

Doing Gender in The Era of Digitalization: How Beauty Influencers Achieve Stable Income

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Abstract. Social media has changed the way people communicate with each other. It has overcome geographical distances and people can easily communicate and interact with others through social media platforms. At the same time, social media has become a channel for many people to shop online. On the other hand, through social media, people can also earn some income in different forms. This paper uses Xiaohongshu as a social media platform to discuss how beauty influencers can earn a stable income by doing gender. On the platform of Xiaohongshu, this study selects the videos posted by two famous female beauty bloggers: CHENG and XIE as the research targets and analyzes them to study how they make profits through the definition of contemporary women. The study concludes that beauty influencers utilize their gender identities and the way they present themselves to generate a steady income by partnering with beauty brands or setting up their own beauty brands to sell their products, as well as cashing in on their traffic by inserting advertisements into their videos to generate advertising revenue fees. The significance of this study is to help these influencers better understand their business models and revenue sources and to provide practical advice and strategies that can help them achieve better survival and development in the competitive online environment. At the same time, this can also provide useful references and lessons for the entire field of social media marketing and influencer economy.

Keywords: Female beauty influencers; doing gender; gender identity; stable income.

1. Introduction

With the rise of social media, more and more women choose to earn income by posting beauty makeup tutorials, product recommendations and fashion sharing to attract followers. However, in the highly competitive field of beauty, how to maintain the stability of income has become a problem worth studying.

Beauty influencers promote diversity in beauty in their videos and encourage women to find beauty that matches their personal comfort level rather than being subject to society's stereotypical definition of beauty. However, the beauty products they promote are actually advertised as being more in line with traditional societal standards: fair, slim, and perfect. This self-contradictory phenomenon reflects beauty bloggers' pursuit of a marketing strategy that promotes product sales through the promotion of specific beauty standards for commercial gain [1, 2]. The promotional behaviors of beauty influencers may lead viewers toward socially accepted models of beauty, which in turn reinforces this idealization of beauty. This phenomenon emphasizes the potential conflict between commercial interests and notions of beauty in the beauty industry and provokes reflection on the relationship between aesthetic self-identification and social aesthetic orientation.

This study focuses on the perspective of doing gender. The theory of "doing gender" focuses on how individuals express and fulfill their gender identities through their daily behaviors, and the key to beauty bloggers' interaction with their fans is precisely through sharing daily beauty videos. In this way, fans can gain a deeper understanding of the process of constructing gender identity and the relationship between gender identity and social identity and cultural background. At the same time, the theory of "doing gender" also emphasizes the dynamic and contextual nature of gender behavior, and the choices and interactions of individuals in their daily lives. This theory can give individuals more subjectivity, liberate the concepts and frameworks of gender, and promote gender diversity and inclusiveness. The videos of the two bloggers in this study promote more equality where every

woman has the right to love beauty, regardless of appearance, which is exactly what this theory refers to in building a more inclusive and equitable society.

2. Literature Review

In the current networked economic environment, some influencers share content on how to get the perfect body, clothes and make-up in order to compete for traffic hotspots. This phenomenon has triggered the pursuit of "white, thin, and beautiful" standards on the Internet, which has gradually become the standard of beauty in the Chinese subconscious [3]. At the same time, traditional Chinese aesthetics has a long history and carries rich cultural connotations. Gender issues, as a social and cultural phenomenon, play an important role in this cultural context. This aesthetics is intertwined with gender issues, reflecting and influencing people's perception of beauty and aesthetic concepts.

2.1. Appearance and Gender

In ancient society, female appearance was not only a display of personal image but also a symbol of social status and family honor [4]. Women were required to maintain a clean and beautiful appearance, conform to traditional aesthetic standards, and embody an image of chastity and modesty. Through clothing, hairstyles and make-up, women displayed symbols of family status and social status. In the feudal society of China, the highest value of life and moral standard for women is to be a filial woman, a dutiful wife, and a good mother, and if a woman can do these things, she will receive great recognition from the male society [5].

With the development of modern society, the role of women's appearance in the construction of gender has gradually changed, and women are not only required to have a traditionally beautiful appearance but also need to show professional competence, a sense of autonomy and self-expression. In the workplace, women may also be at risk of being demeaned on the basis of their gender. Especially when judged in real-world situations where there are potential consequences for the evaluator, competent women are more likely to be devalued [6]. However, with the strict norms and judgments of women's appearance in modern society, women are expected to adapt their appearance to different settings in order to conform to the gender expectations and roles of women in society.

Women's "doing gender" in terms of appearance is an ongoing process, reflecting social and cultural expectations and pressures on women's gender roles, as well as women's own shaping and expression of gender identity. At the same time, women are constantly challenging, expanding and redefining gender norms and identities through changes and designs in their appearance.

