Representation of Women on Media: "You are so Beautiful" a Case Study

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Abstract:This study will take the Chinese variety show "You are So Beautiful" as an example to discuss the representation of women in media. Even though some media organizations have reduced the standardized definition of women's beauty, they still subconsciously view women as bodies under the influence of a long patriarchal society.
Keywords: Representation of Female, Media, Body Image

Introduction

Representation is a meaningful part of people's lives, it is one of the important processes of generation and exchange between language and culture [1] (Hall, 1997). With the development of the digital age, modern media has enabled the rapid dissemination of information. The audience's acceptance of mass media text reproduction is a complex process, their personal factors will form a framework of understanding and different positions for decoding. Therefore, they will make choices when they come into contact with media texts, but the selection process is the main controlling class long-term assimilation and social learning process of various social systems controlled. In most cases, the mass media can effectively strengthen the stereotype of the audience, and even shape the stereotype of the audience through frequent and long-term influence. This article aims to explore the stereotypes of women in media representation and focus on the case study that how women are objectified and define on media.

Theory and Hypotheses Development

Media always plays a leading role in influencing the social norms and cultural appearance standards of perception, especially the media standards of the ideally slim female body, which is often referred to as the 'thin-ideal' [2] (cohen et al, 2019). Due to the representation of media could greatly affect people's subconsciousness, when the media defines women's bodies in inappropriate ways, it is easy to make psychological cues to the public, especially female.[3] Fardouly et al (2018, p.1382) believe that the definition of idealized body in the media may inspire people to go to the gym and have a healthy diet, but although this will motivate women to pursue a healthier lifestyle to some extent, it is still based on the premise and focus of looking at appearance.

[4] Gallagher & Hebert (2007, p. 57-59) analyzed that the advertisements of many cosmetics companies are suggesting ideal makeup to women and promising a result that they can also become 'ideal' by purchasing cosmetics. This ideology translates 'ideal appearance' into a timeless, universal standard, suggesting that women should work towards this standard.[3]Fardouly et al (2018, p.1381) state the socio-cultural representation of body image indicate that the use of media may lead to a decrease in body satisfaction through two approaches: the ideal of internalizing social beauty and the tendency to compare one's appearance with others. Although not every woman internalizes these standards, most women are aware of social aesthetic standards through the media [3] (Fardouly et al,2018). Ironically, some advertisements on media claim to help every woman open the door to beauty while instilling the notion that

women are inherently flawed if they do not go through beauty products and weight loss[4](Gallagher&Hebert,2007).In the stereotype, covering the 'defects' and 'idealizing' their appearance seems to be the goal that women should always pursue.

In modern society, women are more likely than men to feel less confident about their appearance and up to one in two women will be dissatisfied with their appearance on average [5](Schott and Langan, 2015).[2] Cohen et al (2019, p. 1547) state when women make media unrealistic appearance ideals Self-objectification and comparison of appearance can lead to physical dissatisfaction and adverse consequences, including eating disorders, depression, sexual dysfunction, and drug use. The sexual objectification of women in the media allows women to view their bodies as if they are based on appearance and the object of evaluation which means self-objectification. These definitions of women are likely to become a sharp knife for women to hurt themselves.

In fact, many media organizations or individuals are trying to overthrow the definition of the female ideal body. In 2019, there was an online social movement called 'reality vs Instagram' that female netizens post their real original photos with filtered and beautified photos on an image to form a contrast [6] (Tiggemann and Anderberg, 2019). The purpose of this online movement is to protest the trend of pursuing a perfect figure and to promote the perfect picture in social media is not real, no one's figure is perfect and physical defects are normal, then, there is no need to treat yourself comparison of other women who look perfect. [6] Tiggemann and Anderberg (2019, p.4) state this online movement promotes women's appreciation of imperfect bodies which is original bodies that are not mainstream aesthetics and encourage women to take part in this online movement as it is an effective way to relieve the pressure of physical appearance. However, some issues need to be noted here. First, appreciating an imperfect body image also redefines the ideal body image, which is thin and plump. This also gives women a hint that the real body is imperfect and flawed, just suggesting that women go except for 'imperfect' body. Secondly, when this movement aims to call on women to appreciate imperfect bodies, the focus is still on the female body, but it only pushes the standard of beauty to another concept: the mainstream aesthetics are slim and plump. The online movement of this kind may define and materialize women in another way, and those who participate in the resistance to define the ideal body of women may not be aware of it.

