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Fashion and femininity: from local press to the digital age. A critical vision of its evolution, discourses, and tensions

Moda y feminidad: de la prensa local a la era digital. Una visión crítica de su evolución, discursos y tensiones

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Abstract

Fashion is a reflection of political, social, and cultural changes. Its study requires adapting analytical tools to each historical period. In this work, the objectives are divided into two phases: first, to reconstruct the discourse of fashion through a qualitative analysis of the local press during the Spanish Transition, identifying gender stereotypes and aesthetic pressures characteristic of that era; and second, to explore how the democratization of fashion, social media, and the rise of sustainability shape the current construction of femininity, through semi-structured interviews with actual experts in communication and fashion.

The results reveal the persistence of gender stereotypes, the popularization of fashion through influencers and social media, and the growing importance of sustainability and conscious consumption. Fashion emerges as a platform for identity, but it also faces significant challenges in the digital age in balancing ethical and sustainable practices. Although there have been advances in inclusion, aesthetic pressure remains strong, often fueled by the rapid spread of content on social media. In conclusion, although the discourse of fashion has evolved since the Transition period, it is crucial that it continues to adapt to cultural and technological changes.

Keywords

Gender stereotypes, femininity, fashion, conscious consumption, sustainability, social media.

Resumen
La moda es un reflejo de los cambios políticos, sociales y culturales. Su estudio exige adaptar las herramientas analíticas a cada época. En este trabajo, nuestros objetivos se dividen en dos fases: primero, reconstruir el discurso de la moda a partir de un análisis cualitativo de la prensa local de la Transición, identificando los estereotipos de género y las presiones estéticas propias de ese periodo y segundo, explorar cómo la democratización de la moda, las redes sociales y la emergencia de la sostenibilidad configuran hoy la construcción de la feminidad, mediante entrevistas semiestructuradas a expertas actuales en comunicación y moda. Los resultados reflejan la persistencia de estereotipos de género, la popularización de la moda gracias a influencers y redes sociales y la creciente relevancia de la sostenibilidad y el consumo consciente. La moda se erige como una plataforma de identidad, pero también se enfrenta a retos significativos en la era digital para equilibrar prácticas éticas y sostenibles. Aunque hay avances en inclusión, la presión estética sigue siendo fuerte, a menudo fomentada por la rápida difusión de contenido en redes sociales. En conclusión, aunque el discurso de la moda ha evolucionado desde la Transición, es crucial que siga adaptándose a los cambios culturales y tecnológicos.

Palabras clave
Estereotipos de género, feminidad, moda, consumo consciente, redes sociales, sostenibilidad.

Introduction

This research analyzes the evolution of communication on the construction of femininities, studying the discourse reflected in the local press during the Spanish Transition (1975-1982), a period with profound political and social transformation that ushered in the democratization of the media, the redefinition of identity, and the renegotiation of gender roles, in order to contrast it with contemporary dynamics. Until now, little attention has been paid to the intersection between fashion and political and social change, which can provide valuable information about social phenomena and can help better understand the construction of the welfare state and social identity in Spain.

Fashion, as a means of communication, uses its own language and requires distribution channels, the press being one of the most prominent. Fashion acts as a mirror of public opinion and reflects the "spirit of the times" (Velasco, 2018). According to Cabrera and Vera (2021), the media has been

crucial in shaping public opinion, the political agenda, and subjectivities. Luque and Pérez (2018) argue that the media shapes globalized attitudes by exposing everyday social situations related to politics, economics, and culture. Surprisingly, fashion has been underestimated by academic studies, possibly because it has not been considered a "serious subject." Celso Almuiña, professor of Contemporary History, highlights the need to study fashion due to its multidisciplinary nature, which requires a cross-sectional analysis and a complementary methodology. Fashion is a marker of social group identity (Velasco, 2016), and sociologist Martínez (1995) points out that although clothing serves a practical function, this represents only 50%, with the rest being communication. Current historiographical trends advocate adopting a gender perspective in historical studies to enrich the understanding of bilateral dynamics from a contemporary perspective. Cabrera and Vera (2021) recognize the importance of the socio-demographic process in examining how changes in participation in the political sphere and in communication and cultural professions have increased the role of women.

