change of themes as well. This hypothesis is supported by Hansen and Machin (2019) who note that sans serif fonts suggest a mechanical approach that tends to be more noticeable by the viewer and is hence more successful in the distribution of themes. From this point it can be argued that the readership has changed as well to a more fashion and sports caring male reader and the magazine tries to address them through those choices. However, the font and colour choice therefore prove to be highly selected and curated in order to produce and represent a certain meaning. It is also acknowledged by Nick Lacey (1998) who is aware of the fact that fonts anchor meaning as well because they indicate a certain genre of the magazine and set it in a particular context to address a very specific readership. As a consequence, it catches the reader's attention which makes them more receptive for the dissemination of stereotypical themes but also for thematic changes.

#### **4.5 Identification of changed portrayals**

To identify whether or not the portrayals have changed over time, the analyses from the previous sections will now be taken into account in order to be able to make strong inferences about this objective. First of all, changes in portrayals could not be detected in the depiction of non-binary models which means that the magazines still choose to portray binary genders only instead of offering a diverse range of genders to the audience. However, within this binary gender spectrum some changes occurred in terms of the depiction of ethnicities for males and females and age differences for female models as they tend to be younger today in terms of their age than in the past.

Comparing both analysed years with each other you can argue that in 2015 female models were overall depicted as happy and likeable in Cosmopolitan alongside with signs of female nudity that can be seen as an objectification of the female body. Additionally, the models stroked poses that convey a certain vulnerability and timidity and therefore cause the effect that those characteristics are ascribed to women and femininity. This stereotypical portrayal has changed over time as the year 2023 reveals because the depiction of female models is more neutral or has even changed to a body language that transports stability and confidence.

What is contradictory is that Cosmopolitan in particular as a magazine with female models only uses standardised hair colours and changed the hair appearance from different hair types to long hair. However, in this context it is necessary to mention that previous scholars like Azalee Maslow (2015) were able to reveal a trend in the Cosmopolitan magazine in the 2010s where the models were depicted with either a medium hair length or short hair which also indicates a cultural change during this time period. On the other hand it is striking that

the magazine nowadays obviously reinvents an old ideal where female beauty is linked to long hair because it is seen as part of the cultural definition of femininity because long hair is even defined as “irrefutably feminine” (Synnott, 1987, p.384) and considered to be a status symbol. Hence the reinvention of an ideal is supported by the findings that all female models used make-up in both years and wore particular accessories and dress styles such as skirts, high heels or finger rings. Consequently, it proves that less changes have occurred in terms of those variables which shows that the models are presented in a very feminine way and creates a stereotype through a cultural construction that strengthens a traditional female gender representation which is acknowledged by Judith Butler (1990) as well, elaborated in the literature review. She states that gender is culturally constructed and notes that the body in relation to a certain gender represents a sexed surface, in this case through the use of make-up, the dress styles or even through standardised hair appearances for instance.

While some changes could be noticed for female models in terms of their characteristics, a comparison of the depiction of male models discloses that they are still shown as agent and confident, without any overt make-up and are presented by poses that taking up space and show signs of confidence. In connection, they are in both years depicted with suits, shirts and blazers which indicates that few changes have occurred in the portrayal of males with regard to those aspects. It proves that there is a very strong male stereotype that remains stable and still connects status, physical power and agency with masculinity. In this context it deserves mention that previous researchers like Goddard (2000) have found out that this particular kind of masculinity is linked to men’s perception of what they think women expect of them and should be seen in relation to the fact that even female models in GQ as a male magazine are depicted as more agent and confident than in Cosmopolitan. However, all male

models have shown a wide range of hair appearances which disproves that this aspect contributes to a stereotype as there were many changes.

Setting those results in relation the use of themes on the covers it can be argued that over time the symbolic role of the model has decreased, and a higher focus is put on the context in which the model takes places in relation to the themes. Although the study was able to reveal these findings, changes of portrayals could not be disclosed in terms of the use of themes in Cosmopolitan as there is an increase in themes dealing with emotional characteristics which supports the above presented findings. As a consequence, women are still linked to emotionality and personality skills. However, through changes in design for Cosmopolitan the used fonts in 2023 contribute to a better visual experience and make the themes more accessible for the audience. It can be outlined that changes in design occurred, among other aspects, with regard to the fact that print magazines are competing with digital magazine outlets today. This is because print magazines have a fixed structure while digital platforms offer the possibility “to move through an article in any of a number of ways” (Eveland and Dunwoody, 2002, p.36) which pressures the print magazines to create a good visual and reading experience.

A minor change has been noted in themes covered in GQ. While in 2015 the magazine mostly dealt with success, they also covered sports and fashion in 2023 which ascribes fashion awareness to the male sex. However, the theme ‘success’ was not only depicted in a conventional business context but rather carried out in combination with words like “upgrade”, “winner” or phrases like “it’s tough at the top”. Additionally, the coverage of sports in the recent year was presented in a very positive and winning way through words such as “unstoppable” or “rogue king” and it is hence noticeable that one analysed

magazine of GQ was overall dedicated to sports and has been announced as an annual sports issue. Even changes in the font design underline a more modern approach connected to those new themes. Nevertheless, the fact that both magazines lack in terms of changed themes outlines a tendency of framing that establishes stereotypes towards both genders.

Another aspect that will be considered in connection with the themes is the angle. As pointed out, the angles in both magazines did not change much which shows that the chosen eye-level angle directly communicates with the audience and creates a connection with the model and the covered themes. This illustrates the power of angles which address the viewer because the eye-level demands engagement and ensures that the audience is more receptive and that they can understand the themes easily.

All in all it can be ascertained that the portrayals of men and women within the content analysis have changed in some aspects regarding the settings or poses of the models for example. By focusing on other visual characteristics in contrast the study was able to investigate that for some variables, such as the use of make-up and the gender of the models, less changes have occurred and the fostering of a stereotypical portrayal could be detected, especially for females. To place these findings and analyses in the overall context of this study, conclusions are drawn in the next chapter alongside with some recommendations for future research that might be conducted or undertaken.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

Over the last decades, the modern western media has always been invested in the creation of stereotypes of men and women through a certain depiction of those two genders, including gender roles, dress styles and characteristics. As acknowledged by Berger (1972) these portrayals are deeply embedded in western cultures and affect the way people see things through certain learned assumptions. Fashion magazines in particular have contributed to the fostering of a held and fixed image of what is considered to be male and female. In other words, women continued to be acknowledged as more communal and men are characterised as more agentic, according to Haines *et al.* (2016). However, miscellaneous scholars like Eagly *et al.* (2019) or Tyler (2001) have detected some changes in stereotypes and the depiction of models on magazine covers. Upon intensifying the research of the topic of stereotypical portrayals in fashion magazines the following research objective arose:

*How do stereotypical portrayals of men and women in various fashion magazines have changed?*

To find a substantial answer to this question, the methodology that has proven to be the most useful tool is a content analysis as proposed by Hansen and Machin (2019). Regarding the fact that a content analysis can be applied to texts and images equally it has been chosen in order to be able to conduct a sufficient analysis that will provide information in relation to the overarching objective. Therefore, aspects for an analysis of semiotics and visual materials have been taken into account as well as suggested by Gillian Rose (2016) who focuses on content analysis for images.

After that, different research questions have been set based on the objective of the entire study to make strong inferences about the portrayals of men and women through images and texts. Thus, the research questions are:

1. Who appears on the covers?
2. How is the visual appearance of the models?
3. From what angle is the photo shot?
4. What linguistic elements are used on the covers besides the photograph?
5. Have the portrayals changed over time?

By answering them, two magazines to be analysed have been chosen in advance, GQ and Cosmopolitan, because the research revealed that these magazines are highly appropriate pieces of media and well suited for this study. Moreover, a time period of eight years has been selected, 2015 and 2023, to investigate potential changes during a long period that is current at the same time. Between those variables, eight magazines have been analysed in total by a random sample method in accordance with defined analytical categories (see table 3.1), a codebook (see Appendix 1) and a created coding schedule (see Appendix 2). However, before the content analysis could be conducted in Microsoft Excel properly, it has been pilot tested to ensure its reliability for the study.

### **5.1 Key findings**

The examination of the content analysis revealed that during a period of eight years, no particular frequency of words and phrases could be detected although the analysis uncovered the treatment of stereotypical male and female themes. Hence in 2015 Cosmopolitan mostly focused on topics dealing with emotional characteristics (n=6) and

other themes (n=8) while they increased them in 2023. GQ overall covered other themes (n=13) in the past and changed to a higher focus on themes dealing with success (n=3), fashion (n=2) and sports (n=2).

Occurring stereotypes have also been investigated in the depiction of different genders. Both magazines either portrayed male or female models and failed to show any signs of models that can be considered to be non-binary while females showed significant signs of make-up and males did not. This goes along with the findings that male nudity could not be revealed within the analysis and female nudity has been uncovered in 60% of magazines that depicted women. Even the uses of accessories and dress styles have proven to portray a very stereotypical feminine and masculine style of men and women in both analysed years through the use of finger rings and skirts or high heels for women for example and the fitting of suits, shirts or blazers for men. Changes in this context have been detected in terms of the models' skin colour and ages as Cosmopolitan for example changed from middle aged models (100%) to young adult models (100%). Furthermore, the facial expressions and gestures differed in both years. Female models in Cosmopolitan have been portrayed smiling (n=2) with their hands on the hips (n=2) and male models with a confident expression (n=2) and other gestures (n=2) in 2015 whereas in 2023 Cosmopolitan changed to a confident expression as well with multiple gestures and GQ only supplemented the expression by a serious expression with other gestures or no gestures.

