

Identifying Different Types of Gender Stereotypes Displayed by Social Media

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Abstract. Since the early 2000s, social media became popular. In fact, what viewers see on social media is subtly influencing their minds. Especially in 2020, during the pandemic, social media are more likely to replace face-to-face communication. This paper's purpose is to identify different types of gender stereotypes displayed by social media. Studying this topic has more possibilities to help us understand social media better, by recognizing its limitations and raising public awareness of gender stereotypes displayed by social media. In this way, it is possible to alleviate the problem of gender stereotypes displayed by social media in the future. This paper begins with "gender stereotypes" "advertisement" "comment" "picture" and "social media" as the keywords, articles from 2000 to the present were searched on Google Scholar. After screening, a total of 19 articles were included in the inverse analysis range of this paper. As a result, there are three types of gender stereotypes displayed on social media in general: Gender stereotypes in advertisements, Gender stereotypes in comments, and Gender stereotypes in pictures videos.

Keywords: Social Media, Gender Stereotype, Advertisement, Comment, Picture.

1. Introduction

Gender stereotype is jeopardizing individual groups in the current society because it has been twisting our values. At the same time, social media begin to grow rapidly, it is well-known that the content on social media will attract people's attention and change viewers' values [1,2]. Those negative content including gender stereotypes will also make an impact on the viewers. What's worse, the majority of people cannot even realize that social media is changing their point of view on genders. Therefore, it is essential to find out those several types of gender stereotypes displayed on social media. This paper will discuss what are the few types of gender stereotypes on social media. The reason for researching this topic is, that after figuring out the causes of this problem, the public will pay more attention to the problem of gender stereotypes. In light of the above-mentioned ways, it is possible to alleviate gender stereotypes more effectively.

Gender stereotyping is assigning specific characteristics to a person only based on his or her gender, individuals who do not conform to gender stereotypes are vulnerable to discrimination. "Gender stereotype" refers to a generalized or preconceived idea of the attributes or characteristics that men and women have or should have or the roles that men and women play or should play. It is the main factor that causes gender inequality and discrimination among genders. Gender stereotypes will be harmful when it limits certain groups of people's freedom and ability, for example, many women are likely to hit the glass ceiling when they are applying for a job only because they are female, no matter how prominent they are.

Here are a few common examples of gender stereotypes: Females are too weak to be independent and work, and males should be strong enough in order to support the whole family; Males should make enough money to support their family; Females are always emotional so they are not able to undertake "big tasks", "big task" belongs to male; Male who spends more time with family is not reliable, male should spend more time on their work and career, females should spend most of their time taking care of their family [3].

The keywords of this paper are "Gender Stereotypes" "advertisement" "comment" "picture" and "Social Media". By searching these keywords, there are about 2000 papers on Google Scholar in total. After screening, 19 articles are considered to be used for reference.

2. Different types of gender stereotypes displayed by social media

Social media is subtly influencing how people think about genders. It is crucial to find out the different types of gender stereotypes. Gender stereotypes may be displayed on social media for different aspects: Gender stereotypes in advertisements, gender stereotypes in comments, and gender stereotypes in pictures and videos. The specific classification of the paper can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Analysis for references

Numbers of Articles	Different gender stereotypes	References
6	Gender stereotypes in advertisements	[4] [5] [6] [7] [8] [9]
6	Gender stereotypes in comments	[10] [11] [12] [13] [14] [15]
4	Gender stereotypes in pictures and videos	[16] [17] [18] [19]

2.1. Gender Stereotypes in Advertisements

The world of advertising is full of various stereotypes, one of the stereotypes that stand out is gender stereotypes. Advertising often uses gender stereotypes in order to increase sales. In fact, the advertisement often includes gender stereotypes to cater to the audience, to let the audience feel the connection between the product and themselves [4]. At the same time, these gender stereotypes in advertisements are likely to deliver negative information and reinforce gender stereotypes.

