

ONLINE FEMINIST PUBLICATIONS AS SOCIAL ENTERPRISES: DIVERSIFYING  
REVENUE STREAMS THROUGH CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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by

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

ONLINE FEMINIST PUBLICATIONS AS SOCIAL ENTERPRISES: DIVERSIFYING  
REVENUE STREAMS THROUGH CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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## DEDICATION

To my wonderful parents who have always encouraged me to learn and grow. Thank you for your love and support. Your example taught me the importance of hard work and believing in your worth and capability.

To my great friends who are always there to support me. Thank you for reminding me to have fun along the way.

To all the strong women in my life.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	ii
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Goals of the Study.....	2
2. LITERATURE REVIEW .....	3
Business Models .....	3
Social enterprises .....	6
Defining feminism .....	14
Commodification of the movement .....	15
Feminist publications .....	16
Research Questions.....	19
3. METHODS .....	20
Recruitment.....	20
Sample.....	22
Procedure .....	22
4. RESULTS .....	24
Commodifying editorial content.....	25
Celebrating femininity and trivializing feminine content.....	28
Social media algorithms and familiarity with publications .....	30
White feminism and commodity feminism.....	32

Transparency and accountability .....	34
Social entrepreneurship as part of company’s policies.....	37
Engaging women as part of the social enterprise initiative .....	42
Humor as a way to connect.....	43
The social good, the product, and the counterproductive .....	43
Distinguishing journalism brand from other commercial endeavors.....	45
5. CONCLUSIONS .....	47
Discussion.....	47
Significance.....	49
Limitations .....	50
Directions for Future Research.....	50
REFERENCES .....	52
APPENDIX	
A. Survey Questions .....	56
B. Focus Group Consent and Protocol .....	62
C. Information About Participants.....	66

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## ABSTRACT

This qualitative study examined how feminist online publications can adopt social enterprise business models. The focus group analysis of the audiences of Refinery29, Bustle, HelloGiggles, and Jezebel first explored the audience's outlook on the commodification of feminism. The focus group also considered plausible ways of adopting social enterprise initiatives to diversify revenue streams of these publications, continue promoting gender equality, and to better establish the images of the publications. During four focus groups, twenty total participants shared a variety of feedback, including their opinions on the commodification of the feminist movement and the commodification of editorial content. They talked about how their purchasing decisions are affected by their desire to contribute to the social good. Other themes identified during the study were white feminism, the trivialization of feminist content, and the importance of companies' policies.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Journalism is vital to democracy, and it's important for publications to successfully adjust to the changing market to continue producing quality content. The current generation of news consumers got used to getting their news online for free, and media organizations are struggling to bring in revenues to pay their journalists and sustain their businesses. Advertising has been providing revenues to the print newspapers for decades and continues to be the main source of income for most online publications. Unfortunately, the prices of online advertising are not nearly as high as they used to be for print (Abrahamson, 2015). Many newsrooms are struggling to adjust to the changing media environment and are failing to bring enough money to sustain themselves. To counteract this struggle, media organizations must ask themselves how they can adjust their business models to meet today's environment. Diversifying revenue streams allows newsrooms to continue growing and producing good journalism, and ensures that their employees get proper compensation and benefits.

Social corporate responsibility has become more important to the consumers, who are now more aware of the social implications of enterprises. By combining commercial activities and social responsibility, companies can attract more customers, and therefore generate higher revenues. Online publications can expand their revenues through adopting social enterprise models by bringing positive change to the world through commercial operations (Smith, Gonin, & Besharov, 2013).

This study specifically looked into four feminist online publications including Jezebel, Refinery29, HelloGiggles, and Bustle. These publications are considered

feminist because of the values they have and the content they produce. These values include gender equality, inclusiveness, women empowerment, and body positivity. Like many other media companies, these publications bring in most of their revenue through advertising (Shontell, 2016; Johnson, 2016; Dave, 2015). And like many others, they can benefit from expanding their revenue streams. Adopting a social enterprise model would be beneficial to the publications for multiple reasons. It will allow them to continue promoting gender equality and lift women up through their initiatives. On top of that, they will be able to grow their profits and establish greater trust and credibility with their audiences.

It's also important to mention that the issue of selling feminism has been a common discourse among academics and the general public. If those feminist online publications will adopt social enterprise initiatives, the question of commodification is an important one to ask. In a capitalist society, the tension between earning money and supporting a movement can be hard to navigate. Publications need to avoid the commodification of feminism and bring a higher awareness to feminism.

### **Goals of the study**

The purpose of this study is to define and examine feminist online publications and then explore how those publications can adopt a social enterprise business model. The four focus groups looked at the audience of Refinery29, Bustle, HelloGiggles, and Jezebel. The study first explored audience's outlook on the commodification of the movement. Then, it examined how to adopt social enterprise initiatives in a way that diversifies revenue streams, continues promoting gender equality, and establishes better images of the publications.

## Chapter 2: Literature review

### Business Models

Journalism is facing a lot of financial challenges. A generation of readers got used to getting their information for free, and advertising sales are not as lucrative anymore. Newspapers are downsizing and closing all over the country, and the industry needs to adjust its business model. The rise of technology in journalism has also affected the industry immensely.

There are many upsides to the emergence of convergence journalism. Multimedia journalists can now produce more content for the same amount of money, therefore increasing productivity. Convergence journalism also allows for “co-operation,” a form of business in which competitors can partner together to make higher profits. A variety of mediums that journalists can use enable them to create a better, more engaging content and reach a wider audience. All those advantages initially appealed to many publishers and publication managers, promising to bring higher revenues than print (Quinn, 2004).

While there was hope that with the rise of convergence media, publications would be able to bring more money through online advertising, it is not the reality today. Unfortunately, advertising revenues are not the same as they used to be in print. According to Abrahamson (2015), for every thousand readers who had purchased a print magazine, the publisher earned \$140 in advertising revenue. But, when you look at the web, the equivalent of it is less than half a cent. While there is an increase in productivity,

the nature of online media prompts journalists to work longer hours. There is a demand for more skills, but these skills don't ultimately translate into higher paychecks.

Clemons (2009) argues that publications can't solely rely on advertising anymore. Consumers frequently don't trust advertisers and don't want to view ads. While he agrees that advertising will not vanish, he also argues that many ads are ineffective. He says that consumers know when they want to purchase something, they know where to get it from, and whom to rely on with the product reviews. They also feel resentful towards advertising because of the large number of spam and fraud circulating online, the obnoxious pop-ups, and the invasion of privacy. "The problem is not the medium; the problem is the message and the fact that it is not trusted, not wanted, and not needed" (Clemons, 2009, p.19).

While advertising will continue to be a huge revenue stream for most publications, it needs to be delivered in new and innovative ways. Because consumers tend to ignore and dismiss ads, advertisers and publishers are looking for new ways to connect with their audience. Native advertising is an example of publications trying to reach customers in a way that is engaging and doesn't hurt the credibility of the publications. Nel (2010) conducted a study of 66 newspapers in Britain and analyzed the ways those publications made money. The study looked at different business models that companies utilized and the opportunities they didn't take advantage of. The research found that while advertising was still the most popular revenue model, the publishers were also building partnerships and acting as middlemen between companies and readers.

Looking for new ways to bring money that is not dependent on advertisers' dollars is vital for journalism publications. The more revenue streams the company has,

the better chances that the publication can sustain itself if one of them fails. There are many opportunities out there for publications to explore. Digital magazines can diversify their revenue streams with the use of premium content, e-shops, special services, crowdfunding, e-books, or special editions. One of the significant advantages that digital magazines have over their print counterparts is that they can give readers an opportunity to look, try, and buy products online. They can provide readers with a 360-degree look at the products and let them buy those products immediately (Santos Silva, 2011). Other ways to make money include selling real things, selling virtual things, and selling access. Selling virtual things can involve selling content and information, selling participation in the virtual community, selling information gathered from online experiences, and selling accessories from virtual communities (Clemons, 2009).

Christensen, Anthony, and Roth (2004) in their book “Seeing What’s Next” talk about the three theories of innovation: the disruptive innovation theory; the resources, processes, and values theory; and the value chain evolution theory. Those theories are aimed to explain and predict market disruptors. It investigates how a new product or service can successfully enter the market, grow its customer base, and take over the industry. The book examines the times when industry leaders didn’t pay enough attention to those disruptors and failed to predict the upcoming changes. The authors argue that to become a successful disruptor, a company needs to cater to non-consumers or overshot consumers. Non-consumers are the customers that the industry is not currently serving, and overshot consumers are customers that want simpler and cheaper products.

Media companies are also not immune to disruptions as the industry changes rapidly. Publications not only need to keep up but to be ahead of the curve. In the

changing world of technology, journalists shouldn't continue making the same mistakes. Applying old models to a new age is not going to bring the same results. Publications need to continue to experiment with emerging technologies such as voice-enabled devices, artificial intelligence, or virtual reality. As newsrooms adopt new technology and innovate with their content, they also need to innovate with their revenue streams. It's essential for them to pay close attention to market disruptors to be able to fund the production of quality content.

Online publications should try to reach new markets and explore new territories to make those much-needed profits. As businesses, they need to think "outside their core." It might seem that the farther you go from your original business, the riskier it gets. But, the likelihood of failure doesn't correlate with how far is the new initiative from the core business. The companies fail when they don't investigate deeply enough and make unrealistic assumptions (Bertels, Koen, & Elsum, 2015). Implementing new projects can be beneficial for the overall growth of the organizations. But, to succeed, media companies need to analyze a new territory carefully. A new territory they can explore is a concept of social entrepreneurship.

### **Social enterprises**

Social enterprises are organizations that hope to solve social issues through business practices. "In a world filled with poverty, environmental degradation, and moral injustice, social enterprises offer a ray of hope" (Smith et al., 2013, p. 407). Many companies have adopted this hybrid model that allowed them to both make money and do good in the community. Some companies focus on improving welfare through employment, while others provide products and services to previously disenfranchised

customers. For example, Essilor, a global optical lens company, made their lenses accessible to people in rural India (Smith et al., 2013).