According to Barros (1993), historians can modify or replace paradigms in the social sciences, including the study of fashion, which is intrinsically linked to the social, ideological, and cultural context. Exploring the flow of information between the media and fashion trends at specific moments is crucial to understanding the processes of social change (Rodríguez, 2009). Given the complexity of fashion as a cultural and social phenomenon, it is considered necessary to explore it in depth in the context of recent history (Mansilla, 2017). Focusing on fashion as a means of communication during Transition and the current era, this research seeks to shed light on its influence on the construction of identities. A holistic perspective on fashion is used, recognizing it as a phenomenon that impacts various aspects of society (Martínez, 1995). Using the press and the opinions of experts in communication and fashion as tools, it is examined how the image of society is projected, focusing on fashion management and its consumers (Velasco, 2018).

The hypotheses explore whether fashion transcends its practical function, acting as a social phenomenon that reflects trends and preferences, contributes to the construction of gender stereotypes, and plays a role in shaping power relations and the expression of personal identity.

Materials and method

The main objective of this study is to conduct a critical analysis of the social discourse on fashion present in *La Voz de Almería* during the Spanish Transition (1975-1982) and contrast it with the contemporary view of experts in communication and fashion. The following specific objectives are proposed: to identify the gender stereotypes and aesthetic pressures prevalent in this newspaper; to describe the role of the mass media as markers of time, as Luhmann points out: "The media tell us what is considered the future and what is the past" (Carmona, 2024, p. 131). To analyze the democratization of the media and the emergence of new specialized publications, as well as to examine the relationship between political liberalization, fashion consumption, and the redefinition of female identities. This will allow us to compare how digital platforms and influencers are reconfiguring fashion discourse today with historical journalistic narratives, through the opinions of experts, to see how they position sustainable fashion as the heir or break with the aesthetic idea of the Transition and thus be able to propose future lines of research on fashion, ethics, and the environment.

The methodology used is based on two complementary approaches. First, the newspaper archive of *La Voz de Almería* was compiled for each of the ten years of the period under study, using the keyword "fashion." A ten-year sample was chosen because, from the perspective of many historians, the Transition should be understood as a prolonged process, which requires a sufficient time frame. Each year yielded around 200 headlines, of these those articles that simultaneously met the following criteria were examined: addressing fashion as a social or cultural phenomenon and including explicit references to identity, gender stereotypes, or the construction of femininity. No minimum length was established for the selected texts; however, the following were excluded: short notes or reviews with little analytical substance, mentions of fashion in contexts unrelated to the subject of study, duplicates of events, and texts focused exclusively on technical aspects (fabrics, prices) with no link to gender or power. The number of articles retained ranged from twenty to sixty per year, depending on the intensity of the media debate at the time. Finally, the selected texts were subjected to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in order to explore fashion as an expression of power. To this end, they were classified according to their main theme: identity, stereotypes, mentalities, and gender (Pardo, 2007).

The choice of *La Voz de Almería* was not accidental. Between 1975 and 1981, this newspaper was part of the State Social Media, which meant that local communication was heavily controlled, with messages directed from Madrid and influenced by the Women's Section, focused on communication strategies for the home. Therefore, by analyzing this newspaper, all the messages that were conveyed to the population can be gathered, because, as is known, the rest of the media "drew" from the newspapers. This configuration provides valuable information about the messages that were intended to be conveyed to the public, which could be extrapolated to other provinces, as they were "orchestrated" by the government. From 1977 onwards, journalists showed a growing commitment to freedom of expression, although they were still limited in their scope of action (Román, 2024). Finally, in 1982, with the approval of the Law on the Privatization of the State Press Chain by the first socialist government, the newspaper became a private media outlet.

In this sense, the evolution of *La Voz de Almería* during the Transition reflects profound changes both in its structure and editorial orientation and in the discourse, paving the way for modernization and freedom of expression.

Figure 1
Page from the newspaper La Voz de Almería
dedicated to fashion during the Transition

Source: Own elaboration based on data from *La Voz de Almería*.

On the other hand, to interpret the continuities and ruptures detected between the two periods, semi-structured interviews were conducted with five

specialists in communication and fashion. The questions focused on: How they perceive the evolution of fashion discourse from the Transition to today, what media and technological factors have influenced this transformation, and the role of sustainability and conscious consumption in current narratives. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed manually using inductive thematic analysis, generating four main codes (continuity, rupture, innovation, media feedback). This process was carried out in four phases: preliminary reading to detect recurring ideas, establishing codes related to the construction of femininities and changes in fashion discourse, review of themes, and finally, definition and naming of categories to explain the transformation of discourse.

