

# FEMINISM INDUSTRY: AN INQUIRY INTO THE CORPORATE APPROPRIATION OF WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

EGE ÖZTOKAT

## Abstract

A growing number of corporations started to develop product lines, advertising campaigns and new media engagement plans using messages and imagery around feminism and women's movement in the recent years. As part of this new trend, a large number of global corporations adopted a seemingly feminist perspective by capitalizing on women's empowerment, the body positive movement, intersectionality and other similar concepts from the feminist discourse of our day. Even though these high budget projects manage to appeal to larger sections of the world population than organically founded groups within women's movement, the article argues that the corporate appropriation of feminism leads to decontextualization of women's issues. The article aims to analyze the industrialization of feminism and the dynamics behind the creation of this emerging industry. The article consults in semiotic analysis of a recent ad campaign to serve as an example to offer a perspective on the subject. Concordantly, the textual and visual material of the commercial film launched by Nike Turkey on February 20, 2017 are analyzed. The findings of the article offer an observation of the appropriation of feminist discourse and the transformation of feminist values into profit values.

**Keywords:** Appropriation, Feminism, Patriarchy, Advertising, Capitalism.

## 1. Introduction

The appropriation of feminism by global corporations created a new understanding, a new definition of feminism in the recent years. Feminism and women's movement are often redefined in the process of creating product lines, advertising campaigns and new media engagement initiatives targeting women as consumers. Concepts, values and discourse which belong to feminism and women's movement are transformed in this process in order for corporate messages to come across as supportive of women. However, as feminist values are turned into profit values, the ideals behind women's movement are decontextualized or trivialized.

In order to understand this recent trend of corporate appropriation of feminism, it is important to consider the positioning of women in the world economic order, mainstream media's function as a sustaining tool of the world economic order, and the media's global role in social and economic positioning of women as dynamics behind this industrialization process. The emerging feminism industry transforms feminism, making it difficult for large sections of the world population to differentiate exploitation from empowerment, consumption from liberation, and products of the feminism industry from values of feminism and women's movement.

## 2. Women in the World Economic Order

Throughout history, gender has been built by certain driving forces such as cultures, governments and the economy. It is impossible to talk about women's issues without evaluating the economic order of the world and its subsidiary ideologies. While ideologies which shape gender were imposed by a religious world view in pre-capitalist societies, post-capitalist cultures constructed "*secularized discourses of gender and sexuality*" (Connell, 1987, pp.250). Therefore, the holders of the hegemonic power, the capital, started to define the context of gender.

The tendency of hegemonic power to discard disadvantaged classes is reflected on the mainstream binary heteronormative constructs of gender, privileging cisgender, heterosexual (and in the West, white) men. Hegemony is defined by R.W. Connell as "*a social ascendancy achieved in a play of social forces that extends beyond contests of brute power into the organization of private life and cultural forces*" (1987, pp.184). Moreover, ascendancy is embedded in mass media content, social policies, wage structures and so forth.

Wage structures give an insight to women's place in the current economic system. According to The World Economic Forum (2016), by 2016 only 59% of the gender gap on economic participation has been closed worldwide. While the economic parity between genders has been ameliorating, it is estimated that equal pay will not be reached until 2059 and the statistics suggest that today, on average, a woman earns 79 cents for every US dollar a man earns in the United States of America (Sheth and Gould, 2017). Whereas in Turkey, a woman's average yearly earning is 12.162\$ when a man's is 27.672\$, and on average, a woman earns 1\$ while a man earns 2.27\$ for the same work (Bianet, 2017). That is to say, a woman in Turkey earns 44 cents on the dollar.

As seen in the example of the wage gap, hegemony and patriarchy are no longer institutionalized by religion or law, but through inequalities which are necessary for sustaining the economic system. In every instance where social inequality is institutionalized, where values are transformed by the upper classes and where power structures form, women are subject to subordination and classification as the secondary gender. As Sibel Özbudun states "*Since it can only be institutionalized with the support of the patriarchy, power is masculine from the start*" (2007, pp.22). Even though oppression does not profit the system directly, it is a source for the creation of a widespread mentality where gender classifications are enforced through practices such as "*division of labor among genders*" (Özbudun, 2007, pp.22).

Liberal and neoliberal economic systems and the patriarchy are flexible and adaptable in nature, therefore they appear in various ways in different times and places. Today, the discourses of their ideologies appear differently in order to adapt to the current social conditions where women are an important part of governments, the work force

and the media. The more visible state of women forces the media, advertising discourse and their practices to evolve accordingly. While the mainstream media discourse of the 1960's prioritized beauty for male attention (Reed, 1969), today's discourse highlights confidence, empowerment, and liberation. However, the products being advertised remain the same, as well as the ideologies behind them.

