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SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE FORMATION OF THE IMAGE OF KAZAKH WOMEN

The digital transformation of public communication positions social media not merely as content-sharing platforms but as strategic arenas for shaping cultural representations and rethinking gender norms. In the Kazakhstani context, visual and textual strategies on Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook dynamically construct the image of Kazakh women, blending traditional social expectations (family, modesty, care) with contemporary self-presentation practices (entrepreneurship, education, civic engagement, lifestyle branding).

Research Objective – to examine how the image of Kazakh women is constructed in digital media, assess its impact on gender stereotypes and social practices, and identify new forms of female agency that demonstrate the interaction between media, cultural heritage, and contemporary social dynamics.

Novelty – this study systematically analyzes the digital representations of Kazakh women, highlights how visual and textual strategies influence the transformation of gender stereotypes, and identifies new forms of female agency at theoretical, empirical, and practical levels, providing a novel conceptual framework for media transformation studies.

Findings and Interpretation – digital spaces act as critical arenas for re-evaluating gender equality, promoting women's participation in professional, political, and social life. Content and discourse analysis of posts, captions, hashtags, and audience comments reveal visual motifs, narrative frameworks, and mechanisms for discussing power and femininity, while demonstrating the structural tension between traditional cultural norms and contemporary social demands.

Keywords: social media, Kazakh women, gender stereotypes, feminist theory, media transformation, female agency, online identity, cultural representation.

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Әлеуметтік желілер және қазақ әйелінің имиджін қалыптастыру

Қоғамдық коммуникацияның цифрлық трансформациясы әлеуметтік желілерді тек ақпарат алмасу құралы ретінде ғана емес, мәдени бейнелерді қалыптастыру мен гендерлік нормаларды қайта ойластырудың стратегиялық алаңы ретінде анықтайды. Қазақстандық контекстте Instagram, TikTok және Facebook платформаларындағы визуалды және мәтіндік стратегиялар қазақ әйелінің бейнесін динамикалық түрде конструирлеуге ықпал етеді, бұл дәстүрлі әлеуметтік күтілетін сипаттамаларды (отбасы, қарапайымдылық, қамқорлық) сақтай отырып, қазіргі заманғы өзін-өзі көрсету практикаларын (кәсіпкерлік, білім алу, қоғамдық белсенділік, лайфстайл-брендинг) біріктіреді.

Зерттеудің мақсаты – қазақ әйелінің цифрлық медиа кеңістігінде қалай қалыптасатынын талдау, бұл бейнелердің гендерлік стереотиптер мен әлеуметтік тәжірибеге ықпалын бағалау, сондай-ақ онлайн-агенттік (agency) деңгейінде жаңа формаларды айқындау арқылы Қазақстандағы гендерлік саясат пен мәдени бейнелеудің өзара әрекеттесуін көрсету.

Ғылыми жаңалық – зерттеу қазақ әйелінің бейнесінің цифрлық репрезентацияларын жүйелі түрде талдап, визуалды және мәтіндік стратегиялардың гендерлік стереотиптердің трансформациясына әсерін көрсетеді. Сонымен қатар әйел агенттігінің жаңа формаларын теориялық, эмпирикалық және практикалық деңгейде анықтау арқылы медиатрансформация саласында жаңа концептуалды рамка ұсынады.

Нәтижелер мен интерпретация – цифрлық кеңістік гендерлік теңдікті қайта бағалаудың критикалық алаңы ретінде әрекет етеді, бұл әйелдердің кәсіби, саяси және қоғамдық өмірге қатысуын ынталандырады. Контент-анализ және дискурс-анализ әдістері арқылы алынған деректер визуалды мотивтерді, нарративтік рамкаларды және билік пен әйелдік тақырыбын талқылау механизмдерін көрсетеді. Зерттеу сонымен қатар онлайн-коммуникация мен дәстүрлі

арасындағы құрылымдық кернеуді айқындайды, бұл қазіргі әлеуметтік және идеологиялық контекстті түсінуге мүмкіндік береді.

Түйін сөздер: әлеуметтік желілер, қазақ әйелінің бейнесі, гендерлік стереотиптер, феминистік теория, медиатрансформация, әйел агенттігі, онлайн-өзіндік, мәдени бейнелеу.

