The Influence of Film and Television Works on Feminism

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Abstract:

In recent years, the film and television industry has developed rapidly, and the stereotypes portrayed in film and television works have a huge impact on people's image preferences. As women become increasingly important in society, they still appear in an unequal image in current electronic media. This article explores the impact of unequal images on people and the challenges women face today through questionnaire surveys and interviews, combined with literature analysis. Research has found that the public does not believe that women have equal status and that female images in film and television works are sufficiently realistic. The media always promotes feminism to the public in a negative way, which makes it difficult to see the impact of media attention on the current reality of feminism. Displaying authentic female images to guide public attention to the challenges faced by women is an appropriate way to improve current movies and TV dramas. Many papers have discussed the impact of feminism on the media, and this paper will discuss the impact of media on feminism from a global feminist perspective. This study will provide reference value for gender equality issues and women's work environment, and provide reference suggestions for the development of the film and television production industry.

Keywords: feminism, media, film study, television works

Introduction

The past decades has seen the rapid development of the film and television industry. According to the recent study the comprehensive population coverage rate of television works has increased from 76.3% to 99.7%(https://data.stats.gov.cn/,2023)within thirty years. Potter (1988) stated that the perceived real-ity of a media presentation may influence mental processes, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors(Shapiro and Choke,2003).This indicates that the influence of movies and TV dramas on people is becoming increasingly widespread. At the same time, the female population in China has increased from 652.87 million to 688.44 million in the past decade(https://data.stats.gov.cn/, 2023)as.From the trend of data, it

appears that the number of female population will continue to rise in the future. With New Zealand becoming the first country to recognize women's right to vote in 1893, the world began to grant women the right to vote and be elected, which meant a significant improvement in the status of women. Nowadays, women occupy an increasingly important position in society, but gender inequality still exists. Therefore, emphasizing the equality of female identity is very important for maintaining social and national development. Variation in citizen's appraisals of candidates on the basis of gender may result from a gendered pattern of campaign messages and coverage(Koch,1999).The feminist movement has been on the rise in recent years such as "Me Too" and National Women's Organization established have found that the image of women in many people's eyes is deeply influenced by the media. Feminism as its governing ideology, feminism gives shape and direction to the women's movement and is shaped by it(M.Fiss, 1994).

Therefore, the author is interested in the relationship between media and feminism, and hopes to find appropriate ways through this project to make the media have a positive impact on protecting women's rights. In addition, many study have studied the impact of the development of feminism on the media, and the results seem to be positive, but few have paid attention to the influence of the media on feminism. Meanwhile, there is currently no literature that comprehensively discusses global feminism in existing academic research.

This study will collect people's opinions and evaluations of female characters in film and television through a questionnaire survey, as well as their level of exposure to feminism. The study will conduct interviews with women in the workplace to identify the difficulties they encounter in participating in social production activities. The project also combines feminist papers with media influence papers to discuss the role of media in feminism and sociology.This project hopes that the results of this research can provide reference value for gender equality issues and women's work environment, and provide reference suggestions for the development of the film and television production industry

Literature Review

The Importance of Media in Feminism

As mentioned above, the media has a huge impact on women. The media spotlight on young feminist activism in contemporary times is unprecedented (Jackson, 2018). For example, the 2016 issue of Teen Vogue magazine was titled 'Girls of Power: The New Face of Feminism'.

Digital media are a key tool to connect girls with feminism and with other feminists in local and global contexts (Jackson, 2018). AL Press believes that:"an assessment of feminist media studies must necessarily address our anxieties about women and feminism, as well as those about media representations of and impact upon women, gender, and sexuality." Similarly, Budgeon and Harris (2017) argue that young women should be able to bring feminist politics to ways they understand their own everyday experiences of sexism, racism, misogyny and homophobia. Therefore, the impact of media on feminism is crucial.

The causes of the influence of media on feminism

It's believe that women are the bearers of image or men as the bearers of appearance.Mulvey(1975)argued that the institution of cinema is characterized by a sexual imbalance of power, and psychoanalysis may be used to explain this (White, 1998). Women have long been placed in an objective position, while men have been placed in a thematic position.

