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The relationship between the viewing of short outfit videos and women's body image

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Abstract

With the progress of social economy, the short video industry has developed rapidly. Short video has attracted a large number of users due to its characters and attributes such as fragmentation, self-fulfillment and other cultural tendencies. Women are more prone to anxiety in the process of watching short outfit videos, specifically in terms of dissatisfaction with their own body shape and appearance. After collecting and analyzing the questionnaires, and the study finds that short video, by conveying the social idea that “value is justice”, has an increasing impact on the audience's anxiety about body image and appearance, and greatly increases women's consumption of clothes and appearance, which influences the formation of modern consumerism and social values. The influence of video perceptions generally decreases as the level of education and social status increases.

Full Text

Preamble

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Abstract: With the progress of social economy, the short video industry has developed rapidly, attracting a large number of users due to its fragmented nature, capacity for self-fulfillment, and other cultural attributes. Women are particularly prone to anxiety when watching short outfit videos, specifically manifesting as dissatisfaction with their own body shape and appearance. After collecting and analyzing questionnaires, this study finds that short videos, by conveying the social ideology that “appearance is justice,” increasingly impact audience

anxiety about body image and appearance, and significantly increase women's consumption of clothing and beauty products. This phenomenon influences the formation of modern consumerism and social values. Notably, the influence of video perceptions generally decreases as the level of education and social status increases.

Keywords: cultivation theory; body anxiety; consumerism; short video

1 Introduction

The rise of short outfit videos reflects popular body aesthetic intentions, as women are influenced by the social culture of “white, thin, and young.” Such construction of bodily rules and regulations has heightened self-anxiety. Through widespread dissemination on online platforms and the guidance of consumerism, the stimulation of short outfit videos has caused women to suffer from “body anxiety.” Through observation, it is evident that short outfit videos exacerbate women's self-denial and induce anxiety to a certain extent. This paper employs questionnaires and in-depth interviews to analyze the causes of women's “body anxiety” triggered by short outfit videos, to verify the potential effects of such videos on women's anxiety, and to discuss how women can confront this anxiety and learn to properly accept themselves.

2.1 Literature Review of Cultivation Theory

As an internet-derived video format, the rise of short outfit videos has upset the balance between television and audience posited by traditional cultivation theory. Much relevant research has been based on single-theory argumentation. For example, from the perspective of television's influence on viewers' perceptions, Gerbner analyzed the violent messages delivered by television to audiences, pointing out that the cultivation effect on audiences is positively correlated with the amount of television watched, and that audiences will experience a certain cultivation effect as long as they watch television [1] [1]. Cultivation theory has been debated since its inception, describing how television affects audiences over time and concluding that the longer they watch television, the more they are affected. However, with the rapid development of the internet, many scholars have argued that the causal factors involved in this theory tend to be singular. The complexity of the internet has led to audience diversity, and the audience has transformed from simple recipients of information to content publishers. These changes have brought about a transformation in cultivation theory. In general, cultivation theory has been challenged because of its inability to provide adequate explanations for modern consumerism.

2.2 Literature Review on the Integration and Application of Cultivation Theory

This paper discusses the phenomenon of body anxiety brought by short videos based on cultivation theory. The development of the internet has impacted people's ways of thinking, and the cultivation function has increased significantly compared to television. In this context, Gerbner introduced new concepts to cultivation theory by examining the audience's level of literacy in relation to reality and television—empathy and hierarchical beliefs [5] [5] . With the development of the internet, more scholars are concerned with the evolution of cultivation theory and have begun to combine additional theories with it to better align with further inferences. In China, Bao Rong combines changes in audience psychology regarding interaction and participation under new media development with cultivation theory, suggesting that behind new technology itself remains the concentration of media power [4] [4] . Domestic scholar Tian Hongyuan combines network theory with cultivation theory in China's big data environment and reformulates the structure of the network cultivation model, in which the audience actively meets cultivation from the internet [6] [6] . The internet environment has led to a change in cultivation theory, with audience participation influencing the composition of the framework and the pluralistic network moving linearly in both directions. The importance of the audience in the communication process is increased through the output of their own ideas to influence the public.