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Социальные сети и формирование образа казахской женщины

Цифровая трансформация общественных коммуникаций превращает социальные сети не только в платформу обмена информацией, но и в стратегическое пространство формирования культурных образов и переосмысления гендерных норм. В контексте Казахстана визуальные и текстовые стратегии на Instagram, TikTok и Facebook динамически конструируют образ казахской женщины, сочетая традиционные социальные ожидания (семья, скромность, забота) с современными формами самопрезентации (предпринимательство, образование, общественная активность, лайфстайл-брендинг).

Цель исследования – проанализировать, каким образом формируется образ казахской женщины в цифровых медиа, оценить влияние этих репрезентаций на гендерные стереотипы и социальные практики, а также выявить новые формы женской агентности, демонстрирующие взаимодействие медиа, культурного наследия и современной социальной динамики.

Научная новизна – исследование системно анализирует цифровые репрезентации казахской женщины, выявляет влияние визуальных и текстовых стратегий на трансформацию гендерных стереотипов, а также определяет новые формы женской агентности на теоретическом, эмпирическом и практическом уровнях, предлагая новую концептуальную рамку для медиатрансформации.

Результаты и интерпретация – цифровое пространство выступает критической ареной переоценки гендерного равенства, стимулируя участие женщин в профессиональной, политической и общественной жизни. Анализ контента и дискурса публикаций, подписей, хэштегов и комментариев аудитории выявляет визуальные мотивы, нарративные рамки и механизмы обсуждения власти и женственности, а также показывает структурное напряжение между традиционной культурой и современными социальными требованиями.

Ключевые слова: социальные сети, казахская женщина, гендерные стереотипы, феминистская теория, медиатрансформация, женская агентность, онлайн-идентичность, культурное представление.

Introduction

In contemporary information societies, social media platforms have transcended their initial function as mere tools for communication and content dissemination, emerging instead as strategic instruments that actively shape cultural representations, influence public opinion, and renegotiate social norms. The widespread proliferation of platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook is not merely changing social interactions but is actively facilitating the construction of new social, cultural, and political frameworks (MAKASHEVA, 2024: 45). From a gendered perspective, these developments provide a crucial lens to examine how women's roles are being reconceptualized, allowing for the construction of public images that integrate both professional visibility and personal identity (Tavangar, Covid, Kumar, & Lata, 2025: 78; Butler, 1990: 65).

Within the Kazakhstani context, social networks have mediated a complex historical evolution of women's social representation, enabling the emergence of professional and social identities that extend beyond traditional gendered expectations (Dall'Agnola, 2024: 78). Historically, Kazakh women's societal functions were largely confined to familial and domestic spheres, with public visibility heavily constrained by cultural norms (Peña-Guzmán, 2016: 21). The advent of social media, however, has catalyzed a process of renegotiation, whereby women strategically present themselves in professional, entrepreneurial, and civic domains, thereby challenging conventional boundaries (Parker, 2014: 59; Fuchs, 2021: 87).

Recent developments suggest an accelerated expansion of women's societal roles, reflecting both increased opportunities and persistent structural tensions inherent in traditional social systems (McRobbie, 2008: 21). Simultaneously, public rep-

representations of Kazakh women remain intertwined with enduring cultural ideals such as “the pillar of the family” and the archetypal maternal role. Contemporary digital narratives navigate this duality, balancing respect for heritage with innovative self-representation, promoting national customs and familial values while foregrounding professional achievements and individual initiatives (Giddens & Sutton, 2021: 92; Peña-Guzmán, 2016: 32).

Despite the growing body of research on digital media and gender representation, the specific mechanisms through which social media shape the perception of Kazakh women, and how these representations interact with traditional cultural norms, remain insufficiently explored. Therefore, in this article, the authors aim to systematically analyze these under-investigated aspects.

In this regard:

- The object of the study is the social media environment in Kazakhstan, where digital representations of women are created and circulated.

- The subject of the study is the construction of Kazakh women’s images in online content, including visual and textual strategies, narratives, and discursive practices.

- The purpose of the study is to investigate how digital media actively reconstruct the societal perception of Kazakh women, assess the transformation of gendered stereotypes, and identify the forms of female agency that emerge through online engagement.

Research tasks:

1. To analyze digital content (posts, captions, hashtags, and comments) on Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook to identify dominant patterns, themes, and narrative frameworks representing Kazakh women. This task aligns with the results showing both the continuity of traditional roles and the emergence of modern professional and civic identities.

