

# Feminist Impact via Chinese Social Media: A Post Content Analysis of Xiaohongshu

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## Abstract

This paper discusses the impact of feminism on women through the Chinese social media and e-commerce platform—Xiaohongshu. Sentiment and themes were categorized for 50 top posts of feminism, which ranged from feminism Comment, female power education to analysis of movie and news. The research reveals that different content categories, emotional tones, and commentator feedback significantly influence user engagement. This study is also an indication of active engagement and diversity of ideas on issues of feminism by young Chinese women. These findings offer valuable insights for content creators and platform operators, emphasizing the need to consider emotional and categorical dynamics in strategy development to optimize user experience and content dissemination on Xiaohongshu.

**Keywords:** *Feminism, Xiaohongshu, social media, women's rights, gender equality*

## Introduction

Social media has become a significant force in people's interaction with social and political issues such as feminism. Social media networks such as Facebook, twitter and Instagram have played an important role in the advocacy for feminism movements and a platform for women to express themselves and fight for their rights (Semenzin, 2022). In China, there are many social media platforms such as Weibo, Douyin, Weixin, Xiaohongshu (RED) etc., Xiaohongshu, which is also called RED, has risen to be among the most popular social media platform especially among Chinese young women (Pan et al., 2022). With 90.41% of its active users being women, XiaoHongshu offers a unique social media environment that provides a platform for the shaping of feminism (Gu et al., 2023).

Xiaohongshu was established in 2013, which has quickly achieved success in the Chinese market with its deep

insight into the needs of female users and its cultural philosophy. Starting from a female perspective, the platform encourages content creators to share diversified content such as beauty, fashion, and life, and builds a community environment of mutual help and trust. Xiaohongshu provides users with customized content experience through precise personalized recommendation algorithms, while cleverly embedding soft advertisements into the user experience to enhance the brand's affinity. In addition, the close cooperation between the platform and brands, as well as the influence marketing of key opinion leaders and grassroots influencers, have further expanded Xiaohongshu's influence among female brands. By constantly keeping up with the times, Xiaohongshu has not only maintained its competitiveness in social media, but its audience has also gradually expanded from a local Chinese audience to a more

international one, becoming one of the most popular social media platforms for women (Lian et al., 2021).

Xiaohongshu has transformed from a shopping website into a platform where everyone can express themselves - share experiences, opinions and suggestions. Besides, it has also become a sharing platform for girls to express feminist views. (Shi et al., 2021). Although a number of researches have worked on some research to determine the effects of social media on the growth of feminism globally, for example, Crossley (2015) mentioned in his study that Facebook expands and nourishes feminism. Digital spaces are crucial to defining "fourth wave feminist practice" and such engagement has no geographical limits (Guillard, 2016). But only a few have been done regarding to the Chinese social media - Xiaohongshu. This is a reason why the literature is limited in terms of analyzing the relationship between Chinese feminism and social media. This is rather unfortunate given that such discourses occur in different social contexts. Moreover, there is a lack of research on the particular features of Xiaohongshu and the content created by users to comprehend how and to what extent feminism is present and functions in women's lives. This research seeks to address these gaps by first providing a brief on the feminism content on Xiaohongshu and secondly the level of audience engagement.

This study aims to bridge the gap in understanding the nature and impact of feminist discourse on social media platforms, especially on Xiaohongshu in China. The study will focus on three core

aspects. First of all, this study is to define and categorize the specific types of content that promote feminism on Xiaohongshu, as the user-generated content requires a clear framework to ensure accurate positioning and classification. Additionally, this research also shed light on how feminist content influences the opinions, attitudes, and behaviors of Xiaohongshu's female users, an influence mechanism that is currently unclear. Last but not least, it is also important to explore how China's mainstream ideology influences the creation and expression of feminist content on Xiaohongshu, and the potential constraints or opportunities that the interaction between state ideology and platform policies imposes on these discourses. By systematically identifying, evaluating, and examining these aspects, this study hopes to gain a deeper understanding and shed light on the impact and role of feminism on social media.

This study seeks to give a detailed analysis of feminism on Xiaohongshu and the extent to which women have been able to embrace the application to advance for women's rights and the extent of the community's participation in such causes. Carrying out a qualitative analysis of the study sample of user-generated posts, the study will search for trends and stories. Also, likes, comments, and shares will be compared to determine the success and reception of feminism in the context of the selected social media platform.

