

Analysis of Gender Discrimination in Fashion Media

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Abstract: For most people in today's society, the changes in media approach brought about by the new media revolution have contributed to a rethinking of gender issues, especially in the field of fashion. This paper focuses on the phenomenon of sexism in fashion media platforms, like gender discrimination, and aims to explore the changing gender discrimination that has been influenced by the changes in fashion media. By comparing and analyzing the similarities and differences of sexism in traditional fashion magazine media and emerging social media in the United States, and based on data from previous studies on gender issues in fashion media, this paper concludes that the phenomenon of sexism in today's new media fashion differs from traditional media fashion in that the problem of gender inequality gradually decreases, gender identity becomes more universal, and has the development trend of equality and diversity.

Keywords: Gender discrimination, Fashion media, New media

1. Introduction

The new media revolution since the 21st century has brought about changes and upgrades in communication methods, impacting traditional communication media, greatly promoting freedom of expression and the exchange and integration of diverse viewpoints on the Internet, and providing a broader platform for people to communicate online, of which the issue of sexism is one of the most prominent topics of discussion. Many people have studied gender issues in industry communication media such as film and television, but few have analyzed the phenomenon of sexism in media platforms in the field of fashion. However, the fact is that fashion is closely connected to people's lives and people's perceptions about gender issues in the field of fashion are very informative.

Therefore, this paper specifically explores the phenomenon of sexism in fashion media platforms, and through this thesis the author hopes to give the reader a clearer understanding of this topic. Based on previous research data, this paper explores the sexism of models in American fashion magazine advertisements and the guidance of magazine covers and content on gender issues through data analysis; the presentation of gender issues in new media fashion and the guidance of netizens on gender issues through case studies; and the comparison of sexism in traditional fashion magazine media and emerging social media in the United States. The significance of this paper is not only to summarize the phenomenon of sexism in today's fashion media platforms, but also to predict the future development trend of gender issues in media communication with equality and

pluralism. It also states that gender discrimination and other issues will be gradually reduced and gender identity will become more common.

2. The Analysis of Gender Discrimination in the Fashion Magazine

After the 19th century, many fashion magazines that are now considered legendary were born, such as Vogue and Harper's Bazaar, making the magazine industry mature and complete. Since then, fashion was disseminated more quickly and cheaply through them.

Magazine editors collected the fashion shows held by major fashion houses and published the selected looks in magazines, bringing society's attention to fashion ideas and setting the trend of the seasons. Because magazines have such an important influence on fashion, their covers and contents are representative of society's perceptions of gender issues at the time. Therefore, this thesis chooses to take this as the entry point for analysis.

2.1. Gender Discrimination Against Models

Magazine covers are one of the key factors that influence consumers to buy magazines, and among them, models are the most direct and dominant image presented on the cover. In addition to that, magazine covers are the product of editorial judgment and are symbols with social significance [1]. This means that the image of the model on the cover may show what society considers beautiful at the time.

As shown in Table 1, it can be concluded that: male fashion magazine covers feature heterosexual models more frequently than female fashion magazine covers; female models appear on the covers of fashion magazines more often than male models.

Table 1: Frequency distribution of Vogue and GQ cover models' sex [2].

Note: $\chi^2=17.80$, $df=1$, $p<.001$

	Vogue		GQ	
	Opposite	Same	Opposite	Same
n	2	111	24	105
%	1.8	98.2	18.6	81.4

As shown in Table 2, the mean ages of the female and male models were in the difference of approximately 11 years. This implies that female models on magazine covers are significantly younger than male models.

Table 2: Age of female and male cover model [2].

Note: $t(150.46)=7.87$, $p<.001$

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Female	135	17	62	28.99	6.67
Male	107	19	84	39.79	12.89

2.2. The Guide of the Cover/Content of the Fashion Magazine to Gender Issues

From the data of previous experiments on fashion magazine cover model pairs of occupations, it can be concluded that more female professional models appear on the cover than male ones. It can be seen that there are only four categories of female models; the number of professional models and actors together account for 90.2% of the entire range, which reflects the limitations of female

models' careers. In contrast, the occupations of male fashion magazine cover models were more diverse: among 12 types of occupations observed, only 10 of the total 129 were professional models.