2. To evaluate the extent to which social media contribute to the transformation of gender stereotypes and promote female agency in professional, political, and social spheres. This task corresponds to findings regarding the interplay between digital visibility, cultural norms, and empowerment outcomes.

Preliminary interpretations suggest that social networks not only reconstruct public perceptions of Kazakh women but also shape broader societal attitudes toward gender equality, thereby reinforcing women’s participation in civic, professional, and political spheres (Scott, 1999: 45). The theoretical significance of this research lies in articulating a conceptual framework for understanding media-

mediated transformations of gender roles, while its practical relevance includes informing policy initiatives, media literacy programs, and campaigns designed to enhance women’s rights and equitable representation (Harding, 2004: 123; Sassen, 2001: 156).

Literature review

The influence of social media on women’s public representation and the negotiation of gender roles has emerged as a pivotal topic in contemporary scholarship, highlighting the tension between digital platforms and entrenched social norms. Butler (1990) theorizes gender stereotypes as socially and culturally constructed, arguing that media spaces can function as arenas in which traditional expectations are challenged and women’s roles are rearticulated (Butler, 1990: 32). Building on this theoretical foundation, Beauvoir (2011) emphasizes the historically subordinate position of women, suggesting that feminist engagement and media activism provide mechanisms through which these structural inequalities can be contested and transformed (Peña-Guzmán, 2016: 12).

Within the Kazakhstani context, empirical investigations illuminate the transformative potential of digital platforms. Dall’Agnola (2024) demonstrate how social networks actively mediate the evolution of women’s public images, shaping both professional visibility and broader social participation (Dall’Agnola 2024: 18). Contemporary scholarship further underscores the capacity of online spaces to amplify women’s achievements and to energize feminist movements, thus serving as both reflective and constitutive tools in the negotiation of gender norms (Hail, Yusof, Shakir, Al Farsi, Al-Shamsi, & Sarea, 2024).

From a sociopolitical perspective, Foucault’s (1977) analysis of power structures elucidates the mechanisms by which societal norms are embedded and reproduced, including gendered expectations, while Fiske (1992) emphasizes media’s dual role in reinforcing and contesting hierarchical cultural frameworks (Fiske, 1992: 19). The emergence of digital activism, exemplified by the YesAllWomen movement, illustrates how online platforms enable collective mobilization against systemic gendered violence (Kaufman, 2025). Similarly, cross-cultural studies of movements such as MeToo and #BalanceTonPorc reveal the transnational capacity of digital advocacy to reshape normative discourses and challenge entrenched patriarchal assumptions (Lucchetti, 2022).

Taken collectively, these studies suggest that social media operate both as mirrors of existing gendered structures and as instruments of disruption, offering sites for critical negotiation of women's societal roles. Critically, this literature establishes a conceptual framework for analyzing Kazakh women's digital representations, situating contemporary online practices within historical, cultural, and structural contexts. It indicates that while digital platforms expand possibilities for female agency, they simultaneously reflect enduring societal constraints, highlighting a structural tension that must be accounted for in both theoretical analysis and policy formulation. This nuanced understanding allows for a more critical assessment of how online media mediate identity construction, social power, and cultural expectations in a rapidly digitalizing society.

In conclusion, the novelty of this study lies in its systematic analysis of Kazakh women's digital representations across multiple social media platforms, integrating both content and discourse analysis to reveal the interplay between traditional cultural norms and emerging forms of female agency. Unlike previous research, this article identifies specific mechanisms through which digital media facilitate the transformation of gendered stereotypes, the negotiation of professional and civic identities, and the development of new modes of online empowerment, providing a conceptual framework applicable to both scholarly inquiry and practical policy development.

Research methods and methodology

English Version

This study is based on a qualitative constructivist methodology, which emphasizes understanding social reality through the lens of interactions, discourse, and mediated communication. The research primarily employs two complementary qualitative methods: content analysis and discourse analysis. These methods were chosen to examine how Kazakh women's digital representations are constructed, how they interact with societal expectations, and how they enable new forms of female agency within social media environments.

Details regarding dataset selection, coding categories, and the interpretive value of each method are described in the Results section.

