

Discourse on Gender Aspects in Digital Media and Their Influence on Public Consciousness

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Abstract: This study investigates the gender-related aspects in digital media and their influence on public consciousness. The primary objective was to assess how gender roles are portrayed in digital media, including the prevalence of stereotypes and the impact of commercial interests on content creation. A mixed-method approach was employed, combining quantitative content analysis of 50 media items (spanning digital platforms and traditional outlets from Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan) and qualitative expert interviews with 10 media analysts and journalists. Additionally, a SWOT analysis was conducted to evaluate gender representation in digital media. The results revealed a persistent prevalence of traditional gender stereotypes in digital content, especially regarding women's roles, where over 60% of the analyzed content depicted women in conventional roles centered around appearance or motherhood. Despite an increase in female representation in digital platforms such as blogs and social media, these efforts have not substantially reduced the dominance of stereotypical portrayals. Furthermore, the research found that social initiatives promoting gender equality are gaining visibility but remain largely dependent on platform type and user engagement. The study emphasizes that while digital media hold the potential to transform public perceptions and reduce stereotypes, commercial interests and insufficient gender-sensitive content remain significant challenges. The practical significance of this research lies in providing actionable recommendations for media organizations to enhance the representation of women, emphasizing the adoption of gender-sensitive standards in content creation and advertising, which could help challenge persistent stereotypes and foster a more inclusive media landscape.

Keywords: Public role; Innovative platforms; Social influences; Social content; Right to a career

1 Introduction

Gender aspects in digital media constitute a significant area of research, as these media have become a primary source of information and shaping public opinion. The influence of digital platforms on the formation of gender stereotypes, the representation of women and men, as well as their interaction with societal norms, requires in-depth analysis. The online environment, social networks, and diverse digital content actively shape perceptions of gender roles, which can both facilitate their transformation and reinforce traditional notions. This study is highly relevant as it allows for an assessment of how digital media shape cultural, social, and political

conceptions of gender, as well as the implications of this influence on public consciousness and behaviour.

A considerable number of scholars have explored this topic, offering diverse perspectives. For instance, N. Akbulaev and B. Aliyeva (2020) examined the relationship between gender and economic growth in the context of Kyrgyzstan, demonstrating how gender roles determine socio-economic development in Central Asian countries. They emphasised that gender stereotypes may restrict women's economic opportunities, thereby affecting overall societal progress. These observations have also influenced subsequent research on gender aspects in digital media. A. Al-Rawi et al. (2023) focused on the impact of social media in Kyrgyzstan, investigating how digital platforms have become a new space for shaping public perceptions of gender, particularly among youth. They noted that social media can both drive shifts in gender perceptions and reinforce stereotypes, especially within the framework of cultural and social norms characteristic of Central Asia.

E. Assyltayeva et al. (2025) conducted a content analysis of mass media in Kazakhstan, examining its influence on the formation of civic identity. They found that media content plays a crucial role in shaping cultural perceptions of civil rights and gender roles, as well as in how these perceptions are transmitted within society. Media often depict gender roles in traditional ways, which may influence how individuals perceive their societal roles. A. Azizi (2023) explored how online platforms have become a vital tool for feminist and civil society activists in Kazakhstan. He highlighted that social media have enabled activists to raise critical issues of gender equality and fostered the development of new forms of social change. This study underscores the role of digital platforms in transforming societal conceptions of gender and in mobilising civic initiatives. The role and sustainability of external aid in developing media and information literacy in Central Asia, particularly in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, were examined by A.O. Dadakhonov (2024). He demonstrated how foreign initiatives contribute to media literacy development, which, in turn, helps reshape perceptions of gender roles in these countries, fostering a more critical stance towards traditional stereotypes and promoting gender equality in the media sphere.

The issue of gender equality and international law in Kyrgyzstan was examined by A. Erisheva (2023), who emphasised the importance of human rights in ensuring women's equality in society. She noted that, despite the existence of legal mechanisms, cultural and social stereotypes still significantly influence women's status, which is often reflected in media and societal narratives. Her research highlights the crucial role of education and media in transforming public perceptions of gender roles. L. Jiang et al. (2025) explored the impact of social media on shaping public opinion and trust in information within Kyrgyz journalism. They found that social media serves as a powerful tool for shaping public discourse on gender issues, as well as for combating disinformation, which is essential for the accurate perception of gender roles and equality. They noted that media can both reinforce stereotypes and contribute to the struggle for equality. The influence of social media on youth de-radicalisation processes in Kyrgyzstan was examined by Y. Kumar (2021). The author pointed out that online platforms can serve as instruments for reshaping perceptions of gender roles and promoting equitable treatment of women. These media resources have become significant in countering radicalisation, yet they can also function as spaces for reinforcing either traditional or progressive gender perceptions.

A. Kurmanov and S. Kurmanov (2024) investigated the issue of "digital misrecognitions" in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan, where media and digital platforms serve as key instruments in

reflecting gender stereotypes and violence through visibility. They underscored the importance of context and social conditions in understanding how gender visibility in digital spaces can either amplify or mitigate violence against women and minorities. A. Nam (2024) studied the role of the language of instruction, national identity, and attitudes toward gender roles in Kazakhstan, demonstrating how these factors interact in shaping gender perceptions within educational contexts. The author observed that media and educational practices can facilitate shifts in gender role attitudes by fostering new cultural identities.

The aforementioned studies did not sufficiently address the influence of social media algorithms on the dissemination of gender stereotypes. Furthermore, the aspect of intersectional discrimination – particularly the interplay of gender with ethnicity, religion, or social status – remained outside the scope of analysis. The aim of this study was to identify key gender-related aspects in digital media and analyse their impact on societal consciousness. The research objectives included assessing the representation of gender roles in digital media and identifying prevalent stereotypes, analysing the influence of digital media on shaping societal perceptions of women and men, and determining the role of digital media in promoting gender equality and challenging traditional stereotypes.