Considering the entire setting of the image, including the fonts and background colours, it can be noted that the models were overall placed in the foreground with overlapping elements in both analysed years and magazines. While the camera angle revealed a level shot (100%) in 2015 for all magazines and for Cosmopolitan in 2023, GQ made use of level

and low angle shots in the recent year. The angle was supported in both magazines by either a medium shot, a medium close-up or a long shot. Talking about the fonts, in 2015 Cosmopolitan predominantly used black, straight and sans serif fonts with more colours added in 2023. GQ in contrast made use of straight and serif fonts in 2015 that were mostly in white or matching with the cloth colour and increased them to 60% in 2023, accompanying by a use of sans serif and straight fonts (100%) with a higher number of capital letters. Within the setting, the used background colours firstly revealed a 100% use of monochrome and white backgrounds for the Cosmopolitan magazine in 2015 and suggested changes as there could be more backgrounds detected with multiple colours. Contrarily, GQ used a wider range of colour pallets for their backgrounds in 2015 and still did it in 2023.

## **5.2 Recommendations and potential areas for future research**

Regarding the fact that this study contains a relatively small sample of magazines, future researchers are encouraged to widen the scale of magazines within this time period in order to be able to make more precise interferences about the objective. However, due to the fact that this might be time consuming, the researchers should ensure that they have sufficient time to conduct the content analysis for a bigger amount of magazines. That is also the reason why the choice of a smaller sample size in this piece of research was made with regard to the limited amount of time.

Other possible areas for further study can include an elaboration on what influences the covers and portrayals of men and women have to a young audience and whether or not they are significantly affected by them. With the fact in mind that young adults are still in an educational learning process this examination would be able to provide information about the fostering of stereotypes within society. Hence an age bracket between 20-25 is

recommended because it fits into the target audience of the chosen fashion magazines as they consist, among others, of the Gen Z (Hearst UK, n.d.). Additionally, the demographics of Gen Z are characterised by people that were born between 1997 and 2012 according to Eldridge (2024) which justifies the inclusion of this age bracket. To offer the possibility to draw strong conclusions for this area of research, scholars are emboldened to conduct interviews with people of these ages. Nevertheless, they need to be aware that interviews demand the participation of human beings. Therefore, ethical guidelines need to be maintained throughout the entire process and ethical approval needs to be applied.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Codebook

#### **1. For all fashion magazines:**

A magazine cover is a front cover on a magazine either physically or online.

Every front cover which has a model on it must be coded.

Do not code feature articles, advertisements and other content pages.

For consistency, magazines that cannot be identified as fashion magazines are not to be coded.

There is no minimum size of an item in order to be considered as a front cover.

If a cover is intended to continue on the back cover as well, only the front cover is to be coded.

#### **2. Coding scheme:**

Table 1 shows the list of variables/categories that are considered for annotating stereotypical portrayals of men and women in fashion magazines.

**Table 1.** Categories along with their IDs

<b>ID</b>	<b>Category/Sub-category</b>
<b>01</b>	Medium
<b>02</b>	Date
<b>03</b>	Position within the medium
<b>04</b>	Genre classification
<b>05</b>	Gender
<b>06</b>	Age
<b>07</b>	Skin colour
<b>08</b>	Body type
<b>09</b>	Gaze of person(s) photographed
<b>10</b>	Gestures
<b>11</b>	Body pose
<b>12</b>	Facial expression
<b>13</b>	Camera angle
<b>14</b>	Distance

15	Setting
16	Group size
17	Male nudity
18	Female nudity
19	Model's use of accessories
20	Dress style
21	Cloth colour
22	Background colour
23	Model's use of make-up/cosmetics
24	Male hair appearance
25	Female hair appearance
26	Non-binary hair appearance
27	Male hair colour
28	Female hair colour
29	Non-binary hair colour
30	Font style
31	Font colour
32	Themes
33	Frequency of words

### **3. Descriptions/explanations**

#### **V0. Coder ID**

The coder ID shall identify the researcher who undertakes the coding.

01 Philipp Baumhöfner

02 Other\*

(\*any other researcher who wants to undertake this coding needs to be identified)

#### **V1. Medium**

The coder shall identify the type of magazine he/she chose for analysis. Therefore the coder needs to choose between one of the following categories:

01. Cosmopolitan

02. GQ

#### **V2. Date**

A code must be applied to the month and year of the publication date. Therefore, the first variable represents the month in which the magazine was published. In this case it ranges from 01-12, so if the month was May for example, the code would be 05. The second variable represents the year. Regarding the fact that the study focuses on magazine covers from 2015 and 2023, the code will be either 15 or 23 on every occasion.

### **V3. Position within the medium**

Only front covers are to be coded. The coder needs to assign a number to each magazine cover that is to be coded. The number must run in ascending order. Consequently, every magazine cover has an identification number to which the coder has to refer throughout the study.

### **V4. Genre classification**

Only front covers are to be coded that are depicted in a magazine the coder considers as a fashion magazine or is characterised as such by the magazine itself. This contains magazines like GQ, Cosmopolitan, Vogue or Harper's Bazar. Other magazines like lifestyle or current affairs magazines are to be excluded from this study under all circumstances.

### **V5. Gender**

A magazine cover shall be classified under this category if it explicitly depicts/portrays a model. If this is maintained the coder has to categorise it into one of the following categories:

V5a. Male: the visuals clearly indicate that a man is portrayed.

V5b. Female: the visuals clearly indicate that a woman is portrayed.

V5c. Non-binary: the visuals of the person portrayed cannot clearly identified or appear to be a mixture of both sexes.

→ The coder has to choose the most specific category and has to categorise each model.

### **V6. Age**

A magazine cover shall be classified under this category if it portrays a model and needs to be assigned to one of the following conditions:

V6a. Teen: the model is aged between 13-19.

V6b. Young adult: the model is aged between 20-35.

V6c. Middle aged: the model is aged between 36-60.

V6d. Elderly: the model is aged from 60 onwards.

→ To clearly classify the model to one category, the coder needs to research the model's age on the image only if it is a celebrity and can easily be researched. For example an actor/actress or singer. If the model is unknown and cannot be researched the coder has to exclude this category to avoid any personal bias and wrong conclusions.

### **V7. Skin colour**

The coder needs to assign the image of a magazine cover to this category if it portrays a model and needs to categorise it to one of the following conditions:

V7a. Light: the model appears to have pale skin to faire skin.

V7b. Medium: the model appears to have a medium skin.

V7c. Naturally brown: the model appears to have a light brown skin.

V7d. Very dark brown/black: the model appears to have very dark brown to black skin.

Always choose the most specific category.

### **V8. Body type**

The coder has to classify the image of a magazine cover under this category if it portrays a model and has to categorise it into one of the following categories:

V8a. Slim: a model that appears to be slight in build and structure and/or thin.

V8b. Muscular: a model that shows significant signs of muscles, such as a sixpack, trained upper arms and breast or thighs.

V8c. Average: a model that does not show any signs of muscles but also does not appear as slim or overweight.

V8d. Overweight: a model that appears to fall into the curvy range and appears to be above a weight considered normal within the fashion industry. To give an example for a better understanding, famous overweight models are Ashley Graham or Sarina Nowak. If possible, the coder shall check the BMA of the model to ensure a higher precision.

➔ The coder has to choose the most specific category.

#### **V9. Gaze of person(s) photographed**

The coder has to classify the image of a magazine cover under one of the following categories if it portrays a model:

V9a. The person in the image is looking directly into the camera.

V9b. The person in the image is looking at another person.

V9c. The person in the image is looking off the edge of the frame

V9d. The person in the image is looking into the camera even though the head is (slightly) turned to the side.

#### **V10. Gestures**

The coder needs to assign the image of a magazine cover to this category, if a symbolic hand movement from the model can be identified. After that, he/she has to specify the movement by choosing from the following sub-categories:

V10a. The model is running a hand through the hair.

V10b. The model has a hand/the hands on the hips.

V10c. The model has a hand on/besides the mouth.

V10d. The model is holding something.

V10e. The mode has their arm(s) down.

V10f. The model rests her face on one hand.

V10g. The model shows a fist.

V10h. The model does not show any signs of gestures

V10i. Other

### **V11. Body pose**

The coder needs to analyse the pose of the model who is portrayed on the magazine cover. This includes the following categories:

V11a. Pose taking up space

V11b. Pose space limited,

V11c. Hands on hips pose (both hands)

V11d. Arms crossed pose

V11e. Relaxed pose

V11f. Legs crossed pose

V11g. Stance standing

V11h. Stance sitting

V11i. Stance reclining

V11j. Stance kneeling

V11k. Other stances

V11l. Body language open,

V11m. Body language closed

V11n. Body language confident\*

V11o. Body language submissive

V11p. Other body languages

(\*confidence in this context is maintained, if the depicted person on the image has a pose that takes up space, alongside with uncrossed arms and a standing stance. In other words, the variables V11a and V11g need to be chosen at least before this variable can be selected.)

➔ The coder shall choose one category for each pose, stance and body language.

