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A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF GENDER IDEOLOGY IN FEMININE, MASCULINE, AND UNISEX FASHION BRAND SLOGANS USING FAIRCLOUGH'S THREE-DIMENSIONAL MODEL

RIFKI JUNIAR PRATAMA
Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya, Indonesia
Email: rifkijuniar98@gmail.com

EKA FADILAH
Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya, Indonesia
Email: ekafadilah@untag-sby.ac.id

Abstract. This study investigates gender ideology in feminine, masculine, and unisex fashion brand slogans using Norman Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model. It aims to identify the linguistic features used in the slogans, analyse students' interpretations of the slogans, and describe the gender ideologies the slogans reflect. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the study analyses nine purposively selected fashion brand slogans representing feminine, masculine, and unisex branding, complemented by open-ended questionnaire data from twenty English Literature students at Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya. The findings show that the slogans employ lexical choices, grammatical structures, metaphors, pronouns, evaluative adjectives, and gendered nouns to construct ideological meanings related to gender identity and consumer culture. Unisex slogans favour universal, inclusive expressions that promote equality and gender neutrality; feminine slogans foreground empowerment, inclusivity, and emotional authenticity; and masculine slogans construct masculinity through prestige, individuality, freedom, and sophistication. Students critically evaluated these representations of inclusivity and gender ideology, indicating that fashion brand slogans function as ideological discourse that reflects and reproduces broader social values regarding gender representation and consumer culture in contemporary society.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Fairclough, Fashion Brand Slogans, Gender Ideology, Inclusivity.

INTRODUCTION

In today's digital and globalised media environment, fashion brand slogans function not only as marketing tools but also as ideological texts that shape consumer identity and social perception. Advertising slogans are designed to be short, memorable, and persuasive, enabling brands to communicate cultural values and shape audience attitudes through concise language (Anjum, 2023). Fashion advertising in particular tends to

reproduce gender expectations, associating masculinity with strength and dominance and femininity with beauty, emotion, and elegance (Afreh, 2023), while advertising discourse more broadly contributes to constructing public understanding of gender roles through repeated linguistic patterns (Rahmadani, 2023). More recently, growing public awareness of inclusivity and gender equality has pushed many brands to move away from rigid stereotypes toward empowerment-oriented and gender-neutral messaging, a shift visible in the rise of femvertising (Föhl, 2025), more diverse campaign representation (Alisson, 2025), and increasingly inclusive language aimed at Generation Z consumers (Yin, 2025).

Despite these developments, prior research on gender in advertising discourse has mainly examined a single category of representation, such as general advertising, cosmetic slogans, or visual campaigns, without systematically comparing feminine, masculine, and unisex branding within one analytical framework (Ezzeddine, 2023), (Güldal, 2023), (Nash, 2023). This gap matters because fashion brands rely on distinct discursive strategies, such as empowerment, prestige, and inclusivity, to appeal to different consumer segments while promoting marketable identities; without a comparative lens, these strategies risk being treated as isolated phenomena rather than parts of one broader branding discourse. This study addresses that gap by analysing nine feminine, masculine, and unisex fashion brand slogans through (Fairclough, 1995) (Fairclough, 2010) ThreeDimensional CDA model, guided by three research questions: (1) What linguistic features are used in feminine, masculine, and unisex fashion brand slogans? (2) How do students interpret the meaning of the selected slogans? and (3) What gender ideologies are reflected in the slogans? Accordingly, the study aims to identify the linguistic features of the slogans, analyse students' interpretations of them, and describe the gender ideologies they reflect.

LITERATURE REVIEW Critical Discourse Analysis and Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an interdisciplinary approach that treats language as social practice, foregrounding the relationship between discourse, power, and ideology (Fairclough, 1995, 2010). Unlike approaches that study language as a neutral, selfcontained system, CDA integrates linguistics with sociology and communication studies to explain how language reproduces or resists power relations and ideologies embedded in society. It is explicitly critical and normative, aiming to uncover hidden ideologies and unequal power relations encoded in discourse, and it operates across levels ranging from micro-linguistic choices, such as lexis, syntax, and modality, to macro social structures such as institutions and culture (Wodak, 2021).