Tracing the history of advertising, during the period of 1940-the 1960s, most of the images of women in advertisements were housewives with perfect body shapes. Meanwhile, it reflects the status of men and the inequality between genders. It is obvious that people desire the beauty of women's bodies. Taking a poster name "Show her it is a man's world" as an example, this poster shows a couple, the women in the poster need to take care of her husband on her knees, it seems like the women's duty is to take care of their husband and to serve their husband. Advertisements of this period are rife with gender stereotypes, this also means that gender inequality is quite serious in this period, the social status of men and women have a lot of differences. For instance, the poster in this period all shows the desire for female body perfection. A typical example of the poster is the one that names "Men wouldn't look at me when I was skinny!" This shows the high standard for women's body shape and the discrimination between males and females. When it comes to the current society that after the 2000s, women who appear in advertisements are likely to have sexual innuendo to attract consumers. Many women in the advertisements wear swimming suits and underwear or aprons to make the advertising more appealing and to give the males a view of sexual pleasure, while men are more likely to dress in suits or smart casual. As a result, Females are more related to house chores products, and males are related to electronic appliances. Taking the famous MTR advertisement as an example, the advertisement "Offer women a hand in the kitchen" reflects gender stereotypes. The MTR company launched a new product that focuses on south Indian breakfast offerings. In this advertisement, an Indian wife was making breakfast for everyone in her family. Even though everyone in her family wanted different kinds of food, the wife still smiled and cooked the breakfast with "lots of hands". The main character of this advertisement is a housewife who is wearing an apron, always trying her best to accommodate everyone in her family. This advertisement represents the image of a traditional woman [5]. Not only the adult female has particular images in advertisements, teenage female also has gender stereotypes when they appeared in an advertisement. Teenage females in the advertisements are likely to give people the feeling of "peace" "less active" and "beautiful". In fact, typically females who appear in the advertisements are always "smiling to the camera" or "wearing a dress", referred to as the feeling of "beautiful".

Compared to women in advertisements, men are defined as a more powerful and strengthened image. Men are more likely to be the protagonist in the scene, for example, a father carrying his child on his shoulder and his wife just smiling watching him [6]. The difference between the image of men and women in the advertising, it's not just a reflection of gender stereotypes in society. What is more frightening is that the different images in these advertisements reflect the different social statuses of men and women and the inequality between genders [7].

On the other hand, teenage males in the advertisements are more “active” and “sports-related”, which is completely different from teenage females. As a matter of fact, the teenage boys in the advertisements are always in the act of “jumping high” or “running fast”, which is much more “active” than teenage females [8]. Moreover, when a teenage male and a teenage female both appear in an advertisement, it will also have a big difference between males and females. The most common example is a sport-related advertisement, the teenage girl in that advertisement is wearing a pink sports suit while the teenage boy is wearing a blue sports suit. It seems like the color pink is belong to girls and the color blue belongs to boys [9]. Another good example is the advertisements for “Axe”. This advertisement represents the boy who lives in order to get women. Using this kind of gender stereotype in advertisements needs to consider the responsibility behind the advertisements. Therefore, in this advertisement, it will convey the concept of “men can’t live without women.

When a brand is using gender stereotypes in their advertisement, it may increase sales and bring benefits to the brand company, however, it also sends a message about gender stereotypes to their audience.

2.2. Gender Stereotypes in Comments

Comments on social media are one of the most direct ways to show whether an audience likes a work or not. It is quite essential for the creator. In fact, the gendered comment on social media often includes negative one and positive one, both of them will make an impact on the future content the creator posts. Therefore, whether comments affect different genders to different degrees? Do viewers make different comments based on gender?

According to TikTok, females are more active on social media than males, 61 percent of active users on TikTok are females [10]. When it comes to Instagram, 56 percent of active users on Instagram are females [11]. All of these data show that women are using social media more frequently, does this mean that women will pay more time and attention to comments on social media? In fact, females use social media for an average of 8.2 hours a day while males only for an average of 6.9 hours a day. Generally speaking, females use social media mainly for sharing their life and for family, males use social media mainly for business reasons. Therefore, the reasons for using social media vary depending on gender, females, and males are likely to be different in how much they care about social media [12]. In other words, comments on social media can be more damaging to women. Women's self-esteem can be easily ruined by negative comments on social media [13]. For instance, women who spend more than an hour every day on social media are more likely to have body anxiety and appearance anxiety, they are less confident [13].

