

## WEAVING WORDS AND IMAGES: THE RHETORICAL POWER OF METAPHOR IN ONLINE FASHION DISCOURSE

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### ABSTRACT

The article elaborates on a specific aspect of my PhD research by analysing the influence of metaphor on constructing meaning and communicating it in digital fashion criticism. The study employs Conceptual Metaphor Theory [1] and Multimodal Discourse Analysis [2] to systematically identify and interpret verbal and visual metaphors. The research methodology applies *qualitative coding* of relevant sequences of research corpus, Metaphor Identification Procedure ([https://www.researchgate.net/publication/42797372\\_MIP\\_A\\_method\\_for\\_identifying\\_metaphorically\\_used\\_words\\_in\\_discourse](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/42797372_MIP_A_method_for_identifying_metaphorically_used_words_in_discourse)) and Corpus of Contemporary American English (<https://www.english-corpora.org/coca/>) to establish patterns and collocations, to ensure a uniform and reproducible examination of metaphorical concepts.

The study identified in fashion discourse four main source-domains: nature, art, warfare, and dramatic performance, to shape the way online fashion reviewers articulate target concepts connected to fashion features like change, rebellion, and nostalgia. The mapping between target and source domains turns visual designs into easy-to-understand narratives. They elucidate the ideological aspect of fashion discourse, and demonstrate how metaphors communicate aesthetic taste, navigate identity, and interact with contemporary political discourse regarding gender, body standards, and cultural sensibilities.

The scientific base of my PhD research are linguistic studies on stylistics, discourse analysis, and fashion communication studies. It combines figurative language analysis with multimodal interpretation. The article attempts a cross-cultural comparative approach by using materials in English and Romanian to see how metaphorical mapping, intertextual references, and multimodal strategies change or not, depending on the culture and media format, from spoken commentary to images, captions, and video-based performance.

**Keywords:** Digital fashion criticism, Fashion discourse, Conceptual metaphor, Source domain, Intertextuality

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Digital media have been transforming contemporary fashion criticism, shifting it from the ivory tower of elite print journalism to the horizontally networked, participatory platforms in which influencers, editors, and audiences collectively negotiate the aesthetic value [3]. As Rocamora observes, “Digital media have redefined the ways in which fashion is produced, distributed, and consumed” (p. 505). Fashion communication now unfolds