In this way, the historical articles ensure that the objective of evaluating fashion discourse is met, while the expert voices provide the interpretation necessary to understand the factors behind these changes.

The interviewees have a close relationship with fashion and communication, providing a valuable perspective to the research: María Prieto, a graduate in Advertising and Public Relations with a Master's degree in Sociocultural Analysis of Knowledge and Communication, has worked in the Communications Office of the Faculty of Information Sciences and in the Department of Journalism and New Media at the Complutense University of Madrid. Isabel Perales, journalist and with Master's degree in Social Communication. Concha Pérez, a journalist and professor at the University of Seville, attached to the Department of Journalism, and professor at the Master's degree in Fashion at the Seville Chamber of Commerce, making her an expert in teaching and analyzing fashion from an academic and professional perspective. Ana Velasco, writer, journalist, and historian, is a professor at the Complutense University of Madrid. Thanks to her journalistic career and her training in history, she approaches fashion as a cultural and social phenomenon. Isabel Muñoz, journalist and doctoral candidate in Information Sciences at the Complutense University of Madrid.

The interviewees were selected intentionally based on their professional careers and academic contributions to the world of fashion and communication. This approach has provided a broader view of the experts' opinions and facilitated comparison with the discourse present in *La Voz de Almería* during the Transition. This has led to a deeper understanding of the continuities and changes in the way fashion is communicated and experienced throughout both decades.

Figure 2
Set of questions for contemporary fashion experts

Perceptions of femininity, beauty standards, and sustainable fashion in the local and regional press: a comparative perspective
1. How do you think the local press and fashion supplements currently reflect femininity and women's independence? Do you notice any differences in their approach compared to national media? 2. In your opinion, how do local and regional media address beauty standards and social pressure, compare to national media? What role do they play in promoting conscious and sustainable fashion consumption? 3. Do you consider fashion to be a tool for expression and empowerment for women today? How do local and regional fashion supplements contribute to this perception? 4. Do you think that today's media, including local and regional media, have managed to overcome the traditional view of gender in fashion, or do you see the persistence of certain stereotypes? How is this reflected in fashion coverage and advertising campaigns? 5. How do the media, especially local media and fashion supplements, manage the construction of femininity today? What differences are there in the representation of sustainable fashion and conscious consumption compared to fashion in the 1980s?

Fashion since the transition to digital

During the Franco regime, fashion in Spain was strictly regulated, reflecting a conservative and hierarchical society. Dress codes limited diversity and creativity. However, around 1975, with Franco's death, social and cultural changes began to emerge, which materialized with the transition to democracy, allowing for greater diversity and individual expression in fashion (García, 2013). From 1973 to 1982, fashion reflected the social, cultural, and political transformation of the time. The first democratic elections in 1977 established a new discourse, and fashion became a means of expressing identity and participating in the construction of a democratic and modern Spain.

From the 1980s onwards, globalization had a decisive influence on the Spanish fashion market, promoting the arrival of international brands and generating a homogenization of trends (Orospe, 2024). This process led to changes in supply and demand in the textile industry, with the introduction of flexible and just-in-time production, driven by new technologies (Martínez, 2024). During this period, television and specialized fashion magazines became the main tools for dissemination, establishing stereotypes of beauty and, consequently, lifestyles and notions of femininity.

Since 2010, the digital age has further transformed fashion. E-commerce, social media, and digital platforms have altered consumer habits and the way trends are communicated. Influencers and bloggers have come to the fore, displacing traditional media and allowing for the rapid dissemination of new developments. Instagram and TikTok have established themselves as key media for the industry, contributing to brand image creation and the loyalty of young audiences (Pérez and Velasco, 2020). Likewise, García (2023) states that "physical stores are in decline" (p. 42), but adds that they will have to evolve to offer exclusive shopping experiences that combine product purchases with new experiences.