What's more, for the men who appear on magazine covers as non-professional models, they are not always young and educated; in fact, their appearance and the aura they display are distinct from professional models. Actors such as Sean Penn and Clint Eastwood, who are over 50 years old, appear on the covers with little background decoration and expose their natural facial wrinkles.



Figure 1: Sean Penn & Clint Eastwood on GQ cover [3][4].

However, such a situation is almost impossible with female models, taking Beyoncé and Anne Hathaway as the example. Regardless of their ages, most of them wear sexy clothes, showing off their perfect bodies. On the contrary, male models tend to present a respectful image, making consumers aware of their success. In addition, even though people love these female models, their attitude is the admiration for their appearance, not respect for their achievements.



Figure 2: Beyoncé & Anne Hathaway on GQ cover [5][6].

From this, it can be seen that female models appear more frequently and younger than male models on fashion magazine covers, having more limited range of occupations and stronger professionalism; male and female models have stereotypes and the messages they convey to consumers are diametrically opposed. By these difference between male and female models, it can be inferred that traditional fashion media, i.e. magazines, have gender stereotypes of models and unequal sexism issues, and influence the public perception of sexism issues in their communication.

3. Gender Discrimination in the New Media Fashion Platform

Though in the early times, fashion magazines have become very influential on both consumers and fashion companies, nowadays new media fashion platforms like Instagram take the place of magazines and dominate the fashion field. Many fashion brands sign up for their official accounts and fashion companies also cooperate with “influencers” for advertising.

In fact, the change in the fashion media is accompanied by a change in sexism in fashion field. As the dissemination of information has become more direct and widespread, society has developed

a new understanding and awareness of gender equality, especially in relation to the sexism between men and women. By analyzing specific cases on new media platforms, this paper explores gender issues in the field of new media fashion and how the phenomenon of "influencers" has guided it.

3.1. Gender Issues in New Media Fashion

In the wake of the new media revolution, more and more people are becoming aware of the importance of gender issues. Among them, the change of gender issues in the new fashion media is obvious. Therefore, this paper focuses on the case study of fashion brands on the emerging social media Instagram to explore the promotion of women's equal status and the improvement of gender discrimination on the new fashion media platform.

Since its launch in 2010, Instagram has grown to become one of the most popular social media platforms. Instagram's high level of visualization has enhanced its appeal to businesses, prompting a spurt of fashion brands to enter: many fashion brands have started posting photos and videos on Instagram, tagging relevant hashtags so that people can get the latest news about the brand just by browsing the posts[7]. Along with this, feminist ideologies, such as dissatisfaction with the sexism of traditional fashion media, have become more widespread as a result of the Instagram craze.

Take for example the Christian Dior Autumn/Winter 2020 Ready-to-wear Collection (Dior AW20), which was designed by Maria Grazia Chiuri in collaboration with the French feminist artist collective Claire Fontaine collective. The Dior AW20 collection attracted a great deal of attention and public opinion upon its release. By August 2022, as shown in Figure 4, all of the posts about Dior AW20 posted on Dior's official account had more than 100,000 likes.

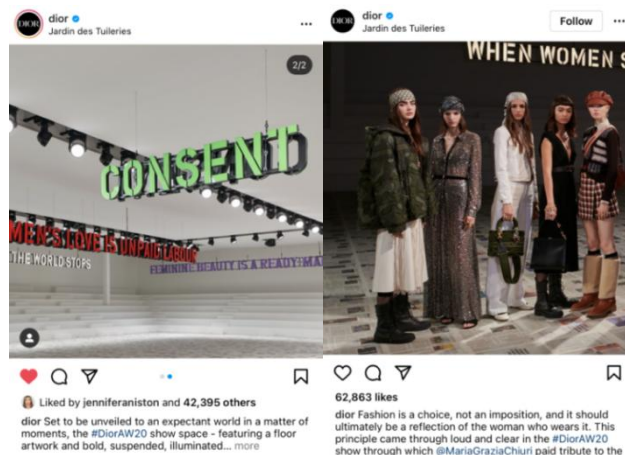


Figure 3: Dior's posts on instagram [8].