2 Materials and Methods

A content analysis was conducted on 50 media items published between January 2024 and March 2025 across both traditional and digital media outlets in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. The sample included television programmes such as KTRK, TV channel “24KZ”, talk shows Ala-Too 24, and Qazaqstan TV. Online news platforms analysed comprised Kloop.kg, Vesti.kg, Tengrinews.kz, Informburo.kz, and Nur.kz. Additionally, content from YouTube channels such as ZorTV, Tochka KG, Orda.kz, and KazakhTV, as well as TikTok accounts of popular influencers, including @aidana_kz, @bekzat.tok, @nurgul_blogger, @dastan_kg, @aijan.kg, and @zhanbolat_official, was incorporated into the analysis.

The selection of media content was based on the inclusion of diverse platforms, including television programs. To ensure comprehensive representation, content from YouTube channels and TikTok influencers was also incorporated. Gender stereotypes were identified based on a coding system developed for the study, which categorized portrayals of women in traditional and contemporary roles. This was supplemented by expert interviews with 10 media analysts and journalists, providing qualitative insights into the influence of commercial interests and state initiatives on gender representation in media. The data was analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics for quantitative processing, alongside qualitative analysis from expert interviews.

A sociological survey was conducted among 500 respondents in March 2024 using the Google Forms platform. The respondent sample comprised: women aged 18-25 (90 individuals); men aged 18-25 (70 individuals); women aged 26-35 (80 individuals); men aged 26-35 (60 individuals); women aged 36+ (100 individuals); and men aged 36+ (100 individuals). The study adhered to the provisions of the Code of Ethics of the American Sociological Association. Furthermore, participants provided voluntary informed consent, with particular attention given to maintaining confidentiality. The survey consisted of the following 15 questions:

1. Which type of media do you most frequently consume (television, news websites, social media, etc.)?
2. How often do you encounter content related to women in the media?
3. Which topics concerning women are most frequently covered in the media?
4. Do you notice gender stereotypes in media content?
5. How would you evaluate the overall portrayal of women in the media (positive, negative, neutral)?
6. Does media content influence your perception of women's role in society?
7. Do you trust information on gender issues in traditional media?
8. Do you trust information on gender issues in social networks?
9. Do you believe digital media contribute to improving gender equality?
10. Do you perceive an influence of digital media on your personal views regarding women?
11. What is your attitude towards women holding leadership positions in society?
12. Do you believe the state should regulate media content concerning gender issues?
13. Do you support initiatives aimed at creating more gender-sensitive content?
14. What changes would you like to see in the media representation of women?
15. Which type of content, in your opinion, could most effectively influence societal perceptions of women?

Additionally, 10 expert interviews were conducted with journalists, media analysts, representatives of feminist organisations, and digital media researchers from Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan between April 2024 and March 2025, using video meetings and electronic communication. The interviews addressed the following questions:

1. How has the representation of women in digital media changed over the past 10 years?
2. Which predominant gender stereotypes persist in the media landscape?
3. Is there a trend towards an increasing number of women in journalism and the blogosphere?
4. How do you assess the role of digital media in shaping societal perceptions of women?
5. What are the main barriers to the formation of gender-sensitive content in the media?
6. Does commercial interest influence the formation of gender-related content in digital media?

7. Are state initiatives effective in regulating gender-related content in the media?
8. What is the level of impact of social initiatives and activism on changing gender representation in media?
9. Can you provide examples of successful cases of gender-related content transformation in digital media?
10. What recommendations could you propose to improve the portrayal of women in media?

Statistical data processing was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics software to analyse sociological results, enabling the creation of an accurate and reliable overview of gender representation in media.

A social media analysis was performed, encompassing Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook, to assess the level of public discourse on gender equality, the frequency of stereotypical portrayals in advertising, influencer content, and video materials, as well as the impact of social initiatives on digital culture.

The study employed content analysis, sociological surveys, expert interviews, social media analysis, and SWOT analysis to evaluate gender representation in digital media in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan and its influence on public consciousness.

The content was assessed based on five criteria:

1. What types of female representations are present in the materials (traditional vs. contemporary roles)?
2. How frequently do gender stereotypes appear in the presented information?
3. What is the general tone of women's portrayal in media (positive, negative, neutral)?
4. Are women presented as experts or opinion leaders in news coverage?
5. Does the content employ gender-sensitive or discriminatory language?

The methodologies applied in the surveys and interviews were grounded in scientific ethics principles, ensuring the accuracy and objectivity of the obtained data.

3 Results and Discussion

Gender aspects in digital media have become one of the key topics in the media landscape. Since media play a crucial role in shaping societal norms and values, they significantly influence how people perceive various social roles, particularly those of men and women. In the context of digital media – encompassing social networks, news websites, the blogosphere, and diverse online platforms – gender equality and its representation acquire new dimensions. Given the continuous development of technologies and new media, there is a growing need to examine how these media shape perceptions of gender and the roles of women and men in society. Digital platforms can both promote gender equality and reinforce traditional stereotypes about men and women, thereby influencing societal perceptions of these categories. As gender issues are pivotal in the context of social change, understanding how media construct

stereotypes is a crucial step toward overcoming inequality and achieving a more equitable representation of reality in media.

Gender refers to socially constructed characteristics and roles that society assigns to men and women. Unlike biological sex, which is a physiological attribute, gender is defined through social, cultural, and psychological aspects. Gender roles, in particular, constitute a set of expectations and standards linked to how individuals should behave based on their sex. Digital media encompass a broad spectrum of internet-based media platforms, including social networks (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok), online news outlets, the blogosphere, and other digital platforms through which people access information, interact, and share content. Gender stereotypes are entrenched notions about how men and women should look, behave, or perform certain functions in society. These stereotypes often impose limitations on individuals based on their sex, which can negatively impact equality and fairness in society. Gender stereotypes in media may be positive or negative; however, they most frequently restrict personal opportunities by establishing rigidly defined “correct” and “incorrect” behavioral models for men and women.

