

Analysis of the Transformation and Influential Factors of Western Female's Social Image from the Perspective of Mass Media

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Abstract: This paper analyzes the evolution of the Western female social image and the influential factors from the perspective of mass media. The research background highlights the historical process of female emancipation, which has sparked the development of a more diverse and pluralistic social imagination about female social image. The paper aims to determine the significance of mass media in driving these changes through a classic case study of garment advertising. The highly summarized research content includes an in-depth review of historical and documentary evidence, an analysis of the correlation between transformation of females' social image and the media, and an examination of various influence factors that have contributed to the change of Western females' social image. Additionally, the paper examines the role and significance of inclusive concepts in this process. Predictions for future trends in female's social images are also made with academic rigor. The research result conclusion presents novel insights and discussions on the interplay between the female social image, traditional media, and the fashion industry, providing a comprehensive understanding of the forces driving changes in the social image of females. The significance of this paper lies in offering insights into the past, present, and future implications of these changes, contributing to a better comprehension of the complex relationship between traditional media, culture, and female's social image and garment. This topic assumes great significance as it facilitates a deeper understanding of the current social status and position of women in modern society, thereby bolstering the comprehension of society and culture.

Keywords: mass media, female, social image, Western

1. Introduction

Since the early 20th century, females have broken away from their patterns of family and domestic gender roles and begun to seek opportunities and to challenge patriarchal society in order to strive for equal social status and rights. This historical process has sparked the development of social imagination about female social image without gender stereotype to a more pluralistic level, which continually challenges prevailing social norms, cultural norms, and fashion norms, sequentially propelling the “female audience” towards to a new horizon. In this case of development, mass media, such as advertisement, poster, and magazines which made a significant influence present female

representation to the public, has played a crucial role in driving these changes of female social image by take the advantage of broader usage. This paper aims to determine the significance of mass media that has influenced the evolution of the female social image. By utilizing a classic case study of garment advertising, this paper also wishes to examine how the depiction of women has evolved throughout various historical periods, also the influence factors that have contributed to this transformation of female social image. Through this analysis to reflect upon the past, present, and predict the future implications of these changes in the female social image.

In recent decades, the influence of mass media on the portrayal of women has been progressively expanding, especially against the backdrop all-encompassing effects of media in contemporary society. As a result, exploring how media has shaped female images assumes great significance. On the other hand, recognizing the academic value of this topic facilitates a deeper understanding of the current social status and position of women in modern society, thereby bolstering the comprehension of society and culture. Accordingly, this paper seeks to examine changes in the Western female social image and their underlying causes, which presents novel insights and discussions on the interplay between the female social image, traditional media, and the fashion industry. Additionally, a comprehensive examination of the role and significance of inclusive concepts in this process will be undertaken. Based on the above findings, future trends of female's social images shall be predicted with academic rigor.

After the introduction part, in the second section, this paper provides an in-depth review of historical and documentary evidence to trace the evolution of women's social status and their representation in mass media. The third section analyses the correlation between the transformation of female's social image and the media, specifically exploring the role of inclusive concepts in driving these changes. Through this analysis, the paper elucidates how the media shapes and reflects society's perceptions of gender expression. In the fourth section, the paper examines various influence factors that have contributed to the change of Western females social image. These influence factors include the broader social context, the influence of media and the fashion industry, and shifts of individual and cultural values. By thoroughly examining these elements, this paper seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the forces that driving changes in social image of female. Finally, the fifth section summarizes the findings of this study, which presents the limitations of the research paper, and offers recommendations for future research in this academic area. This paper contributes to a better comprehension of the complex relationship between traditional media, culture, and female's social image and garment, providing insights into the past, present, and future implications of these changes in female's social images.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Role of Mass Media

The definition of mass media is proposed by Roger Wimmer, who earned Ph.D. in mass media research from Bowling Green State University in Ohio in 1976, who posits that mass media refers to the channels that carry mass communication that can be reached a substantial amount of people [1]. Mass media has a wide reach that allows it to transmit information and ideas quickly and effectively across great distances. On the other hand, it possesses high accessibility, allowing individuals to access news, entertainment, and other forms of media from almost anywhere at any time through mobile devices and other technologies. In Western countries, the ownership of mass media is highly centralized in the hands of a few large corporations or individuals, which leading to a high degree of centralization regarding its control and decision-making processes. Many forms of mass media are driven by profit motives, with advertising serving as the primary source of revenue, which may contribute to sensationalism and entertainment value, compromising journalistic integrity in favor of

financial gain. Overall, those feature of mass media plays a critical role in helping it as an effective tool in culture dissemination.