## Literature Review

### a) Social Media

Social media has long surpassed its original role as a communication tool and has gradually integrated into people's daily lives, becoming a new lifestyle. It is not just an interface that provides visual, text and auditory functions, but a platform that can connect people's emotions, thoughts and experiences (Kent & Li, 2020). Through social media, people can keep in touch with friends and family around the world anytime and anywhere, share their lives, and express their personal thoughts and opinions. This immediacy and interactivity make social media an indispensable part of modern society.

At the same time, the influence of social media has penetrated into all aspects of people's lives. It has not only changed the way information is disseminated, but also shaped people's consumption habits, social methods and cognition of the world. Through social media, brands can reach consumers more directly, and users can obtain information and participate in social discussions more conveniently. This two-way interactive feature makes social media play an increasingly important role in shaping public opinion and social culture (Runde et al., 2021).

In addition, social media platforms have slowly penetrated into all aspects of people's lives. Whether it is used for socializing, entertainment, work or education, social media provides a space that meets the needs of different groups of people. People can find friends with similar interests, gain new knowledge,

and even seek career opportunities through social media (Akubom & Amah, 2024). With the continuous development of science and technology, the functions of social media are also constantly improving, which will play an increasingly important role in future social life (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

### b) Social Media and Feminism

With the widespread use of social media, more and more feminist views are expressed through social media. In Western society, the relationship between social media and feminism has become a hot topic in academic research and public discussion (Vaccari & Valeriani, 2021). Many studies have shown that social media sites are the main way to share feminism and support some feminist movements, such as #MeToo, #TimesUp and other movements (PettyJohn et al., 2022). Social media provides women with an unprecedented space to share personal experiences, seek social support, and mobilize gender equality and social justice. Through these platforms, women can not only tell their own stories, but also find resonance and support each other. This collective voice helps to improve the existing structure of gender inequality.

For example, Drewett et al. (2021) explained why women use Twitter to describe their experiences of sexual harassment and sexual assault, and to voice strong opposition and concerns about these experiences on social media. Their stories not only make more people aware of such incidents, but also allow more people who have experienced them to speak out, allowing women around the world to unite and resonate. This cross-

border alliance is an indispensable force in social media in promoting the development of feminism. This digital amplification has not only created awareness but also created togetherness among women across the globe, which is why social media plays such an important role in feminism (Li et al., 2021).

### **c) Xiaohongshu and Feminism**

Xiaohongshu, which is also called RED, was built in 2013 (Shi et al., 2021), which was originally opened as the e-commerce platform, but then it changed into a e-community. Xiaohongshu played a more and more important role in people's life. Xiaohongshu has successfully positioned itself as a social networking site with e-commerce integration and hence has a very large target group of young Chinese women (Lian et al., 2021). The majority of users on the Xiaohongshu platform are young females, constituting 87.24% of the user base, which is estimated to be around 300 million. Among these users, 70% are from the post-1990s generation, highlighting the app's substantial appeal to this demographic, especially young women who favor Xiaohongshu for their engagements (Gao, 2024).

Research by Lian et al. (2021) reveals that Xiaohongshu is increasingly utilized by women to engage in discussions around beauty standards, body positivism, and gender equality. The platform's design, which allows users to post text, images, and videos, supports different kinds of contents to cover both personal and social issues (Wei, 2023). This diverse range of expressions provides an easily accessible space for

feminist discourse to share their experiences and perspectives (Sun & Ly, 2023). However, Xiaohongshu is not well researched in the academic area, especially regarding the role of feminism in Xiaohongshu.

As a new media platform, Xiaohongshu not only provides a platform for women to show themselves and share their daily lives, but also becomes an important channel for the dissemination of feminism and female independence (Shi et al., 2021). Xiaohongshu presents a diverse image of women through the content posted by users, encouraging women to pursue their self-worth and express themselves. Many female opinion leaders and bloggers express positive messages about women's autonomy, self-confidence and self-reliance by sharing personal stories, career development experiences and life attitudes (El Idrissi Amiri & Ghourdou, 2024).

