

Portrayal of Feminism in Barbie Vlog

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Abstract

The development of technology and emergence of participatory culture has helped to create many opportunities in sharing messages and self-representation. Within this entailment of advancement, the famous social actor, Barbie doll uses the opportunity in participating and uses her posthuman form as an extension of herself in presenting some of her identity and ideology in YouTube. That ideology that instilled by her posthuman form in YouTube is the ideology of feminism, the ideology that used to strangled Barbie from the criticism around her in the past. The juxtaposition that was shown in her new identity by portraying a contrasting view was revealed by Saussure's semiotic analysis and how the ideology of Barbie was relevant to the feminist critics now.

Keywords: Portrayal, Feminism, Posthuman, Barbie Vlog, YouTube

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Introduction

As a remembrance of what represents childhood, Barbie doll's popularity will always be everlasting with at least one Barbie exists within a household (Sherman and Zubbrigen, 2014). By being able to sell three Barbie in a day in 2008, Barbie soon becomes the powerhouse within the toy industry (Goldhill, 2014). Because of its great impact and popularity, Barbie doll labeled as the ideal self towards many young girls' life (Wright, 2003). However, the embodiment highlighted by the doll generates a problematic view, with its disturbing history of being inspired by a German doll named Bild Lilli (Driessen, 2016). Bild Lilli itself was marketed for adult men and given as gag gifts while Ruth Handler, the founder of Mattel sees it as an opportunity in remodeling the doll to fit the younger girls market (Tulinski, 2017). However, the attempt debunked as the doll soon became a perpetrator for sexualized and dramatizer of the gender role (Kuther & McDonald, 2004). Especially with its feminine conceptualization which putting aside the masculinity and gender-neutral tendencies (Rogers, 1998). First talking Barbie stated how 'Math is hard' disesteem women in the STEM community and reinforces women's representation to be dependent and limiting the ability of women (Wood, 1994). Despite the values, the physical attributes of Barbie provide certain terminology in Barbie's brand name with the name 'Barbie doll', 'Plastic' and 'Fake' as the statement of evidence in surpassed qualities of beauty branded within the society (Whitney, 2013). Consumerist view sees Barbie's proportion as an accomplishment achieved through a sufficient amount of money (Rogers 1992 in Toffeetti, 2007). Unrealistic body proportion enhanced by Barbie followed by children's tendencies in putting Barbie as the ideal self creates the implication of previewing comparisons between young children and the doll itself (Rogers, 1998). Having to have never been able to aid the relationship with many feminists, Barbie proving an attempt in changing the view. Together with the curvy Barbie, the use of Barbie vlog by emphasizing on some feminism issue has created great advantage towards the company. The use of Barbie to be more relevant and real as a vlogger connotes with the Media Equation Theory in setting a culture of seeing the technology as something alive as the reaction audience gave equivalent with what they perceived in face-to-face interaction (Griffin, 2014). With that in mind, Barbie vlog has a significant place within the development of posthuman in pop culture and how the posthuman actor able to portrays a feminist view.

Feminism

Fluidity in gender roles provides vicissitude on how it was defined and limitation by sex doesn't exist instead, construction towards what gender constitutes was highlighted (Butler, 1990). Limitation towards femininity and masculinity are faced with many considerations and how monoandrogynous personality is acclaim to fit more within the equality status (Tong, 2013). As many other aspects such as cultural, economic and technology to play a role in the reconstruction of gender (Guiliano, 2017). With the belief of "Male Breadwinner Hypothesis" putting forth what they believe of man as the dominant leader within the family (Guiliano, 2017). Having the rejection towards women's identity, the act of feminism was done by the very first feminist named Mary Wollstonecraft who wrote the book named *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* while followed by another movement named the *Declaration of Independence* in 1848 (Bieniek, 2015). Transitioning from the traditional view of feminism towards a more 'trendy' and 'cool' view of feminism and putting aside the