Such a high number of views not only promoted the Dior AW20 show but also spread the word about its theme of feminism. The theme throughout the show was "I Say I", an excerpt from a manifesto published by Italian artist Carla Lonzi in 1971, expressing the empowering self-assertion that feminism brings to women. For the show, Claire Fontaine created a number of slogans that were hung in the air as neon installations, including many feminist slogans such as "Consent", "Feminine beauty is a ready-made", etc. This creative installation focuses on the multi-faceted nature of the female subject, giving voice to feminism and portraying the difficult challenges feminists face while also conveying the desire to break with traditional patriarchal notions of society.

3.2. The "Influencer" Phenomenon as a Guide to Gender Issues

As the Internet has entered the era of widescreen, an emerging group - "Influencer" - is gradually expanding and pushing its development to a new climax. Influencers are people who have online influence, often with a large number of followers, and rely on their output on social media to attract public attention. As a new social trendsetter, the "Influencer" phenomenon has a significant impact on economic development and social culture. Among them, one of the significant influences is the change of society's perception and behavior towards sexism.

Studying the phenomenon of "Influencers" in the new media fashion and analyzing the effects on the gender issues are of great importance to change the traditional gender concept, spread gender equality, and scientifically guide the values and behaviors of society on gender issues[9]. Therefore, this study explores the gender implications of the "Influencer" phenomenon from the perspective of feminism through comparative and example analysis based on previous studies on fashion bloggers.

Previous analysis of textual (n=38) and visual content (n=760) posted by top-ranked American female fashion influencers on Instagram led to the conclusion that prominent female fashion influencers label themselves as independent and autonomous - scheduled passionate work, staged glamorous life, and curated social sharing - to portray the feminist ideal of self-fulfillment [10]. For example, fashion blogger Wendy (Wendy's Look Book) posted a photo on Instagram of her sitting in a window seat. In the photo, she leans casually and holds a laptop(see Figure 5), wearing only light makeup and casual clothes. Although this photo also has a carefully arranged layout, unlike traditional fashion magazine shoots that deliberately show off female models' bodies, her arrangement is to create a serious and focused atmosphere while working, highlighting the beauty of women's self-reliance and self-discipline.

Additionally, fashion bloggers are sending the message to the society that women can accomplish a lot too. Take fashion blogger Natalie Suarez (Natalie Off Duty), for example, who posted a red carpet photo of herself at an Express jeans event on Instagram. Not only does her formal dress and confident expression in the photo show her success, but the fact that she is pictured with model Kate Upton also represents her prestige.



Figure 4: Instagram image of Wendy (Wendy's Look Book) working and of Natalie (Natalie Off Duty) at an Express jeans events [11,12].

It can be seen that most female fashion influencers tend to present an entrepreneurial femininity, showing self-confidence, weakening the male help in the process of reaching these achievements and emphasizing that women should succeed through their own efforts and dedication in their work. Thus, it improves the sexism in the new fashion media platform and further promoting feminism.

4. Conclusion

In a conclusion, from traditional fashion magazine media to new media fashion platforms, the phenomenon of sexism has diminished and the open-mindedness represented by feminism has

gradually increased. For traditional fashion magazine media, female models appear more frequently and younger than male models on their covers; female models have a more limited range of occupations than male models, and female models have stronger professionalism than male models. Not only that, traditional fashion magazines have a tendency to gender stereotype and sexist issues about the models on their covers, and influence the general society's perception of sexist issues in their communication. Then, in the new fashion media platforms, many fashion brands use feminism as one of their creative concepts, and convey the idea of gender equality and gender equality through clothing design and show decoration; many fashion bloggers (influencers) support and promote the open-mindedness represented by feminism on social media such as Instagram, thus subconsciously changing the public's perception of gender. The rise of the new fashion media has also led to an increase in the number of fashion bloggers.

However, the rise of new fashion media has also given rise to new gender issues, such as the aestheticization of women as white, young, and thin. Therefore, it is not enough to rely only on the propaganda of a small number of feminist supporters, but the general public should cultivate the correct values and view gender issues with an open and tolerant mind, so as to promote gender equality and gender equality in essence.

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