The unique community atmosphere and big data content recommendations created by Xiaohongshu have further promoted the discussion and popularization of feminist topics. Users can receive content on related topics on the platform and participate in discussions on topics such as gender equality, women's rights protection, and career development, which often inspire deeper social thinking and action (Ceia et al., 2021).

In addition, Xiaohongshu's e-commerce function and content sharing are closely integrated. A product may represent an independent concept that keeps pace with the times. Xiaohongshu also provides a stage for female entrepreneurs and brands to display and

sell products (Guo, 2022). This not only helps women achieve economic independence, but also provides opportunities for them to chase their career dreams. Many brands and products that have become popular on Xiaohongshu, which are founded by women or paid attention to the female market, which reflects the support of Xiaohongshu for women's economic participation and creativity (XU, 2023).

Xiaohongshu is favored and used by more and more women because it attaches great importance to how to use its own social media attributes to provide a community for women to express themselves, inspire each other and grow together (Nidoli, 2024). It challenges the stereotypes of traditional gender roles and promotes society's recognition of women's diverse roles and contributions through stories that show the versatility and strength of women (Aman et al., 2022).

Overall, Xiaohongshu has not only promoted the spread of feminism and women's independence through the influence of its new media platform, but also supported women's social participation and economic development through practical actions. It has successfully established itself as a brand trusted and loved by female users, and has also made positive contributions to social progress and diversity (Shi et al., 2021).

## Methods

The research method of this paper combines content analysis and digital ethnography, which can be specifically called social media content analysis.

Content analysis is often used when making the research on social media because analyzing and translating social media content into information, key concepts and themes is critical to generating new knowledge frameworks and developing strategies (Lai & To, 2015), which is a ground theory approach. Schwartz & Ungar (2015) mentioned researches on people's thoughts, feelings and personalities are always given small scale of volunteers, but the content on social media has a large number of statistics.

Delli Paoli & D'Auria (2021) put forward that digital ethnography is a modern way of studying how people interact in online communities and how to make it possible to send data. Ethnography is also a versatile approach that works well in online settings (Robinson & Schulz, 2009). After searching for "feminism" on Xiaohongshu and collecting relevant top 50 contents within half year, these contents are coded and organized. For example, the content of the post may be classified, such as emotional expression (positive, negative, neutral), theme (feminism Comment, female power education, analysis of Movie, etc.), and the relevant comments and interactions (such as the number of likes) are counted.

The research method includes the following steps:

- a) Select platform and keywords: Select "feminism" as a keyword for search on Xiaohongshu.
- b) Data collection: Collect relevant posts which has highest views and their comments, likes, saves and other data.

- c) Coding and classification: Encode the content of the post and classify it into different categories such as themes and emotions.
- d) Interaction analysis: Analyze interactive data such as comments and likes to find out the patterns and trends.
- e) Results presentation: Summarize the findings and explain the social and cultural significance behind the data.

in the discussion of "feminism" on the Xiaohongshu platform. "News" accounts for the largest proportion, 40%, followed by "Feminism Comment", accounting for 22%. "Analysis of Movie" accounts for 20%, and the "Female power education" category accounts for 18%. These figures show that when users discuss "feminism", news related to women in society is the most popular topic of discussion, and comments on feminism are also relatively common, while other categories of content also account for a certain proportion, reflecting the diversity of discussions and the wide range of interests of users.

## Results and Disussion

### a) Thematic Analysis of Posts

The analysis of 50 top posts from Xiaohongshu will feature the following four major themes: female power education, News, feminism Comment, analysis of movie. Figure 1 shows the distribution of different content categories

