

# Analysis of The Impact of Social Media's Medical and Cosmetic Information on Women's Image

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## Abstract

Using international media platforms as examples, scholars have examined the positive correlation between general social media use and appearance anxiety and appearance rejection sensitivity from a feminist perspective and have interpreted the reasons for women's "self-objectification" and "self-denial". This study will use Chinese media platforms as an example, concentrate on the constructed nature of media, and examine how the medical aesthetics sector shapes the perception of traditional women from the standpoint of social media research. It is discovered by contrasting contemporary medical aesthetics commercials with conventional medical aesthetics advertisements that Although the subjectivity and voice of women are gradually growing, the stereotyped view of women is mostly maintained through their visual symbols. The removal of the feudal past is still a challenge for women, hence it is critical to increase media literacy.

## Keywords

Female subjectivity; Stereotypes of women; Media constructiveness.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The "looks" and "body" of women are popular subjects in the age of new media. For many young women, "face value is justice" has been their guiding principle. The "face value economy" has fueled an incredible boom period in the medical beauty sector, with terms like "elf ear plastic surgery" and "muscle leg liposuction" commonly showing up on popular searches. "The thinner the person, the better," "the smaller the face, the better". It's becoming fashionable to have this nearly psychotic aesthetic. Numerous chaotic phenomena are arising in tandem with the medical beauty market's quick expansion. Medical beauty advertising are unquestionably one of them that have contributed to this trend. According to a 2014 study on the connection between Facebook use and body image anxiety, women frequently engage in look comparison on social media, and the more Facebook they use, the more accurate the comparison is and the more severe their body/look concern gets. [1] Some girls turn to severe weight-control measures like dieting, hyperventilating, or even fasting in order to maintain the social media appearance metrics, which eventually results in eating disorders, eating disorders like bulimia or anorexia, or other ailments like stomach ulcers, metabolic issues, and drooping skin. In addition to causing physical harm, appearance anxiety can also result in psychological trauma such as self-depreciation, lack of confidence, and self-identification, which worsens women's "self-objectification" —the process by which women internalize the perspective of objectification from a third party as a result of being treated as objects by others for a prolonged period of time. To put it another way, because women have been treated as objects by others for a long time, they have absorbed their oppressors' viewpoints and objectified themselves, which eventually leads to self-exploitation and oppression. In their investigations of the relationship

between media and body image, scholars have primarily discussed the effects of media use on women's bodies. , and have also questioned them from a feminist standpoint, although they have given little thought to how media is formed. This study will examine the manner in which contemporary media portray women and how they shape women's images from the point of view of media's constructiveness of women's gender, using Chinese media platforms as samples (Weibo and Xiaohongshu as instances). We can determine whether and how much modern medical commercials that feature women contribute to maintaining the stereotypical view of women by contrasting them with older medical advertisements that featured women.

## **2. ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF PATTERN IMAGE ALTERING**

The three primary categories of modern medical beauty advertisements are: Effect comparison comes first; specifically, working with online celebrities or medical beauty companies directly upload before-and-after comparison images of customers in order to provide visitors with clear and intuitive visual stimulation and win over admirers. Second, information sharing - using beauty bloggers and experts on online platforms as the main body, explaining specific customer cases to popularize "specialized" medical beauty knowledge like "European large double and open" and "fan-shaped double eyelids". Which is more appropriate for you?" was used as the video's title to entice viewers to watch, boosting the organization's credibility and professionalism. Third, dramatization of the narrative to allow users to become fully immersed in the plot. Examples include "reverse," "face," and "ugly duckling into a white swan" drama. Through a "reversal," "face," or "ugly duckling into a white swan" scenario, the user is allowed to become fully involved in the substitution. This creates an exciting atmosphere and encourages individuals to ask themselves, "Why can't I?" [2] In this ideal state, people are always self-conscious and aging, and they are plagued by the fear "I'm not good enough." Medical commercials impair women's independence and encourage their propensity to consume, and patterned aesthetics that endanger bodily health are slowly but surely gaining acceptance in society.