The determining male gaze project its fantasy onto the female figure which is styled accordingly (Mulvey, 1975). Therefore, in film and television works, creators are more concerned about whether the content presented is a determining male gaze rather than the true appearance of women. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for stronger visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness (Mulvey, 1975). Haradhan Kumar Mohajan(2022) believed that feminism was a mass movement commenced by women of all groups to eradicate all forms of feminist oppression by men that in a prevailing society. It always fights against all types of oppressions on women.The increase in the female population proves a larger consumer group, so the media will produce products that cater to the preferences of the consumer group in order to cater to their needs.

The Current Status of Feminism in the Media

Feminism is among the social movements and cultural-critical discourses that most definitively shaped the rise of Anglo-American film studies in the 1970s(White, 1998).

There is no doubt that feminism has made great contributions to the film industry and has had concrete manifestations in recent years, such as the huge success of the films Barbie and Young Women and the Sea. The digital revolution has paved the way for a new iteration of feminism (Jain, 2020). Feminists use satire and humor as a means of communication in the media and are willing to compare women with men, unintentionally placing themselves in an objectified position. This method is very popular in the media. It is, however, a somewhat contentious site; critics question whether online feminism can

effect social change, privilege the offline as a site for "real" politics(Christensen, 2011; Harris, 2008). Shadowing this celebratory media fascination with feminism, however, rape culture proliferates off and online and anti-feminism is a burgeoning presence in mainstream and online media (Keller, Mendes, & Ringrose, 2016).

The problems faced by feminism

Glimenez (1975) believed that sexism was not a modern phenomenon and was a form of social oppression. This oppression constructs a negative image of women. Many women still suffer from this oppression to this day. Cudd(2006)points out that the permanence of oppression is attributed to the dominant group, while the persistence of oppression is attributed to the oppressed group.

To sum up, This binary relationship perpetuates oppression. Feminism, as an ideology aimed at eliminating the inequality of women's status, should take a subjective stance to eliminate the reasons for oppressed groups. As Davis(1997) put it, the feminist professional academic is first and foremost seen as a social scientist, then a feminist, and only rarely, a female.In other words, feminist academics are concerned mainly with the analysis of gender rather than with emancipation issues (Sabbarwal, 2000).

Methodology

Overview

This study combines the methods of first-hand research and second-hand research. Firstly, through secondary research, background research was conducted on the importance of media on feminism, the reasons for the impact of media on feminism, and the current status of feminism in the media. Secondly, the author also employed a first-hand research approach.The questionnaire was mainly designed to address people's perception of female images on film and television works and their level of exposure to feminism, and interviews were conducted on the working environment of women in different industries.

Literature research

The existing literature already has a relatively mature theoretical system, especially in the field of film research. Mulvey(1975)provides authoritative basic theories, and a large number of scholars' papers highly recognize her views, even in recent years. There are some papers that were published earlier, and after comparing them with recent literature and finding, the authors confirmed that these papers are still usable and more authoritative today. But these documents focus more on the issue of liberating women rather than the reasons for gender discrimination. The author first conceived a method of first-hand research,

and then read a large amount of literature on feminism, digital media research, and sociology. By understanding the author's identity, publication year, and previous views, relevant and referenceable literature was found to test its rationality.

The existing research gap is that scholars and film and television producers have overlooked the reasons for discrimination against women when studying how to liberate women and produce feminist films. The author mainly focuses on the reasons for this phenomenon in digital media in the research paper, in order to find ways to change the current situation.

Questionnaire displayed

The author designed a questionnaire which consisted sixteen questions, mainly used multiple-choice scoring questions. The first two questions are about basic personal information. This survey is voluntary and will not disclose personal information to ensure that personal privacy is not compromised. Questions 3 to 14 aim to reflect people's level of exposure to digital media and their perception and satisfaction with female images in film and television works. Questions 14 to 15 are aimed at understanding people's level of understanding of feminism. Among them, the 7th, 10th, and 16th questions (figures) in this questionnaire are the most important, which demonstrate the practical significance and value of this study. The aim of these questions is to find out the subjective views of participants: their satisfaction of the portrayal of women, whether this portrayal is in line with reality, and their views of if the social status is equal to others.

Question 13 is an open-ended question that asks about the impression left by female characters in current film and television works.

The design and distribution of data treatment and analysis questionnaires are carried out through an application called Wenjuanxing. The author selected more critical questions and valuable data to organize and analyze the questionnaire data, which can reflect people's evaluation of female images in current film and television dramas. Data organization and analysis are mainly completed by comparing the percentages and average scores of different options, and the data collected from the questionnaire is displayed in a pie chart.

