

# Impact of Xiaohongshu on Its User Based and Society: A Review

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**Abstract - Today, individuals pretty much all use at least one mobile app a day. In china it is mostly used unique apps within their country. Xiaohongshu is most famous mobile application which is used in china for their Xiaohongshu is a cross border e-commerce and social media platform that trades luxury, beauty and fashion goods by inspiring shoppers to share contents, ideas, bargains and shopping tips in the social community. Accordingly, this study mainly focused to identify the impact of Xiaohongshu on its user based and society.**

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the past few years, there has been an explosive growth in the number of mobile apps with over billions of users persistently having access to smart phones around the world. Today, individuals pretty much all use at least one mobile app a day. Whether it's checking persons' bank account, shopping for an outfit or direction for a restaurant, there is an app for all of above and lots more too. Mobile- apps are applications that are running on mobile devices like smart phones or tablets (1). Furthermore, mobile app can be defined as computer generated program designed and developed to run on iPhones, smart phones, tables and many other mobile devices (2). It can be accessible mobile apps through app stores such as Apple App store, the blackberry World store, the Google Play store, Microsoft Phone Apps store and many more specialized or regional app stores (3). Accordingly, Statista (4) statistics, as of August 2017, there are over 3.5 billion unique mobile internet users and it was downloaded 197 billion mobile apps in 2017. Further, it was emphasized there are about 8 million apps in the Google Play store, 2.2 million apps in the Apple Play Store, 669K in the Windows Store, and 600K in the Amazon App store (5). The figures provide information on the number of iOS and Android app downloads in 2017, 11.3 billion apps were downloaded in the United States, while china had the highest amount with 79.3 billion downloads and the

second highest download 12.3 billion is recorded from the India (4).

China has the largest population and the fastest growing consumer market in the world. One of the most popular fastest markets has been the smart phone and mobile game market. And also china has exceeded United States figures, number of mobile application activation and engagements for Android and iOS. It seems that smart devices are becoming more entertainment-oriented with become most used mobile applications are video and music relevant apps. In recently, Aurora Big Data (6) highlighted that China's mobile app industry was steeping a partial rapid change under the overall stable situations. Further, it was underlined in fourth quarter of 2017; there is an average of 40 apps per mobile phone and every netizen occupies 4.2 hours per day on various app respectively 2.5 hours spent on social networking apps, 30 minutes watch online videos, 12 minutes for get news, 11 minutes for online shopping, and about 10 minutes to play a mobile game. Video apps Huoshan and Tik Tok, mobile games Wildlands Ops and Tongzhou considered as the most popular new comers to the Chinas' mobile app market in 2017. WeChat was the topped on the list in 2017 and QQ app become second place in china market respectively. In December 2017, mobile netizens downloaded 4.13 apps on average and uninstalled 3.42 apps. Moreover, Aurora Big Data (6) stated that males enjoy Momo mobile application and women have favoritisms on mobile applications such as Picture show, Faceu and B612 to take photographs. It can be segmented mobile apps based on several insights such as social networks, integrated e-commerce, Haitao e-commerce, fresh e-commerce, used e-commerce, car service, shared bicycle, used car trading, payment settlement, online banking, photograph picture, short video, live streaming, Music karaoke, game and Workout. While WeChat, QQ, Sina Weibo and DAU are still leading among the social network mobile application,

Taobao, Jingdong, and pinduo ranked among the top three in the penetration list of integrated e-commerce app with 53.4%, 20.7% and 19.0% market penetration rate respectively. As of the last week of the December 2017 highlighted that 1.68% market penetration rate of Xiaohongshu which is considered as most popular haitao e-commerce app in china. Accordingly, the Aurora Big Data (6) indicated most popular mobile apps based on variety of insight with their market penetration rate.

Xiaohongshu is a cross border e-commerce and social media platform that trades luxury, beauty and fashion goods by inspiring shoppers to share contents, ideas, bargains and shopping tips in the social community. It also known as “Little Red Book” .Tingyi chen (7) stated that Little Red book is one of the foremost and fastest growing social e-commerce app in china and it encourages a “safe space” for like-minded shoppers to write reviews and share their shopping experiences worthy or not. As well as it emphasized in series D round June 2018, Xiaohongshu valued at USD 3 billion and it has been supported by the most prestigious investors including Alibaba, Tencent, Benesis capital, ZhenFund and GGV capital. Xiaohongshu has over 100 million registered users and it can be identified 30 million monthly active users. Active user increment could be identified as 40% in the end of 2017 (7). According to the Yiguan statistics in January 2018, Xiaohongshu’s penetration rate in cross-border e-commerce app reached 70.4 % (as cited in (8)). It has emphasized some statistics by e-commerce research center based on gender structure female users accounted for 89% , based on age structure accounting for 21% under 24 years old and accounting for 64-35 years old 64% (as cited in (8)). Xiaohongshu is not limited to the Chinese people it can be used foreign consumers with confidence. People’s daily newspaper (9) highlighted that little red book could be win 50 million Chinese and foreign consumers with acquiring their trust on cross-border e-commerce platform.

