

Young Chinese Women's Beauty Seeking Behavior in the Chinese Social Media Appearance Gaze

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Abstract: In the era of social media, visual culture is pervasive. Guided and influenced by information, the female body often finds itself ensnared in the “body gaze.” Over time, this leads to an internalization and deepening of the idealized beauty standards while fostering dissatisfaction with oneself. Consequently, individuals can become trapped in a cycle of anxiety, driving them towards an excessive pursuit of beauty. This study is rooted in social cognitive theory and employs questionnaires. It initiates its investigation by utilizing online platforms such as Weibo, WeChat, and Xiaohongshu for distributing questionnaires, employing purposive sampling to target young women between the ages of 18 and 30. Irregular responses were excluded from the analysis. The research explores the intricate relationships that impact young women when they encounter messages related to the “body gaze” on social media platforms, and how these messages affect their beauty-seeking behaviors. The findings underscore the significant influence of social media on the psychological behavior of women. In light of these results, this study emphasizes the importance of society paying closer attention to women's perceptions of beauty and their aesthetic behaviors. It advocates for cultivating a healthier and more rational approach to beauty-seeking behavior. Ultimately, this research concludes that the younger women are exposed to body gaze-related content on social media, the higher their level of ideal beauty internalization, the lower their self-satisfaction, and the greater their experience of appearance-related anxiety. These factors contribute to beauty-seeking behaviors, including an inclination towards plastic surgery and other cosmetic procedures.

Keywords: body gaze, beauty seeking behavior, look anxiety, social media, internalization of ideal beauty

1. Introduction

Today, the Internet occupies everyone's life, and young people who regularly use social media say that whether it's social media such as Xiaohongshu, Douyin or Weibo. Occupy hot topics “beauty” comes up all the time appeared before our eyes Aesthetics is inherently a product of personal preferences and inclinations trending topics that can be eye-catching on the swarming social media landscape “#Plain makeup#” “#men's dress code#” “#BM figure value#” there are countless depictions and displays of women's body image under the dominant aesthetic. A portion of short video mobile platforms have-various stereotypical figurations of women's perfect appearance, The

topic of women's beauty, “#Ineffective Makeup” and “#Effective Dressing” are both centered on the three keywords “white, young and thin” in the consumerist mindset. It makes women's aesthetics influenced and controlled, the scrutiny and imitation of female celebrities' looks everywhere, the countless medical makeup and weight loss information prompts women to become dissatisfied and anxious about their appearance.

The use of social media affects young women's scrutiny of appearance and self-objectification, as women are more likely to compare their own appearance with those of their classmates and friends, Internet celebrities, and model celebrities, and this comparative behavior removes women's subjectivity and causes them to internalize a certain single “aesthetic standard,” i.e., the appearance gaze, which leads to “self-objectification,” i.e., the internalization of ideal beauty.

Most women post selfies on social media, and most of them engage in beautify behaviors. Spending too much time taking, photoshopping, and selecting photos often leads to increased appearance anxiety, and more severe body control anxiety women try to maintain their “ideal selves”.

A questionnaire from China Youth Net in 2021 showed that nearly 60% of college students have varying degrees of appearance anxiety. Among them, women are especially. “The 2021 Chinese Young People's Look Anxiety Report, which mentions that 81% of girls wish they were thinner. Nearly 10% of young people have serious appearance anxiety. Also, the younger you are, the lower you rate your looks and the higher your anxiety index. “The 2022 Medical Beauty Industry Network Attention Report” analyzes the medical beauty industry's attention, industry hot events, and user profiles under the perspective of new media big data, with a view to providing a user attention guide for the industry and brands. According to the report data the majority of people who are interested in the medical beauty industry are women aged 20-39. Social media platforms have become an important channel for people interested in obtaining information about medical aesthetics.

Social media is almost ubiquitous in our lives, and it is full of appearance-gazing “beauty” messages that influence the aesthetic and beauty-seeking behaviors of tens of thousands of Chinese women.

2. Literature Review

With social media playing an increasingly important role in people's lives, many scholars have studied the impact of social media on women. Tongtong Wang's research emphasizes that in the age of social media and the dominance of visual culture, women's bodies are caught in the trap of the “gaze of the other”, which creates self-doubt and appearance anxiety in a battle of ego and mass psychological cues, and that the beauty of the environment constituted by the media socialization contributes to the emergence of women's appearance anxiety. Constructing visual places for gazing [1]. According to Chen Qi's study, researchers who agree that the media has a negative impact on women's body imagery believe that the cause of women's negative body imagery is the media's representation of women's bodies in an objectified way and the spread of the idea that “thin is good” [2].