Variable

The author posted the questionnaire online and also distributed it in real life to maintain a balance in the number of participants from different age groups as much as possible. However, the author did not control for the gender

and cultural background of the participants. The author believes that the impact of media on feminism is not entirely determined by the awakening of female consciousness or self-objectification. The impact of media on men and different cultures may also affect feminism.

Feminism in Film Industry

The author watched feminist films from different cultural backgrounds and periods to understand and analyze the attitudes of media towards female images in different historical contexts. The earliest film among them is Jeanne Dierman, released in 1975. It tells the story of a middle-aged widow for three days, expressing the protagonist's inner turmoil and consciousness awakening through the plot of disordered life and killing clients.The film ranked first in the critics' edition of the 100 Greatest Films in Film History by Sight and Sound magazine in 2022, which proves its authority and the message it conveys is still applicable today. Other films were released later, and the author chose films such as "Barbie," "Young Women and the Sea," and "Raise The Red Lantern" based on box office data.These movies have made the new generation of women more aware of femininity and drawn public attention to gender equality issues.

Interviews design

The author aims to discover social stereotypes and the problems that women encounter in their daily lives due to gender by understanding the living conditions of women in society.

The author designed an interview with five questions, mainly about the working environment of women. The first question is about working background about interviewees, and it is confirmed that the interview is voluntary and will not disclose personal information. Questions 2 to 5 are set based on the main issues of the project to study the problems faced by women in working environments and the authenticity of the female image promoted by the media. This interview aims to understand the real-life situation and problems faced by women. The interviewees come from five different work fields and have rich work experience.They are teachers, waiters, artists, and workers, all aged between 25 and 45, and live in different regions, which can explain the needs of women in the current environment.The author is mainly concerned about the issue of working conditions because unequal relationships are more likely to manifest under conflicts of interest. Simone de Beauvoir(1998) believed in "The Second Sex" that It is precisely because of work that women have bridged most of the gap with men, and only work can ensure women's specific freedom. Once women are no longer parasites, the system built on attachment will collapse.Therefore, the conducted interviews has great reference significance for analyzing the status of women in society.

Results

Questionnaire

Question 7

To what extent are you satisfied with the female image in the films and TV dramas you have been exposed to? (1 is very unsatisfied, 10 is very satisfied)

The total score of this questionnaire is 1848, with an average of 5.06
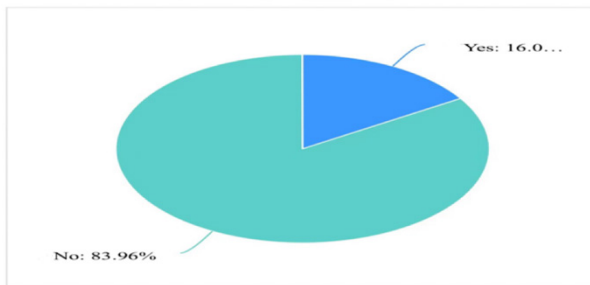
Question 10

To what extent do you think the female image in current TV dramas is in line with reality? (1 is very dissatisfied, 10 is very satisfied)

The total score for this questionnaire is 1325, with an average of 4.52

Question 16
Do you think the current social status of women is equal to that of men/non binary gender

Option	Subtotal	Proportion
Yes	47	16.04%
No	246	83.96%
Number of valid applicants for this round	293	

Question 13 Please describe the most common female images in the film and television works you are exposed to in three words!

Word frequency analysis

Figure 1, 2, 3, 4: Graphs of questionnaire results. Related questions:

a) To what extent are you satisfied with the female image in the films and TV dramas you have been exposed to? (1 is very unsatisfied, 10 is very satisfied)

b) To what extent do you think the female image in current TV dramas is in line with reality? (1 is very dissatisfied, 10 is very satisfied)

c) Do you think the current social status of women is equal to that of men/non binary gender

d)Please describe the most common female images in the film and television works you are exposed to in three words!

From the 293 valid questionnaires shown in the figure, it can be seen that 40.27% of participants spend more than two hours per week on film and television works. The score for satisfaction with female images is 5.08, with single character designs and uninteresting character images being the main reasons for dissatisfaction. The third major reason is that the character image does not match reality, with a score of 4.52 in terms of its degree of conformity with reality. In the survey, the majority of people have an academic understanding of feminism, and the majority of people learn about feminism through media and art works, accounting for 75.08%. This shows that the media has a certain influence on feminism.