### b) Relationship between content category and number of "likes"

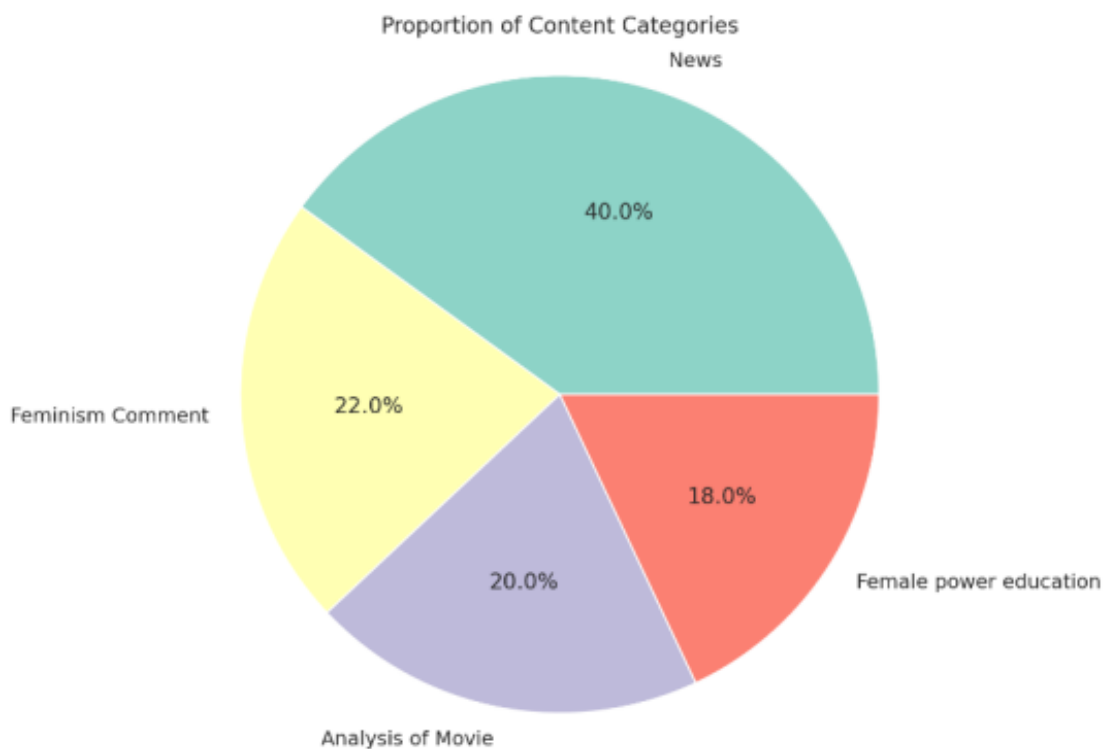


Figure 1: Proportion of Content Categories

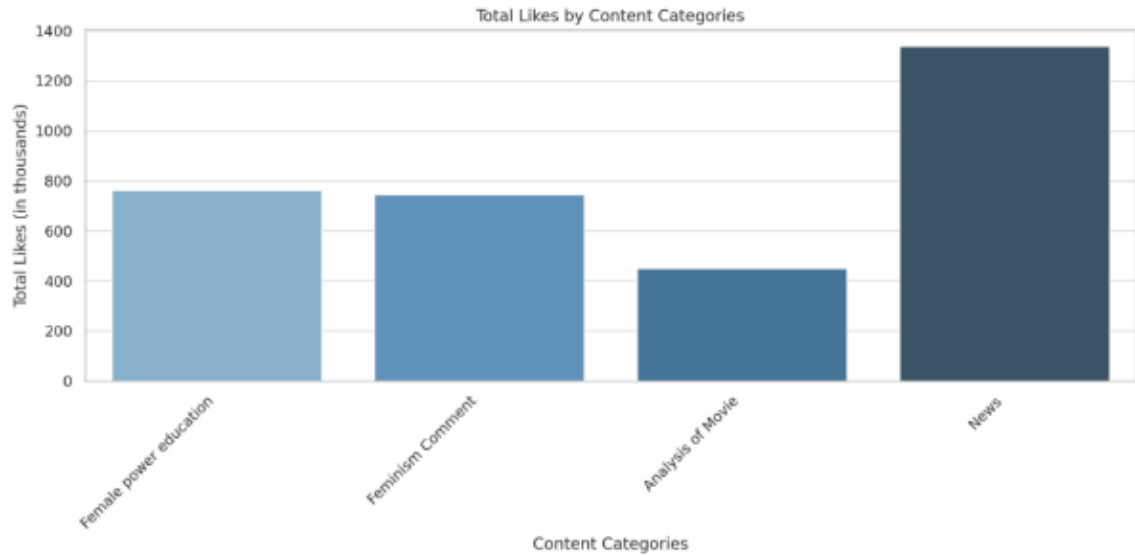


Figure 2: Relationship between content category and number of "likes"

On the Xiaohongshu platform, different categories of content attract different degrees of likes from users.