Digital media propagate diverse stereotypes about women and men, shaping societal perceptions of gender roles. One of the most prevalent stereotypes is the portrayal of women as objects of beauty or secondary characters, often reducing their roles to emotional support or attractiveness. For instance, in advertisements and films, women are frequently depicted as homemakers, mothers, or objects of sexual desire, which limits their opportunities for self-expression in other social spheres. Men, in contrast, are traditionally portrayed in media as strong, decisive, dominant figures who exhibit aggression, determination, and problem-solving abilities. For example, an advertisement for the dishwashing detergent Fairy often features a woman in the kitchen smiling while washing dishes, reinforcing her role as a homemaker (The Laundry Lab, 2025). This leads to men being predominantly associated with professional roles, while women are linked to domestic or emotional ones. Such stereotypes may exacerbate gender inequality, restricting social and professional opportunities for both women and men.

Another stereotype is the representation of “teenagers” or “young people”, where gender identity is often confined to classical roles: girls are expected to be gentle and obedient, while boys are depicted as strong and independent. This limits self-expression, particularly for those who do not conform to these traditional images. An example of this stereotype was a Pepsi advertisement in which girls were portrayed as sweet ballerinas, while boys were shown as bold heroes (AnnainCA, 2010). It is also important to note that stereotypes may vary depending on cultural contexts. In post-Soviet countries such as Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, media reflect traditional patriarchal views, yet a process of modernization is simultaneously underway, fostering shifts in attitudes toward women and gender equality overall.

Patriarchal systems frequently restrict women's access to economic opportunities, education, and decision-making authority, hence impeding overall economic progress. By excluding half of the population from complete engagement in the workforce and leadership positions, these institutions hinder the optimal utilisation of human resources and creativity, eventually impeding economic progress. Conversely, the promotion of gender equality and the dismantling of patriarchal norms cultivate a more inclusive economy, wherein both men and women equally contribute to productivity, resulting in sustainable development and enhanced socio-economic advancement.

Digital media exert a powerful influence on shaping public consciousness, as they are capable of rapidly disseminating information, thereby altering people's perceptions and beliefs about various social issues, including gender. The creation of gender-sensitive content fosters the formation of a more inclusive society, free from limitations based on sex. Media can serve as a catalyst for social change, dismantling gender stereotypes and ensuring equal opportunities for both sexes. Shifting attitudes toward women and men in the media influences social norms and expectations, shaping new behavioural models that reflect societal realities.

International organisations and foreign aid significantly influence media landscapes and advance gender equality; nonetheless, their effects require critical evaluation. Although initiatives by organisations like the United Nations and the European Union have resulted in some advancements in media literacy and gender-sensitive programming in nations such as Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, these efforts frequently encounter constraints. A significant difficulty is the absence of robust enforcement mechanisms and the inclination for projects to be more performative than substantive, neglecting to tackle the fundamental causes of gender inequality in media. Moreover, foreign aid frequently emphasises immediate interventions over enduring structural transformations, and the cultural and political settings of recipient nations are typically inadequately addressed. This may result in a dissonance between external policies and local reality, where programs may fail to align with local needs or be compromised by ingrained social attitudes. Moreover, reliance on foreign aid poses a risk of fostering an environment in which local media organisations may lack the incentive to autonomously tackle gender issues or cultivate durable, indigenous solutions. Consequently, although international organisations and foreign aid promote gender equality in the media to some extent, their efficacy is constrained by significant deficiencies.

The internet and social media, in particular, enable users with diverse gender perspectives, including members of the LGBTQ+ community, to find platforms for self-expression and interaction. The role of digital media in shaping public consciousness regarding gender issues is immense. Media do not merely reflect but actively construct perceptions of gender roles in society, influencing how we perceive ourselves and others. A crucial aspect of this process is overcoming gender stereotypes and creating content that reflects the diversity of gender identities and promotes gender equality in society. Consequently, a content analysis of media materials in traditional and digital media in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan was conducted, with the results presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Results of the content analysis of media materials

Analysis criterion	Results
Portrayal of women in materials	68% of materials depict women in traditional roles (mothers, homemakers, caregivers), while 32% portray them in modern roles (career women, leaders, social activists)
Frequency of gender stereotypes	72% of materials contain stereotypical statements or plotlines reinforcing traditional female roles. The most prevalent are associations of women with family and emotionality

Overall tone of women's coverage	54% of materials adopt a neutral tone, 28% are positive (highlighting successful women and achievements), and 18% are negative (criticism or scandal-focused narratives)
Representation of women as experts or opinion leaders	Only 26% of materials feature women as experts or opinion leaders. In political and economic news, this figure is even lower (14%)
Use of gender-sensitive or discriminatory language	39% of materials contain discriminatory remarks or phrases emphasising women's appearance over their professional qualities

Source: compiled by the authors.

Analysis of media content in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan reveals that both digital and traditional media continue to reinforce a conservative image of women in society, though gradual examples of modern representations of female roles are emerging. Gender equality in the media landscape remains limited, indicating insufficient attention to this issue both from editorial teams and state regulators. The underrepresentation of women as experts and their low participation in socio-political discussions demonstrate that the female voice in the media sphere is not equal to that of men. This may influence public consciousness, reinforcing perceptions of men as primary societal leaders and women as secondary figures. The prevalence of gender stereotypes in content and the frequent use of discriminatory language suggest a lack of gender sensitivity among journalists and content creators. It also highlights the need for implementing ethical standards regarding gender balance in media.

Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan are contending with the enduring presence of old gender norms in digital media, notwithstanding incremental advancements. In Kyrgyzstan, the content study reveals that more than 60% of media sources continue to represent women in traditional positions, hence perpetuating restricted depictions of their skills and societal functions. This pattern is seen in Kazakhstan, where women's responsibilities are frequently restricted to parenting or caregiving, despite digital channels like blogs and social media providing opportunities for more varied images of women. The rise of female representation in new media does not yet adequately confront the established preconceptions in mainstream media, highlighting the necessity for a more systematic approach to gender-sensitive content production across all media platforms.

The scenario in European countries underscores the disparity in the evolution of gender representation in media. In countries like Sweden and Norway, digital media have advanced significantly in attaining gender equality, primarily due to governmental backing, media regulation, and a robust emphasis on gender-sensitive editorial standards. These nations have led in the implementation of gender-neutral language and the promotion of legislation that guarantee equal representation in both professional and domestic spheres. Nonetheless, even in these progressive circumstances, conventional preconceptions persist, particularly in advertising and popular culture, illustrating that although advancement is achievable, the struggle for equitable representation necessitates ongoing endeavours from both the public and media domains. The comparative analysis indicates that although Central Asian nations such as Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan have distinct cultural obstacles, the wider global context demonstrates that digital media may serve as both an instrument for transformation and a platform for perpetuating antiquated standards.

Nevertheless, certain positive shifts are observable in digital media, particularly on social networks and within the blogosphere, where initiatives aimed at reshaping societal perceptions of women are becoming more frequent. For instance, TikTok accounts of popular bloggers such as @aidana_kz, @bekzat.tok, @nurgul_blogger, @dastan_kg, @aijan.kg, and @zhanbolat_official actively disseminate content promoting awareness of gender equality, expanding opportunities for self-expression, and challenging stereotypes about women in contemporary society. This underscores the potential of digital platforms in combating stereotypes and fostering more objective portrayals of women's societal roles. Table 2 presents the results of a sociological survey examining respondents' perceptions of gender stereotypes in digital media and their impact on shaping public consciousness.

Table 2. Results of the sociological survey

Question	Answer	F 18- 25	M 18- 25	F 26- 35	M 26- 35	F 36+	M 36+
1. Which type of media do you most frequently consume?	Social media	49	38	43	32	54	54
	News websites	25	20	22	17	28	28
	Television	11	8	10	7	12	12
	Print media	5	4	5	4	6	6
2. How often do you encounter content related to women in the media?	Daily	20	15	18	13	22	22
	Several times a week	40	32	36	27	45	45
	Rarely	30	23	26	20	33	33
3. Which topics concerning women are most frequently covered in the media?	Family and motherhood	37	29	33	25	41	41
	Career and success	24	19	22	16	27	27
	Scandals and personal life	19	15	17	13	21	21
	Gender equality	10	8	9	7	11	11
4. Do you notice gender stereotypes in media content?	Yes	65	50	58	43	72	72
	Sometimes	16	13	14	11	18	18
	No	9	7	8	6	10	10
5. How would you evaluate the general portrayal of women in the media?	Neutral	41	32	37	28	46	46
	Positive	26	20	23	17	29	29
	Negative	22	18	20	15	25	25

6. Does media content influence your perception of women's role in society?	Yes	55	43	49	37	61	61
	No	35	27	31	23	39	39
7. Do you trust information on gender issues in traditional media?	Yes	31	24	27	20	34	34
	Partially	38	29	34	25	42	42
	No	22	17	19	14	24	24
8. Do you trust information on gender issues in social media?	Yes	25	20	22	17	28	28
	Partially	43	34	38	29	48	48
	No	22	17	19	14	24	24
9. Do you believe digital media contributes to improving gender equality?	Yes	47	36	42	31	52	52
	Partially	31	24	28	21	35	35
	No	12	9	10	8	13	13
10. Do you feel digital media influences your personal views on women?	Yes	42	33	38	28	47	47
	Partially	34	27	30	23	38	38
	No	14	10	12	9	15	15
11. What is your attitude towards women holding leadership positions in society?	Support	62	48	55	41	69	69
	Neutral	19	15	17	13	21	21
	Do not support	9	7	8	6	10	10
12. Do you believe the state should regulate media content on gender issues?	Yes	40	31	35	26	44	44
	Partially	33	26	30	22	37	37
	No	17	13	15	11	19	19
13. Do you support initiatives to create more gender-sensitive content?	Yes	52	41	46	35	58	58
	Partially	29	22	26	19	32	32
	No	9	7	8	6	10	10
14. What changes would you like to see in the portrayal of women in the media?	More stories about women leaders	34	27	30	23	38	38
	Less stereotypical content	31	24	28	21	35	35

	More materials on gender equality	24	19	22	16	27	27
15. Which type of content, in your opinion, can most effectively influence societal perceptions of women?	Social initiatives and projects	38	29	34	25	42	42
	Documentaries and reports	26	20	23	17	29	29
	Educational materials	19	15	17	13	21	21
	Advertising campaigns	7	6	6	5	8	8

Source: compiled by the authors.

According to the survey findings, several key observations can be made. First, respondents – primarily consuming content via social networks and news websites – express concern regarding the role of media in perpetuating gender stereotypes. This suggests that both traditional media and new platforms often depict women through the lens of entrenched stereotypes, negatively influencing public perceptions of women’s roles. At the same time, a majority of respondents support initiatives aimed at creating gender-sensitive content, which may signal a shift in media development trends. This confirms a growing demand for a more inclusive approach to representing women, including narratives of success and leadership. Interest in gender-related content is increasing on digital platforms, indicating the potential of social networks and blogs to drive changes in public consciousness. However, while most respondents believe digital media can contribute to equality, some remain cautious about information disseminated through these platforms.