Study by Bu Xiaohua and Gao Fengni indicated that individuals who frequently use highly visual types of social media have significantly higher concerns about their appearance and image issues than their peers who do not use social media, especially for those who are usually more concerned about their appearance [3].

Study by Yuyu Liu, time spent on social media can inversely predict an individual's body satisfaction, positively predict attention to appearance, and internalization of ideal body shape. On social media platforms, users are accustomed to deriving body esteem from appearance comparisons, and when people make upward comparisons of superiority, this usually leads to a decrease in body esteem [4].

Tian Tian wrote in her journal that research has shown that the frequency of social media use is positively correlated with the degree of internalization of women's ideal beauty, and that social culture influences the development of "ideal beauty" to a certain extent by affecting an individual's perception of his or her own body and the bodies of others [5].

These studies illustrate the existential impact of appearance gazing in social media on women's self-satisfaction, internalization of ideal beauty, and appearance anxiety, yet what behavioral consequences do these psychological influences lead to for women?

Ganlu Ying wrote in her research: In modern society, with the development of medical beauty technology, women can not only accurately "restore" their self-image, but also make use of "plastic surgery", "makeup", "weight loss" and other means to symbolize their own modification [6].

Zhou Yuxin article mentions that with the development of beauty application software programs and the continuous improvement of beauty features, technological advances have helped users to present themselves in a more idealized way. However, behind the proliferation of the use of beauty face technology, there is an implied widespread anxiety and control. Some scholars have criticized beauty technology from a feminist perspective, arguing that it is a gendered technology that creates more extensive self-tracking and self-monitoring, ultimately leading to "quantification of self" (QS) [7].

Yingjie Wang and Jingli Chen on medical beauty, study of women influenced "beauty" behavior: compared with traditional media, social media is freer in interaction and communication, and with the popularity of the face value economy and the rise of "Internet +", the plastic surgery industry has also undergone great changes in the wave of the Internet. With the popularity of the face value economy and the rise of "Internet+", the plastic surgery and cosmetic industry has also undergone great changes in the wave of the Internet. Relying on the dissemination of the Internet, plastic surgery has really come into the public's field of vision, and the strong influence of social media has become the most important factor in prompting people to undergo cosmetic surgery [8].

Kendyl M. Klein finds female college students are particularly vulnerable to the influence of social media on their body image they have a new view of their bodies and accept the developmental changes that occur during puberty [9].

Scholars finds that a growing body of research suggests that young women tend to replicate normative feminine cues popularized in the mass media in their selfies, or selfie cell phone photos. Clues to these stereotypes include the posing behaviors documented in Goffman's gender display framework, which visualize the power imbalance between men and women [10].

These studies and theories above help us to understand some background information in advance. However, there are still some gaps in research in this area. While there is an abundance of literature on the impact of social media on women's appearance anxiety, there are fewer studies on influencing women's beauty-seeking behavior. In addition, the impact of women's self-satisfaction has not been emphasized in studies of the impact of social media. Moreover, there is a lack of clarity about the age and education ranges, so young women and middle-aged women are definitely affected differently. The purpose of this paper is to study the impact of Chinese social media on young Chinese women's beauty-seeking behavior, to help women understand their own psychological problems, to establish a more focused self-beneficial aesthetic and beauty-seeking behaviors, and to help us understand the impact of social media use and the phenomenon of women being affected by social media in the age of the Internet. In addition, the study will help women in China and around the world to build a better psychological defense against the gaze of appearance.

3. Methodology

Quantitative research methods were used to analyze the effects of gaze and on the psychological behavior of female users. Using the questionnaire survey method, Chinese women's internalization

of ideal beauty, women's self-satisfaction, and women's look anxiety level as the basic pivot points, we formulated hypotheses and verified the relationship between women's media use and the influence of women's beauty-seeking behaviors. The questionnaire for this study was administered primarily through an online web survey. Firstly, the questionnaire was released in Zhihu, WeChat, Weibo and other online social platforms, and in order to avoid the same user from repeatedly filling out or repeatedly submitting the questionnaire, each IP can only answer and submit once. In order to ensure the quality of the questionnaire, the research process and objects were strictly controlled. The target of the questionnaire was limited to young women between 18 and 30, and invalid samples were excluded according to the following rules: filling out the questionnaire for too short a time (less than 1 minute), omission of answers in the questionnaire, non-standardized answers (including, but not limited to, all the answers are the same). Finally, a total of 320 usable data were obtained.

4. Results

This study was conducted group of young women, and considering that the three variables of the subjects' age, education level, and length of time using social media may have an impact on the results, these three findings were added to the study to obtain the following data.