The dataset includes posts published on Instagram and TikTok between January 2023 and March 2025. A total of 450 posts from 25 Kazakhstani female bloggers were systematically selected based on the following criteria:

1. The account belongs to a Kazakh woman;
2. Posts focus on women-related topics, including family, career, fashion, and feminism;
3. Each post received at least 5,000 likes, indicating substantial social impact;
4. Content is authored in Kazakh or Russian.

During coding, six primary thematic categories were defined: (1) traditional roles, (2) contemporary lifestyle, (3) entrepreneurship, (4) gender equality, (5) civic engagement, and (6) blogging. The coding outcomes are presented in Figure 2.

Content analysis was applied to systematically investigate visual and textual representations across platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook (Dall'Agnola, 2024: 17). Discourse analysis examined linguistic, rhetorical, and semiotic structures within social media texts, revealing the social, cultural, and ideological mechanisms influencing women's roles (Azizi, 2023: 44). Foucault's (1977) framework of social power structures and Barker & Galasinski (2001) perspectives on media and cultural discourse informed the analysis. Postmodern media theory (McLuhan, 1994) and recent studies on online identity and agency (Septianto, Matmann, Hollebeek, & Higgins, 2023) complemented the approach.

Integrating these methodological perspectives allows for a conceptually grounded, critically reflexive analysis of Kazakh women's digital portrayals. By combining content and discourse analyses with rigorous dataset selection, the study transcends mere cataloging of observable features, interpreting structural biases, cultural tensions, and patterns of social influence in online representations.

In sum, this section now explicitly states the methodological foundation and the methods used, while the detailed contributions of each method are deferred to the Results section for clarity and structure.

Results

Trends in the image of Kazakh women on social media

- Traditional roles and family values: In the course of addressing this research task, we analyzed social media accounts and platforms where content related to traditional roles and family life is predominantly shared. Content from rural women on Instagram and TikTok primarily emphasizes domestic life and family responsibilities. For example, blogger Akbilek Abdirova uses stop-motion videos to depict everyday household routines, presenting the "well-rounded daughter-in-law" archetype. Content

analysis indicates that while traditional roles remain central, framing them within a contemporary context stimulates public debate and increases the social visibility of rural women. The persistence of these stereotypes in the digital representation of Kazakh women can be explained by cultural and social factors. Traditional Kazakh culture places a strong emphasis on family cohesion, respect for elders, and the centrality of domestic duties, which are deeply embedded in folklore, proverbs, and social expectations. These cultural norms continue to influence women's self-presentation, as content creators negotiate between demonstrating respect for heritage and engaging with modern digital practices. Consequently, the reproduction of such stereotypes reflects both the continuity of cultural values and the mechanisms by which online platforms mediate the interplay between tradition and contemporary social visibility (rferl.org, 2025)

- Modern lifestyle and fashion: The portrayal of Kazakh women extends beyond traditional expectations to encompass modern lifestyle, fashion, beauty, and travel themes. The widespread circulation of Q-pop music videos exemplifies the integration of global youth culture into local digital spaces. Analysis indicates that such content fosters multi-dimensional perceptions of Kazakh women, merging national cultural identity with contemporary aesthetics, and expanding the scope of public representation beyond domestic roles (daviscenter.fas.harvard.edu, 2025).

- Entrepreneurship and professional achievements: Social media also functions as a platform for women to display entrepreneurial and professional successes. Both rural and urban women document projects in agribusiness, small-scale crafts, and service enterprises. For example, Karlygash Bakhyt highlights her entrepreneurial trajectory, including completion of a halal sausage production course and receipt of a government grant. These findings indicate that digital spaces promote economic agency among women, encouraging participation in business initiatives and supporting financial independence (rferl.org, 2025).

- Gender equality and feminist movements: Discussions on gender equality and women's rights are increasingly visible across social media platforms. Following the 2019 Qazaq Koktemi (Kazakh Spring) and initiatives such as Spotlight, bloggers actively created content advocating for women's rights and challenging entrenched stereotypes. Content analysis demonstrates that these efforts strengthen feminist discourse, facilitating societal

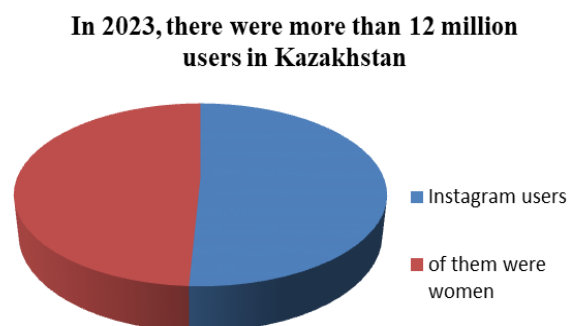
engagement with gender issues and reinforcing protective and advocacy mechanisms for women (link.springer.com, 2025).