### **2.1. Advertisements that performative tell the truth**

Every piece of content on social media is filtered and processed, and this is particularly true with apps where face value is paramount. People have a tendency to display their best selves, thus while posting images, various tools like lighting, filters, beauty, makeup, and so on have appeared to assist users in achieving their ideal selves. Users will accept the modified photographs as fact when they are put online, but this so-called truth is really just bloggers' performative truth. The only thing that this alleged truth is, is performative truth. The best example of performative truth is that bloggers have to go through a careful planning process in order to publish unfavorable information about themselves, like the numerous "anti-anxiety" videos on the Internet, in which they purposefully highlight some of their own flaws to show that they, like regular people, are flawed to make them feel more grounded in reality. Those "anti-anxiety" comparison pictures are really simply a tactic for internet stars to establish a personal connection with their followers in order to get likes and views. Models are created as idealized images with "big eyes," "high nose," and "devilish body" under fine-tuning and beautifying for social media platforms and medical commercials, and with effective content creation and a sizable fan base, they are able to attract followers. These images have subtly influenced public aesthetics thanks to effective content generation and a sizable fan base. Women who do not adhere to online aesthetics are also explicitly equated in several medical beauty commercials with "incompleteness", for instance. The slogan "a woman is only complete when she is beautiful, and being a woman is a good thing" appears in the XinYang APP campaign. Young people may compare themselves to unrealistic pictures due to the visual and exhibitionist aspect of social media, and when these expectations are not satisfied, this can cause anxiety, low

self-esteem, sensitivity, and negative self-esteem. Women have changed from being the target of seduction to the subject of self-training as a result of the media platform's attempts to control women's looks. They have also voluntarily catered to so-called "mainstream" aesthetics and have gradually increased their need for medical aesthetic programs.

## **2.2. Activated "peer comparison"**

According to a study on the use of Instagram and young women's body image issues and self-objectification, Women are more inclined than men to compare their appearance to that of their classmates, friends, and (particularly) Internet celebrities and socialites. Women's subjectivity is lost as a result of this comparing activity, which internalizes a single "aesthetic standard," leading to "self-objectification." Everyone can post images on social media, and the platform then promotes the best-looking ones to the top, creating them Internet celebrities, and constantly pushes them to everyone, encouraging users to accept the concept that "there are beautiful women everywhere" as reality. People may accept that actresses are prettier than they are, but it is difficult to accept that their peers are prettier than they are, and even more difficult to accept that a large number of recommended peers are prettier than they are. Anxiety, in turn, motivates some people to use popular templates to alter their own beauty, and thus the frenetic search of a certain monolithic aesthetic orientation is born - right-angled shoulders, manga legs, A4 waist, etc. They will continually exaggerate their accomplishments in order to acquire heat and eyeballs - if you seek 100 pounds, I'll be 90 pounds, if you're 90 pounds, I'll be 80 pounds..... The more exaggerated the performances, the more users will be excited and preferred, and the patterned aesthetics of women's looks grow progressively severe in a frenzy of peer competition, with less and fewer people reaching those standards. In this atmosphere, communal worry over appearances emerges.

## **3. FEMALE IMAGE PORTRAYAL IN TRADITIONAL MEDICAL AND AESTHETIC ADVERTISEMENTS**

The term "stereotypical image," often referred to as "stereotype" and "role stereotyping," was brought into the study of communication media by psychology. It is referred to as "a cognitive structure involving the perceiver's knowledge, ideas, and expectations about a human group or a particular type of event" According to Beauvoir's statement in *The Second Sex*, "A woman is not born, but is molded and formed." Appearances, careers, marriage, families, and emotions..... Women are shaped and defined by the different preconceptions that exist in society. China's media is more likely to slip into conventional patterns when it comes to the representation of women because it is an ancient nation with a long history of male-centered thought.