2.3 Literature Review on Short Videos and Body Image Anxiety

The integration of consumerism into people's daily lives is generally considered to have begun in the early 20th century, when consumerism swept the world in the process of globalization, and our country was inevitably affected. With the emergence of short videos, "consumption of the body" gradually reached its peak and body image anxiety arose. In Freud's theory of anxiety, anxiety arises as a reaction caused by ego conflict, a view that has received much attention from scholars at home and abroad and has led to numerous research findings [7] [7] . Sullivan, a scholar in the field of anxiety theory, added to this theory by studying the association between socio-cultural factors and audiences: anxiety is a sign that one's self-esteem is at risk, that one's position in the eyes of important people is at risk. Women's anxiety is also becoming more significant in the consumerist environment. Jacobson examined the phenomenon of ego and behavior, suggesting that anxiety consists of four factors: stimulus, ego, competence, and cognitive evaluation [8] [8] [9] [9] . Anxiety arises from the combined effect of the self and external factors. In social media, the craze for body evaluation is constantly pushing women toward newer goals. More and more women watching short videos unconsciously compare themselves to idealized bodies in the videos, reshaping their aesthetic values and creating negative feelings such as anxiety.

2.4 Problem Formulation

To fill the gap in research on women's anxiety triggered by short outfit videos from a cultivation theory perspective, this study adopts questionnaire surveys and in-depth interviews. Based on questions related to anxiety triggered by watching short outfit videos, the following hypotheses are established:

Hypothesis 1: Watching short outfit videos leads to a significant increase in body anxiety among women.

Hypothesis 2: Watching short outfit videos gives rise to broader discussion about body anxiety among women.

Hypothesis 3: The viewing of short outfit videos triggers body anxiety that leads to enhanced clothing consumption in women compared to men.

Hypothesis 4: Women's doubts about face and body shape are significantly enhanced after watching short outfit videos.

Hypothesis 5: Women's self-objectification increases significantly after watching short outfit videos.

Hypothesis 6: The idea of "appearance is justice" is associated with the literacy of internet users themselves.

Hypothesis 7: The progressive spread of education among women diminishes anxiety about body image.

Hypothesis 8: Education generally diminishes the idea that "appearance is justice."

3 Research Methodology

Based on the above, this study proposes hypothesis establishment and theorization of sampling and interview findings on the phenomenon of consumerism, using questionnaires and in-depth interviews to answer questions about women's body image anxiety caused by short outfit videos. Representative sampling and semi-structured in-depth interviews are conducted, with reference to previous researchers' methods. This study aims to identify some of the mechanisms that influence psychological disorders in users when watching short outfit videos and to provide a factual basis for short video content to shoulder the responsibility of guiding users toward constructing healthy and scientific psychological perceptions.

4.1 Audience Anxiety and Consumerism

The results show that approximately 50% of short outfit video audiences are affected by anxious thoughts conveyed in the videos and experience serious body and appearance anxiety, believing that "appearance is justice" is correct. Most audience members are relatively concerned about evaluations of their external image and experience significant anxiety. Their primary method of relieving anxiety is to change their existing external bodily state. Their aesthetic mentality tends toward assimilation, learning to imitate the daily dressing and makeup styles of various celebrities and online bloggers, and spending more on daily

dressing and appearance, such as new clothes, skincare products, and cosmetics.

According to the survey, the proportion of audiences learning to dress according to Douyin short outfit videos accounts for 70% of the overall sample. The average monthly spend on everyday wear is over \$200, with 20% of the audience spending over \$2,000. Forty percent believe that the frequency of buying new clothes is influenced by recommendations from outfit videos, while making purchase decisions based on actual needs accounts for only 30%. It is evident that short outfit videos not only affect audience psychology but also impact consumers' daily lives, causing non-essential life consumption to increase significantly. This leads to extravagance and wastefulness prevailing and hinders the formation of positive social values.

