

The Influence of Misogyny on the Development of Feminism in Media Communication

— A Case Study of Feminist Attitudes Towards Female Images

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Abstract: The research focuses on the labeling description of feminism in media communication, exploring under the current situation, whether the promotion of new female images and the negation of traditional female images are helpful for modern women to truly understand themselves. Through the qualitative interview, it is found that most feminists in the 20-30 age group have good expectations for social diversification and de-labeling, but unconsciously distinguish themselves from traditional female images and dislike them. To study and discuss whether this psychological phenomenon causes a new round of “female oppression” under the contemporary media evaluation system, and whether it can really help women to understand the relationship between themselves and move towards true independence. At the same time, does media communication strengthen the public’s negative impression of feminism in the development process of feminism, associating feminism with labels such as “radical” and “strong”? This paper hopes to explore how women can better understand their own needs and achieve real equality in the future, and put forward suggestions and expectations for the behavior of media communication in its development.

Keywords: misogyny, feminism, media communication, female image

1. Introduction

The rise of feminism symbolizes women’s struggle for self-rights and respect for others, and is the awakening of self-consciousness. But at the same time, the process of self-consciousness awakening should also be a process of gradually knowing oneself comprehensively. In the era of media development and the rise of feminism, blindly advocating new female images and strongly rejecting traditional images are essentially avoiding to face the past self and “self-loathing” of the past female images, and invisibly creating a new mindset for women, in which the development of media plays a role that cannot be ignored [1-3]. How should women deal with the relationship between past stereotypes and femininity? How to deal with the relationship with the self? What role does the medium play [4]? How should it develop? The author expects to study whether the negation of the traditional female image in the past can help contemporary women completely get rid of the shackles to equal rights, help women to understand themselves and correctly deal with the

relationship with self-image, so as to make a small contribution to make contemporary women better control themselves. At the same time, it explores how to make media communication help establish this awareness.

2. Methodology

2.1. Interviewee

2.1.1. Reasons for Selection

In order to explore the above issues, the author believes that samples should be selected from groups with certain experiences and opinions on feminism, and interviewees should be selected from different ages, classes, occupations, regions, etc., which will help to comprehensively understand people's attitudes towards traditional female images and new female images. In the process of the rise of egalitarianism on the Internet, whether this subconscious "self aversion" to the past image has affected their understanding of feminism (feminism) and their expectations of future goals.

2.1.2. Image Description of the Interviewee

In this study, four young women often considered to represent or target the new image of females were selected (see Table 1).

Table 1: Interviewee introduction.

Interviewee	Age	Work/Study	City	Other
F	25	Work	Shenzhen	Homosexual, purposefully free from environmental oppression.
X	20	Study	Haikou	In the phase of exploring the future image goal.
L	21	Study	Chongqing	Homosexual, have high expectations of themselves.
C	24	Work	Hangzhou	Be aggressive on equal rights and has achieved her independent goal to some extent.

2.2. Method

In order to have a deeper understanding of the above issues, the qualitative interview method is adopted this time, and the semi-structured interview method is mainly adopted.

3. Results

All interviewees believe that: in life and the public opinion environment, people distinguish the traditional female image from the new female image obviously, and they will oppose the traditional female image in the communication process of magazines, network social media platforms and so on. When this kind of evaluation appears on themselves, the interviewees will have a certain positive reaction, thinking that they are different from the traditional female image in the past, which is classified as "praise" for themselves. Interviewees believe that they are an independent, progressive and egalitarian new female image, and their expectations for themselves are similar to

the expectations of feminism for modern women, such as “I should be economically and spiritually independent”, which completely separates them from traditional female images. “Traditional female images are weak, dependent on male power, and not strong enough to obtain resources independently”. Most interviewees believe that traditional female images represent the oppression of women in the past, and the new female images should be economically and spiritually independent, mentally strong, and take the initiative to fight for social resources. Only a few believe that the role of traditional female images in families should not be denied. The interviewees think that the future society should be a comprehensive new female visualization society. “I think the ultimate goal of affirmative action is to realize most of the” new female images “, which are diversified and diverse, but not similar to the traditional female images, and believe that “this is not the consciousness of the new female images”. This kind of cognition, to some extent, has crowded out other evaluation criteria in life.