Hence, the study mainly focused to examine the impact of Xiaohongshu (Little Red book) on its user based and society at large.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### *History of Xiaohongshu*

Xiaohongshu which can be literally interpreted as “little red book” as Chinese and it is a social e-commerce shopping app founded in Shanghai, china in 2013 by Miranda QU and Charlwin Mao as a UGC (User Generated Content) social sharing platform. After some iteration it was introduced android version via transforming shopping strategy in to a shopping-sharing community in 2014 (8).

In the beginning Xiaohongshu arrived with a sharp position to aiming young, urban female’s unmet wants and needs of discovering and sharing shopping list and experiences while travelling outside the china or connect local Chinese female customers with international merchant. Through this accurate customer targeting strategy Xiaohongshu could be able to distinguish their mobile app among the Weibo, Weixin and some image sharing platforms which already covered mass Chinese consumers’ Digital Social Life. Accordingly, Xiaohongshu made a large group of females who love luxury/ fashion shopping and sharing, bringing lot of trust, feeling of being involved and safety to its target consumers (10).

Shanxi News networks highlighted that Xiaohongshu is used word-of-mouth marketing and they revealed the “2014 Little Red Book Global awards”. The products chosen for the award are selected based on reviews and votes from users (11). In 2014, it was underlined there are 17% of the daily regular visitors were opening Xiaohongshu six or seven times per day. As well as founder identified there is one consumer category who are using this app to get the help of their relatives living or studying in abroad to purchase products. After the six months from the launch of the app the Xiaohongshu setup its warehouses in Shenzhen and Zhengzhou. It started to sell cosmetics mostly from Asia, Nutrition products from Australia and fashion products mostly from Europe. As stated above the Xiaohongshu based on word-of mouth marketing approach and as of 2016 total app downloads increase up to 15 million (12). At the end of the 2015, Xiaohongshu formed strategic

cooperative partnerships with worldwide popular business brands such as Blackmores, Panasonic, @cosme, and kirindo. In just after 4-year continuation the number of users has exceed 50 million and Xiaohongshu has grown into world's largest community e-commerce platform (9).

Chop hand girl highlighted (13) that on June 6th Xiaohongshu sales reached 100 million RMB in the first two hours and it made rank first in the shopping category of Apple app store. The Xiaohongshu held a shopping festival to celebrate their fourth anniversary on 6th June 2017 and app ranked as number one shopping app in the App store (14). According to the WalkChat (7) discussion the Xiaohongshu mobile app become #1 App in the cross-border e-commerce app category and it has underlined 15.4 million Monthly Active users during Black Friday 2017. It was launched self-operated brand: Redlight welfare society by Xiaohongshu in 2018 (15).

#### *Characteristics of Xiaohongshu*

Xiaohongshu is a shopping app for oversea products with a motto of "Find the best things from around the world".

It is not only a social media platform, but also a cross-border-e-commerce site. It has given chances to the users share the content and talk about their buying intention and experience on the platform. As well as it allows to get information regarding upcoming products. Xiaohongshu has created a community which focuses on users' original content. That feature increases the content hits and user engagement through social media functions like comments, favorites, and reposts among users (16). Tingyi chen (7) highlighted that Xiaohongshu is a "safe space" and it allows like-minded customers to write reviews and share their shopping knowledge with other users. As well as the "explore" section of the app enabling user's content on topics such as fashion, food , travel and beauty and cosmetics. The "Nearby" section of the mobile app can be used while traveling on business trip and it gives the details of foods, shopping opportunities around the users. It is become smooth transition between content consumption and e-commerce because the users

usually add "hyperlinks" to the page when reading posts. Essentially, the Xiaohongshu platform has rich content which is shared by users accordingly their actual shopping experience (7).

Xiaohongshu create partnership with the world-famous foreign brands and keep their own inventory for added quality assurance, shipping directly to their users from warehouses (7). For instance, At the end of the 2015, Xiaohongshu formed strategic cooperative partnerships with world famous business brands such as Blackmores, Panasonic, @cosme, and kirindo (9). At the initial stage they have established two warehouses in Shenzhen and Zhengzhou to keep their own inventory and just in time delivery service (12). In order to give the goods to user hands quickly the Xiaohongshu has been using separate shipping method for shipping (13).

The Xiaohongshu has User Generated content (UGC) and it hasn't any obvious buying and selling relationships. It basically depends on community and social media functions that allows interacting to consumers with both sellers and other consumers. As well as this platform allows good user communication and provide reliable information (16). Rebecca Sentance emphasized that Xiaohongshu cultivates quality both in its products and community. Further, she has described the mobile app uses algorithms to recommend content to users that users might be interested in. As well as mobile app have "Featured" and "Editor's Pick" sections to highlight the popular notes on the home page (17).