That means one category out of V11a-V11f, V11g-V11k and V11l-V11p. If the coder can identify more than one category of those three sub-categories, he/she shall choose the most specific one.

## **V12. Facial expression**

The coder needs to identify the facial expression of the model depicted in the image.

Therefore, the coder needs to assign it to one of the following categories:

V12a. The model is smiling.

V12b. The model is looking serious.

V12c. The model is looking neutral

V12d. The model has their mouth slightly open.

V12e. The model is shouting.

V12f. The model is winking.

V12g. The model has a confident expression\*

V12h. Other

(\*a confident expression is maintained, if the depicted person in the image is making eye contact with the viewer and he/she is keeping the chin slightly up, along with either a serious or neutral expression. In other words, the variables V12b or V12c need to be chosen before this variable can be selected.)

➔ The coder is allowed to choose between one and two categories.

### **V13. Camera angle**

The coder has to classify a magazine cover under one of the following categories only if the cover consists of an image that contains subjects and/or objects. For clarification: The angle refers to the camera's angle in relation to the vertical.

V13a. Low angle: the camera is positioned below the subject's eye line, looking upward.

V13b. High angle: the camera is positioned above the subject's eye line, looking downward.

V13c. Level shot: the point of view is set at the eye level of the subject being captured

### **V14. Distance**

The coder has to classify a magazine cover under one of the following categories only if the cover consists of an image that contains subjects and/or objects.

V14a. Landscape: shows the full body of the model including the entire scenery.

V14b. Long shot: the whole body of the subject is within the frame, from head to toe, along with some of the surrounding scenery.

V14c. Medium: the body of the subject is shown from their head to the upper legs.

V14d. Medium close-up: the body of the subject is shown from their head to the top of their chest.

V14e. Close-up: the subject is shown from their forehead to the chin and must show the mouth.

V14f. Extreme close-up: the subject is framed as close as possible, capturing only specific details of a whole. Example: the image only shows the subject from the eyes to the nose.

### **V15. Setting**

The coder has to classify a magazine cover to the following categories if the cover consists of an image that contains subjects.

V15a. Subject placed in the foreground

V15b. Subject placed in the background

V15c. Objects placed besides the subject (no fonts, just real objects)

V15d. Overlapping\*

(\*placing elements in front of others; may include both objects and fonts)

For comprehensibility the coder shall not choose more than two categories. If there are more than two categories he/she shall choose the most specific ones.

### **V16. Group size**

How many people/models are depicted on the image? To make interferences, the coder needs to apply the image to one of the following categories:

V16a. One person

V16b. Two or more persons

**V17. Male nudity**

The coder needs to classify the image of a magazine cover to this category if the model on the image shows significant amounts of nudity and skin. He/she shall only choose this category if V5a. has been chosen in advance.

Example: A male model is portrayed with his upper body free of clothes; A male model is showing off his upper arms through a singlet.

**V18. Female nudity**

The coder needs to classify the image of a magazine cover to this category if the model on the image shows significant amounts of nudity and skin. He/she shall only choose this category if V5b. has been chosen in advance.

Example: The model shows a lot of cleavage; The model is portrayed bare-chested; the model shows their full legs.

**V19. Model's use of accessories**

What kind of accessories does the model have? The coder has to choose from the following categories only:

V19a. Necklaces

V19b. Bracelets

V19c. Earrings

V19d. Finger rings

V19e. Handbags

V19f. Gloves

V19g. Skin tattoos

➔ For those categories the coder is allowed to choose multiple categories but he/she shall not choose more than three categories to maintain comprehensibility and specificity.

**V20. Dress style**

The coder has to identify the dress style of the model depicted. Therefore he/she needs to assign the following dress styles to the model:

V20a. Dress

V20b. Skirt

V20c. Blazer

V20d. Suit

V20e. Tie

V20f. Top

V20g. Short pants

V20h. Singlet

V20i. Shoes

V20j. Jacket/Coat

V20k. Shirt

V20l. High heels

V20m. Others

➔ For those categories the coder is allowed to choose multiple categories but he/she shall not choose more than five categories to maintain comprehensibility and specificity.

### **V21. Cloth colour and appearance**

Document the colour of the clothes which the model is wearing on the image by choosing from the following categories. Focus on the most significant colour of the clothes.

V21a. White

V21b. Black

V21c. Striped

V21d. Patterned

V21e. Sequin

V21f. Blue (any blue tone)

V21g. Red (any red tone)

V21h. Mixed colours\*

V21i. Bright

V21j. Dark

V21k. Other

➔ The coder is allowed to choose several categories.

(\*the colours are mixed on one cloth or by a combination of the top cloth and the bottom cloth)

### **V22. Background colour**

Document the font colour that appears on the cover by choosing from the following categories:

V22a. White

V22b. Blue

V22c. Pink

V22d. Pastel

V22e. Grey

V22f. Green

V22g. Matching with the cloth colour\*

V22h. Matching with the font colour\*

V22i. Multi coloured

V22j. Monochrome

-> the coder is allowed to choose up to three categories.

(\*needs to be the same colour in a slightly different way)

### **V23. Model's use of make-up/cosmetics**

The coder needs to classify the following categories if the model depicted shows evidence of the use of make-up and/or cosmetics. Thus, the categories provide information about where on the body the make-up/cosmetics are used. The coder is allowed to choose from one to all categories in this case.

V23a. Face\*

V23b. Eyes

V23c. Eye brows

V23d. Lips

V23e. Nails

(\*make-up/cosmetic on the face skin)

### **V24. Male hair appearance**

The coder needs to classify from the following categories if he/she has chosen category V5a. in advance.

V24a. Long

V24b. Short

V24c. No hair

V24d. Hair is wavy

V24e. Hair is straight

V24f. Hair is curly

V24g. Facial hair

Example: if the man on the image has a beard but no hair on his head, the coder has to choose the categories V24c. and V24d.

➔ The coder is allowed to choose between one and three categories.

### **V25. Female hair appearance**

The coder needs to classify from the following categories if he/she has chosen category V5b. in advance.

V25a. Long

V25b. Short

V25c. No hair

V25d. Hair is wavy

V25e. Hair is straight

V25f. Hair is curly

Example: if the woman on the image has long curly hair, the coder has to choose the categories V25a. and V25f.

➔ The coder is allowed to choose between one and two categories.

### **V26. Non-binary hair appearance**

The coder needs to classify from the following categories if he/she has chosen category V5c. in advance.

V26a. Long

V26b. Short

V26c. No hair

V26d. Hair is wavy

V26e. Hair is straight

V26f. Hair is curly

V26g. Facial hair

Example: if the person on the image has short straight hair and a small beard, the coder has to choose the categories V26b., V26e. and V26g.

➔ The coder is allowed to choose between one and three categories.

### **V27. Male hair colour**

The coder needs to classify from the following categories if he/she has chosen category V5a. in advance.

V27a. Blonde

V27b. Brunette

V27c. Red

V27d. Black

V27e. Silver

V27f. Other

➔ The coder needs to choose one category only. If there are more than one possible, choose the most specific one.

Example: The model has blonde hair but shows little signs of brunette hair, the category to choose is V27a.

### **V28. Female hair colour**

The coder needs to classify from the following categories if he/she has chosen category V5b. in advance.

V28a. Blonde

V28b. Brunette

V28c. Red

V28d. Black

V28e. Silver

V28f. Other

➔ The coder needs to choose one category only. If there are more than one possible, choose the most specific one.

Example: The model has brunette hair but shows little signs of black hair, the category to choose is V28b.

### **V29. Non-binary hair colour**

The coder needs to classify from the following categories if he/she has chosen category V5c. in advance.

V29a. Blonde

V29b. Brunette

V29c. Red

V29d. Black

V29e. Silver

V29f. Other

➔ The coder needs to choose one category only. If there are more than one possible, choose the most specific one.

Example: If the model has blue hair, the category to choose is V29f.

### **V30. Font style**

Document the font styles that appear on the cover by choosing from the following categories:

V30a. Serif

V30b. Sans serif

V30c. Gothic

V30d. Handwritten style

V30e. Italic

V30f. Straight

V30g. All in capitals

V30h. Other

➔ The coder needs to do this per word and/or phrase and is allowed to choose up to three categories.

### **V31. Font colour**

Document the font colour that appears on the cover by choosing from the following categories:

V31a. White

V31b. Black

V31c. Matching with the background\*

V31d. Matching with the cloth colour\*

V31e. Blue

V31f. Pink

V31g. Other

(\*needs to be the same colour in a slightly different way)

### **V32. Themes**

The coder has to identify the themes that are covered on the front cover by choosing from the following categories:

V32a. Sexuality/sex

V32b. Agency/power

V32c. Beauty

V32d. Success

V32e. Relationships

V32f. Health

V32g. Wealth

V32h. Emotional characteristics (e.g. “the emotional stages of New Year’s Eve”; “We’ve been through so much together”; “Stop apologising”)

V32i. Dealing with the other sex

V32j. Dealing with clothes/fashion

V32k. Dealing with empowerment (e.g. “you can do this!”)

V32l. Dealing with sports

V32m. Dealing with household

V32n. Dealing with technology

V32o. Pregnancy

V32p. Dealing with conflicts/negativity

V32q. Other

→ The coder needs to do this per word or phrase.

### **V33. Frequency of words**

The coder has to document the frequency of words appearing on the cover by choosing from the following categories. He/she must do this per phrase and must assign the words within the phrase to those categories.