In several interviews, although the interviewees envision the future society as an environment of “diversity” and “no labels”, advocating women’s independence (“One is to give women the same resources, that is, to earn enough money; One is to give women the same opportunities, the chance to work, the chance not to be fired. Don’t put the social labels on women, such as you should get married and when you are older you should have children.”), when it comes to the process of achieving that goal, it takes a “distaste” attitude toward the traditional female image (“I think it is oppressive, repressed, and not self-asserting, which can be compared to servility.”), that is, “more traditional images should be completely excluded in the process of progress”, which is the most obvious inconsistency found by the author in the process of research. At the same time, the interviewees also showed anxiety and stress about the high demands of feminism to some extent. Although there is a sense of self-demand, self-goal, they said that the new female image for modern women will be more stringent than the requirements of traditional women. In the era of the development of media, the cognition of feminism comes more from the publicity and portrayal of various media, believing that media plays a very important role in the development and dissemination of feminism.

4. Discussions

4.1. Feminism Cognition

With the deepening conflict between feminists and traditional male power as the background, in this process, in order to show the progress and independent thought of the new generation of feminism, many women unconsciously distinguish their self-image from the traditional female image (such as weak, beauty, etc.), which is specifically manifested as “I am different from other girls. I don’t like spending time dressing up. “, “Boys’ friendship is simple, they are not scheming”, “I am a strong woman” and other comments and behaviors. Many women have also received similar evaluations in the public opinion environment. In the process of evaluation and being evaluated, the traditional female image and the contemporary “new female” image are divided into two parts.

In 2018, media reports about Zhang Guimei caused a stir. Zhang Guimei, known as the most beautiful school principal, refused donations from Huang Fuyan, a student visiting her Alma mater, and asking her to “Get out!” because “Your family has struggled to support you until now... And now you’re a stay-at-home wife.” The media deliberately set up the conflict between traditional female images and new female images in the process of reporting, triggering a large area of discussion. In the public opinion environment and life, this kind of opposition between the traditional female image and the new female image is not uncommon. Current feminism is gradually rising, women began to consciously fight for their rights. However, in the process of struggle, in order to become the so-called “new women”, the belittlement of the traditional female

image has deeply influenced the process of social feminism. It appears that women are disliked when they become the traditional female image (such as housewives), and they have to face the inevitable family responsibilities (such as breastfeeding, etc.) [5]. In this situation, the goal of becoming a “new woman” makes women wander between tradition and revolution, family and career, and the social pressure women bear increases to some extent.

In this case, the traditional female image is symbolized in fact, which represents the situation that women were oppressed by male power in the past. Women expressed disgust and opposition to the characteristics of the past male domination, and also to the past oppression. However, this emotion is transferred to women in modern society and becomes the unconscious self-deprecation of women in the process of progress, which is a kind of subconscious self-loathing, namely “misogyny emotion”. The rejection of past images affects modern women’s self-image cognition and the process of equality.

For the principal Zhang Guimei mentioned above, the connotation of her idea is essential that women express their “self-loathing” to “housewives”. Just like the Japanese sociologist Chioko Ueno’s comment on the Japanese writer Mariko Hayashi in *Misogynist*, “Behind the sight of the writer (Mariko Hayashi), is there a sense of self-abuse or criticism? I doubt it. Watching her merciless writing of the heroine’s destruction, I felt that the writer has an ‘outside’ view by seeing himself as an ‘exception’, and with this outside view of privilege, the writer caustically observes the heroine [2].” Words like “caustically” and “merciless” are harsh to describe the average woman, but it’s worth noting that this mindset of distinguishing the new women from traditional women is also a form of male perspective that has eroded women in the past. One interview respondent revealed in an interview that she felt anxious and stressed about the high goals and expectations demanded by feminism. The author believes that it is precisely because they are bound by stereotypes in the past and eager to get rid of this evaluation system that modern women adopt a radical way to achieve the imagined world through complete denial and dislike. However, this way of thinking is essentially the same as the nature of the traditional evaluation system, both are formed through the exclusion of a certain model. If she becomes a traditional woman, she has to bear the criticism of society. If she wants to become a truly commendable new female image, she must take care of her career while she cannot get rid of her family’s demand for the role of women, which brings more pressure on modern women. In the author’s opinion, such a high demand for new female images to prove that “women are strong” by devaluing traditional images is in contrast with traditional images in the past, which confirms Professor Ueno’s description of “women’s self-loathing of women” (“Mariko Hayashi is sometimes called a feminist, perhaps because of her sense of distance and critical consciousness towards the category of “women”[2]).