### **3.1. Gender Implications**

The images of women in the traditional media generally include three types: images of traditional female characteristics, images of beauty, and images of sexuality. [3] The number of female news figures in our country's mainstream media is decreasing, and their occupations and identities are illogical given that men predominate in social roles, families, authoritative positions, and families in general, while women are stuck in traditional auxiliary roles. On the other hand, the audience is inundated with images of women in fashion publications, entertainment programs, ubiquitous ads, and various talent competitions. According to a poll, women are portrayed in advertisements as moms or wives, caring for their children or husbands at home, working around the house, and being the primary buyers of apparel, beauty products, and gold jewelry. Men, on the other hand, are mostly seen in mechanical, electronic, and technological advertisements. This implies that men control the planet through knowledge and technology. Through these commercials, the media consistently conveys the idea that for women, the body is more important than the head and that one of the most crucial elements in

achieving success is beauty. The tradition of conservative, rigid, and conventional gender roles in society is reflected in medical beauty marketing, and any appearances that do not fit these expectations should be immediately changed. In certain medical advertising, a woman cannot succeed without attractiveness, and the advertisement's convincing justification is that if you use a particular product or follow a particular medical program, you will be able to improve your appearance and win the admiration of men.

### **3.2. The absence of a female "voice"**

Symbolic devaluation serves as another analytical approach to examine the portrayal of women in the media. This concept is derived from the idea of symbolic annihilation that was introduced by Tachman in 1978 in his book *Making News* to illustrate the marginalization and disregard of women in the media. In a patriarchal society, women are relegated to a state of symbolic elimination, where they are not presented at all or are trivialized and chastised. [4] The 1996 U.S. annual report entitled *Women, Men, and the Media* reveals that male activities, voices, and images dominate 85% of the front pages of newspapers, and that men serve as the primary sources for about three-fourths of prime-time news stories, while women are the primary source for only 6% of stories. Moreover, the majority of women portrayed are presented as relatives or wives, and 75% of stories pertaining to women are represented or spoken by men. The intentional marginalization of women's voices in mainstream media culminates in the symbolic annihilation of women in the mass media.

## **4. "CHALLENGE" OR "REINFORCEMENT"?**

### **4.1. Recovering and Reconciling Female Subjectivity in New Media**

The homogenized "artificial human" and "net red face" have increasingly caused people's aesthetic weariness, and "plastic face" has become a derogatory or even a stigma for performers and other professions that place a great importance on facial worth. Since the nineteenth century, an increasing number of women have participated in public debate and appeared often in the media.

Women's periodicals, women's channels, and women's websites began to sprout up alongside the expansion of the women's movement and the diversification of media. Many modern women have become aware of the subtle stereotypes that surround them and have begun to assert their feminine identity, struggle for women's rights, tear off labels, and break stereotypes. Many health and beauty bloggers nowadays are breaking away from the previous attachment to men or love and emphasizing women's independence, autonomy and resilience in their advertisements. Friendship and support between women and common progress have become the theme of many medical beauty advertisements. For example, Weibo's head medical beauty blogger "Your AAA of Spades" emphasizes the importance of self-improvement in one of her videos, "After making sure that your main energy (study/internship/job, etc.) is enough, the rest of your energy can be used to improve yourself, so don't put the cart before the horse. Become beautiful, become white, become thin, have a side business, have hobbies and specialties, learn to wear these are "spare energy" to do things." Many health and beauty bloggers nowadays are breaking away from the previous attachment to men or love and emphasizing women's independence, autonomy and resilience in their advertisements. Friendship and support between women and common progress have become the theme of many medical beauty advertisements. For example, Weibo's head medical beauty blogger "Your AAA of Spades" emphasizes the importance of self-improvement in one of her videos, "After making sure that your main energy (study/internship/job, etc.) is enough, the rest of your energy can be used to improve yourself, so don't put the cart before the horse. Become beautiful, become white, become thin, have a side business, have hobbies and specialties, learn to wear these are "spare

energy" to do things." Another blogger, Zhang Linchao, as a "hot mom", has not only made achievements in her own medical beauty and clothing business, but also often shares her "maintenance tips" as a mother. In the video, she emphasizes many times that no matter what stage a woman is in, she should remain free, self-reliant and confident, and that women at every age have their own unique charm and beauty, and that no matter what age she is, she should protect her girlhood, and be her own queen from her state of mind to her mindset. For medical beauty, she believes that women if they like, think this thing is good for you to do it, but never change yourself for the sake of other people's opinions.