V33a. Queen

V33b. King

V33c. Sex

V33d. Ex

V33e. Cool

V33f. Good

V33g. Beauty

V33h. Underwear

V33i. Baby

V33j. Marriage

V33k. Breakup

V33l. Career

V33m. Boss

→ The word needs to be explicitly mentioned. Otherwise the coder cannot assign it to a category.

## Appendix 2: Coding schedule for images and texts (constructed in Microsoft Excel)

### Coding schedule for images:

Question	Answer
V0. Coder ID	01
	02 Other Please specify:
V1. Medium	01 Cosmopolitan
	02 GQ
V2. Date	Please specify here:
V3. Position within the medium	01 front cover
	02 other
V4. Genre classification	01 fashion magazine
	02 other
V5. Gender	V5a male
	V5b female
	V5c non-binary
V6. Age	V6a teen
	V6b young adult
	V6c middle aged

	V6d elderly
V7. Skin colour	V7a light
	V7b medium
	V7c naturally brown
	V7d very dark brown/black
V8. Body type	V8a slim
	V8b muscular
	V8c average
	V8d overweight
V9. Gaze of person(s) photographed	V9a direct looking into the camera
	V9b looking at another person
	V9c looking off the edge of the frame
	V9d looking into the camera with a (slightly) turned head
V10. Gestures	V10a running a hand through the hair
	V10b hand on the hips
	V10c hand on/besides the mouth
	V10d holding something
	V10e arms down
	V10f face rests on one hand
	V10g fist
	V10h no signs of gestures
	V10i other

V11. Body pose	V11a taking up space
	V11b space limited
	V11c hands on hips pose
	V11d arms crossed
	V11e relaxed
	V11f legs crossed
	V11g stance standing
	V11h stance sitting
	V11i stance reclining
	V11j stance kneeling
	V11k other stances
	V11l open body language
	V11m closed body language
	V11n confident body language
	V11o submissive body language
V11p other body languages	
V12. Facial expression	V12a smiling
	V12b looking serious
	V12c looking neutral
	V12d mouth is slightly open
	V12e shouting
	V12f winking
	V12g confident expression

	V12h other
V13. Camera angle	V13a low angle
	V13b high angle
	V13c level shot
V14. Distance	V14a landscape
	V14b long shot
	V14c medium
	V14d medium close-up
	V14e close-up
	V14f extreme close-up
V15. Setting	V15a subject in the foreground
	V15b subject in the background
	V15c objects besides the subject
	V15d overlapping
V16. Group size	V16a one person
	V16b two or more persons
V17. Male nudity	
V18. Female nudity	
V19. Model's use of accessories	V19a necklaces
	V19b bracelets
	V19c earrings
	V19d finger rings
	V19e handbags

	V19f gloves
	V19g skin tattoos
V20. Dress style	V20a dress
	V20b skirt
	V20c blazer
	V20d suit
	V20e tie
	V20f top
	V20g short pants
	V20h singlet
	V20i shoes
	V20j jacket/coat
	V20k shirt
	V20l high heels
	V20m other
V21. Cloth colour and appearance	V21a white
	V21b black
	V21c striped
	V21d patterned
	V21e sequin
	V21f blue
	V21g red
	V21h mixed colours

	V21i bright
	V21j dark
	V21k other
V22. Background colour	V22a white
	V22b blue
	V22c pink
	V22d pastel
	V22e grey
	V22f green
	V22g matching with cloth colour
	V22h matching with font colour
	V22i multi coloured
	V22j monochrome
V23. Model's use of make-up/cosmetics	V23a face
	V23b eyes
	V23c eye brows
	V23d lips
	V23e nails
V24. Male hair appearance	V24a long
	V24b short
	V24c no hair
	V24d wavy
	V24e straight

	V24f curly
	V24g facial hair
V25. Female hair appearance	V25a long
	V25b short
	V25c no hair
	V25d wavy
	V25e straight
	V25f curly
V26. Non-binary hair appearance	V26a long
	V26b short
	V26c no hair
	V26d wavy
	V26e straight
	V26f curly
	V26g facial hair
V27. Male hair colour	V27a blonde
	V27b brunette
	V27c red
	V27d black
	V27e silver
	V27f other
V28. Female hair colour	V28a blonde
	V28b brunette

	V28c red
	V28d black
	V28e silver
	V28f other
V29. Non-binary hair colour	V29a blonde
	V29b brunette
	V29c red
	V29d black
	V29e silver
	V29f other

**Coding schedule for texts:**

Question	Answer
V0. Coder ID	01
	02 Other Please specify:
V1. Medium	01 Cosmopolitan
	02 GQ
V2. Date	Please specify here:
V3. Position within the medium	01 front cover
	02 other
Words and phrases	Type in the word or phrase that is to be analysed here:

V30. Font style	V30a serif
	V30b sans serif
	V30c gothic
	V30d handwritten style
	V30e italic
	V30f straight
	V30g all in capitals
	V30h other
V31. Font colour	V31a white
	V31b black
	V31c matching with background
	V31d matching with cloth colour
	V31e blue
	V31f pink
	V31g other
V32. Themes	V32a sexuality/sex
	V32b agency/power
	V32c beauty
	V32d success
	V32e relationships
	V32f health
	V32g wealth
	V32h emotional characteristics

	V32i dealing with the other sex
	V32j clothes/fashion
	V32k empowerment
	V32l sports
	V32m household
	V32n technology
	V32o pregnancy
	V32p conflicts/negativity
	V32q other
V33. Frequency of words	V33a queen
	V33b king
	V33c sex
	V33d ex
	V33e cool
	V33f good
	V33g beauty
	V33h underwear
	V33i baby
	V33j marriage
	V33k breakup
	V33l career
	V33m boss

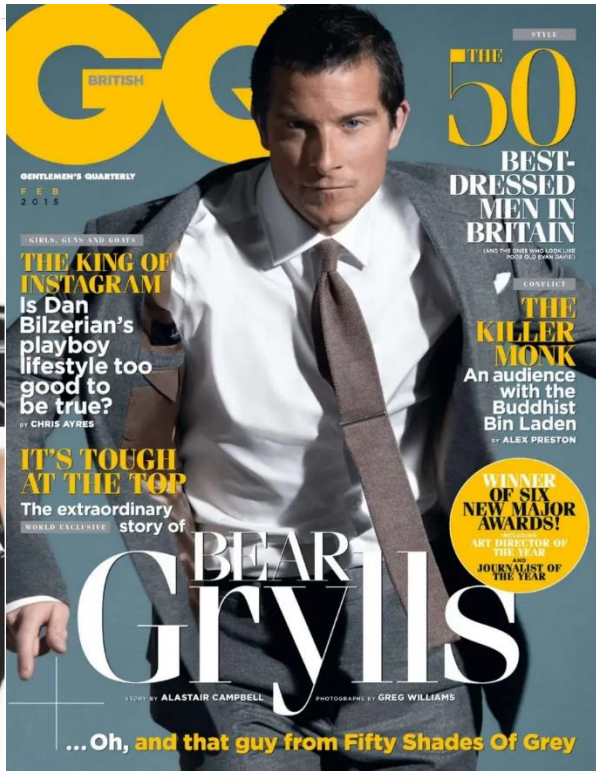
Appendix 3: Analysed covers



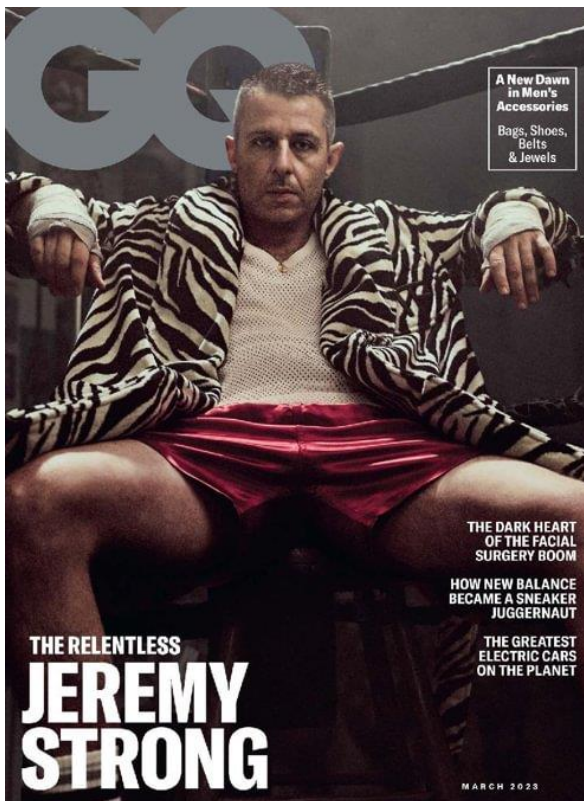
Cosmopolitan covers 2015 (March & August).



Cosmopolitan covers 2023 (June/July & October/November).



GQ covers 2015 (September & February).