Hegemony and patriarchy are communicated through media. The mainstream media, as one of the most important components of the economic system and its sustainment and propaganda tool, are crucial to the creation and positioning of gender roles, and their diffusion and normalization among the public. Constant exposure to implicit messages render the public vulnerable to media's influence and unaware of their mandate.

Advertising is a field where gender discourses are particularly dominant. Ads that approach women as consumers accordingly shape their rhetoric. The language used in advertising is no longer overtly sexist or derogatory to women, it claims to support, celebrate and empower them while creating an industrialized consumption model around feminism and women's movement.

### 3. Industrialization of Feminism

Today, spearheaded by the world economic order and the media, a new understanding of the concept of feminism emerges as a lifestyle in concordance with consumption culture. Therefore, a new, industrialized version of feminism is created through mass production of products targeting women, attribution of values from feminism and women's movement to these products, appropriation and use of feminist discourse while advertising, and mass consumption of products and appropriated values by women.

In order to understand the model of this industrialization process, it is important to go back to the teachings of the Frankfurt School and their concept of culture industry. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno explained in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* that "*only what has been industrialized, rigorously subsumed, is fully adequate*" (1944, pp.95) to the concept of culture in terms of the culture industry as it relies on systematic domination and subordinates all branches of intellectual production in order to impose the logic of work on individuals' leisure time. Therefore, control is no longer restricted to work; it is in culture, leisure, and entertainment. In this system, "*something is provided for everyone so that no one can escape; differences are hammered home and propagated. [...] Everyone is supposed to behave spontaneously according to a 'level' determined by indices and to select the category of mass product manufactured for their type*" (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1944, pp.97).

In this context, it is easy to see from a corporate perspective that a new sect of women is formed as a consumer category, a consumer model. The individuals of this new target group of consumers are autonomous, economically independent women who do not fit nor tolerate the stereotypes previously asserted by the media. In order to incorporate this sect into the economically charged mechanism of daily life, the media need a new framework to appeal to them in a way that profits the system. As a belief stemming from equality, feminism disturbs the economic system which depends on inequalities by its nature. Therefore the system needs to control this stance against itself, reorient it and finally, profit from it. The economic system and the media then reframe feminism and values of women's movement as consumer habits. The tendency to limit women's liberation in a way that will not challenge the fundamental inequalities of a society whose major division is that of class is reflected on the media discourse (German, 1995).

To create a feminism industry is to sell product by disrupting and commodifying feminism for the sake of mass consumption. Therefore, the new trend of feminism as a consumer behavior model offers women a commodified, standardized version of feminism. Hence, a "*remarkable similarity*" emerges "*between 'liberating' feminism and 'liberating' capitalism*" as "*the desire for emancipation starts to look like something wholly interchangeable with the desire to simply buy more things*" (Power, 2009, pp.27). The promise of feminism industry is to liberate, empower and support women if they consume certain products. Thus alienation is unavoidable as concepts lose their

meanings in order to persuade the consumer. As Horkheimer and Adorno observe, the bourgeois division of labor “enforces the self-alienation of individuals, who must mold themselves to the technical apparatus body and soul” (1944, pp.23).

Media discourse is crucial as constant exposure to it shapes the language of society. When issues are reflected upon through the use of media terminology, the conversation shifts in a way that is intended by the system. Herbert Marcuse asks “*Can one really distinguish between the mass media as instruments of information and entertainment, and as agents of manipulation and indoctrination?*” (1964, pp.11). Marcuse’s concept of one-dimensional behavior depends on one-dimensional language shaped by the media’s “*publicity agents*” which “*shape the universe of communication*” (1964, pp.88). Therefore autonomy, discovery, demonstration, and critique recede before designation, assertion and imitation. Marcuse explains, “*Discourse is deprived of the mediations which are the stages of the process of cognition and cognitive evaluation. The concepts which comprehend the facts and thereby transcend the facts are losing their authentic linguistic representation*” (1964, pp.89). Concordantly, feminism as appropriated by corporations and the media can be seen as threatening to feminism as an ideology of gender equality. When corporations capitalize on women’s empowerment, the body positive movement, intersectionality and other similar concepts from the feminist discourse of our day, they become values of consumption and indicators of a specific, consumerist lifestyle.

In the example of empowerment, one of the concepts which have recently been appropriated and popularized by global corporations, we see that the concept becomes almost interchangeable with exploitation in advertising discourse. Media messages of empowerment are built according to the principles of exploitation. As Rosalind Gill explains, “*Contemporary advertising [...] suggests, above all, that buying the product will empower you*” (2008, pp.43). This new strategy of liberating masses of men and women solely concentrates on getting women into positions of power within the system. As a result, Sinéad Kennedy explains “*so-called mainstream feminism increasingly found itself, at best in accommodation with the forces of capitalism and at worse in convergence with corporate and neoliberal interests. Questions of race and class, once fundamental, were marginalized or abandoned in favour of identity politics*” (Kennedy, 2013).