All participants, who were aged between 18 and 30, chose to use social media platforms. A significant majority, 73%, reported frequently engaging with beauty-related content on social media, encompassing topics such as makeup and body image. Regarding daily social media usage, the breakdown was as follows: less than one hour (3.40%), one to three hours (21.12%), three to five hours (33.74%), and more than five hours (41.75%). Education levels were distributed as follows: high school and below (2.91%), junior college (7.52%), bachelor's degree (62.14%), and master's degree and above (27.43%), highlighting a predominantly well-educated sample.

The study investigated whether exposure to body gaze-related content on social media correlated with heightened self-criticism and decreased self-confidence. Findings revealed that 27.08% strongly agreed, 45.83% somewhat agreed, and 18.75% remained neutral.

Regarding personal dissatisfaction, 67% of participants admitted to occasionally wishing to be someone else. The degree of appearance anxiety varied: 10.42% considered it very serious, 41.25% quite serious, and 25.2% average.

Participants were queried about whether encountering "staring" messages on social media heightened their appearance anxiety. Responses indicated that 26.7% perceived it as a significant concern, with an additional 37.5% considering it even more problematic.

A substantial majority (72%) admitted to occasionally pursuing aesthetic trends promoted by platforms like Netflix and celebrities on social media, perceiving these trends as their ideal self-image. The presence of an ideal beauty standard influenced beauty-seeking behaviors such as plastic surgery and makeup application. Specifically, 16.3% reported engaging in numerous such behaviors, 43.5% in several, and 25.2% in some. Furthermore, higher levels of appearance anxiety correlated with an increased likelihood of adopting beauty-seeking behaviors, as endorsed by 16.7% strongly agreeing and 32.3% relatively agreeing.

When evaluating the role of self-satisfaction, 21.2% of respondents believed it had a very strong influence, while 38.6% thought it had a relatively strong influence on the frequency and extent of beauty-seeking behaviors.

5. Discussion

This paper examines the effects of body gaze information on the internalization of ideal beauty, female self-satisfaction, and the level of female look anxiety among young Chinese women on Chinese social media. Thus, a study of the impact of passing through young women's beauty-seeking

behaviors, in summary, the study was informed body gaze messages on Chinese social media positively influence the level of look anxiety among young Chinese women. This article suggests that reason may exist in the following areas social media platforms bring together many types of, Different styles of content creators Creates inconsistent quality of information on platforms Some of the perverse standards of judgment about women's appearance. The impact on women's psychology and behavior varies greatly. The longer social media is used and the more body-gazing information you see, the more you will be affected and the higher your level of appearance anxiety will be. This article suggests that affect may exist in the following areas the increase in the level of anxiety about the appearance of young Chinese women has led to a general lack of self-confidence in the mentality and at the same time generated excessive pursuit of beauty behaviors, similar to excessive cosmetic surgery and other behaviors Most young Chinese women suffer appearance anxious to a greater or lesser extent as a result.

This article considers the following measures first, strict regulations are imposed on the sources that create appearance anxiety. Regulators must improve and introduce targeted policies, laws and regulations, and industry standards as soon as possible to regulate excessive and false propaganda on media platforms regarding women's appearance standards, to rectify malicious marketing, to create a clear media environment, and to promote the development of social media into a standardized track.

Secondly, with regard to the media, media practitioners must actively undertake the obligation to disseminate positive values. They should actively explore the content and form of discourse oriented towards the image of women, and actively promote the formation of a healthy and harmonious media space.

This article suggests that reason may exist in the following areas by viewing gazing messages on social media, most young women are influenced to believe that they are not beautiful enough, compare themselves to celebrities, and are overly concerned about flaws thus creating low self-esteem, which is also known as lowered self-satisfaction.

This article suggests that affect may exist in the following areas more and more young women are becoming dissatisfied with themselves due to the influence of social media and are trying to change themselves in various ways to fit in with the dominant aesthetic.

This article considers the following measures first of all, young women should establish independent self-awareness and positive aesthetics and self-judgment, and establish healthier, more natural, and more appropriate standards of self-aesthetics, so as to avoid negative emotions, such as dissatisfaction with themselves, due to excessive indulgence in unreasonable social comparisons. In the use of social media, it is necessary to focus on cultivating one's ability to discern and criticize media information, filtering unhealthy and unreasonable information on social media, and avoiding being influenced by the unhealthy beauty promoted by social media and becoming dissatisfied with oneself.

The study was informed body gaze messages in Chinese social media positively influence the degree of internalization of ideal beauty among young Chinese women.

