The Impact of We-media on Refusing Social Appearance Anxiety

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Abstract: In the age of We-media, the way people disseminate information is gradually becoming more interactive and widespread, and more and more people are using the Internet to express and spread their thoughts and opinions. With the trend of reshaping aesthetics on media platforms in recent years, refusing social appearance anxiety has also become a hot topic of public concern. In this paper, I analyze the content and text of the communication behavior of Tik Tok blogger Broccoli from the perspective of We-media and audience, and find that the video platform has built a bridge to communicate with the audience for the dissemination of ideas, and that We-media has made some efforts to spread "refusing social appearance anxiety". Broccoli has both posted videos encouraging women and expressed an "refusing social appearance anxiety" stance to her audience. The opinion leaders, represented by Broccoli, have led their fans to rethink female beauty and create a new aesthetic, appealing to the public that women can define their own beauty, that female beauty can be healthy without anxiety, and that women can have a sense of self. These communications have shaken up the theory of male gaze that has long influenced the media world, causing some men to rethink the stereotypical notions of beauty imposed on women. This is why We-media has had a certain effect on refusing social appearance anxiety.

Keywords: Tik Tok, gaze, looks healthy, mainstream aesthetics, refusing social appearance anxiety, feminism.

1.   Background

In an era when the paper media is the mainstream, the traditional media has the right to speak and widely disseminate the definition of female beauty and female image. TV talent shows such as America's Next Top Model, which cater to the aesthetics of the general public in order to increase their ratings, are rigorous in their selection of women to compete, and in the programme they have verbally attacked women who are imperfect or flawed, identifying stereotypical images of women such as fat, acne and aging as not meeting the requirements of beauty, hoping to use the beauty of women's bodies to influence men's view of women[1]. As a result, more and more women are focusing on a slimmer body and glowing skin, and are catering to public aesthetics through unhealthy methods such as dieting, medical aesthetics and diet pills, a phenomenon that is gradually becoming a trend in society.

With the advent of The Internet Era, more media platforms, younger users and diversified content have driven the emergence of various Micro-video and live stream. Influenced by factors

such as cognitive level and social opinion, some We-media and netizens spread social appearance anxiety online, such as skinfluencer that boast women with fair-skinned and big eyes to boost sales of their products. But there are also those who challenge traditional aesthetics, such as the Tik Tok blogger Broccoli, who shows a sunny and confident female beauty that goes against the traditional fair-skinned, slim and young aesthetic. In December 2020, a wave of refusing social appearance anxiety was started by Tik Tok, with many bloggers showing their appearance without makeup and out-of-shape bodies to viewers through Micro-video or live stream. The trend is a call for women to be brave and accept their unique beauty. As of January 25, 2022, Tik Tok's *#refusing social appearance anxiety* had 480 million views, 800 million comments, 300 million retweets and 92 extended topics, receiving strong support from young netizens[9].

This hot debate has led to a number of questions for this study: why does female beauty depend on the male gaze? Is We-media having an impact on refusing social appearance anxiety? How can new aesthetics be constructed? This article uses the example of Tik Tok blogger 'Broccoli' to explore the impact of We-media on refusing social appearance anxiety from the perspective of the audience and the development of women's sense of independence behind 、refusing social appearance anxiety.

2. Research Review

2.1. The Concept and Research Status of We-media

We-media, often referred to as digital media, refers to the use of network technology, wireless communication technology and computers and other terminals to provide users with information and entertainment services. The world-renowned consulting company McKinsey was the first to propose the advent of the "big data" era. But the development of We-media in China has only begun to rise in the past decade, and there is no clear and official authoritative definition of it. In the final analysis, on the one hand, because the development speed of self-media is relatively fast, on the other hand, the research direction of Chinese scholars on We-media is different. I think with the rapid development of Internet technology, the audience for real-time news in the traditional sense is no longer limited to a single newspaper, but has become diversified. People can get the information or resources they want through a variety of channels to meet their own needs. In this research paper, I prefer to emphasise the relationship between the medium and the communicator. In the web 2.0 era of social media, everyone can become a Key Opinion Leader and express their opinions on We-media platforms, which makes the study of We-media even more innovative.

