

# ***The Discourse Power Construction of Male Beauty Bloggers and the Disciplined Female Audience from the Perspective of Body***

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**Abstract:** With the continuous development of online short video economy, the number of female consumers is also on the rise, among which many male beauty bloggers have joined the short video industry. With the female economy in full swing, some male make-up bloggers are trying to show their masculinity and reinforce female fans with mansplaining. The study, conducted on TikTok's beauty blog Kaikai Next door, assessed whether his communication style reflected examples of male preaching from a body-theory perspective. The results indicate that Kaikai Next door's evaluation of the female body continues to be influenced by the male-centric gaze, while male discourse perpetuates the idea of patriarchal culture. This statement elucidates the influence of women and the limitations they face, while simultaneously acknowledging their capacity for resistance. When KaiKai next door, a male beauty blogger, uses symbolic violence and the patriarchal ideology of women otherization to construct a male online image of himself by using female consumers, it results in the oppression of women's living space and the bullying of women's self-worth. However, the qualitative study of only one beauty blogger cannot describe the whole social situation, but this beauty blogger can reflect some gender problems that do exist in society. This study is committed to providing help and reference for promoting an equal society, resisting hegemonic rule and defending one's own rights and interests.

**Keywords:** mansplaining, body theory, male discourse, gaze

## **1. Introduction**

The emergence of social media platforms has facilitated the increasing visibility of male beauty bloggers, hence contributing to their growing presence in the public sphere. Within conventional patriarchal countries, the representation and societal positioning of masculinity have historically been subject to stringent regulations and limitations. These behaviors are often referred to as having feminine qualities, and women who watch men may be considered frivolous. In this way, male beauty bloggers and their female audiences challenge the so-called "Normality" and "Naturalness" of gender culture, to explore the possibility of freeing the body from the bondage of gender role, and to develop the practice of presenting self-gender consciousness [1].

Currently, the primary demographic of men's beauty blogs in China consists of women, and the majority of the information generated by male beauty bloggers is tailored towards women [2].

However, in contrast to those bloggers who actively seek to engage their audiences, there also remain male make-up bloggers who endeavor to demonstrate their masculinity and establish a loyal female following by means of exhibiting self-control and discipline. Then, why do traditional performances of masculinity receive the favor of female users? In the face of the vitriolic remarks about women by some male beauty bloggers, why aren't women offended and still attracted to their work? Therefore, studying some of the gender performance behaviors of male beauty bloggers on TikTok in China helps us to explore the expectations and effects of patriarchy on masculinity and how audiences are affected when men perform beauty behaviors, which are generally considered feminine behaviors, under the social system of China's traditional gender binary system.

This study selected a TikTok beauty blogger named "Kaikai Next Door" for research. "Kaikai Next door" is a TikTok beauty blogger who self-identifies as male within the gender binary system of traditional Chinese culture. His make-up, speech and actions and make-up are masculine, and he is known for being sharp and sarcastic, often making harsh comments about women in his videos. A survey shows that among the audience of Kaikai Next Door, males account for 8.44% and females account for 91.56%.

This pertains to the notion of mansplaining, which encompasses the phenomenon of men elucidating concepts to women in a condescending or patronizing fashion. Simultaneously, it exemplifies a form of discourse power. The purpose of this study is to evaluate whether the individual's communication style exhibits any occurrences of mansplaining and to determine whether his interaction with a mostly female audience has resulted in a unique form of discourse. This article will analyze the impact of Kaikai Next Door on the female viewership, specifically in relation to Postfeminism and body theory. This analysis aims to examine the role of Kaikai Next Door as a male makeup influencer within the context of his navigation of the digital world, his response to societal expectations, and the intersection of his makeup-related content with ideas such as mansplaining, body theory, and gender roles.

