

Female Look Anxiety - A Study of the Commodification of the Body of Girls in Plastic Surgery Circles

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Abstract: Through this research study, by examining the issue of the commodification of plastic surgery circle girls' bodies as a whole, we discover the historical and contemporary contextual factors that have led to this problem and the impacts it generates in our current environment. Exploring the causes and development of this issue can, to some extent, aid women in breaking free from the position of being objectified, thus mitigating appearance anxiety. It is advised that women avoid becoming overly immersed in the transformative effects of medical cosmetic procedures and work towards liberating themselves from the commodification of their bodies.

Keywords: appearance anxiety, medical cosmetic procedures, commodification of women's bodies, plastic surgery circle girls

1. Introduction

In a patriarchal society, women belong to the side that is 'gazed upon.' As we progress into modern society and alongside the development of imagery, we find ourselves at the age of the visual. Women hold a position of being 'seen,' and the evolution of contemporary visual culture has, to a certain extent, intensified women's appearance anxiety. Within this state of appearance anxiety, accompanied by technological advancements, it has given rise to the flourishing of the medical beauty industry. Some women ease their appearance anxiety by undergoing cosmetic medical procedures. However, this doesn't truly address the core issue of appearance anxiety and, at the same time, gives rise to the commodification of women's bodies [1].

Therefore, in this study, we will analyze the causes of the commodification of the female body in terms of the male gaze, the development of the image media, and the development of the medical beauty industry. Empirical evidence will also be used to further explain these causes.

2. Text

Next, we will gradually explain the reasons for the commodification of plastic surgery circle girls' bodies in several stages.

2.1. Stage one

Clarifying the Causes of Appearance Anxiety: In a male-dominated society, for thousands of years, the standards of female beauty have been determined by male aesthetics. Under male dominance, women have been objects of observation and scrutiny. Throughout history, across cultures, there has been a form of idealization imposed on women's bodies – erasing individual traces of life to produce doll-like products tailored to male preferences.

Within the framework of male aesthetic conditioning [2], women also engage in self-observation, which means that it's not just men observing women; women also engage in self-examination. Once a woman subconsciously realizes that "seen sex" has an exchange value, she tries to beautify herself according to men's preferences in order to increase her "seen sex". Women come to understand their own image through the male gaze, internalizing the male gaze and adopting an inherent male perspective to evaluate themselves. If they fall short of male aesthetic ideals, they might become dissatisfied with their appearance, leading to appearance anxiety.

2.2. Stage two

The Aggravation of Appearance Anxiety Due to the Development of Visual Media [3]: Alongside the advancement of visual communication, each image not only conveys informational meaning but also holds a certain aesthetic expression. Coupled with the evolution of beauty-enhancing technology [4], people have grown accustomed to the illusion of a universally 'highly attractive' appearance created in virtual spaces. This has led to comparisons between real-life appearances and the standards of attractiveness set in these virtual spaces. The disparity between appearances in filtered camera apps and real life has amplified appearance anxiety. Moreover, at the age of consumerism, attractiveness is no longer solely an innate physical attribute but has become a marketable resource, thus fueling the commodification of the body.

2.3. Stage three

Aesthetic disorientation and the illusion of beauty brought about by medical aesthetics [3]: The technology behind medical aesthetics seems to offer a path to improvement in terms of cosmetic anxiety. In fact, "beauty" changes along with history and culture, and there is no uniform standard. However, the medical beauty industry has taken over advertisements to create aesthetic templates and standardize aesthetics, believing that "big eyes, high nose, white and thin" is beautiful [5]. In order to make profits, medical aesthetic institutions will cooperate with plastic surgery netizens, relying on the user's trust in their popularity, the concept of aesthetics and medical aesthetic services together, thus subconsciously realizing the user's consumption guidance. Under the aesthetic standards constructed by the medical beauty industry, women's initiative and power of choice are further weakened.

Moreover, medical beauty advertisements often resort to false advertising [6], using complex terminology to confuse consumers. This not only enhances the persuasiveness of ads but also sets up cognitive barriers. To compete, some institutions use low-price group purchases as marketing tools, concealing additional costs.

Furthermore, these ads perpetuate insatiable image consumption desires. They swap the positive values of "confidence," "perfection," and "success" with the physical attributes of a woman's body. After imposing a single aesthetic standard, they emphasize the malleability of the body. Consequently, individuals may experience anxiety if they don't conform to this standard.

The medical aesthetics industry is driving more and more women to fall into the plastic surgery loop through the marketing techniques articulated above [4]. And then, the more successful modern

medical aesthetic marketing becomes, the more serious the contemporary tendency to objectify women becomes.

