

Beauty is Justice: Research on Short Video Workers of Makeup from the Perspective of Visual Rhetoric

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Abstract:

Against the backdrop of the active participation of creative workers in beauty short videos in live streaming sales and beauty education, fan groups replicate and disseminate the behavior of creative workers in short videos for imitation, presenting clear characteristics of crowd-oriented communication. This study starts from the basic perspective of “appearance” and combines visual rhetoric theory to explore and summarize the behavioral characteristics of creative workers in beauty short videos, providing suggestions for promoting the dissemination of beauty short videos.

Keywords: Visual Rhetoric; Makeup; Short Video Maker; Beauty

1. Introduction

In the context of the gig economy, Short Video Workers mainly engage in physical labor, accompanied by mental, spiritual, and emotional labor. They have a large scale and possess the characteristics of “digital spiritual labor”, but rely on platform labor, making them a typical open employment form (Liu et al., 2021). Makeup, abbreviated as Beauty Makeup, is one of the main content presented in Short Video Workers. Previous studies have observed the female-dominated B2B beauty video community in the context of social media, and discovered the “agency” exhibited by Makeup Short Video Workers, focusing on the “visibility” of beauty videos (Zeng et al., 2021). In beauty videos, the liberation of women’s bodies is an important lever for “her economy” to achieve its economic significance. Therefore, the interpretation of Makeup Short Video Workers can be discussed in conjunction with women’s studies (Zeng & Ye, 2022).

How to express beauty? Makeup Short Video Workers highlight the expression and construction of “appearance”. Beauty is often regarded as a metaphor for social status and beauty influencer “Li Jiaqi” often uses female celebrities such as “Ouyang Nana” and “Chen Yihan” to reinforce her expression. From Bourdieu’s perspective, beauty, as a symbolic capital, can be transformed into commercial value (Kuang Wenbo, 2020). In the observation of Makeup Short Video Workers, this study found that the entire dissemination process is filled with an atmosphere of “entertainment to death” and “consumption first”. Beauty influencers use symbolic imagination to weave a dream of becoming beautiful, in which “appearance is justice”. This

study is based on a case analysis of Makeup Short Video Workers and their short video texts, and discusses them from the perspective of “appearance”. It is believed that Makeup Short Video Workers have outstanding characteristics in visual expression, and short video texts highlight the stitching of communication and profit purposes at the level of visual rhetoric, promoting communication-based on fully meeting profit objectives.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Makeup Short Video Workers

Short Video Workers, who specialize in beauty and makeup, are accustomed to using visuals and commentary to disseminate the content of beauty short videos. Although there are also men involved in this work, research has focused on the construction of women’s images in Makeup short videos. Women choose to participate in them for the needs of image construction, entertainment, and identity recognition (Liu & Hu, 2019). In the Makeup Short Video Workers group, women dominate the mainstream, so the diffusion of female consciousness is one of the main characteristics of the Makeup Short Video dissemination environment (Zeng & Ye, 2022).

The media presentation of Makeup Short Video Workers directly affects the construction of body imagery, which refers to the psychological picture formed by individuals about their bodies, including cognitive attitudes and emotional evaluations (Yang et al., 2010). Under the stimulation of information such as text, images, and videos on media platforms, the occurrence of female self-objectification is accompanied by a sense of physical shame. For

example, obese girls may feel a strong sense of physical shame (Yang & Xu, 2016). With the help of short video tools, Makeup Short Video Workers constructed rich images that influenced the audience’s construction of body imagery.

2.2 Visual Rhetoric

Visual rhetoric is considered to contain two layers of structure, one is the situational context of virtual and real, and the other is the pre-existing cultural context, both of which jointly participate in the construction of the second layer and peripheral framework of visual rhetoric (Zhang, 2022). Visual rhetoric constructs a relational structure of “virtual and real intertextuality” in situational context, thus exploring a relational logic from the mechanism of “graph graph” intertextuality provides an epistemological basis for explaining the operational logic of visual culture (Zhang, 2023).

For Makeup Short Video Workers, visual rhetoric helps to better align the rhetorical structure with the content presented by the medium. For example, in short, beauty videos, bloggers often use “invitation rhetoric” to promote products and complete sales. The diversity, decentralization, and uncertainty of invitation rhetoric need to be taken seriously (Lin, 2020). Taking luxury brands as an example, the brand image construction of Makeup products can also construct a “survival concept” based on social culture, generating new meanings under symbolic interaction (Zhao & Peng, 2019).

3. Methodology

Questionnaire

This study intends to design a survey questionnaire consisting of basic demographic characteristics and a Likert scale. In the basic demographic characteristics section, this survey is planned to focus on gender, age, education level, etc; In the design of the Likert scale, the items are graded into five items based on satisfaction, and the questions are mainly designed for different dimensions of beauty bloggers.

In the process of questionnaire distribution, this survey mainly relied on the method of nonprobability sampling. The respondents were targeted and only distributed on the TikTok, WeChat, and Xiaohongshu platforms with a short video playback function. This survey was distributed to short video audiences through TikTok group chat, WeChat group chat, and Xiaohong book group chat to understand their views and attitudes about Makeup Short Video Workers.

