Aesthetics of Women: A Visual Rhetoric Study to Short Videos about Beauty & Makeup

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Abstract. With the diffusion of digital intermediary platforms in the media space, platform technology has brought revolutionary changes to cultural and creative content, which has spawned new categories of creative workers, such as online celebrities. Such creative workers who rely on mental, spiritual, and emotional labor as the core in cyberspace have realized the labor upgrading from "digital odd jobs" to "digital spiritual jobs". Then it is worth pondering over how platform capital will achieve ideological control of digital flexible labor through hidden labor control. At present, there are a lot of research results on digital flexible technology, but the research results from the perspective of journalism and communication lack systematic theoretical elaboration. This article hopes to start from the local practice, and put the emerging communication phenomenon of digital flexibility in China in recent years into a specific social and historical stage scenario for investigation. Especially in the current situation, with the rapid development of short video, live broadcast and other digital cultural services, as a flexible force among short video producers, female short video producers not only focus on the general characteristics of the current digital smart groups, but also build on gender issues and femininity, Through the analysis of female short video producers, we can examine the survival status of digital workers from another dimension: on the one hand, we will conduct a more systematic investigation on the short video creative workers, a digital flexible worker group; On the other hand, from the perspective of visual rhetoric, we can understand how the female groups that were ignored or even deliberately suppressed in the past traditional society rose in the modern network society, gradually formed the network female group, and have female expression ways, and explore the development trend of the future female group in the network space and how to guide the female group more effectively and normatively.

Keywords: beauty and makeup; Short video; female sex; visual rhetoric.

1. Introduction

Bourdieu once regarded the construction of aesthetics as a social process, which involves the relationship between rule and power. He separated "elegant aesthetics" from "popular aesthetics", and believed that "a few people who master the aesthetic code and can decipher it are different from many people belonging to the secular world" (Hanquinet, Roose&Savage, 2014). Looking back at the aesthetic appreciation of women being stared at, modern cultural norms socialize women. They believe that "beauty" is a female attribute, and the pursuit of beauty is regarded as a female responsibility.

As a kind of aesthetic capital, appearance affects the economy and society, forcing women to look at their bodies from the perspective of appearance, hoping to obtain social capital of other attributes through the use of higher aesthetic capital. Baudrillard believes that in the consumer society, the body has become the "most beautiful consumer good", and it has completely appeared in advertising, fashion, and popular culture. Under the influence of consumerism, Chinese women's willingness, ability, and proportion of consumption in all aspects are gradually rising, becoming the world's second-largest beauty market with the fastest growth only after the American market.

The consumption potential is prominent, forming a "she" economy. In the era of mass communication, magazines, TV, social media, video websites and other media have further strengthened the aesthetic expectations of society. Short videos and live broadcasts, as two carriers of platform content, have replaced graphic information and integrated into people's daily life, while beauty videos have become an important carrier for the rise of "her economy" and "her power".

Beauty videos are what bloggers provide suggestions on makeup, hairstyle design, skincare, and other content. The bloggers establish emotional ties with their audiences by sharing their daily life

experiences. Among the majority of women, driven by the love of beauty, beauty videos have always played an important role in the short video platform. The creative workers of beauty videos attract many beauty-loving women to join this "visual carnival" through the display of makeup skills, visual contrast before and after makeup, sharing of experience in beauty care, and evaluation of beauty products. The audio-visual language of beauty short videos can enable creative workers of beauty videos to communicate information and emotions with the audience, reflecting the meaning construction strategies, and effects of beauty symbols in the given scene, which is the basic proposition of visual rhetoric. Therefore, we can continue to explore how creative workers of beauty short videos act on viewers rhetorically. Under computer vision technology, as the most significant appearance feature, the face value evaluation algorithm advocates the one-sided aesthetic concept of "white", "young" and "thin". In this case, to occupy the traffic highland, how do creative workers of beauty video practice visual rhetoric, the physical element structure of their visual text The analysis and evaluation of visual rhetoric effect and visual practice will help to understand the existing situation of female digital labor and make targeted reflection.

2. Literature Review

Rhetoric, written by Aristotle, is considered to be the earliest theoretical work of rhetoric in the history of European literary and artistic theories. It proposes to achieve the purpose of persuasion and communication through the strategic use of language. At this time, the main rhetorical object of rhetoric is language text. Visual rhetoric originated from the western traditional rhetoric theory, and this concept was born by Roland Barthes, a French literary theorist, and critic. In the 1960s, the development of mass media such as television and film made society enter a media society, and visual culture sprang up. He proposed to analyze the image persuasiveness in advertisements with the method of "visual rhetoric". The real turn of visual rhetoric is after the "image turn", that is, images are considered as a form of communication with different forces, systems, and historical environments as a language (Mitchell, 1994:1).