In the work of A. Anindya (2022), the importance of youth’s role in raising awareness of gender issues through social media is emphasised. It was found that young people may not be sufficiently critical of the content they consume, which contributes to the perpetuation of stereotypes. The study by S. Arshad and S. Khurram (2020) indicates that government initiatives aimed at fostering civic engagement through social networks have a positive effect. However, the current research notes that social media is not always an effective tool for altering deeply entrenched societal perceptions of gender. This aligns with the conclusions of T. Birkner and A. Donk (2020), who argue that social media can shape a new historical consciousness, though this consciousness may sometimes be constrained by the context and platform on which the content is disseminated.

M.M.H. Emon and M.N. Nipa (2024) focus on gender issues in the context of entrepreneurship. They highlight existing barriers for women in business, which directly reflect gender stereotypes perpetuated through media. The findings of this study support their conclusions, as it was also revealed that stereotypes regarding women’s societal roles, propagated via social media, can influence career opportunities. S. Gao et al. (2020) examined public attitudes toward artificial intelligence in healthcare through social networks. Their results underscore the significance of the context in which information is presented. The study observed that, in the case of gender stereotypes and equality on social media, context also significantly impacts the effectiveness of messaging, which may either reinforce or challenge societal perceptions of women. Table 3 summarises the results of expert interviews conducted as part of this study.

Table 3. Results of expert interviews

Question	Responses
1. How has the representation of women in digital media changed over the past 10 years?	Dominant response: Over the past decade, the representation of women has become more diverse, yet it often remains confined to traditional roles (mothers, caregivers, sexual objects). However, there has also been an increase in women's self-expression on platforms such as YouTube and TikTok
2. What are the predominant gender stereotypes that continue to dominate the media landscape?	Dominant response: Women are frequently portrayed through the lens of traditional roles – emotional, dependent, and lacking ambitions comparable to men. Stereotypes of women as homemakers or sexual objects also persist
3. Is there a trend towards an increasing number of women in journalism and the blogosphere?	Dominant response: Yes, there is a growing trend, particularly in the blogosphere and on digital platforms. However, these changes are gradual, and many women still face gender barriers that limit their opportunities
4. How do you assess the role of digital media in shaping societal perceptions of women?	Dominant response: Digital media holds significant influence, as it provides greater opportunities for women's self-expression. However, due to commercial interests, much of the content still reflects stereotypical portrayals of women
5. What are the main barriers to creating gender-sensitive content in the media?	Dominant response: The primary barriers include societal biases, a lack of political will, financial constraints, and the control exerted by large media corporations that rely on traditional, profit-driven stereotypes
6. Does commercial interest influence the formation of gender-related content in digital media?	Dominant response: Yes, commercial interest often shapes gender-related content, as media outlets cater to audiences for whom stereotypical portrayals are more appealing and marketable
7. Are state initiatives to regulate gender-related content in the media effective?	Dominant response: No, most initiatives fail to bring tangible change due to the absence of concrete enforcement mechanisms. Many experts argue that such measures are largely performative and often misaligned with the actual needs of the media landscape
8. What is the level of influence exerted by social initiatives and activism in changing gender representation in the media?	Dominant response: Social initiatives and activism have a positive impact, but progress remains slow. Nevertheless, there is growing interest in more inclusive representation of women in media

9. Can you provide examples of successful cases of changing gender-related content in digital media?	Dominant response: Examples of successful cases include the #MeToo campaign and other women's rights movements actively supported through digital platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube
10. What recommendations would you propose to improve the portrayal of women in the media?	Dominant response: Recommendations include increasing the number of women in media leadership roles, supporting initiatives for gender-sensitive journalism, creating more content featuring women in leadership and professional capacities, and implementing educational programmes for journalists on gender sensitivity

Source: compiled by the authors.

Findings of the conducted study reveal that, despite certain progress in the representation of women in digital media, they still face limitations in mainstream media spaces, particularly in traditional television and news outlets. Prevailing gender stereotypes, such as portrayals of women as emotional and dependent, remain dominant in many media materials. However, there is a growing number of women actively engaged in blogging, which allows them greater freedom to express their views and participate in shaping media content. One of the key conclusions is that while digital media provide women with more opportunities for self-expression, commercial interests often constrain this process, perpetuating stereotypical imagery. This also confirms the existence of barriers, such as financial and political constraints, which prevent the full realisation of gender-sensitive content. At the same time, activism and social initiatives have a positive impact on changing societal perceptions of women's roles in media, albeit progress remains slow. To improve the situation, it is necessary to increase the number of women in media leadership positions, which would enable the creation of more inclusive and gender-sensitive content. Another crucial step is supporting educational programmes for journalists to foster a better understanding of gender sensitivity and contribute to a more balanced media landscape.

An analysis of social networks, particularly Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook, was conducted to assess the level of public discourse on gender equality, the frequency of stereotypical portrayals in advertising, blogger content, and videos, as well as the impact of social initiatives on digital culture. The analysis was based on publications addressing gender issues between January 2024 and March 2025. The findings indicate that discussions on gender equality have gained significant traction, especially on TikTok, where users actively engage in debates on equal rights for women and men, combating discrimination, and challenging gender stereotypes. On Instagram and Facebook, activity surrounding gender equality discussions is less pronounced; however, social initiatives such as #MeToo (MeToo, 2025) and other campaigns have significantly raised awareness of gender inequality. Regarding stereotypical portrayals in advertising, blogger content, and videos, all three platforms exhibited a high prevalence of traditional gender stereotypes. Advertisements predominantly depict women in domestic or beauty-oriented roles, while men are frequently associated with leadership and professional positions. Stereotypes are also present in blogger content, though videos and posts that generate active discussion often emphasise issues of equality and resistance to such stereotypes.