This, in turn, leads to a tendency to see women’s issues as individual problems, thus trivialize them. As Kennedy explains, “*Women today, we are told, can have it all if they only want it enough. Women who feel they are treated unequally or unfairly only have themselves to blame; they need to examine their own behavior and cast aside their victim mentality*” (2013).

The ambiguity of the media discourse positions the concept of empowerment, and other appropriated feminist concepts, as the antithesis of women’s movement. The values of feminism industry start to implicitly oppose feminism. From this, a system where women cannot even use feminist terminology correctly comes to be. As Nina Power humorously suggests, “*Stripped of any internationalist and political quality, feminism becomes as radical as a diamanté phone cover*” (2009, pp.30).

#### 4. Methodology

The method of analysis used in the article is sequential semiotic analysis, based on the semiotic approach of discourse analysis defined by *Ecole de Paris* founded by A.J. Greimas (1966). The data is collected from the commercial film of Nike Turkey, released on Youtube on February 20, 2017 as part of the advertising campaign under the slogan “*This is us*” (Youtube, 2017). The commercial film has also been released on Turkish television, in cinemas and transmitted as sponsored content on Facebook and Instagram. The commercial film’s duration is 1 minute and 10 seconds and it is produced by the agency Wieden+Kennedy Amsterdam (Executive Creative Director: Mark Bernath, Eric Quennoy; Creative Director: Al Merry, Craig T. Williams; Art Director: Zeynep Orbay, Tunç Topçuoğlu; Production Company: Academy Films; Directors: Christopher Barrett, Luke Taylor; Director of

Photography: Alex Barber; Producer: Medb Riordan) (Coloribus, 2017). The film is approached as a heteroclitic discourse deploying visual, textual and oral/verbal languages. The discourse of the film is evaluated from a semiotic perspective. “*Semiotical function*” is the fundamental and solidary relation between content and expression, as explained by Louis Hjelmslev (1968, pp.99) or between the signifier and the signified as in Ferdinand de Saussure’s theory (1973, pp.99). Concordantly, the signs are analyzed through the dichotomy of these two faces of the sign.

The important signifiers and the messages conveyed by basic signs are evaluated in the article. Paradigms that are constructed to interpret the signs as intended by the commercial, the codes, and the references of these codes are explored. The sequential structure of the commercial is read in order to detect the possible meanings behind the contrasts involved in the discourse. Through this method, it is aimed to reach findings which will help analyze the commercial’s messages about gender, feminism and empowerment.

The commercial is an entity that can be analyzed in seven meaningful sequences in order to highlight the seven consecutive installations in the commercial film. The sequences are defined as micro structures of the macro structure of the commercial’s entirety, hence their articulation supplies the analysis with the main structure. The main structure is composed of the commercial text of the duration of 1 minute and 10 seconds, consisting of music, lighting, sounds, language, visual effects and writing. It stars Turkish athletes such as national basketball player Işıl Alben, national tennis player İpek Soylu, and national triathlete Esra Gökçek.

After applying segmentation to the main structure, each sequence is analyzed separately in order to describe the principal plot. Following semiotic approach, the study evaluates meaningful structures in two essential levels. The first is the surface level where narrative and figurative components are located. Actors are the elements of the first level of analysis with their action schemes and performances as well as their figurative and thematic roles. This level concerns narrative, figurative and thematic components of the discourse. The second level, following Greimas (1966, pp.18), is the basic level of the signification, also called the deep structure of meaning where the semantic fields of the detected roles and figures are evaluated.

In the article, semantic possibilities of the entirety of the discourse are investigated as social discourses create meaning through a combination of multiple paradigms. The first sequence is analyzed in depth in order to understand the surface level and the deep level of the sequential structure shared by all sequences, and the other six sequences are read according to the detailed analysis of the first.

## 5. Findings

The commercial film consists of seven sequences, each composed of two segments, and one intersegment with almost identical structures and mechanisms. These seven sequences are detected with regard to characters, spaces and acts. Every sequence contains two segments describing two spaces, which are chained by a focus on the main character. The findings focus on the figurative structure of the discourse and its possible significance in the deep structure of meaning. Contrasts between the two segments of each sequence and the dynamic audiovisual structure of the intersegments depict two different worlds for each character and create two incarnations of the same character.

