

Extract from the Semiotic Study Report, January 2020

# The four representations of mature femininity in culture and communication



## **Aim of the Study**

**The aim of the study is to understand mechanisms, symbolism and codes of mature femininity that are present in the popular culture and public discourse, in order to enhance the communication aimed at improving the employability of mature women aged between 45 and 65.**

## Methodological Note

Contrary to traditional methods of research, a semiotic study doesn't ask respondents. It analyses existing texts (in a broad cultural sense) that both influence and shape human behaviours and attitudes.

A text of culture, semiotically speaking, isn't only a written text but also images, signs, symbols, films, commercials, documentaries etc.

This study has included a variety of cultural texts that have been created over the course of last three years and which regard the theme of mature femininity 45+ in general or mature femininity at the workplace.

The texts are mainly of Polish origin, although, in some cases international texts were used to enrich research material.

The core of the research materials consists of the texts from the Polish newspapers issued between 2016 and 2018. We've analysed over 500 press texts and roughly 1,000 pieces of research from other sources, including films, guides, web portals, Polish and foreign commercials – all of which presented the theme of a mature woman.

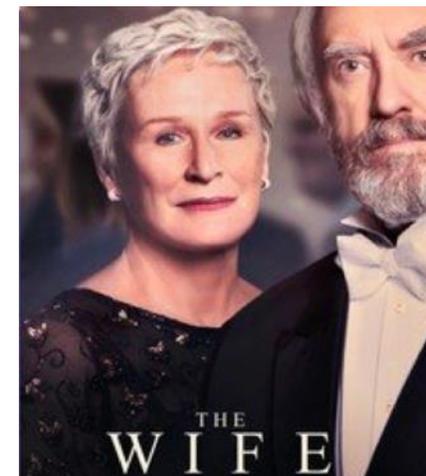
## MATURE FEMININITY IN CULTURE



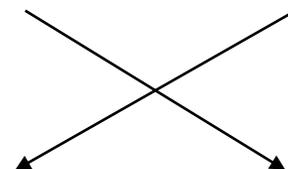
INDEPENDENT  
MATURITY

vs

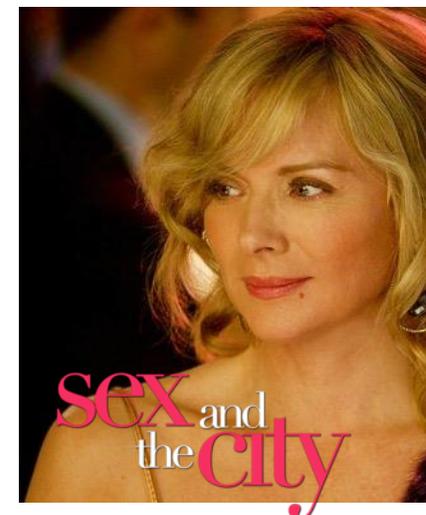
ENSLAVED  
MATURITY



CELEBRATED  
MATURITY



“UPGRADED”  
MATURITY



# INDEPENDENT MATURITY

Playing by your own rules,  
 nonconformity, breaking  
 stereotypes, independence,  
 taking over control



THE PATH OF YOUR OWN



THE MORAL COUNTEROFFENSIVE



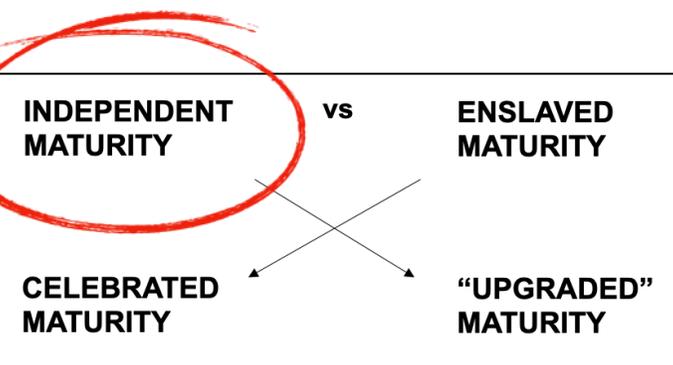
STRONG AND POWERFUL

## LANGUAGE OF ACTIVATION

The language of assertiveness, taking control, independence, emancipation

Activation aimed at independence, creativity, creating your own style, fighting stereotypes

## BREAKING THROUGH



There is a growing number of mature heroines that appreciate their age, past decisions, life without steady partner (or husband). They cherish the fact they have the right to go makeup-free or the freedom to create themselves. The slogan, that is popular among many of them goes „I don't need to but I want to”.

The mature femininity is becoming a vehicle for original ideas that clash with moral and cultural values of conservative origin. It is a sign of a moral counter-offensive that intends to grant women a right to choose a partner (in some cases a younger one), to expose their body (no matter their age) or to end a twenty-year mundane relationship.