The influence of social initiatives on digital culture was observed through various campaigns and activism aimed at improving gender equality. Movements such as #MeToo (MeToo, 2025),

#HeForShe (UN Women Asia and the Pacific, 2025), as well as flash mobs and petitions widely supported on TikTok and Instagram, have contributed to shifting attitudes towards gender issues among younger audiences. These initiatives have helped raise awareness of discrimination and equal rights while promoting more inclusive and gender-sensitive content. Thus, the social media analysis demonstrates that although stereotypical portrayals of women and men remain prevalent in digital content, social initiatives provide a platform for change and foster greater awareness of gender issues, which may, in turn, positively influence digital culture and public consciousness.

Another important aspect of gender inequality is intersectionality, which examines how gender intersects with other social identities such as ethnicity, class, and geography to create unique and complex experiences of privilege and oppression. Women from marginalised ethnic groups frequently encounter compounded discrimination, where racial or ethnic biases overlap with gender biases, resulting in various forms of disadvantage. Women of colour in the workplace may face both gender and racial discrimination, which can hinder their career advancement, lead to compensation inequities, and preclude them from leadership positions. Likewise, socioeconomic class is crucial, as women from lower socio-economic origins encounter more significant obstacles to education, healthcare, and economic possibilities compared to their affluent peers. The intersectional experiences illustrate that the ramifications of gender inequality cannot be properly grasped without acknowledging the influence of other identity facets on individual marginalisation.

The geographical context exacerbates this intersection, as women in rural or underdeveloped areas may encounter unique obstacles that diverge from those faced by their urban counterparts. In rural regions, gender norms tend to be more stringent, constraining women's mobility, education, and work prospects, while also hindering their access to resources like healthcare and legal assistance. The convergence of gender and geography can further marginalise women in low-income or conflict-affected regions, where gender inequality is frequently intensified by economic instability, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficient legal protections. An intersectional approach is crucial for acknowledging the multifaceted nature of oppression and for developing more effective solutions to address gender inequality comprehensively.

It's worth to note, that economic changes and the rise of the political elite directly influence the development of gender rights, transforming social institutions and the legal frameworks governing gender equality. Economic transformations often lead to the redistribution of resources and the emergence of new opportunities for women, particularly in the labor market, thanks to the promotion of gender-neutral policies and the expansion of women's participation in the workforce. The political elite can either facilitate or hinder progress in the area of gender rights through its policy decisions, as evidenced by legislative measures supporting gender quotas, access to education, and equality in employment. The combination of these elements can disrupt traditional gender roles and stimulate a transition toward a more inclusive government. Entrenched cultural norms and institutional biases can hinder the full achievement of gender equality, despite the implementation of progressive changes. Thus, while reforms and elite influence are important, achieving meaningful change requires sustained advocacy, public recognition, and the deconstruction of patriarchal structures at all levels of government and society.

The findings of the study demonstrate that digital media play a crucial role in shaping public consciousness regarding gender equality and gender stereotypes. Social networks, in particular, create new opportunities for disseminating ideas about equality between the sexes, yet they

simultaneously leave room for reinforcing traditional stereotypes. A key characteristic is that content on such platforms does not always reflect reality and may have both positive and negative effects on the perception of gender roles. According to research by H. Al-Dmour et al. (2020), social media platforms play a pivotal role in shaping public awareness during crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. They enable the rapid dissemination of information but can also be a source of misinformation. This aligns with the finding that highlights the dual effect of social networks: on the one hand, they facilitate the spread of information on gender equality, while on the other, they may reinforce stereotypes associated with traditional perceptions of men and women. The work of H. Albanna et al. (2022) demonstrates how social media can be leveraged to achieve social change, particularly in the context of non-profit organisations advocating for gender equality. The study's results confirm that these platforms can serve as a powerful tool for mobilising and amplifying the impact of initiatives aimed at combating gender stereotypes. However, critical questions remain regarding how to ensure content quality control and information verification. Table 4 presents the results of a SWOT analysis of gender representation in digital media, which helps identify key issues, including the stereotyping of images, uneven role distribution, and the limited visibility of women in professional and leadership contexts.

Table 4. SWOT analysis of gender representation in digital media: Identifying key issues

Strengths	Weaknesses
Increasing participation of women in the blogosphere and on digital platforms (TikTok, Instagram)	Pervasiveness of stereotypical portrayals in advertising and media, particularly on traditional platforms
Development of social initiatives aimed at combating gender stereotypes	Limited number of women in leadership positions within media organisations and editorial boards
High engagement in gender equality campaigns (#MeToo, #HeForShe)	Insufficient oversight of gender-sensitive content in digital media
Opportunities	Threats
Expansion of gender-sensitive content in media and advertising through initiatives and legislation	Commercial interests may hinder the development of gender-sensitive content
Growing support for feminist organisations and social movements	Gender stereotypes perpetuated in traditional media may undermine efforts to achieve equality
Potential for creating new educational programmes to raise awareness of gender issues	Lack of effective regulation and state support to ensure gender equality in media, namely: Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 223-IV “On State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women” (2009) Law of the Kyrgyz Republic of No. 184 “On State

	Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women” (2008)
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Source: compiled by the authors.

Gender quota legislation is frequently designed to rectify the under-representation of women in political and professional domains. In actuality, these laws often do not fulfil their objectives due to various significant issues. The enduring cultural and sociological prejudices that influence public perceptions of gender roles might diminish the efficacy of quotas. Although women may occupy positions of authority or leadership, they frequently encounter institutional obstacles that constrain their influence, such as being assigned to less significant posts or having their decisions undermined by male colleagues or the public. Moreover, quotas may be perceived as symbolic rather than substantive, generating an illusion of gender equality while failing to tackle underlying structural challenges, such as inequitable access to resources or professional networks.