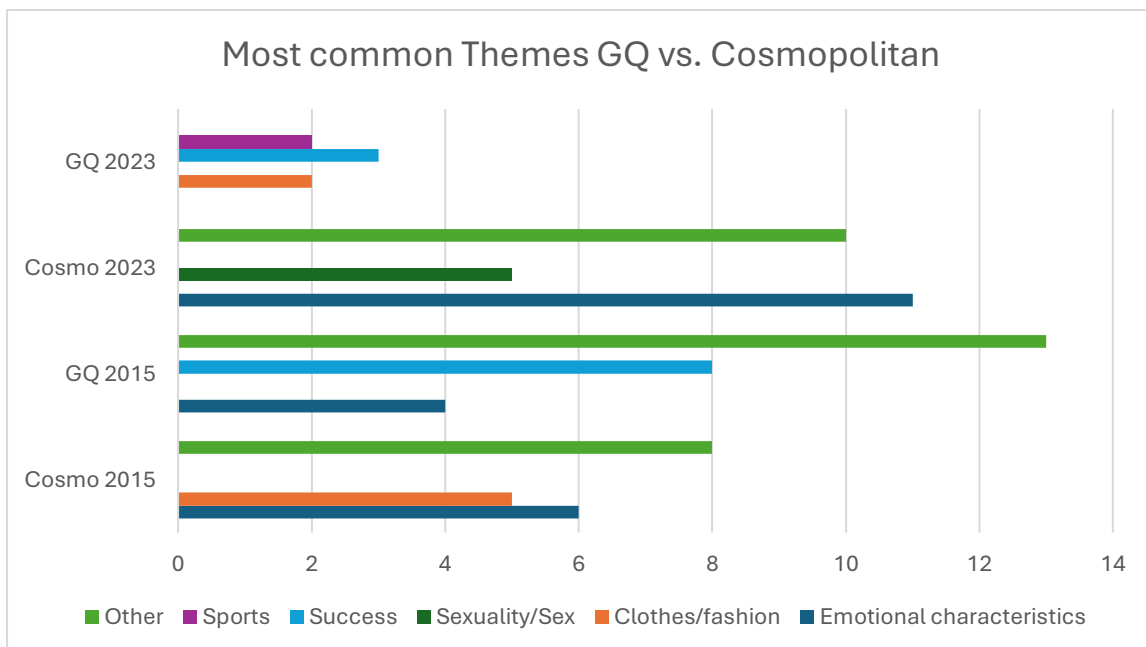
GQ covers 2023 (March & February).

#### Appendix 4: Coding categories

<b>01</b> Medium	<b>12</b> Facial expression	<b>23</b> Model's use of make-up/cosmetics
<b>02</b> Date	<b>13</b> Camera angle	<b>24</b> Male hair appearance
<b>03</b> Position within the medium	<b>14</b> Distance	<b>25</b> Female hair appearance
<b>04</b> Genre classification	<b>15</b> Setting	<b>26</b> Non-binary hair appearance
<b>05</b> Gender	<b>16</b> Group size	<b>27</b> Male hair colour
<b>06</b> Age	<b>17</b> Male nudity	<b>28</b> Female hair colour
<b>07</b> Skin colour	<b>18</b> Female nudity	<b>29</b> Non-binary colour
<b>08</b> Body type	<b>19</b> Model's use of accessories	<b>30</b> Font style
<b>09</b> Gaze of person(s) photographed	<b>20</b> Dress style	<b>31</b> Font colour
<b>10</b> Gestures	<b>21</b> Cloth colour	<b>32</b> Themes
<b>11</b> Body pose	<b>22</b> Background colour	<b>33</b> Frequency of words

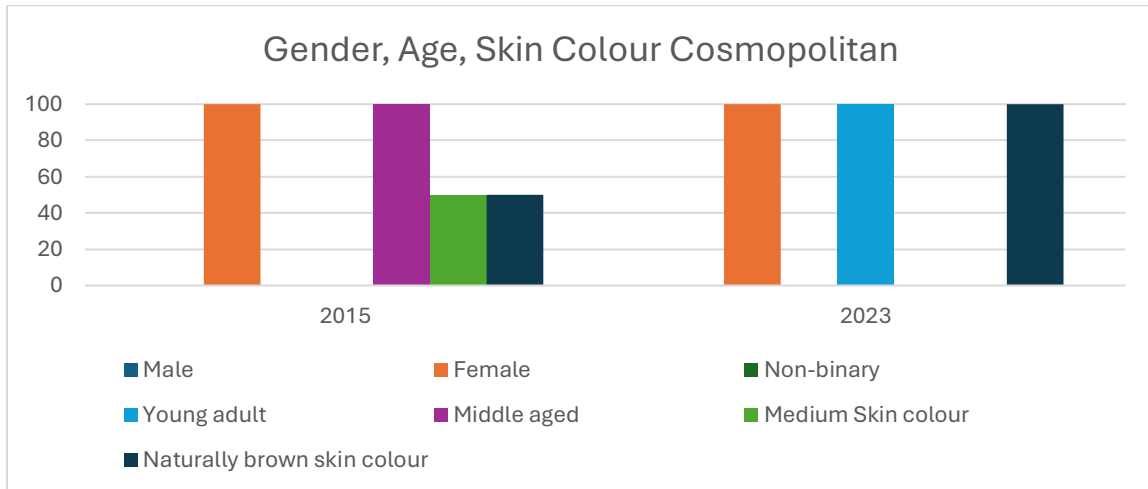
**Table 3.1:** Coding categories.

#### Appendix 5: Data results of themes

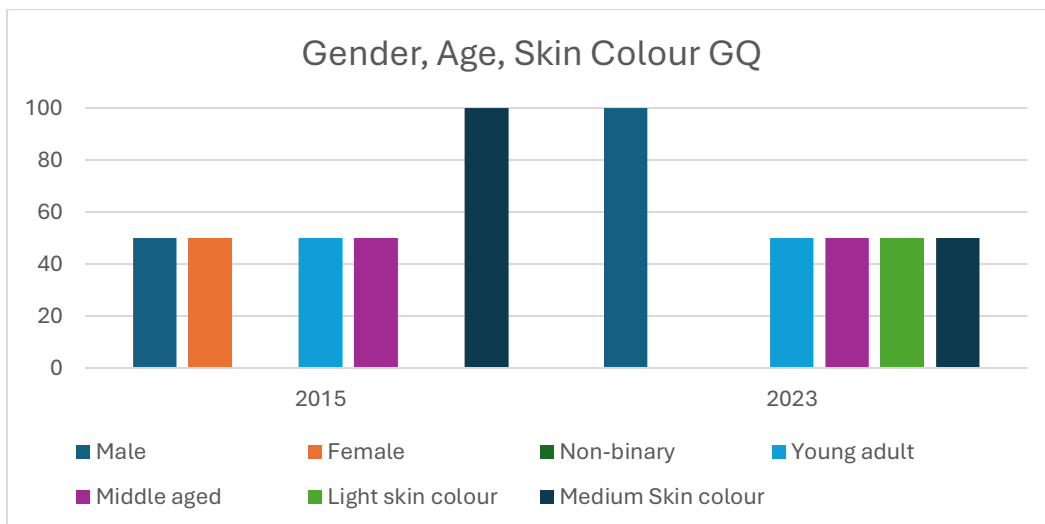


**Table 3.2:** Most common Themes GQ vs. Cosmopolitan.

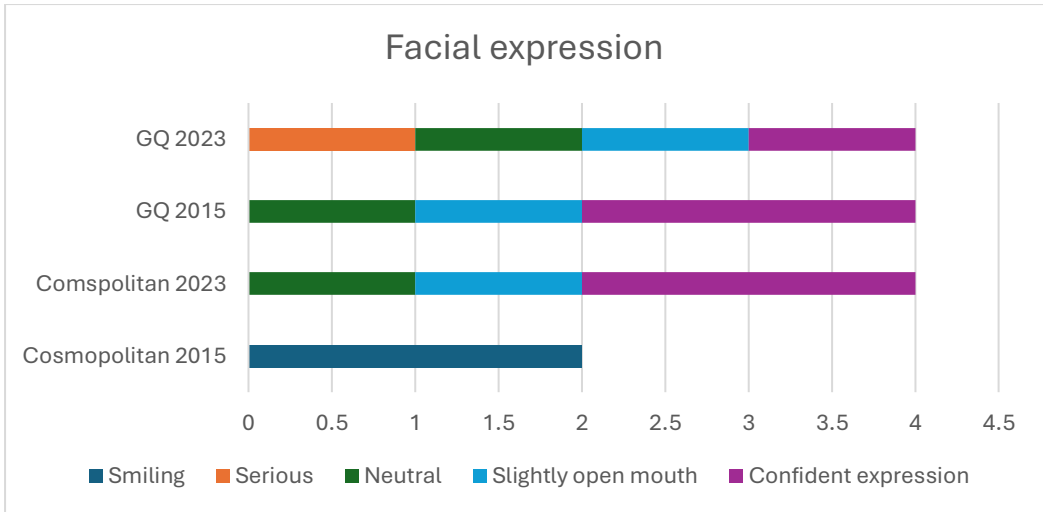
**Appendix 6: Data results of characteristics of the depicted model**