The personification of platform handles more comfortable social relationship because in Xiaohongshu users are called "little sweet potatoes" and the customer service is called "the captain of the potatoes". Through this business strategy Xiaohongshu try to give feeling like users work with their "girlfriend" not the mobile app (16).

The content of the Xiaohongshu comprised with celebrities' recommendations and high-quality Professional User Generated Content (PUGC) and it will create skyrocket demand for products (18). Accordingly, Tingyi chen (7) Xiaohongshu is one of

the most popular platforms among celebrities and there are number of stars sharing their latest shopping experience and lifestyle hacks. This feature allows to Xiaohongshu increase the number of active users and their demand for products because consumers think like they share an intimate bond with celebrities through their personal, light hearted shopping notes (7). Some popular celebrities such as Fan BingBing and online celebrities are using Xiaohongshu, which attracts lot of new users (19)

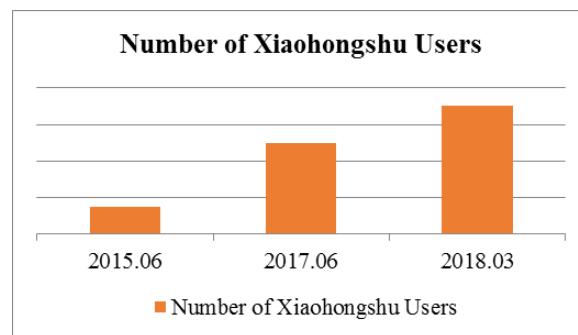
#### *Product Development*

Mainly, It can be identified three development stages of Xiaohongshu.. Initial stage started from the December 2013 and terminated in November 2014. The period called as product polishing period because in this stage Xiaohongshu explore their market. Although it is initial stage, the atmosphere of community is very healthy, and it could be identified large number of high-quality overseas shopping. The main user group of this stage are female users who are interested in outbound travel and shopping value. As well as in this stage community boarder has been extended to all aspects of Life and this lay a good foundation to the next development stage.

The period of December 2014 to October 2016 identified as second stage of Xiaohongshu development life cycle. Female Haitao users are identified as the main users. This stage considered as the first wave of growth and it was happened commercial exploration in this stage. This was a most crucial stage and trend was to enter the Haitao e-commerce market. Here consumer had excellent execution and decision-making power.

After that the third stage started October 2016 and continues up to today. Mainly focused to maximize user value and called it as high speed development period. Basically focused on user group which 90, 95 after the new generation girls. The second stage emphasized the position of the Xiaohongshu clearly. It was cared carefully about the community users and maintaining the atmosphere of the community to maximize the value proposition of the users (20). User Profile of Xiaohongshu

According to the DIGITALING, Xiaohongshu has two type of users. One is the avant-grade buyer who shares their shopping expererince with community after shopping. This type of users has strong spending power and is willing to share their handheld experience. The other category is certain women who have the ability to consume but actually they haven't any abroad shopping experience. Normally they faced problems such as where to go, how to buy when they are moving to shopping on abroad (20).

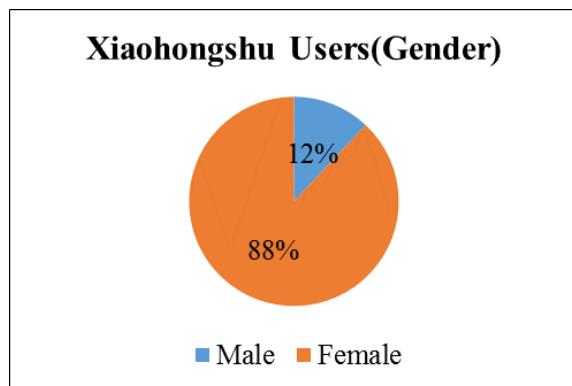


At the beginning Xiaohongshu gathered their users by sharing shopping tips and gradually turns to generate User Generated Content through users. As of May 2018, there were identified 100 million registered users and roughly 30 million monthly active users with Xiaohongshu platform (19). It was emphasized that most Xiaohongshu users are post-90s urban female who value quality, relatively high consuming power and who have premium taste (7).

The figure 1 shows that numbers of Xiaohongshu users are gradually increased from 2015 to 2018 with 15,000,000 to 70,000,000 respectively. At the initial stage the target market of Xiaohongshu was female audience and Qianfan highlighted that there are 88% predominantly female audience in 2017 and rest is the male audience (as cite in (7)). As well as it is underlined that more than 60% of Xiaohongshu users are 30 years old or younger audience, 13% users are between 31-35, 15% user are between 36-40 and rest is greater than 41 years old.