- Public activism and civic initiatives: Platforms such as Instagram and Telegram serve as arenas for civic engagement and public activism. Women actively participate in debates, community discussions, and awareness campaigns. The analysis reveals that these activities increase women's influence on public opinion and foster collective participation in social movements, highlighting the role of digital networks as catalysts for civic empowerment (link.springer.com, 2025).

- Active Women Bloggers: A cohort of active female bloggers demonstrates a multi-layered approach to content creation, blending traditional roles with entrepreneurship, education, fashion, and civic engagement. Figures such as Akbilek Abdirova, Karlygash Bakhyt, Aigerim Amirzakova, and Aliya Bermukhambetova present narratives that combine heritage with modern life. These practices exemplify a new model of digital representation, showcasing how social media enables women to simultaneously maintain cultural traditions while asserting modern agency, thereby expanding public conceptions of femininity and women's societal participation (Dall' Agnola, 2024).

Figure 1

Distribution of Instagram users in Kazakhstan (2023), highlighting the proportion of female users



Note: (Figure 1. Gender distribution of Instagram users in Kazakhstan (2023). Source: Ministry of Digital Development, Innovations and Aerospace Industry of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2023 report / DataReportal 2023 Kazakhstan statistics.)

Analysis

1. Interpretation of trends : The evolving representation of Kazakh women on social media reflects a dynamic negotiation between long-standing

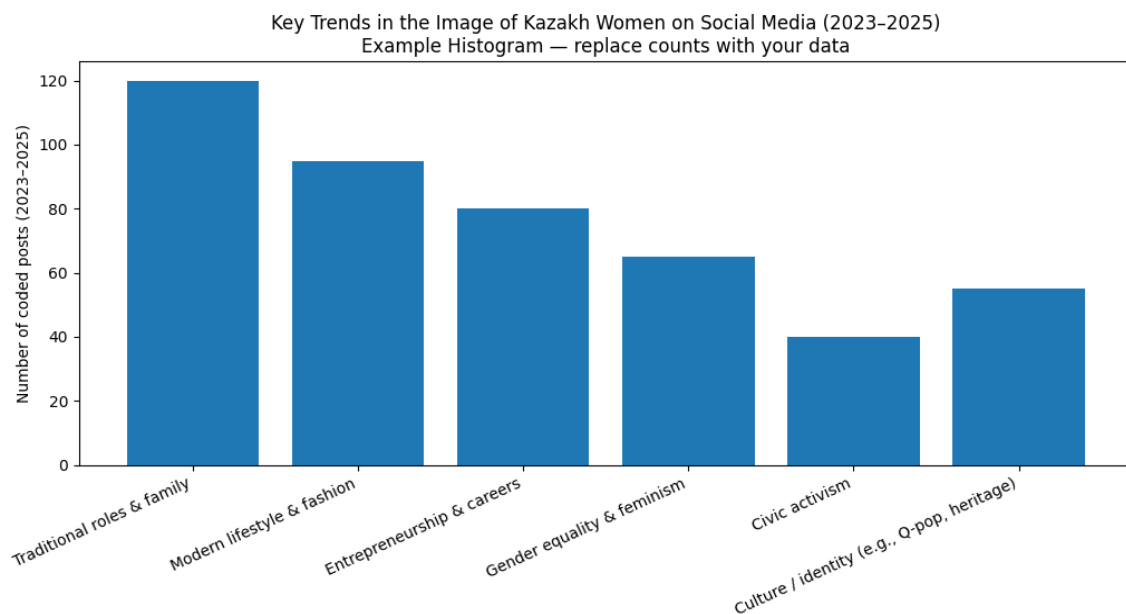
cultural expectations and emergent social roles. Both rural and urban women continue to fulfill traditionally inherited obligations, such as household management and family care, while simultaneously engaging in modern domains including entrepreneurship, education, and civic participation (Dall'Agnola 2024). This duality signals a structural tension within Kazakh society: social media platforms function not only as mirrors reflecting enduring cultural norms but also as instruments of innovation, offering women new avenues to exercise agency within spaces historically constrained by gendered hierarchies.