The first segments are based on traditional representations of women in media, they depict women in private spheres which are deemed traditional, usual and familiar while the second segments represent the same characters in different spaces related to sports. The commercial film has a spatially fictionalized design through the use of actors’ passages from one location to another. The two segments of each sequence are both simultaneously connected and divided by intersegments which are about three seconds long. This is the main logic of the commercial film containing basic canonic schemes. This editing practice, which is also the narrative technique of this visual discourse, makes the message clear and striking.

**Segment 1 → Intersegment → Segment 2***Table 1. Sequence structure*

The first sequence (from 0 min. 00 sec. - 0 min. 10 sec.) depicts a living room as the first location of the sequence and of the commercial film. The living room contains referents to a typical middle class home through the familiar elements of chandelier, buffet, couch, carpet and beige, patterned wallpaper. The characters seen in front of these elements show a nuclear family. There are four figures: the mother, the father, the daughter (the character) and the son who pose in front of a camera for a family portrait. The thematic and figurative roles are depicted clearly from a semiotic perspective.

The intersegment is a fast and short episode where the character opens her mouth to reveal a bright green mouth guard, takes her clothes off and is then dressed in bright blue sports gear, and pushes the camera which was taking the family portrait to the floor. The dull lack of color of the first segment is disrupted by the use of green and blue, two colors of nature and vitality as the character passes on to the second segment. The visuality of the film assumes a new tone through chromatic change where the content and the expression are both transformed. The accent on sport breaks the routine and introduces vitality or energy. The second segment of the first sequence depicts a gym where the referents of sports material including a sand bag are used. The viewer sees an ordinary gym where the character trains seriously and energetically. Here, the figurative role is athleticism and the thematic role is professionalism and seriousness. The heavy use of black and grey highlights the character and the activity of boxing. The semiotic value of the visual units used in this segment (sports gear, mouth guard, sand bag etc.) corresponds at the deep structure to the isotopy of /sport/ whereas the first segment reveals the isotopy of /tradition/ with the conventional pose and the typical living room.

The first sequence thematically and figuratively articulates two separate spaces. The actor in both plans is the woman character. The first plan sees her as a daughter of a traditional family and the second as an athlete. The passage transforms the daughter into an athlete strikingly. This dramatic change is rooted in two different isotopies in the semantic level: /tradition/ and /sport/.

Sequence	Segment	Character	Space	Signs	Isotopy
<b>Sequence 1</b> (0 00-0.10)	Segment 1	Daughter	House, living room	Camera	/tradition/
	Segment 2	Athlete	Gym	Mouth guard, sports gear	/sport/
<b>Sequence 2</b> (0.11-0.18)	Segment 1	Cook	Kitchen	Flour	/tradition/
	Segment 2	Athlete	Gym	Barbell	/sport/
<b>Sequence 3</b> (0.19-0.27)	Segment 1	Shopper	Jewelry Store	Golden jewelry rack	/tradition/
	Segment 2	Athlete	Gallery	Gold medal, gold trophies	/sport/
<b>Sequence 4</b> 0.28-0.34)	Segment 1	Daughter	Café	Turkish tea cup	/tradition/
	Segment 2	Athlete	Tennis court	Sports gear	/sport/
<b>Sequence 5</b> (0.35-0.43)	Segment 1	Woman	Study room	Books	/tradition/

	Segment 2	Athletes	Basketball court	Sports gear, court	/sport/
<b>Sequence 6</b> (0.44-0.53)	Segment 1	Sisters	Photograph	Picture frame (note: gets dropped by the character and breaks)	/tradition/
	Segment 2	Dancers	Studio	Clothing	/sport/
<b>Sequence 7</b> (0.54-1.04)	Segment 1	-	Bedroom	Pink color, white color	/tradition/
	Segment 2	Runners	Istanbul	Open space, Nike shoe	/sport/

*Table 2. Sequential Elements*

Reading further in the semantic level, the inherent qualities positioned as traditional, familiar and conventional in the first segment are put in opposition to the boxing training of the second segment as unfamiliar, unusual. As these two spaces are opposed by the discourse, the commercial film formally suggests that the character exists either as a daughter or an athlete, which implies that she cannot exist in both traditional and untraditional spaces. The discourse suggests that these two worlds are mutually exclusive.

The discourse which seems to use the binary opposition criteria of structural studies carries a stereotypical scheme in its deep structure, such as the stereotype of a woman whose existence is restricted to private spheres, to home. The use of the field of presence and the form of existence confronts the presence of a traditional family woman with the presence of an athlete. As the differentiation between the segments demonstrates, the commercial presumes two separate universes. The auditory and visual accent of the passages gives the sense of a strong opposition between the two universes in the deep surface. The editing emphasizes disjointed, heterogeneous existences. The throwing of the camera that was taking the family portrait demonstrates aggression to claim that the universe of the first segment is oppressive and that the second is liberating. This communicates that getting out of the first universe of oppressive and traditional conditions surrounding the stereotypical woman should be fought. However, the strong opposition and aggression revitalize the stereotypes that the commercial film is fighting on the surface level by positioning them as forms of existence to be avoided and fought in the deep level of structure.

