# The Influence of Xiaohongshu on Female Consumer's Choices

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***Abstract:*** Xiaohongshu, a rising lifestyle-sharing platform, has garnered significant popularity among femal. Despite recent controversies over false traffic, it remains a pivotal influence on femal's shopping decisions. This study aims to explore why Xiaohongshu continues to be influential in the consumer decisions of femal after false traffic. This paper used a case study to analyze a survey of 200 femal from diverse backgrounds to understand their methods of gathering shopping information and making purchase decisions on social platforms, focusing on Xiaohongshu's unique attributes. First, the study reveals that enhanced, deceptive content on the platform frequently persuades women, suggesting a need for improved information authenticity, consumer education, and self-regulation in advertising. Secondly, digital influencers and trends heavily influence the platform's young audience, highlighting the importance of encouraging influencers to share genuine experiences over mere advertising. Lastly, the natural trust engendered by word of mouth (WOM) and user-generated content (UGC), critical features of Xiaohongshu, underscores the platform's strategy to bolster UGC and WOM credibility. In conclusion, Xiaohongshu plays a crucial role in the shopping decisions of contemporary female consumers, underscoring its significance in the social media landscape.

***Keywords:*** Xiaohongshu, misleading information, follow the trend, Word of Mouth

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Research Background

As the digital age has flourished and social media has become widespread, it has entered an era of fragmented information. This shift has led people, especially female consumers, to increasingly rely on online information to make decisions and form judgments. Against this backdrop, a unique trend has emerged on Xiaohongshu, a new lifestyle-sharing platform rapidly gaining popularity. Here, users engage in a process of "longing for something or no longer longing for something," a metaphor for sharing and evaluating life-related information and UGC. They make consumption decisions based on the credible experience's others share on the platform. Since its inception in 2013, Xiaohongshu has stood out with its unique "community and e-commerce" business form [1]. Based on the statistics from the 2022 Xiaohongshu Business Ecology Conference, Xiaohongshu boasts an impressive 200

million monthly active users, surpassing 43 million registered users, and experiences nearly 100 million daily searches, making it one of the most popular UGC platforms in China [2].

Presently, there is a scarcity of scholarly research on the emergence of Xiaohongshu on this particular site. The growing popularity of Xiaohongshu has attracted increased scholarly attention. Lin utilized the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to investigate the platform's soft advertising and its influence on consumer purchase intentions. Wang et al. conducted a study using Xiaohongshu as an example to investigate how big data may be used to develop new management models for Internet enterprises [2]. Wang and Cao conducted a study in 2023 to investigate the impact of several types of green product advertising on Xiaohongshu on consumers' purchasing decisions. They utilized Construal Level Theory (CLT) and the theory of consumption values in their analysis. Their discoveries contributed to the enhancement of eco-friendly advertising tactics [3].

## 1.2. Research Gap

Despite significant research on Xiaohongshu, additional research is needed to determine why, despite recurrent incidences of fraudulent traffic on the platform in recent years, consumers continue to rely on Xiaohongshu for information before making purchases. This paper tries to explore why Xiaohongshu remains an important stage in female consumers' purchasing decisions. The goal is to investigate why customers continue to rely on Xiaohongshu while knowing about its shortcomings, as well as the psychological and behavioral patterns of female consumers during their decision-making process. This investigation is expected to reveal information on the influence of Xiaohongshu's community-based business model, particularly in terms of user trust, content quality, and user interaction. Furthermore, this research seeks to contribute to the development of more effective consumer protection measures as well as increase transparency and ethical standards in digital advertising.

## 1.3. Structure of this Paper

To address the research questions raised earlier, this paper will conduct a survey to analyze whether female consumers browse Xiaohongshu before purchasing. This field study aims to investigate the specific types of information that contemporary female consumers of various backgrounds search for on Xiaohongshu. Based on the data collected, this paper will delve into the reasons behind these behaviors and, accordingly, offer well-founded suggestions and recommendations for improvements on Xiaohongshu.

## 2. Case Description

Because of its original community model, Xiaohongshu has rapidly climbed in the domains of social media and e-commerce since its beginning in 2013. The platform has a deep understanding of internet-era user preferences, consistently increasing its market share through initiatives such as cultivating online influencers, cooperating with celebrities, and merging an online retail mall with user-generated content. Because of its original community model, Xiaohongshu has rapidly climbed in the domains of social media and e-commerce since its beginning in 2013. The platform has a deep understanding of internet-era user preferences, consistently increasing its market share through initiatives such as cultivating online influencers, cooperating with celebrities, and merging an online retail mall with user-generated content. Xiaohongshu successfully established a B2K2C business model, effectively connecting brands, Key Opinion Consumers (KOCs), and consumers, creating a complete commercial loop from product discovery to purchase [4]. In 2017, it received the "China Brand Award," and in 2018, it raised approximately $300 million in funding, surpassing a $3 billion valuation and gaining the attention of prominent investors such as Alibaba and Tencent [5]. However,

by the end of 2021, Xiaohongshu was confronted with a number of concerns, including controversies about filtered scenic locations, privacy policy issues, and the governance of misleading marketing, all of which gained broad public attention. Despite these hurdles, Xiaohongshu has maintained its growth trajectory.