## 2. Literature Review

The extant scholarly literature mostly focuses on the examination of gender in beauty videos, with a particular emphasis on the impact of gender role identification on various behaviors and related phenomena. According to Chinese scholar Lin Chongde, the concept of gender consciousness presentation refers to the acquisition of authentic gender roles [2]. This entails conforming to societal and cultural norms regarding the expected motivations, attitudes, values, and behaviors associated with men and women, ultimately shaping one's character accordingly. Several studies have indicated that the development of gender awareness is shaped by a combination of socio-cultural and biological variables, with psychologists placing greater emphasis on the influence of socio-cultural elements. Hence, within the realm of gender studies, the manifestation of gender consciousness is commonly synonymous with the recognition and delineation of gender roles.

Mansplaining, including a condescending or condescending way for men to explain things to women, especially a concentrated display of gender awareness. The term "mansplaining" was coined by Rebecca Solnit in her book *Men Explain Things to Me* (man+explain+ing), and has given rise to the derivative "mansplainer". Mansplaining typically involves a man speaking to someone else (often a woman) in a condescending manner, lecturing and explaining topics that he may not fully understand, even if the man lacks sufficient knowledge about the subject at hand. Nevertheless, he still believes that the person he is speaking to is more ignorant than he is. Mansplaining is an action based on male-centered thinking, where the man assumes his words represent the truth in a conversation.

Michel Foucault has helped bring a body perspective to bear, showing a deep concern for body theory in his books. His discourse production theory emphasizes that the "Body" is not only the body

in the sense of anatomy, it is produced materially in the process of being trained, cultivated and molded. Michel Foucault has opened up new perspectives for gender studies, making people rethink their bodies and what goes on around them [3].

Drawing inspiration from this concept, the author endeavors to incorporate the notion of the body into the discourse around this subject, with the aim of elucidating the intricate fabric of gender roles. Michel Foucault's conceptualization of the "Body" elucidates the notion that the individual body is, to a certain degree, a product of social interaction [4]. Hence, in the discourse around gender identity matters, particular emphasis is placed on the physical body. The research posits that a comprehensive understanding of how gender culture influences the individual body to perpetuate social culture can only be achieved by incorporating the body and conducting a systematic analysis of the interplay between social culture, field, and body. The breakdown of binary opposition, which arises from physiological differences in sex, facilitates the development of independent gender role identification and the realization of gender equality.

Based on the aforementioned information, the central focus of this article will revolve on the examination of the male beauty blogger's network discourse within the framework of the body theory, as well as the passive identification of the female audience..

### 3. Methodology

Qualitative research methods place significant emphasis on comprehending and interpreting the subject matter from the perspective of the study's participants. In this study, the aim is to elucidate the process and mechanisms through which makeup bloggers construct their own gender roles and acquire recognition from their followers. Consequently, qualitative research methods were employed in this paper. In the preliminary stage, the author conducted interviews with a sample size of 15 individuals who were viewers of the subject matter. In order to expand the sample size, an additional five enthusiastic followers of Kaikai Next Door were recruited for the purpose of conducting in-depth interviews, using the snowball sampling technique. The interview questions were designed to explore a range of themes, including the respondents' comprehension of Kaikai Next Door's videos, their emotional responses to the content, the portrayal of gender awareness, and their perspectives on masculinity.

The author conducted interviews in standard Mandarin, accommodating the convenience of the interviewees. A total of 13 hours of interview audio-recordings were transcribed, and a selective translation into English has been presented in this document. In order to uphold the principle of secrecy, the author took the necessary step of redacting any identifying information and substituting pseudonyms for the people involved in the research. During the course of the fieldwork, the author engaged in the practice of maintaining reflective notes and producing analytic memos. This involved recording observational comments, as well as composing summaries of both observations and interviews, which collectively contributed to the creation of comprehensive field logs. By employing this approach, the author was able to discern coding categories and consolidate the unprocessed data into essential data items. In addition, the author employed diagrams and network ethnography techniques to visually represent complex connections among evolving coding categories. These categories were accompanied by their respective events, processes, and informative narratives derived from transcriptions and field notes.

## 4. Results and Analysis

### 4.1. Woman in the Position of Being Stared at

“Some people walk down the street have amazing faces. They have a nose like Highway. The Chin looks like a witch, and the fine lines of the pores can be seen from ten meters away. The blue eye shadow looks like Avatar.”