Table 1

Evolution and relationship of fashion discourse, from print media to the digital age

Aspects	Print Media	Digital Age
Dissemination of trends	Mainly through magazines, newspapers, and television.	Immediate thanks to social media, blogs, and online platforms.
Role of opinion leaders	Designers and specialized magazines wielded great authority.	Influencers, bloggers, and independent experts are gaining prominence.
Availability of fashion	Limited by geographical barriers and less variety of styles.	Global, with brands and trends accessible at the click of a button.
Speed of change	Moderate, marked by runway seasons and launches.	Accelerated, driven by the immediacy of the Internet and "fast fashion" culture.
Relationship with the public	Readers received information passively.	Consumers interact, comment, and share trends, favoring co-creation.
Impact on sustainability	The pace of production and consumption was slower.	Challenges related to fast fashion have emerged, but so have slow fashion initiatives and environmental awareness.
Creation of identity	Fashion was presented as an aspiration, filtered by traditional media.	Strong consumer participation, with consumers building their style by sharing content and influencing others.

Source: Own elaboration based on data from *La Voz de Almería* and interview results.

The advent of the Internet has optimized transactions and business management, while social media has accelerated the fashion cycle, creating challenges in terms of sustainability. In response, eco-friendly fashion and "slow fashion" are gaining more followers, promoting responsible production and

consumption practices (Crespo, 2022). This approach advocates for change in both manufacturing and consumer behavior, emphasizing the importance of eco-friendly and responsible habits (Martínez, 2021). In addition, there has been a boom in the second-hand market, especially among millennials and Generation Z, as well as a growing acceptance of eco-friendly products, confirming the need for more conscious fashion (García, 2023).

Finally, artificial intelligence (AI) has become a key tool for the industry: it enables the personalization of the customer experience, the prediction of trends, and the optimization of the supply chain. Thanks to AI, fashion companies can add value through neuromarketing techniques and strengthen customer interaction, thereby increasing loyalty. In this context, social media acts as a channel that directly connects trends and consumers, driving the "democratization of fashion" (López *et al.,* 2024).

Fashion and female representation: Discourse analysis in the local press

In 1973, fashion was highlighted as a means of expressing femininity in its various facets. From this perspective, the transformative power of aesthetics was emphasized, as evidenced in the statement: "today's woman, physically and mentally situated within a society with its own mentality and opinion" (La Voz de Almería). At the same time, personal attractiveness was promoted through the accessibility of beauty products: "Finally, makeup products within everyone's reach. A new, freer, more joyful, and more refined form of makeup" (La Voz de Almería, March 11, 1973). However, it was noted that fashion sometimes also conveyed messages of frivolity or infantilization, revealing a critical awareness of the stereotypes and pressures associated with femininity: "it is the plain truth, a trend that is sought after and sought after to satisfy the desire for perpetual youth to which women generally aspire" (Pik, 1973, p. 12).

By 1974, progress toward independence and equality for women was already visible. The training offered by the Women's Section was highlighted: "Today, women are very independent, and much of that independence is due to the training that the Women's Section has been providing to Spanish girls for years," although at the same time, the challenges and contradictions inherent in this process were recognized. Thus, it was stated: "Legal and labor equality has been rapidly incorporated into our laws in recent years and has

represented a fundamental advance in the promotion of women" (Pik, 1974, p. 12), while warning that "we must overcome the obstacles and taboos that prevent the principles of equality between men and women from permeating our daily lives to the point where they seem as natural as breathing" (La Voz de Almería, May 31, 1974). These quotes reflected the complexity of society, in which change was presented as a constant struggle for equality.

The following year, women were portrayed as innovative figures in the field of fashion. The discourse emphasized female protagonism by declaring: "The world of fashion belongs to them, women who can afford expensive dressmakers, i.e., those who celebrate International Women's Year every year, know how to dress." In addition, the existence of a marked distinction between male and female roles was highlighted, and criticism was levelled at consumer society and youth movements such as the hippies and beatniks, as well as communism. These reflections showed how fashion was deeply influenced by the social and political trends of the time (Martínez, 1975).

Although not explicitly addressed in 1976, it was clear that fashion continued to play a crucial role in the construction of femininity. Aspects related to feminine elegance and the representation of "sex and other taboo subjects" were mentioned, given that "there has been a proliferation of nudity, both in shows and in illustrated magazines." In this context, the following reflection was made: "How often are sex and nudity used exclusively to liven up a languid plot and attract an audience incapable of enjoying anything other than crude stimulation" (Planelles, 1976, p. 15). In addition, it was observed that references to prominent women were often associated with the positions held by their husbands, indicating a persistence of traditional gender roles (La Voz de Almería, April 2, 1976).