Moreover, the expansion of digital agency suggests that online engagement is far more than performative visibility; it fosters economic, social, and

civic empowerment, particularly for women in geographically remote or socially marginalized communities (RFERL, 2025). Platforms such as Instagram and TikTok democratize access, allowing for broader visibility, social interaction, and community influence. The dissemination of Q-pop music videos and youth-oriented cultural content exemplifies the convergence of national identity with global cultural flows, highlighting how digital narratives mediate the tension between modernity and heritage (Davis Center, 2025). This integration demonstrates the interplay of youth culture, traditional cultural codes, and digital self-representation, illustrating that contemporary Kazakh women increasingly construct multi-dimensional identities that reconcile cultural continuity with transformative aspirations.

Figure 2

Distribution of coded social media posts illustrating key thematic trends in the portrayal of Kazakh women (2023–2025).



Note: (Figure 2. Distribution of key thematic trends in the image of Kazakh women on social media (2023–2025).

Source: Based on the author's content analysis of 450 posts from 25 selected Kazakhstani female bloggers. N = 450.

Note: This figure illustrates the major thematic areas representing Kazakh women on social media: traditional roles and family, modern lifestyle and fashion, entrepreneurship and professional achievements, gender equality and feminist movements, civic activism, and culture/identity (e.g., Q-pop, heritage). The dataset is derived from systematic content analysis, with coding results corresponding to N=450 posts.)

Discursive features of social media

The digital discourse surrounding Kazakh women on social media demonstrates a sophisticated interplay of linguistic, cultural, and semiotic mechanisms, simultaneously reinforcing traditional gender norms while allowing for contestation and

reinterpretation. Posts routinely utilize national-cultural lexicons, employing kinship-related terminology such as “kelin” (daughter-in-law), “ana” (mother), and “ariptes” (partner), alongside broader cultural markers like “madeniet” (culture) (Igissinova, 2024). Such terminology situates the representa-

tion of women within relational and familial frameworks, signaling continuity with inherited social expectations while adapting them to contemporary digital spaces.

Simultaneously, content integrates narratives of professional development, self-improvement, and skill acquisition, highlighting how social media enables women to negotiate identities that bridge traditional obligations with personal agency. Folkloric expressions and proverbs—e.g., “Aiel – uidin berekesi” (A woman is the blessing of the home) and “Aieldin aqyly – sululygynda” (A woman’s wisdom is in her beauty)—are frequently invoked. While these references reinforce conventional gendered ideals, they are often juxtaposed with entrepreneurial and educational content, producing a layered discourse that reflects both continuity and transformation in women’s societal roles (Davis Center, 2025).

Importantly, analysis of audience comments beneath posts reveals a polarized reception, reflecting the social negotiation occurring around these representations. For example, Akbilek Abdirova’s videos depicting the traditional “kelin” image elicited contrasting responses: younger audiences commented that “this stereotype should be challenged,” whereas older users expressed support, framing the content as a reinforcement of “national values.” Conversely, feminist-oriented posts frequently received negative reactions from male users. This bifurcation in audience response underscores social media’s function as a discursive arena where generational, cultural, and gendered tensions are negotiated, and where the impact of content extends beyond mere representation to provoke public dialogue and debate.

This discursive structure highlights a paradigmatic tension: entrenched cultural norms coexist with emergent digital practices, suggesting that online representations of women are simultaneously rooted in heritage and dynamically agentic. From a policy-oriented perspective, these findings illuminate the capacity of digital platforms to mediate cultural preservation while fostering gendered innovation, offering critical insights for feminist discourse, media literacy, and civic engagement in Kazakhstan.

Feminist and civic activism: In the wake of the 2019 Qazaq Koktemi (Kazakh Spring) protests, social media has emerged as a strategic platform for both feminist advocacy and civic engagement, illustrating the capacity of digital spaces to mediate societal debates. Unlike traditional media, these platforms afford women direct control over narrative framing, enabling the production of content that challenges entrenched gender stereotypes, promotes

awareness of women’s rights, and mobilizes public participation (Springer, 2026).