Another example of a social enterprise is a North American company “Me to We.” They provide funding for the nonprofit organization Free the Children. They organize volunteer trips, bring motivational speakers, and have a line of organic and ethically manufactured clothes and accessories called “Me to We style.” During their annual “We Day,” they bring celebrities and organize live performances. The company is excellent at utilizing multiple marketing approaches, including social media, television, motivational talks, and events (Jefferess, 2012).

Apart from these two companies, there are many other examples in various fields. Children rights activist, Kailash Satyarthi, saw that many Indian children were sold to business owners to produce rugs. In the 1990s he launched what is now called GoodWeave International, a company that certifies rugs produced without child labor in South Asia. GoodWeave certified more than 130 woven rugs retailers globally (Martin & Osberg, 2015). This is a great example of a for-profit company creating global change. The company increases transparency, urges customers to be more socially responsible, and helps combat child labor.

So why should companies care about social responsibility in the first place? Companies are now expected to implement corporate social responsibility. Those demands are coming from governments, customers, and even employees. Social responsibility can also increase profits, open new markets, and increase efficiency (Santos, Pache, & Birkholz, 2015).

A quantitative study by Marín, Cuestas, and Román looked at how corporate social responsibility affects consumers. They found that company-cause fit, corporate ability, and interpersonal trust have a positive influence on consumers' perception of company's motives. Hypocrisy, on another hand, has a negative effect. When consumers think that corporate social responsibility is presented to gain benefits and make more money, it grows their overall skepticism towards that company. When consumers trust businesses, they are more likely to attribute their social efforts to value-driven motives. Customers have a better perception of the company when there is a strong fit between the business and the social cause. Business leaders should select causes that fit well into the overall mission and are easily manageable. When implemented carefully, corporate social responsibility may increase a company's value, have a positive effect on a company's image, and create an advantage over their competitors (Marín, Cuestas, & Román, 2016). This shows that there is an added value to pursuing a social enterprise model for online publications.

The notion of social responsibility is not limited to businesses. Consumers exercise their buying power more consciously when reminded of their social responsibility (Quazi, Amran, & Nejati, 2016). Consumers are becoming more aware of social implications and are more likely to engage with a business that cares about their community. They view companies that take on socially responsible actions as reliable. Social responsibility increases customers' satisfaction and ultimately brings the revenues up (Lee, Sung, Kim, Jung, & Kim, 2016).

Abrahamson (2015) when discussing advantages of digital journalism, states that the interactive nature of the web creates a sense of community and loyalty between

readers and the publication. This means that publications can combine interactivity and social enterprise concept to create a highly loyal audience. According to Santos et al. (2015), commercial models can be more efficient than nonprofit models in solving social issues. The presence of competition promotes increased efficiency and continuous innovation. Other advantages of social enterprises include boosting productivity and innovation, leveraging scarce public and philanthropic resources, responding quickly to demands of the market, and improving access to skilled personnel (Dees & Anderson, 2003).

According to Dees and Anderson (2003), companies can pursue social goals through different parts of their business processes. Those include product or service, procurement, employment, production, and marketing to target customers.

- Procurement is when the business uses its purchasing power to serve social purposes. Examples include purchasing from disadvantaged suppliers, buying fair-trade or environmentally friendly products.
- Employment practices can include employing disadvantaged individuals and providing them with training and development opportunities.
- When it comes to product or service method, the business, in that case, would provide products or services that have inherent social value. Those can include education, environmentally sustainable products, or product that aims to solve major social problems.
- Companies can also use socially responsible production methods. For example, they can make sure to use only clean energy.
- Lastly, businesses can target a disadvantaged market to provide them with the

resources they need. For example, a company called Grameen Bank profitably expended their credit to poor Bangladeshi women.

Online publications can adopt more than one of the mentioned methods. They can recycle and use clean energy. However, the best method for them to bring revenues and incite social change is to provide products and services.

Santos et al. (2015) also argue that there are multiple types of hybrids, including market hybrids, blending hybrids, bridging hybrids, and coupling hybrids. Market hybrids are companies in which beneficiaries are also clients, and the value spillover happens automatically. In these hybrids, essential products such as water, energy, and healthcare are designed in a way that they can be produced and sold cheaply, therefore creating access to in-need customers (Santos et al., 2015). For online publications to adopt a market hybrid model, it would require creating entirely new initiatives and programs or even building a completely new company altogether. Therefore, the market hybrid model is not the best option for online publications.

Blending hybrids are companies in which their clients are both paying customers and beneficiaries. To create a societal change blending hybrids also involve additional initiatives such as training or community outreach. Some examples of blending hybrids are microfinance and education (Santos et al., 2015). Blending hybrids would be a good model for publications to utilize. Microfinance, community outreach, and education training can go well with the mission of online publications, especially feminist publications. Initiatives such as creating online mentorship programs for women or providing microcredits to women-led startups can bring positive change, bring revenue, and create an excellent marketing for feminist publications.

Bridging hybrids serve both clients and beneficiaries who are from different groups, but they create initiatives that integrate both groups to make a change (Santos et al., 2015). This model is quite similar to a blending hybrid model, and similarly, it can work for online publications. For example, selling fair-trade accessories and clothing would help the women who produce those products, while also making socially responsible customers happy.

Lastly, coupling hybrids happen when you have beneficiaries and clients in two different groups, but there is no automatic value spillover. So, it requires social interventions along with the commercial operations. This type of hybrid is the most difficult to manage since there is a need to constantly balance different missions and resources (Santos et al., 2015). This hybrid is not the best for online publications to utilize, because of how hard it can be to manage and reach financial stability through this model.

“Social enterprises have proven to not only succeed in surviving and expanding, but also in developing novel approaches to some of the world's greatest problems.” But, in order to thrive, social enterprises need to attend to competing demands that come with the nature of the hybrid organization (Smith et al., 2013, p. 428). If media companies decide to adopt a social enterprise business model, they need to be aware of challenges that may come with it and be mindful of how to deal with them.

One of the big challenges is balancing between different objectives of social purpose and profit-making (Dees & Anderson, 2003). Various questions come from balancing the business goals and the social values. Those include:

- How to define success across different goals?

- How to differentiate and integrate both social and business missions?
- How to attend to both short-term and long-term goals?
- How to manage increased short-term costs to achieve long-term social goals?

If online publications decide to adopt additional social enterprise initiatives, all those questions would be important to address (Smith et al., 2013).

When it comes to media publications, the line between social and commercial responsibility is blurred. A study by Lee et al. argued that corporate social responsibility has an even bigger significance for media companies. Their research found that corporate social responsibility in the media has three major parts: credibility, usefulness, and fairness. Publications are considered to be more socially responsible if they provide a more credible, fair, and useful information.

Since media organizations are for-profit and serve the public, they can be considered social enterprises. However, I would argue that there are many other social enterprise initiatives they can implement in addition to providing information. Those initiatives should align with the purpose of the publications to provide alternative revenue streams. The challenge of balancing two different goals, social and commercial, is not new to publications. And because they have a previous expertise, it will be easier for them to adopt additional social enterprise initiatives.

There are ways for companies to become effective social enterprises. A good way to ensure success is to have a clear mission and a compelling venture model. That includes targeting customers who value social responsibility and linking social cost savings to productivity improvements for customers. Other ways to succeed are to make

sure to test your company's assumptions, to create a committed team, to develop a good brand reputation, and to strategically collaborate with nonprofits (Dees & Anderson, 2003).

Enterprises are vital in creating jobs and generating wealth, but the entrepreneurship field is dominated by men. A study by Nicolas and Rubio (2016) found that gender gap is reduced when it comes to social entrepreneurship, and women-led social enterprises are highly important for promoting gender equality. While any publication can adopt social enterprise initiatives, feminist online publications can benefit from the model significantly. Through business ventures, women can lift themselves and others around them.

Another study by Lyon and Humbert (2012) analyzed 825 social enterprises to examine the gender balance in their governance. The authors argue that while social enterprises have a reduced gender gap compared to the solely commercial enterprises, women are still underrepresented. Feminist online publications can bring revenue by expanding their business models to social enterprises. At the same time, they can also fulfill their mission to help and empower women.

Kimbu and Ngoasong (2016) in their qualitative study examined female social entrepreneurs who own small tourism firms in Cameroon. They looked at how those women combined social and commercial goals in their business strategies and how they overcame their local barriers. They found that women transformed themselves by transitioning from “traditional” roles of housewives to business owners, and helped others through employment, training, and income redistribution. Those women supported social and economic development by providing tourism services to broader communities.

The authors argue that through these business ventures, women were able to lift themselves and others around them (Kimbu & Ngoasong, 2016). This is an example how women can create social change while also making a profit.

These studies show how much value social enterprise models can bring. Feminist online publications can help empower women by utilizing this model.

### **Defining feminism**

After establishing the value of social entrepreneurship for feminist online publications, there is a need to define those publications, and to introduce the short history of feminism.

There are multiple schools of feminism, but all of them start with the common assumption that women are oppressed. The first wave of feminism focused on social, legal, political, and intellectual inequalities. Some of the prominent first wave feminists were Mary Wollstonecraft and Virginia Woolf. Wollstonecraft argued that human virtue shouldn't be determined by gender. She also argued for equal education to allow women full participation in social life. The second wave of feminism was focused on "refining what we understand as equality but it also extends to women's bodily experience in culture in society" (Scholz, 2013, p. 4).

This study acknowledges that women are still facing social and economic inequalities. Right now, we live in a stage of post-feminism or third-wave feminism. This is a moment where the gender equality culture has been changed partially, and in some cases, women are facing more pressures from the society (Press, 2011). The third wave of feminism emphasizes the importance of individuality and diverse personal experiences, examining the way race, gender, and class interrelate (Mahoney, 2016). Defining

feminism can be complicated: various people would define the term differently, emphasizing the most relevant aspects to them. Ferree and Mueller (2004) in their work define feminism “as the goal of challenging and changing women’s subordination to men” (p.577) They also argue that it’s important to accept and understand the wide range of women’s movements and the wide range of definitions of feminism.