This article suggests that reason may exist in the following areas the internalization of ideal beauty, i.e., the influence of young women to recognize the "dominant aesthetic". Seeing it as their ideal self. The ideal appearance pushed by social media and the high value ethos can further internalize women ability to take the beauty promoted in body gaze messages as their ideal beauty.

This article suggests that affect may exist in the following areas current research, on the other hand, proves that in social platforms, as long as users have been exposed to the information of users who are more perfect than they are, upward social comparisons will occur naturally, and users will unconsciously compare themselves with the best people in the process of browsing the information, gradually recognizing the ideal beauty and influencing their own aesthetics to become singular and making irrational beauty-seeking behaviors, and the majority of young women will spend more than

an hour p-plotting to make themselves Most young women will spend more than an hour to make themselves more like their ideal selves, and even have imitation dressing, imitation plastic surgery and so on.

This article considers the following measures to help women cultivate rational thinking, improve their ability to discern and interpret various types of information in social media, and refrain from using looks as the only criterion for measuring themselves; to build up a good psychological quality, and to avoid irrational internalized behaviors and a negative comparison mentality.

Socially, the socio-cultural context needs to allow for the coexistence of multiple aesthetics. Rather than regulating one group by a uniform standard, the establishment of pluralistic aesthetics should be about expanding the scale and type of beauty rather than overly applying visual modifications to constrain the natural image of physical appearance.

This article suggests that reason may exist in the following areas the body gaze information on social media has caused young Chinese women to have increased anxiety about their looks, decreased self-satisfaction, and deepened internalization of ideal beauty, and these three psychological influences have thus led to behavioral influences on women's beauty-seeking behaviors.

This article suggests that affect may exist in the following areas tens of thousands of beauty industries have been created, retouching, make-up, plastic surgery, etc. have a complete industry chain, as if it would be incompatible with social media if they didn't do this, the body-gazing messages on social media reveal a sense of urgency all the time, urging Chinese women to seek beauty. Young women seek to achieve physical beauty standards through beauty-seeking behaviors to fill the negative emotions such as anxiety caused by social media. There are those who suffer from anorexia and stomach problems caused by excessive weight loss; there are those who fail at plastic surgery; there are those who suffer from anxiety caused by p-pictures; what if the wall is crooked? What if they are told they don't look like themselves? And so on. Women's search for beauty, which originally relied on their own will, has turned into an over-compulsive behavior that constantly fills in their emotions.

This article considers the following measures first of all, young female groups should be guided to diversify their self-presentation without having to take body presentation as the only way to realize self-identity and social identity; Secondly, young women should use beauty apps moderately, reduce their reliance on selfies, medical makeup and other behaviors, and look at themselves from a holistic and in-depth perspective; Finally, young women should reduce the influence of the body gaze message on themselves, and consciously reduce the behavior of looking at themselves from the perspective of the "other", reduce the comparison of appearance, and realize the importance of thought and vision for themselves. They should realize the importance of their thoughts and perspectives. They should build up a firm aesthetic view of themselves and behave rationally in seeking beauty.

6. Conclusion

This paper delves into the psychological and behavioral effects of social media gazing on young women and how it shapes their beauty-seeking behavior. In today's digital age, the proliferation of social media platforms, such as Xiaohongshu and Weibo, has ushered society into a new era. These platforms promote the concept that "value equals justice" and inundate users with a constant stream of Body Gazing Messages, constructing a stereotypical ideal of female beauty. As a consequence, many young women find themselves ensnared in a pit of appearance-related anxiety. Research findings indicate a strong link between exposure to social media body gaze messages and heightened levels of look anxiety among young women. The more they encounter such messages, the more their anxiety intensifies. This prompts self-scrutiny and fosters negative emotions like appearance anxiety. Consequently, an increasing number of young women turn inward, seeking solutions through beauty-

related procedures like plastic surgery and medical aesthetics. Simultaneously, the incessant deluge of social media content, glorifying perfect appearances often exemplified by celebrities and internet personalities, fosters a culture of comparison. This constant measuring against unrealistic beauty standards leads to diminished self-satisfaction and drives beauty-seeking behaviors to irrational extremes. Furthermore, the study reveals how young women gradually recognize the pervasive influence of stereotypical aesthetics on social media. As they perceive themselves as falling short of these ideals, they undergo a transformation in their self-perception. This deepening internalization of societal beauty ideals prompts frantic alterations in appearance, reinforcing beauty-seeking behaviors and driving them to excessive pursuits of perfection. In summary, this paper underscores the intricate interplay between social media, young women's beauty perceptions, and their ensuing beauty-seeking behaviors. It sheds light on the multifaceted nature of these dynamics, revealing the profound impact of social media on the psychological and behavioral landscapes of young women.

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