A paradox appears in the deep level of the discourse: the positioning of traditional and conventional lifestyles as stereotypical by the commercial film recreates the stereotypes it is fighting. The commercial does not only fight stereotypes forced by the patriarchy by depicting extraordinary athletes as successful individuals, it consorts in embodying stereotypes by aligning them with forms of existence closer to the traditional and the conventional. Beyond the binary oppositions of these contradictions, the world of women is designed through a theme of separation, thus it does not allow women to be autonomous individuals who have the choice to prioritize sport or family, but as oppressed, weak individuals who need to individually fight all traditional forms of existence by adopting the forms of existence glorified by Nike.

The second sequence (from 0.11 to 0.18) consists of a segment where the character is sifting flour and of another segment where the same character is lifting a barbell. The first segment is shot from a bird's-eye angle showing a wooden kitchen table, flour, eggs, kitchen supplies and red, patterned tiles. The character is wearing an apron but her face is not visible due to the camera angle. The intersegment is a turning shot where the camera moves to focus on the character's face, and the background turns into a blue floor on which the character lifts a barbell, and her apron disappears to reveal Nike sportswear. While the first segment's visual units depict a traditionally gendered space, the kitchen; the second segment strongly opposes the first through changes in chromatic design, camera angles and the character's attire.

The intersegment of this sequence is important as we see sport as the element which reveals the character's face on the surface level and gives her an identity on the deep semantic level. The first segment depicts anonymity while the second focuses on individuality. The moment of gaining an identity comes at the same time as the reveal of Nike sportswear. The camera angles reveal the brand value of Nike as a product to be consumed for emancipation as a semantic value of the deep structure. The flour on the character's hands as a sign in the first segment is replaced by another sign in the second, powder. Flour is an ordinary sign characterizing the kitchen space and it refers to the semantic field of the domestic while powder is an opposing sign referring to sport. This transformative scene prioritizes the /sport/ isotopy in the deep structure as opposed to the one depicting housework. The opposition of the figurative acts of housework and lifting refer to the opposition of the thematic roles of oppression and emancipation. The discourse assumes that the act of getting out of the kitchen and into the gym is a status upgrade. While the first segment highlights anonymity of the cultural codes attributed to women such as being homemakers, the second segment depicts athleticism as an extraordinary form of existence.

The third sequence (from 0.19 to 0.27) depicts racks of golden jewelry in its first segment and shelves of trophies in the second. The first segment shows two characters, a man who insists on giving the character of a woman jewelry behind the surface of the lines of golden jewelry resembling a display window. The intersegment is the splitting open of the racks of golden jewelry by the woman character and her stepping through to the front as the background changes into shelves of golden trophies.

The use of golden jewelry in the first segment and the gold trophies in the second refers to two separate forms of existence: the traditional and the sportive. The third sequence follows the structure of the second as the character's face is first shown and she is attributed an identity when stepping out of a space referring to the stereotypical view that women are materialistic and value expensive ornaments, and into a gallery of trophies highlighting accomplishments which relates to the isotopy of /sport/. The positioning of the character with her head held high and posing upright in the second segment opposes the first segment.

The fourth sequence (from 0.28 to 0.34) shows the main character keeping her head down and listening to another, older character in the first segment, and the main character as playing tennis in the second segment. The space used in the first segment is a café where there is a traditional Turkish tea cup on the table in front of the character. The tea cup and the traditional attire of the character are visual elements referring to traditional, conventional forms of existence. Following the abovementioned sequences, this segment draws attention to the connection between tradition and oppression as the character in the traditionally depicted space is being disturbed and forced into submission as conveyed by her facial expression. In the second segment, the camera angle is pointing up to reveal a referee watching a tennis match. The connection of tradition and oppression is highlighted once again as the characters in reference to the /sport/ isotopy are shot from glorifying camera angles referencing power in the second segment.

The fifth sequence (from 0.35 to 0.43) sees a woman arranging a bookshelf in the first segment and a basketball game in the second. The transformation of the bookshelf into the floor of a basketball court on which the characters play basketball in the intersegment prioritizes the area of sport over the private sphere as the other sequences.

The sixth sequence (from 0.44 to 0.53) opens with a full screen display of a framed photograph showing five women with serious facial expressions standing in a line by height. The first segment is short and still. The dropping of the framed photograph to the ground reveals the center character's arm as she throws the frame to the floor in the intersection and the same characters from the photograph are revealed to be standing in a studio. The five characters dance and laugh in the second segment. While the first segment sees the characters dressed in white, black and dark blue, the second segment sees them in red, yellow, white, grey and blue Nike tights and sports tops. The stillness and dullness of the first set design are opposed by the colorful attire and the dynamic movements of



the characters. Embodied by the breaking sound of the glass, the transformation from the conventional into the unconventional is highlighted once again.