Fairclough's model comprises three interconnected dimensions: (1) textual analysis, the description of linguistic features such as vocabulary, grammar, and rhetorical devices; (2) discursive practice, the interpretation of how texts are produced, distributed, and consumed; and (3) social practice, the explanation of the broader socio-cultural and ideological context in which discourse operates (Fairclough, 1995) (Fairclough, 2010). Applied to fashion slogans, the textual dimension examines lexical and grammatical choices; the discursive-practice dimension considers how slogans are produced by brands, circulated through media, and interpreted by consumers, including intertextual links to broader cultural narratives of empowerment and confidence (Kendrick, 2024) and the social-practice dimension situates these patterns within wider ideologies of gender, power, and consumer culture, in which apparently progressive language may still reproduce dominant norms (Samra Akram, 2025).

Fashion Brand Slogans as Advertising Discourse

Fashion brand slogans belong to the genre of advertising discourse and function as concise, persuasive representations of brand identity that nonetheless carry ideological meaning about identity, lifestyle, and gender (Fairclough, 1995). At the textual level, slogans use lexical choice, grammatical structure, pronoun usage, and gendered expressions to construct impressions of masculinity and femininity, strengthening brand identity and emotional appeal (Nurhadi, 2024). Through repeated circulation across advertisements, websites, and social media, the values and identities such slogans promote become normalised within everyday discourse (Kendrick, 2024), making short slogans a rich source of data for CDA despite, or precisely because of, their brevity.

METHOD

In conducting research, a method or the right way to study an object is used. A chosen research method in language studies is based on the researcher's consideration of the object, the data, and the characteristics of the phenomenon being studied. This research is divided into two parts, namely qualitative textual data and complementary respondent data. In this research, a descriptive qualitative method supported by open-ended questionnaire data is used. Qualitative research is an approach that focuses on in-depth understanding and interpretation of a phenomenon, rather than relying solely on numerical data. It involves studying language use and meaning through textual observation and exploring how readers respond to it. The analysis method used in this research is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), following (Fairclough, 1995) (Fairclough, 2010) three-dimensional model. The basic implementation of this method is interpretation, meaning that this method gives attention to the textual, discursive-practice, and social-practice dimensions of a text. Therefore, the CDA method is carried out on texts that are dense in ideological content, in this case fashion brand slogans. This research evaluates nine fashion brand slogans representing feminine, masculine, and unisex positioning to reveal the gender ideologies embedded within them, while also considering how student readers interpret and respond to those meanings. The textual data are taken entirely from official brand websites and marketing campaigns accessed in January 2026, while the respondent data are taken from twenty English Literature students at Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya, selected through purposive sampling. The data to be analyzed are collected by using the steps below: a) Reading and understanding each slogan; b)

Distributing an open-ended questionnaire online through Google Forms and WhatsApp to gather respondents' interpretations; c) Identifying linguistic features relating to the topic of analysis, such as gendered lexis, modality markers, and metaphorical expressions; d) Classifying the data based on the research questions and the categories of gender representation. Once the data have been gathered, they are analyzed by the following steps: a) Interpreting the classified data based on Fairclough's textual, discursive-practice, and social-practice stages; b) Analyzing the questionnaire responses through a four-step thematic coding procedure, namely reading responses in full, assigning initial codes, grouping codes into broader categories, and refining them into overarching themes such as empowerment, confidence, prestige, and gender neutrality; c) Relating the textual and thematic findings to the theory used; d) Organizing and concluding the results of the analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION Gender Ideology in Fashion Brand Slogans

This section presents findings from the analysis of nine fashion brand slogans, categorised into Feminine, Masculine, and Unisex groups, followed by a discussion organised around Fairclough's textual, discursive-practice, and social-practice dimensions.