In 1977, fashion and the construction of femininity were closely linked to the evolution of society and the role of women. With the greater freedom that journalists began to experience "from 1977 onwards, we began to commit ourselves to democracy, which was a general commitment of the press, and we stopped following the guidelines... but before that it was impossible... People knew that the things that appeared in the newspaper came from others and did not originate with us" (Román, 2024), the discourse became more practical, adapting to the needs of modern women. It was expressed as "a practical fashion at the service of an active woman who is fully integrated into a society in which, at last, she seems to have been granted a better position" (La Voz de Almería, September 18, 1977). Thus, personal care be-

came a pillar of female identity, reinforcing the idea that "today's woman... has clearly assimilated, among many other things, that personal care is so important that it deserves to be considered a requirement for functioning and being pleasant within the society in which she belongs" (Vázquez, 1977).

In 1978, the debate was broadened to include topics such as the role of women in the fashion industry and feminist movements. The need was raised that "fashion in clothing is not always as appropriate as it should be, if those who establish it do not take into account the function to be performed by the body, both from an aesthetic and hygienic point of view," suggesting a concern for functionality and physical well-being, in addition to purely aesthetic criteria. On the other hand, the ability to choose was evident in the adoption of trousers: "they ceased to be an exclusively male garment and women adopted them, aware of all the advantages that fashion could bring them, and thus acquired new prominence and set out on a path that had until then been limited or almost unexplored" (De Pablos, 1978), demonstrating the challenge to gender norms.

The discourse in 1979 highlighted the pressure on women to meet certain standards of beauty, manifested in: "as a decisive threat to women this spring, the slogan of the day is: you have to lose weight." An idealized vision of femininity was also presented, with statements such as "spring is the only season that belongs to the fair sex, who likes to be pampered, and the poor bard who is never tired of strumming its lyre," which was evident in a change with the adaptation of models: "designers have been able to adapt their models to more universal standards," although, at the same time, pressure continued to be exerted that "current fashion does not allow for wide, round hips," which restricted body diversity (Kalikatres, 1979).

In 1980, fashion discourse was defined as a tool for female expression and empowerment, emphasizing that "any type of soft, romantic, well-finished garment in original but elegant colors" not only beautified women but also strengthened their self-esteem. The evolution of makeup was presented as an essential part of the process of constructing femininity: "if modern life is pure hustle and bustle, this month it increases even more; more work, shopping, commitments... this should not be reflected on the face. Going to a meeting looking exhausted is discouraging for everyone. Good time management is essential." In addition, it reflected the central role of women in the home, where their responsibility for creating a welcoming environment was considered an extension of their feminine identity. This expectation, howe-

ver, generated feelings of inadequacy and limited women's opportunities in other areas (Moreno, 1980).

In 1981, fashion was still considered a means of shaping femininity, emphasizing the importance of dressing elegantly, but it also imposed pressure: "This is the time when we must arm ourselves with enough willpower to conduct those projects so often postponed since last summer, whether it be losing a few pounds or rejuvenating our complexion." (La Voz de Almería, 1981, July 12). In this context, there was discussion about the evolution of the perception of women in society, including the recognition of the value of family love and the strengthening of emotional ties, as well as support for maternal responsibilities: "transforming a movement with the idea of promoting family feelings and reaching the general public of our nation" or "do not deny her that right" in relation to breastfeeding (Marianata, 1981).

Finally, in 1982, fashion became a space for reflection on the construction of femininity and gender stereotypes. Social pressure on physical appearance was questioned: "because most women decide to attack when it is too late, sometimes too late, and cellulite is unforgiving." In addition, social norms that imposed certain standards of elegance and body image were highlighted: "our era also has its social rituals, certain relentless norms by which people judge (and allow themselves to talk about) our physical and economic well-being and our social status." This discourse also extended to the family, where during festive seasons, women were expected to maintain an immaculate image: "During the Christmas holidays, full of family gatherings, women must look well-groomed and overflowing with joy, even though cooking takes up a lot of time during those days" (del Campo, 1982).

Redefining fashion: femininity, beauty, empowerment, and sustainability today

The local press and fashion supplements continue to perpetuate certain gender stereotypes that delineate the image of women in traditional terms. For example, when it is stated that "a successful woman is one who rises socially or maintains the high status she has inherited," and it is further proclaimed that "she is professionally successful, that is what is important and, apparently, unheard of, and on top of that, she is the mother of several children, has a fabulous house, and looks younger than she is, without losing fe-

mininity" (Prieto, 2024). These expressions reflected a conception of women who are valued based on their social position and their ability to combine professional achievements with traditional roles.

