

# From the Perspective of Feminism: Market Positioning of Xiaohongshu

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## ABSTRACT

Xiaohongshu, as a significant consumer carrier under the background of female consumerism, has achieved some marketing success in China. The success stems from its emphasis on female consumption. It works on culture concept, media convergence, marketing that highly connected with feminism. On this basis, it demonstrates unique preponderance and surpasses other same kind products in Chinese competitive media surrounding. This article starts from female perspective and investigates the relationship between Xiaohongshu's development and feminism. We use research methods and perspectives of female theory. Through our research, we have found the result that Xiaohongshu has the merits of concept construction and the emotional values, also has targeted strategies from female perspective in the new media environment and market definition from female base to community marketing to e-commerce construction.

**Keywords:** *Feminism, SHE Economy, Media Convergence, Marketing, Xiaohongshu.*

## 1. Introduction

Contemporarily, women are regarded as the biggest growing economic power in the world. According to *World Bank Report 2014*[1], the global spending power of women is expected to reach \$18 trillion by 2014, which is approximately more than twice the combined GDP of China and India in 2014. With the improvement of women's economic and social status, a special economic circle and economic phenomenon have been formed around women's financial management and consumption. Due to women's praise of consumption, the effect of promoting the economy is obvious, i.e., it is also called "SHE economy". Ms. Shi Qingqi, a famous economist, put forward the concept of "women's economy", which is also called "SHE economy" in her book *She Economy Analysis 2007*. [2] She pointed out that more and more businesses are starting to identify their customers from a woman's perspective, and develop and new products. Modern women have more income and more opportunities, which advocate "work in order to better enjoy life", becoming an important consumption group. In modern society, consumerism is combined with

feminism. Women consider consumption as an act of forming and expressing their individual identity as well as a symbol of their individuality. Women are more likely to be driven to consume under external guidance or trends. Recently, social media is pushing consumerism more complex and faster than any other medium. Xiaohongshu, an integrated shopping and community software, serves as an important reference and booster in today's female consumption.

## 2. XIAOHONGSHU AND ITS CULTURE

So far, Xiaohongshu has become a strong momentum that cannot be underestimated in social media arena. Its valuation exceeds 10 billion US dollars and monthly active young users exceed 100 million. Besides, it is rated as the digital media platform with the highest advertising value in the Chinese market, ranking 4th in the total list of App Store. As for the world's top business giant Chanel Dior to various emerging growing enterprises (e.g., Perfect Diary), audiences and potential customers are searched in Xiaohongshu in order to expand their market as well as improve brand awareness and influence.

## **2.1. BACKGROUND**

Under the female consumerism, the female idealized self-consciousness is unprecedented. After the Reform and Open up, contemporary women's consciousness of autonomy and independence has gradually awakened. As a consequence, feminism has gradually become a prevailing discourse narrative in the public.[3]

In the modern consumption society, "SHE Economy" has become a feminist characteristic of new consumption. The rapid development of modern society, the great abundance of commodities and the wide range of social services all contribute to the transition for female consumers from "consumption of goods" to "consumption of experience". With the incremental of goods, women have a wide range of choices, i.e., consulting consumption is on the rise. Under this circumstance, Xiaohongshu gives full play to its irreplaceable role as an encyclopedia. In this case, it provides women with complete consulting functions (e.g., product evaluation). Besides, it becomes a link between female consumers and the brand as well as an app that serves both a lifestyle platform and a consumption-making portal.

In the era of social media, women are exposed to more external platforms, and their curiosity makes them more inclined to spy on excellent role models. Xiaohongshu provides a channel for women to project their desires onto others before they are good enough to achieve their ideal life. During browsing outstanding and successful women's feeds in RED, females are able to visualize their idealized selves, i.e., get emotional satisfaction. Female students, for example, cannot satisfy their desire to be beautiful because they have no leisure time to dress up themselves. Therefore, when they see the exquisite photos posted by female stars or celebrities on social media platforms, they will project their desire to be a beautiful girl onto them, hoping that they can be them one day.