As a vital carrier of culture, mass media has a profound influence on the shaping of female image by various medium. Simultaneously, mass media is also serves as a key means to disseminate culture and ideology. For instance, the research which is conducted by Sung-Yeon Park suggests that reading beauty and fashion magazines can lead to an increased desire to be thin through both direct and indirect pathways, which highlight the potential impact and shaping behavior of media exposure on body image ideals and related behaviors. When audiences consume information via mass media, it not only sets standards and forms necessary for social mainstream culture but also shapes the concepts, standards, expectations, and attitudes of individuals. Among them, films, posters, advertisements, magazines, and other media outlets with wide audience groups have a particularly significant influence force on society and individuals.

2.2. The Evolution of Woman's Status and Social Image in the Historical Context

In the past few decades, women have undergone significant changes in the political, cultural, and social spheres. Unlike in the last century, women have much more freedom in their daily lives and social relationships than before. Under the influence and transformation of modern social trends, most people believe that there is no difference between men and women in enjoying rights or obtaining benefits. Women began to fight for their rights, striving to obtain voting rights as well as equal employment and educational opportunities. Throughout years, feminism has undergone four waves of significant changes, evolving from a political to an economic, social, and cultural phenomenon. The first wave emerged in the early 20th century, aiming to promote women's suffrage, resulting in legislation guaranteeing basic rights for women. The first wave emerged in the early 20th century, aiming to promote women's suffrage, resulting in legislation guaranteeing basic rights for women. The second wave, which began in the 1960s, focused on legal and social equality. In second-wave, feminists argued that cultural and political inequality were interlinked, leading them to encourage women to examine every aspect of their lives to reflect the power structures behind gender discrimination. With the issue of female body image, feminism holds that women have been under great pressure and anxiety from beauty competition, which means judging and criticizing on women's bodies from the male's point of view, only focusing on the outer image, while denying the inner feeling of female's bodies. Women are always in unfair competition with the ghost of models, with the majority of women in the mirror of ordinary self-image and models devoid of women's confidence in competition. The third-wave feminism arose in the 1990s, which emphasizing individuality and diversity, while attempting to avoid overly narrow definitions of feminine qualities. The fourth wave began around 2012 with social media campaigns against sexual harassment, violence against women, and rape culture, which seeks to address issues such as street and workplace harassment, campus rape, and sexual assault. One of significant examples include projects such as the Me-Too movement [2]. This historical process of the feminist movement profoundly influenced the Western perception of women's image and clothing. Since the early 20th century, mass media has shaped a stereotypical notion of female imagery, where highly sexualized standards constitute gender responsibilities and moral standards. However, under the impetus of marriage changes and increased divorce rates in the 1950s and 1960s, women's status was further elevated as they entered the workforce and expanded avenues for self-realization, their clothing evolved from evening gowns and skirts to more practical and fashionable professional attire such as denim jackets.

3. Evolution of Female's Social Image -Taking Calvin Klein Lingerie Advertising Poster as a Case Study

The evolution of western female social image has gone through various stages. The article uses advertisement as a way of depicting the journey of growth of the female image. The advertisement by Calvin Klein is a clear indication of the journey. It shows the difference of female images in different period. In 1999, the female image on Calvin Klein's advertisement is muscular, slender, and erogenous. In 2019, the advertisement demonstrated the inclusion of more women with various garment sizes, especially when it comes to specific female figures, it designs sizes for different figures, and Calvin Klein's plus-size women and plus-size models also feature in underwear advertising. After that, in 2022, it shows the inclusion of wider races and gender identity of people, the man on the advertisement was pregnant, which display a kind of Inclusive social environment. These three advertisements show a clear construction between the ideas of female images over decades. From a muscular traditional female image, it changed to an independent strong female image, with blurred boundaries in gender and race aspect. In 1990, there came the models, women in this era wanted to look like the ideal thin woman that were portrayed by the media [3]. Body image has therefore transformed into one of the major topics in society. The advertisements therefore painted the image of a woman to be the ideal fit and masculine. As the mass media leads the trend and occupies the dominant position of fashion trend, the result has been a subsequent rise in the cases of eating disorders that further harm the body and image of women. Throughout history, the perception of body image has been shaped by a range of factors, including media. According to Doctor Jennifer L. Derenne, a psychiatrist in Stanford, California, the contemporary research suggests that excessive exposure to mass media, such as television, movies, magazines, and the internet, is associated with negative body image and disordered eating, which in turn increases the risk of obesity [4]. After that, media and advertising have shifted along with an awakening of female consciousness, independence, and a more inclusive social environment, potentially continuing to exacerbate the evolution of this trend. In addition, because of the changing social environment and the media, women's body image anxiety and eating disorders have decreased and concern for their health has increased.