While it might be hard to come up with a single definition for all, there is still common understanding among the audience and media professionals on what feminism is. The idea of feminism comes down to the central value of social and economic gender equality, empowerment of women, and inclusivity. In this study, we’ll use the commonly understood definition of feminism as a movement aimed to achieve a social, economic, and political equality for both sexes.

### **Commodification of the movement**

During the third wave of feminism, a concept of commodity feminism has risen to the surface. Commodity feminism is an idea of appropriation and de-politicization of the feminist movement to support commercial interests (Goldman, Heath, & Smith, 1991). Spice Girls have been criticized for using a message of girl power to sell merchandise, rather than to promote gender equality (Hains, 2014). However, Hains in her interview study about girl power in music, argues that commodity feminism can be productive as well. She points out that for some of her subjects, girl power messages were there at the right time, introducing them at a young age to the concepts of feminism.

Living in a culture of consumerism, the issue of commodification often comes to the front of the discussion. The selling of feminism has become a common discourse in

the last few years, with advertising and brands utilizing the feminist movement in their marketing campaigns.

There's a difference between making feminism attractive and making it meaningful to the millions of people who are more worried about earning a college degree or a living wage than they are in angling to get a heel into the C-suite. The appeal of marketplace feminism is that it doesn't ask much of consumers (Zeisler, 2016).

The dark side of selling of the movement is the complacency with buying tokens of feminism, rather than participating and educating yourself on the real issues. However, some argue that in the end, the message gets out there, appealing to the general public and promoting the feminist agenda. In an interview with Forbes, a marketer and a creative director Carrie Ingoglia mentions that she doesn't have anything against bringing feminist advertising campaigns like the Dove Beauty campaign to the mainstream. Even if the reasoning behind the campaign is to make money, it still sends a positive message to young girls (Aarons-Mele, 2017).

In a capitalistic society, every movement needs to be supported with funds to continue making progress within the community. The line between the selling of the movement and selling to support the movement can be difficult to navigate. This study examines how effective can social enterprise initiatives be to raise awareness and revenues for the feminist publications.

### **Feminist publications**

Mahrt (2012) looked into the relationship between readers' values and the magazines' values. She specifically analyzed women's magazines, using the theory of cognitive dissonance, an idea that people try to avoid messages that are different from their own. The survey analysis found that traditional magazines tend to resemble their

readers' values. Mahrt also states that women's magazines can function as "open" texts, meaning readers can project their worldviews onto the magazines they read. However, magazines can try to portray the values that are important to their readers.

Publications like Jezebel, Bustle, HelloGiggles, and Refinery29 can be described as feminist, because of the values they portray: female empowerment, inclusiveness, and equality. Jezebel explicitly states in their mission statement that they are a feminist publication. HelloGiggles identifies itself as "a positive online community for women (although men are always welcome!) covering the latest in beauty, fashion, lifestyle, female empowerment, culture, relationships, friendship, careers, and issues that matter most to young women's lives" (HelloGiggles, n.d). Its mission of female empowerment aligns with the values of feminism movement. Because of that, it falls under the umbrella of feminist publications for this study. When it comes to Refinery 29 and Bustle, they don't explicitly state they are feminist in their mission statements. However, when you look at their content, much of it follows the feminist values tackling the issues of gender equality.

Publication	Readership and demographics
Bustle	50 million unique visitors per month, 70 percent of their readers are female, and the majority are 18-34 years old (Bustle, n.d.).
Jezebel	15,5 million monthly readers in the U.S (Jezebel, n.d).
HelloGiggles	13.5 million daily readers (HelloGiggles, 2016)
Refinery29	500 million users across platforms (Refinery29, n.d.). 70 percent of their readers are female, 30 percent are male (Refinery29, 2015).

Bustle is a media startup that creates content mainly for millennial women. According to their website, “Bustle is for & by women who are moving forward as fast as you are” (Bustle, n.d). The website raises money through investors and earns revenue through advertising. They met their advertising goal of \$10 million in 2015 and hoping to get to \$20 million in 2016. While raising \$11.5 million is a lot of money, it’s not nearly as much as some other media companies earn. Vox and BuzzFeed have raised around \$200 million each (Shontell, 2016).

This shows that Bustle has a lot of room to grow in terms of profit, and could benefit from expanding their revenue models. Refinery29 and HelloGiggles also get their revenues from advertising (Johnson, 2016; Dave, 2015). All the publications stated above are feminist online publications that can grow from adopting social enterprise initiatives.

When looking at the literature review, it is clear there is a significant value tied to corporate social responsibility. There is also a serious need for new revenue streams for journalism publications. Combining social responsibility with profit-making leads to the idea of social entrepreneurship, a model that should be utilized by feminist online publications.

Based on the review of the literature, there is a good amount of studies done focusing on the journalism business models, on social entrepreneurship, and feminism. However, there isn’t anything that combines all those concepts. Online feminist publications can adopt social enterprise initiatives to continue promoting feminist agenda and lifting women up.

## **Research Questions**

RQ1: How does the “commodification” of feminism affect readers’ perception of the publication?

RQ2: What kind of social enterprise initiatives would audiences want publications to adopt?

RQ3: How does the audience’ attitude towards feminism translate into action?

## **Chapter 3: Methods**

The method of this study is focus groups with the audiences of the four feminist publications. The focus group method was chosen for multiple reasons, including the fact that it can provide rich data with high validity and can speed up the sampling compared to one-on-one interviews (Lunt & Livingstone, 1996). Another reason for the focus group method is that it allows for brainstorming of new ideas and gets impressions on the current operations (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). Since the purpose of the study is to find ways to implement socially responsible business models and to find out what the audience is both interested in and be willing to pay for, focus groups create a perfect space for it. It allows for the participants to converse and build their ideas upon each other.

### **Recruitment**

This study consists of two steps. First, a short Qualtrics survey was sent out to help identify potential focus group participants and gather their demographic data. The survey included following questions: age, gender, occupation, political affiliation, whether the participant is a reader of one or more publications that are being studied, and their outlook on feminism. Respondents who identified in the survey that they were interested in participating in the focus group were contacted via email to attend one of the four focus groups.

The survey was promoted on researcher's social media accounts, by sending out information emails to various student groups on campus, and through flyers that were distributed across University of Missouri-Columbia campus and downtown Columbia,

Missouri area. Organizations that researcher reached out to promote the study among its participants included:

- Mizzou Feminists Student Union
- Association of Trulaske Businesswomen
- Mizzou Black Women's Initiative
- University of Missouri Circle of Sisterhood
- Mizzou Women in Media
- University of Missouri Women's Center
- University of Missouri Women's Law Association
- Missouri National Organization for Women
- Mizzou Women's Ultimate Frisbee
- Mizzou Greek Life
- University of Missouri Women in Geography
- University of Missouri Society of Women Engineers
- University of Missouri Naturelles
- MU Women in STEM
- MU Student Chapter of the Association for Women in Mathematics
- The Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science at the University of Missouri
- Mizzou Collegiate CattleWomen

The purposive snowball sampling was also used in the recruitment process.

Participants were encouraged to invite their friends and acquaintances who also read the publications. Snowball sampling was beneficial since it allowed for more participants.

## **Sample**

This study targeted a millennial age group which corresponded with both the audiences of the publications and the demographics of the University of Missouri-Columbia campus. The 18-34 age group also represents future purchasers and influencers. All participants were over 18 years old. All the participants were in age group of 18-34, except for one female participant in the third focus group who was in the age group of 45-54.

The four focus groups had a total of 20 participants. Each focus group consisted of 4-7 respondents. The first two focus groups were inconsistent in composition, with one male participant present in each group. Participants came from various ethnic backgrounds. Those included: Black or African American; White or Caucasian; Asian/Pacific Islander; Hispanic or Latino; White and Hispanic. One respondent preferred not to identify their ethnicity. Most participants were students, except for one event planner. Everyone identified as either liberal or moderate in their political beliefs. Since the purpose of the focus group was not to debate over feminism, but rather talk about social enterprise models, all participants either identified themselves as feminists and/or agreed with the feminist ideals.

## **Procedure**

Four focus groups are considered a good number when the population size is low (Fallon & Brown, 2002). Since the “population” is the audiences of those publications, four groups were enough to reach theoretical saturation.

The study of the coverage of celebrity health news by Hinnant and Hendrickson (2014) used a focus group method with similar participants - magazine audiences,

specifically women 22-45 years old. Their focus groups were conducted during the evening to accommodate participants' schedules, and the sessions were both videotaped and audiotaped. All those procedures were applied to this research. The focus groups took place on University of Missouri-Columbia campus on four different dates: September 25, September 26, October 4, and October 5. They lasted under 90 minutes. Participants were provided free refreshments, snacks, and pizza. They were also eligible to receive a \$5 MU bookstore gift card. Participants were given consent forms prior the start of the focus group, and everyone was alerted that they will be audio and videotaped to gather data for this study.

The focus groups had three topics to answer three research questions. To answer the first research question, the focus group started with the discussion of the process of commodification of feminism. First participants were introduced to the idea of the commodification of feminism and asked their opinion on the subject. They were shown an image of a generic white T-shirt with "feminist" written on it and asked how their perception of the publication changes based on where the profits are going to. During the second part of the discussion, participants were introduced to the concept of social enterprises to make sure that all participants understand the topic. There were a few ideas of social enterprises introduced along with real initiatives that companies had. Follow-up questions were asked about the social enterprises to identify participants' behavior.

After the focus groups were completed, the data was transcribed and analyzed by the researcher to find common themes and extract interesting insight from the conversations.

## Chapter 4: Results

During the focus groups, participants shared a variety of feedback. They discussed how the commodification of feminism affects media companies. Respondents talked about what kind of function the four publications serve, and values they want to see from them. They also shared how their purchasing decisions are affected by the desire to contribute to the social good.

Respondents identified a problem of the commodification of the editorial content. Commodifying feminist content can come in two ways. One is when publications take advantage of the popularity of the social justice movement. They appeal to audience's emotions to attract clicks, but the content presented often lacks quality. Publication's desire to be perceived as the most socially aware and to get a large number of views overpowers the goal of providing facts. Second is when entertainment content becomes a constant noise from advertisers. A large number of articles are produced to profit from the empowering nature of the publication and fail to serve the audience.