It is the contemporary consumer culture that makes women's individuality visible. In the process of consumption, women's subjectivity and highlight self-identity are reflected. Therefore, women's individual self and the larger self as a role in society get united.

## **2.2. Analysis of Competitive Products: The Merits of Concept Construction of Xiaohongshu**

In addition to the concept of "community shopping sharing" proposed by Meilishuo.com and Mogujie, Xiaohongshu is unique because of its unique humanistic care and concept, which makes it one of the most popular social sharing media today[4]

Meilishuo and Mogujie provide a platform for many network experts to share their shopping experience in

product evaluation, which play a certain role in promoting and vane the front end of the sales chain. A simple community concept is formed. Thus, some women form the habit of searching for strategies and assessments before shopping.

Limitations are that users only passively accept the recommendation information of the masters. Besides, the power of community discourse is very concentrated, which is not conducive to the development of a highly active community.

Xiaohongshu practices the concept of "the community loves the user, the user will love the community"[5], and integrates the humanism of social media into the brand building. Based on the community shopping guide platform established by Meilishuo and Mogujie, Xiaohongshu gives every user an equal right of speech and a strong sense of community. In addition to KOL, Xiaohongshu lets ordinary consumers also have the right to share and ridicule. As long as the user can resonate, the content is novel enough to have heat. Users comment and interacting with each other in their notes gives Xiaohongshu a unique sense of community interaction and belonging that allows users to participate in it.

## **2.3. The emotional Values Hidden in Xiaohongshu**

Xiaohongshu soothed women's negative energy and relieved modern women's ordinary anxiety, which became women's emotional haven. The inclusiveness of it enables women to give full play to their subjectivity. Specifically, women are no longer afraid to show off their niche interests and quirky styles. Based on big data, advanced algorithms and manual screening, people with similar interests and hobbies are connected and gathered under the same content or in the comment area of the same KOLs. Xiaohongshu builds a bridge and network for users, which allows them to find like-minded people quickly and accurately. Thereby, it eliminates the sense of loneliness of users, who may no longer regard themselves as isolated islands.

Xiaohongshu also promotes women's positive energy and gives full play to their subjectivity. Subjectivity means women's affirmation of their own power and capacity. It is a kind of conscious initiative reflected in social life practice activities that women clearly recognize their own strengths as a human being, consciously require their own status, ability, life style knowledge level, personality shaping, mental health and other aspects of continuous improvement and perfection, and strive for it. [6]

As women's sense of independence increases, they aspire to be excellent and live for themselves. Moreover, in the process of becoming excellent, whether it is internal or external, the guidance of role models is

pursued. As for women who want to express themselves, Xiaohongshu provides a platform for users to find their audience. Thus, users can play their personal strengths to obtain heat, so as to perform, feed themselves and realize self-value. For ordinary women, Xiaohongshu offers notes which are not intended for promotion, but everything from beauty makeup to perfect temperament, allowing women to find approaches to self-improvement.

In an era where social media is closely integrated with thoughts, Xiaohongshu is highly consistent with women's material needs and spiritual desires both in terms of function and content. It learns lessons from the previous community apps, which pays attention to the concept and attaches importance to humanistic care. With its successful marketization and objectification of emotional value, Xiaohongshu consciously integrates with the changing psychology of women. Nowadays, it has become an indispensable part of the social media market.

### **3. MEDIA CONVERGENCE ABOUT XIAOHONGSHU**

With the advance of society, feminism has begun to wake up. On account of the presence of media, female was gradually aware their status in the society. The plurality of feminism is embodied by four waves of feminist movements that reflect different priorities, desired outcomes, and methods over time[7]. The fourth waves of feminism is focused on justice for women. Xiaohongshu spreads the latest concept about girls' power, as for the inflection in China.[8]

The propaganda of feminism was strengthened in the process of consciousness implantation once by once through these advertisement and slogan. Besides, the latest 5G technology is utilized to communicate the significance of self-awareness for the female. It is significant for consciousness implantation in the female perspective to improve status.