From figure 2, the most "likes" winner is the "News" posts. Among them, categories such as "Female power education" and "Feminism Comment" are particularly prominent, attracting a large number of "likes". This phenomenon shows that platform users have a strong resonance and interest in topics related to female power education and feminism commentary. This type of content can not only attract users' attention, but also stimulate users' emotional resonance, thereby obtaining high number of likes. Users' positive feedback means that these contents have a high potential for dissemination on the platform and may influence users' opinions and behaviors.

< There are many more women in decision-making positions at Cambridge University > post obtained 364000 likes, < The moment of female consciousness awakening > post got 277000 likes, and < Why do we need female directors > post

gained 256000 likes. These 3 posts are the most popular contents among "feminism" topic.

c) Relationship between content category and number of "saves"

We observed similar trends in the collection volume of content as shown in figure 3. Users not only like these topics, but are also willing to collect them for future reference. Collection behavior often means that users believe that these contents have long-term value and may contain information that is beneficial to the user's personal life, learning, or ideological growth. For example, educational content is often collected by users because of its knowledge and guidance so that they can be consulted again when needed. Similarly, feminist commentary news content may provide users with new perspectives and insights, so it is also frequently collected. These collection behaviors show the importance users attach to these topics and their actual impact in users' daily lives.

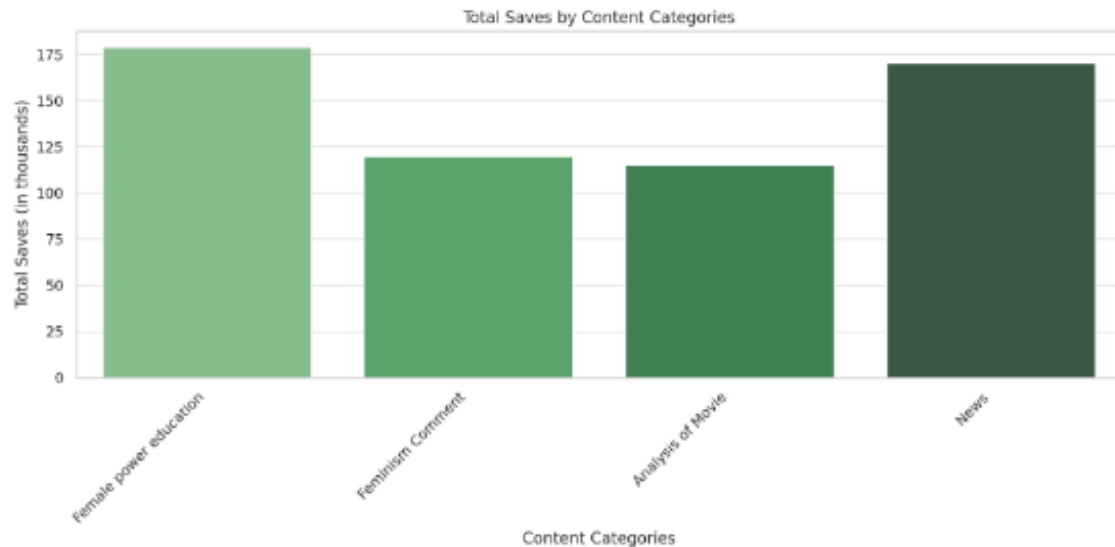


Figure 3: Relationship between content category and number of "saves"

The posts include gender discrimination, workplace inequality, societal pressures relating to women. But at the same time, their critical nature portrays high awareness and dissatisfaction within people against the prevailing gender norms and inequalities. Thus, bringing light to these issues calls for discussion and debates regarding a change in society. The educational content < Nurture yourself according to your ideal partner > received 61000 saves for this post.

d) Relationship between content categories and number of comments

Different content categories also show significant differences in the number of user comments. As shown in figure 4, the category - "News" triggered a large number of user comments. Movie analysis content usually involves in-depth analysis and criticism of the work, which may trigger clashes of opinions and discussions among the audience. News content, especially when it involves social hot spots and controversial topics, is more

likely to stimulate users' desire to participate and prompt them to express their opinions. A large number of comments means that these topics may have caused more extensive discussions and disputes among users. This highly interactive content not only enriches the social function of the platform, but also strengthens communication and interaction between users.

e) Relationship between emotional color and interaction volume

Emotional color is an important factor affecting the interaction volume of content. Studies have found that content with positive emotions usually has a higher median in "likes" and "save", indicating that users are more inclined to like and collect content with positive emotions. This may be because positive content can usually bring positive psychological experiences, making users feel happy or inspired, and thus more willing to interact with such content.