The seventh sequence (from 0.54 to 1.04) shows an empty bedroom in the first segment. The design of the room through the use of pink and white colors, flowers and posters, refers to the culturally gendered approach to color and design of children's rooms. The intersection depicts a Nike shoe stepping on the room and demolishing it. As the camera zooms out, the commercial film shows the owner of the Nike shoe shrugging. In the second segment, the character is joined by seven other characters as she runs from the dark studio towards the first open space seen in the film. The focus on the giant foot stepping on a space conventionally attributed to young women and girls aligns with the throwing of the camera in the first sequence and the dropping of the photograph in the sixth. Another important element in this sequence is the first open space in the commercial film, it appears at the end of the last segment where the characters run towards a silhouette of Istanbul, marked by the silhouette of the Galata Tower. This editing choice lines up with the use of private spheres such as home, kitchen and study room as referents of tradition and oppression. By showing the characters running off to the first open space in the film, the commercial gives the sense that the characters are running to their freedom.

Another important element of the commercial film's discourse is the use of audio. The voice over text and the background music communicate the messages of the film. The voice over text reads *"You know us. We have pretty faces. Our hands are fine and delicate. Oh, and did I mention, we love gold? It suits us well. We're always quiet and humble. We keep our house perfectly in order. And we wouldn't dare laugh in public. Now would we? You know us... Don't you?"* The tone of the text is in coherence with the tonality used in the commercial. The critique of the stereotypes is established through irony. The use of qualifying adjectives such as *"pretty"*, *"fine"*, *"delicate"*, *"quiet"* and *"humble"* belong to the semantic fields of external qualities and of subservience, related intimately to the traditional representation of women in media and the qualities of women that are deemed acceptable in patriarchal cultures. The symmetry between the first phrase and the second to the last highlights the widely accepted state of these stereotypes. The text is read by an ironically stereotypical woman who is passive, weak and reduced to her appearance. The rhetorical final question challenges patriarchy to reflect on the representations of the oppressed state of womanhood. The political reference to *"laugh in public"* also draws attention to political oppression alongside the cultures and traditions by referring to a statement by the Deputy Prime Minister of Turkey in 2014 suggesting that women shouldn't laugh out loud in public and that it is not decent as women should be pure, modest and timid in his opinion which he defends with Islam.

The falling of the camera that took the family portrait in the first sequence, the shattering of the frame in the sixth sequence and the demolishing of the pink and white bedroom in the seventh are used in order to emphasize the breaking of the stereotypes they represent. Although successful in delivering a critique of traditional and political oppression in patriarchal culture, they both locate family as the oppressor in the process of significance and present all traditional forms of existence as oppressed. The background music is parts of Beyoncé's song *Run the World (Girls)*. The song is important to the entirety of the commercial as it sets an energetic tone with its dynamic rhythm and fast pace suited for the message of uniting women of Turkey with sports. It is important to note that Beyoncé is seen as one of the most important feminist icons of popular culture and that this song has been widely accepted as an anthem for empowerment due to the repetitive lyrics *"Who run the World? Girls"*.

As the commercial film ends, two slogans appear one after the other *"This is us"* and *"Just do it"*. The first is the slogan of Nike's campaign for engagement with women through encouragement of sports. The use of *"us"* establishes unity and an emotional connection with the audience and the brand. The emphasis of the phrase is on the opposition between stereotypes and reality. The following *"Just do it"* slogan of Nike also adds to the messages of energy and freedom through sports and the commercial film ends with the Nike logo.

## 6. Conclusions

Following the analysis, it can be concluded that Nike Turkey's commercial film exemplifies the corporate appropriation of feminism through messages of empowerment. The highlight on real women athletes from Turkey, the ironic embodiment of stereotypes, references to cultural and political oppression, and the use of a song by a feminist pop culture icon while advertising a brand all qualify the commercial film as a product of feminism industry.

The main opposition in the structure of the commercial's discourse is between tradition and sport. According to the analyzed discourse used in the commercial film; conventional lifestyles, traditional forms of existence and stereotypes are closely connected. Through a strong emphasis on contradiction, it is implied that sports are empowering and liberating. This opposition is important on multiple levels. First of all, it suggests that the way to fight the traditionally formed gender roles is through sport and consumption of sportive and allegedly empowering products and brands. The transformation of values and concepts by feminism industry alienates women and trivializes women's issues such as familial and societal pressures or unemployment and exclusion from education as excluded problems that women can overcome individually. Only cure that is being offered to the oppressed women trapped in traditional, conventional gender roles is for them to empower themselves through sports. Gender roles are seen as something a woman can individually abandon just by wanting to. It is suggested in the discourse that women who exist in traditional and conventional contexts are not allowed or accustomed to participate in sports, but also that they can easily gain the individual freedom to do so. Alignment of the advertised products with signs used against the patriarchy gives the impression that consuming the products is empowering, which is coherent with the main idea implicitly dominant in the messages of feminism industry: to be empowered is to consume.

