

TRAPPED IN THE AESTHETICS OF FEMININITY: FEMINISM IN *BARBIE* (2023)

Vannie Martieza Sukadiwan

English Studies Program, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Universitas Padjadjaran

Email: vannie23001@mail.unpad.ac.id

ABSTRACT. Feminism in popular culture is often represented through narrow feminine aesthetic standards—such as the dominance of pink, a highly polished appearance, and doll-like imagery—which reinforces the stereotype that female empowerment is intrinsically tied to conventional femininity. This research analyzes how Greta Gerwig's *Barbie* (2023) constructs a corporate-driven representation of media feminism that remains confined within a hyper-feminine commercial paradigm, thereby failing to capture the political depth of the broader feminist movement. Using a qualitative descriptive method grounded in John Fiske's television culture semiotic approach, the study analyzes the film's narrative codes and visual text across three levels of signification: reality (costumes and physical settings), representation (camera framing and lighting), and ideology (patriarchy and capitalism). The findings indicate that while the film structurally promotes women's empowerment, its reliance on hyper-feminine aesthetics limits inclusivity. This limitation is evident in the film's continuous obsession with idealized Mattel body proportions, the promotion of Eurocentric beauty standards, and the dominance of consumerist symbols of hyper-femininity as prerequisites for female agency. Consequently, the text demonstrates that the representation of feminism in *Barbie* (2023) sanitizes the diversity and complexity of women's intersectional experiences. Ultimately, this study implies that the mainstream commodification of political movements via "femvertising" reduces systemic resistance to a digestible lifestyle brand, effectively perpetuating capitalist-patriarchal structures under the guise of superficial liberation.

Keywords: *Barbie*, Corporate Feminism, Femvertising, Hyper-femininity, Semiotics

TERPERANGKAP DALAM ESTETIKA FEMININITAS: FEMINISME DALAM *BARBIE* (2023)

ABSTRAK: Feminisme dalam budaya populer sering kali direpresentasikan melalui standar estetika feminin yang sempit—seperti dominasi warna merah muda, penampilan yang sangat rapi dan dipoles, serta citra menyerupai boneka—yang memperkuat stereotip bahwa pemberdayaan perempuan secara inheren terkait dengan feminitas konvensional. Penelitian ini menganalisis bagaimana film *Barbie* (2023) karya Greta Gerwig mengonstruksi representasi feminisme media yang digerakkan oleh korporasi, yang tetap terjebak dalam paradigma komersial hiper-feminin, sehingga gagal menangkap kedalaman politis dari gerakan feminis yang lebih luas. Dengan menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif yang berlandaskan pada pendekatan semiotika budaya televisi John Fiske, studi ini menganalisis kode naratif dan teks visual film tersebut melalui tiga tingkat signifikasi: realitas (kostum dan latar fisik), representasi (pembingkai kamera dan pencahayaan), serta ideologi (patriarki dan kapitalisme). Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa meskipun film ini secara struktural mempromosikan pemberdayaan perempuan, ketergantungannya pada estetika hiper-feminin membatasi inklusivitas. Keterbatasan ini terlihat jelas dalam obsesi film yang berkelanjutan terhadap proporsi

Trapped in the Aesthetics of Femininity: Feminism in *Barbie* (2023)

Vannie Martieza Sukadiwan

Submitted: 18/05/2025 Accepted: 19/10/2025 Published: 30/06/2026

tubuh ideal ala Mattel, promosi standar kecantikan Eurosentris, serta dominasi simbol-simbol konsumeris hiper-feminitas sebagai prasyarat bagi agensi perempuan. Akibatnya, teks tersebut menunjukkan bahwa representasi feminisme dalam *Barbie* melenyapkan keragaman dan kompleksitas pengalaman interseksional perempuan. Pada akhirnya, studi ini menyiratkan bahwa komodifikasi gerakan politik arus utama melalui "*femvertising*" mereduksi perlawanan sistemik menjadi sekadar merek gaya hidup yang mudah diterima, yang secara efektif melanggengkan struktur kapitalis-patriarkal dengan kedok pembebasan yang dangkal.