2.2. Gaze Theory and Social Appearance Anxiety

John Berg says: "The process of the dissemination of beauty culture is actually the completion of the process by which the desires of the male viewer are objectified into concrete images of beauty". The inferiority complex of the female body is a product of the traditional social view of gender imposed on women [2]. It is evident that modern society as a whole remains patriarchal and male-dominated, and that young women, under the influence of the 'male gaze', have been subconsciously formed into an aesthetic that caters to the male gaze. When stereotypical aesthetics become the norm, some women who are unable to attract the male gaze become confused about their own appearance and their aesthetic value, and eventually become anxious. And the development of We-media has brought more discourse to women, which in turn makes the act of refusing social appearance anxiety shake the development of gaze theory to a certain extent. In the end, modern feminine aesthetics is a pathological view of beauty that is lovingly crafted and elaborated for modern women from a male perspective, while in the process, it is women themselves who are

absent. Through the subtle brainwashing of women through popular culture, the fair-skinned, slim and young type of female beauty has gradually become a model for women[3].In the current society, with the widespread spread of the topic of "#refusing social appearance anxiety", female communicators are gradually breaking away from the mainstream aesthetics of traditional female beauty and making "diverse beauty" a new pursuit for young women. When women truly start to see themselves as they are and are not influenced by the pleasure of the "male gaze", then there will be no trace of "social appearance anxiety".

In addition, young women's 'social appearance anxiety' is mostly due to the media's dissemination of content. Nancy Etkopf mentions in Survival of the Pretty: "Beauty is a woman's most exchangeable asset, and it can be exchanged for social status, money, and even love."[4] Such as these statements have reached a certain consensus in society. In today's age of media dominance, Micro-video and live stream have become an important medium for promoting one's own ideas and spreading one's image, and many users express their thoughts and opinions through these media users who have lost certain "social" constraints often comment on the ordinary woman's figure, appearance and dress in her videos, ridicule and attack women with language, rendering rigid aesthetic concepts in a disguised way, which cause some young women's anxiety about their appearance. With the growing awareness of women's independence, more and more young women are beginning to rethink their freedom of appearance, which is bound by online public opinion, and begin to face their true selves and promote the expression of "freedom of beauty". Some We-media bloggers are challenging traditional aesthetics by speaking out through *#refusing social appearance anxiety*. For example, blogger Broccoli, with her brown skin and toned body, is known by netizens for her faux makeup resembling Zhang Fei, which is originally a far cry from the mainstream aesthetic of " fair-skinned , slim and young", but as of 2022-1-30, the video she posted received a total of 7112.6w likes, with an average of 24.3w and received unanimous praise[9], showing that her cheerful character showed the audience the beauty of confidence, sunshine and diversity, and also "exchanged" for her favorite industry and assets, and practically told young women that appearance is not all about women.

3.   Methods

3.1.   Research Methods and Data Collection

This paper uses two methods: content analysis and text analysis, to analyse the content and text of the videos posted by Broccoli. A total of 45 videos from August 12, 2021 to October 23 were selected as samples to analyse the content posted by Broccoli in the videos, in order to analyse the image created by Broccoli to Tik Tok users. In the comment section, the top six comments with the most agree&like in each video are selected to understand Tik Tok users' attitude towards Broccoli, and then analyse the reasons why Broccoli contributes to "refusing social appearance anxiety".

3.2.   Processing of Data

In this article, we crawled through 45 videos of Tik Tok blogger Broccoli, excluding the useless texts with topics, and select the following five parts with the meaning of promoting the new female image.

Table 1: video content.

time	video content
2021-8-12	Accept every bad part of you
2021-8-21	Call me Prince of black horse
2021-9-26	Be positive
2021-10-2	Slightly fat body and strong
2021-10-23	I want you to be better, to not be distracted, to be yourself

The study selected the top 50 hot comments for analysis, removing irrelevant information such as advertisements and jokes, and finally obtained 2,250 valid comments. Among them, crawl through the top six comments below by comment content.

Table 2: comment content and the number of agree&like

time	comment content	the number of agree&like
2021-9-13	In fact，Ialways thought she was very beautiful,not because"white,thin and young"，but full of confidence, sunshine and health.	54000
2021-9-15	I was trying to conform to the popular aesthetic before,and I especially like you for fishing me out of my anxiety	32000
2021-10-2	I really love the sunshine and confidence in Broccoli，I think she is just the most beautiful and lovely.	25000
2021-9-5	There is more to female beauty than being white and thin and young	14000
2021-8-12	People's greatest anxiety comes from people，you are the best you can be	14000
2021-8-29	You really have good looking!	12000

The following top five occurrences were crawled out by keyword frequency.