The impact of advertisements is not just on the body of women but also on portraying a different personality that is similar to that of the 90s. The media, through advertisements, have objectified, sexualized, and materialized women to sell different products and services [5]. The promotion of garments, products, and ideas through advertising has perpetuated an unattainable standard of beauty for women. For instance, Calvin Klein's advertisements depict slender, attractive models wearing lingerie, instilling in women a desire to emulate this idealized body type. This creates an unnecessary reliance on self-objectification and cultivates a culture of consumerism. Although the ads seem quick and forgettable, the image they portray about women sticks for many years in the subconscious mind. The expectations in these advertisements do not just have impacts on women but also on how men view the female image.

Several factors transformed the image and the advertisements in 2019 display a different image of a woman. Women have been on the fight for equal rights and with the increasing cases of advertisement, came body shaming. The calls for inclusivity and diversity came to its peak in 2019 with Kelvin Klein depicting a more natural image of women, one that many can identify with. The discussion has swiftly changed with the current trends. The image that is painted is that of a man seemingly pregnant with a woman taking care of him. The picture shows a complete turnaround of the image that has been portrayed over the years. Female body has been portrayed by the media depending on the change of women's status, the awakening of self-awareness.

It can be seen through the changes in the images of women in advertisements that the Western media has been on the forefront of advertisement that has involved women and sharing of their culture

and image globally. Moreover, it finds the way with the concept of inclusivity and diversity through media communication. In 1999, the discussion around inclusivity had not picked pace and therefore the image of a woman that was painted was an ideal white model woman. The discussion changed in 2009 with many companies seeking to expand their reach to other markets. Body shaming that had been witnessed after the image that was painted in the 1999 called for a more inclusive approach in advertising. The image that was painted was that a woman that each one could identify with. The concept of inclusivity and diversity has therefore been keying in painting the image of women. The trend in 2022 has been gender roles and that too has been significant the image of women. The picture in the billboard of Kelvin Klein indicates the trend.

4. Analysis of the Influential Factors

4.1. Social Background and Historical Periods

Beauty in women has historically been associated with higher social class [6], and this portrayal has persisted for many years. Various historical periods have helped shape the image of women, such as during the era of slavery when women were typically expected to perform household chores and fieldwork while men engaged in manual labor. In this case, women were viewed primarily as domestic servants responsible for rearing children. During the fight for equal rights in the late 1990s transformed the narrative around women, but the media continued to perpetuate misogynistic stereotypes and reduce women to sexual objects [7]. Careers, bodies, families, and clothing choices were all subject to sexist scrutiny, contributing to a culture of exploitation and objectification of girls and women. When either social change or ideological progress occurs, the associated stereotypes has turn into a transformation period. Even though during this recovery period, women are still passively faced with some bad content, in other words, women were discredited on the basis of their gender and subjected to sexual harassment, which has had lasting effects on their lives and opportunities, the Modern society has continuously evolved into a more inclusive, equal and freedom, which can promote a positive transformative effect on how female social image are perceived in society.

According to the study of Carol Martin, one of the main concerns highlighted in this research is the inflexibility faced by female officers who desire to take time off for maternity leave, resulting in their career advancement being restricted, which is a workplace sexism [8]. The workplace sexism is a critical issue that can lead to various problems for women, including unequal pay compared to male colleagues, unemployment, and even workplace sexual assault. With the rapid development of a more equal and inclusive social environment, there is a greater recognition of the value and contributions of women in traditionally male-dominated fields without the discrimination of different races, ages, and gender identity, as more women occupy positions of power and influence in various industries, they may be better positioned to advocate for greater equality and fairness in hiring, promotion, and compensation practices, which can help to create a more level playing field for all workers, regardless of gender. By promoting women's autonomy and agency, a free society encourages them to challenge social norms and stereotypes and redefine their role in society, which ultimately contributes to a more positive and empowering social image of female. On the other hand, a socially inclusive and equal society enables females to participate fully in decision-making processes at all levels and aspects, which means the voices of women can be heard, respected, and acted upon, leading to policies and laws that promote gender equality, protect women's rights, and advance their interests. This fosters a positive social image of women as valuable and respected members of society, who are capable of contributing to the development of their communities and the nation as a whole.