Secondly, the commercial film deems all traditional, conventional acts as stereotypical and as things to be fought by all women. While fighting gender roles and stereotypes, it defines all traditional lifestyles as confined to house work or family, and perpetuates another kind of stereotype of weak women who, despite having the choice, cannot pull away from oppressive forms of existence. In the exemplary commercial, the signs of the camera and the framed photo are used both as referents of family and tradition and as referents of oppression. By throwing or breaking these objects at the moments of liberation, tradition and family are rendered oppressive by nature. Housework and family are located to seem similar to obedience to misogynist political orders of being passive (such as the Deputy Prime Minister's statement). The lack of Muslim women in headscarves in the commercial is also noteworthy as in reality, they are an irreducible portion of women in Turkey. The commercial marginalizes tradition and implies that all traditional families in Turkey are oppressive. The suggestion that women cannot choose to exist in traditional cultures depicts weak women who cannot stand up for themselves and need help creating new lifestyles more adapt not to equality, but to Nike's corporate values. The idea that all traditional lifestyles are oppressive denies women the choice to be homemakers or prioritize family if they choose to do so. The commercial does not give a distinction between traditional stereotypes and realities of women in Turkey who may willingly choose more traditional, conventional families and lifestyles.

The analyzed commercial film is also an example of glocalization; the adoption of local values and products in the globalization process, articulating a reciprocal relationship between global and local contexts (Ritzer, 2010). By using elements that are locally charged with meanings related to gender roles and the patriarchal culture, the commercial connects the local context of women to its global stance. However, as the film is produced by a European agency, the perspective towards local cultures contains problematic implications that marginalize traditional and conventional culture while trying to incorporate it. The commercial sees the way to emancipation as westernization, which implies an orientalist point of view. This is the main reason the commercial cannot make the differentiation between women who willingly exist in more traditional contexts and women who are oppressed and constrained to live by gender norms. By suggesting that all traditional forms of existence are negative stereotypes, the commercial only references tradition as Turkish culture of patriarchy under Islamic influence.

A common practice of the discourses which create or enforce stereotypes is the depiction of one-dimensional women. The commercial reuses this one-dimensional approach towards women while giving the impression of fighting it, and focuses on opposition and aggression instead of unity and strength. While women's empowerment means empowering all women by supporting their choices, the commercial deems all traditional lifestyles as stereotypical and basically, wrong. The commercial film does not in fact fight negative stereotypes but it fights traditional lifestyles which are not suited to consume their brand which represents a western lifestyle. This message of the commercial film is an example of feminism industry's approach to women as consumers, which relies on the redefinition of all culture and tradition as oppressors opposing the redefinition of feminism as a consumerist lifestyle.

From a feminist perspective, empowerment would celebrate a woman's choice to wear what she pleases. On the other hand, the discourse of feminism industry transforms this idea in order to dictate what women should wear by registering certain clothing items as empowering and others as oppressive. In the example of the analyzed commercial film, we see that women in traditional spaces are dressed in dull colors and have facial expressions that convey boredom, anger or subordination, while Nike brand clothing is colorful and lively, and the women who wear them are active and strong. The Nike logo and the slogans follow the last scene where the characters are seen as running towards the first open space in the film which signifies their freedom. The discourse deploys these elements in order to suggest that Nike is putting its signature on freedom and liberation of women as the message is successfully conveyed.

As we see in the example of Nike's appropriation of empowerment, certain concepts are taken out of their contexts to create a commercial discourse in the industrialization process of feminism. Nike's commercial redefines empowerment in the context of sport in order to engage local masses of women, and proceeds to fight stereotypes. However, the signs which are used to articulate these stereotypes actually refer to tradition and convention. By not differentiating elements which oppress women within tradition from tradition itself, feminism industry discourse focuses on selling products by marginalizing traditional lifestyles as they are less likely to be influenced by consumer culture and its rather western values. Hence, a message of empowerment is established by transforming the concept of empowerment into a product value. It is also critical to note that almost all of the important decision making positions in the production of the commercial film were held by European men. This explains further the idea that empowerment in the context of feminism industry does not mean actually providing women with economic, social or political opportunities; it is simply seen as a discourse of manipulation into consumption.