Since then, Roland Barthes, Kennedy Burke, Rudolph Arnheim, and other scholars have enriched rhetoric theory, brought nonverbal signs into a new rhetoric vision, and proposed visual thinking logically. In the 1980s and 1990s, the study of visual rhetoric was promoted to the "object rhetoric" turn, including space research, even public spaces (squares, museums, amusement parks, celebrations, ceremonies, etc.), and the text scope of visual rhetoric was greatly expanded (Haskins, 2003). After the 21st century, scholars such as Keith Kenny, Linda Scott, Charles Hill, and Diane Husband have further expanded the text form, theory, and method of visual rhetoric. In short, the study of visual rhetoric started in the 1960s, matured in the 1990s, and developed rapidly after the 21st century (Olson, 2007). In the 20 years of vigorous development of visual rhetoric in the West, it has gone from the study of advertising works to the positive trend of interdisciplinary research involving politics, news, communication, and art criticism. Compared with the West, the study of visual rhetoric in China is still in its infancy, but relevant achievements have been emerging in the past two years.

Visual Rhetoric by Professor Liu Tao of Jinan University in China has made great theoretical contributions to the study of visual rhetoric in China. Based on the argumentative exploration of the academic origin, he tried to establish a macro conception of the discipline system of the history of visual rhetoric. This paper introduces Professor Liu Tao's visual analysis framework, that is, "visual rhetoric refers to a practice and method that emphasizes the use of visual text strategically, as well as the strategic construction and production of visual discourse, to achieve the function of persuasion, dialogue and communication by emphasizing the visual media text, spatial text, and event text as the main rhetorical object." According to different text objects of visual rhetoric, three types of visual rhetoric methods can be generated accordingly.

Under the visual grammar of media text, visual rhetoric is mainly presented in two aspects: language map text: as a means of political rhetoric, and the visual rhetoric of language map text at

this time continues the core function of traditional rhetoric, and then develops into "visual persuasion". Political visual rhetoric is usually used to achieve the recognition of a certain political view, that is, to achieve rational "thinking" from the perceptual "look". The early political visual rhetoric in China mainly revolved around pictorials. For example, as the pictorial newspaper with the longest circulation time and the most extensive influence in the late Qing Dynasty, *Dianshizhai Pictorial* uses photographic lithography technology as a medium to determine the semantic subject status of the image matrix through the production mechanism of "picture subject and text auxiliary", and forms a resultant mechanism of image expression through visual metaphor, metonymy, and several rhetorical devices, clearly marking the concept of home and country, national consciousness and enlightenment trend of thought of pictorial. During the Anti-Japanese War, *Jin Cha Ji Pictorial* emerged at a historic moment. Under the historical mission of fighting against Japan and saving the nation from extinction, the number, classification, symbolic elements, and theme content of the images in the pictorial aroused the people's feelings of steadfastness and common hatred for the enemy through the reconstructed metaphorical symbols, which led to the expression ideas of the pictorial during the Anti-Japanese War, that is, to achieve emotional connection and complete social mobilization through systematic scale symbolic expression.

At the same time, the Xinhua Daily, the Ta Kung Pao, and the Central Daily, in the face of the Chinese people with generally low educational levels, adopted popular reading materials such as "cartoons" and "wood board depictions" to present the opposite signs of "justice and evil", such as depicting the situation of the front line soldiers fighting in blood and carrying out "painful narrative", thus turning this emotion into a positive enthusiasm for the war of resistance. However, "Political Cartoon" has always been an entry-level political enlightenment or incitement that politicians have no choice but to take to the uneducated bottom groups. Now, the era of media visual turn has come, and "comic", an ancient political rhetoric form, has entered the international media public opinion field. From the perspective of the visual framework, the image of China in the text of the language picture, facing the "worst guess" of China from the West, China's national image always slides between the two extremes of ideological negation and utopian affirmation, which is not conducive to the communication between national subjects. However, China has carried out digital cartoon diplomacy at many international conferences and conducted a visual framework of context reconstruction, prick point creation, conflict, and spectacle, which has won China's diplomatic discourse power and effectively resisted the Western discourse hegemony. Political rhetoric is also reflected in photographic works, news pictures, and other picture texts. Video text: As a mass media, in addition to the function of persuasion, the visual rhetoric of video text pays more attention to the output of cultural values and the construction of collective emotions. The image itself is a way of viewing and meaning interpretation, so the relationship between image and rhetoric is inseparable. The practice of visual rhetoric in video texts is mainly concentrated in advertising, films, variety shows, documentaries, and other video texts. In the era of TV prevalence, traditional festivals have more say in the presentation of TV media. The traditional festival evening party plays a role in leading the spirit of the times by stimulating the metaphor of traditional culture. Nowadays, short video platforms are on the ascendant. Generally speaking, though dramatic, conflicting, and representative pictures, language, and music, short videos can capture the audience's attention in an instant and construct an emotional identity in a very short time.