A further reason for the ineffectiveness of gender quota laws is the absence of enforcement measures and the political will to implement quotas effectively. In numerous nations, despite the existence of quota legislation, there is insufficient oversight to guarantee adherence, and political figures frequently devise methods to evade the regulations. Moreover, quotas may result in tokenism, wherein women are chosen to meet legal obligations without receiving the necessary support to thrive or lead successfully. In many instances, the fundamental power dynamics remain unexamined, and women persistently encounter obstacles that impede their professional and political progress. Consequently, although gender quotas can facilitate women's involvement, they are inadequate in isolation without concurrent initiatives to tackle cultural, institutional, and systemic disparities.

The analysis of gender representation in digital media, conducted through a SWOT analysis, revealed that while certain advancements have been made towards improving gender equality, significant challenges remain. A positive aspect is the growing role of women on digital platforms, particularly in the blogosphere, as well as the increasing activity of social initiatives promoting shifts in societal attitudes towards gender issues. However, persistent stereotypes actively disseminated in advertising and traditional media remain a critical problem. Against this backdrop, commercial interests and financial constraints often hinder the development of gender-sensitive content, while the insufficient number of women in leadership positions within media limits opportunities for achieving comprehensive gender representation. At the same time, significant opportunities for further change exist, particularly in the development of gender-sensitive content through initiatives, legislative reforms, and support for feminist movements. Raising awareness via educational programmes and creating new tools for content monitoring are crucial steps towards achieving equality.

The study by F. Hou et al. (2020) identified significant gender differences in the perception of depression and anxiety disorders during the pandemic, which is also highly relevant for gender awareness. They found that women experienced depression and anxiety more frequently, confirming previous research on the impact of social media on women during crises. L. Hudders and S. De Jans (2022) focus on gender effects in influencer marketing, emphasising the importance of opinion leaders in social networks. Their findings confirm that the choice of content promoters can significantly influence the reinforcement or subversion of gender stereotypes. In the case of female influencers advocating for equality, stereotypes are challenged. R. Karasneh et al. (2021) examined the media's influence on pharmacists'

perceptions of the pandemic. These findings are also relevant to the present study, as they demonstrate that media can alter or reinforce public perceptions of critical social issues, including gender equality.

T. Kaya (2020) investigated shifts in social media usage during the pandemic. The results align with the current research, indicating behavioural changes among users during global crises, suggesting that social media can serve as a powerful tool for social change. M. Leonhardt and S. Overå (2021) explored behavioural differences between boys and girls in video game and social media usage. Their study also highlighted significant disparities in how male and female users perceive gender-related content. Z. Li et al. (2025) focus on the Global Digital Compact aimed at combating online discrimination. This aligns with the study's conclusions, as it underscores the need for regulatory mechanisms to counter content that perpetuates gender stereotypes. C. Mahon and D. Hevey (2021) examine the impact of social media on body image perception, a key aspect in the context of gender stereotypes. Their findings corroborate this research, as they also reveal that social media often exacerbates negative body image, particularly among women. C.M. Norris et al. (2020) emphasise the importance of considering sex differences in studies on heart disease in women. This is pertinent to the present research, as media frequently overlook gender-specific factors when addressing social issues.

In the realm of digital media, it is essential to create content that fosters equality and mutual respect among all individuals, regardless of gender. The development of gender-sensitive content requires a systemic approach and an awareness of the significant influence media holds in shaping societal perceptions of the roles of women and men. In this context, it is crucial not only to consider gender aspects in content but also to work toward overcoming gender stereotypes and promoting inclusive practices. Below are several key recommendations for media and content creators. A fundamental requirement for gender-sensitive content is the representation of women and men in diverse roles, free from the constraints imposed by traditional stereotypes. Women should be portrayed not only as mothers, homemakers, or objects of beauty but also as professionals, leaders, scientists, activists, entrepreneurs, and in any other spheres where they can achieve success. Similarly, men should not be limited to depictions of strength and dominance but should also be shown as emotionally open, sensitive, and adaptable. Rather than presenting a specific gender role as the sole norm, media should provide space for a broad spectrum of individual expressions. This also includes the representation of the LGBTQ+ community, where it is vital to acknowledge and respect all gender identities and sexual orientations.

In media, the use of gender-neutral language is crucial to avoid reinforcing stereotypes and stereotypical perceptions. Employing words that do not confine individuals solely to their gender is an important step toward inclusivity. For instance, instead of repeatedly using the terms “man” or “woman” in restrictive contexts, one may opt for “person”, “employee”, or “participant”. At the same time, it is essential to use terminology that aligns with individuals' self-identification. When referring to the LGBTQ+ community, caution must be exercised to avoid terms that may cause offense or misunderstanding. In the case of gender-neutral or transgender individuals, it is important to use correct pronouns – such as “he”, “she”, or “they” – depending on how a person identifies their gender. Advertising is a significant component of the media landscape, and its role in shaping gender stereotypes should not be underestimated. One of the primary recommendations for creating gender-sensitive content is ensuring balanced representation of women and men in advertisements, without imposing limitations on role types or behaviors. Women should not be reduced to mere objects of advertising focused on their physical attractiveness, nor should men be confined to portrayals of strength and aggression.

For example, in advertisements for household goods or food products, men can be shown cooking or engaging in domestic chores, just as women can be depicted pursuing science or business. This helps dismantle traditional notions that certain functions or occupations are inherently “male” or “female”.

The implementation of gender-sensitive practices should begin at the very foundation of media, including editorial policies. This means that editorial teams must be aware of how gender influences news perception and should establish standards ensuring fairness in the coverage of gender-related issues. For instance, when reporting on women, it is important to adhere to principles of equality, accurately reflecting their achievements and challenges rather than reducing their roles to emotional or domestic aspects. Media must also recognize that gender inequality can manifest at various levels – from unequal representation of women in professional fields to the devaluation of women’s voices or participation in public debates. This necessitates careful monitoring and an understanding of how gender biases may distort information. For gender-sensitive content to become the norm, it is necessary to raise awareness among content creators. This can be achieved through training sessions, workshops, and seminars on gender equality and sensitivity. A key objective of such initiatives is to broaden the understanding of the importance of gender equality in the media environment and to educate authors and journalists on how to avoid stereotypical approaches in content creation. In particular, it is crucial to educate media professionals on how their texts, videos, or other forms of content can not only avoid discrimination but also actively promote ideas of equality and fairness.