2.2. Chinese women's pursuit of beauty

Chinese women's pursuit of beauty has shown diverse changes in historical evolution. Ancient Chinese women's aesthetics were mainly reflected in the aesthetic concepts of feudal society, such as fairness and slenderness, softness and modesty [7]. The beauty of "plump breasts and fat hips" prevalent in the Tang Dynasty, the beauty of vegetarianism in the Song Dynasty, and the beauty of a slim waist in the Ming and Qing Dynasties all reflected the aesthetic concepts and lifestyles of the society at that time.

There is a popular saying in China: "Fair skin can cover up a hundred ugliness". It humorously summarizes the general view and preference of China on whitening. In ancient Chinese aesthetic philosophy, fair skin was considered a sign of grace, symbolizing a woman's gentleness and elegance. As a result, Chinese women's pursuit of fairness has become a deeply rooted aesthetic concept.

Compared to the United States, China has a significantly higher percentage of beauty products that promote skin color aspects and are advertised with the slogan that they will whiten, lighten, and brighten the skin tone of consumers [8]. Some people believe that darker skin is less appealing to wear than fair skin, giving off a bulky and boring look, while others prefer the historical evidence of the "white ideal" and believe that fair skin signifies a social status. In contrast, due to the nature of their work and living conditions, farmer's and their children's skin were still darker and tanned, and

they were more likely to be poor. Therefore, skin color is often used as a cue to identify a person's origin and social class [9].

In Chinese society, women's pursuit of thinness also has been a widespread and valued aesthetic concept. This notion is not only reflected in the media and advertisements, but also deeply affects individual self-perception and society's identification of female beauty. Compared with men, women are more inclined to pursue thin bodies, more likely to feel anxiety about obesity, and more inclined to adopt weight reduction behaviors such as dieting. These gender differences reflect socio-cultural expectations and pressures on women's body image, presenting different challenges and dilemmas faced by women in terms of body image perceptions and behaviors [10]. It has also been shown through research that young women learn from magazines, advertisements, fitness clubs, and other cultural institutions that the preferred ideal weight is significantly lower than the healthy weight recommended in the medical literature [11]. Most of the Chinese girls in Meng Zhang's study had personal experiences with dieting and attempting to lose weight, and fashion magazines and models undoubtedly helped the subjects of this study associate ideas of fashion and beauty with thin women. Although Chinese women realize that the model's weight standards are unrealistic and the potential harm to their bodies at the expense of their health is worrisome, they still see and admire the model's body as the ultimate beauty ideal.

3. Methodology

This paper uses content analysis, which is a method for describing, interpreting and understanding content [12]. This paper analyzes the content and related videos of two female beauty influencers on the Xiaohongshu platform, as well as their own branded stores created on the Taobao platform. First, the textual analysis includes identifying the research questions, how beauty influencers express their female gender identities in videos and articles, and how to generate appropriate use of doing gender in the Xiaohongshu platform to resonate with the analysis and thus engage readers. Second, the text is summarized by extracting their opinions and keywords about women's aesthetic characteristics and appearance. Finally, we compare the number of fans on Taobao and Xiaohongshu platforms to speculate how they utilize their advantages to cash in on their fan base to obtain a stable income.

4. Results

4.1. Video Content

4.1.1 The definition of beauty

CHENG and XIE interpreted their perceptions of beauty in their videos:

"With a head of hair and fair skin, you look good with a casual cleanup."

"Sharing a yellow skin whitening makeup look that can make your look tender and translucent."

"Good skin is the only way to be in a good mood, you can really go white with it."

"Make yourself whiter through hard sun protection, soft sun protection, whitening serums and food beauty. When you are whiter, your face will look cleaner."

The definition of beauty is a complex and diverse concept that is influenced by a variety of factors such as culture, society, history, personal experience and aesthetic standards. However, these two beauty influencers define beauty as having a fair complexion and a slim figure, which are more in line with the definition of beauty that conforms to mainstream aesthetic standards such as the general public.

4.1.2 How to use their concept of beauty to market products

"This brand is more recommended for newbies, it's easier to get started and I use it in a way that fits the shape of my eyes the best."

"My skin is more on the yellowish side and after using this mask, my skin became more translucent than before."

These two beauty influencers promote beauty products for brands and their own stores by sharing the tools and supplies they use to apply makeup in their daily lives. In the video, they use their own conceptualization of beauty to promote their products, and by comparing their past and present photos, they highlight the efficacy of the products and entice their fan base to buy them. For example, in the past photos, the influencer's skin color was dull, but now her skin is fair and glowing, this change is after using a certain whitening product, this effect is highlighted, and if the fan base with the same situation if they also use this whitening product, they may have the same effect.

4.2. Taobao

In order to further investigate how these two female beauty influencers fulfill the need to earn a steady income, a comparison is made by collecting the number of Xiaohongshu platforms and Taobao followers of these two (Table 1).