To avoid the commodification of content, publications can utilize creative approaches. They can also make sure to provide history and background that could move the social justice movements forward. Promoting inclusive content can also help publications to mirror the values of the readers.

Adopting social enterprise initiatives can help online feminist publications to diversify their revenue streams and to continue promoting gender equality. Participants mentioned that one of the main functions those publications serve is to empower women through providing them with jobs and an outlet for their voices. When publications

provide a quality workplace for women, it signals to their audience that they stand true to the values they write about. Respondents also said that to successfully implement additional initiatives, publications need to be transparent and inclusive. They can also utilize humor, profit-sharing, and engage women as part of their strategies.

The themes found during the focus group analysis are broken down based on the three research questions.

**RQ1: How does the “commodification” of feminism affect readers’ perception of the publication?**

**Commodifying editorial content.** The focus groups started with an introduction of the concept of commodity feminism, an idea of appropriation and de-politicization of the feminist movement to support commercial interests (Goldman, Heath, & Smith, 1991). A significant theme that was brought up by the participants was the issue of commodification of the editorial content.

When discussing the content of the publications, participants identified different types of coverage. Those included beauty, fashion, female empowerment, celebrity gossip, and in-depth pieces. In addition to those, a concept of “social justice clickbait” was introduced during the second focus group by a Participant 2 (female, age 25-34).

Social justice clickbait is often produced to appeal to a liberal-leaning demographic, and it commodifies social movements. What makes it different from other types of clickbait, is that it masks as socially conscious content that is aimed to bring change. Often it appeals to the emotion and fails to include context and facts. It prompts the reader to get mad or upset for the sake of shares and clicks. Because this content lacks, it may harm the social justice causes. An example of it brought up during the

fourth focus group was articles about young women getting suspended from school for their clothing. Without mentioning or discussing overarching social issues, the article loses its importance. It fails to provide value to the readers, to make them more intelligent about the topic.

Participant 3 (male, age 18-24) said: “I really want them to do what they believe in and stand up for social justice, feminism, everything like that. But, I think there's almost a feeding frenzy to be the most out there.” He believes that there is a problem with an entire digital publishing industry. Many publications get “sloppy” when they aggregate news on social issues. Instead, he argued that publications should try to be more creative and avoid “cheapening” of their content to make money. “So, if we can have a better discussion about it, about commodifying some of the editorial content to just like one up the next place, we probably would be in the better spot,” he said.

When publications compete to be the most socially aware, they might fall into the trap of creating noise. And that could make it harder for people to have productive conversations. Participant 3 (female, age 18-24) said that publications shouldn't be “just jumping on the hottest social justice issue without any context.”

During the second focus group, Participant 6 (female, age 18-24) said that those short “fluffy” articles are not going to change the opinions of people with different political and social views. She said when content lacks facts, it doesn't prompt people to take a step back and think about the issue at hand.

Participant 4 (female, age 18-24) in the fourth focus group said that this content is not productive for the cause. “But it just makes people mad. It doesn't really put any solutions out. I don't like things that just incite arguments and just want to make people

mad,” she said. Participant 2 (female, age 18-24) agreed with her. She also added that there is room for various content, and not everything will make an impact. However, it is up to the publications and their mission and ethics to choose how and what they write.

Social justice clickbait creates an atmosphere that doesn't allow for conversation, context, and explanation. Instead, publications are trying to top one another with how progressive and socially aware they can appear. The content is produced to bring revenue, rather than to raise awareness.

The second way publications can commodify editorial content is when their content becomes a constant noise from advertisers. When a large number of articles is produced to profit from the empowering nature of the publication, it fails to serve the audience. Examples of this are articles that simply list things to buy. Slideshows of clothes show readers what to buy this season without providing a lot of extra information. It is understandable that publications partner with brands to make revenue, and that some readers want purchasing recommendations. But, when it fails to bring additional value beyond providing links, it becomes commodified.

Participant 3 (male, age 18-24) from the first focus group said that media publications should strive to produce high quality sponsored content. He believes that if the content is well researched and well reported, then it is a good way for publications to make money. It is vital for publications not to sacrifice quality for quantity when producing sponsored content.

Participants in the second focus group voiced that publications should strive to have a long commitment to advertisers. Participant 4 (female, age 18-24) and Participant 3 (female, age 18-24) talked how advertisers seek to partner with influencers on

Instagram. They argued that just one post signifies the lack of commitment to the brand, which makes the recommendation less trustworthy. They believe when you associate yourself with the brand longer, it carries much more weight.

This idea can be translated into a useful strategy to produce sponsored articles. Publications should partner with brands for an extended period to produce a series of content that is creative and has high quality. Creative, transparent, and committed sponsored content can foster a more trusting relationship with your audience.

The audiences of online feminist publications see the problems with the commodification of the content. They want them to support feminism by taking time to explain history, implications, and repercussions of the topic. When the content is meant for entertainment and brand sponsorship, it is essential for publications to be creative and to emphasize quality. That could generate positive brand associations, creating more loyal readers and customers.

**Celebrating femininity and trivializing feminine content.** The balance of content was a second big discussion among the focus group participants. There was a debate over the level of importance of beauty and fashion coverage. Participants pointed out that there is a problem with the trivialization of feminine content.

During the fourth focus group Participant 1 (female, age 18-24) said:

I also think that, why can't women's rights and advancement be a part of both female and male interests? Why can't men be interested in this too? And I almost feel like when you put all women's content together, it becomes trivialized, and it becomes less important in general and not real journalism.

Participants also discussed that it is important for those publications to have a variety of content. They also argued that being traditionally “feminine” and having interest in “feminine” content is not mutually exclusive with the feminist movement.

Many participants labeled light content as “fluff,” which included fashion, beauty, celebrity, entertainment, and news aggregated content. Some participants also wondered why “fluff” must always have a negative connotation. Here is an excerpt from the discussion during the fourth focus group:

Participant 1 (female, 18-24): And also, is that the worst thing because it is—

Participant 4 (female, 18-24): I need some fluff in my life. Life is hard and sad sometimes, and you know what? Sometimes I want to look at pretty things.

Participant 1: I mean, it's driven toward our interests. I mean, I wouldn't say all women, but women are the ones who primarily want to do that.

Participant 4: Yeah, it's okay to be feminine and want to do things like that.

Participant 5 (female, 18-24): Yeah, I think you still be feminist and still want fluff sometimes.

So, why female-oriented content is often considered to be less important than male-oriented coverage? Why fashion and beauty are considered less intelligent than sports? Although the female-focused content has the same impact on society, it's often labeled as trivial. Often publications that are produced by women and for women automatically become niche and are not as well-respected as their male-focused counterparts. Participant 1 (female, 18-24), focus group four, said:

I wish we could get to a place where an all-female publication was as respected as an all-male publication. And that's the thing, is that all women publications are trivialized like I said earlier, but it's not that they're a bad thing. It's a great thing. It's just that society needs to change.

Participant 1 (female, age 25-34) from the third focus group added that it's important to have a balance of content. She said that many people who identify as women enjoy “feminine things like makeup and fashion.”

Participant 4 (female, age 18-24) from the third focus group expressed a similar opinion. She said that this type of content is positive since it celebrates femininity. However, she said that celebrity news and gossip are different, and they could be

“harmful.” She believes that it is problematic because it profits off the celebrities. Other participants mentioned celebrity gossip, and many saw it as unessential and unimportant. Often celebrity gossip goes against the publication’s mission to empower women. Avoiding tabloid gossip and ensuring that the content has additional value beyond the prominence of the famous figures can create better images for the publications. It’s understandable that completely erasing celebrity news is not realistic because there is still a demand from the readers. However, making sure to approach this topic ethically is important for publications to do. Writers should look for story angles that celebrate something, focus on the significance of the news, and connect it to the larger issue. This approach can generate high-quality content that goes along with the mission of the publication and the values of the readers.

**Social media algorithms and familiarity with publications.** The focus group participants’ opinions on the quality of the publication did not depend on the frequency in which they read that publication. Instead, it depended on the social media algorithms and the kind of content that appeared on their feeds.

One of the problems identified by the focus group participants is that content geared towards the millennial female demographic is often oversimplified. Participant 4 (female; age 18-24; reads Refinery29, Bustle, Jezebel once a week; reads HelloGiggles less than once a month) during the fourth focus groups said: “I feel like a lot of times stuff that is geared towards us is very superficial and not very thought-provoking.” She adds that she wants to be educated and wants those publications to write about business and health. Instead, in her feed, she mostly sees videos about “makeup throughout time.”

Participant 4 (female; age 18-24; reads Bustle and Jezebel once a week; reads Refinery29 multiple times a week; HelloGiggles less than once a month) from the second focus group associates those publications with short montage videos of celebrities. Participant 2 (female; age 18-24; reads Refinery29 once a month) from the first focus group mainly sees makeup videos and often does not distinguish the publications from one another. Participant 7 (female; age 18-24; reads Bustle once a month; reads Refinery29 once a week) from the second focus group said:

My problem with those like publications, traditional new publications aiming at the young female audience is that sometimes they like tend to write articles that are a bit condescending, and they write articles like, oh, here's a Wall Street Journal article for girls.

On another hand, Participant 1 from focus group three (female; age 25-34; reads Bustle, Jezebel, Refinery29 less than once a month) talked about a story she loved from Bustle. She emphasized that she appreciated the feminist focus of the video series about women and homelessness.

When examining the Refinery29 website, there is a section focused on money and career that also includes articles about tech (Refinery29, n.d). Bustle also covers tech. Its features often include complex investigative pieces, such as recent reports titled: “What It's Like To Be A 13-Year-Old Girl And In Jail For Shoplifting” and “I'm A Mexican Immigrant And I Know Firsthand What Life Looks Like Without DACA” (Rosenthal & Diaz, 2017; Perez De La Pena, 2017). HelloGiggles also covers money, career, health, and tech. (HelloGiggles, n.d).

