



Linguistics

Feminism in Nikewomen, What are girls made of Advertisement: a Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis

Shilva Lioni¹, Eva Najma², Afel Kurniawan³, Randy Athaya⁴, Alma Fathiinah Rianto⁵

^{1,2,3,4,5} English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Andalas University, Padang, Indonesia

SUBMISSION TRACK

Received: February 20, 2025
Final Revision: March 22, 2025
Accepted : April 4, 2025
Available Online: April 30, 2025

KEYWORD

Feminism, Multimodal, Critical Discourse Analysis, Advertisement

CORRESPONDENCE

E-mail: shilvalioni@hum.unand.ac.id

A B S T R A C T

Advertisement is one of the media which is used to influence audiences, which in this case is on framing woman portrayal or sharing feminism perspective and ideology. The goal of this study is to examine the portrayal of feminism in Nikewomen, What a girls made of advertisement. The research analyze a Nikewomen, What a girl made of advertisement by using Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA). The findings revealed that the what a girls made of advertisement symbolizes feminism ideology, as shown by the plot, text, color, and woman character used on the advertisement which have the freedom to express herself and as the symbol of strength, confidence, power, independence, and resilience. Furthermore, the video depicts feminism ideology by depicting woman superiority and highlighting woman as valuable creature. Nike impact audiences by messages given, which are a feminist concept and feminism ideology, through using advertisement videos as a platform to influence audiences. Generally, this research is qualitative descriptive-explorative research where descriptive and explorative are intended to describe and explain the situation based on collected data and facts, which are then analyzed and arranged systematically to get conclusions in detail to be a hypothesis.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, global brands have increasingly embraced social and political themes. Various media are used on this case which one of them is advertisement and Nike, as one of the world's leading sportswear companies is no exception.

Advertisement is rated as one of the largest media which is used to influence audiences. In advertising, people often using their platforms to influence public discourse and promote particular values. One of Nike's notable campaigns is the advertisement "*What Are Girls Made Of*". The advertisement stands out as a powerful message that challenges traditional gender norms and empowers women through sport. This advertisement becomes a rich site for critical investigation, particularly in how it constructs and conveys feminist ideologies through various modes of communication.

This study adopts a Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) approach to examine how feminist messages are constructed in the "*What Are Girls Made Of*" advertisement. The MCDA approach in this context is used to analyze the semiotics of signs, words, and images which are referred as multimodal.

Talking about multimodal, as stated by Anstey & Geoff (2010), a multimodal text is one that incorporates two or more communication tools and semiotic systems. Specifically, there are five types of semiotic systems which are linguistic, visual, audio, gestural, and spatial (layout). Multimodality is a study of discourse that analyze a language phenomenon which combined with other several resources as a communication and representation of visual semiotic (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006).

On this research, multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) is used to a critical examination of how language, visuals, color, gestures, plot, and layout work together to produce meaning and influence viewers. By analyzing the discursive strategies and semiotic resources employed in the advertisement, this research aims to uncover how gender, power, and identity are represented and negotiated in Nike's branding. The analysis also seeks to understand how such multimodal texts contribute to the broader discourse on feminism in contemporary media. This analysis explores how languages create more meaning and have function beyond the sentences. The study examines languages in a broader and deeper context that includes the influences of ideology, social, cultural, and historical contexts.

Studies on multimodal analysis specifically language and signs within the framework of multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) have previously been conducted by scholars such as Gill and Lennon (2022), Jones (2019), Ulati (2021), Lirola (2016), Achfandy et al. (2022), Lopez (2017), Brady (2015), and Saimon (2019). However, further development of multimodal analysis within the MCDA framework, particularly concerning sport's advertisement symbolizes feminism ideology remains relatively scarce. Different from the previous researchers, this research offers new insights into current trends in the strategic use of language and signs in sport advertisement within feminism context. The research aims to enhance how media on this case Nike's sport advertising framing woman portrayal or sharing feminism perspective and ideology as the superior one not the inferior one.