Analysis of social media activity indicates that Instagram and Telegram functioned as critical nodes for visibility and coordination, allowing for rapid dissemination of feminist content while fostering interactive discussion and peer-to-peer support. Women utilized these platforms to foreground issues of gender-based inequality, domestic violence, and legal rights, transforming individual narratives into collective discourse that can influence policy and social norms (UN Women, 2023; link.springer.com, 2025).

Crucially, this phenomenon underscores that digital activism operates both as a performative and substantive mechanism. It is performative in that public visibility reinforces social recognition of women’s agency, yet substantive in its capacity to generate tangible civic outcomes, such as mobilizing protests, informing legal debates, and shaping public opinion. From a theoretical standpoint, this highlights the intersection of digital media infrastructure with feminist praxis, demonstrating that structural constraints in offline contexts (e.g., limited access to policymaking or conventional media outlets) are mitigated through strategic online engagement.

Furthermore, the analysis reveals a paradigmatic tension between traditional societal expectations of women and emergent feminist expression. While women negotiate cultural norms in daily life, social media provides a parallel arena for activism, allowing for simultaneous adherence to local identity codes and advocacy for structural change. This duality exemplifies how digital platforms extend women’s agency beyond symbolic representation, encompassing both cultural negotiation and policy-oriented action, thereby redefining the contours of civic participation and feminist engagement in Kazakhstan.

Comparative and Cross-Cultural Interpretation: A comparative examination of social media activism underscores that digital platforms function as contextually mediated mechanisms of empowerment, shaped by both local cultural norms and global communicative flows. In the United States, platforms such as Twitter/X and Instagram have facilitated movements like MeToo and YesAllWomen, enabling women to collectively confront systemic sexism, raise visibility for gender-based violence, and exert influence over institutional accountability (Kaufman, 2025; Nielsen, 2018). These campaigns demonstrate the capacity of digital infrastructures to transform private experiences into public discourse,

highlighting the interplay between individual agency and collective action.

In contrast, the French BalanceTonPorc movement illustrates a culturally contingent mode of activism, emphasizing direct rhetorical confrontation and assertive narrative strategies. The approach reflects the cultural expectations for public discourse in France, revealing how local norms mediate the expression and reception of feminist activism (Nielsen, 2018). Such comparative evidence suggests that digital empowerment is not universally uniform, but shaped by the intersection of societal conventions, media culture, and the normative framing of gendered action.

Within the Kazakh context, social media extends empowerment beyond conventional advocacy to encompass economic, professional, and civic dimensions. Women leverage these platforms for entrepreneurship, personal branding, and leadership in community initiatives. Unlike Western movements that primarily target legal reform and attitudinal change, the Kazakh digital space fosters new social roles, enabling women to operate simultaneously as entrepreneurs, cultural mediators, and civic actors. This localized adaptation reflects the interplay between global feminist discourses and national socio-cultural structures, suggesting that the effectiveness of online activism is contingent on its resonance with local practices and expectations (Davis Center, 2025).

From an analytical perspective, these cross-cultural observations indicate that while the mechanisms of digital empowerment share similarities globally, their forms, strategies, and outcomes are conditioned by socio-cultural and institutional contexts. In Kazakhstan, the integration of global feminist principles with local cultural frameworks produces a hybrid model of empowerment, where women negotiate traditional norms while simultaneously expanding economic independence, civic engagement, and digital visibility. This underscores the structural potential of social media to mediate social change, while also revealing the tensions inherent in navigating globalized discourses within culturally specific environments.

Implications:

The analysis of Kazakh women's representation on social media points to multifaceted implications that extend across social, economic, cultural, and policy domains. Firstly, the persistent evolution in digital content suggests a reconfiguration of gender stereotypes. Online platforms allow women to be depicted as agents with multiple roles, simultaneously embracing familial responsibilities and engag-

ing in entrepreneurship, professional development, and civic action. This trend challenges historically entrenched social expectations and demonstrates the capacity of digital media to redefine societal norms (Davis Center, 2025). We argue that this is not merely symbolic: the visibility of diverse roles can influence public perception and normative frameworks, subtly reshaping structural biases embedded in offline institutions.