However, the perceptions of most publications are based not on their homepage content, but on their social media presence, which is controlled by algorithms. A publication may write a lot of high-quality complex content, but often it can be

overlooked by many readers because it won't reach their social media feeds. Boosting their best content to reach the largest audience is essential when it comes brand recognition and perception. While social media algorithms are beyond the control of the publications, paying attention to what your audience sees is vital. Looking for ways to get a broad reach for the most important pieces is something for social media teams to think about.

**White feminism and commodity feminism.** During three of the four focus groups, a theme emerged that commodity feminism is often associated with white feminism.

Focus group participants argued that when feminism is commodified, it often becomes white feminism. It excludes the complexity, context, and intersectionality of the movement. It also forgets about different races, socio-economic statuses, genders, and the LGBT community. This point was brought up not only by women of color, but white women as well. Meaning the theme was present across different demographics. During the third focus group Participant 1 (female, age 18-24, White or Caucasian) said:

I think it can be problematic for commodity feminism, is when it could – quickly becomes white feminism, and it kind of doesn't really get the true depth of what feminism is. It just kind of gets a very topical thing, which, unfortunately, translates to white feminism, where it doesn't really include people of color or any LGBT things. That's kind of where I see problems lie.

One of the topics that came up was celebrities profiting from the popularity of feminism, while also excluding the intersectionality of the movement. Participant 3 (female, age 18-24, Black or African American) talked about it during the fourth focus group. She said that in Hollywood there is a big issue of white feminism. Many celebrities who promote women empowerment make her wonder whether they mean

empowerment to all women or just to white heterosexual women. Participant 1 (female, age 18-24, White or Caucasian) agreed, and also mentioned Taylor Swift as an example of someone profiting from the popularity of feminism:

Absolutely. I mean, I think that when it becomes commodified, it's all about white feminism again, and I think that— I don't know. I mean, it's just I think talking about race is uncomfortable for a lot of people, and it almost feels political. And it feels controversial when it really shouldn't. It's like if we're talking about men versus women, then we should be able to talk about different women in accordance with each other, and so that's when it gets a little dicey for people.

During the first focus group Participant 4 (female, age 18-24, White or Caucasian), also brought up the issue of white feminism. She added that advertising often caters towards white feminism as opposed to feminism that includes all ethnicities.

We're still shunning out all who are included in feminism. Because when I think feminism, I don't just think like oh empowering women. Like yes, it's empowering women, and it's empowering people who are transgender, transgender women, transgender men, empowering men even in some circumstances too.

Feminist publications need to make sure that both their editorial and sponsored content goes along with their mission of diversity and inclusivity. As they introduce additional initiatives, those need to be evaluated carefully by a diverse group of stakeholders. Participant 3 (female, age 18-24, Black or African American) from the fourth focus group urged publications to use their outlet to “turn the word feminism and to include all women.” She also would love to see those publications expand and get more diverse as they go along. Participant 1 (female, age 18-24, White or Caucasian) agreed with her and added: “I think feminism is absolutely inclusive of race, of sexual orientation, or gender. Like all these different things that come together and you can't just always be like women, women, women.”

Feminist publications serve a function of empowering women of all backgrounds and educating the audience about the intersectionality of feminism. With every additional initiative that is aimed to bring revenue, publications need to evaluate how well it aligns with those functions. Here are some questions a news organization can ask itself: Is it a social justice clickbait? Is it promoting intersectional feminism? Are we making money off the popularity of feminist movement? Are those initiatives deeply personal and focused on white feminism? These questions need to be answered by a diverse group of people to evaluate both current and future endeavors.

**RQ2: What kind of social enterprise initiatives would audiences want publications to adopt?**

**Transparency and accountability.** The biggest theme found regarding adopting social enterprise model is that the initiatives should be transparent and well researched. When it comes to media companies, the biggest assets they have are credibility and trust of their readers. When media organizations decide to engage in additional for-profit initiatives, they have an advantage because they have an audience that supports and trusts them. But, they also need to make sure to protect that trust. Transparency is vital to ensure that the brand is not affected negatively by the company's initiative to make money.

Some of the big feminist narratives include the goal of empowering women and messages such as “you are beautiful just the way you are” and “love and appreciate your body.” Feminist publications that support these messages might also create a lot of sponsored content in partnerships with clothing, makeup, and beauty brands. This brings us to a question of how do you balance those conflicting messages of inner beauty with

the company's desire to sell skincare, makeup, or clothes. Participant 3 (male, age 18-24) from the first focus group answered it this way:

So, I think it would be, you would just have to not come across as disingenuous, and to say you don't need any of this, you are good, and then your sponsored content says the opposite. I think you just need to be honest and a little bit more straight about. Yeah, you might feel pressured to feel this way, to do this, and if you want to do this that's fine, and if you don't that's fine too.

When news organizations produce sponsored content or partner with brands to create new initiatives, it's crucial for them to conduct research. It's also vital for them to make sure that their message is consistent, clear, and aligns with their mission.

Participant 3 (male, age 18-24) also added that to pull off additional initiatives like selling merchandise, publications have to be “completely straightforward and shameless about it and also donate a lot of it.”

Another theme was the importance of accountability. Focus group participants voiced they wanted companies that are involved in socially responsible campaigns to follow up on their promises. They need to let their customers know the actual results of their campaigns. Many participants said that they are often skeptical when companies promote socially responsible campaigns. They are often seen as a ploy to get people to buy a product without making a real impact.

Participant 1 (female, age 18-24) from the first focus group said that companies use social responsibility to create a buzz and to get more customers. Often, she doesn't know what the real results of those campaigns are and what kind of impact they made. She said that companies need to tell their audience and shareholders about the benefits from the implemented programs. She added, “They also need a third party to audit what's

going on, cause I don't think companies themselves can represent every step they are doing.”

Participant 3 (female, age 18-24) from the fourth focus group also said that companies need to share the process of the program and to follow up with the results.

Media companies can benefit from promoting the impact of their social initiatives. Giving real facts and metrics is important to continue fostering trust, credibility, and brand loyalty among the audience. Making sure that the impact can be measured and reported on by other outlets is also vital to share the unbiased result of the work you have done.

Participant 4 (female, age 18-24) from the first focus group said that in order for feminist publications to create an effective social enterprise initiative, they need to be “transparent in their content.” They also need to split their profits by at least giving away half of the proceeds to the social justice issue they are going to support. Other participants also expressed a similar outlook, saying that donating some of the proceeds is essential when you are promoting a socially responsible initiative.

Participants mentioned that publications should be transparent about how the proceeds are being used and where they are going to. Participant 7 (female, age 18-24) from the second focus group said:

I mean the more transparent the company is about their proceedings, the more likely I am to buy their product. It's just like from an ethics standpoint. But I think it also depends on how they advertise it, because sometimes you can do it very ethically and then you can only go a little bit... like you're trying to cash in on this cause. So, I think it's a combination of those that determine if I'm going to buy the product or not.

If feminist media publications are hoping to adopt social enterprise initiative there are a few things they need to make sure to do:

1. Create a clear, consistent with the mission, and straightforward message to your audience.
2. Make sure to be generous and transparent about the proceeds.
3. Follow up with the results of the initiative, providing clear measurements of what kind of impact you created.

### **Social entrepreneurship as part of company's policies**

*Motives versus Impact.* The participants questioned the motives of media companies that produce feminist content or adopt socially responsible actions.

The respondents debated what carries more weight. On one level, there are writers and strategists, who deeply care about the movement, strive to produce quality content and to implement new ways to support the newsrooms. On another, there are CEOs of large media organizations that see a growing demand for feminist content. They might mostly care that feminist publications are a lucrative niche. The question discussed was whether the motive of profiting from the movement outweighs the social good that comes out of it?

During the fourth focus group, Participant 1 (female, age 18-24) said that media molds the minds of people. She believes that even if the company's motives are not pure, it's great that they put positive messages out there for girls to listen and watch. Participant 5 (female, age 18-24) also wondered that if the audience doesn't recognize the appropriation, does it mean that the empowering messages have positive outcomes? Participant 3 (female, age 18-24), however, said there are times when commodification of feminism doesn't add any value. One company might sell ethically manufactured "feminist" t-shirts and share the proceeds to make a positive impact. Another company

might produce the same merchandise in factories with terrible conditions while paying women low wages. The second company simply abuses the popularity of the feminist movement. Participant 2 (female, age 18-24) summarized those ideas, and said: “I think the only good thing that could come out of commodity feminism would be more representation because that's just something that you view.”

Participant 3 (male, age 18-24) from the first focus group also talked about the motives versus the impact:

I mean that is definitely because it makes money, don't get me wrong. But, if the other part of that is that a bunch of young women are politically informed and empowered to participate in their democracy, then I'm not as mad that Hearst is making a lot of money off it.

He said that there are companies that want to profit from the feminist movement, instead of focusing on the social impact. Not only do they see its popularity among the audience, but they also have a large pool of passionate employees available to them. They might take advantage of those employees' familiarity with the audience and their desire to work extra hard to promote the message. Because of that, he would be more skeptical if Conde Nast or Hearst decide to adopt new social enterprise initiatives, than if an independently-owned publication would do it. Participant 4 (female, age 18-24) agreed with him. She said that the face of the company has the power to affect the readership. Board of directors or CEO's could deter readers if it's white men capitalizing on the feminist movement.

Participants voiced that whoever is creating this content can also be a big indicator of the company's motives. Participant 5 (male, age 25-34) from the second focus group said:

When I see that it's done by a group of young female strategists, who can balance the message with the marketing goals I am totally fine with that. When I am imagining an old white male, Don Draper kind of copywriter making that up, then I am just disgusted.

Participant 3 (male, age 18-24) from the first focus group also echoed that idea.

He said that while there might be ownership issues at the top, as long as the people on the ground are putting in the work to make an excellent product, then it's okay.

During the fourth focus group, similar ideas were expressed by participants.

Participant 3 (female, age 18-24) said that even if men established women-oriented publications, the important part is that it is empowering women and giving them an outlet. Participant 2 (female, age 18-24) agreed with her. She said as long as women get to have a platform to express their opinions, it doesn't matter who owns it. Participant 5 (female, age 18-24) agreed and added that it would be great if one day men would also want to read and care about those topics.