The short video transmits orderly collective memory by visualizing the "invisible" mainstream ideology into visual influence and constructs collective memory by setting agenda through algorithm technology. In radio and television programs, cultural variety shows mainly follow the visual rhetoric logic of cross-media narration, go through the process of visual transcoding, and use visual rhetoric strategies such as metaphor and metonymy to finally achieve the rhetorical effect of cultural value writing. Different from variety shows, documentaries should highlight their functions of education and information dissemination, so the visual rhetoric of documentaries is more functional than that of entertainment programs. For example, ecological documentaries will use the "lofty rhetoric framework" to encourage the audience to protect the environment. National history

documentaries convey historical ideas, collective memories, national emotions, and national will through rhetorical significance devices. Medical documentaries highlight the life elements and build public recognition of the medical community through the "progressive" strategy, the "fragmented" effect, and the "biased" and "metaphorical" rhetoric.

The visual rhetoric of space text is based on the "object rhetoric" turn, which mainly examines the role of the "function" of space in the visual dimension. The visual rhetoric method of space text aims to discuss "the visual composition, element selection, structural layout, design concept, the visual style of the internal elements of space, the relationship logic and combination mode of space and space, the interaction mode and participation structure of space and subject". Throughout the academic history of visual rhetoric, there are relatively few studies on spatial rhetoric. A typical space visual object is a museum. For example, the study of the Vietnam War Memorial Hall and the Holocaust Memorial Museum (Foss, 1986; Hasian, 2004). Taking the National Museum of China as an example, by creating a lofty architectural form, we use the combination of natural lighting and artificial lighting to make light carry the narrative function of space discourse, the linear narrative structure of exhibits display, scene restoration, and other space strategies for meaning production. For another example, as a typical celebration space, the Centennial Congress of the founding of the Communist Party of China has constructed a "magnificent" celebration theme through multiple types of symbolic symbols, presenting a "grand and solemn" temperament connotation. In the life scene, it can be found that in recent years, a large number of young people have made "local discovery" in image social networking, which has made many small scenic spots in China become the traffic highland of social media. Among them, the "filter" function in the beautifying image APP has played an important role. These filters carry out "visual metonymy" through the naming of foreign landscapes, connect "experience intermediaries" to "visual persuasion", and finally change cognition under the indicators of images, to reconstruct rural scenes to achieve spatial compilation. In addition, the popular industry triggered the commercialization of rhetoric. For example, the form of a concert is a perceptual spatial structure organized with the star body as the center. The hierarchical order of urban space will eventually be internalized into its rhetorical logic. IKEA's space visual rhetoric practice, through the concept of "folding", that is, the "language of things" in aesthetics, not only reflects the folding of IKEA furniture during transportation but also reflects the folding of furniture in use. It transforms the display of IKEA stores into space language, realizes space reconstruction, and finally forms a space imagination system of "IKEA style".