Table 1. Comparison of the number of followers on different platforms

Name	Number of followers in Xiaohongshu	Taobao store name	Taobao followers number	Selling category
CHENG	8,688,000	CHENG's store	6,210,000	Beauty and Skin Care
XIE	2,098,000	XIE Beauty Store	402,000	Beauty and Skin Care

4.2.1 Business pattern

Due to "aesthetic fatigue", influencers gradually lose the attention of the public. Therefore, in order to prolong their lifecycle, many of them are constantly producing new quality content in order to gain better access to their products. In beauty influencers' video sharing, they are usually not only the medium for promoting the products of famous brands, but also the strategy of using social media platforms such as Xiaohongshu to attract and attract fans. By promoting well-known brand products as well as their own Taobao store products in their videos, these influencers are actually marketing and promoting their own personal brands while making a profit. By posting links to relevant names in their videos and guiding their fans to gradually move to their own Taobao stores to make purchases, they are successfully utilizing the spreading and purchasing power of social media platforms, resulting in deeper relationships between their fans and more opportunities and possibilities for their own brands and businesses to grow. In addition to increasing sales, this fan-driven strategy also promotes the expansion of personal brand awareness and influence, laying a solid foundation for their future business partnerships and development.

4.2.2 Sociological analysis

They are utilizing the power of social media and the convenience of the internet in a good way. Through the Xiaohongshu platform, beauty influencers can directly reach out to a wide range of audiences and build up their influence and fan base, for example, CHENG and XIE have a huge fan base of more than 2 million on the Xiaohongshu platform, and the likes of their total videos have even exceeded 10 million. Through the popularity of the demand and consumption of beauty and make-up in society, they post videos to arouse the public's interest in the videos. Their testimonials and promotions can have a significant impact on the purchasing decisions of consumers, influencing supply relationships in the marketplace, and this authority and influence also encourage well-known beauty brands to collaborate with beauty influencers in order to generate financial revenue.

Beauty influencers share their own experiences of becoming beautiful or whiter through videos, which resonate with the mass fan base, triggering an identity that leads them to become one of their fans. By purchasing and using the recommended products, fans and influencers establish an emotional connection that transforms their identification and trust into consumer behavior. In the process, personal beauty and skincare traits become an expression of each influencer's personality and taste, pursuit of beauty and self-worth.

4.2.3 Doing gender

Female beauty influencers make profits by promoting branded products and their own products, which can be interpreted as a form of "gendering" or "doing gender", which is a way of expressing and practicing gender identity and gender roles in society. gender roles in society.

Female beauty influencers, through their appearances and make-up, present an image that conforms to society's standards of female beauty, and this behavior can be viewed as an expression of gender identity to the general public, creating an image of themselves that conforms to traditional female aesthetics. At the same time, in the beauty influencers' videos promoting their products, they emphasize products and skills that conform to women's beauty standards and follow the norms and expectations of women's beauty in society. By portraying themselves as women and the products they recommend, they are actually responding to and conforming to society's expectations of female beauty.

Female beauty influencers interpret and take on the image of female beauty in a unique way, thus solidifying their gender identity and status in society. As they promote branded products, they also construct identity symbols for the group of women they represent. Through the selection and recommendation of beauty products, they construct symbols associated with women's values of beauty, self-confidence and independence, reinforcing the identity between themselves and their followers.

The profits made by female beauty influencers through the promotion of branded products and their own products are not only a commercial act but also involve the construction of gender identity, the response to gender norms, and gender identity, further extending the scope of the application of "doing gender" in the field of social media and consumption.

5. Conclusion

In today's social media times, beauty influencers realize multiple channels of revenue acquisition through content creation and promotion. Beauty influencers build a relationship of trust by establishing a gender identity with their followers. By showcasing their own beauty skills and product experiences in their video content, beauty influencers not only build intimacy with their viewers in terms of their appearance, but also give them a sense of empathy and emotional connection to each other through their shared gender identity. This intimacy helps to enhance fans' trust in the beauty influencer, making them more willing to accept and purchase the beauty products recommended by the influencer, thus realizing the influencer's revenue acquisition on the social media platform. It also leverages the platform's traffic and fan base to direct fans to shopping platforms for consumption. Labeling the videos with product names and links essentially builds an affiliate marketing model, where purchases are measured by conversion rates and beauty influencers earn accordingly.

In addition, collaborative partnerships with beauty brands are one of the most important ways for beauty influencers to generate revenue. By collaborating with brands to promote their products, events or brand images, beauty influencers not only increase their exposure and awareness on social media, but also promote their audience's attention to the products and their willingness to purchase, thus realizing a win-win situation for both brands and influencers. Through a mutually beneficial partnership, beauty influencers gain additional advertising revenue, thus achieving successful and stable development of their commercialization operations. This partnership model not only positively impacts the promotion and sales of beauty products, but also provides significant opportunities for beauty influencers to grow and increase their influence on social media platforms. By continually seeking partnership opportunities and expanding revenue sources, Beauty Influencers not only give themselves greater commercialization potential, but also build a more interactive and experiential purchasing environment for both brands and consumers, which promotes the development and innovation of the beauty industry.

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