The motives versus impact conversation can be complicated. But, the company's structure and mission are significant factors on the impact they create. At the end of the day, audiences care about intention. Publications should mirror the values of their readers to be able to avoid the commodification of feminism. The audiences want those publications to serve a function of providing an outlet for feminism and women empowerment.

***Providing jobs and a healthy workplace environment.*** Another function that feminist publications serve is promoting a healthy workplace. Participants said it's fundamental for the publication's success to treat their employees well. Participants expressed that a company's policies are more important than their advertising campaigns, profit-sharing, or other socially responsible initiatives. If the feminist media publications

are promoting the message of female empowerment, they need to translate those values into their companies' policies and culture. Even further, they need to make sure to partner with businesses that abide by a similar mission.

Participant 3 (female, age 18-24) from the fourth focus group said for publications to differentiate themselves from those who are exploiting the popularity of the movement, they need to make sure to put their money where their mouth is. She also made a point that feminism may be more popular and mainstream now. But, those publications need to strive to create real results by affecting the legislation.

I think it is important for everyone to put their money where their mouth is. If you're going to wear a shirt that says feminist, you'd better stand for everything that a feminist stands for, not just for the popular, not just because it's popular right now.

To further support her idea Participant 3 (female, age 18-24) also talked about a Maybelline's campaign she enjoyed. The makeup brand donated a certain percentage of the proceeds to a fund. First, participant felt excited about it and enjoyed how it was executed. But, later in the focus group, she remembered that the company tests on animals, which completely devalued the fact that they did this campaign.

Participant 3 (female, age 18-24) also provided an example that if she is going to buy a t-shirt that says "feminist" on it, she would want that company to employ diverse models, and provide a large variety of sizes.

Social entrepreneurship and corporate social responsibility can boost company's brand, improve sales, or widen their audience reach. The first step for companies to get the benefits is to have policies that promote social good.

It was mentioned throughout multiple focus groups by various participants that one of the functions those publications serve is providing jobs to women in the

journalism industry. Those publications help promote gender equality allowing women to rise to the top.

Participants in the fourth focus group had a conversation about the importance of fair labor and wages. They said that it is vital for companies to show that they are not merely capitalizing on the movement, but care beyond the marketing and sales.

Participant 4 (female, age 18-24): Personally, when I see shirts like that, I always get kind of annoyed [laughter] because I'm like, you're just trying to capitalize off people, and I just don't know because a lot of shirts like that are made from poor labor and not fair wages, and so I think researching it is important, but any time I've seen stuff like that, it's been on Forever 21 or H&M.

Participant 3 (female, age 18-24): Both of those companies are really bad.

Participant 1 (female, age 18-24): Imagine being the women making that shirt.

Participant 5 (female, age 18-24): I know.

Participant 4 (female, age 18-24): No. It's so sad to think about. It's just I don't know. I definitely think that is commodity feminism.

Participants continued talking about the importance of fair wages and good labor conditions. Participant 4 (female, age 18-24) believes that fair wages and reasonable working hours are more important than donating money. Donating is an add-on while taking good care of your employees is mandated, she added. Focus group participants also voiced the need for paid maternity leave and quality healthcare. Publications should have systems in place to allow a diverse group of women to grow and attain senior positions within the company.

Participants talked how those publications play a vital role in providing women with a quality workplace. Primarily, this begins with building a company culture where “they don't have to worry about being sexually harassed,” said Participant 3 (female, age 18-24) during focus group four. She wants women to have a place where they don't have to worry about creating male-appropriate content or producing something too feminine. She believes that those media publications “serve a purpose for women to actually have

an outlet, and a job, and not have to worry about, are they going to be good enough? Are they going to stand up to their male competitors?”

Feminist publications need to continue striving towards creating a positive workplace, with opportunities for advancement, excellent benefits, and a diverse staff. By guaranteeing fair policies, those publications by default are creating a positive change in society and move forward the feminist ideals.

**Engaging women as part of the social enterprise initiative.** Participants talked about the components of an acceptable for-profit initiative. They said that apart from transparency and research, it is also important to engage women throughout the entire process by giving them a stage and recognition. Employing and engaging with diverse range of people is vital when coming up with additional initiatives. During the fourth focus groups Participant 1 (female, age 18-24) put it this way:

You've got to be careful about celebrating women and exploiting women, and like— well, I mean, feminism, in general. So, just going back to the idea of a female comedy night, if you are putting women at the forefront and giving them a platform, then they're speaking for themselves, and it's not necessarily the organization speaking for women. So, I appreciate things like that.

Participant 4 (female, age 18-24) agreed with her and said that she supports anything that gives women a voice. She also mentioned that it's also important for those publications to have advertisers and sponsors that agree with their business ethics. Overall, she doesn't see a problem when companies make a profit off a topic that women care about, as long as they do it ethically.

Publications that want to bring additional value and revenue by adopting new initiatives need to ask themselves how they can give women a platform to express

themselves. They can ask themselves if they should do it through art, fashion and design, public speaking and knowledge sharing, technology or business.

Giving women a platform is another value those publications provide to their audience. That function needs to be carefully considered when coming up with new initiatives. For example, if a feminist publication is organizing a fair, they need to ask themselves how they can engage female-led businesses. They might want to hire artists and performers from a diverse background, and include games and activities that promote feminist messages.

**Humor as a way to connect.** Participants found that humor can be a good way to relate to politics, social justice issues, and feminist ideas. Participants during the second focus group talked how comedy brings people together. Participant 1 (female, age 18-24) said that humorous content could bring more people in to have a conversation and open them more to the values of feminism.

However, it's important to differentiate humor from snark. Participants in the second focus groups expressed that snark is not relatable, but instead, perpetuates a common idea people agree with. As Participant 2 (female, age 25-34) said during the second focus group, snark is not changing any minds.

Audiences value entertainment and want feminist publications to make them laugh. As publications look for new ways to bring revenue, humor is something to keep in mind. A humorous approach can allow for a broader impact and engage more people in the conversation.

**RQ3: How does the audience's attitude towards feminism translate into action?**

**The social good, the product, and the counterproductive.** Corporate social responsibility is beneficial when it's conveniently presented, and acts as an add-on to a product that is already appealing to the audience. If the product is not something the customers are interested in, the social good won't change their decision. But, if a customer is interested in the product, they might put away their ethical concerns.

Participant 7 (female, age 18-24) said during the second focus group that if she really wants a product, she would still get it, even if the company doesn't mention where the proceeds are going. Participant 2 (female, age 25-34) expressed the same opinion, saying that "if I really like the product I'll probably put aside any ethical concerns, if I have to be perfectly honest." When she buys products that claim they provide a social good, she often feels suspicious of it. But, in her words the "worst case scenario it's just like anywhere else I would've bought it."

Participant 2 (female, age 18-24) during the fourth focus group, shared a story when she was interested in purchasing a feminist t-shirt:

I remember I was looking at one, one time and I was like, "I want to buy this one!" and sent it off to a group message, and my friend was like, "Don't buy from them! They just got a lot of flack for their representation. All their models are only white women." And I was like, "Okay, that's a valid point." [...] So, that was something that I definitely paid attention, especially for these specific phrases. You want it to go to something that you actually believe in and not just like, "Oh, I'm wearing this, I'm cool."

When customers want to either purchase tokens of the feminist movement or participate in events that promote that mission, they care more about the corporate social responsibility. But, the quality of the product still comes first. Because of this, at times social responsibility can become counterproductive. During the second focus group, Participant 4 (female, age 18-24) told a story when she was interested in buying a purse

that was “made by women in Rwanda.” She said it was a small section of bags, and she didn’t like them as much as opposed to the regular collection. She felt guilty to buy the other product she was interested in and ended up exiting the website.

Participant 2 (female, age 18-24) from the fourth focus group said that it’s okay for feminist publications to make money from different events and initiatives, as long as it is something that she is interested in. Participant 3 (female, age 18-24) from the first focus group expressed a similar idea, saying that making a profit doesn’t matter as much if they are providing you with the service. It wouldn’t turn him off “if they were kicking it back somehow.”

It is beneficial for companies and publications to adopt social enterprise initiatives. Not only does it make a positive impact, but also shows your audience that you care, creating more trust and loyalty among your readers. It can help you boost your marketing and sales, as long as you conduct thorough research and ensure that you don’t appear disingenuous. A publication has to create products or initiatives that are desirable, high quality, and ethically produced if they want people’s desire to be a part of something good to translate into their purchasing decisions. Publications need not to overestimate audience's willingness to help others, but shouldn’t underestimate audience’s ability to look deeper into the company's policies and culture. The offering will speak for itself if the quality product and integrity of the organization are remaining high. Researching audience’s attitudes and implementing ethical standards can help create a quality campaign that is both profitable and impactful.

**Distinguishing journalism brand from other commercial endeavors.** The last argument participants made is that publications need to have a clear separation between

the journalism brand and other for-profit efforts. Participant 3 (female, age 18-24) from the second focus group said that if the company is continuously engaged in a side business, they might lose their credibility as a media organization. If they are remaining transparent and not engaging in additional initiatives frequently, then it might work in her opinion.

As media publications adopt new initiatives, they need to clearly distinguish their journalism brand from whatever else they are doing. The journalism brand needs to appear as impartial and separated from the rest of the campaigns to keep the trust and credibility of the company. Good branding and ethical transparency would allow publications to benefit from the social entrepreneurship while not harming their journalistic brand.

## Chapter 5: Conclusions

### Discussion

During the focus groups, respondents' perceptions of the publications and their outlook on the commodification of feminism gave an insight into what can be improved. The audiences helped identify the values that matter to them. They expressed what kind of purpose they want the feminist publications to serve. Those included:

- To make them smarter and educate them on the topics
- To foster a productive conversation about feminism
- To inspire and lift women up
- To promote the intersectionality of the feminist movement
- To entertain and make them laugh
- To provide women with a quality workplace
- To engage and empower women
- To give women an outlet to share their voices

Feminist publications need to keep these functions in mind when considering the outcomes of their product. Those feminist publications can be the leading light that transforms our society. They can disrupt the industry and the society if they identify their values, listen to their audiences, and build content that provides a thorough analysis. With sponsored content, advertising, social media algorithms, and many other factors putting pressure on media outlets, finding the balance between editorial integrity and business practices is tough. Figuring out what purpose the audience wants publications to serve

provides them with values to follow. It equips them with goals and directions for future initiatives.

