

In What Ways Does Douyin Content Contribute to the perpetuation of gender stereotypes and the objectification of women?

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Abstract: This study aims to investigate the impact of Douyin content on the perpetuation of gender stereotypes and the objectification of women. Due to the limited time and resources of this research, I selected the best video that fits all research requirements, and analyzed the comments in two categories. Through the analysis of the video I chose from Douyin and the comments, the research reveals that while there are videos on the platform that objectify women, the majority of comments express disapproval of such content. Statistics suggest that while Douyin content does contribute to the perpetuation of gender stereotypes and the objectification of women, users of the platform will be increasingly aware of such issues and actively combat them through their comments. This highlights the potential for Douyin to be a platform with positive changes in promoting gender equality and challenging harmful gender norms.

Keywords: Douyin Content; The Perpetuation of Gender Stereotypes; The Objectification of Women; Gender Roles

Introduction

Douyin, also known as TikTok outside of China, has become a cultural phenomenon, particularly among young people, with a reported 1 billion active users worldwide. However, like many social media platforms, Douyin has been criticized for its role in perpetuating harmful gender stereotypes and the objectification of women. Some studies have found that gender stereotypes are prevalent in Douyin videos, with women often portrayed in traditional gender roles such as caregivers or sexual objects. Women may also be objectified and sexualized in videos, reinforcing harmful gender stereotypes and limiting opportunities for self-expression and creativity, there have been concerns about the impact of Douyin on body image and self-esteem, particularly for young women. In response to these criticisms, there have been efforts to promote gender equality on the platform. Some content creators have challenged traditional gender roles and promoted more inclusive and respectful representations of gender in their videos. Additionally, Douyin has implemented policies aimed at combatting harmful content, including those that perpetuate gender stereotypes and objectify women.

The rationale behind this study is to investigate the extent to which Douyin content contributes to harmful gender stereotypes and the objectification of women. By analyzing videos and comments on the platform, this study aims to gain insight into the prevalence and impact of such content and to identify areas for improvement. In addition, by highlighting examples of positive gender representation on the platform, this study aims to raise awareness of the potential of social media to be a force for positive change that promotes gender equality. My hypothesis is video contents on Douyin do increase objectification of women in a large extent.

1. Literature review

Studies about gender stereotypes in Chinese contexts have been conducted, finding that the gender stereotypes of Chinese college students were consistent with the traditional gender concept that men are stronger and more capable, and women are more passive and submissive, and this impression did not change according to gender and gender roles^[5].

However, the issue of how social media contributes to the continuation of gender stereotypes and the objectification of women has been extensively researched in the past few years^{[1][2]}. For example, Meier and Gray conducted a study to examine the impact of exposure to traditional gender roles on social media^{[3][4]}. The study found that exposure to traditional gender roles on social media led to a reinforcement of such roles in real-life interactions.

However, the generalization of such gender stereotypes has been questioned in accounting for all situations. Some studies have

investigated the recreation of gender stereotypes in male cross-dressing performances on Douyin [6]. Their analysis of the female roles played by male transvestite performers in mother/daughter relationships, heterosexual relationships, and friendships suggests that such performances highlight four stereotypical female roles: vulnerability, controlling, materialism, and hypocrisy. The authors recommend that Douyin takes more action to encourage gender representations that are more inclusive and respectful, both in terms of content creation and algorithmic fairness.

In general, the existing literature indicates that Douyin content has the ability to promote negative gender stereotypes and the objectification of women. Nonetheless, there are instances where positive gender representations can be found on the platform. Furthermore, the function of comments in either reinforcing or contradicting gender stereotypes is a critical aspect to take into account. The purpose of this study is to investigate whether Douyin video content exacerbates the objectification of women and how it affects the platform's vast user base.

2. Research methods

The process of analyzing Douyin video content and comments is an important step in understanding how the platform contributes to the objectification of women and how it affects its vast user base. However, due to time constraints in data collection channels, finding the most appropriate video to analyze can be a challenging task. In this case, the researcher had to thoroughly search through a large number of videos to find the one that is most suitable for analysis.

After careful consideration, the researcher selected the original video of the "Black Horse Incident," which is widely known for its controversial content that objectifies women. The video has also gained a significant amount of views, making it an ideal candidate for analysis. The researcher will closely examine the video content to identify instances of objectification of women, such as the portrayal of women as sexual objects for male consumption or the focus on physical appearance and sexuality. In addition, the researcher will analyze the comments section to identify how viewers engage with the video content and whether they reinforce or challenge gender stereotypes.

3. Results

Basically, the "Heima Couple Incident," refers to a college couple who publicly displayed their monthly living expenses on Douyin, attracting many netizens' doubts and criticism. In the video, this couple only has a monthly living expense of 1,500 yuan (about 231 US dollars), which is all paid for by the female partner. However, the female partner is not dissatisfied with this allocation; on the contrary, she believes it is a way for her boyfriend to express his love for her. Many netizens believe that this unequal distribution of finances between men and women and the objectification of women are common in Chinese society and require more attention and reflection.

The following content found from video reflecting gender inequalities in intimate relationships:

- Inequitable financial distribution: In this video, the woman bears the entire payment of living expenses, while the man does not bear any financial burden.

- Women are objectified: The woman states in the video that she believes that her boyfriend will pay for her expensive vaccines as a sign of his love for her.

- Gender Role Positioning: The woman indicated in the video that she perceived herself as playing a vulnerable role in the relationship and that this role positioning was a result of traditional Chinese culture and education systems.

The comments can be sorted into two categories: Propose and Oppose

Oppose:

- "You two don't look like college students, you look like working people who have been polished by life."

- "The root of the problem of the low status of women in such intimate relationships lies in education, as Chinese-style education tells women that they must submit to men."

- "I really can't accept two people sharing one meal. Is it really necessary to lower the quality of life like this?"

Propose: Hardly found

4. Discussion

The strong dissatisfaction and criticism expressed in the comments about the unfair financial distribution between men and

women in the video reflects the gender inequality that exists in Chinese society. In traditional Chinese culture, men are considered the economic pillars of the family and the primary social role, while women are expected to play a secondary role in the family and rely on male economic support. This traditional cultural influence has led many people to believe that men should bear the economic responsibility in intimate relationships, while women should take care of the family and children.

However, this concept has been challenged and reflected upon in contemporary China. With the increasing status of women in social and economic life, more and more people have come to realize that men and women should be equal in intimate relationships and should not be limited by social traditions and habits. Therefore, in the comments section, many netizens expressed strong dissatisfaction and criticism of the unfair financial distribution between men and women in the video, believing that this phenomenon not only violates the principles of equality and fairness, but may also lead to unjust treatment of women in intimate relationships.

However, there are plenty of limitations that make this study unaccurate. Without knowing the specific research being referred to, it is difficult to provide a comprehensive list of limitations. However, in general, research studies can have several limitations that could affect the generalizability or validity of their findings. Some common limitations of research studies include small sample sizes, limited geographic or demographic representation, sampling bias, lack of control over extraneous variables, use of self-reported data, and potential confounding variables. Other limitations could be related to the research design, such as the use of cross-sectional data, which may not allow for the examination of causality, or the lack of a control group in an experimental study. It is important to acknowledge these limitations in any research study, as they could affect the interpretation and application of the findings. Additionally, it is important to recognize that research studies are often conducted within specific contexts and may not be generalizable to other populations or settings.

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