
The End of Anti-Aging Industry? An Examination of Gender and Age Relations in Anti-Aging Ads in Chinese

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Abstract

This paper situates ageism, or age discrimination, in a broader system of age relations that intersects with other social inequalities, and then use the framework to analyze the images of internet advisements for the anti-aging industry in Chinese. Borrowing a spatiality perspective in social gerontology, this study explores the trilogy of society, image, and gender through an interpretative reading of images and scripts on the websites in "successful ageing" and "anti-ageing" created by the booming retirement industry in the Chinese-speaking world. To provide an analysis of a concrete practice of ageism, I collect examples of marketing discourse and subject them to a content analysis. A sample of 100 anti-aging websites was derived by typing in the key word "anti-aging" into Google search engine based in Taiwan, and then identifying appropriate sites for analysis. This paper then examines how the images and messages construct aging bodies on those websites by the anti-aging industry, gender dimensions and inequalities in family and everyday life. The results are discussed with findings from the West. In conclusion, the paper uses critical gerontology to critique the normative vision by focusing on the unarticulated values, assumptions and consequences.

Keywords: anti, aging, advertising, gender, ageism, social gerontology, inequality

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