Kata-kata Kunci: *Barbie*, Feminisme Korporat, Femvertising, Hiper-femininitas, Semiotika

INTRODUCTION

Discrimination, defined as systemic unfair treatment based on factors like gender or race, severely hinders social equality, institutional development, and structural peace, restricting women's full participation in public spheres while inflicting psychological harm (Pokharel et al., 2014). Statistically, these disparities remain stark; global gender data underscores that women perform roughly three times as many hours of unpaid domestic and care work as men, and as of recent metrics, women occupy only 26.8% of parliamentary seats globally. These pervasive inequities are structurally anchored in the enduring social framework of patriarchy.

In response to these systemic hierarchies, feminist movements continue to contest global institutional arrangements to secure equal socio-political rights, material resources, and economic opportunities for women (Kent, 2022). However, as feminism has intersected with mass media, its political edge has frequently been co-opted and redefined. In popular culture, feminist advocacy is increasingly filtered through rigid commercial aesthetics and cultural stereotypes. Mass media systems regularly confine femininity to hyper-polished, narrow visual scripts, limiting the broader definition of female empowerment.

The historical trajectory of *Barbie* as a cultural artifact demonstrates a fluid transition from rigid mid-twentieth-century gender

socialization into a highly sophisticated mechanism of modern corporate branding. In its initial historical phase, the *Barbie* doll functioned primarily as an engine of white supremacist and patriarchal propaganda, conditioning young consumers to internalize a monolithic body wall defined by unrealistic, Eurocentric beauty standards and passive domestic roles. Over the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, this blatant enforcement of gender norms shifted due to intense social critique, forcing the Mattel corporation to implement strategic rebranding campaigns.

This phase introduced surface-level diversification—incorporating a variety of ethnicities, body types, and high-status professional identities—to make the product line palatable to a more progressive public. However, this evolution culminates not in genuine liberation, but in the modern film text, which acts as a highly contradictory site of commercial "*femvertising*." By absorbing radical political critiques and wrapping them in a bright, hyper-feminine aesthetic, the contemporary artifact proves that its structural evolution was never intended to dismantle patriarchal hierarchies, but rather to protect its corporate market share by turning political dissent into a profitable lifestyle brand.

These media-driven expectations dictate how women are expected to look, dress, and behave to be recognized as both socially acceptable and ideologically empowered. For

instance, gendered marketing systems routinely naturalize specific color palettes, treating pink and soft pastels as inherently feminine traits preferred by women and girls (Drost, 2019). This coding extends to restrictive bodily expectations: a thin, highly proportioned frame, flawless skin, and meticulously styled hair.

Sartorial choices—such as high heels, structured skirts, and revealing silhouettes—are framed as essential markers of modern womanhood. Consequently, women who do not or cannot conform to these commercial standards are often cast as structurally deficient. This creates a double burden where media narratives require women to project professional power and independence while simultaneously maintaining a highly manicured, conventional beauty profile. By packaging feminist liberation inside a rigid commercial aesthetic, popular culture defuses the radical potential of the movement, allowing patriarchal power structures to persist in a more subtle, market-friendly format.

This tension between political liberation and commercial aesthetics is central to Greta Gerwig's film *Barbie* (2023). For decades, the Barbie doll has operated as a global cultural icon, socializing generations of children into idealized, Eurocentric beauty standards. While the 2023 film attempts to criticize patriarchal power and promote female agency, it faces an obvious internal contradiction: it seeks to dismantle systemic inequality while operating inside a hyper-feminine, corporate aesthetic that has long commodified women's identities.

While recent scholarship has examined media representations of conventional beauty standards (La Porte & Cavusoglu, 2023; Rajendrah et al., 2017; Yakali, 2024), the cultural semiotics of the color pink, and the emergence of corporate "femvertising" (Bideaux, 2019; Gupta, 2023), these analyses frequently treat commercial aesthetics and structural critique as separate issues. Existing

studies document how media representations marginalize diverse identities (Bideaux, 2019; Rajendrah et al., 2017) and trace the rise of posthumanist themes in contemporary film (Kent, 2022; Parke, 2024; Yakali, 2024). However, a significant research gap remains regarding how *Barbie* (2023) uses an apparently subversive feminist script to protect its underlying commercial brand.

Instead of moving away from traditional consumerist ideals, the film relies on a manicured, exclusive aesthetic that limits its capacity to represent the intersectional realities of women globally. The film champions the slogan "*Women can be anything*," visually organizing a corporate utopia—Barbieland—where female characters hold institutional roles as presidents, physicians, attorneys, and pilots. Yet, as Yakali (2024) notes, this dynamic often reinforces a stressful "superwoman" archetype, requiring women to achieve high professional success while maintaining strict control over their bodies, appearances, and domestic roles.

