

# FASHIONABLE POLITICS

The discursive construction of ethical consumerism  
in corporate communications, news media, and social media

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## Abstract

This thesis investigates the discursive construction of *ethical consumerism* – a notion that encompasses both ‘conscious’ consumption choices and ‘responsible’ corporate activities – in mediated discourses about fashion and clothing consumption in Sweden. Drawing on the discourse-historical approach within critical discourse analysis, the study provides an empirical examination of discursive elements in corporate communications, newspapers, and social media, which construct the market as the best solution to social injustice and climate change. The analysis focuses on how specific identities or practices are established as ethical, authentic, and legitimate, and investigates both the promises and the limits of discursive ethical consumerism in late capitalism.

The thesis shows how corporate and journalistic discourses can be depoliticising, as they focus on consensus and collaboration rather than on conflicts of interest, and on individual responsibility and consumption choices rather than on political policy. However, the convergence of consumption and politics also becomes highly political when these issues are discussed by the audience. The approach places the thesis within a tradition of critical studies of branded politics and the neoliberalisation of contemporary societies, while still taking the reflexive awareness of politically motivated consumers into account.

**Keywords:** ethical consumerism, neoliberalism, political brand cultures, consumer culture, critical discourse analysis