In contrast, other voices in the journalistic field offer a more transformative vision. Perales (2024) recognized that "the change we are experiencing through the press and the media in general, locally, nationally, and internationally, is in itself a point in favor of the feminist struggle and empowerment," noting that "the power to show ourselves as we are, the reality is imperfect, because there are many types of bodies, and for that we need fashion that adapts to them." This approach highlights the importance of inclusive fashion that reflects the real diversity of women, as opposed to the homogeneous ideal traditionally promoted.

Several experts agree that, in terms of content, there are no major differences between the local and national press, although there are contrasts with the international press. According to Velasco (2024): "I don't think there are major differences because we live in a post-industrial or cultural capitalism dynamic... not one in which there are cultural industries of which the media are part." On the other hand, Pérez (2024) points out that "the local press and fashion supplements deal with more specific issues and target more specific audiences, as their work can actually be even more important because they can talk about specific issues that concern their own readers, and women can see themselves well represented." This perspective suggests that the local press has greater potential to address the real concerns of its audience in an intimate way.

Likewise, the interviewees expressed a certain optimism regarding the global effort of the press to reflect issues of gender equality, femininity, and the defense of women's independence and freedom, with statements such as: "I believe that, in general, the international, national, and local press have made a significant effort to reflect the entire issue of gender equality, femininity, the defense of femininity, and the defense of women's independence and freedom in their spaces." However, Muñoz (2024) believes that the local press remains more traditional, using language and addressing issues "more typical of another era."

Regarding the discourse on social pressure and beauty standards, according to the interviewees, local and regional media share similar content. For Perales (2024), local media often draw on image banks, which are not always "representative in terms of beauty standards." Prieto (2024) expanded on this: "diversity and inclusivity respond to market demands and to our

continued consumption in order to maintain constant economic growth, so I do not think they promote particularly responsible consumption." Similarly, Muñoz (2024) emphasizes that local media were "less risky when dealing with certain issues, because they do not have as wide an audience as national media and cannot afford to stray beyond certain limits."

In relation to sustainability and conscious consumption in fashion, Pérez (2024) believes that local media have an important role to play in informing and even "convincing" readers to change certain unsustainable consumption habits. Velasco (2024) added that "local media can do a lot, especially because sustainability is a topic of debate and one of the things most demanded of fashion. Fashion is the third most polluting industry in the world." He also suggests taking advantage of the business opportunity for "journalistic, regional, and local brands that may have a reach and interest that is perhaps underestimated today."

Finally, fashion was highlighted as a tool for expression and empowerment for women, a way of constructing both individual and collective identity. For Perales (2024): "the simple fact of wanting to look beautiful, elegant, sophisticated, is already loving yourself, showing that you care and that you want to look good, above all, to yourself. The way you dress is a way of representing your deepest self." Pérez (2024) emphasizes that "it is perhaps one of the areas that has given women the most opportunities to face the social pressures to which they are exposed. Being fashionable has also meant challenging themselves and facing those kinds of pressures that sometimes, and especially in the past, have been very difficult." However, Velasco (2024) warns that, although fashion empowers, it is also part of the capitalist industry: "it is a way of making money" (Muñoz, 2024) concludes that, despite efforts to offer a renewed discourse, "the content of the media is similar, but the way it is approached seems new, even though it is not."

In summary, all interviewees agreed that media discourse has not yet completely overcome traditional gender views in fashion, although changes in content can be observed, such as greater diversity in local supplements and the reflection of a more dynamic role for women in society, evidenced by the growing incorporation of images shared between both genders (Pérez, 2024; Perales, 2024; Muñoz, 2024; Velasco, 2024). In addition, compared to past decades, there is a perceived promotion of sustainable fashion and conscious consumption, although the market continues to influence the formation of new models of femininity and beauty, as does the inertia of Francoist heritage in some discourses, reflecting social problems such as racism and gender inequality.

Results

This extensive analysis shows, on the one hand, how the discourse on fashion and female representation has evolved over the years in *La Voz de Almería*. Each year it reveals transformations in the way femininity is constructed, from the exaltation of youth and aesthetics in the early days, through advances in independence and the strengthening of traditional roles, to the integration of debates on equality, inclusion, and sustainability. Furthermore, it shows how the media, especially the local press, have been instruments for spreading messages that have influenced women's identity and role, reflecting contradictions and tensions in the process of social modernization.

