

# *An investigation into how the portrayal of patriarchal attitudes in Western print advertising media is used to inform the construction of feminine identity.*

## **Introduction**

The constant perpetuation of patriarchal attitudes causes a continuity of damaging gender expectations within Western society today and influences the construction of collective feminine identity. Media, in particular print advertisement, as a widespread agent for socialisation is a force for continuity as it reinforces traditional, socially constructed values of patriarchy. Therefore, this Personal Interest Project has a predominant focus on *how the portrayal of patriarchal attitudes in Western print advertising media is used to inform the construction of feminine identity*. Originally, evoked by my own desire to pursue a career in the advertising industry, the explicit, cross-cultural element of gender really engaged me in the formation of this topic, as I, a female in modern society, have always been interested in the specific representation and depiction of females within media in Western society. Additionally, from my own experience, a highly sexualised portrayal of women has been advocated.

The project will specifically investigate patriarchal attitudes conveyed and the resultant ignition of androcentric culture within society. Capitalism as a direct influence of objectification will also be analysed and a comparison with the values of 1960s print advertisements will be examined. Furthermore the impact of these attitudes on the construction of feminine identity in a post-modern era will be covered.

Through use of secondary research such as, books, academic journals, online articles, websites and libraries I have been presented with an efficient base for determining the

cross-cultural nature of gender evident within print advertisements and the associated impact on the construction of feminine identity.

In order to develop my understanding of the Personal Interest Project topic, qualitative and quantitative primary methods have also been utilised. Due to the media associated nature of my Personal Interest Project, a content analysis has been conducted as an appropriate method. I have also distributed a questionnaire, incorporating both closed and open-ended questions, aimed at both males and females to gauge meso opinion. A focus group of six females of varying age between 16 to 60 has also been used as a springboard for discussion. The range of ages has been used to account for the perpetual evolving construction of the feminine identity, and to highlight possible continuities or change. Conclusively, the use of structured interviews have enabled this project to acquire opinions of academics and industry professionals in Advertising and Gender Studies. The media, specifically the prevalent and patriarchal nature of print advertisements in the macro environment is pivotal to the construction of the feminine identity.

This research topic is undoubtedly related to the Society and Culture course, as gender and media have a mutually dependent relationship in influencing the socialisation of an individual. The widespread dissemination of patriarchal cultural norms holds significant power over the construction of a collective feminine identity due to its influence as a primary communication technology. Throughout this project I aim to research effectively and ethically, establishing an improved sense of social literacy. Ultimately, through synthesis and development, the authorial role of print advertisements will be discerned.