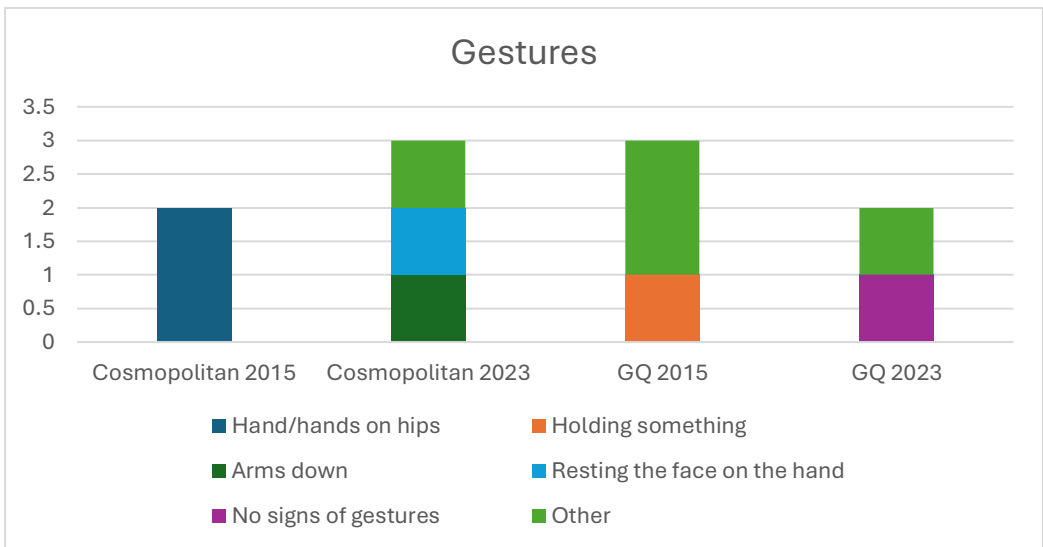
**Table 3.3:** *Gender, Age, Skin Colour Cosmopolitan.*



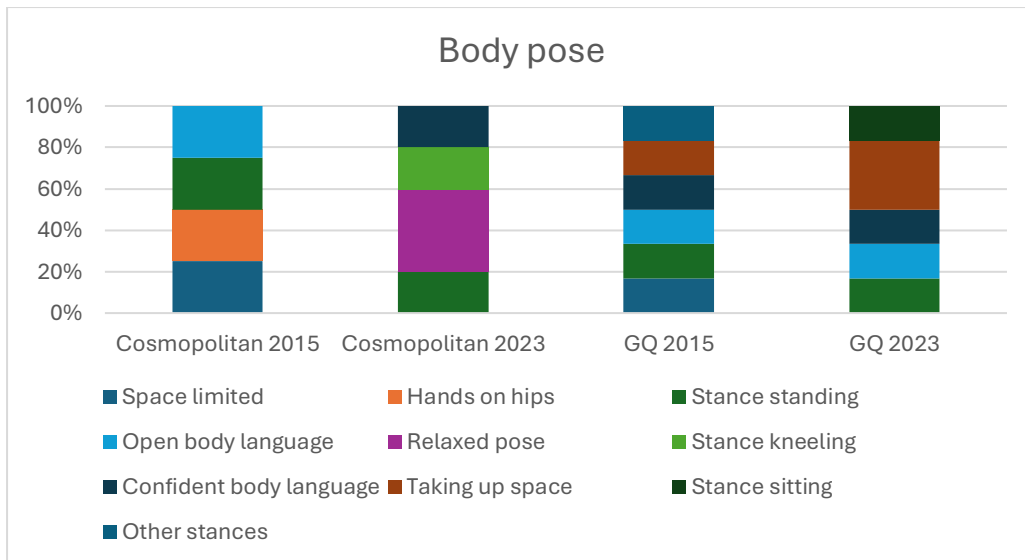
**Table 3.4:** *Gender, Age, Skin Colour GQ.*



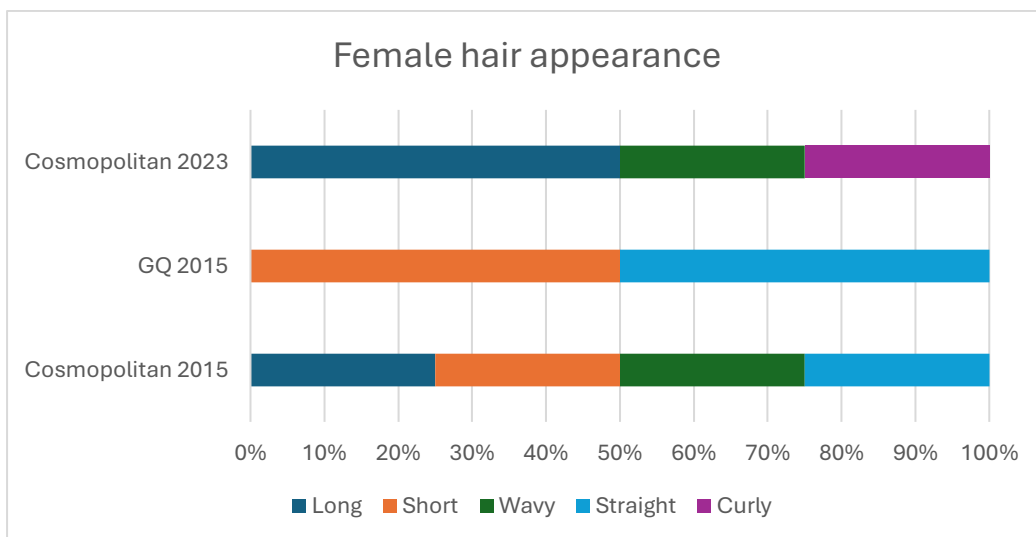
**Table 3.5:** Facial expression by year and magazine.



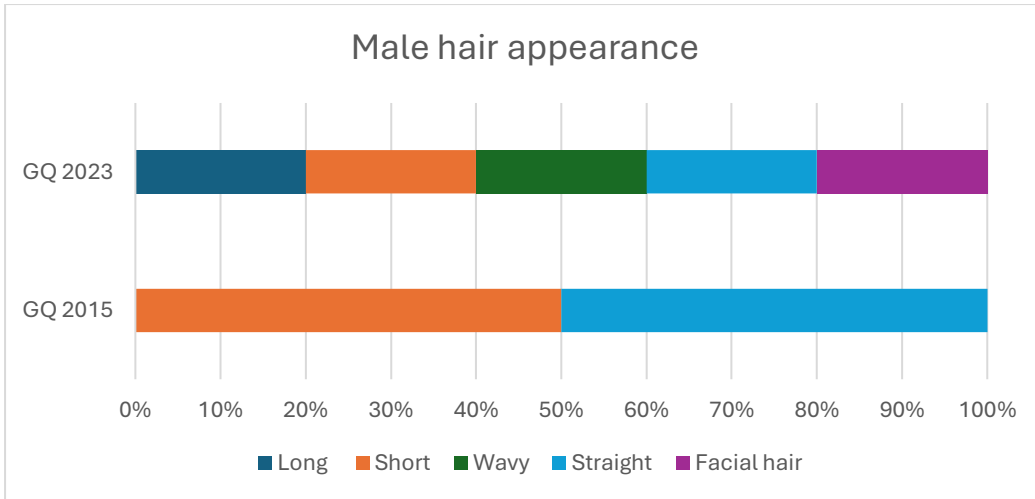
**Table 3.6:** Gestures by year and magazine.



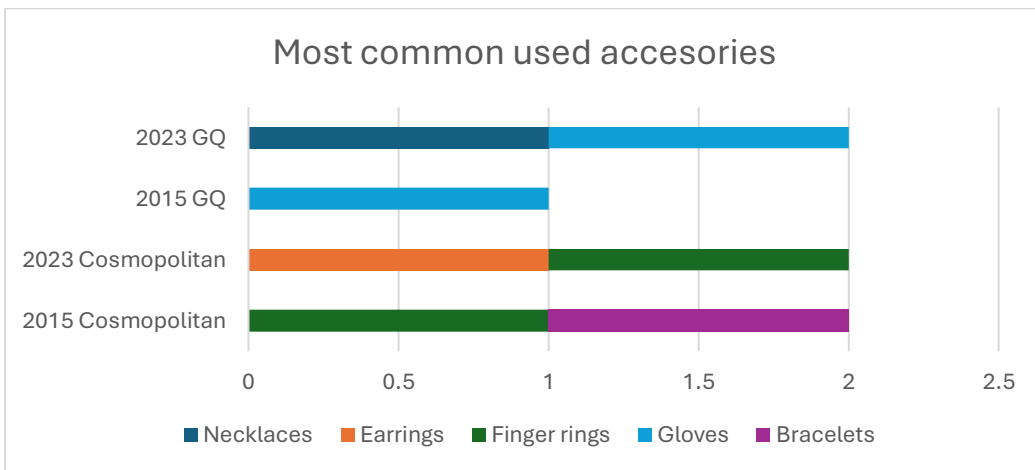
**Table 3.7:** *Body poses by year and magazine.*