The rhetorical analysis of event text emphasizes that it should be placed in a certain practice, process, and evolution, and then discusses the occurrence mechanism and significance process of image events in rhetorical practice. At present, there are relatively few rhetorical analyses of event texts, and the main concern in China is the visual rhetoric practice of major ritual events. For example, the opening and closing ceremonies of the Olympic Games ceremony use the generation mechanism of micro scenarios, that is, through elaborately choreographed academic and artistic programs, the national narrative framework is adopted, and the "myths, experiences and values of the nation and the country" are displayed in a dramatic way to reproduce the history of the country. Therefore, it can also be said that the opening and closing ceremonies of the Olympic Games are a national image publicity activity. In a word, for example, the basic meaning of the five Olympic rings is "five continents", symbolizing human solidarity. As a visual nonverbal symbol, the Olympic rings reduce the audience's awareness and allow the meaning of "unity" to be spread among different texts. As a display action stipulated by the Olympic Committee, the design, and presentation of the visual symbols of the "five rings" in each host country are the focus of creativity, reflecting a country's artistic style, science and technology, and humanistic care. The celebrations, ceremonies, events, competitions, and other behaviors at the Olympic Games not only demonstrate the spirit of sports but also convey the Chinese people's yearning for a better life, which fits the meaning of the Olympic Games as a national carnival. From the perspective of visual rhetoric practice in traditional rituals, the visual communication of traditional rituals is more dependent on the motivation and purpose of their communication behavior. Due to the continuous change in the

communication system, the generation of the meaning of various visual symbols in traditional rituals completely depends on the generation context of the symbols, thus realizing the effective transmission of their meaning.

3. Findings

3.1 Digital work provides a new perspective for understanding the relationship between women

The research of digital work is a hot topic in recent years, of which the theoretical roots are in the political economy of communication. The school of political communication economy provides a new perspective for understanding the relationship between communication and reception, that is, there is a certain economic connection between communication and reception, such as the concept of "digital labor", which has been deeply explained by the academic community in recent years. From "free labor" to "digital flexible labor", digital labor has different levels, including digital odd jobs, digital flexible labor, etc. The division of these types is mainly based on the "availability" provided by different communication technologies. According to the interpretation of the communication political school, the theory of "audience commodity theory" emphasizes the management of the labor process. The platform critically interpreted the process of alienation of labor control through indicators such as "fans" and "viewers". Pay attention to the social and economic attributes of platform content, and think that the regulation of the platform in terms of security is moving from "safe harbor" to "platform governance". From the perspective of labor control research, creative workers with the core of mental, spiritual, and emotional labor were born.

The "emotional labor" of female short video creative workers has outstanding research value. As the watched object, the media images provided by female short video producers themselves constitute the main content of the research topic. In the context of short videos, women's aesthetic appreciation and gaze are more concentrated and prominent. It is believed that the underlying logic of digital flexible work's involution is the creation diaphragm generated by content solidification. From this point of view, female short video producers perform through the platform, and the audience communicates with them through bullet screen comments, likes, and rewards while watching.

For example, in the media image construction of female sports athletes, athletes' "self-fulfilling prophecy" can build a "pseudo-event" with communication value. As far as the concept of generation is concerned, the reference to "human pseudo-event" can be traced back to the work of the American historian Bulletin in 1961. In this context, the media image of women is more suitable for "heroes" than "celebrities", and refers to "people who are capable of fighting bravely" at the symbolic level. Self-presentation in "pseudo-events" is a conventional approach to the construction of athletes' media image. This communication strategy has certain limitations and is not conducive to the sustainability of athletes' media image construction.

3.2 Classification of female media depends on gender, media, and audience

The classification of female media images depends on three dimensions: gender image, media literacy, and audience awareness. In a study on the effect of female star endorsement, female star spokesmen with "strong audience awareness" and "high media literacy" have constructed a more powerful media image. Media literacy is not only reflected in international oral expression, but also in the characteristics of adapting to all media with knowledge learning. At the interactive level, more attention should be paid to relationship-building with the audience. For women, the cultural schema of alienation will strengthen their "body beauty" outside of competitive sports. The visualization, commercialization, and symbolization of women are full of relevant media reports.

3.3 Short video of beauty

Domestic research on beauty videos is still in its initial stage. The beauty video community platforms studied are mainly concentrated in Station B, Tiktok, Kwai, and Little Red Book. The research content mainly involves marketing strategies, content production, and communication strategies. Specifically, in the field of journalism and communication, it mainly criticizes the communication phenomenon of the beauty video community from the perspective of media criticism. Some scholars have found that the female images in beauty videos are morbid. Under the oppression of patriarchal ideology and capital, women are addicted to making up and body transformation to please men, enjoy entertainment and show their bodies and wealth. In addition, the collective beauty activities of women in the beauty video community have led to a trend of social values towards "appearance fetishism", leading to women's negative body attitudes after watching beauty videos. In addition, the audience decoded the current popular culture and aesthetic style through the beauty short video community platform, purchased a large number of beauty products, presented their understanding of the external image construction, and lost in the expectation and construction of their appearance. At the same time, in the online women's autonomous region of the beautiful video community, there are constantly internalized sexist words among female users, who slander, objectify and otherize the appearance and body of female bloggers. Although to some extent, the technical availability of the media platform has endowed women with more "her power" and the potential of gender liberation, even though the beauty video community empowers women in the media, women have not escaped the control of patriarchal ideology and consumerism in the new media environment. At this time, the visual-dominated media environment accelerated the alienation of the artistic expression of women's beauty, and the overflow of images led to the assembly line of stereotyped female images and oppression of women, which is no different from "foot binding" in the modern sense.