Most modern medical aesthetic content emphasizes that women can have personal choices and independence from traditional female roles, including in terms of career, family, and personal image. It attempts to reconcile the conflict between feminism and traditional female roles by breaking down the constant "objectification" of women, empowering women to express themselves, and giving women a voice to re-tell their opinions and perspectives, so that everyone can see more possibilities for women. This helps society at large to re-examine the image of women in the traditional "other" and the relationship of discursive power in an autonomous and selective manner and with a critical eye, and also creates more possibilities for women to rebuild their subjectivity.

#### **4.2. Continuation of tradition**

Although modern medical advertisements verbally convey the message of "independence" and "freedom", some of their visual symbols still continue the traditional stereotypes of women to a large extent: firstly, the stereotype of beauty, through the concept of "high-tech" ("photo rejuvenation", "gold micro-needling", etc.), the concept of smooth and fair skin, slim body, tall and straight. First, the stereotype of beauty, through the concept of "high-tech" ("photo rejuvenation", "gold micro-needle", etc.), the smooth white skin, slim figure, high nose and other visual elements with "beauty", "luxury", "beauty", "luxury", "beauty", "luxury" and so on. The visual elements such as smooth and fair skin, slim figure, high nose and so on are associated with "beauty", "luxury" and "prestige". As an example, the promotional language utilized by the Beijing Star Medical Center for a particular medical beauty regimen highlights gender-based objectification by equating a woman's sex appeal with the appearance of her legs. Additionally, age-based expectations perpetuate discriminatory beliefs such as the notion that one's worth diminishes with the visible signs of aging, including the presence of wrinkles, expression lines, and a sagging face. Furthermore, gender-based stereotypes continue to marginalize women, with women being frequently relegated to subordinate roles in daily life as wives, girlfriends, and mothers. Advertising campaigns often portray women four times as frequently in such roles than men. Many advertisements continue to propagate the harmful belief that a woman's success is defined by her ability to fulfill traditional gender-based roles such as finding a spouse, having children, and pleasing the opposite sex. This perpetuates the harmful belief that attractiveness is synonymous with worthiness and that women must conform to traditional notions of femininity in order to be valued. Despite the seemingly empowering language utilized in many advertising campaigns, it is clear that such messages often reinforce rather than challenge the stereotypes that have plagued women for centuries.

### **5. CONCLUSION AND REFLECTION**

In contemporary medical marketing, there has been a gradual shift towards highlighting women's subjectivity and agency. However, this shift is characterized by a persistent adherence to traditional gender norms and is primarily targeted towards a narrow socioeconomic demographic of middle and upper class women, thus exposing its limitations. On the one hand, women desire to break free from the shackles of feudal norms, yet they are also susceptible to confusion in the face of rapid societal change.

To rectify the traditionally subjugated status of women and remodel their subjective positioning, two key areas require refinements. Firstly, there is a need to improve media literacy in order to foster an awareness of the constructed nature of gender representation in the media. As media professionals, it is incumbent upon us to reinforce our sense of responsibility and abandon subjective and stereotypical approaches to gender portrayal, instead striving towards objectivity. Secondly, the establishment of a harmonious gender-inclusive media space rests upon the actions of women themselves. Women should assume agency to shape the discourse, increase their self-awareness, combat both overt and covert gender discrimination in the media, and work towards establishing correct value systems.

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