A total of 104 questionnaires were distributed and 100 were collected, with a valid questionnaire rate of 96.15%. In terms of basic demographic characteristics, it is manifested as over 70% of the respondents are female, over 30% are under 16 years old, and the proportion of samples aged 16-18 is 31%. The overall respondents tend to be younger. The proportion of respondents from the eastern region is the highest, at 77%. Overall, this survey reflects the views and attitudes of young women in the eastern region, which is consistent with the main audience of Makeup short video bloggers.

Table 1 Basic Information(N=100)

Types	Option	Frequency	Percentage(%)	Cumulative Percentage(%)
Gender	Female	74	74.00	74.00
	Male	26	26.00	100.00
Age	<15	34	34.00	34.00
	15-18	31	31.00	65.00
	18-30	6	6.00	71.00
	>30	29	29.00	100.00
Area	East	77	77.00	77.00
	Central	20	20.00	97.00
	West	3	3.00	100.00
In Total		100	100.0	100.0

3.1 Case Study

This study screened typical cases on the Xiaohongshu platform, which has a more diverse presentation of video,

text, and images, based on the different ways in which short video content constructs the topic of “beauty”. In terms of beauty content, Makeup Short Video Workers are

mainly divided into three categories, namely makeup-type Short Video Workers, imitation-type Short Video Workers, and makeup education-type Short Video Workers.

Table Different Types of Makeup Short Video Workers

Number	Types	Data	Details
01	Colorful Makeup	almost 1121 thousand fans	Makeup bloggers and fans mainly rely on appreciation and curiosity psychology
02	Mimicry Makeup	almost 943 thousand fans	Makeup short videos focus on imitation, with fan interests based on the target audience
03	Teaching Makeup	almost 100 thousand fans	Teaching Makeup is similar to makeup education, and fans are interested in learning about makeup

Overall, different types of Makeup Short Video Workers rely on social media platforms to showcase skincare and beauty content. According to Lacan’s gaze theory, Makeup bloggers showcase their makeup process through platforms such as Xiaohongshu, similar to the act of “looking in the mirror.” The makeup education video aims to attract fans by constructing an “ideal self” and completing their imagination of their “self-ideal” during the viewing process.

4. Results & Findings

4.1 Youth Subculture: Audience Orientation of Makeup Short Video Workers

This survey found that the main audience of Makeup short videos presents a basic characteristic of youthfulness, and some beauty bloggers have close connections with subcultures such as cosplay. During the questionnaire survey, the demographic characteristics of the respondents reflected that young women from developed eastern regions were the main group of Makeup Short Video Workers. Makeup Short Video Workers not only showcase the construction and expression of beauty from a personal perspective, but their works also serve as a powerful tool to reflect contemporary Chinese youth subculture.

For communicators engaged in brand marketing and youth work, to win the attention of young audiences, it is necessary to first recognize the important position of beauty and other categories among young audiences. Makeup Short Video Workers fully utilize beauty as a “social currency”, expand social circles, and closely connect with young audiences. At the same time, the construction of subcultures among some young people should also be guided to avoid negative social psychological influences such as comparison as much as possible and promote Makeup Short Video Workers to further empower positive value construction.

4.2 Knowledge Dissemination: Makeup Short Video Workers Are Doing Makeup Teaching

“Makeup teaching” is one of the popular short video content models on social media platforms, guiding fans on how to complete appropriate makeup is the main focus of this type of Short Video Worker. In this study, multiple bloggers used a step-by-step teaching method to impart makeup knowledge to their fans in the observation of Makeup Short Video Workers, a makeup education type. As a form of popular cultural knowledge, the dissemination of “makeup knowledge” relies on new media professionals such as Makeup Short Video Workers. Based on observations from the early stages of this study, short video bloggers specializing in “makeup education” tend to provide makeup education to their audience.

Short Video Workers break down makeup techniques into different modules that can be utilized through step-by-step decomposition and visual demonstrations, and creatively use “montage” to decompose Makeup Short Video Workers’ makeup techniques, presenting clear structural features. In observation, this study found that short video bloggers who highlight “makeup education” in their tag settings tend to impart makeup knowledge to the audience and use titles like “treasure children” to actively interact with the audience. In terms of makeup techniques, they emphasize detailed introductions of strength, area, and location.

4.3 Product Marketing: The Profit Model of Makeup Short Video Workers

Live streaming sales and product promotion are the main ways for Makeup Short Video Workers on social media platforms to achieve profitability. As a network anchor that imparts beauty and makeup knowledge, Makeup Short Video Workers has a clear trend towards specialization and plays an important role as a seller in product mar-

keting. In terms of product impact, Makeup Short Video Workers focuses on live-streaming sales and promoting good products.

This study found in the survey that Makeup Short Video Workers tend to highlight personalized characteristics in the product marketing process, bringing in some personalized factors to present outstanding characteristics. The dissemination of some beauty products by Makeup Short Video Workers reflects this point. Makeup Short Video Workers satisfies the audience's purchasing needs for Makeup products through live streaming and other means while strengthening the communication relationship between bloggers and audiences in the product marketing process.

5. Summary and Discussion

Overall, Makeup Short Video Workers tend to construct a positive media image among their audience by grafting on youth subcultures and using persuasive communication methods to win their attention and recognition. Therefore, regarding the construction of youth subcultures, Makeup Short Video Workers will focus on highlighting the construction and understanding of "beauty", and continue to influence young audiences in short video works. This study believes that the characteristics of Makeup Short Video Workers should be paid full attention to, promote the image communication and product marketing of beauty bloggers from multiple dimensions, and promote the full development of the Internet in all categories, including beauty.

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