The feminist critique in *Barbie* remains split: it highlights the frustrations of real-world patriarchy while continuing to market the conventional, consumerist beauty standards of the Mattel brand. Therefore, this study analyzes how the representation of femininity in *Barbie* limits the political scope of feminism by wrapping its message in an exclusive, corporate lifestyle brand. Additionally, this study examines the deployment of the color pink within the text to determine whether it functions as an authentic symbol of collective liberation or as a calculated strategy of commercial femvertising designed to capture feminist consumer markets.

METHOD

This study uses the film *Barbie*, written by Greta Gerwig and Noah Baumbach and directed by Gerwig, as its primary analytical text. The film was selected due to its massive

commercial reach and its explicit engagement with contemporary discourses surrounding feminism, media beauty standards, and corporate women's empowerment. The primary audiovisual data was accessed and compiled via official high-definition digital streaming platforms, including Netflix and Prime Video.

To conduct a systematic evaluation of the text, the researcher utilized a multi-stage data collection and analysis procedure to manage the purposive selection of representative scenes:

1. Repetitive Textual Screening: The film was viewed multiple times to establish an accurate understanding of its narrative structure, tonal shifts, and ideological progression.
2. Timecode Registry and Logging: Specific scenes, visual sequences, and monologues explicitly focusing on hyper-feminine aesthetics, the strategic use of the color pink, and the critique of patriarchy were isolated and cataloged with precise timecodes.
3. Transcription and Visual Capture: High-resolution screenshots of the chosen visual frames were captured alongside accurate textual transcriptions of the corresponding dialogues and monologues.
4. Theoretical Textual Analysis: The compiled visual elements (such as set design, costuming, and lighting) and narrative dialogue tracks were scrutinized using qualitative and semiotic theoretical frameworks.

To analyze the compiled data, this study combines several theoretical perspectives focused on media representations of gender. We apply post-feminism theory (Li, 2024) to examine how the film balances traditional gender roles with modern discourses of individual choice and agency. The visual architecture of the text is evaluated through the

lens of the male gaze (Mulvey, 1973), which explains how mass media structures women as passive visual objects for spectator consumption.

This visual critique is integrated with gender performativity frameworks (Grahm & Wilson, 2018), which treat femininity not as a biological essence, but as a stylized repetition of social actions, clothing choices, and behaviors. Furthermore, the analysis uses popular culture feminist theory (Ileš & Marijanović, 2023) to assess whether cinematic texts can successfully subvert traditional patriarchies or if they inevitably reproduce them. Finally, femvertising theory (Negm, 2023) serves as the conceptual bridge linking these models, exposing how messages of female empowerment can be corporate tools designed to align feminist values with capitalist interests.

The methodological analysis schema for this study establishes a rigorous, qualitative approach to evaluating the film's ideological framework.

The primary dataset is derived from purposively selected scenes and precise textual transcripts from *Barbie*, specifically isolating sequences where visual choices and narrative conflicts intersect. This raw data is then evaluated through a multi-layered theoretical core consisting of post-feminism, the male gaze, gender performativity, popular culture feminism, and femvertising theories. By combining these frameworks, the primary analytical unit moves beyond simple plot summary to systematically deconstruct both the narrative and visual codes within the text. This allows the study to critically analyze the construction of hyper-feminine sets, commercial costuming, and the underlying consumerist brand strategies implemented by the corporation, exposing how messages of female empowerment are manufactured and contained within mass media.

The selected data consists of scenes and dialogues from *Barbie* (2023) that directly represent these gender dynamics. The chosen sequences were selected because they clearly illustrate the intersections of post-feminism, the male gaze, gender performativity, media feminism, and corporate femvertising. The selected data is explained through a narrative approach, evaluating how the film's visual arrangements, production design, and dialogue tracks work together to construct its specific model of gender and empowerment.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Limitations of Inclusivity in Media Feminism

In Greta Gerwig's *Barbie*, the presentation of female empowerment is structurally tied to a hyper-feminine commercial aesthetic. This visual architecture is established through the overwhelming dominance of the color pink.