Table 2
Construction of femininities through the social discourse of fashion in La Voz de Almería

Year	Discourse Focus	Observations	Year	Discourse Focus	Observations
1973	Fashion as a means of expressing femininity and accessing beauty products. The influence of stereotypes about eternal youth begins to be apparent.	Fashion presents as a vehicle for self-expression, but introduces stereotypes related to youth and aesthetics.	1978	Debate on the functionality of fashion and the importance of physical well-being. Clothing that challenges traditional gender norms begins to be adopted.	There is a growing concern for well-being and functionality, and women are increasingly able to challenge traditional boundaries.
1974	Progress toward female independence and equality, albeit with challenges and contradictions. Educational and legal advances are highlighted, but so is the difficult road to equality.	Progress is noted, but contradictions and persistent cultural barriers to gender equality emerge.	1979	The discourse focuses on the aesthetic pressure imposed by fashion and the adaptation of design models for greater inclusion, although restrictive standards are imposed.	The pressure to conform to specific physical ideals is evident, while at the same time possibilities for more inclusive fashion are opening up.
1975	Women are represented as innovative figures in fashion, but with a marked distinction between gender roles. Criticism of consumerism and youth movements is integrated.	Female innovation is contrasted with the persistence of traditional roles and a materialistic view of identity.	1980	Fashion presents as a tool for female empowerment, strengthening self-esteem and personal care. The evolution of makeup and the role at home is emphasized.	The ability of fashion to empower and strengthen women is highlighted, although an impeccable image is imposed, which can generate pressure.

1976	Construction of femininity through fashion with debates about nudity and the use of sex to enliven arguments, and the association of women with traditional roles.	Although it is suggested that fashion contributes to the construction of femininity, discourses that reinforce male dominance and stereotypes persist.	1981	Fashion was used to forge femininity and promote changes in social perception, integrating debates on equality and traditional roles, as well as family love.	The discourse of fashion is integrated with the family sphere and social commitment, maintaining traditional aesthetic pressures.
1977	Fashion adapts to a new social reality, driven by greater freedom of expression in the press and personal care as a pillar of female identity.	The press began to reflect a more active and multifaceted image of women, but there were still certain condescending approaches to their role.	1982	Fashion becomes a space for reflection on the construction of femininity and gender stereotypes, with special attention to social standards and family roles.	There is evidence of the persistence of social pressure and the imposition of traditional roles, especially in the domestic sphere, which still influence the image of women.

Source: Prepared by the author based on data from *La Voz de Almería*.

Table 3

Social discourse on fashion in the digital age

Aspect	Perspecrives and opinions
Femininity and independence	Gender stereotypes are perpetuated in the press. There is an effort to reflect equality and empowerment. The local press is more traditional.
Beauty standards and Social Pressure	The discourse on beauty does not vary much locally. Diversity is promoted due to market demands. The media can influence sustainable consumption.
Fashion as Expression and Empowerment	Fashion is a tool for expression and empowerment, although it remains part of a capitalist industry. Social pressure remains.
Traditional Views of Gender and Stereotypes	Gender stereotypes have not been overcome, but there are changes in content and advertising campaigns. Inclusion is used as a capitalist strategy.
Construction of Femininity and Sustainable Fashion	Sustainable fashion and conscious consumption are gaining ground, but more effort is needed. Controlled media influence the perception of fashion.

Source: Prepared by the author based on interview results.

On the other hand, if looking at Table 3, it can be seen the evolution of fashion in terms of femininity, beauty, empowerment, and sustainability, showing that although the press perpetuates certain gender stereotypes, it also plays a crucial role in promoting empowerment and sustainability. Fashion continues to be a tool of expression for women, although it is influenced by capitalism. Beauty standards are changing more because of social media than because of the press, and although sustainability is gaining ground, it still faces challenges such as greenwashing.

Conclusions

This journey shows that although fashion discourse on the construction of femininity has undergone formal changes from the 1970s to the present day, the substantive transformations are partial and, in many cases, contradictory. Traditional stereotypes persist, such as the valorization of thinness, the exaltation of youth, and domestic roles, revealing the continuity of the power structures described by Bourdieu in the theory of symbolic reproduction (Fernández, 2005).

