

Postfeminism, Femvertising and Inclusion: An Analysis of Changing Women's Representation in Contemporary Media

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Abstract : In this paper, the results of qualitative content research on postfeminist female representation in contemporary Western media (advertising, television series, films, social media) are presented. Female role models spectacularized in media culture are an important part of the development of social identities and could inspire new generations. Postfeminist cultural texts have given rise to heated debate between gender and media studies scholars. There are those who claim they are commercial products seeking to sell feminism to women, a feminism whose political and subversive role is completely distorted and linked to the commercial interests of the cosmetics, fashion, fitness and cosmetic surgery industries, in which women's 'power' lies mainly in their power to seduce. There are those who consider them feminist manifestos because they represent independent 'modern women' free from male control who aspire to achieve professionally and overcome gender stereotypes like that of the 'housewife-mother'. Major findings of the research show that feminist principles have been gradually absorbed by the cultural industry and adapted to its commercial needs, resulting in the dissemination of contradictory values. On the one hand, in line with feminist arguments, patriarchal ideology is condemned and the concepts of equality and equal opportunity between men and women are promoted. On the other hand, feminist principles and demands are ascribed to individualism, which translates into the slogan: women are free to decide for themselves, even to objectify their own bodies. In particular, it is observed that femvertising trend in media industry is changing female representation moving away from classic stereotypes: the feminine beauty ideal of slenderness, emphasized in the media since the seventies, is ultimately challenged by the 'curvy' body model, which is considered to be more inclusive and based on the concept of 'natural beauty'. Another aspect of change is the 'anti-romantic' revolution performed by some heroines, who are not in search of Prince Charming, in television drama and in the film industry. In conclusion, although femvertising tends to simplify and trivialize the concepts characterizing fourth-wave feminism ('intersectionality' and 'inclusion'), it is also a tendency that enables the challenging of media imagery largely based on male viewpoints, interests and desires.

Keywords : feminine beauty ideal, femvertising, gender and media, postfeminism

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