

Introducing Colourwashing – Towards a Definition

Conference Paper – Mr Jay Dunstan BA (Hons) MA

Summary of work so far...

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Agenda

- General introduction
- Prior debates
- Where we are now
- Problems with the current configuration
- Towards a definition of colourwashing
- Conclusion



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General introduction



Source: *Lloyds Banking Group* (2018) 'Ethnicity in Advertising report.'

Prior debates

It has long been understood within academic discourse that there exists a more than tenuous link between mass communications media and the reproduction of racisms (van Dijk, 1993).

This assertion of a link rests upon the supposition that media plays a vital role in shaping the social cognition of the culture where they operate (van Dijk, 1993).

van Dijk, T. A. (1993) *Elite Discourse and Racism*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.

Where we are now

The diversity discourse is shaping cultural production and cultural output across the global cultural economy (Saha, & van Lente, 2022).

Diversity is the dominant paradigm in creative industries policy and by extension, it reinforces structures of dominance in its drive for legitimacy (Saha, & van Lente, 2022).

Saha, A. & van Lente, S. (2022) 'Diversity, media and racial capitalism: a case study on publishing.'
Ethnic and Racial Studies, 45(16), pp.216-236. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2022.2032250>

Problems with the current configuration

- Representations are highly racialised - performative
- Depictions draw upon and perpetuate reductionist essentialised discourses
- Necessary structural changes in the CCI and within wider society are hidden by colourwashing
- Colourwashing (and other contributory factors) are feeding into polarising societal narratives

Defining colourwashing

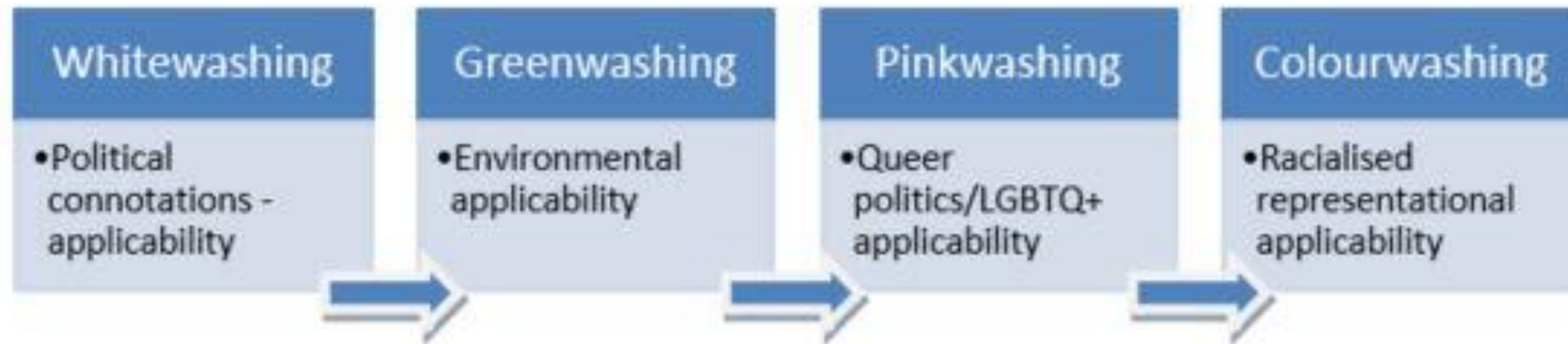


Figure 1. A linear representation of the development of the colourwashing term and its related words.



Why do we need this term?

Colourwashing



Agency
Capitals
Codes
Concepts
Cultural processes
Discourses
Historiography
Narratives
Power
Rhetorical devices
Signifying practices
Symbolic capital



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End thoughts

- What are the actual representations?
- What exactly is being encoded and decoded?
- Are there opportunities to resist and create agency?

Thank you for your time

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