Meanwhile, Xiaohongshu has enough excavation in female customers. After grasping the main point, it began to open the small range, even chose the minority audience which is symbolized feminism. Besides, as the media selection probability goes, the more the efficacy of Xiaohongshu is and the less the price to pay, the media selection probability for female to choose Xiaohongshu will be larger.

#### ***3.1. Xiaohongshu's Media Convergence in the Internet Times***

In modern society, consumption transformation is gradually appearing. It is no longer a single unchangeable structure, but an interactive and unchangeable one.

In order to achieve media convergence better, Xiaohongshu makes effort on content and distribution. For the product content, it converged the social media

and purchasing application to achieve one-stop service to catch the attention of female. After finishing the satisfaction to the demand of female in makeup, travel, emotion, food fields, it used the convenient page design to match recommendation and purchasing link. On this occasion, users do not need to consume the cost of finding purchasing way and just touch the links below the message to purchase the favorite recommendation products just now. Besides, its official online shopping mall maximized the publicity effect. This action has gained the economic benefit while achieves the nature media convergence simultaneously.

For the online distribution, Xiaohongshu has realized the significance of online publicity and made effort on being the title sponsor of talent show. The Chinese Youth was a good example. Based on the heat of talent show, RED it showed itself logo in the show frequently to attract young female's attention to add new users. To contain the new users which came form The Chinese Youth, it also set up the special parts for chinoiserie (e.g., Han Chinese Clothing, traditional makeup), which is popular in today's female to continue the heat of the talent show. This culture of layer was extremely demonstrated in the Xiaohongshu.

For the offline distribution, Xiaohongshu also set up physical store to sell derivatives about its logo and top products in some supermarkets, which gathered a large member of customers. It not only gave consumers more perfect and professional shopping experience, but also strengthened the brand impression in every consumers' heart, which is the most important. Furthermore, it also helps Xiaohongshu achieve industrialization to make the online and offline one-stop service better converged.

#### ***3.2. Xiaohongshu's Targeted Strategies from Female Perspective in the New Media Environment***

There are the fierce competitions in the new media environment. Although Weibo has the bigger volume and the more mature operation pattern in social media, Xiaohongshu still has the innovation to surpass Weibo in advertisement details.

As mentioned above, Xiaohongshu is a platform which emphasizes on concept and motion. It was the first platform to invite artists to share experience and feeling about the product, which is enough real to attract consumers purchasing the same product with superstars. It captures the desire of female to be beautiful and forms the obvious comparison with advertising shooting and showing on Weibo in the past makeup online publicity. The soft advertising makes consumers easy to catch and reduces the distance between the superstars and common people, which Weibo was not as good as Xiaohongshu.

There are also differences between Weibo and Xiaohongshu in containing old and new users. Based on mature Sina firm, Weibo uses the method that comprehensive information system to cover consumers daily life, i.e., Weibo could satisfy just for whatever users want. However, Xiaohongshu was just in the beginning and do not have enough money to invest. It uses the decentralization method which encourages users to share premium content. Because female is born with the desire to share, platform will support content expose as long as the user's content attractive enough. In this good operation model, more and more users will be appealed to join it. After enjoying bonus of heat new, users will transfer to old users to create better content.

To sum up, from my perspective, Xiaohongshu has succeeded in media convergence. It is hoped that Xiaohongshu could adapt to the changing times and set up suitable and professional live streaming service in media convergence. which will be a win-win strategy.

#### **4. Market Definition of XIAOHONGSHU FROM FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE**

Xiaohongshu has made great achievements in the media. This platform also has excellent performance in the market. The following will be described in three aspects: marketing positioning, community building, and e-commerce construction.

##### **4.1. Previous period: female base**

Xiaohongshu initial market positioning is a lifestyle sharing platform. In specific, women are more emotional, and also more love to share their experience on the Internet, i.e., it has a strong female base.