According to *Oxford Learner's Dictionary*, feminism is the belief and aim that women should have the same rights and opportunities as men. Feminism is the recognition of gender injustices led by gender stereotyping that affect woman in the household or in society. According to Tong (2018), feminism attempt is to fight for independence and equality of status and social roles between men and women, so that gender discrimination does not occur in society.

In brief, the purpose of the present studies was (a) to look and analyze for patterns of multimodal used on Nikewomen, *What a girls made of* advertisement, and (b) to infer the meaning and function for each element of communication (multimodal) on portrayal woman figure and feminism ideology.

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research design using the Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) approach to examine how feminism is portrayed in Nike's advertisement "*What Are Girls Made Of*". The data analyzed by using critical discourse analysis from Fairclough (1995) and Van Dijk in order to examine the context and feminist components, as well as Multimodality from Kress and Leeuwen (2006) to examine the visual semiotic appeared on the advertisement. The plot, text, color, and woman character figure used are analyze as the multimodality aspect on this study. The researcher used multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) to examine each multimodality exhibited in the advertisement as well as the meanings behind those multimodalities and ideological positions. The study critically examines how feminist discourse is constructed and communicated through the combination of linguistic and visual modes.

Data Source

The primary data for this study is Nike's "*What Are Girls Made Of*" video advertisement, which is publicly available through Nikewomen's official media platforms on YouTube. The advertisement is selected based on its explicit engagement with gender-related themes and its popularity as a commercial piece promoting women empowerment with 4.092.144++ view and 102.000 numbers of like.

Data Collection

The advertisement is downloaded and watched for several times then transcribed to include both

verbal (spoken/written language) and non-verbal (visuals, music, gestures) elements. Screenshots of key scenes are taken for detailed visual analysis, and the transcript is segmented for linguistic analysis.

Analytical framework

On analyzing the data, the writers follows a three-level approach based on Fairclough's (1995) model:

1. Textual analysis which focuses on the linguistic choices, including vocabulary and rhetorical devices used in the narration.
2. Visual analysis which utilizes Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) visual grammar to analyze imagery, composition, color, gaze, and framing.
3. Discursive practice to examines how the advertisement draws on and contributes to broader feminist discourses.
4. Social practice which is explored the socio-cultural context in which the advertisement is produced and received, particularly in relation to gender ideologies and commercial branding.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the advertisement video, at the beginning of the video, there is a little girl which was seen to be ready to perform a song in front of an audience. At first, she is seen singing the lines facetiously. In one of her first lines, she says that women are made of gossip and marmalade, implying a mocking. Not too long from that moment, suddenly a woman in ice skating appears from a door and performs her skill. Then by a gesture, she secretly encourages the little girl. That little girl then begins to change her air and behaviour and then starts singing the next lines with a serious face. Not just like before, she is singing the songs with the lyrics to tell that women are made of irons, striving, self-destruction and battles. In the next lines, she sings that women are made of perseverance and grace that give the proud to the nation. While singing this line, a ballerina appears and looks at the little girl. The next of women was also shown boxing in the distance as the little girl looks at her and continue sings with the lyric that women are made of bruises, punches, bravery and clenched fists, along with a next figure of woman appears skateboarding. The little girl then sings another line saying that women are made of independence, skill, passion heart, and dignity. While singing, another scene present where a group of other little girls are seen behind her refer to next woman who appears in a running contest and she is seen wearing Nike shoes. The lines of song continue to that women are made of will that's harder than stone, strength and fire; shortly after a next figure of woman is seen lifting herself and we can see her muscles through her workout. The next figure, a woman disguises herself among the audience standing up and tearing her clothes, revealing that she is probably an athlete, along with the little girl singing her lines that women are made of accomplishments and achievement. The video cuts to a woman suddenly kicking a football to that little girl and she catches it, then she closes her imagining. The video ends with the little girl changing her place in a snowy football field, grabbing a ball, and ready to kick it to the goalkeeper. The last sentence of word "You are made of what you do" appeared and the video was cut off.