When feminism is confused with feminism industry, it is easy to forget that global corporations are a force of women's oppression much like local patriarchal cultures. The appropriated feminism industry discourse gives the impression of fighting stereotypes for women but on the semantic level, it is fighting traditional lifestyles in order to transform local cultures to fit their consumption models. Hence, women are directed to do as the corporations dictate while being told they are free to do as they please.

As previously established, feminism industry fights traditional lifestyles not because they oppress women but because they may pose a threat to consumer culture, therefore when appropriating feminist discourse while globalizing, it does not convey the emphasis on any sort of equality or equity as it feeds off of inequalities. It is not surprising that the messages diffused by feminism industry fail to represent women's conditions since their main goal is to sell product. When appropriating values from women's movement, feminism industry must redefine the concepts to create ambiguity.

The feminist ideology of working towards gender equality and corporations' goal of manipulation and exploitation through consumption do not accommodate each other. Therefore feminism industry disrupts feminist concepts and appropriates feminist discourse in order to appeal to women who are now, in 2017, more aware of the world economic order and advertising discourse's previous practices of objectifying and manipulating them.

Consequently, global corporations consort in appropriating an ideal which challenges their oppressive existence as they cannot control it to their advantage without appropriating it. The appropriation of feminism then becomes industrialized in the framework of consumer culture.

When feminism is transformed into a lifestyle for women who have enough privileges and opportunities, anything a woman individually does for herself is considered empowerment, including consumption. That is to say, the industrialization of feminism is both old and new: it is the old practice of global corporations' creation of a culture they find appropriate for women in order to sell them product, and it is the new system and its complementary language of a mass deception process more adapt to the socioeconomic conditions of their consumers.

## References

- Bianet, 2017. "Kadınlar Daha Çok Çalışıyor, Daha Az Kazanıyor". [online] Available at: <http://bianet.org/bianet/kadin/184255-kadinlar-daha-cok-calisiyor-daha-az-kazaniyor> [Accessed on 1 October 2017]
- Coloribus, 2017. *This is us. by Wieden + Kennedy Amsterdam for Nike*. [online] Available at: <https://www.coloribus.com/adsarchive/tv-commercials-online/nike-this-is-us-22110560/> [Accessed 1 October 2017].
- Connell, R.W., 1987. *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics*. Cambridge: Polity Press in assoc. with Basil Blackwell.
- German, L., 1995. 'Babes, Barbie and the battle of the sexes'. *Socialist Review*, [e-journal], 185. Available at: <http://pubs.socialistreviewindex.org.uk/sr185/german.htm> [Accessed 1 October 2017]
- Gill, R., 2008. *Empowerment/sexism: Figuring female sexual agency in contemporary advertising. Feminism & Psychology*, [e-journal], 18(35). Available at: <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0959353507084950> [Accessed 1 October 2017]
- Greimas, A.J., 1966. *Sémantique structurale recherche de méthode*. Paris: Librairie Larousse.
- Hjelmslev, L., 1968. *Prolégomènes à une théorie du langage*. Paris: Minuit.
- Horkheimer, M., Adorno, T.W., 1944. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Reprint 2002, edited by G.S. Noerr, translated from German by E. Jephcott. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Kennedy, S., 2013. *Marxism and Feminism in an Age of Neoliberalism. Irish Marxist Review*, [e-journal] 2(7). Available at: <http://www.irishmarxistreview.net/index.php/imr/article/view/79/81> [Accessed 1 October 2017]
- Marcuse, H., 1964. *One-Dimensional Man*. Reprint 2007. New York: Routledge.
- Özbudun, S., 2007. *Neo-Liberalizm ile Ataerkinin 'Dansı'*. In: S. Özbudun, C. Sarı and T. Demirer. *Küreselleşme, Kadın ve 'Yeni' Ataerki*. Ankara: Ütopya Yayınevi.
- Power, N., 2009. *One Dimensional Woman*. Winchester: O Books.
- Reed, E., 1969. *Problems of Women's Liberation*. New York: Merit Publishers.
- Ritzer, G., 2010. *Globalization: a basic text*. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Saussure, F., 1973. *Cours de linguistique générale*. Paris: Payot.
- Sheth, S. and Gould, S., 2017. *5 charts show how much more men make than women. Business Insider*, [online] 8 March. Available at: <http://www.businessinsider.com/gender-wage-pay-gap-charts-2017-3> [Accessed 1 October 2017]

World Economic Forum, 2016. *Global Gender Gap Report 2016*. [online] Available at: <<http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2016/economies/#economy=TUR>> [Accessed 1 October 2017]

Youtube, Nike: This is us, 2017. [online video] Available at: <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1OYi2pbNK\\_4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1OYi2pbNK_4)> [Accessed 1 October 2017]