Big data shows that the population of women aged 25 to 40 is 290 million, nearly 75% of household consumption decisions are dominated by women. The size of the women's market may reach 4.5 trillion yuan in 2020, which indicates that the consumer market ushered in the era of female consumption [9]. In addition, Xiaohongshu was originally in the form of User Generated Content (UGC) overseas shopping sharing. In general, women prefer overseas shopping to men, i.e., it gained a large audience of women who are keen on overseas shopping. In detail, nearly 90% of the users are women. Among them, 24-35 years old accounted for the most, which accounted for nearly 60%. Xiaohongshu in the early positioning is clearly focused on the female market. The consumer portrait of the women is: loving life, pursuing a quality of life, enjoying shopping and sharing. The acceptance of the price is high. To cater this group of consumers, the theme color of Xiaohongshu is chosen as bright red. More specific, the red background with the white text. This simple and atmospheric design also conforms to the high-quality e-commerce character.

In the meantime, the lovely "potato captain" image can also get the good feelings of female users.

##### **4.2. Medium Term: Community marketing**

Community marketing is a kind of marketing which makes the brand spread faster through the power of word-of-mouth communication among users. It has the advantages of less investment, quick effect and concentrated target customers.

Xiaohongshu is a "community + e-commerce" model. To increase contact with users, it has made a lot of efforts in community building. First of all, on page settings, it features social software, where one can comment, chat or create group chat. In this way, the audience is made more accessible to what they want to know and are interested in, i.e., can strengthen the user stickiness. Second, it will also hold online and offline activities to maintain community building. On April 28, 2017, Lin Yun, a famous movie star entered Xiaohongshu, whose fans soared by 10.44 million soon. She once recommended a mascara that sold out five times within three months. In order to complete community building and business cycle, Xiaohongshu also pays great attention to the relationship between bloggers. In Shanghai in 2020, the first offline "handshake day" would invite bloggers to share their experiences and teach creators how to commercialize. A large number of KOL participated in the event. By means of these activities, the visibility of the platform is enhanced. In November 2020, The monthly active user of Xiaohongshu is 12.3219 million.

##### **4.3. Later stage: e-commerce construction**

Building an electronic mall ensuring the quality of products is a issue that Xiaohongshu needs to address. As mentioned above, it was the first shopping guide platform, which has always been to expand the market as a value-oriented. In October 2014, Red had his own online shopping store called "fulishe", which helps the APP create a "community e-commerce" closed loop the online shopping store in half a year later, without any advertising in the case of sales of more than 200 million. This is because Xiaohongshu has high quality users, which turns idea of buying goods turned to shopping malls to buy behavior, which is also in line with the pattern of women shopping.

Xiaohongshu supply chain adopts the form of overseas direct selling and self-owned bonded warehouse. In contacts with suppliers, which can also profit from it. Merchants can enter the platform, while it also signed a contract with the merchant and determined the commission rate (usually 15%~20%, to 5%(2020). The commission is divided into Xiaohongshu another profit model. At the same time, merchants also have to pay the corresponding margin, General merchants charge 20,000 RMB[10], Cross-border traders \$3500. Customers order

products overseas, which is directly delivery by the manufacturer from overseas .The self-owned bonded warehouse is stored in the bonded warehouse by the professional overseas purchasing group, which obtained at a low price and sold at a higher price subsequently.

Whether it is the brand concept of Xiaohongshu or the usage of media, it is ultimately for the market. How to achieve business revenue is the ultimate goal of Xiaohongshu, because of the success secretes of it that follows the concept of female consumption.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In summary, based on above analysis, Xiaohongshu won the success in the social media as a culture marketing media. There is no doubt that it did well in female marketing and communication. Specifically, it creates new female marketing model and situation, which achieves a win-win of feminism development in society and commercial success. However, it has some boundedness as a relatively free platform. Some extreme feminist concepts (e.g., "money worship" and "pastoral feminism") spread values that will have some bad impact on immature women. Even so, Xiaohongshu has infinite possibility in the future. If it is thirsty for connecting with international platforms, it must show up some features about Internet (e.g., receiving some foreign culture, global languages etc.). Besides, it is obviously that Xiaohongshu is a successful example in marketing positioning and communication under the feminism view. These results shed light for feminism to develop well in market positioning and communication.

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