Figure 1. *A Sea of Pink* (Gerwig, 2023)

The scale of this chromatic choice was so massive that the film's production designer, Sarah Greenwood, noted that building the sets caused a temporary global shortage of fluorescent pink paint (Kolirin, 2023). Far from serving as a neutral backdrop, this color choice is a central ideological signifier. Within popular culture, pink has historically functioned as a marker of conventional femininity, symbolizing docility, softness, and maternal care (Bideaux, 2019). Under a semiotic evaluation, this specific styling defines empowerment by

combining unrealistic physical proportions with a highly commercialized standard of female identity (Pierce, 2019).

The visual landscape of *Barbie* is anchored by an omnipresent hot pink production design that functions as a primary visual signifier. Within the text's semiotic framework, this relentless use of color ceases to be a mere aesthetic backdrop and instead translates into a rigid cultural mythos. As highlighted by the opening musical track, the color pink is explicitly coded as an identity markers for a woman who is simultaneously "pretty, intelligent, never sad, and cool." This equation produces a distinct political effect: it creates an ideological capture where female empowerment is only validated when it aligns with a market-friendly, hyper-manicured, and cheerful lifestyle. Consequently, the film implies that a woman's agency is intrinsically tied to her willingness to perform consumerist aesthetics, thereby narrowing the definition of liberation to fit a corporate brand strategy. This ideological framing is reinforced during the opening sequence by Lizzo's track "Pink" (2023). The lyrics spell out the precise social parameters of this environment:

*Pink, goes with everything (oh yeah) /
Beautiful, from head to toe... / Pretty,
Intelligent, Never sad, Cool.*

By assigning attributes like "intelligent" and "cool" directly to a specific color palette, the text implies that female empowerment is valid only when wrapped in a highly cheerful, consumerist aesthetic. While this modern use of pink tries to show that women can be strong and assertive without giving up traditional femininity (Gupta, 2023), it creates a strict cultural boundary. It implies that a woman's political agency remains tied to her ability to maintain a highly polished, visually pleasing appearance.

The narrative crisis in *Barbie* is triggered not by ideological dissent, but by a

Trapped in the Aesthetics of Femininity: Feminism in *Barbie* (2023)

Vannie Martieza Sukadiwan

Submitted: 18/05/2025 Accepted: 19/10/2025 Published: 30/06/2026

somatic break—specifically, the sudden appearance of cellulite and the drop of the protagonist's flat feet onto the ground. Within the film's patriarchal-capitalist ecosystem, these natural human physical traits are instantly perceived as a systemic crisis, framed as a catastrophic malfunction of the gendered object.



Figure 2. *The Malfunction* (Gerwig, 2023)

Because the plastic utopia cannot tolerate bodily variation without undermining its entire commodity value, this somatic deviation forces a pipeline of enforced exile. The protagonist must be removed from her immediate environment and sent to the Real World under the guise of a quest, revealing how strictly the dominant structure disciplines women's bodies to maintain an idealized, marketable image of perfection.

This aesthetic demand becomes explicit when the "Stereotypical Barbie" protagonist experiences a bodily change: her arched feet drop flat to the floor, her heels touch the ground, and cellulite appears on her thigh. The film frames these normal human traits as an alarming operational error. When she seeks help, Weird Barbie diagnoses the issue as a catastrophic breakdown of her idealized identity:

"That's cellulite. That's gonna spread everywhere... and then you're gonna start getting sad and mushy and complicated."
(00:21:20)

The other Barbies reinforce this fear when she prepares to leave for the Real World, yelling: *"Bon voyage to reality and good luck restoring the membrane that separates our world from theirs so you don't get cellulite!"* (00:24:20).

Analyzed through a gender performativity framework, this panic shows how media objectification forces women to treat their bodies as manufactured, flawless commodities (Grahn & Wilson, 2018). While the film tries to use this moment to parody unrealistic beauty expectations, its visual design relies heavily on those same idealized forms to maintain its commercial appeal. The narrative claims to champion a modern, post-feminist critique of patriarchal control (Li, 2024), but it packages this critique within a highly polished, media-friendly format that keeps traditional beauty standards intact (Kulcsár, 2011).

This reliance on traditional visual markers is illustrated when Weird Barbie offers the protagonist a choice between a high heel and a flat Birkenstock sandal. The protagonist's immediate instinct is to choose the high heel, clinging to the visual symbol of traditional femininity.