63.82% of participants believe that images that do not conform to reality are mostly deliberately vilified. Among the most common keywords for female images, love, vase, and beauty occupy the majority, while other derogatory and neutral words are mostly used, mostly displaying gentle images such as kindness, softness, and emotionality. It is interesting that people aged 45 and below are more satisfied with female images and believe that gender equality has been achieved, while those under 45 are the opposite and feel that female images are not realistic enough. The term 'independence' is more likely to appear in surveys conducted around the age of 20. This indicates that the portrayal of women in almost similar images by the media in recent years has become increasingly unrecognized. The media should strive to present authentic female images and reduce deliberate denigration.

Interviews results

Number	Occupation	Summary
I1	Entrepreneur	Having experienced unfair treatment and being relatively friendly, but with different evaluations of unnecessary competition between women, women do not receive the respect they deserve due to their gender, and many women are also more willing to deal with men. Female entrepreneurs also have strength and ambition rather than appearance
I2	Artist	Having experienced unfair treatment is relatively friendly, but there are different evaluations. Women are always morally limited in their artistic expression, and feminists in the industry are considered extreme. Female artists do not necessarily mean they will fall in love with many people
I3	Worker	Having experienced unfair treatment and believing that men are more efficient in their work, there may be some rumors and evaluations targeting women, even if these are not a big deal for men. Workers are not all uneducated and uneducated
I4	Office Worker	Having experienced unfair treatment may seem fair on the surface, but it is more difficult for women to advance, apply for jobs, and return to the workplace. There are not many conflicts between female colleagues
I5	Teather	Having experienced unfair treatment, men are more likely to apply for jobs, they are very friendly to women, and there are no conflicts due to job reasons. They are not as harsh as described by the outside world

Figure 2: Graphs of interview results

According to the interviews, the author created a table that includes a brief description of each interviewee's answer. Summarizing the responses of the respondents, they all believe that achieving true equality for women in the workplace is very important, especially for workers in enterprises. They believe that even if enterprises are really working to reduce this gap, due to people's different views on gender, men are more likely to be favored, while women need to put in more effort than men in the workplace to receive rewards.

Competitors

l1(refers to the interviewee shown in the figure below) believe that sometimes competition does not occur between men and women, but between women competing for the resources left by men. It is disappointing that many female leaders - who have the respect and power that is appropriate for their status - choose to become accomplices to the deprivers in order to solidify their position.

Similarly, l4 also believes that the current democratic ideology makes many men unwilling to acknowledge themselves as gender discriminators, even if they do engage in gender discrimination. It is strange that men are very united on gender issues, while women are trapped in the same gender competition created by others for women, often to please others.

Unconscious Discrimination

Sometimes, what matters is not how she thinks, but how the people around her think. Most people, especially those who are relatively young, firmly believe that gender equality should exist in the first place. However, in real life, they often make obvious gender discriminatory behaviors, such as different evaluations when making the same behavior towards different genders, "said the l2. She has found that in engaging in public welfare activities, there is an implicit worship of patriarchy in any language. The l2 said, 'People still find it difficult to find suitable alternative words, and gender related vocabulary permeates gender discrimination into everyone's mindset in daily life. This is difficult to change because we are forced to use these words every day. Even I find it difficult to completely avoid them. In fact, it is very scary to belittle non-existent women in every negative scenario.'.

"For example," said l2, "the Chinese word " Jealousy " is a derogatory term that means jealousy, but it represents a woman in its character form."l3 also expressed her dissatisfaction with words specifically used to insult women in the interview, and admitted that it was difficult to reduce the use of these words. She believes that men are indeed more likely to be respected in the work environment.She suggests that people should try using other vocabulary or creating a new word instead of ignoring them.

Difference

It is worth mentioning that, l5 believes that there is not as much gender discrimination in her work because many behaviors are not linked to personal interests. But she acknowledges that due to the gender ratio in the workplace, men are clearly more likely to be hired in teaching positions. This also means that women need to put in more effort to obtain the positions they desire.

L5 also mentioned that she believes that students may be more likely to encounter this issue through differential treatment, especially in career choices. But others believe that gender discrimination is no longer prevalent among young people.