During the Transition, *La Voz de Almería* initially contributed to reinforcing conventional gender roles; however, from 1976 onwards, signs of a more active femininity emerged, presented as a vehicle for individual empowerment. Nevertheless, this emancipation coexisted with rigid normative and aesthetic demands, illustrating the tension of cultural capitalism in the democratic phase: the "free woman" quickly joined the consumer market, turning self-sufficiency into just another product.

Today, visibility and diversity have advanced, but the same regulatory mechanisms persist under new formulas. The "constant transition" mentioned by Ana Velasco is manifested in the intensification of beauty ideals through social media and influencers, who simultaneously impose youth, professional success, motherhood, and physical attractiveness. At the same time, discourses on sustainability and conscious consumption are emerging which, although necessary, are threatened by greenwashing strategies and the lack of structural changes in the industry.

Thus, fashion continues to play a dual role: as a tool for identification and potential empowerment, and as a device for social control and exploitation, both of bodies and resources, in an accelerated cycle of production and con-

sumption. To move towards a truly plural and free femininity, it is essential that the media and the industry take on an active responsibility, promoting ethical practices, transparency, and a discourse that goes beyond simple diversification of styles, promoting profound social transformation.

Recommendations and limitations of the research

This study was conceived with the intention of revealing how *La Voz de Almería* articulated its messages on fashion, gender, and identity between 1975 and 1982, and how these narratives resonate or are transformed in contemporary discourse. However, from its methodological foundations to its geographical scope, the work has a number of limitations that should be recognized when interpreting its results.

Firstly, the research was based solely on one provincial newspaper: *La Voz de Almería*. Its status as a state-owned newspaper during the Transition ensures that it reflected the official discourse, but at the same time it excludes other newspapers, whether privately owned or with a different orientation, which would have offered valuable nuances. To compile the corpus, ten years of headlines containing the keyword "fashion" were searched, and articles that explicitly referred to gender, femininity, or identity were selected. This intentional sample, of between twenty and sixty texts per year, allowed for an in-depth examination, but sacrificed exhaustiveness, i.e., articles that did not use that specific terminology or that addressed the phenomenon of fashion were left out. Thus, the decision to prioritize interpretive quality over quantity introduces a limit on the statistical representativeness of the results.

The CDA provided the theoretical framework necessary to articulate relationships between language, power, and the construction of femininity. However, each phase of coding was based on interpretive decisions, inevitably subject to the researcher's perspective. This subjective component, inherent in any qualitative approach, suggests caution when generalizing conclusions.

A second line of research consisted of interviewing five current experts in fashion and communication, selected through purposive sampling based on their academic and professional backgrounds. Their reflections provide valuable information about the continuities and ruptures between the past and the present, but the homogeneity of the profiles, all academics or journalists, leaves out other voices, both in terms of gender and roles, such as designers,

consumers, activists, or digital content creators, whose testimony would enrich the understanding of current discourses.

Finally, the comparison between historical texts and contemporary opinions provides flashes of insight, but also reveals contextual dissonances: language, cultural references, and interpretive frameworks have changed substantially, making it difficult at times to directly contrast the two records.

Given these limitations, several avenues for the future are proposed: exploring other newspapers and formats (magazines, radio, television, advertising), incorporating quantitative analysis or statistical techniques that offer broader patterns, and including an intersectional perspective of class, age, and territory to capture the plurality of women's experiences. It would also be useful to investigate how female readers during the Transition received and internalized these messages, through retrospective interviews, and to extend the study to national and international contexts to assess cultural similarities and differences.

Despite its limitations, this work provides valuable tools for critical media education, enabling students and professionals in communication, fashion, and gender studies to identify persistent stereotypes and propose more ethical narratives. It also offers a solid foundation for designing public policies on equality and media sustainability, aimed at promoting truly inclusive discourses. Finally, its findings can inspire future multidisciplinary teams—historians, sociologists, communicators, fashion experts, and feminist studies scholars—to combine methodologies and perspectives, and even to resort to big data analysis, to trace more accurately the evolution of social discourse on fashion and femininity.

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Olga Soriano Ortega	Conceptualization, Methodology, Software, Validation, Formal Analysis, Research, Resources, Data Curation, Original Draft Writing, Writing-Revision and Editing, Visualization, Supervision, Project Management, Fund Acquisition.

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