

Public Abstract

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Title:Cashing in on Girl Power: The Commodification of Postfeminist Ideals in Advertising

Over the last decade, fem-vertising, Girl Power rhetoric, feminist consumerism and commodity feminism have proliferated in advertising. This study analyzes key literature regarding how Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and cause marketing incorporate postfeminist and neoliberal theory into marketing campaigns to encourage women to consume brands as a sign of their independence and power. This research, conducted as qualitative focus group analyses, examines how groups of racially diverse college-aged women define feminism and the modern empowered woman, how they connect and react to advertisements using women's empowerment as a selling point, and how they feel about the portrayal of race in these advertisements. Through this research, it became clear that race matters when discussing these advertisements. Definitions of feminism depended on participants' race, and racial diversity in the advertisements was a powerful motivator, especially for women of color. The advertisements using feminist rhetoric were deemed empowering, but not feminist, and participants were ultimately skeptical of corporations promoting feminist politics. However, they struggled to imagine a better alternative, and accepted that it was their responsibility to purchase from companies that represented their values. Overall, participants reinforced the use of a neoliberal lens to understand postfeminist advertising.

Keywords: commodity feminism, postfeminism, neoliberalism, cause marketing, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), intersectionality