

Critical Discourse Analysis Approach to the Post-Feminist Representations in Ecommerce Livestreamings of Lipsticks

Authors : Haiyan Huang, Jan Blommaert, Ellen Van Praet

Abstract : The embrace of neoliberal economic system in China has engendered the entry of global commodity capitalism into domestic Chinese market and ushered in the post-feminism that is closely associated with consumerism from western culture. Chinese women are instilled and thus hold the belief of empowering themselves and expressing their individualism through consumption. To unravel the consumerist ideologies embedded in Li's discursive practices, we rely on critical discourse analysis (CDA) as our research framework. The data analyses suggest that cosmopolitanism and class are two repeating themes when Li engages in persuading consumerist behaviors from the female audience. Through hints and cues such as "going on business trips", "traveling abroad", "international brands" and among others, Li provides the access to and possibility of imagining cosmopolitan and middle class identity for his audience. Such yearning for western culture and global citizen identity also implicates the aspiration for a well-off socioeconomic status, proving that post-feminism in China not only embodies western consumerism but also implicates the struggle of class movement. These defining elements of choice and freedom are well-situated in contemporary Chinese society where women are enjoying more educational and economic independence than before. However a closer examination reveals conflicts between hegemonic discourse of post-feminism and the status quo. First, propagating women's power through consumption obscure the entrenched gender inequality in China. Philosophies such as employment discrimination, equal payment, education right, etc., the cornerstones of feminism did not exist in China, leading to historical gender issues unsolved. Second, the lengthy broadcastings (which normally last more than 2 hours) featured with big discounts on products beg the question who are the real audience of ecommerce livestreaming. Seemingly addressing to young well-off Chinese females, Li's discursive practice can be targeting at young but not wealthy girls who aspire to mimic the lifestyle of middle class women. By selling the idea of empowering and constructing identity through consuming beauty products (e.g., lipsticks), capitalists are endeavoring to create the post-feminism illusion and cause anxieties among Chinese females. Through in-depth analyses of hegemonic discourse on ecommerce livestreaming of lipsticks, the paper contributes to a better understanding of post-feminism in contemporary China and meanwhile illustrates the problems Chinese women face in securing power and equality.

Keywords : Chinese women, critical discourse analysis, ecommerce livestreaming, post-feminism

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