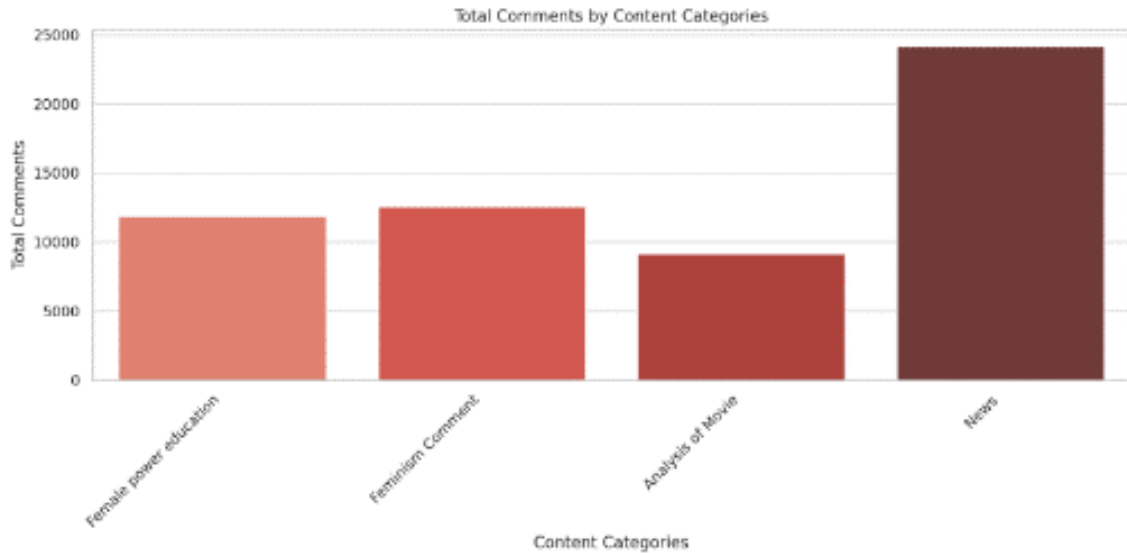


Figure 4: Relationship between content category and number of comments

However, although content with negative emotions performs relatively weak in likes and collections, it often triggers a relatively high number of comments. This may be because content with negative emotions is more likely to arouse users' emotional reactions, prompting them to express their opinions, objections or support. This shows that although negative emotions may not attract users' likes as much as positive emotions, they can enhance the influence and spread of content by triggering discussions.

#### f) Relationship between commentator's attitude and interaction volume

The commentator's attitude also showed a significant correlation with the overall interaction of the content. The study showed that content with supportive comments had a higher overall interaction, especially in terms of "likes" and "saves". This shows that users tend to like and collect content that receives more positive feedback. Supportive comments can not only enhance the credibility, but also form a positive

community atmosphere, and promoting user interaction and participation. On the other hand, this also shows that if post creators can guide positive discussions and supportive comments when producing and publishing feminist content, they may achieve greater success and influence.

### Discussion

The research has found that Xiaohongshu is an important platform for young Chinese women to express feminist discourse. From the data, we can see that news about feminism and posts about feminist education have a lot of discussions, which shows that users have a strong interest in these topics. On the Xiaohongshu platform, content categories, emotional colors, the emotions of commentators, and the interactive behaviors between users and content creators all have an impact on the development of Xiaohongshu. The ideology of the Chinese is also a very important part of the formation of Xiaohongshu content, which has formed

Xiaohongshu's unique content dissemination and interaction model.