4.2. Mass Media and Fashion Industry

According to Betz, Sabik, and Ramsey, the majority of media outlets tend to assign women to traditionally gendered roles, which is described as “ild or soft social role” such as fashion, arts, family, and lifestyle [9]. Conversely, men are often given coverage in areas typically considered “hard news,” including politics, economy, and sports. However, there have been advances in reducing the disparities between genders in news reporting and writing. The media and fashion trends no longer discriminating against female and exhibiting bias can have a significant impact on the transformation of female social image.

The representation of female social image in media and fashion aspect has historically been limited, often perpetuating the stereotypes, and reinforcing gender roles. In recent years, as society becomes increasingly aware of the need for equal representation and diversity, there has been a transfer towards more inclusive and empowering portrayals of women without bias, discriminations, and gender stereotype. Women have broken through barriers that once limited their participation in these fields, also become parts of the creator in media content, which increased representation has resulted in a transformation of media content and has intensified the positive transformation of women’s social image. According to Richard M. Perloff , who studied in School of Communication, Cleveland State University, asserts that the significance of recognizing the impact of social media on attitudes towards body image and its potential to cause disruptions in one’s perception of their own body should be emphasized [10], media and fashion play a crucial role in shaping societal norms and attitudes towards women. Under this case, if women are depicted positively and with empowerment, they are more likely to be perceived as competent and capable, resulting in greater social acceptance and opportunities. Conversely, portraying women negatively or objectifying them can reinforce damaging stereotypes and contribute to gender inequality. Eliminating discriminatory and biased elements from media and fashion promote a more diverse and inclusive to modern society, where women are valued based on their abilities and contributions rather than appearance or gender. This shift towards equality lead to better outcomes for female’s self-esteem, mental health, and society as a whole object.

4.3. The Evolution of Individual and Collective Cultural Values

Individual and group cultural values are also important factors in the changes of women’s images and clothing. With technological advancements and globalization, individual and group cultural values have also changed. For example, inclusivity concepts have been widely promoted and accepted due to the growing emphasis on body diversity and self-acceptance attitudes in society. In previous eras, women were less likely to be recognized as authoritative figures or spokespersons within their respective fields compared to their male counterparts. This is reflected in some literary works, according to the paper that analysing two short stories, “The Story of an Hour” by Kate Chopin and “The Yellow Wallpaper” by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, which examines how the female characters in these stories awaken their consciousness and stand up against male dominance. The authors successfully depict realistic female characters who reject oppression and voice their own opinions and feelings [11]. However, due to the liberation of personal thoughts and the influence of the feminist movement, every individual in society is gradually breaking free from gender stereotypes, discrimination, and cognitive shackles regarding the social image of women. Especially with the sublimation of women’s self-awareness and the yearning for spiritual freedom, the perception of women’s social images in society has transformed into more inclusive and diverse thinking.

5. Conclusions

This paper primarily investigates the transformation of the social image of Western female and analyses factors that have influenced this change. By examining historical changes in mass media and

representations of women's fashion, the paper explores how the female image has evolved over different eras. Using Calvin Klein lingerie advertisements as a case study, the article scrutinizes the transformation of the female image and discusses the trend of inclusivity in future development. The research scope encompasses a historical review, an analysis of influencing factors, and a key research case, revealing the indispensable contribution of traditional media in shaping women's gender identity awareness. This study also provides scholars with profound perspectives for reflection and contemplation on Western female imagery, traditional media, and the fashion industry. Despite progress in women's rights worldwide and changes in various media platforms, female counterparts struggle to fulfil roles still seen as masculine in some cultures and societies. Though the various media outlets have given women more power to define themselves and their chosen image for media consumers, they have simultaneously created unattainable standards of femininity over the years.

Some of the limitations of the research include a small case size that the research relied on. The study can therefore not paint a clear picture of the extent of the problem. Future studies can build on this limitation and have a more conclusive study with a larger sample size for address this limitation. On the other hand, some of the sites that were used to collect the information that the study relies on had limited information that was also borrowed from other sites and research studies. Consequently, the study primarily relied on secondary data. Future research should prioritize first-hand information and aim to offer a more detailed analysis of the challenge at hand. Nonetheless, this study serves as a foundation upon which future research can be built.

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