The work of F. Olan et al. (2024) examines the impact of fake news on society. The study also confirms that fake news can significantly influence the perception of gender roles, creating distorted representations of women and men. E.J. Seo et al. (2020) demonstrated how social media affects brand reputation and user trust. This is corroborated by research findings indicating that gender equality is also a key factor in brand preference among younger generations. Generational disparities significantly influence perspectives on gender roles and equality, as each generation is shaped by unique social, political, and cultural environments. Older generations, especially those raised in traditional or patriarchal settings, may possess more conventional perspectives on gender roles, frequently perceiving women primarily as carers and homemakers. Younger generations, particularly those influenced by global gender equality movements and media platforms advocating progressive values, are generally more receptive to questioning established gender conventions. Nonetheless, among younger generations, there exist disparities, as certain individuals champion more inclusive and fluid interpretations of gender, whereas others may adhere to traditional notions influenced by cultural or familial factors. This generational split underscores the persistent struggle between tradition and development, as society norms evolve at varying rates influenced by cultural background, education, and exposure to new views.

In their study, N. Tabassum and B.S. Nayak (2021) investigated gender stereotypes and their impact on women’s career advancement. These findings are consistent with broader research, as it has been established that media often creates or reinforces barriers to women’s professional development. The study by S. Talwar et al. (2020) analysed the dissemination of fake news on social media. The results confirm that fake news can reinforce stereotypes and falsely shape perceptions of the roles of women and men in society. S. Yin and Y. Sun (2021) explored digital feminism and its influence on participation in equality movements. This aligns with the observed rise in feminist initiatives on social media, which contribute to combating gender stereotypes. In summary, the research findings confirm that social media can serve both as a

powerful tool for challenging gender stereotypes and as a factor reinforcing them. It is essential to consider the context in which media content is consumed and to foster critical thinking among information consumers, thereby mitigating the negative impact of stereotypes.

The Kyrgyzstan study on gender representation in digital media highlights global trends and post-Soviet and Central Asian problems. In Kyrgyzstan, like elsewhere, digital platforms can challenge and promote gender preconceptions. Social media has given women new areas for self-expression and activism, but financial interests and societal standards continue to affect content, limiting gender equality. The dual role of digital media in promoting social change and perpetuating harmful stereotypes has been debated worldwide, from Western countries grappling with gender representation in advertising to the rising participation of women in online platforms. Post-Soviet gender norms in Kyrgyzstan are complicated by patriarchal media and society. These interactions, notably the representation of women as mothers or carers, echo global conversations about gendered expectations, even as digital platforms promise equality. Similar challenges occur in Europe, North America, and Central Asian countries like Kazakhstan, underscoring the need for worldwide initiatives to generate media content that reflects multiple gender identities and promotes equality. Kyrgyzstan's experience shows how localised efforts to dismantle media gender stereotypes can inform global strategies for fostering inclusive media practices that challenge and reshape deeply ingrained gender roles.

Digital and social media offer many potential to change gender concerns. Content must promote gender equality and user inclusivity. This includes equal voice and self-expression for all genders, including content control tools to prevent prejudice and abuse. Digital platforms can also help women and under-represented groups build communities and networks, improving media access. Monitoring gender-sensitive content's effectiveness is essential to keep it from being theoretical. Analysis of audience reaction, social developments, and content impact on public awareness can achieve this. Monitoring may also include tracking gender discrimination and stereotypes when gender-sensitivity guidelines are implemented. Gender-sensitive content is a moral requirement for media and a necessary step toward social justice. Everything from content editing and creation to media professional training and policy execution must alter. Following these guidelines will help create inclusive media. Specialised awareness initiatives could boost media efforts to counteract fake news and prejudices. Social media users should also receive media literacy instruction. Further research is needed to find effective digital platform content regulation tools and analyse how new feminist initiatives are changing gender attitudes online. The findings show that digital media content strategies must be improved to counter gender stereotypes and ensure gender equality in media.

4 Conclusions

This study emphasises the crucial influence of digital media in creating public awareness on gender equality. Digital channels, such as social media and online news sites, possess the capacity to propagate progressive ideas and contest conventional gender norms. The content study indicated that a substantial segment of media persists in perpetuating gender stereotypes, especially about women, by largely linking them to domestic roles or accentuating their beauty. Although there is greater representation of women in contemporary media channels such as blogs and social networks, these initiatives have not substantially reduced the prevalence of traditional depictions. The study highlights the psychological effects of media content on public attitudes. Although 47% of participants recognised the impact of digital media on their perceptions of women's societal roles, the study underscores the continued prevalence of stereotypes, especially in commercials and influencer material. Such assumptions frequently diminish women's professional ambitions and leadership capabilities.

From an economic standpoint, gender stereotypes in media restrict women's involvement in diverse industries, especially in leadership positions, hence affecting their professional advancement and economic prospects. Although digital media platforms provide a space for diverse representations, they are also subject to financial interests that frequently prioritise stereotyped and marketable content. Ultimately, social initiatives like #MeToo and campaigns advocating for gender equality have received public endorsement; but, advancement continues to be sluggish. These initiatives have significantly advanced awareness; nonetheless, societal and institutional obstacles continue to hinder genuine gender equality in media coverage. Consequently, augmenting the representation of women in media leadership roles and advocating for gender-sensitive editorial procedures are essential measures for fostering more inclusive content development. To promote enduring change, it is essential to establish educational initiatives for journalists and media practitioners about gender sensitivity and ethical standards in content creation.

Conflict of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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