Barbie operates on a deeply contradictory dual track where its active political script—which loudly critiques real-world patriarchy and institutional glass ceilings—is continuously undermined by its passive visual display. While the dialogue track works to expose systemic male dominance, the visual grammar of the film relies heavily on traditional sartorial markers of seductive appeal, keeping the female characters framed as visually pleasing objects. This containment demonstrates the mechanics of Laura Mulvey's male gaze theory: the narrative text grants the female characters an illusion of political speech, but the camera continues to discipline their bodies through hyper-feminine costuming, bright saturation, and commercial framing.

Ultimately, the film ensures that the characters remain visually non-threatening and structurally digestible for the heterosexual spectator appetite.

Viewed through Laura Mulvey's (1973) male gaze theory, the high heel operates as a classic visual tool designed to satisfy a heterosexual spectator appetite rather than represent an active, self-directed subject. Even while the film explicitly critiques patriarchy, its visual grammar stays confined within these traditional forms. Pop culture feminism often repackages radical ideas into digestible consumer habits to avoid threatening mainstream patriarchal values (Ileš & Marijanović, 2023). By filtering its feminist critique through familiar commercial symbols, *Barbie* (2023) ensures its ideas remain safe and profitable for the global marketplace.

The internal contradictions of these gender demands are articulated in Gloria's central monologue, which highlights the conflicting standards women face under a patriarchal capitalist system:

You have to be thin but not too thin, and you can never say you want to be thin. You have to say you want to be healthy, but also you have to be thin... You're supposed to stay pretty for men but not so pretty that you tempt them too much or that you threaten other women... And if all of that is also true for a doll just representing a woman... then I don't even know (01:13:50).

This statement highlights how modern society requires women to look strong and independent while simultaneously fulfilling highly

restrictive, conventional beauty expectations. It exposes the emotional strain of trying to satisfy these conflicting social demands. However, by placing this critique within a highly profitable corporate film, the narrative reveals a core contradiction of post-feminist media: it offers an accurate diagnosis of systemic oppression, but uses that diagnosis to sell a highly manicured, market-friendly lifestyle brand (Li, 2024).

Femvertising and the Commodification of Feminism

The tension between genuine political resistance and corporate branding becomes clear when the protagonist enters the Real World and encounters Sasha, a teenage girl who explicitly challenges her identity:

You represent everything wrong with our culture. Sexualized capitalism, unrealistic physical ideals... You set the feminist movement back 50 years. You destroy girls' innate sense of worth and you are killing the planet with your glorification of rampant consumerism (00:40:36–00:40:55).

The protagonist tries to defend herself by asserting, "*Barbie is so much more than that.*" (00:40:47), but Sasha shuts her down, labeling her a "*fascist.*" This confrontation exposes how corporate brands use feminist rhetoric to cover up their underlying consumerist goals (Hackett et al., 2023; La Porte & Cavusoglu, 2023).

Gloria's monologue highlights the structurally impossible standards imposed upon women under a patriarchal system, noting the psychological toll of trying to satisfy constantly shifting social expectations. She argues that women are forced to perform continuous

excellence while navigating contradictory cultural rules: they must achieve physical thinness under the guise of health, exercise corporate authority without breaking soft feminine stereotypes, and balance career ambitions with maternal care. Furthermore, she points out that women are expected to remain visually appealing to men without causing offense, hold themselves responsible for male misbehavior, and maintain quiet gratitude despite knowing the systemic game is rigged against them. Ultimately, Gloria reflects on the exhaustion of watching women endlessly compromise their identities for social acceptance, concluding that if even a plastic doll cannot successfully navigate these weaponized contradictions, the system itself is structurally broken (01:13:50).

By addressing this criticism directly within the script, the corporate creator uses a classic strategy of femvertising—incorporating radical political critiques into its marketing to make the brand appear self-aware and progressive (Negm, 2023). This approach absorbs the audience's skepticism, transforming a structural critique of capitalist beauty standards into an entertaining plot point that ultimately protects the product's market value.

The structural critique leveled against the Mattel brand within the film is managed through a calculated corporate co-optation loop. When the teenage character Sasha delivers a radical critique—labeling Barbie an engine of "sexualized capitalism" and a "fascist" who ruined the feminist movement—this threat is immediately absorbed by the corporate script itself. By writing self-deprecating parody directly into its own studio product, Mattel successfully neutralizes outside dissent. This loop achieves a highly effective femvertising outcome: it rebrands the corporation as progressive, self-aware, and safe, turning a systemic threat into an entertaining plot point that ultimately protects and expands the

product's long-term market value. This corporate control is highlighted when the protagonist visits the Mattel headquarters and finds herself pursued by an all-male board of executives who want to force her back into a commercial display box.