In this research, respondents talked about the problem of the commodification of the editorial content. To avoid that, publications could utilize creative approaches. They should also make sure to provide history and background that could move the social justice movements forward. Promoting inclusive content can also help publications to mirror the values of their readers. Abiding by those principles can ultimately bring better associations with both the media outlet and their advertisers.

Based on the review of the literature and the focus groups' insight it is clear that social enterprise initiatives are a good way for publications to make money. First and foremost, publications need to ensure that the companies' policies are representative of the values they write about. Media companies should provide fair wages, excellent benefits, and healthy working environment.

Beyond that, adding transparent and well-researched socially responsible initiatives is beneficial for those feminist publications. Going outside of the core business and targeting a diverse demographic can further help publications to serve their readers. Starting conversations with people who are on the fence about feminism and reaching a male demographic can serve a valuable function of fostering discussions.

Creating initiatives that your audience wants and willing to pay for can be tricky. Using humor, listening to your customers, and critically reviewing the proposed offerings by a diverse group of people can ensure a smoother implementation. As those media companies grow and find new ways to bring revenue, it's vital for them to put their journalistic mission first and foremost.

It's important to mention the diverse sample of the audience. Apart from the main demographic of women, 18-34, the sample included two men in the age group of 18-34 and one woman in the age group of 45-54. The most important criterion was that participants had to be the readers of at least one the publications. The themes found across the various focus groups were consistent across different sex and age. Respondents from different demographics talked about the issues of commodified editorial content. They also discussed the motives of the companies, and the importance of giving women the platform as part of their processes. This shows that the themes found during the study were not only limited to one demographic.

### **Significance**

This study provided an insight into readers' opinions about the commodification of feminism. Participants shared their perceptions of the publications, and what motivates their purchasing decisions. The ideas of the commodified editorial content and the social justice clickbait were two of the most important findings in this research. Those concepts can be applied beyond the four publications studied in this research.

This study provides online feminist publications with a set of values that the audience wants served. By following those values, publications have a general direction to follow. While this research focused on the four publications, similar media outlets have been established since the start of this research and gained popularity. Although those weren't included in this research, the themes can be applied beyond the four magazines that were studied.

## **Limitations**

All participants from the focus group identified themselves as either liberal or moderate and believe in feminist ideals. Because of that, it excluded other findings that might have come from a different demographic. There might be readers who would consider themselves conservative and would have different opinions on the subject. The sample for this study is also limited to mostly college students at the University of Missouri-Columbia. While the age aligns with the readership of those publications, geographically the sample is limited to one location.

While the study was limited to women-oriented publications, the themes found can be generalized beyond the four publications presented in this study.

## **Directions for Future Research**

Additional studies can:

- Analyze social enterprise models for different demographics and different media publications. A quantitative or qualitative study can look into what kind of socially responsible initiatives different audiences prefer for different publications.
- Find the key touchstones that help women communicate with other women about feminism. Studies can illuminate the way for publications to continue transforming our society.
- Examine the best tactics to foster conversations about feminism among people who don't believe in feminist ideals. Studies can consider how feminist content can reach a wider audience, specifically men.
- Explore different revenue models. A focus group can help discover

possibilities with branding, events, and subscriptions.

- Look at the impact of specific types of content, whether it is gossip, opinion pieces, or videos about the audience. A survey analysis can help identify best content strategies for those publications.
- Analyze the work of the journalists. Interviews with the journalists and the strategists of those publications can explore the unique challenges that come with balancing feminine and feminist content.
- Focus on how social enterprise model can be applied both financially and operationally to various media companies. Studies can consider the unique challenges that media companies have when they adopt social enterprise initiatives and how can those publications deal with them.
- Examine past initiatives to measure and further understand an audience's perception of publications engaging in additional for-profit initiatives.
- Explore the best strategies to manage the newsrooms. Quantitative or qualitative studies can examine various managerial techniques, for example, what new managerial theories might work well in today's newsrooms.

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## Appendix A: Survey Questions

### Survey: Online feminist publications as social enterprises

#### Online feminist publications as social enterprises: diversifying revenue streams through corporate social responsibility

##### Consent to Participate in Research

*Please read the following form carefully.*

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Kamila Jambulatova, Master's student at the University of Missouri. The purpose of this research is to explore how online publications can adopt a social enterprise business model. When you are invited to participate in research, you have the right to be informed about the study procedures so that you can decide whether you want to consent to participation.

Your participation in this survey and the study is **voluntary**. You must be at least 18 years old to participate. If you do not want to continue the survey you may stop at any time. This survey should not take more than 5-10 minutes to complete.

**Risks.** There are no reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts that might occur as a result of your participation in this research project.

**Confidentiality.** This information will not be shared with anyone, and will only be used for the purpose of the research. Your identity and the information you provide in this study will be dealt with confidentiality when sharing and publishing the results of this study. Your information will never be connected to your identity.

**Questions, Concerns, and Complaints.** If you have any questions about the research, please contact **Kamila Jambulatova**, who can be reached by email: [kjb7d@missouri.edu](mailto:kjb7d@missouri.edu). Or my advisor Randall Smith at [smithrandall@missouri.edu](mailto:smithrandall@missouri.edu). You may contact the Campus Institutional Review Board if you have any questions about your rights, concerns, complaints or comments as a research participant. You can contact Campus IRB at the following address

**Campus Institutional Review Board** 489 McReynolds Hall Columbia, MO 65211  
(573) 882-9585 | Email: [umcresearchcirb@missouri.edu](mailto:umcresearchcirb@missouri.edu) | Website:  
<http://www.research.missouri.edu/cirb/index.htm>.

**I have read this consent form and my questions have been answered.**

- Agree (1)
- I do not agree (2)

*Skip To: End of Survey If I = I do not agree (2)*

Q1 How old are you?

- 18 - 24 (1)
- 25 - 34 (2)
- 35 - 44 (3)
- 45 - 54 (4)
- 55 and older (5)

Q2 What is your gender?

- Male (1)
- Female (2)
- Transgender female (3)
- Transgender male (4)
- Gender Variant/Non-conforming (5)
- Not listed (6) \_\_\_\_\_

Q3 What is your ethnicity?

- White or Caucasian (1)
- Hispanic or Latino (2)
- Black or African American (3)
- Native American or American Indian (4)
- Asian / Pacific Islander (5)
- Other (6) \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer not to answer (7)

Q4 Are you a student?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

---

*Display This Question:*  
*If Are you a student? = No*

Q5 What is your occupation?

---

Q6 How would you describe your political beliefs?

- Liberal (1)
- Moderate (2)
- Conservative (3)

Q7 In one line, what it means for you to be liberal/moderate/conservative?

---

Q8 Do you read any of these publications? (Choose all that apply)

- Bustle (1)
- Jezebel (2)
- Refinery29 (3)
- HelloGiggles (4)
- None (5)

---

*Skip To: End of Survey If Q4 = None (5)*

---

Q9 How often do you read those publications?

	Multiple times a day (1)	Once a day (2)	Multiple times a week (3)	Once a week (4)	Once a month (5)	Less than once a month (6)	N/A (7)
Bustle (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jezebel (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Refinery29 (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HelloGiggles (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q10 Do you consider yourself a feminist?

- Yes (1)
- Maybe/Unsure (2)
- No (3)

Q11 Do you believe in the following?

	Yes (1)	Maybe (2)	No (3)
Equal pay for both sexes (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More women should hold important political positions (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Women should have rights to make their own choices regarding their bodies (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Paid maternity and paternity leave (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reducing sexual harassment (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reducing domestic violence and sexual assault (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reducing discrimination against women of color (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More women should enter STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our society needs to continue making changes for equality (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q12 A focus group will be formed to further explore audience's opinion on commodity feminism and additional revenue streams for online publications. Are you willing to be contacted to participate in the focus group? If you choose to participate you will receive a \$5 MU bookstore gift card. It will last up to 90 minutes, and free food and refreshments will be provided.

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

---

*Display This Question:*

*If A focus group will be formed to further explore audience's opinion on commodity feminism and addi... = Yes*

Q13 Please share your email address so we can contact you about the date and time of the focus group. Your email is not going to be shared with any outside party or used for any other purposes other than this research project.

---

Q14 What time works best for you to attend a focus group? (Choose all that apply)

- Weekdays (1)
- Weekends (2)
- Mornings (9 am - noon) (3)
- Afternoons (noon - 5 pm) (4)
- Evenings (5 pm - 8 pm) (5)

## Appendix B: Focus Group Consent and Protocol

### Focus Group Consent Form

Online feminist publications as social enterprises: diversifying revenue streams through corporate social responsibility

## CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

*Please read the following form carefully.*

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Kamila Jambulatova, Master's student at the University of Missouri. The purpose of this research is to explore how online publications can adopt a social enterprise business model. When you are invited to participate in research, you have the right to be informed about the study procedures so that you can decide whether you want to consent to participation. This form may contain words that you do not know. Please ask the researcher to explain any words of information that you do not understand.

Your participation in this focus group and the study is **voluntary**. You must be at least 18 years old to participate. You do not have to be in the focus group or study if you do not want to. You may refuse to be in the focus group or study and nothing will happen. If you do not want to continue to be in the focus group and/or study, you may stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

**Description.** The purpose of this study is to examine how online publications (Refinery29, Bustle, HelloGiggles, and Jezebel) can adopt a social enterprise business model. We are interested in the audience's outlook on the commodification of feminism as well as for-profit initiatives audience would be interested in. You are selected to take part in this study because you previously identified that you want to participate in this study. The focus group should not take more than **90** minutes.

**Risks.** There are no reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts that might occur as a result of your participation in this research project.