In the first place, different content categories show significant differences in attracting user interaction. Educational content such as "female power education" and commentary content such as "feminist comments" are particularly prominent in likes and collections. This shows that these topics are not only widely concerned by users, but also have long-term reference value. Users are willing to save these contents for future use. This trend also reflects the high recognition and attention of platform users to the topics of women's power and feminism. On the other hand, film analysis and news content show stronger interactivity and can stimulate extensive discussions among users. This type of content often involves in-depth interpretation and criticism of real events or cultural works, which is more likely to resonate or controversial with users, thereby increasing the number of comments.

Secondly, emotional attitude plays a key role in user interaction. Studies have shown that content with positive emotions usually performs better in terms of likes and collections, which may be because positive content can bring users positive mental experiences, such as pleasure, encouragement, or recognition. Therefore, users are more willing to interact with these contents and express their love and support. However, although negative emotional content does not perform as well as positive emotional content in terms of likes and collections, it still performs well in terms of the number of comments. It can be seen that

negative emotional content can more effectively stimulate users' emotional responses, prompting users to express their opinions, opposition, or support, thereby triggering more positive discussions. This emotion-driven interaction shows that even negative content can enhance its dissemination and influence on the platform by triggering controversy and discussion.

In addition, the emotional feedback of commentators is closely related to the overall interactivity of the content. Content with supportive comments has higher interaction of "likes" and "saves", indicating that users are more inclined to participate in content that receives more positive feedback. This trend may be because positive feedback can enhance the credibility and attractiveness of content, form a positive community atmosphere, and further promote user interaction and participation. For content creators, being able to guide positive discussions and supportive comments can not only help Xiaohongshu to improve the popularity of content, but also increase its exposure and influence on the platform.

In conclusion, these findings reveal the complex motivations and behavioral patterns of platform users when interacting with content. Understanding these rules not only provides strong support for content creators to optimize content strategies, but also provides important academic support for platform operators. They can improve the overall user experience and content quality of the platform by adjusting the distribution of content categories, guiding positive emotional feedback, and promoting interaction between users. This multi-

dimensional interaction model reflects the changing needs and behaviors of users in the digital social media environment, providing valuable insights for future social media operations and content creation.

## Conclusion

### a) Summary of the Findings

From the research, we can conclude that with the rapid development of new media, female consciousness is awakening than never before. Xiaohongshu and various social media platforms provide women with a platform to express their voices, share their experiences and stories, and advocate for women's rights on social media. The rise of group consciousness has prompted the continuous attention of women's rights and interests, thereby providing a stronger guarantee for women's equality and dignity. Therefore, female are no longer just passive participants of rights, but more and more active in promoting laws and policies related to women, striving to fight for their own power and rights and so on. Women are no longer limited to traditional family and auxiliary roles, but are gradually moving to a broader stage, showing their unique charm and talents. Whether in art, culture, or in science, technology, business and other fields, women are using their wisdom and creativity to open up a world of their own. Their efforts and achievements have not only changed their life routine, but also injected new vitality into society. The ideology of Chinese women is also developing.

It is no exaggeration that women are gradually emerging in fields that were once regarded as male-dominated. They have not only made remarkable achievements in traditional fields such as politics and economy, but also become leaders in modern fields such as technology and innovation. More and more women are becoming leaders and experts, and their contributions have been widely recognized and praised by society, which is broadly shown through Xiaotongshu platform. This phenomenon not only reflects the improvement of women's own abilities, but also reflects the increasing attention paid by society to gender equality.

The critical discourse analysis of Xiaohongshu's feminist content in this research emphasize that this platform generally mainstreams women's empowerment. Through continuous efforts, women are changing the traditional concept of gender roles. Their success is not only a personal victory, but also a powerful challenge to gender equality in society. Today's women have not only made progress in the family or workplace, but have also become an important driving force for social change on a global scale.

### b) Research Contributions

It part of the digital feminism literature in a non-Western context, particularly relating to China. In that respect, the research bridges the gap in the literature by providing empirical data about feminist discourses on Xiaohongshu and their engagement metrics. The paper further points up the unique role that

Xiaohongshu has been playing as a platform for young women from China in discussing matters related to feminism.

### c) Limitations and Future Research

This study is nevertheless bounded by its sample size and focus on one platform. Future studies could increase the sample size and include more Chinese social media platforms, allowing for an even fuller portrait of digital feminism in China. Corresponding qualitative studies about the user experience and perceptions concerning feminist content on Xiaohongshu can also add valuable insights into this discourse.

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