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Postmodernism, feminism, and the body: The visible and the invisible in consumer research

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Abstract

The academic discourse on consumer behavior has paid no attention to the body as a site of cultural representation and social power, despite its generous exploitation in the world of marketing practice. This paper explores the relationship between postmodernism and feminism in the context of consumer behavior and restores body to its rightful position in our discourse. Postmodernism and feminism challenge the fundamental tenets of Enlightenment philosophy based on rationality and dualist assumptions - subject/object, culture/nature, rational/irrational, and mind/body. Feminism goes further than postmodernism: It argues that not only are the first terms in each of these dichotomies more privileged but that they are gendered as well. This paper examines the process of production and consumption of gender through body rituals. The mutuality of the two spheres is central to our understanding of both production and consumption processes. Postmodern feminism allows us to deconstruct

the various levels at which cultural mediation of the body occurs and allows women to re-make their bodies and call various marketing practices into question.



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