This is part of Kaikai Next Door ‘s beauty video. In Kaikai Next Door ‘s beauty videos, he repeatedly emphasizes images with a strong “Femininity,” such as “Absolute elegance,” “100 percent refinement,” and “A hint of good intelligence.” There are few taboos when it comes to commenting on women’s bodies, and the video is filled with vitriolic satire on every part of the female body.

The prevailing framework utilized in the examination of the Internet and the female physique is commonly known as the “Gaze” theory. Specifically, the concept of the “Male gaze” pertains to a societal phenomenon that is distinguished by disparities in gender. Typically, it is the female who assumes the role of the observer, subject to the influence of the male gaze.

At first glance, the act of a female audience engaging with a video content created by a male make-up blogger can be interpreted as a deviation from the traditional male gaze perspective. Young woman admire city life, lured in by media images of urbanization and vibrant consumerism. Resisting against the men culture, they tend to challenge authorities, and pursue individual independence and rich material life. However, under the vitriol of the beauty bloggers, the female body is invisibly scrutinized across the screen and injected into the norms of female appearance, and the female body is not liberated in the process.

Interviewee Yuji, as a film and television industry practitioner, to put it bluntly, the essence of the media’s “Visual culture” is this: “Most of the time the image of a woman is used to please a man. She has to be careful about everything, because the impression she gives, especially the male impression, will become the standard by which others judge her success or failure in life. That’s how Kaikai Next Door became popular.”

This shows that the traditional concept of male as the first sex and female as the second sex still exists in the patriarchal society, therefore, the male gaze toward the female is naturalized, which weakens the gender inequality, and the traditional social concept makes the gaze relationship normalize. The prevalence of internet media consumption, particularly pertaining to the portrayal of women as attractive and sexually appealing, has become widespread due to financial motivations. In the current societal context, there is an increased tendency among men to exhibit heightened audacity in objectifying women through persistent staring. Even though male beauty bloggers, who are primarily followed by women, may appear to prioritize the female perspective, Kaikai Next Door’s evaluation of the female body nevertheless relies on a male gaze that is influenced by the dynamics of power. The phenomena of male make-up bloggers have been observed for a considerable period, leading to a level of familiarity among female viewers.

### 4.2. Male Discourse Power

The acquisition and exercise of control has always been the primary goal of patriarchy. According to Foucault’s theory of discursive power, it is not people who are speaking, but rather the discourse that is speaking through people. Power comes from knowledge, and power construct discourse. Subjectivity does not reside in people, but rather language constructs human essence. In the context of traditional Chinese society, a binary gender structure prevails, wherein men wield complete authority and establish their masculine identity through persistent efforts and engagement in discourse that reinforces their dominance. This process involves the objectification of women and the

establishment of a dichotomy, thereby solidifying their own male identity [5]. Within such a context, those who fail to adhere to the established norms of authority are subjected to punitive measures.

Kaikai Next Door would also use insulting language and negative emotional expression to describe women who do not follow the way he does makeup in his video. This forms a set of rewards and punishments within the language framework. Through this mechanism, Kaikai Next Door put women under the control of men, propagated the power of men's gaze, and constructed the female role to worship the "Masculine flavor" that the male-dominated society hoped for [6].



Figure 1: Some comments from Kaikai Next Door's Video (Source:<https://v.douyin.com/iJoaQxrc/>).

As shown in figure 1, in Kaikai Next Door's video, Kaikai Next Door constantly uses strong and commanding language to convey his "rules" to the female audience, which is the conventional language of the male perspective. An audience Bingbing remarked:

"Sometimes, I admire those guys like Kaikai Next Door . They cuss out girls, they said lots of bad things, but that's also a way to survive in society (hun she hui). You know, let others admire you, follow you, then you can get things done."