Compared to the direct definition of women in the media, such movements seem to be intended to help women oppose being defined, but they also subscribe to women's representation as bodies. By analogy, when the media calls should not define women's ideal body image, is it also subconsciously pushing women to another definition? For example, when underwear brands promote fat and large-sized figures in advertisements and using a large number of women as models, it may be just a marketing strategy intended to expand the market. From the concept of representation, no one can be defined, and no one can define another. Thus, the origin and development of stereotypes in the media is a subject that needs more in-depth discussion and research.

Case Study

The stereotypes of women in media reproduction still exist in different media fields, including magazines, television, social networking sites et al. This case study aims to analyze a Chinese reality show called 'You are so beautiful'. Each episode of this show will select an ordinary woman as a guest. The five hosts are composed of stars and stylists and they will help the guests to improve the look. In the concept, changing the look means that women change their appearance and appearance to Ideals that reflect the 'attraction' of social construction [4] (Gallagher & Hebert, 2007). The point of view of the show is that not only are women with slim bodies and good-looking faces beautiful, but ordinary women can also become beautiful with their help, and promise to help ordinary women look for themselves and build confidence through transformation. The guest of the first episode of it is a female doctor, this reality show describes her as a typical objective impression of female doctors in Chinese society: old, academically focused, no fashion sense. Thus, the hosts were determined to help the woman transform into look 'more like a woman'. When the host asked why the female doctor never put on makeup, the female doctor answered: I think this is a trap of consumerism, but the host believe that the girls painted Lipstick is a necessary condition to change the appearance of

women. Similar defining remarks and opinions have appeared many times in the show. In the second episode, the five hosts suggested that the mother of four children should not just be a housewife, go out of the house and have free time for beauty and shopping which could improve the quality of life. The hosts reckon it is helping the housewife strive for an independent, self-loving, and exquisite life. However, is makeup and dressing a way to improve the quality of life and become self-confident? The unintentional comments on women 's stereotypes during the show are completely contrary to the desire to help women. Suggesting female guests to improve their self-confidence in ways that change their appearance and cater to the public's aesthetics is not helping women, but deepening social stereotypes of disrespect for women, unless the female guest loves fashion and she can do what she wants to do.

All of the procedures and change processes in this reality show ignore the psychological roots of the less self-esteem and low self-confidence exhibited by the participants. The reality show only provides shallow solutions to those much more complex problems, and the temporary and shallow solutions cloud not solve the problems of women.

While "You Look So Beautiful" promotes beauty in women of any appearance and rejects idealized standards of image that define women, it uses another form of viewing woman as bodies. The female guests have their own strengths and interests in different areas, and they can improve their self-satisfaction and confidence in other areas, rather than just by changing their appearance to build confidence.

Conclusion

In conclusion, due to the long-standing stereotypes of women in the media, even if the purpose of some media organizations is to tear off the stereotypes label of women and to help them rebuild self-confidence, but they may also unconsciously define women. Due to the representation of women in the media has a profound impact on the audience's views on women, thus forming public opinion and stereotyped impression among the audience. These audiences with stereotyped impression may have the subconscious impression of stereotyped impression in real social communication, and affecting their judgment and behavior. They changed their attention from 'thinness and fullness to beauty' become 'ordinary or obese looks can also be beautiful'. How can female remove the materialized and defined labels on media, instead of reinforcing stereotypes, it is worthy of deeper research in the future.

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