conservative perspective (Vaginaos, 2016). With the new culture emerges, the business realm uses the opportunity in developing the marketplace feminism (Zeisler, 2016). By putting more honest and realistic politics within the promotion campaign (Cohen, 2015). The strategy by Mattel proposed the changes in Barbie's identity from the fashion icon and housewife in 1959 into a career woman with various dreams with the slogan 'Be Anything' (Tulinski, 2017). Empowerment generated by Barbie through the presentation by the physical attributes of Barbie by having curvy with 22 eye colors, 14 face shapes, 24 different hairstyles, 30 different hair colors and 7 kinds of skin tones; representing a more multicultural view of Barbie's representation (Tulinski, 2017). Disclosing the view towards Barbie by enhancing what Barbie was criticized as (Townsend, 2018). Multi-dimensional Barbie displayed believable content of feminism as its core values, forwarding the sales of Barbie after the slump (Castle, 2018). With the boomerang effect, Mattel tried to escalate the new identity of Barbie from something she used to not and proposed the market view. In seeing the portrayal, researcher attempt on an understanding from two perspectives; the power and victim feminism. Victim feminism correlates with the first and second wave of feminism as the resistance towards violence of male existential traits (Talbot, 2005). As the violence appears originated during the wartime scarring trauma of sexual assault as the main triggers of victim feminism ideology (Stringer, 2014). Within the ideology, women rejecting the power and patriarchy implementation and seeking peace-loving ideology as the purpose of the ideal view (Wolf, 2013). Meanwhile, power feminism derived from the recognition of power and how this realization helps women in using that power for their benefits (Wolf, 2013). Although, the use of power feminism with the peruse of constituting stricter punishment for the male within the political realms (Orlof & Shiff, 2016).

Research Methodology

In understanding the natural phenomenon of feminism view, qualitative approach best accommodate the measurement of cultural view, experiences, and relationships within a group (Teherani, Martimianakis, Stenfors-Hayes, Wadhwa & Zapio, 2015). Through the qualitative approach, differences can be accountable as qualitative referred to as post-positivist and constructivist belief (Teherani, Martimianakis, Stenfors-Hayes, Wadhwa & Zapio, 2015). Semiology is one of the tools suitable in developing interpretations within the content analysis. As semiology by Saussure derived from the thinking of language as the unified variables in connecting the society (Hussein & Abushihab, 2014). Core values of semiology itself are duality, the use of langue (language) and langage (human speech); and diachrony and synchrony (Hussein & Abushihab, 2014). For a deeper meaning and multi-dimensional representation could be accessed by the use of synchrony towards the entire system (Hussein & Abushihab, 2014). Though, semiology system constructed of inconsistency due to an inability for deciphering dominant values within the signifier and signified (Carrasco, 2015). Because of the complexity in language, Saussure uses syntagmatic and paradigmatic analysis in manipulating the messages (Carrasco, 2015). Codes were the smaller subject of the content analysis and how these subjects used for the basis of coding. Social codes were used for the construction of knowledge used for the assembly of social identity (Chandler, 2007). Its construction within the society is accompanied by the language and bodily codes, where language codes connote differences in a social context, followed by bodily codes which distinguished according to cultural determinant (Chandler, 2007).

Discussion

The kind of feminism mostly shown within the vlog is the prevalent power feminism. From the points appear within the traits of power feminism, Barbie vlog displayed three significant traits of power feminism.

1. Seeks Power

Throughout the video, Barbie has always shown the desires and attempt on gaining power through both of her body language and language codes. Her way of tilting her head downwards and using most of her eyes movement during the statement of how she despises the use of 'Sorry' to be said within the society. The seeking of power appeared in three perspectives: (1) language power, (2) princess power, and (3) feminine power. Within the power of language, the value instilled within that certain words, implying the society as the main determinant of the value presents (Foucault, 1994). Portraying how this value present within the vlog, Barbie emphasizing her body language on the sentence society that present. The value stapled within the language 'Sorry' of degrading women's level within the society by putting the word 'Sorry' as a negative connotation. Meanwhile, in the princess power, Naomi Wolf (2014) believes in the natural urges of many young girls in their desire of power seeking by hiding behind the hierarchy wants. Provoking the 'princess' dream as part of what girls are aspired to be. Hence, the use of princess power in that context is purposely attaching the desire of power closely in women. While in the feminine power of synching the traditional values of men and traditional values of women within the context of leadership. Restating the need for new values in leadership by putting more of feminine aspects in exerting the power.

2. Critical Attitude Towards the Society

Renewal of subjectivity done in reference to the attempt in rejecting the current subjectivity planted by the society (Foucault, 1982). Prompted by the process of new discoveries, Barbie putting forth a new subjectivity of women adapting multifaceted career and promoting speaking up attitude for women. In regards to the oppression occurred in the past, halting the use of voices of women.

3. Creating Changes in Society

Within the vlog, Barbie offering the recognition of how she could help many young women out there in breaking the cycle. By putting some of the movement of breaking the traditional stereotypes of women in the STEM community and not being able to mix both art and science elements. And how Barbie seems to promote the changes of values within the 'Sorry' and she uses a language she thought as something more valuable and empowering.

Conclusion

With the implementation of power feminism within the vlog, Barbie uses the most recent type of feminism in promoting powerful action. Although, she did blame the victim feminism tendencies that occurred in some part of the videos.

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