The process of contemporary equal rights is to first make women realize the fact that they are oppressed and send out the signal of fighting for equal rights. On the basis of external support, then inward introspection, explore their own personality traits and needs. For example, a housewife who was originally under the patriarchal system fought back after realizing the oppression. At this time, she did not realize whether her real inner need was to be given the opportunity to fight for resources or to protect her family and children. In the author’s opinion, people are still in the stage of making women compete outwards, but in this stage, the excessive negation of the traditional image will not be conducive to every woman’s return to their own inner, which is a new round of mindset.

4.2. The Influence of Media Communication

Chen Hongmei believes that the development of female media has not really established women’s sense of independence, and the overall self-examination and discipline are still based on the male perspective [6]. In the article “Equality that feminists strive for Also has its Negative Side”, a woman expresses that modern feminism “imposes too high requirements on women”, which leads

to women actually suffering too much pressure and feeling anxious because they cannot meet the requirements of feminists in the modern public opinion environment. The author believes that the results of the study can confirm to some extent the perplexity of the author before the study: when society is striving for greater rights for women, whether the suppression of the traditional image in the past will cause more trouble and pressure on women. At the same time, the tendency to a new round of women's expectations tends to radicalize and even demonize feminism in the public opinion environment [7]. To some extent, it shows that "it is the identity chosen by strong, radical women who do not care about their families", which may lead to the aversion and rejection of feminism in the public opinion environment, and ignoring the true meaning of feminism, which is to escape the label of social bondage [8].

In the modern public opinion environment, the way of media publicity has a deep impact on the public's cognition of feminism [9]. In terms of topic guidance and propaganda wording, feminism is closely linked to the stereotypical new female image. For example, when feminism-related issues are widely discussed, they are not well clarified [6]. When the audience does not have a comprehensive understanding of feminism, they tend to report on the fierce words and deeds of women's equal rights, which makes the public dislike the concept of feminism by labeling some affirmative action as "demonized" [10]. At the same time, the guidance of media publicity on public opinion makes mainstream views become more intense, aggravates the preference of society for new female images, increases the pressure on modern women's intangibles, and is not conducive to women really reflecting on their needs and thinking about whether their expectations for the future fully conform to the portrayal of new female images.

4.3. Suggestions

4.3.1. Suggestions for Women

Women don't blindly follow the masses. As feminism plays an increasingly important role in the public opinion environment, the discussion on women's topics has increased [11]. With the support of network media, the spread of views becomes more convenient and it is easier to form a certain trend of public opinion. When the current feminism to some extent creates a new round of stereotypes about women, individual women should not blindly follow the mainstream of public opinion, but should start from the logic behind the remarks to judge whether it is helpful for women to obtain equal rights.

Women should reflect on their real needs and expectations. The new female image has labels such as "independent", "independent", "strong" and "free from family" under the media, but it does not mean that every woman should become a "strong woman" in her final destination [12]. What really helps women identify themselves is to guide them to think about their own needs and expectations, whether they want to belong to a family or work for a career. A pluralistic and open discussion and reflection on the goal and destination suitable for women can better help women obtain the corresponding rights and interests in the process of development.

4.3.2. Suggestions on Media Communication

The media should avoid tagging. In media communication, the label of feminism can attract topics and traffic to a certain extent, forming the output and transmission of the label of feminism. A series of words related to feminism, such as "independent" and "strong", form the stereotype of new female images in the environment of public opinion [13]. It is easy to mislead women to reflect on the direction of their own needs, and even demonize feminism as a pronoun of radical and strong, which is not conducive to the real development of feminism.

The media could combine feminism and diversity issues. At present, the topic of feminism in

China mainly focuses on the international feminist movement and entertainment news, and there are few vertical in-depth reports and horizontal multiple reports on feminism. At the same time, much of it comes from the perspective of the male experience [14]. As a result, in the environment of public opinion, feminism is mostly related to fierce words and deeds. The best way to spread feminism among the masses is to show a variety of forms of feminism and avoid single propaganda. Feminism could be combined with multiple issues of life, which can break through the limitation of publicity and shows the spiritual core and future expectations of feminism more comprehensively.

5. Conclusions

In general, this study explores the views of feminists in their 20s and 30s on the relationship between new female images, traditional female images and female images and media.

There are also some limitations in the study. The number of interviewees is limited and does not necessarily represent the majority view. The sample size can be expanded later. The interview time is limited, so the interview time can be extended on the basis of expanding the number of interviewees. The interviewer should make a more nuanced judgment of the respondents' answers.

The research can explore more about the communication bias of domestic media towards feminism and the public's views on feminism on major domestic media platforms. It is also possible to make a comparative study of the differences between domestic and foreign media in feminism propaganda, as well as the different preferences of different media for related issues.

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