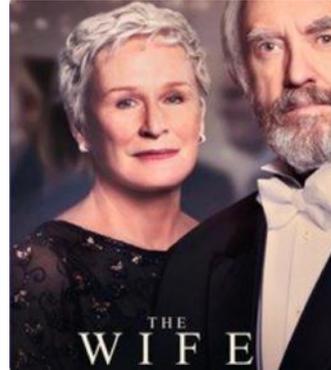
It's a prevailing idea of mature femininity that is represented by the images of powerful, proud and self-confident women. The strong and powerful maturity doesn't succumb to neither stereotypes nor the pressure of the environment. A mature woman plays by her own rules and takes the matters in her own hands.

# ENSLAVED MATURITY

Seclusion, looking for the way to survive the hard time, trying to understand the new reality, alleviating the symptoms of aging



NEITHER YOUNG, NOR OLD



THE OBLIGATION TRAP



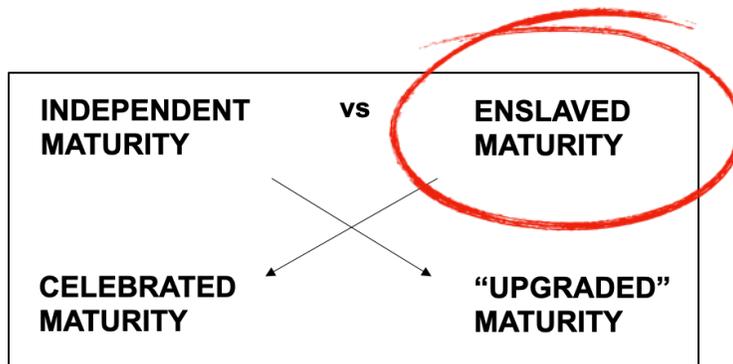
LIVING THROUGH HARDER TIME

## LANGUAGE OF ACTIVATION

The language of getting used to, turning weakness into strength, looking for new ways

Activation aimed at getting used to the new state, understanding, educating, showing new possibilities

## SURVIVAL



Mature femininity is like a fog, hovering between old age and youth, between freedom and obligations.

Mature women are running away from the inescapable truth about themselves and their bodies – they don't know who they are and what they could become.

A mature woman does her best to survive this peculiar time of vague self-image and cultural clichés.

Mature femininity has fear of entering another stage. It makes use of the behaviours and attitudes that were adequate before menopause.

She have to accept her invisibility to men, husbands or employers. "I don't want to change anything in my life, I want to stay in my daily routines, I don't agree to a different life". She proudly lasts until safe retirement.

The life of a mature woman is determined by menopause that makes daily life harder. The texts in the culture suggest that one should last through harder times, hoping that it gets better one day.

This emphasis on enduring makes mature femininity something intolerable or bitter. It's a time of sadness, depression and diseases, which deprive mature femininity of any pleasant and worthy moments.

# CELEBRATED MATURITY

The praise of maturity and female wisdom, cherishing the new life, appreciating its bright sides, optimism



MY SECOND  
BEAUTIFUL LIFE

My beautiful second life is about consciously entering another life stage, i.e. mature femininity. The stage is accompanied by the assumption that it's the best is yet to come – professionally, financially and emotionally.

What a woman needs is to embrace the novelty of the situation and live the life to the fullest. The future looks bright.



I LIKE BEING  
MATURE

„I like being mature” is a manifesto of mature women, who emphasise their self-love.

The idea reflects their pride in their achievements, life wisdom, optimism and self-confidence.

It's the acceptance of one's body, changing appearance and the inner beauty.



APPETITE  
FOR LIFE

Mature femininity is a readiness to live the life to the fullest and to cherish little moments.

The appetite for life allows her to take whatever she wants: entertainment, sex or many activities that have been a forbidden fruit so far.

Mature femininity means reaching summits, pursuing hobbies and exploring the unknown aspects of life.

## LANGUAGE OF ACTIVATION

A language of praise for maturity, energy, vitality, acceptance and optimism

Activation aimed at deriving joy and pleasure from a new, better life, celebrating beauty, wisdom and inner strength

## AFFIRMATION

INDEPENDENT  
MATURITY

vs

ENSLAVED  
MATURITY

CELEBRATED  
MATURITY

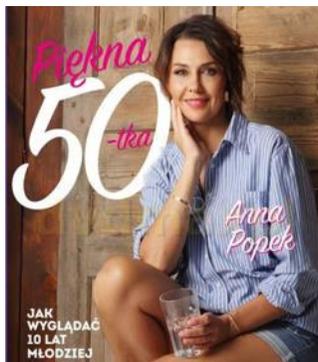
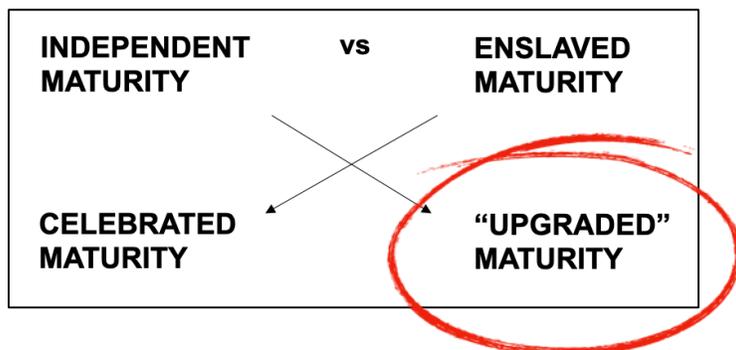
“UPGRADED”  
MATURITY