Gender Differences in Anxiety Production: The findings show that in the modern technological environment, media platforms are no longer just for PGC (Professional Generated Content) but are also open to the general public. Combining the popularity of short videos in China with women's body anxiety, Hao Yu proposes that the definition of beauty ought to be rich and diverse, that aesthetics needs multiple dimensions, and attempts to create a "de-gendered" discursive space so that women can generally stay away from body anxiety [10] [10] . Under fierce competition in the media market, various channels are developed, and the female body as a viewable asset can certainly maximize benefits. The aesthetic domestication of the female body by short videos begins and ends there. Phrases such as "white, thin, and young" also deepen bodily stereotypes. Misogynistic culture places women in a deeper level of body anxiety through the domestication of the self and places them in a dilemma where their self-worth is obscured from the aesthetic dimension of the body. Compared with male audiences, female audiences unconsciously compare themselves to bodies in videos after watching short outfit videos, with obvious psychological anxiety and an over-saturation of their own needs, easily generating an unhealthy consumer mentality of comparison, extravagance, and herd-following.

Women's doubts and anxieties about their appearance and body shape have increased significantly, especially among young university students who have not yet entered society and who watch short videos more frequently than other social groups. Thus, their discussion of prevalent internet ideas increases, and their own objectification becomes more obvious. Nowadays, societal aesthetics unanimously pursues "white, thin, and young," believing that appearance is justice. The prevalence of beauty products, makeup, and even cosmetic surgery is very likely to lead to anxiety about appearance and body shape and even to excessive medical treatment and sub-healthy physical conditions. This has a negative impact on the psychological and physical health of female groups and is not conducive to establishing good values and correct, reasonable consumption concepts in society.

Audience Clothing Consumption Patterns:

- Self-needs

- Video recommendation
- No fixed frequency
- Purchase by season
- Purchase by the month
- Weekly purchases
- Daily purchase

The results indicate that the more audiences watch short outfit videos, the stronger their anxiety about body image; the more they watch, the higher their agreement with the idea of “appearance is justice”; the stronger their anxiety, the greater their spending on dressing and grooming. Higher socio-economic status and education level correlate with less obvious influence on body image anxiety, while the influence on the idea of “appearance is justice” shows less correlation with audience quality.

4.2 Analysis of the Correlation Between Viewing Short Outfit Videos and Women’s “Body Anxiety”

To verify the effect of watching short outfit videos on female audience anxiety, the two factors were transformed into corresponding constants and variables for observation and analysis, yielding the following results.

4.2.1 Analysis of the Correlation Between Viewing Length, Frequency, and Audience Anxiety

Pearson’s correlation analysis reveals a significant relationship between “frequency of viewing” and “audience anxiety”: the higher the frequency of watching short outfit videos, the higher the level of audience dissatisfaction and anxiety. Hypotheses 1 and 2 are supported.

4.2.2 Correlation Analysis Between Viewing Duration, Frequency, and Audience Gender on Monetary Expenditure

Pearson’s correlation analysis reveals a significant relationship between “frequency of viewing” and “audience spending”: the female audience shows higher spending than males in groups that watch short outfit videos. The more frequently they watch short videos, the more women spend on their own appearance and body image. Research Hypothesis 3 is supported.

4.2.3 Analysis of the Correlation Between Viewing Length, Frequency, and Audience Self-Identity

Pearson’s correlation analysis reveals a significant relationship between “length and frequency of viewing” and “audience’s self-identity”: the number of times audiences watch short outfit videos is positively correlated with their doubts about their body image. Hypotheses 4 and 5 are supported, suggesting that

higher viewing length and frequency correlate with greater self-dissatisfaction and deeper self-objectification.