A current study conducted by Facebook shows that comments under women’s accounts will be emotional. Intensive adverbs and positive emotional words such as “soooo” and “OMG” are more likely to appear when female posts. Words that are more sports-related and politics-related will be more possible to arise when male posts [14]. On the other hand, there are lots of gender-specific words on social media, these words are used to refer especially to a particular gender. One of the most popular gender-specific words that are widely used on social media is “hag”. Looking up to the dictionary, “hag” means an ugly, slatternly, or evil-looking old woman. Therefore, it is clear that “hag” is the word that particularly belongs to women [15]. Another popular gender-specific word is “jerk”. “Jerk” often refers to men who is contemptibly obnoxious, it is the word that particularly belongs to men. These gender-specific words are more likely to play a negative role when the creator posts. These gender-specific words are more likely to be offensive to the creator.

2.3. Gender Stereotypes in Pictures and Videos

Different from the other two gender stereotype examples (Gender stereotypes in advertisements and comments), gender stereotypes in pictures and videos are ‘controllable’. Users are free to post in front of the camera. In other words, no one has dictated how men and women should pose for photos, no one has prescribed what kind of poses belong to males and females. However, here is an interesting fact on social media, there are lots of pictures and videos on social media still including gender

stereotypes. Therefore, this paper will be discussing different features when men and women post a picture or video.

When searching on YouTube, there are millions of videos on YouTube teaching girls how to pose perfectly and cute when they are taking a selfie. Those videos often teach girls to pose cute and elegant when taking a picture instead of posing whatever they want. At the same time, girls who watched those videos are more likely to believe what those YouTubers said. For example, “The dress flick” “The sunblock” “The look back” and “Props”, are poses for females [16]. What’s even scarier is that no matter is the person who posts those pictures or the person who views those pictures, they all believe that these “cute” poses are the best pictures for females. Normally, these kinds of pictures are easier to get likes and positive comments. As a result, more and more females will follow this trend. When it comes to males, their pose will be less cute and more mature and natural compared to females. For instance, the pose “Hands in pockets” “Seated” “Arms crossed” and “Walking” poses for males. In fact, those teaching videos on YouTube are more likely to teach males to be “serious like a boss” and “evil laugh” [17]. Obviously, it is quite different from females selfies. In a word, the man who wants to get more likes on social media will pose like this.

Despite the pictures on social media, videos are also including lots of gender stereotypes. There are lots of videos on social media teaching girls “posting ideas”. Those video creators believe that girls are suitable to film video such as “make-up collection” “makeup tutorial” “skincare” and “hairstyling”, videos that are related to “appearance” seems to belong to girls [18]. It is believed that girls should make a video that is related to their appearance. When it comes to a man, it is widely believed that men should post more videos such as “shoe collection” “challenges” “Electronic devices” and “sports-related” [19]. It is distinct that there is a big difference between the videos males and females posts. When males and females post the kind of video they belong to, they are more likely to get “likes” and popularity. In conclusion, women and men are more likely to make videos that belong to their gender.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, there are three types of gender stereotypes displayed by social media: Gender stereotypes in advertisements, Gender stereotypes in comments, and Gender stereotypes in pictures and videos. To be more specific, “Gender stereotypes in advertisements” are mainly used to increase sales, to create a feeling for their audience that the product they sell is connected with them. By tracing the history of characteristics of gender images in advertisements of different ages, it is obvious to find out that those advertisements including gender stereotypes can represent the gender inequality in that period. However, these advertisements are more likely to send their audience a message of gender stereotypes. Moreover, “Gender stereotypes in comments” show that males and females usually have different types of comments when they post, females are likely to pay more attention to those comments, and there are some gender-specific words on social media that will make a negative impact when the creator posts. “Gender stereotypes in pictures and videos” reveals that the poses and videos that are clearly sexualized are more popular on social media. People are more likely to accept females with cute poses and males with natural poses. When it comes to the videos on social media, males and females often choose to post the type of video that seems to belong to their gender. In this way, creators are likely to get more likes and views when they posts this kind of pictures and videos.

In addition to studying the types of gender stereotypes displayed on social media, it is also crucial to study the methods to alleviate these gender stereotypes. There should be specific strategies for each type of gender stereotype on social media in the future. Studying more about how to alleviate is more likely to contribute to the solving of gender inequality.

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