# “UPGRADED” MATURITY

„Keeping up” with maturity,  
rejuvenating, hiding „the  
imperfections”, chasing the last  
moments of youth

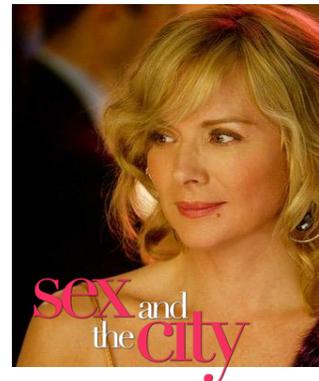
## KEEPING UP



### CARING FOR BETTER LIFE

A woman can't just simply give up to old age – she needs to fight for herself. Hence the conclusion that you have to take care of your standard of life, introduce healthier eating habits, look for new youth elixirs, keep exercising and train your brain.

Mature femininity, according to this idea, requires much effort and destines woman to the everlasting journey for practical tips.



### RECIPES FOR YOUTH

It's about finding ways to stay in shape or keep attractive appearance.

A mature woman of that kind is constantly looking for tips and tricks that would reduce wrinkles, improve skin condition or hide the signs of getting old.

It's a woman who transforms herself in order to look and feel better.

## LANGUAGE OF ACTIVATION

Tutorial and advisory language, practical tips and techniques, support

Activation focused on rejuvenating techniques and methods, covering up the "defects" of maturity, filling gaps in education and skills

# THE MAP OF CULTURAL CODES

## INDEPENDENT MATURITY

BREAKING THROUGH



THE MORAL COUNTER-OFFENSIVE



THE PATH OF YOUR OWN



STRONG AND POWERFUL



THE OBLIGATION TRAP



NEITHER YOUNG, NOR OLD



LIVING THROUGH HARDER TIME



MY SECOND BEAUTIFUL LIFE



APPETITE FOR LIFE



I LIKE BEING MATURE



CARING FOR BETTER LIFE



RECIPES FOR YOUTH

## CELEBRATED MATURITY

AFFIRMATION

## „UPGRADED” MATURITY

KEEPING UP

**WHICH OF THE CODES AND LANGUAGE  
WOULD BE THE MOST APPROPRIATE FOR  
WOMEN'S ACTIVATION IN THE CONTEXT OF  
POLISH CULTURE?**

**INDEPENDENT  
MATURITY**

The language of assertiveness, seizing up control, independence and emancipation.

The action is motivated by independence, imagination, the search for unique style and fighting stereotypes.

**BREAKING THROUGH**
**ENSLAVED  
MATURITY**

The language of adaptation, turning weakness into strength and finding new paths.

The action is motivated by adopting to the new situation, understanding, education and presenting opportunities.

**SURVIVAL**

The language of affirmation towards maturity, energy, vigour, acceptance and optimism.

The motivation for action is based on experiencing joy from a new and better life. It's also driven by celebrating beauty, wisdom and inner power.

**AFFIRMATION**

The language of self-help books, counselling, practical tips and tricks, empowerment.

The motivation for action is based on the rejuvenating methods and techniques, which conceal the „flaws” of maturity. It's about developing the areas that have been somewhat neglected, i.e. particular skills or education.

**KEEPING UP**
**CELEBRATED  
MATURITY**
**UPGRADED  
MATURITY**

We did this recommendation 2 years ago. However, there have been significant changes in the last 2 years. Women in Poland became very active and became more determined in the fight for themselves.

A more up-to-date analysis may show what effect this had on mature femininity



Women's strike



This is the war



Both THE CELEBRATED MATURITY and THE UPGRADED MATURITY are directions that are worth considering when encouraging mature women to improve their personal and professional life.

Although „seizing up” maturity is more conservative than its celebration, it seems more practical from in the context of the Polish culture and existing need for simple and practical tools. That’s why it’s important that women are supported when facing challenging reality and defending themselves against the powerful conservative vision of enslaved maturity.

**THE CELEBRATED MATURITY** is about accepting, or event appreciating the new reality. Comparing to „keeping up” it contains more elements of ideology and the philosophy of life. That’s the place where maturity is valued, not deprecated. The celebrated maturity embodies emancipation and shift in thinking habits. It’s against ageism.

**THE „MOUNTED” MATURITY** puts a special emphasis on practical aspect of communication. It puts forward numerous techniques, tricks and methods that help to keep up with expectations and to „stay in the game”. Their role is also to boost self-esteem and general mood.

Thank you



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