Figure 3. *Barbie at Mattel* (Gerwig, 2023)

This sequence functions as a literal illustration of Mulvey's (1973) male gaze theory, showing how female identity remains managed and contained by male institutional power. The scene reveals that the feminist narrative being marketed does not stem from authentic female experiences, but is a calculated corporate asset designed to appeal to female consumers while leaving the underlying patriarchal power dynamic intact.

The institutional architecture of the film is defined by an absolute divide between the consuming public and the executive core of the Mattel boardroom. At the top of this power dynamic sits an all-male institutional governance that retains absolute control over the production, design, and narrative boundaries of the doll. This board dictates the exact parameters of what constitutes an "empowered female" product line, deciding how diversity and agency are packaged. Below them, the consuming public ingests this corporate femvertising, mistakenly accepting a heavily managed, commercial lifestyle brand as a genuine substitute for structural socio-political change. This dynamic proves that even when the product's message claims to be feminist, the underlying power structure

Trapped in the Aesthetics of Femininity: Feminism in *Barbie* (2023)

Vannie Martieza Sukadiwan

Submitted: 18/05/2025 Accepted: 19/10/2025 Published: 30/06/2026

remains completely patriarchal and capitalist. To achieve authentic gender equality, media representations must move beyond superficial, corporate-approved templates. Scholars argue that true transformation requires a genuine diversity of female roles and characteristics, rather than simply imitating traditional structures of power and physical control (Sever Globan & Pavić, 2016).

Barbie (2023), however, struggles to meet this standard. While the film features a diverse, multi-professional cast, its characters remain bound by corporate guidelines and market-driven body expectations. The narrative advocates for female agency, but keeps its characters anchored to a consumerist aesthetic. Ultimately, the film demonstrates how mainstream media co-opts feminist discourse, turning political resistance into an attractive lifestyle brand that prioritizes corporate profit over substantive structural change (Negm, 2023).

CONCLUSION

This study examines how *Barbie* shapes the representation of feminism through a cultural studies approach, focusing on the use of *femvertising* strategies and the tendency of commodification of gender equality values in popular culture products. By exploring the symbols, plot, and dynamics between characters, this study explores how women's identities are constructed in the film's narrative and how feminist values are inserted into a commercially packaged story. This approach enables a critical reading of the relationship between ideology and the entertainment industry in producing social representations.

The findings show that the movie both opens up opportunities and sets boundaries for the idea of feminism. On the other hand, *Barbie*'s story provides a space for a woman who is able to respond to gender inequality with critical awareness. But at the same time, the

form of empowerment presented is still adjusted to the limits set by the direction of brand interests and marketing strategies. Through visual imagery, conversations between characters, and the flow of conflict, the film shows that the idea of feminism can be reshaped into something that is visually appealing and easy to sell, resulting in a trade-off between conveying the message of equality and the demands of the market. Feminism in this context is no longer presented as a discourse that fully challenges the status quo, but rather becomes part of a narrative and aesthetic strategy that can be accepted by a wide audience. The simplification of complex issues into easily accessible symbols and dialogue keeps critical messages within a safe boundary that suits the interests of brands and global audiences. This shows how popular culture is able to embrace social critique and make it part of its selling point, without having to change the dominant structures that sustain it. Although the storyline includes a critique of patriarchy through satire, the movie doesn't really confront the systems that are already dominant. Instead, the approach makes the movie marketable in the midst of a global trend that celebrates gender equality.

This research shows that popular media such as *Barbie* not only reflects social values, but is also a space where cultural and economic forces influence each other in shaping meaning. The way the movie presents feminism shows that even critical ideas can be absorbed by the dominant system and repackaged to remain marketable. Therefore, it is important to look at popular culture not only from what it directly conveys, but also from the power relations that work behind it. Such an approach helps us understand how ideologies spread in today's culture and how social critique can be shaped to suit the market. In the midst of fast-paced content and alluring visuals, this kind of analysis is important to keep critical discourse

from merely being a surface trend, but rather able to challenge the structures that surround it.