In his discourse, he would say things like, "If you don't listen to me, then you don't deserve to put on makeup anymore" and "If you don't do things my way, then you should throw your stuff away." He would also use insulting language and negative emotional expression to describe women who do not follow the way he does makeup in his video. This forms a set of rewards and punishments within the language framework: if you don't follow his rules, the female audience will be punished, and the punishment is to be subjected to Kaikai Next Door's negative language evaluation. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the linguistic structure employed in the video produced by Kaikai Next Door bears resemblance to the prevalent sentence pattern observed in China's patriarchal society, wherein those in positions of authority utilize the phrase "I'm doing this for your own good, but I just don't know how to express it" as a means of indoctrinating subordinates [7]. This award and punishment system is cloaked in a false image of goodwill, making it less likely that female viewers will be offended by the offensive remarks. The audience Tianxin remarked on how the Tik Tok reflected the larger society:

"A video is a mini-society. The strong ones become the dominant, while the weak ones submit. The internet is just like society; the means of survival are also the same. I can be in such a dominant position to get a sense of security."



Figure 2: Some comments from fans in Kaikai Next Door's video (Source: <https://v.douyin.com/iJoap4He/>).

However, this observation also sheds light on the manner in which Kaikai Next Door develops his masculine identity within the context of his beauty-oriented videos. Within the educational framework of China, instructors possess a position of unequivocal authority and control over students. Videos produced by Kaikai Next Door provide a framework characterized by male dominance, sometimes referred to as “mansplaining,” which resonates with Chinese women. These videos effectively engage female viewers inside this framework, as depicted in figure 2. Simultaneously, it draws the female audience into this particular framework, so solidifying their male subjectivity during the act of engaging in beauty and cosmetics practices. Consequently, the female audience assumes the role of “the other” within this setting.

## 5. Conclusion

As a deep-rooted social concept and cultural psychology, the androcentrism idea that men are superior to women is still embedded in social culture, which restricts the society's expectation of women's roles and body evaluation, patriarchy ideology therefore has a certain “Legitimacy” [8]. Traditional androcentrism have been inherited and internalized, and it is still customary to view women from a male perspective, even to see some of the discipline and requirements of a woman's body image as commonplace.

From a consumerist perspective, contemporary internet companies hold the belief that women constitute the largest consumer demographic, characterized by a pronounced inclination and substantial capacity for consumption. In the era dominated by consumerism, women have emerged as the primary catalysts of consumption, leading to the designation of this period as “Her century.” However, it might be argued that women continue to be objectified and viewed primarily through the lens of male desire, as they are often portrayed as objects of consumption in media and popular culture. The term “Beauty economy” serves as a euphemistic expression denoting the subordinated position of women [9].

This paper takes Kaikai Next Door, a male beauty bloggers, as the research object to explore the impact of media violence on women's rights and autonomy. It mainly embodies the relationship between body and power. The female body becomes the dual domain of oppression and resistance. Male hegemonic ideology of oppression of women and political, economic, cultural and daily life at all levels, and male make-up blogger Kaikai Next Door in the day-to-day content output, this kind of hegemonic consciousness has been duplicated constantly, which promotes and strengthens the existing unequal gender power structure in the form of “Symbolic violence”. The internet age extends

women's consumption role in traditional culture. In this process, men dominate women through "Symbolic violence" and women are in the position of "Being seen", on the other hand, the weak discourse power of the media is easy to be alienated. Male constructs the ideology under the patriarchal culture in the consumer society. In a patriarchal society, maintaining control is the "Path of least resistance", which connects us to a variety of systems [10]. The path of least resistance in mass media, for example, is one in which men dominate and talk to others, and women subjugate or talk as little as possible. The core values of patriarchy shape the perception of alternative choices and how individuals make them without knowing it. The challenge is to make ourselves more aware of the different paths hidden in the situation and the choices individuals can make.

Moreover, there is a noticeable increase in the strength of resistance within it. According to one of the individuals interviewed, the act of silencing women serves as a significant strategy for the establishment and maintenance of male supremacy. The rise of women's self-awareness has led to their utilization of media platforms as a means to express their rights, challenge male dominance, and actively advocate for the achievement of gender equality within society [11]. Hence, it can be inferred that the author's research at this stage is provisional and cannot be universally applicable. In subsequent periods, heightened scrutiny and discourse are anticipated, prompting the author to remain attentive in order to enhance and refine this study.

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