This study used a questionnaire method with three sections and nine questions to understand the buying behaviors and information gathering habits of 200 female Xiaohongshu users. The first component collects basic demographic information and internet shopping habits such as age, gender, and income. The second portion delves into their buying habits and how they use Xiaohongshu for information like brand, price, and reviews. The third section looks into the factors that influence their purchasing intentions, such as decision drivers (such as needs, discounts, recommendations, and brand loyalty), environmental considerations, and sources for new product information, using a 5-point Likert scale to collect precise data on consumer perceptions. From December 1st to December 20th, the survey was delivered on the Wenjuanxing platform. After a thorough screening process, 200 of the 250 questionnaires distributed were considered legitimate.

In terms of age distribution, these females predominantly belong to younger groups, with 101 participants under 18 years old, 83 in the 19-29 age range, 15 between 30-39, and only 1 in the 40-49 age group. This distribution reflects the popularity and influence of Xiaohongshu among young female audiences. When it comes to the factors driving shopping decisions, females of different ages showed varying preferences. Female under 18 are likely to gather shopping information through social media, friend recommendations, and online ads, with their shopping motivations leaning towards brand loyalty, price discounts, and advertising influence. The 19-29 age group may pay more attention to user reviews and brand information, with needs and price discounts being their primary shopping drivers. In contrast, the 30-39 age group may focus more on functional specifications and expert recommendations, with their shopping decisions being more influenced by needs and product innovation. Due to the small sample size of females aged 40–49, effective analysis is challenging. Additionally, the emphasis on environmental factors varies across different age groups. As females age, they may become more conscious of environmental factors in their shopping, reflecting varying levels of awareness of social responsibility and sustainable consumption across age groups.

Overall, this survey provides a window into how young female consumers in the digital age gather shopping information through social media platforms and make purchase decisions based on it. These findings not only reveal their shopping habits and preferences but also reflect the significant role of social media in contemporary consumer culture, as well as the variations in consumption decision-making processes among females of different ages.

## 3.    Analysis of Problems

### 3.1.    Reasons on Misleading Information

Since females are often fond of beautiful things, Xiaohongshu, which primarily targets female users, becomes their go-to platform for making decisions. Disinformation often appears as glorified and idealized advertising images, creating a glossy virtual world. These carefully curated images and narratives create an alluring illusion, particularly in fashion, beauty, and lifestyle. This leads female users to subconsciously trust and rely on the information disseminated on the platform. In line with its strategic objectives, Xiaohongshu is making celebrity engagement a cornerstone of its approach, drawing celebrities to share their daily lives, beauty secrets, and popular items. Concurrently, Xiaohongshu actively collaborates with various brands, inviting celebrities for endorsements and advertisements. The research of Petty et al., which examined how the caliber of the ads and the use of celebrity endorsers significantly influenced how consumers interacted with ads, lends support to this strategy [6]. Akbari posits that both rational and emotional appeals in advertising can positively

influence attitudes towards the ads and impact purchasing decisions [7]. Ads on Xiaohongshu skillfully blend visual allure with informative content, targeting the female audience's pursuit of beauty and fashion. Silayoi et al. mentioned that the informational content of advertisements is critical in influencing cognitive-based decisions, and the visual aspects play a crucial role in emotional or affective decision-making [8].

The surveys indicated that out of 200 female Xiaohongshu users, 154 acknowledged that advertisements had a substantial impact on their shopping choices, highlighting the platform's compelling allure. These observations show how Xiaohongshu's interactive and visually appealing features have an impact on the specific consumption habits that female consumers develop. This emphasizes the significant impact of visually and emotionally captivating advertising methods on molding purchase decisions, as well as the heightened responsiveness of female consumers to advertising.

## 3.2. Reasons on Trend Problem

As young people are inclined to follow current fashions and Xiaohongshu primarily targets people under the age of 30, it naturally becomes the favored platform for young females to influence their buying decisions. Xiaohongshu has emerged as a key platform for young females to explore and uncover new companies, serving as a hub for fashion and beauty enthusiasts. Hence, the latest trends and brand promotions on the platform often have a significant impact on their purchase choices.

This affinity for fashion and brands extends beyond a mere appreciation for beauty; it signifies a profound acknowledgement of the value of brands among young females. To them, a brand is not just a mark of quality and style but also a symbol of social status and personal taste. On Xiaohongshu, the portrayal of brands and products transcends traditional advertising, leveraging digital influencers and social interactions to resonate more deeply with users. These influencers don't just set trends; they are pivotal in steering brand narratives and communication. Young females' behavior in Xiaohongshu clearly demonstrates the impact of social verification theory. They prefer content that aligns with their personal interests and aesthetic tastes, particularly positive narratives from brands and influencers [9]. Javed et al. highlighted that digital influencers are instrumental in shaping content distribution and influencing consumer decision-making [10]. Their recommendations not only dictate consumer trends but also profoundly impact the brand preferences and purchasing decisions of female users.

The survey of 200 female Xiaohongshu users revealed that 118 believed brands significantly influenced their purchasing decisions, while 102 referred to recommendations from friends or social media before shopping. This insight underscores the significant role of brand power and social media engagement in shaping young female's consumer behavior. For them, pursuing brands is not only a recognition of quality but also a way to reflect their lifestyle and values.

## 3.3. Reasons on WOM

Since the WOM marketing model naturally builds trust among users and Xiaohongshu is one of the most successful UGC platforms available, it logically follows that females would choose Xiaohongshu for their decision-making process. This trust is pivotal in decision-making. As one of China's most popular UGC platforms, Xiaohongshu thrives on WOM. In this model, the exchange and sharing of information between users form the backbone of the platform's value. The greater the trust users have in the platform's content, the more likely they are to rely on this information when making decisions.

Rahaman et al. investigated the impact of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) posts on social media on users' intentions to make purchases. They utilized information adoption models (IAM) and

technology acceptance models (TAM) [11]. Their study determined that the quality, credibility, utility, and accessibility of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) information play a vital role in influencing online customers to accept and influence their purchase behaviors. Platforms like Xiaohongshu demonstrate the pronounced impact of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) when users engage with material that resonates with their own interests and preferences, thereby exerting a substantial influence on their purchasing decisions.

According to the survey, 102 out of 200 female Xiaohongshu customers stated that user reviews had a significant impact on their purchasing choices. This highlights the crucial importance of the comment area in fostering trust and influencing purchasing behaviors. The comment area serves as a platform for people to exchange their experiences and thoughts, providing useful insights for others and promoting a sense of community and trust. The interplay between word-of-mouth (WOM) communication and user involvement on Xiaohongshu fosters a shopping environment that is firmly rooted in trust and belief. This not only enhances confidence in the authenticity of the platform's content but also reinforces the connection between brands and consumers. As a result, it has a significant impact on the buying habits and choices of young female users on Xiaohongshu.

## 4. Suggestions

### 4.1. Suggestion on Misleading Information Problem

To improve the validity of information and reduce the frequency of misleading advertisements in today's digital marketplace, Xiaohongshu must use many measures to ensure the information provided to its audience is both credible and correct.

According to Kariyawasam et al., the perceived deceitfulness of advertising methods is dependent on how the target audience perceives and interprets the advertisement's message [12]. As a result, Xiaohongshu should follow Twitter's lead in increasing transparency and user confidence by establishing a clear content policy and providing succinct explanations and justifications for material removal or flagging. Self-regulation is a critical step in the advertising industry's commitment to social responsibility [13]. This strategy comprises supplying consumers with precise labels that identify product traits and qualities, thereby increasing the overall reliability of advertising information.

Furthermore, as Zhu et al. observed, when customers anticipate the negative consequences of misleading online marketing, they approach online purchases with greater skepticism [14]. This emphasizes the importance of improving consumer education and raising awareness about misinformation. User education programs, for example, can improve media literacy by allowing consumers to identify and correct inaccurate or misleading information. These activities should be aimed at providing customers with full information about various goods or services, including explicit statements regarding deceptive claims and consumer rights, to protect them from the hazards of misleading ads. Consumers can learn to understand emotional triggers and practice caution in their financial decision-making processes through such training activities.

In summary, by bolstering the authenticity of information, enhancing consumer education and regulation, and encouraging self-regulation within the advertising industry, Xiaohongshu can maintain its positive influence on female consumers. Simultaneously, these measures protect consumers from the effects of misleading advertising, fostering a healthy and sustainable consumer culture.

### 4.2. Suggestion on Following The Trend

Learning to consume rationally is crucial in today's consumer culture, where females represent a significant market segment. Faced with ever-shifting fashion trends and aggressive advertising

campaigns, females need to cultivate independent thought and rationally analyze promotional materials. This is particularly pertinent in the digital age, where discerning the difference between genuine sharing and commercial promotion is vital, especially when considering recommendations from digital influencers [15]. Such discernment can lead to more intelligent and thoughtful spending decisions. Furthermore, Xiaohongshu should encourage digital influencers to share authentic experiences rather than merely serving as advertising conduits. It could involve requesting influencers or bloggers to provide honest feedback after using a product, highlighting its benefits and potential drawbacks, and giving greater visibility to content offering high-quality, authentic experiences.

Also, females need to enhance their personal judgment skills, grasp individual needs, and master essential financial management. Studies indicate that personal values significantly impact consumer behaviors, including tendencies towards innovation and online consumption [16]. Therefore, understanding and adjusting these values can guide females towards more rational spending decisions. Realizing one's actual needs is crucial to avoiding impulsive shopping driven by trends. Comprehending one's motivations for spending can lead to more accurate predictions about future behaviors, thus fostering more judicious purchasing choices. By adopting these practices, females can not only safeguard their financial interests but also contribute to developing a more mature and reasoned approach to consumption.

## 4.3.  Suggestion on WOM Problem

UGC, particularly word-of-mouth (WOM), has a substantial impact on consumer acceptance of Internet views [17]. By strengthening its UGC and WOM initiatives, Xiaohongshu may significantly increase the trustworthiness of WOM, thereby extending its client base. One practical strategy has been to increase the visibility of high-quality material; highlighting exceptional contributions on the platform's homepage or distributing them to a larger audience not only increases the exposure of excellent UGC but also its influence. Concurrently, Xiaohongshu can incorporate a rewards system, awarding points, badges, and presents to users who create high-quality material.

Furthermore, creating a community for content contributors is a strategic move. Regular sessions sharing insights on content creation and analyzing trends will spark a surge in creative enthusiasm among users, nudging them to diversify their contributions. This initiative can not only reinforce the credibility of UGC but also diversify the platform's content landscape. By introducing third-party verification processes akin to Amazon's "Verified Purchase Review" system, it is possible to increase the credibility of these evaluations by ensuring that the users who write the feedback and reviews have actually used the products. Adding a "verified purchase" label to reviews by users who have bought the product significantly enhances their trustworthiness. Moreover, Xiaohongshu' s proactive approach to addressing negative feedback underscores its commitment to transparency and accountability, further solidifying user trust in the platform.

These concerted efforts can augment WOM's credibility and extend its appeal, particularly with a younger audience that values diverse and authentic content. By advocating the sharing of genuine purchase experiences and product evaluations, Xiaohongshu can position itself as a dependable guide for various consumer segments in their purchasing journey. Such authentic content sharing fosters trust among consumers, bolstering their confidence in the brands and products featured on the platform. Ultimately, the execution of these multifaceted strategies serves to retain and expand Xiaohongshu' s user base, thereby amplifying its market presence and enhancing its brand value.

## 5.  Conclusion

This study examines the influence of Xiaohongshu, a widely-used platform for sharing lifestyle content, on females' shopping behaviors, despite its previous problems with fake user engagement.

Centering on female users, this study investigates their dependence on user-generated content (UGC) while making purchasing decisions and how Xiaohongshu's community-centered strategy impacts user trust and involvement. The objective of the research is to augment consumer safeguarding, foster transparency, and sustain ethical criteria in the realm of digital advertising. The study examines the methods employed by 200 female Xiaohongshu users to obtain purchasing information and make decisions in the era of digital technology. The analysis incorporates theories of consumer behavior, the influence of social media, and the spread of information through word-of-mouth. It examines buying habits among various age demographics. The results emphasize the important impact of social media in today's consumer culture, specifically highlighting the effect of Xiaohongshu in the decision-making of female customers.

The study's key contributions lie in providing deep insights into female consumer behavior on Xiaohongshu and critically examining the platform's misleading information. It reveals how digital marketing strategies and influencer content shape females' shopping preferences, which is essential for forecasting female consumer behavior in digital contexts. Additionally, it highlights the need for authenticity in digital advertising, pointing out the influence of beautified content on user perceptions and the importance of ethical advertising standards. Regarding limitations, the study emphasizes the need for a more diverse and extensive sample to better represent Xiaohongshu's varied user base. Future research should include a broader spectrum of users from different genders, cultures, and backgrounds. Additionally, understanding the impact of geographical and cultural contexts is crucial, as users from different areas may perceive the same platform differently. Exploring these differences is vital for developing culturally sensitive and region-specific content strategies.

In summary, this research offers a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of social media and its impact on diverse user groups, providing valuable insights for future studies and practical platform development.

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