Table 3: frequency of key word.

key word	Frequency
sunshine and confidence	105o
true	512
perfect	496
so beautiful	451
energetic	379

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. The Reinvention of Mainstream Female Aesthetics: Breaking Stereotypes in Terms of Appearance, Body Shape, etc.

In today's society, men are usually portrayed as rational and authoritative, acting as activists and leaders in the public sphere; while women are always interpreted as emotional and attached to men [5]. The emergence of the internet and We-media has broken down this phenomenon. For example, the talent show "Youth With You 2" has created a new type of female group, with Liu Yuxin, who is unisex, and Shangguan Xiai, who breaks away from the " fair-skinned, slim and young" image of the previous female group. They all convey the idea that women should not be defined. However, it

is worth reflecting on the fact that while the internet and We-media are trying to break down gender stereotypes, they are also reshaping new ones, such as the plain-water makeup and Pseudo-plain makeup images of innocent women that are popular in Micro -video. In this social context, the image of women propagated by the mass media is constantly shaping the aesthetics of every user, whether it is a netizen or a celebrity in the entertainment industry, almost all of them are impeccably beautiful in front of the camera, all within the framework of " fair-skinned, slim and young" beauty. According to the answers given by users of Zhihu, "fair-skinned " refers to skin as young and clean as that of a newborn baby; "slim" refers to a slender and graceful physique, a characteristic of young girls; "young "this is also a characteristic of young girls. Women with " fair-skinned, slim and young" characteristics tend to look innocent and harmless, easy to control and non-aggressive, which makes them more desirable to men and attracts most male attention[6]. It is evident that fair-skinned, slim and young is becoming the dominant aesthetic.

The image of women created by the bloggers represented by Broccoli on the communication platform undoubtedly caused a certain impact on the traditional stereotypes of women such as "slim and soft". From the copy published by the blogger in Table 1, "2021-8-21 Call me Prince of Black Horse" and "2021-10-2 Slight fat body and Strong", it can be found that Broccoli is portraying a "black, fat and strong" woman in the communication media, trying to break the " fair-skinned, slim and young" stereotype through the mass media, and create a social atmosphere that encouraged women to build confidence in their appearance. Although her appearance is not in line with the mainstream aesthetic, she still shares her daily life on Tik Tok, showing her sunny and confident side to the public. This appearance has not been met with bad comments, on the contrary, according to the comments on Table 2, "2021-8-29 You really have good looking!" and "2021-10-2 I think she is the most beautiful and lovely." From data, 3.7w users praised Broccoli for her confident, sunny and healthy beauty, and agreed with the new female beauty that Broccoli advocates. It also shows the strong demand for refusing social appearance anxiety from the audience. With the enrichment of the video content, some users on 2021-9-5 said "female beauty is not only fair-skinned, slim and young", and more and more audience started to rethink female aesthetics.

The reshaping of women's mainstream aesthetics is reflected in the attempt to break down stereotypes of appearance and body image with different perspectives and aesthetics. The age of We-media is an open one, where information spreads quickly and audiences are more susceptible to "social appearance anxiety" when accepting new things. Nowadays, many bloggers are using the interactive, mass and spreading nature of We-media to break the stereotypes of female beauty such as fair-skinned, slim and young through mass media such as Tik Tok, further reshaping the mainstream aesthetic of women, which has led to a diversification of the public's aesthetic of women. Under the influence of We-media, the reshaping of women's mainstream aesthetics begins with the repositioning of women's image. In terms of appearance, the male gaze is abandoned and women are guided to gradually discover and develop their own unique features, thus pushing public aesthetics towards openness and diversity; in terms of body shape, the traditional concept of small and slim is abandoned and women are encouraged to pursue healthy beauty instead of the male gaze. The aim is to meet women's need for beauty in all its diversity. The second is to rethink the concept of gender. Most of men focus on the individual characteristics and physical features of women and neglect women's own aesthetic and personality development. This is a very important issue. Guided by the information disseminated by We-media bloggers, men have gradually stopped focusing on women's individual characteristics and physical features and have begun to discover the diversity of women's beauty. According to statistics[9], blogger Broccoli has 25.01% of the male followers. To a certain extent, this shows that some men have started to rethink and reflect on the mainstream aesthetics, and no longer focus on women within the framework of " fair-skinned, slim and young" and not pursue the stereotypical mainstream aesthetics of the past.