Categorization and Linguistic Features of the Slogans

Table 1. Categorization of Selected Fashion Brand Slogans

No	Brand (Origin)	Slogan	Category
1	Uniqlo (Japan)	“Made for all”	Unisex
2	Giordano (Hong Kong)	“World without strangers”	Unisex
3	Nike (US)	“Why do it?”	Unisex
4	This Is April (Indonesia)	“Empowering women with fashion”	Feminine
5	Victoria's Secret (US)	“Welcoming all women”	Feminine
6	Colorbox (Indonesia)	“Every side is you”	Feminine
7	Middlehigh (Indonesia)	“Youthful rebellious n free”	Masculine
8	Canali (Italy)	“Italian style and elegance”	Masculine

9	Berluti (France)	"Made to your taste"	Masculine

As shown in Table 1, the corpus was balanced across three slogans per category, allowing the study to compare how feminine, masculine, and unisex positioning is constructed through language within a single analytical framework.

Table 2. Dominant Linguistic Features by Category

Category	**Dominant Linguistic Features**	**Illustrative Example**
Unisex	Universal lexical items, metaphorical expression, interrogative structure	"all" (Made for all); "without strangers" (metaphor); "Why do it?" (question)
Feminine	Gerunds and gendered nouns, inclusive adjectives, second-person pronoun	"empowering ... women"; "welcoming all women"; "every side is you"
Masculine	Evaluative adjectives, noun-phrase structure, possessive pronoun	"youthful rebellious n free"; "Italian style and elegance"; "made to your taste"

The findings indicate that unisex slogans rely on universal determiners such as "all" and "world," metaphor ("without strangers"), and an interrogative structure ("Why do it?") that together avoid gendered lexis and invite reflection rather than assert a fixed identity. Feminine slogans combine gendered nouns such as "women" with gerunds ("empowering"), inclusive adjectives ("all"), and the second-person pronoun "you," constructing an active, addressed female consumer. Masculine slogans, meanwhile, rely on evaluative adjectives ("rebellious," "free"), noun-phrase structures foregrounding nationality and luxury ("Italian style and elegance"), and the possessive pronoun "your," constructing masculinity through individuality, prestige, and personalised taste. Overall, unisex slogans favour neutral expressions, feminine slogans emphasise empowerment and inclusivity, and masculine slogans foreground freedom, prestige, and individuality, consistent with Fairclough's (1995) claim that lexical and grammatical choices are never ideologically neutral.

Audience Interpretation and Gender Ideology

The questionnaire was completed by 20 English Literature students (10 male, 10 female; aged 20-26), providing a balanced perspective on gender-related interpretation. Respondents interpreted the unisex slogans as open, equal, and universally accessible: all

20 read “Made for all” as accessible regardless of gender, 17 associated “World without strangers” with unity and belonging, and 16 interpreted “Why do it?” as motivational and identity-neutral. For the feminine slogans, about 19 respondents linked “Empowering women with fashion” to confidence and female empowerment, 18 associated “Welcoming all women” with body positivity and diversity, and 17 read “Every side is you” as encouraging self-expression across different identities, although several respondents also noted that this empowering language remained tied to fashion consumption itself. For the masculine slogans, 16 respondents associated “Youthful rebellious n free” with bold, streetwear-inflected masculinity, while 18 interpreted “Italian style and elegance” and 17 interpreted “Made to your taste” as signalling classy, sophisticated, and personalised masculine identity.

Table 3. Gender Ideologies Reflected in the Slogans

Category	Dominant Ideology	Supporting Evidence from Students
Feminine slogans	Empowerment, inclusivity, emotional authenticity	19 respondents associated the slogans with confidence, self-expression, and female acceptance
Masculine slogans	Freedom, prestige, confidence, sophistication	16-18 respondents connected masculinity with rebellion, luxury, elegance, and individuality
Unisex slogans	Inclusivity, equality, gender neutrality	17-20 respondents interpreted the slogans as universal and non-exclusive

These interpretations largely align with the brands officially declared institutional philosophies. Uniqlo, Giordano, and Nike each publicly frame diversity, universal accessibility, or identity-neutral achievement as core brand values, grounding the neutrality read into their slogans in explicit corporate positioning rather than incidental wording. This Is April, Victoria's Secret, and Colorbox similarly frame their missions around women's empowerment, inclusive representation, and self-expression, while Middlehigh, Canali, and Berluti anchor their masculine identities in youthful rebellion, heritage-based Italian elegance, and bespoke personalisation, respectively. This convergence between textual features, audience decoding, and institutional mission supports Fairclough's (1995) argument that discourse is never neutral: brands naturalise particular ideologies as both genuine institutional values and marketable identities.