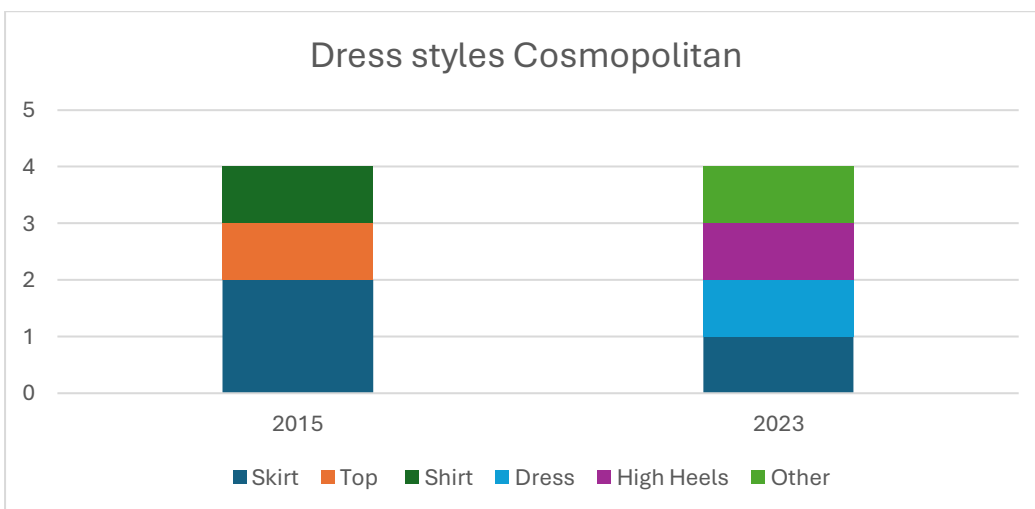
**Table 3.8:** *Female hair appearance.*



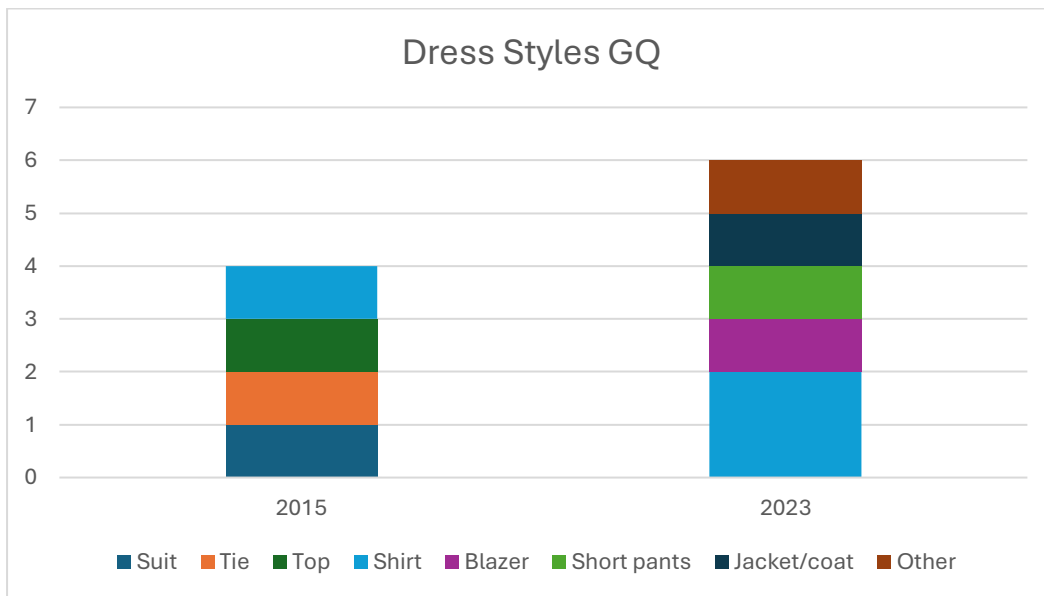
**Table 3.9:** Male hair appearance.



**Table 4.0:** Most common used accessories by year and magazine.

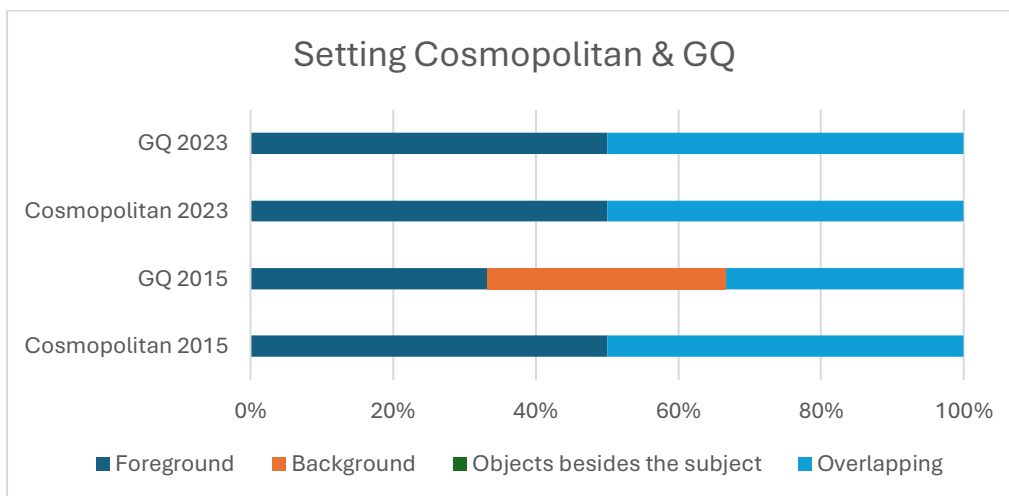


**Table 4.1:** Dress styles Cosmopolitan.

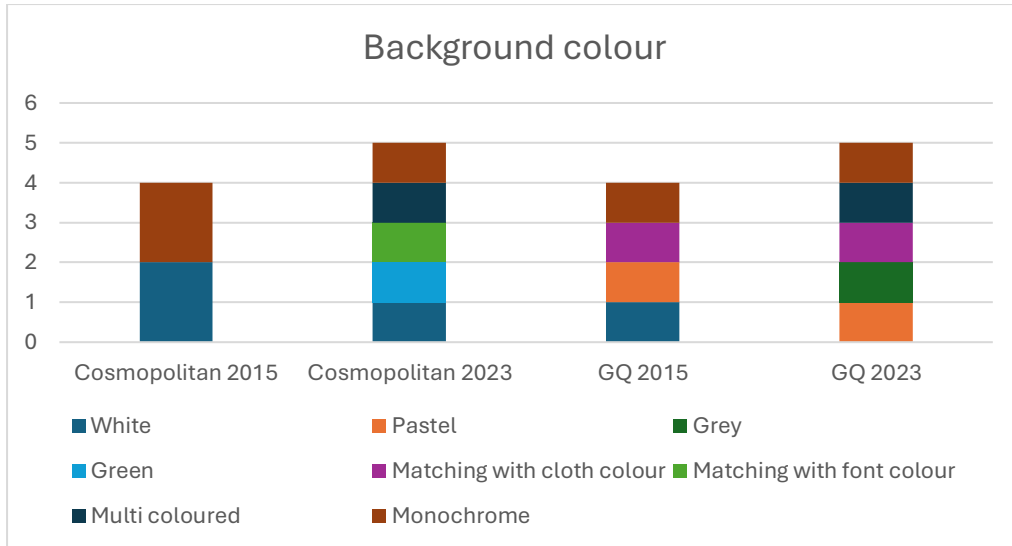


**Table 4.2:** Dress styles GQ.

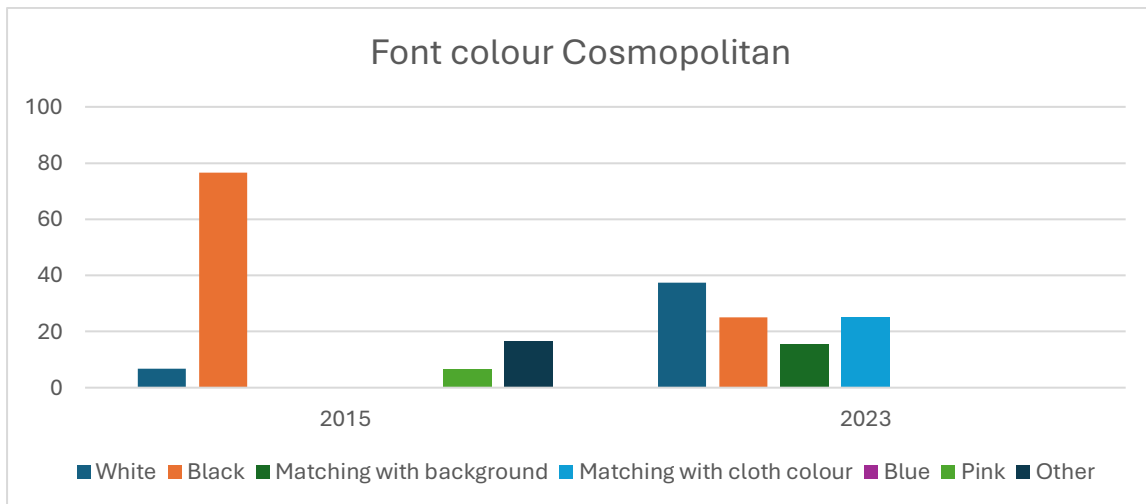
**Appendix 7: Data results of the setting and use of colours**



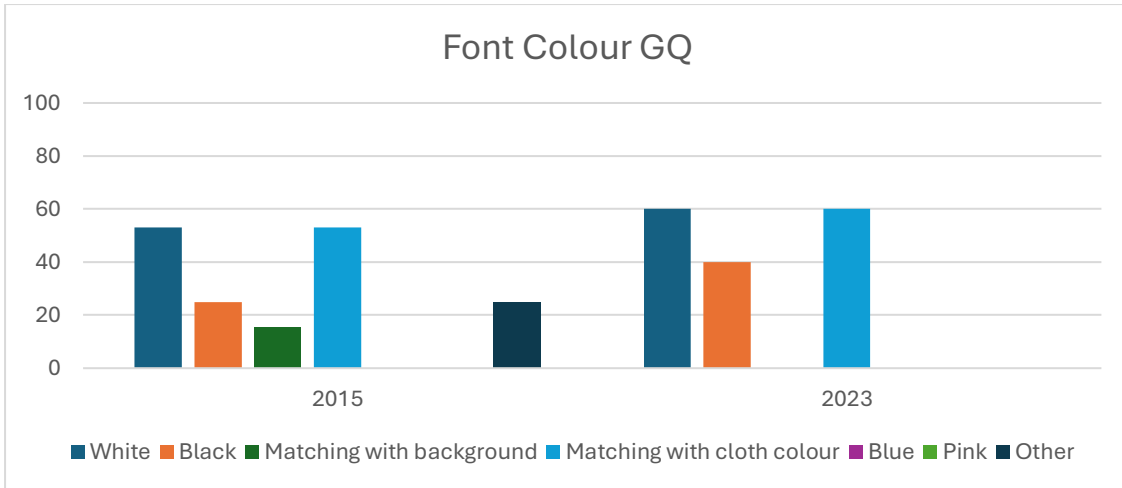
**Table 4.3:** Setting by year and magazine.