4.2. From Social Appearance Anxiety to Appearance Health Mindset

[11] conducted a questionnaire survey on the topic of appearance anxiety among 2,063 university students nationwide, and the results showed that 59.03% of university students had some degree of social appearance anxiety. Among them, the proportion of male students (9.09%) with severe appearance anxiety was higher than that of female students (3.94%), while the proportion of female students (59.67%) with moderate anxiety was much higher than that of male students (37.14%), with over 60% of people in this survey having some degree of social appearance anxiety. In addition, a data released by the China Youth Daily（2021） client in the 2021 China Workplace Women Insight Report shows that over 50% of women in the workplace have appearance anxiety, and 60% of them are post-90s. As " fair-skinned, slim and young" has now become the mainstream aesthetic, coupled with the gaze of men and women and the wide spread of media, it has brought about different degrees of social appearance anxiety. The reason for this is that the mass media in China is still centered on male discourse, with gender differences and traditional sexism reflected in every word, this is a legacy of a patriarchal society where women are just stereotypical symbols, acting as objects to be seen[7]. These are the legacies of a patriarchal society where women are stereotyped as objects to be 'seen'. In today's society, some media still promote "the value of women as limited to their looks, age and body type, their main interest is in cosmetics, clothes and jewellery, and they are very concerned about their appearance, fearing to become old and ugly"[8]. Such 'social norms' have a huge impact on the psyche of women who want to be noticed but are afraid of being pressured by outside opinion. As a result, there is still anxiety about appearance in a patriarchal society, where the aesthetic voice of women is still in the hands of men. However, according to statistics, as of December 2021, the proportion of female internet users was 48.5. With the emergence of female self-mediamers and female audiences, it also shows to a certain extent that women's voice has been affirmed and increased. In these conditions, We-media who speak out against "social appearance anxiety" are likely to attract many like-minded audiences.

Over the past decade, with the increasing proportion of female internet users and the development of communication media, women are more willing than ever to express and communicate their inner world. With this change, women are not only focusing on their appearance, but also on their inner world and spirituality. For example, when Broccoli sent out the message "Accept every bad part of yourself" on 2021-8-12, the spread index reached 80.6 on that day[10], encouraging more audiences to overcome their social appearance anxiety and establish a correct aesthetic and female self-awareness. Her fans also gradually changed from Table 2's "2021-8-12 The biggest anxiety comes from people, you are the best you" to "2021-9-15 I tried to conform to public aesthetics before, I especially like you, you fished me out of my anxiety". This is a kind of self-reflective change of mind. According to these fans' reading data, Broccoli greatly encouraged some young women to face up to themselves, accept themselves, and bravely break away from the framework of popular aesthetics. According to Table 1 "2021-10-23 I hope you to be better, to not be distracted, to be yourself." It can be seen that through the content of her videos, Broccoli hopes to call on her fans to move away from being preoccupied with the needs of others and start focusing on their own needs instead. As women's voices on the internet are gradually being amplified by We-media, women are becoming more influential. According to statistics from the backstage of Tik Tok, among Broccoli's fans, 74.99% of them are women, 52% are women aged 18-24 and 27% are women aged 25-30[10]. It can be said that the content of Broccoli's videos attracts mostly young women aged 18-30. Looking at the society, this group of young women is precisely the main force of refusing social appearance anxiety. According to Table 2, "2021-9-15 I tried to conform to public aesthetics before, and I especially like you for fishing me out of my anxiety" received 32000 agree&like, which shows that Broccoli's optimistic attitude towards life and her confidence in her

own appearance are effective in fighting against social appearance anxiety, which has also caused women to rethink about public aesthetics in the self. This has also caused women to rethink mass aesthetics in the age of We-media, which greatly encouraged women to break the shackles of beauty in the male perspective, and let them regain their confidence in their own appearance, and gradually change to a healthy mindset. However, the shift from social appearance anxiety to a healthy attitude towards appearance is the result of people's re-cognition of self-image in the we-media era. Since the number of women using media is increasing year by year and the attention from media is also increasing year by year, the social anxiety about women's appearance and gender stereotypes are changing in the direction of healthy appearance and freedom of appearance. In general, the image of women in the age of we-media has changed from being "labeled" to being a quality.