Discussion: Textual, Discursive-Practice, and Social-Practice Dimensions

At the textual dimension, the analysis confirms that lexical choice, grammatical structure, pronoun usage, metaphor, and gendered nouns are strategically deployed to construct

specific gender representations and consumer identities. Universal expressions such as “all” and “world” remove explicit gender categorisation in unisex slogans, consistent with (Ezzeddine, 2023) finding that contemporary branding increasingly favours inclusive, gender-neutral language. Gendered nouns combined with empowerment-oriented gerunds and inclusive adjectives dominate the feminine slogans, echoing (Güldal, 2023) observation that empowerment has become a dominant discourse in fashion and beauty advertising. Evaluative adjectives and possessive pronouns dominate the masculine slogans, reflecting a shift from physical strength toward sophistication, style, and personal taste as markers of masculinity.

At the discursive-practice dimension, the slogans function as branding discourse that constructs emotional attachment, consumer identity, and social belonging through repeated circulation in digital and commercial media. Consistent with (Fairclough, 2010) view that audiences actively negotiate rather than passively receive meaning, respondents' interpretations converged strongly with each slogan's intended positioning while also revealing individual variation rooted in personal experience. This finding aligns with (Kendrick, 2024) argument that advertising discourse draws on familiar cultural narratives, such as empowerment or prestige, to produce persuasive meanings that audiences readily recognise and, at times, critically question.

At the social-practice dimension, the slogans reflect and reproduce broader ideologies of gender, inclusivity, and consumer culture. Feminine slogans challenge traditional passivity by portraying women as confident and self-expressive, yet, as several respondents noted, this empowerment remains tied to fashion consumption, supporting (Kendrick, 2024) observation that advertising discourse commonly transforms personal and social aspirations into marketable identities. Masculine slogans continue to normalise prestige, independence, and social status, consistent with (Samra Akram, 2025) that advertising discourse frequently links masculinity to confidence, achievement, and status, while also showing that contemporary masculinity increasingly incorporates sophistication and personal taste alongside traditional strength. Unisex slogans, by contrast, challenge rigid binary categories and align with growing social attention to diversity and non-binary identity (Ezzeddine, 2023).

Taken together, the findings show that despite their different gender positioning, all three slogan categories remain connected to capitalist consumer culture: identity, confidence, empowerment, and inclusivity are consistently constructed as values achievable through product consumption. This confirms (Fairclough, 1995) (Fairclough, 2010) argument that discourse functions as social practice closely tied to ideology and power, and it extends prior single-category studies e.g., (Anjum, 2023) (Güldal, 2023) by showing, within one comparative framework, that feminine, masculine, and unisex fashion branding each mobilise distinct discursive strategies, empowerment, prestige, and inclusivity respectively, in the service of a shared consumerist logic.

CONCLUSION

This study analysed gender ideology in feminine, masculine, and unisex fashion brand slogans using Fairclough's Three-Dimensional CDA model, supported by questionnaire responses from 20 English Literature students. The findings show that the slogans employ lexical choices, grammatical structures, metaphors, pronouns, evaluative adjectives, and gendered nouns to construct meanings related to gender identity, empowerment, inclusivity, and consumer culture. Unisex slogans favour universal and gender-neutral expressions that remove rigid gender boundaries; feminine slogans emphasise empowerment, inclusivity, and self-expression; and masculine slogans construct masculinity through freedom, prestige, individuality, and sophistication. Audience interpretation data confirm that students actively negotiate these meanings rather than passively receiving them, associating unisex slogans with equality, feminine slogans with confidence, and masculine slogans with prestige and independence. At the social-practice level, the study demonstrates that fashion brand slogans function as ideological discourse that reflects and reproduces broader cultural values regarding gender representation and consumer identity, even as empowerment- and inclusivity-oriented language remains tied to consumerist ideology. Future research is encouraged to analyse a larger and more diverse set of slogans across industries, incorporate multimodal elements such as image, colour, and typography, and involve respondents from more varied educational, age, and cultural backgrounds to broaden the scope of audience interpretation.

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