REFERENCES

- Bideaux, K. (2019). Kévin Bideaux, 2019. Millennial Pink: Gender, Feminism and Marketing. A Critical Analysis of A Color Trend. *Colore-Color Culture and Science*. <https://doi.org/10.23738/CCSJ.110110i>
- Drost, W. (2019). A Study in Pink and Other Feminine Stereotypes. *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, 11(1), 30. http://scioteca.caf.com/bitstream/handle/123456789/1091/RED2017-Eng-8ene.pdf?sequence=12&isAllowed=y%0Ahttp://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.regsciurbeco.2008.06.005%0Ahttps://www.researchgate.net/publication/305320484_SISTEM_PEMBETUNGAN_TERPUSAT_STRATEGI_MELESTARI
- Gerwig, G. (2023, July 19). *Barbie*. Universal Pictures.
- Grahn, W., & Wilson, R. J. (2018). *Gender and Heritage Performance, Place and Politics* (Grahn, Wera, & R. J. Wilson (eds.)). Routledge.
- Gupta, M. A. (2023). *Pink: A Language of Communication for Feminism*. <https://iipseries.org/assets/submission/iip2023F97A065F6785514.pdf>
- Hackett, L. J., Coghlan, J., & Nolan, H. (2023). James Bond, Gender Studies, and Popular Culture Pedagogy: A Case Study. *International Journal of James Bond Studies*, 6(1). <https://doi.org/10.24877/jbs.100>
- Ileš, T., & Marijanović, T. (2023). The Power of Television Spectacle: Feminism and Popular Television. *European Realities - Power: Conference Proceedings 5th International Scientific Conference*, 77–98. <https://doi.org/10.59014/XUZA6596>
- Kent, S. K. (2022). *The Routledge Global History of Feminism* (1st Edition). Taylor Francis.
- Kolirin, L. (2023, June 5). ‘Barbie’ movie’s pink paint splurge led to global shortage, production designer says. *CNN*. <https://edition.cnn.com/style/article/barbie-pink-paint-scli-intl/index.html>
- Kulcsár, Z. (2011). A critique of post-feminism. *AMERICANA E-Journal of American Studies in Hungary*, 7(Feminism).
- La Porte, A., & Cavusoglu, L. (2023). Faux Feminism in a Capitalistic Fever Dream: A Review of Greta Gerwig’s *Barbie* (2023). In *Markets, Globalization and Development Review* (Vol. 8, Issue 2). <https://doi.org/10.23860/MGDR-2023-08-02-06>
- Li, Y. (2024). The 2023 Barbie and Post-feminism: Narrative in Hollywood Movie Industry. *Communications in Humanities Research*, 29(1), 35–40. <https://doi.org/10.54254/2753-7064/29/20230522>
- Lizzo, Ronson, M., Wyatt, A., & Reed, R. (2023). *Pink*. Genius.
- Mulvey, L. (1973). *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*. Oxford University Press.
- Negm, E. M. (2023). Femvertising social marketing: a focus on perceived authenticity and perceived congruence of the advertising and consumers’ attitudes toward female portrayal. *Journal of Humanities and Applied Social Sciences*, 5(5), 435–449. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jhass-05-2023-0053>
- Parke, J. J. (2024). I would rather be a cyborg than a Barbie: hyperfeminine nostalgia and patriarchal futurity in *Barbie*. *Feminist Theory*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14647001241291436>
- Pierce, T. (2019). *Feminine, Like*. Indiana University.

Trapped in the Aesthetics of Femininity: Feminism in *Barbie* (2023)

Vannie Martieza Sukadiwan

Submitted: 18/05/2025 Accepted: 19/10/2025 Published: 30/06/2026

- Pokharel, S., Kanya, P., & Campus, M. (2014). *Gender Discrimination: Women Perspective Gender Discrimination: Women perspectives*. 5(2), 80–87.
- Rajendrah, S., Zainal, S., Rashid, R. A., & Mohamed, S. B. (2017). The Impact of Advertisements on The Conceptualization of Ideal Female Beauty: A Systematic Review. *Man in India*, 97. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320550642>
- Sever Globan, I., & Pavić, A. (2016). The Beautiful and Dangerous: A New Depiction of Heroines in North American Television Drama Series. In *Medijske Studije Media Studies* (Vol. 7, pp. 136–151). <https://doi.org/10.20901/ms.7.13.8>
- Yakali, D. (2024). Is She a Feminist Icon Now? Barbie 2023 Movie and a Critique of Postfeminism. *Studies in Media and Communication*, 12(1). <https://doi.org/10.11114/smc.v12i1.6478>