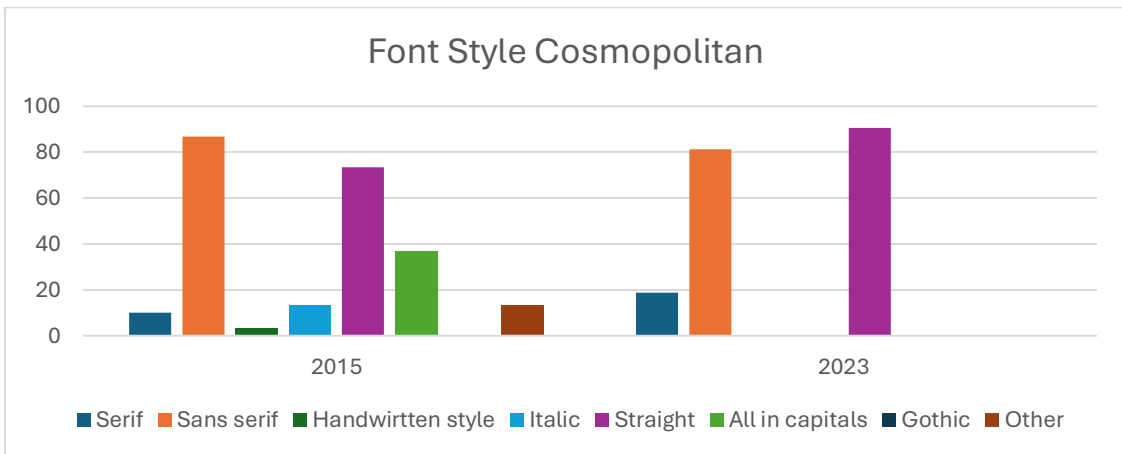
**Table 4.4:** Background colour by year and magazine.



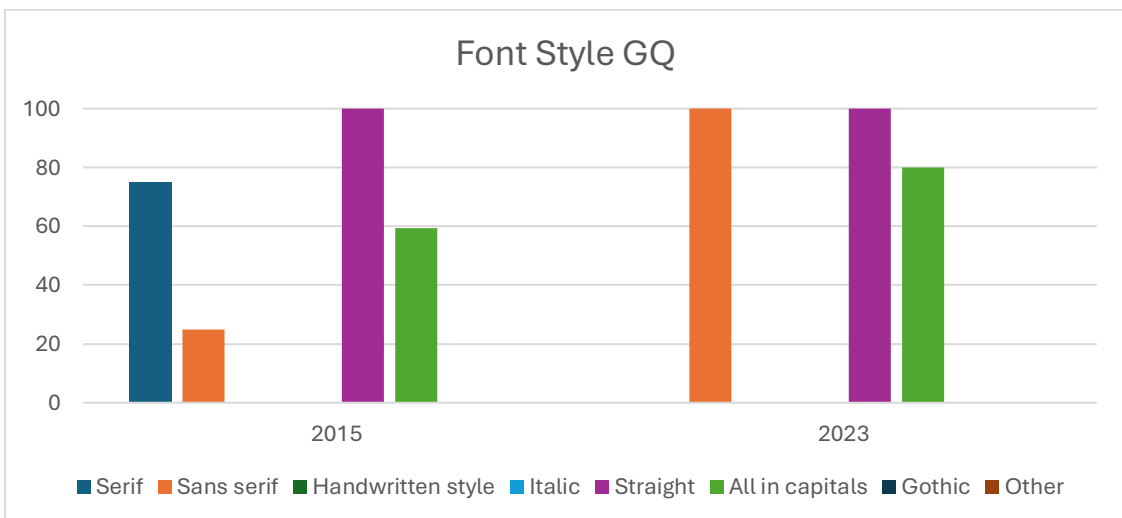
**Table 4.5:** Font colour Cosmopolitan.



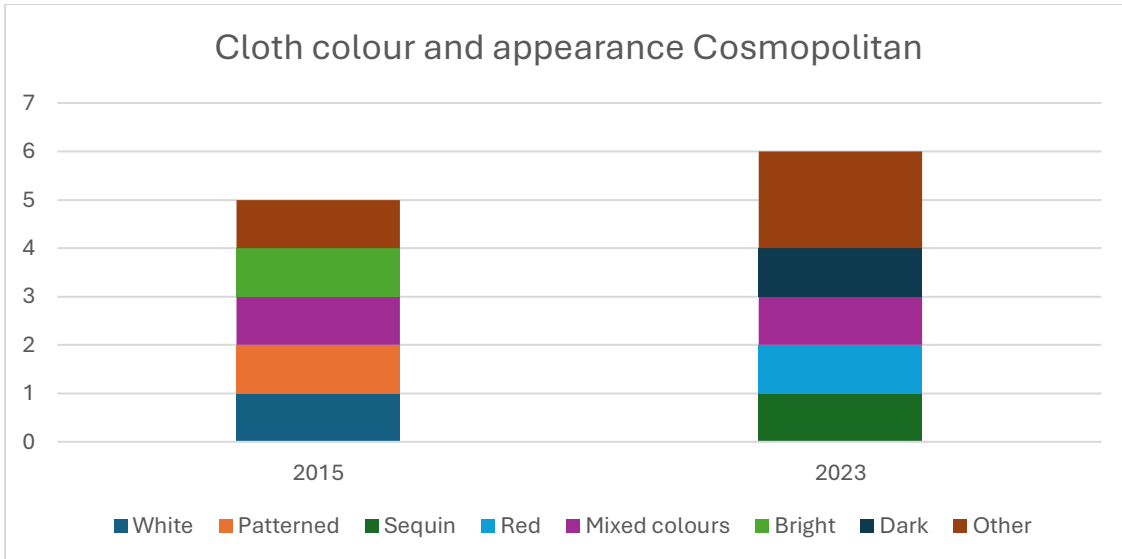
**Table 4.6:** *Font colour GQ.*



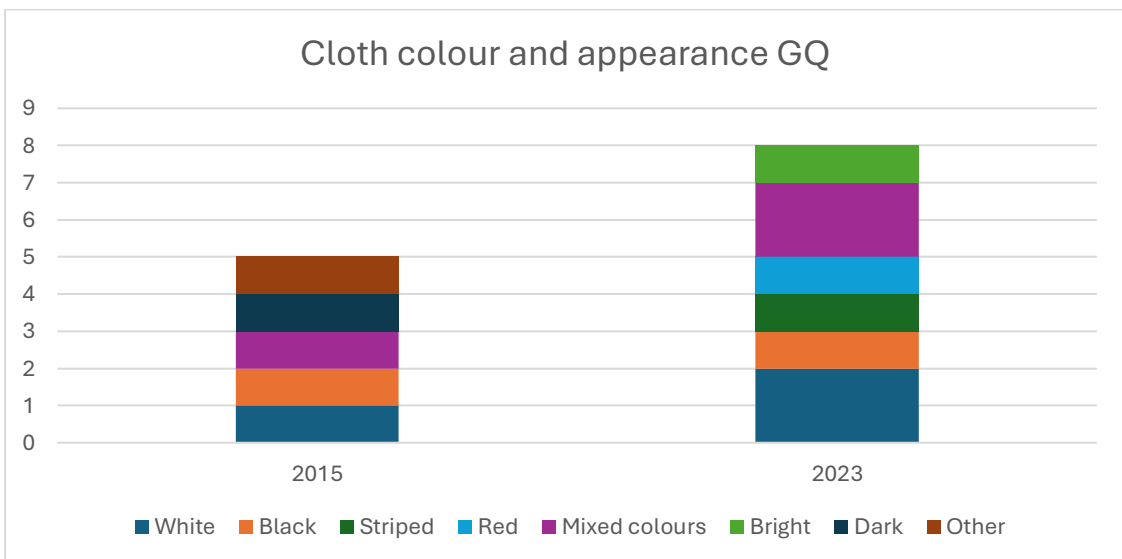
**Table 4.7:** *Font style Cosmopolitan.*



**Table 4.8:** *Font style GQ.*



**Table 4.9:** Cloth colour and appearance Cosmopolitan.



**Table 5.0:** Cloth colour and appearance GQ.