2.4. Stage Four: Examples of "Plastic Surgery Circle Girls"

Firstly, what are "Plastic Surgery Circle Girls" [7]? They refer to a group of girls who consider becoming beautiful as their dream, career and life. Compared with ordinary plastic surgery girls, the whole circle of girls has a big feature - precision. In their eyes, people are not people, but blanks that have been divided into many small pieces. The pursuit of features like "sharp shoulders," "A4 waist," and "smile lines" seems reminiscent of traditional Chinese ideals such as the "three-inch golden lotus." Overall, these girls believe that cosmetic procedures open the gateway to an ideal world, where all beauty can be achieved. Yet, the pursuit of cosmetic alterations can also yield dividends. Throughout this process, bodies cease to be individual features, becoming commodities to attain benefits.

Girls become entrapped in this cycle for various reasons, including early appearance-related anxieties, the allure of the medical beauty industry, and desires for online popularity, plunging them further into the cycle of cosmetic procedures.

One cause is early appearance-related anxieties [8].

A TikTok Internet celebrity recounted how she fell into the cosmetic procedure cycle. Unfair treatment due to her appearance during adolescence fueled her desire for beauty enhancement. At 18, she impatiently underwent double eyelid surgery and, upon the doctor's advice, also underwent a nose procedure. Lacking discernment at 18, she accepted the doctor's recommendations without research. The outcomes fell short, feeling unnatural and causing discomfort, negatively affecting her daily life. She spiraled into anxiety and self-disgust, isolating herself and experiencing low moods. She attributed her discontent to her changing appearance, believing that beauty symbolizes personal happiness. Despite numerous revisions, she remained dissatisfied, deepening her appearance-related anxieties.

Another factor is the growth of the medical beauty industry.

Unified aesthetic standards, deceptive advertising, and altered values in the medical beauty industry intensify appearance-related anxieties. Collaborations with cosmetic influencers enhance credibility and persuasion. For example, TikTok cosmetic influencers portray their transformation as a journey from "ugly duckling" to "swan," idealizing the rewards of beauty enhancement. Their content includes slogans like "It's better to be uniformly beautiful than uniquely ugly" or "A woman's decline begins with self-abandonment," further conditioning their audience.

Desire for online popularity drives some individuals deeper into the cosmetic procedure cycle.

Internet celebrity "Baby Peach" underwent double eyelid surgery in high school to enhance her appearance and gain attention on social media. To sustain her popularity, she pursued continuous cosmetic procedures. Over eight years and thousands of procedures, she suffered unforeseen consequences. Excessive hyaluronic acid injections led to facial nerve damage, twitching, and facial distortion. Despite numerous failures, she maintained attention, capitalizing on her appearance, reinforcing the cycle.

The fourth reason is that some successful bloggers have been able to "cash in on their beauty" through plastic surgery.

Early cosmetic recipients were secretive, but the industry's expansion normalized cosmetic procedures. This led to beauty-focused women who openly shared their "beauty secrets." Their transformations and process attracted followers, turning them into idols for similarly anxious girls. This pursuit of beauty dividend intensifies the idol's allure.

In the era of images, high beauty standards attract attention. Cosmetic influencers garner attention and adoration due to improved appearance. Some of the girls in the plastic surgery circle have

received a boost in their face value after plastic surgery and have gained more attention and love for social media. All this attention means more traffic that can be cashed in, so more and more plastic surgery bloggers are popping up. However, with industry evolution, high beauty standards are no longer scarce. To sustain popularity, influencers resort to frequent cosmetic procedures. These procedures, driven solely by the desire for popularity, commodify bodies rather than addressing appearance-related anxieties.

3. Conclusion

In this thesis, the underlying causes of female look anxiety are described: the male gaze and the self-gaze in a patriarchal society. And it further tells the process of commodification of girls' bodies in plastic surgery circle. This includes the broader context of the age of images and the age of consumerism, the development of the medical cosmetic industry, and the use of specific examples of plastic surgery circle girls to provide greater clarity. This thesis intends to help women see the essence behind the anxiety of looks and not to lose themselves by blindly receiving social trends. Women in the plastic surgery circle, as special individuals who are deeply affected by appearance anxiety, should clarify the causes of their own appearance anxiety and detach themselves from the distorted concept of aesthetics, the coercion of the "value economy", and the publicity and hype of the medical and aesthetic industry. In addition to this, they should further strengthen their own identity, jump out of the shackles of the standard of "ideal beauty", and improve themselves through various ways, so that they can experience a sense of achievement and obtainment in the real world, and realize the transformation of aesthetic concepts and the acceptance of their own body image.

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