4.3. Feminist Reflections

The development of feminism has been accompanied by social progress and cultural innovation, and it has been associated with a progression of thought in the exploration of feminine beauty. Feminism's progress is also closely linked to traditional thinking that emphasizes equality between men and women and respect for the individual as a person. The sociologist Pierre Bourdieu once pointed out that people's identification of beauty is not entirely subjective or free, but is wrapped up in the aesthetic consciousness of the times. Throughout human history, because men have occupied most of the economic and cultural resources, while the perception of what is good-looking has been socially constructed, the social construction of beauty has often been influenced by the male gaze, which has resulted in an unequal discourse on beauty. This creates an unequal discourse between men and women. However, with the pervasiveness and autonomy of the we-media, netizens have expressed their support for "refusing social appearance anxiety", breaking the stereotypical requirements for women and promoting the reshaping of mainstream aesthetics. Along with the accelerating liberalization of the cultural sphere under the wave of economic globalization, people are paying more and more attention to issues such as the realization of self-worth, and feminism is beginning to focus more on the self rather than on the demands of society. When a program like *Older Sisters Who Brave the Winds and Waves* was first released, it won rave reviews, fundamentally because the program emerged to break the stereotypical requirements for women in the past. Statements such as how young is young, how beautiful is beautiful, how thin is thin showed the strong determination of the female community to fight against social appearance anxiety, and also showed to a wide range of internet users that women can define their own beauty and that women can break through the male gaze to achieve self-affirmation and other feminist ideas. As feminism gradually developed and women began to consciously take charge of their own aesthetics, the influence of the male gaze on women and its restraining power gradually weakened. It can be said that the development of feminism has to a certain extent broken through the restraining power of the male gaze theory and fought for the right to speak on an equal footing with men in aesthetics and appearance.

Feminism has also developed in terms of respect for individuality. In the age of We-media, women are able to speak out for themselves on social media platforms, more so because they have been given an independent personality. According to Table 3, when we crawled through the high-frequency keywords in the comments of Broccoli videos, "sunshine and confidence" and "true" were at the top of the list. Many female audiences said they gradually realized that women's beauty is not only fair-skinned and slim, but also active in life and work. They are also able to solve their anxiety. Secondly, in terms of action, due to the popularity and development of We-media, more and more women are participating in the online space and becoming the main body. Women in the age of We-media can examine their own relationships with others, the collective and the individual from different perspectives; they may also express their value propositions through online channels

in order to gain a sense of identity, which indirectly influences the way women think and act. Women in the age of we-media can look at themselves and others, collective and individual relationships from different perspectives; at the same time, they may also express their value propositions and gain recognition through online channels, thus influencing themselves and even changing their behavior, so that most women no longer follow traditional patterns and begin to pursue personalized expression and communication. These behaviors have contributed to the improvement of feminist reflection and the change of mindset. As a common phenomenon in the age of We-media, social appearance anxiety has received widespread attention in the We-media environment. From the perspective of communication science: firstly, the mass media has the dual properties of a messaging function and a publisher identity; secondly, feminism tends to report news instantly and access topics, opinions or emotional experiences that interest them through platforms such as the internet and mobile phones. The development and dissemination of feminism is also a process of social progress and cultural innovation, and in the context of media integration, the phenomenon of social appearance anxiety will gradually be alleviated.

5.   Conclusion

Video platforms provide a bridge to communicate ideas to audiences, and self-mediamers makes a certain effort to spread the message of refusing social appearance anxiety. Each user has a role as a publisher of refusing social appearance anxiety messages and a function to convey "refusing social appearance anxiety" messages. This research has shown that public figures, mainly Broccoli, with a large and adherent fan base, have made an undeniable contribution to rethinking women's beauty and creating a new aesthetic for their followers. As a result, many women have expressed their solidarity with the feminist idea that women can define their own beauty and that woman can be self-aware, which has shaken the male gaze theory that has long influenced the media industry, and has earned the respect of some men.

The emergence of social appearance anxiety is irreversible in the context of We-media, but its effective intervention in We-media platforms cannot be ignored. Firstly, as audiences, we need to realize that our behavior is affected by personal emotions, attitudes, psychological and physiological aspects. This is why communicators should put pressure on themselves in these areas to ensure that the right aesthetics grows up in a healthy We-media environment.

In terms of the social environment, many videos are manipulated by capital, allowing videos that create social appearance anxiety, such as whitening ads and cosmetic surgery recommendations, to be placed in front of female users with precision. When the power of capital is greater than the refusing social appearance anxiety We-media propagandists, whether the We-media will still play a positive influence, whether some topics of social appearance anxiety will be covered up by capital, whether feminism will develop to a new level. All of them need to be further examined, and how to break the information cocoon of social appearance anxiety also worth considering.

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