The analysis of multimodal discourse where used to analyze the strategy that has been used from the Nike advertisement when delivering the message "What are girls made of" and to promote their product. The group acquired the data by transcript from the Nike video advertisement.

After we analysed the advertisement video, certain elements that were used in the advertisement when delivering the message and promoting their product. The elements of this advertisement involve (i) visual elements that the visual of the female athletes in different sports such as skating, boxing, and running create a contrast from the stereotypical ideas that the little girl begins with. Each sport here represents strength, endurance, and skill, symbolizing the evolving definition of femininity; (ii) textual components that through the lyrics that start from the traditional and limiting views of women but suddenly change to reflect strength, will, and independence; and (iii) colour usage that the colour change to be more vibrant (red, black, and metallic) every time the athletes perform as the symbol of strength, power, and resilience reflects the empowering transformation of the girls.

Visual Element: Women as an Athlete

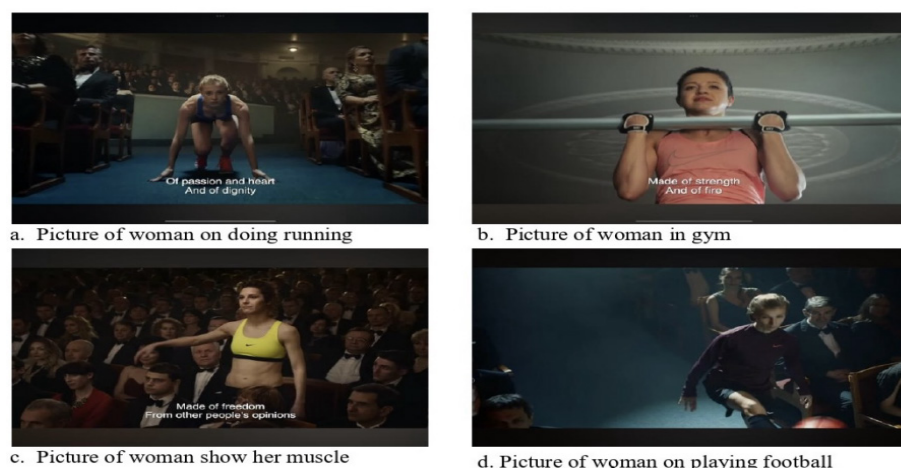
The analysis of the advertisement that holds elements such as visuals, text, and colour shows an important process to identify how the advertisement provides the audience with messages that could be interpreted with the phenomenon that many feminists have been fighting for years for equality for men dominant field, especially on the field of sport.

In the video, we can identify the patterns that emerge and tend to be used as the convention that marks where the video uses a strategy to deliver the messages and promote the product which are visual elements.



Picture 1. Scenes of the appearance of the female athletes

From the visual element, the appearance of the female athletes in different sports such as skating (Picture. 1a), ballerina (Picture. 1b), boxing (Picture. 1c), skateboarding (Picture. 1d), running (Picture. 2a), gymnastics (Picture. 2b), and playing football (Picture. 2d) appeared on the video. Each of a new scene began with the pattern a new woman figure in a new kind of sports. The visual creates a contrast from the stereotypical ideas that the little girl begins with or stereotypical woman in society in general which are made from gossip and marmalade, portrayed as the weak creatures, and as inferior. However, in contrast with those, each sport appeared here represents strength, endurance, masculinity, and skill, symbolizing the evolving definition of femininity. Each of kind athletes here presented the Nike's product on their bodies by their outfit during doing the sport. The choosing of a kind of sport here is showing that even the sport such as boxing (Picture. 1c), playing football (Picture. 2d), skateboarding (Picture. 1d), and others can not only do by man but also woman can have the same opportunity to do that kind of sports, and she was capable for that.