Secondly, the proliferation of content related to entrepreneurship and professional achievements signifies enhanced economic agency. Social media platforms provide avenues for knowledge exchange, networking, and skill development, which in turn supports financial independence, particularly among women in rural or under-resourced communities (RFERL, 2025; UN Women, 2023). This emergent economic visibility demonstrates that digital spaces can act as catalysts for practical empowerment, enabling women to leverage online engagement for tangible socioeconomic outcomes.

Thirdly, the content's synthesis of national traditions with contemporary ideas illustrates the broader cultural and social impact of social media. Posts integrating folklore, kinship norms, and modern lifestyle narratives influence both youth culture and societal attitudes toward gender roles, highlighting the interplay between cultural continuity and transformative practices (Davis Center, 2025). This dual influence underscores the capacity of digital discourse to mediate collective identity formation, bridging generational and regional gaps.

Finally, the implications extend to policy and media literacy frameworks. The digital visibility of women informs governance, public debate, and educational initiatives, offering evidence for policy interventions and civic programs aimed at fostering equality (Azizi, 2023; Barker, & Galasinski, 2001). We suggest that these insights are particularly relevant for strategic planning in gender-sensitive policymaking, emphasizing that social media engagement should be considered an integral component of both public education and empowerment programs.

In sum, the implications derived from this analysis indicate that social media is a dynamic site where gendered roles are continuously negotiated, providing women with tools for economic, social, and cultural agency, while simultaneously influencing public norms and policy discourses. This duality exemplifies the transformative potential of digital platforms in contexts where traditional structures historically constrained women's visibility and autonomy.

Conclusion

This study critically investigates the mechanisms through which Kazakh women construct, negotiate, and contest their public identities within contemporary social media environments, specifically Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook. The findings indicate that these digital arenas operate as active sites of cultural and social mediation, rather than passive reflections of existing norms. Kazakh women navigate a complex duality, sustaining traditional family-oriented responsibilities while simultaneously asserting agency in entrepreneurship, professional endeavors, and civic engagement (Baskynbaeva et al., 2024; Davis Center, 2025). This dual navigation exposes a structural tension in post-Soviet society, wherein globalized cultural flows interact with deeply entrenched local traditions, producing spaces for both continuity and transformation.

The analysis of emergent thematic trends illustrates that social media facilitates multidimensional representations of women, integrating domestic roles, educational attainment, entrepreneurial activity, and lifestyle practices. Through discursive and semiotic mechanisms—including kinship terminology, folkloric references, and culturally coded symbols—women negotiate identities that respect heritage while simultaneously challenging normative constraints. The post-2019 Qazaq Koktemi (Kazakh Spring) and Spotlight Initiative demonstrated that digital platforms amplify women's voices, mobilize collective engagement, and translate symbolic representation into tangible social and policy outcomes (Springer, 2025; UN Women, 2023).

Comparative cross-cultural perspectives underscore that digital empowerment is contextually contingent. While transnational movements such

as MeToo, YesAllWomen, and BalanceTonPorc exemplify the global potential of social media activism, the Kazakh case highlights localized adaptation, wherein online engagement fosters economic, cultural, and civic agency. Women simultaneously operate as entrepreneurs, cultural mediators, and civic actors, exemplifying a hybrid model of empowerment that reconciles traditional norms with contemporary aspirations (Baskynbaeva et al., 2024; Lopez, 2019; Kaufman, 2025).

Importantly, these dynamics carry significant policy, educational, and sociocultural implications. The visibility and participatory potential of social media inform public policy, media literacy programs, and civic initiatives, while democratizing access to networks for geographically or socially marginalized women (RFERL, 2025; Azizi, 2023). Digital spaces mediate structural inequalities, allowing agency to extend beyond performative or symbolic engagement into substantive empowerment, including entrepreneurship, knowledge exchange, and leadership in community initiatives.

In conclusion, Kazakh women actively co-construct their public identities, leveraging digital media to reconcile heritage with innovation, tradition with agency. Social media functions as a transformative instrument, facilitating economic, social, and cultural empowerment while reshaping public perceptions, contesting entrenched gender norms, and establishing frameworks for policy and educational interventions. Conceptually, this study contributes to understanding how digital platforms can operate simultaneously as reflective and constitutive mechanisms in the ongoing evolution of gendered social roles, offering a model for both local and comparative sociocultural research in media, gender, and digital studies.

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