4.2.4 Analysis of the Correlation Between Viewing Immersion Level and Audience Quality and Education

Analysis of the relationship between immersion level in watching short videos and the audience's own quality and education level finds that immersion level shows a significant negative correlation with the audience's way of thinking. Hypotheses 6, 7, and 8 are supported, indicating that higher audience quality and education level correlate with lower identification with videos, greater ability to avoid the stereotype of "appearance is justice," and greater capacity to reduce anxious thoughts.

5 Analysis and Summary

5.1 Development of the Psychosocialization of Anxiety

This study, through survey and analysis of Douyin short outfit video audiences, identifies a trend of socialized psychological identity regarding women's "white, thin, and young" and "appearance is justice" ideals. The diversified influences brought about by internet development reflect women's socialized anxiety and streams of comparison, conformity, and wastefulness, which strongly react against the positive health of social thought and value formation, negatively affecting social consumption psychology and consumerism. Internet short videos already produce involuntary comparisons when audiences watch them, gradually influencing their psychology through the time and frequency of viewing, thus broadly enhancing the intention of self-objectification. Chen Guangyao combines the symbol of the epidemic era in China, the "mask," with women's body anxiety about "thinness as beauty," suggesting that short videos pose a threat to users' body image disorder, which requires societal attention and preventive measures [11] [11]. In terms of social impact, self-objectification has caused women to lose self-value as commodities. Instead of becoming a tool for women's liberation, internet short videos have contributed to the male gaze on women, further emphasizing male aesthetic needs and relegating women to the "second sex" in the online world. Women's heightened self-criticism leads to further objectification. The comparison of female audiences with physical appearances in short videos causes women to focus more frequently on their own body image.

Additionally, this study proposes a correlation between short outfit videos and the psychology of body anxiety, reflecting the development trend of consumerism under the cultivation phenomenon. The media's interpretation of women's body shape and appearance deepens the threat to audiences' perceptions of their own bodies. On the other hand, it provides more discourse and attention for consumerism, prompting women's discussions about face and body shape on the internet, and represents the key for women to gradually take control of media

discourse, completing the reconstruction of the female group's self-perception. However, this study also finds that with gradual development in education level, women's psychological identification with body image anxiety decreases, and they develop a clearer and more reasonable understanding of themselves.

5.2 The Awakening of Audience Object Consciousness

The threat to women's psychological anxiety posed by short videos requires concerted societal efforts to prevent and implement certain measures—a direction researchers should be alert to and reflect upon. Most importantly, schools must enhance cognitive education about female body science to help women establish a healthy bodily cognitive view and also educate men to adopt a scientific attitude toward female appearance, changing the anxiety and discrimination caused by inherent concepts. Short video platforms should also implement policies to regulate content and reduce the pushing of similar outfit video operations, avoiding the formation of information cocoons that bombard users' psyches with single messages over long periods, and preventing negative ideas that tend toward uniformity and create subtle distortions in audience thinking.

In the context of the new era, short video platforms continue to prosper, providing more channels for audiences to create and disseminate information. However, this also poses certain challenges and threats to ideological and political education. The style of short videos should align more closely with our core socialist values, promote excellent national ideology and culture, and block unpleasant words and talk. Short video ideas should go hand in hand with education; the short video platform should fully exploit aesthetic elements in video resources, educate morality with beauty, constantly innovate thinking to inspire audiences to awaken their object consciousness, and promote networked ideological education.

5.3 Conclusion

However, numerous studies have not addressed how women can break the body image anxiety caused by short videos, so this phenomenon of anxiety needs to be studied from that perspective. In the face of various social media guiding the regulation of women's body image, it is vital for women to control media discourse so they can have a voice in society. The individual consciousness of women needs urgent reconstruction, requiring joint efforts. In today's society, women have the same educational resources as men, and internet advancement has given women equal access to media resources. Women need to improve themselves on the premise of relative equality.

However, this study is not comprehensive enough in terms of data collection and has shortcomings regarding the correlation between consumerism and women's development. In future studies, researchers in the field of cultivation theory may need to pay more attention to the in-depth impact of consumerism and expand research and practices related to women under internet development.

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