Picture 2. Scenes of the visual appearance of the female athletes

Textual Element: Women Portrayed as Valuable Creatures

The textual components of the advertisement video start with conservative words that are traditional society have and give a limited view of women, such as:

Minutes 0.30 – 0.40:

The lyric: *“Made of flowers and of rings, made of gossip and of marmalade, this is what our girls are made of.”*

After this lyric is sung, the video shows a female athlete which can be considered as the representation of a female sign that embraces strength, will, and independence that will be shown in many parts when the little girl sings the song as we can see on the video:

Minutes 0.50 – 1.37

The lyric: *“Made of iron and of striving of self-dedication and of battles, this is what our girls are made of. Made of perseverance and of grace, that gives pride to the entire nation, this is what our girls are made of. Made of bruises and of punches, made of bravery and of clenched fists. Made of independence and of skill, of passion and heart of dignity, made of will that’s harder than stone. Made of strength and of fire. Made of freedom from other people’s opinions, Made of accomplishments and of achievements. This is what our girls are made of.”*

The switch in the lyrics shows the determination of women to prove to society that they are not weak creatures but a valuable creature with the elements of an independent and strong girl strengthens the reason people to not underestimate women. The use of word such as iron, striving of self dedication, grace, perseverance, pride of entire nation, bravery, punches, independence, skill, passion, heart of dignity, will harder, strength, fire, accomplishments, and achievements describe how strength and valuable woman. The feminism ideology also supported by the statement “made of freedom from other people’s opinion” that describe traditional society system which being underestimated and being an object of people judgement.

Color Pattern Element: Vibrant Color used to highlight the Message



Picture 3. The atmosphere of warm tone around

The color pattern where the color of warm tone (Picture. 3) changes to be more vibrant which are red, black, and metallic (Picture. 4) and every time the athletes perform show as the symbol of strength, power, and resilience reflects the empowering transformation of the girls (Picture. 1), (Picture. 2). The colours pattern appeared on the video used to engage the audience and become symbolic such as red represents bravery, black represents power, and metallic means wealth. **Butler (1990) on their gender performativity theory** suggests that gender is performed through repeated actions and expressions. The use of vibrant colors in advertising can be seen as a performance that challenges traditional gender norms and redefines femininity. Color psychology on marketing context suggests that colors evoke emotional responses and influence consumer behavior. Vibrant colors like red, pink, yellow, orange are often used to grab attention, convey energy, enthusiasm, power, and passion. Red can signify power, passion, and action, often used in sports ads to suggest strength and confidence (Barthes, 1964).



Picture 4. A little girl with a red ball in her hand

In coherent with postfeminism in advertising, Nike advertisement “*What a girl made of*” can be categorized of postfeminist ads which is often use aesthetic empowerment such as bold colors, strong visuals, and confident female figures to show women as autonomous, capable, and stylish. In this ads, these visuals often subvert expectations, using high-saturation colors to associate femininity with strength and rebellion rather than passivity.

At first glance, the first scene appeared is only music with a girl sing a song to the audience (Picture. 3), but the scene is actually laden with a lot of powerful messages. The several women figures appeared with the change of lyrics in this advertisement video is portrayed as a woman figure who can express herself, challenge patriarchy, have full authority over her body, have power, grace, and strength (Picture. 1), (Picture. 2). Nike portrayed women as the athlete, pride of the nation, strength and power creature and she was not afraid to confront people who looked down on her. These statements are consistent with post-modern feminism or the third wave of feminism.

CONCLUSIONS

To conclude, in this research we are on purpose to take Nike’s advertising video “*What a girl made of*” where the concept of the video is chosen to be able to strengthen the result of analysis that we found in viewing the strategy of multimodal that is used in the video in order to the delivering the messages and feminism ideology beside of promoting their product through the advertisement. There is a lot of feminism representation appeared since the Nike’s sport advertisement is about woman empowerment.

The findings of the research revealed that the “*What a girls made of*” advertisement symbolizes feminism ideology, as shown by the visual element such as plot and woman character, textual element, and color pattern used on the advertisement which portrayed woman have the freedom to express herself and as the symbol of strength, confidence, power, independence, and resilience. Furthermore, the video depicts feminism ideology by depicting woman superiority and highlighting woman as valuable creature.

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