**Confidentiality.** This information will not be shared with anyone, and will only be used for the purpose of the research. Your identity and the information you provide in this study will be dealt with confidentiality when sharing and publishing the results of this study. Your information will never be connected to your identity.

**Video and audio recording.** This focus group will be recorded for the analysis part of this research. The video and audio from this focus group will not be published or shared with anyone. The researcher will ensure a secure storage of the data while working on the analysis.

**Incentives for Participation.** You will receive \$5 gift card to MU bookstore for your participation in this study. If you stop at any time during in the research study, you will still be given the opportunity to receive \$5 gift card.

**Questions, Concerns and Complaints.** If you have any questions about the research, please contact **Kamila Jambulatova**, who can be reached by email: [kjb7d@missouri.edu](mailto:kjb7d@missouri.edu) or phone: (573) 639-0212. Or my advisor Randall Smith at [smithrandall@missouri.edu](mailto:smithrandall@missouri.edu).

You may contact the Campus Institutional Review Board if you have any questions about your rights, concerns, complaints or comments as a research participant. You can contact Campus IRB at the following address

**Campus Institutional Review Board**

489 McReynolds Hall  
Columbia, MO 65211

(573)882-9585

| Email: [umcresearchcirb@missouri.edu](mailto:umcresearchcirb@missouri.edu)

| Website:

<http://www.research.missouri.edu/cirb/index.htm>.

**I have read this consent form and my questions have been answered.**

### **Focus Group Protocol**

The focus groups will last for up to 90 minutes. They will be video and audiotaped. There will be snacks and refreshments available during the focus groups.

### **Focus Group Questions**

#### ***RQ1: Audience's' feelings.***

To answer the first research question, the focus group started with the discussion of the process of “commodification” of feminism. First participants were introduced to the idea of the commodification of feminism and asked their opinion on the subject. Then, participants were shown an image of a white t-shirt with “feminist” written on it in black letters and asked how does their perception of the publication changes is they start selling a “feminist” t-shirt and:

- If a t-shirt was fair-trade?
- If all of the proceeds went to ACLU, Planned Parenthood, or other cause?
- If half of the proceeds would go to the mentioned above cause?
- If none of the proceeds went to the cause, but straight to the publications?

Some other questions about the commodification of feminism include:

1. Do you think the commodification of feminism is an issue? Why or why not?

2. What do you personally consider selling of feminism? What would you consider selling to support feminism? Is there a line?
3. Would your trust towards a publication increase or decrease if they start participating in the commodification of feminism? Why?
4. What is a good way for organizations to raise money for their cause?

***RQ2: Audiences' cognition.***

During the second part of the discussion, participants were introduced to the concept of social enterprise to ensure that all participants understand the topic clearly. The focus group was first encouraged to brainstorm and come up with their own ideas, but a few ideas were also introduced to them to make sure the discussion moves forward. Here are the examples of social enterprise ideas that were presented during the focus group:

1. An online directory that shows women-owned business or fair trade businesses in the area, or to order online from.
2. An online book club membership and a forum.
3. An online mentorship program for women.
4. An online store with local artists and fair trade products.

Questions that would be asked to answer the second research question:

1. What kind of socially responsible initiatives do you want to see your publications doing?
2. Are you interested in any mentioned above causes?
3. What causes matter to you and you want your publications to pursue?
4. How would your opinions change about the publication if they establish on of the initiatives?

***RQ3: Audiences' behavior.***

Follow-up questions were asked about the social enterprises to identify participants' behavior.

1. Would you donate to your publication to support the work they do? Why?
2. Would you buy the “feminist” t-shirt or other similar items? Would your decision change based on where the proceeds are going? Why?
3. What kind of initiatives would you be interested in paying for?
4. Would you pay for any of the initiatives mentioned above? How much?
5. What motivates you to donate or buy products for the cause?

## Appendix C: Information About Participants

### Focus Group 1

Questions	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4
Age	18-24	18-24	18-24	18-24
Gender	Female	Female	Male	Female
Ethnicity	Asian/Pacific Islander	White or Caucasian	Hispanic or Latino	White or Caucasian
Occupation	Student	Student	Student	Student
Political belief	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
In one line, what it means for you to be liberal/moderate/conservative?	Neutral	I would consider myself moderate because I don't necessarily agree with the views of the true liberal/conservative platforms.	Can't we all just get along?	Bipartisan
How often do you read Bustle?	N/A	N/A	Less than once a month	Multiple times a week
How often do you read Jezebel?	N/A	N/A	Once a month	Multiple times a week
How often do you read Refinery29?	Once a week	Once a month	Once a month	Once a week
How often do you read HelloGiggles?	N/A	N/A	N/A	Less than once a month
Do you consider yourself a feminist?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Do you believe in equal pay for both sexes?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Do you believe that more women should hold important political positions?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Do you believe that women should have rights to make their own choices regarding their bodies?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Do you believe in paid maternity and paternity leave?	Yes	Maybe	Yes	Yes
Do you believe in reducing sexual harassment?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Do you believe in reducing domestic violence and sexual assault?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Do you believe in reducing discrimination against women of color?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Do you believe that more women should enter STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math)?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Do you believe that our society needs to continue making changes for equality?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

## Focus Group 2

Questions	Participant 1 [P 1]	P 2	P 3	P 4	P 5	P 6	P 7
Age	18-24	25-34	18-24	18-24	25-34	18-24	18-24
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female	Male	Female	Female
Ethnicity	White or Caucasian	White or Caucasian	Black or African American	White or Caucasian	White or Caucasian	White or Caucasian	White or Caucasian
Occupation	Student	Student	Student	Event planner	Student	Student	Student
Political belief	Liberal	Liberal	Moderate	Liberal	Moderate	Liberal	Liberal
In one line, what it means for you to be liberal/moderate/conservative?	Being open-minded and forward thinking	I don't think I can do that in one line	I believe in equality for all, but also believe in some conservative thinking such as the economics perspective	Wanting policies that benefit as many people as possible, sticking up for women's and minority's rights	Always challenge what is supposed to be common sense	To be being liberal means being an advocate of all demographics/minorities/races/genders etc.	I believe in social equality and global warming, duh
How often do you read Bustle?	Once a week	Once a month	Multiple times a week	Once a week	N/A	Once a week	Once a month
How often do you read Jezebel?	Once a week	Once a month	N/A	Once a week	Once a month	N/A	N/A
How often do you read Refinery29?	Once a week	Less than once a month	Once a week	Multiple times a week	Once a month	Once a week	Once a week

How often do you read HelloGiggles?	Less than once a month	N/A	N/A	Less than once a month	N/A	N/A	N/A
Do you consider yourself a feminist?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Do you believe in equal pay for both sexes?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Do you believe that more women should hold important political positions?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Do you believe that women should have rights to make their own choices regarding their bodies?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Do you believe in paid maternity and paternity leave?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Do you believe in reducing sexual harassment?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Do you believe in reducing domestic violence and sexual assault?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Do you believe in reducing discrimination against women of color?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Do you believe that more women should enter STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math)?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Do you believe that our society needs to continue making changes for equality?	Yes						
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### Focus Group 3

Questions	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4
Age	25-34	25-34	45-54	18-24
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female
Ethnicity	White or Caucasian	White or Caucasian	Prefer not to answer	White or Caucasian
Occupation	Student	Student	Student	Student
Political belief	Liberal	Moderate	Liberal	Liberal
In one line, what it means for you to be liberal/moderate/conservative?	Socially aware	Open-minded	Believe in democracy	I am liberal because I value the importance of equality in all forms more than I do personal comfort or wealth, and I believe that once this equality is accomplished, one will not have to give up comfort or wealth to fully participate and allow others to participate in society.
How often do you read Bustle?	Less than once a month	Less than once a month	Multiple times a week	N/A
How often do you read Jezebel?	Less than once a month	Less than once a month	Multiple times a week	N/A
How often do you read Refinery29?	Less than once a month	Less than once a month	Multiple times a day	Multiple times a week
How often do you read HelloGiggles?	N/A	N/A	N/A	Multiple times a week
Do you consider yourself a feminist?	Yes	Maybe/Unsure	Maybe/Unsure	Yes
Do you believe in equal pay for both sexes?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Do you believe that more women should hold important political positions?	Yes	Yes	Maybe/Unsure	Yes

Do you believe that women should have rights to make their own choices regarding their bodies?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Do you believe in paid maternity and paternity leave?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Do you believe in reducing sexual harassment?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Do you believe in reducing domestic violence and sexual assault?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Do you believe in reducing discrimination against women of color?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Do you believe that more women should enter STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math)?	Yes	Yes	Maybe/Unsure	Yes
Do you believe that our society needs to continue making changes for equality?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

#### Focus Group 4

Questions	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5
Age	18-24	18-24	18-24	18-24	18-24
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female
Ethnicity	White or Caucasian	White and Hispanic	Black or African American	White or Caucasian	White or Caucasian
Occupation	Student	Student	Student	Student	Student
Political belief	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal	Moderate	Liberal
In one line, what it means for you to be liberal/moderate/conservative?	Compassionate	I believe the government should help all its constituents live a quality life	I stand for fair and equal treatment for all americans, no matter their race, sexual orientation, religion, or gender	I try not to side entirely with either political parties.	Accepting of all people

How often do you read Bustle?	Once a week	Once a month	Once a week	Once a week	Once a month
How often do you read Jezebel?	Once a week	Once a month	N/A	Once a week	Less than once a month
How often do you read Refinery29?	Once a week	Once a week	Once a day	Once a week	Once a week
How often do you read HelloGiggles?	Once a week	Once a month	N/A	Less than once a month	Once a month
Do you consider yourself a feminist?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Do you believe in equal pay for both sexes?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Do you believe that more women should hold important political positions?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Do you believe that women should have rights to make their own choices regarding their bodies?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Do you believe in paid maternity and paternity leave?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Do you believe in reducing sexual harassment?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Do you believe in reducing domestic violence and sexual assault?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Do you believe in reducing discrimination against women of color?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Do you believe that more women should enter STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math)?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Do you believe that our society needs to continue making changes for equality?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes