A Feminist Perspective on the Interaction Discourse Between Female Bloggers and Users on Social Media: A Case Study of Xiaohongshu

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Abstract. With the development of digital media, feminist thought has demonstrated new modes of dissemination on new media platforms. This paper aims to analyze the interactions between female bloggers and users from a feminist perspective using discourse analysis as a tool. The study explores the deeper motivations and influencing factors behind interactive discourse to foster a more equitable and inclusive discussion on gender issues and a more harmonious social media discourse space. It also seeks to provide theoretical support and methodological reference for scholars studying the dissemination of feminism on new media platforms.The research finds that the pragmatic strategies of users and bloggers differ but are both influenced by subjective emotional tendencies. Furthermore, the study reveals that the discursive identities of users and bloggers in interactions are shaped by the discourse scenarios constructed by bloggers: the closer the content is to the users' lives, the tighter the connection between their discursive identities, and vice versa. Additionally, different types of content play varying roles in the operation of feminist blogger accounts.

Keywords: Feminism, Discourse Analysis, Female Bloggers and Users, New Media Platforms, Xiaohongshu

1. Introduction

We observe that gender issues, particularly feminist topics, frequently become focal points of public discourse on internet social platforms. Michel Foucault's concept of "discourse as power" highlights that the collision between feminist thought and traditional patriarchal ideologies reflects relatively equal discursive power between women and men on new media platforms. The enhancement of women's discursive power on social media platforms is attributed to digital media providing women with a space to share their stories, perspectives, and experiences. Additionally, the unique discourse forms of the internet facilitate the dissemination of feminist ideas [1].

In the virtual context of digital media, the features of internet discourse usage and the impact of discourse vary between users and bloggers. Users' discursive motivations are influenced by complex factors, grounded in theories such as the "Interpersonal Relationship Model" proposed by Lawrence J. Stibel and Marian Peabody, and Neumann's "Spiral of Silence" theory. Bloggers, on the other hand, utilize internet discourse as a vehicle for thought and to construct their mediated personas, a role that is particularly pronounced among female bloggers.

There are three primary reasons for selecting Xiaohongshu as the research platform. Firstly, Xiaohongshu has a highly concentrated female user base, providing fertile ground for research from a "feminist" perspective. According to statistics, the gender ratio on Xiaohongshu is approximately 3:7 (male to female). In comparison, Weibo users comprise 52% male and 48% female, while Bilibili users consist of 55% male and 45% female. Secondly, Xiaohongshu features diverse feminist content, covering topics such as childbirth, marriage, gender relationships, and career choices. Finally, Xiaohongshu's unique operational mechanisms contribute to its appeal. Its content is more lifestyle-oriented, and the "community" atmosphere enhances the interaction between bloggers and users.

In summary, this study analyzes the interactive discourse in comments between female bloggers and users on Xiaohongshu from a feminist perspective. From a theoretical standpoint, this research applies discourse analysis theory and enriches the theoretical content related to the interaction between mobile opinion leaders and audiences. From a practical standpoint, it seeks to provide valuable insights into the dissemination of feminist ideas and the operation of female blogger accounts.

2. Literature Review

The term "Discourse Analysis (DA)" was introduced by American structuralist linguist Z. S. Harris. In its early stages, discourse analysis applied structuralist theories to dynamically study discourse within texts. With the development of semiotics and post-structuralism, scholars began placing language within social contexts for analysis. Today, discourse analysis not only emphasizes the social practice significance of linguistics but also integrates extensively with disciplines such as computer science and artificial intelligence, offering new perspectives for understanding social phenomena.

With the rise of the internet, mass media discourse analysis has emerged. This field applies traditional discourse analysis theories to mass communication research. Scholars both domestically and internationally have recognized the impact and significance of internet discourse in major social events. For instance, renowned international scholar Michal Krzyzanowski has emphasized the importance of concepts and their transformations in public discourse [2]. In China, scholars focus on localizing discourse analysis theory and fostering innovation. For example, Wang Jiayu combines post-humanist linguistics with traditional Chinese philosophy, while Ran Yongping advocates for examining the essence of internet discourse interaction from a pragmatic perspective. In general, while the focus of mass media discourse analysis research differs between domestic and international scholars, the increasing abundance of research material provided by social media platforms presents broader opportunities for further exploration in both contexts.

Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) first explored women's textual and conversational roles in fields such as parliamentary environments, news and advertising media, classrooms, community scanning projects, and workplaces through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) [3]. This marked the first time women's discursive power received significant attention in the field of discourse analysis. Through discourse analysis, we can observe the new forms of feminist dissemination on new media platforms. Initially, feminism focused on advocating for women's basic human rights in political spheres. Later, Simone de Beauvoir emphasized the need for women to escape the state of being "the Other" and to achieve self-realization. On new media platforms, feminism has shifted to focus more on gender relations and exploring personal empowerment. For example, international studies analyzing discourse around the "Me Too" movement from a feminist perspective identified the proliferation of "hyper-masculinity" and misogyny on social media platforms (Maaranen & Tienari, 2020). In China, Xu Zhi and Gao Shan have noted phenomena such as internalized misogyny and gender discrimination within online female communities [4]. Bu Wei, in *Feminist Media Studies: "Theoretical Travel" and Local Knowledge Production,* systematically explored the development of feminist theories on new media platforms [5]. Wang Yaqian, in articles such as *"New Mimetic Environment": The Personalized Expression of Short-Video Bloggers and Its Impact on Users,* discussed the different impacts of interactive discourse on bloggers and users [6]. Overall, both domestic and international scholars adopt diverse perspectives in their studies of feminist dissemination on new media platforms, offering insights beneficial to both disseminators and audiences within the feminist communication process.

In existing research, studies on the interaction between female bloggers and users remain insufficient. This paper aims to explore these interactions from a feminist perspective, using discourse analysis as a tool to investigate the deeper motivations and influencing factors behind interactive discourse. By enriching the research content in this field, the study seeks to contribute to creating a more equitable and inclusive atmosphere for discussing gender issues and fostering a more harmonious social media discourse space.

3. Research Results

3.1. Research Subjects

This study uses Xiaohongshu as the platform and selects five accounts as samples based on factors such as account influence, style, and published content. The accounts were chosen from the "2024 Xiaohongshu 300" list, which features creators who have been representative within the Xiaohongshu community over the past year. (See Table 1)

Table 1. Overview of Sample Accounts

Account Type	Account Name	Followers (Million)	Likes and Saves (Million)	Account Features
Vlog Recording	Alex Definitely is a girl	4.41	18.88	Focuses on video-based notes, sharing daily life alongside clothing and accessory recommendations. Emphasizes "self" and "freedom."
Check-in Display & Emotional Resonance	A Wen is Aya	16.77	139.42	Focuses on video-based notes, popularizing female knowledge and constructing the image of an "independent cool mom."

Table 1. (continued).

Leisure & Entertainment	Young Worker Xiao Zhang	6.07	81.35	Primarily creates video notes, focusing on everyday topics with relatively fragmented video content.
Knowledge Sharing	Pause in Conversation	13.68	101.15	Uses scenario-based video performances to enrich content coverage and provide comprehensive video content.
Check-in Display & Emotional Resonance	Yang Tianzhen	32.78	102.58	Focuses on video-based notes, sharing daily life while recommending clothing and accessories, constructing the image of a "clean and pure lady."

On the Xiaohongshu platform, content published by bloggers is referred to as "notes." Each note provides users and bloggers with relatively independent discursive spaces. The following three principles were adhered to when selecting sample notes:

1.Timeframe: Sample notes must have been published between May 1, 2024, and November 1, 2024.

2.Engagement Metrics: Priority was given to notes with higher views and discussions.

3.Topic Diversity: The selected notes should cover as broad a range of topics as possible.

For collecting comment data, the following two principles were observed:

1.Representativeness: Selected comments must hold a certain level of representativeness, quantified by the number of likes they received.

2. Interaction with Blogger: Priority was given to comments that the blogger had interacted with.

Based on these principles, a total of 180 interactive discourse comments were collected, amounting to over 6,000 words. The topics covered were diverse, and the open coding approach ensured that the data achieved openness, flexibility, and saturation.

3.2. Research Findings

3.2.1. Emotional Attitude Determines Pragmatic Strategies

Xiaohongshu provides users and bloggers with three methods for interactive discourse: textual narration, emoji use, and image display. Statistical analysis reveals that compared to bloggers, users tend to employ more diverse means of interaction. Additionally, when expressing negative attitudes, users adopt more complex pragmatic strategies.

The following are two examples of user comments under the same video:

a. "Each texture is so on point, sister, you're so beautiful!"

b. "Am I the only one who thinks it's too expensive? [Sneaky Smile Emoji]"

In **a**, the user's attitude is positive. They only use textual narration and directly express their opinion, employing a simple pragmatic strategy. In **b**, the user's attitude is negative, raising doubts about the price. The user combines textual narration with an emoji and employs rhetorical questioning, forming a basic structure of "rhetorical question + opinion + emoji." The appropriation of the emoji's meaning adds a layer of sarcasm, making the strategy more intricate and indirect yet effectively expressing their attitude.

Bloggers, on the other hand, prefer simpler methods for discourse interaction. They may "like" comments they agree with, ignore differing opinions, or reply using ambiguous emojis.

The choice of pragmatic strategy is often influenced by emotional attitudes. Users adopt complex strategies primarily to emphasize their opinions and garner more allies and support. In contrast, when users are positive, they do not feel the need to "arm" their discourse with strategies. Bloggers, however, are motivated by the need to construct a positive media persona. To avoid conflicts with differing opinions, they opt for simpler strategies that help obscure their stance.

3.2.2. Video Context Shapes Discursive Identity

Different types of videos create varied contexts, influencing the discursive identities of users and bloggers during interactions.

In knowledge-sharing notes, the proportion of negative discourse is higher compared to other topics. Additionally, in these negative comments, the content that sparks controversy is often less relevant to the "knowledge" shared in the video. (See Figure 1)
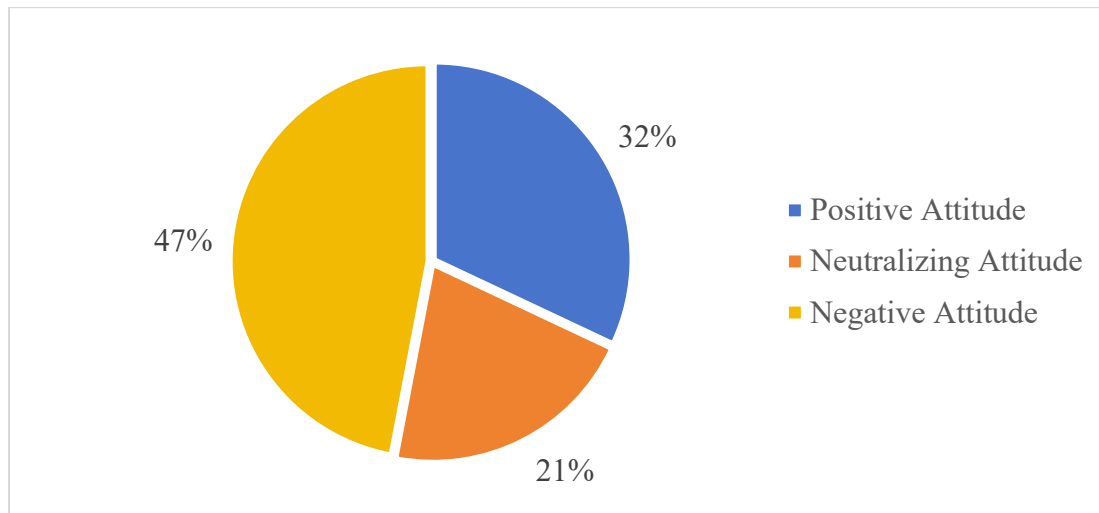
Figure 1. Percentage of Comment Attitudes in Knowledge-Sharing Videos

Compared to the core knowledge itself, peripheral elements of the videos are more likely to be captured by users, leading to a deviation in interaction topics. Additionally, in such videos, users tend to interpret and evaluate the content from a more rational perspective, resulting in comments that appear "calm and objective." In this context, bloggers act as active disseminators of knowledge, while the audience assumes the role of passive recipients. This discursive identity reduces the intimacy and warmth present in the interactions of other video types.

In contrast, in emotional resonance and vlog-style notes, bloggers and users interact as "internet friends," with topics revolving around the video content. Users are more inclined to share their personal experiences.

The following are examples of user comments under different videos:

a. "Exactly! Don't fall into a victim mindset; you must dare to try everything! After becoming a single mom, I handled everything on my own—finding a house, renting it, moving in, assembling the bed, cabinet, table, and curtains... Before doing it all, I never thought I could be this strong!"

b. "After starting to work out, I found everything feels lighter, and I get sick less often. So, sisters, go hit the gym! Not to cater to beauty standards but to become truly independent and powerful!"

Bloggers are skilled at capturing small moments in life, which evoke strong resonance among users. Additionally, by sharing their own lives, bloggers create a sense of participation for users. Based on a shared understanding of feminist topics between bloggers and users, coupled with the influence of attitude and emotion, users exhibit the following interactive discourse motivations:

1. The dual effect of "attitudinal consensus + emotional resonance."

2. Activation and expansion through related experiences.

3. Audience interpretation and sharing.

Based on the influence factor model of social media opinion leaders established by Wang Yaqian in the article "From Celebrities to 'Micro-Celebrities': The Identity Transformation and Influence of Opinion Leaders in the Mobile Social Era" (see Figure 2).
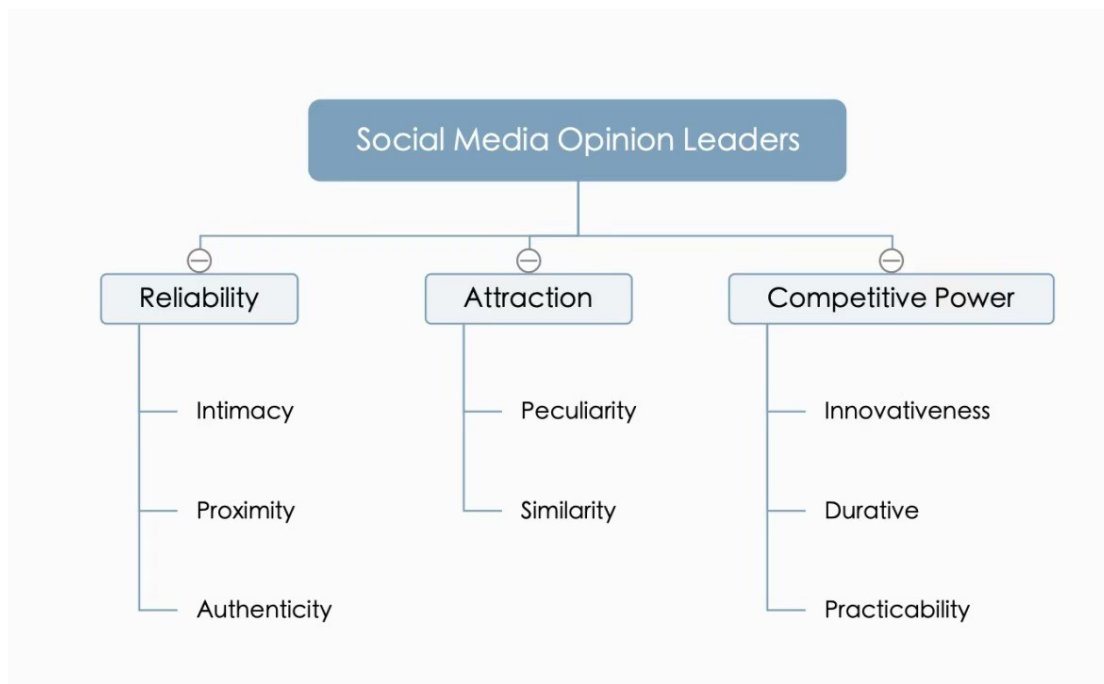
Figure 2. Influence Factor Model of Mobile Opinion Leaders

Different types of videos serve different purposes for bloggers:

Knowledge-sharing videos are highly practical but do not demonstrate significant advantages in credibility or appeal.

Emotional resonance videos perform better in terms of credibility and appeal but are relatively weaker in competitiveness.

Vlog-style videos offer viewers a stronger sense of belonging, with highly personalized content bringing novelty to the audience. Additionally, they fulfill the need for "continuity."

Audiences generally enjoy Vlog-style videos, and more bloggers are adapting to this trend. However, the issue of authenticity in Vlog-style videos cannot be ignored. Overly exaggerated portrayals may backfire, provoking stronger dissatisfaction among viewers.

4. Challenges and Innovations

4.1. Challenges

1. Difficulties in Data Collection and Processing

The lack of a comprehensive corpus poses a significant challenge. Due to the platform's recommendation mechanisms, the types of interactive discourse users are exposed to are relatively homogeneous, making it difficult to enrich the research sample. Balancing the representativeness and diversity of discourse is a major obstacle. Additionally, presenting the sampled discourse in a more objective and scientific manner requires researchers to have strong data processing and coding skills.

2. Integration of Interdisciplinary Theories

This study involves three aspects: feminism, new media communication, and discourse analysis. Each aspect has its own complex theoretical framework. Integrating these theories and utilizing them effectively demands a higher level of interdisciplinary competence and innovative ability from the researcher.

4.2. Innovations

1. Innovation in Research Perspective

Most existing studies on new media communication analyze either the blogger's or the user's perspective in isolation. This study, however, adopts a bidirectional perspective on the discourse interaction between bloggers and users, paying equal attention to both the disseminators and recipients. This provides a reference point for future studies on new media communication.

2. Innovation in Theoretical Application

Traditional discourse analysis is primarily based on face-to-face conversations. This study applies discourse analysis theories to the virtual discourse space of digital media and incorporates the use of emojis into the analysis. While thoroughly practicing discourse analysis theory, this research also expands its application scenarios.

3. Innovation in Research Subject

This study delves into the unique attributes of female bloggers in the process of disseminating feminist topics, such as their distinctive media personas and the strengths and weaknesses of women in promoting feminist content. It specifically focuses on "gender" as a key influencing factor in the dissemination of feminist idea.

5. Conclusion

New media platforms have constructed new virtual discourse spaces for humanity, within which women's discursive power has been elevated, and the dissemination of feminist thought has exhibited new characteristics. On the Xiaohongshu platform, where female users are highly concentrated, users generally provide positive feedback on the feminist ideas advocated by female bloggers, allowing these ideas to spread effectively.

Due to objective constraints, this study analyzed only 180 samples and was unable to comprehensively address every type of video topic and content. Xiaohongshu, as a new media platform with dual attributes of "e-commerce + community," could provide a more holistic view of feminist dissemination if future research delves deeper into the advertising and marketing strategies employed by bloggers under feminist topics. Incorporating questionnaire surveys and in-depth interviews would further strengthen and lend credibility to the exploration of discourse meanings and motivations.

Discussions around gender issues, particularly feminist topics, remain contentious and polarized on new media platforms. Some scholars take a pessimistic view, arguing that female expression in new media is essentially a "utopia" of women's discursive power (Song Suhong & Yang Xi, 2010). If bloggers merely produce highly homogenized content, creating a façade of false prosperity to exploit the momentum of feminism for self-promotion or sensationalism, it would contribute nothing to the dissemination of feminist ideas. Similarly, if users merely follow trends, complain thoughtlessly, or engage in baseless criticism, it would only reinforce divisions.

The dissemination of feminist thought is a complex and intricate process. This paper aims to serve as a starting point, providing theoretical support and methodological references for scholars researching the dissemination of feminism on new media platforms.

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