Foreign research on beauty videos is mostly based on the beauty channel on the YouTube platform, mainly discussing the communication effect of beauty videos. On the YouTube platform, beauty bloggers and users created a beauty practice community through interaction, and bloggers and community members realized interaction and communication through norms and levels in the community and relevant functions provided by the website (Andayani, 2017). Foreign research tends to view the positive significance of beauty videos for their women: some scholars believe that YouTube beauty tutorials strengthen post-feminism, that women can improve their image through consumption, and provide beauty suggestions based on the transformation paradigm, suggesting that women can change themselves through makeup (Chae, 2019). The construction of the YouTube beauty community enables female audiences to find inspiration and suggestions from other bloggers who are willing to share video content, which helps to achieve the balance between work and family and achieve femininity (Casabianca, 2016) and effectively achieves the quasi-social interaction between beauty bloggers and audiences (Rasmussen, 2018). Although the main purpose of beauty bloggers is to entertain and inform the audience about fashion, the technical information and educational information contained in their video creation make beauty bloggers a potential source of education for adolescent girls and young women, It also "directly or indirectly teaches the audience how to use different digital technologies to improve the digital literacy of fans (Choi, Behm Morawitz, 2017). Members of the beauty video community not only participate in the process of building and displaying their identity, but also form a community that shares the transformation potential of the love of makeup (Kennedy, 2016).

4.   Summary and discussion

4.1 Research value

①   At present, a more systematic theoretical framework has not been formed for the phenomenon of "digital flexibility" of creative workers in cyberspace. This topic intends to start

from the local communication practice, take the creative workers of beauty videos as typical cases, and combine the era background and social and cultural background to investigate the communication phenomenon of the "digital smart workers" group in cyberspace, especially the female "digital smart workers" group, It tries to establish a theoretical dialogue between the development of the "digital flexibility" group and the research of communication, and focuses on describing the historical development stage of the digital flexibility group in the field of digital platform communication.

② This topic attempts to show and restore the relationship between female groups and the media in the digital era under the media platform of online beauty video community, and excavate how the female groups that were ignored or even deliberately suppressed in the past traditional society rise in the modern network society and have female expression channels. The connection and interaction between female short video producers and fans are more abundant, which has outstanding research value.

③ This topic focuses on the investigation of creative workers of beauty videos by taking the "female digital smart work" as the entry point, which helps us to further understand the media form, communication path, and logic of the Internet, predict the future development trend of female groups in cyberspace and find more effective ways to guide and governance countermeasures.

4.2 Innovation

① Research topic innovation: At present, in China, the research on "digital smart workers" and beauty videos is still in the initial stage, and research on online female creative workers is rare. This article focuses on the group image of "female digital smart workers", trying to show the impact and change of the network platform on women's groups, and see how women groups use the network to build women's discourse space and women's youth cultural movement, and how to discuss public issues such as gender politics and gender liberation through beauty videos, to promote the emergence of women's issues.

② Theoretical perspective innovation: This paper mainly discusses the communication practice of network female creative workers from the theoretical perspective of visual rhetoric. The study of visual rhetoric in China is still in its infancy, but relevant achievements have been emerging in the past two years. Visual Rhetoric by Professor Liu Tao of Jinan University has made great theoretical contributions to the study of visual rhetoric in China. Based on the argumentative exploration of the academic origin, he tried to establish a macro conception of the discipline system of the history of visual rhetoric. Since 2020, research results on visual rhetoric theory have shown a gradual upward trend. With the help of visual rhetoric, this study explores how creative workers of cosmetics short videos practice rhetoric, that is, how to act on viewers rhetorically.

③ Innovation in research methods: Since the previous research on "digital dexterity" mostly adopts qualitative research methods, this paper adds quantitative image research methods to measure based on qualitative research methods. More accurately quantify the visual rhetoric communication effect of creative workers of beauty video through data.

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