Discussion

The purpose of this study is to discover the influence of media on feminism and analyze people's current views on female images in film and television dramas, in order to study the factors that contribute to their formation and future development trends. At the same time, the same interview revealed the challenges faced by women today and explored solutions that are in line with the current era. The media has a huge impact on women. The media spotlight on young feminist activism in contemporary times is unpre- cedented(Jackson, 2018).Based on the results, we can know that most people learn about feminism through the media and do not believe that current gender status is equal. However, people do not believe that the images of women in the media are real enough, and instead there are many images that belittle women.Keller, Mendes,&Ringrose (2016) argue that rape culture has surged both online and offline, and anti feminism has rapidly developed in the media. In the early days, these images may have won favor and no one paid attention to them.Mulvey argued that the institution of cinema is characterized by a sexual imbalance of power, and psychoanalysis may be used to explain this(White, 1998).The determining male gaze project its phantasy onto the female figure which is styled accordingly(Mulvey,1975).But as the female population increases and more women participate in social production, these issues are gradually being discovered.

In the interviews, almost all of interviees expressed that they have been treated differently and evaluated based on their gender, especially when it comes to negative evaluations of women such as slut humiliation. The difficulties in their work are mainly in job applications and promotions. Respondents who engage in relatively free work, such as artists and entrepreneurs, believe that there is a great need to improve public opinion in the current work environment.

After conducting an interview with l2, the author also discovered that many deductive terms are directed towards women, while positive terms directed towards men.

The author also found that in French, "Courtisan" means "minister by the king's side," while the feminine form of this word, "Courtisane," means "prostitute".Even in cross linguistic vocabulary, there is a similar expression. The Chinese word "Hysteria" means abnormally excited or behaving abnormally, and it originates from the Greek word "Hysteria". However, in Greek, this word means "uterus". Verbal aggression against women serves to naturalize a binary's construction of gender.Sexist language continues, albeit at times in less overt ways and particularly so when the discourse is public, or likely to be made public(Anderson & Cermele, 2014).Butler (1997) argued that language makes sex and gender through the discursive creation of binaries and hierarchies. More than that, Armstrong(2014) and Mills(2008) proposed that the language used to tear down, insult, and denigrate others by speakers who want to gain power and status is connected to status hierarchies of gender, race, social class, and sexuality (Armstrong et al. 2014; Mills 2008).

The interview results of l5 are slightly different from others, and the author believes that this is related to occupation, which also indicates that discrimination still exists even among young people, and even becomes less visible, leading people to mistakenly believe that gender discrimination is no longer as serious.

In the films watched by the author, it is worth mentioning that feminist films have unexpectedly appeared in a more moderate form in recent years, with female protagonists, making it difficult for audiences to even find male presence in such films. This means that current feminist films still focus on the liberation of women's consciousness rather than gender analysis. In order to commercialize the film and make it acceptable to the public, it is understandable to be gentle on this controversial topic. However, this also means that the real issue of gender discrimination has not yet been shown to the public, and what is shown to us is a powerful enough female, even a masculinized image. The message conveyed by such a film is that powerful women should be like men. This also did not reveal the truly important issue, but rather deepened stereotypes.

The digital revolution has paved the way for a new iteration of feminism(Jain, 2020). In short, the media spreads feminism to the public, making this concept known to

more people, but at the same time, it also presents negative images to people. The phenomenon of gender discrimination in life has become invisible, but it has never solved the fundamental problem that leads to discrimination.On the contrary, women will find it more difficult to achieve gender equality in a society that is mistakenly perceived as such.What the media needs to do now is to improve the public opinion environment. Introducing relevant policies would be an appropriate method. Of course, film and television producers also need to showcase the real image of women and pay attention to the problems they face.The author also mentioned in the literature review that in evaluating feminism in the media, we need to eliminate anxiety about women and feminism, as well as anxiety about the description and influence of women, gender, and sexual behavior. We need to focus on gender analysis rather than liberation. The author believes that by utilizing the advantages of efficient media communication, more people can discover this problem and take action to solve it, which will be a relatively easier method for the public to accept and protect the image of the media about women.

Conclusion

It was concluded through the questionnaire and interviews that media, especially film and television works, make feminism known to the public. However, the methods of popularization are often not positive, which makes it difficult to see the impact of media attention on the current hot topic of feminism in reality. Displaying real female images to guide public attention to the challenges faced by women is a suitable way to improve film and television dramas at present. The author hopes that this study can provide valuable information for the film and television industry and make a small contribution to the development of the equal rights movement. It is believed that the film and television industry will become the main platform to support the equal rights movement in the future, and social conflicts caused by discrimination can be greatly alleviated through the widespread promotion of equal rights awareness in the media.

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