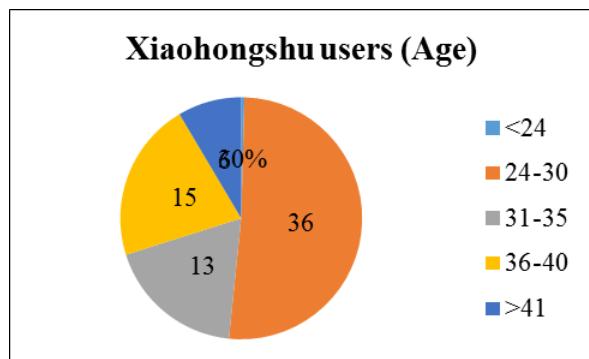
Further it has represented 57% of Xiaohongshu users are living in top-tier cities and 18.93% in 2nd tier, 3rd tier cities have 16.98% users, 12.97% users are living

in super first cities and rest (7.27%) users are living in other areas (7). Accordingly, statistics highlighted by Qianfan (as cited in (7)), Large proportion of Xiaohongshu users has relatively high consuming power.



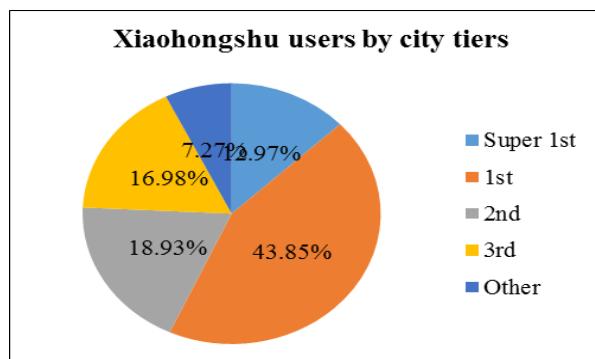
Source: Quianfan October 2017, WalkTheChat Analysis

Figure 1: Xiaohongshu users based on gender



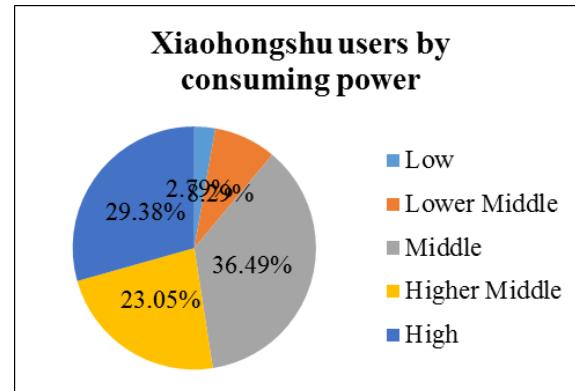
Source: Quianfan October 2017, WalkTheChat Analysis

Figure 2: Xiaohongshu users based on Age



Source: Quianfan October 2017, WalkTheChat Analysis

Figure 3: Xiaohongshu users by city tier



Source: Quianfan October 2017, WalkTheChat Analysis

Figure 4: Xiaohongshu users by consuming power

According to China.com, the number of small red book users exceeded 100 million in May 2018, the monthly activity was nearly 30 million, the daily note exposure was 1.4 billion times (cite as in (8)).

It can be identified more than 500 celebrities accounts of Chinese stars and actress like Bingbing, Angelababy, Lin Yun, Hu Ge are used this platform to share their life and recommendations. Not only domestic celebrities but also there are 10% of foreign celebrity accounts have been opened in the Xiaohongshu (18).

Accordingly Digital Innovation and transformation (10) statistics, Xiaohongshu's user base has explosively grown to over 70 million in 2017 and monthly active user base has hit 15.4 million.

It has emphasized that marketing china website (21) key users are women consumers with an average age of 18 to 35, with over 70% of post 90-users. Further, In 2015 Little Red Book co-founder and CEO Mao Wenchao exposed that 70% to 80% of the apps users are female and more than 50% of Xiaohongshu's users are students and office ladies from 18-35, they living in first and second-tier cities (14).

Girls are big purchasers of the cosmetics and fashion sections, which is good news for the Xiaohongshu . The adaptation rate of Xiaohongshu users who confirm orders on its ecommerce platform after reading posts on its community is as high as 8 %, compared with only 2.6 % in Tmall the biggest ecommerce platform

for official brands in China. Besides, every consumer on Xiaohongshu makes three orders per month on average (14).

In Xiaohongshu, most of the shopping experiences shared are from girls shopping overseas, with those born after 1985 making up the popular of its users. It has represented the new generation of consumers, who have become an attractive goal for businesses all across the world. Majority of them are students and white-collar workers, who love overseas shopping and the search of high-quality living standards (16).

#### *Expansion of Xiaohongshu*

As a shopping User Generated Content community, in initial stage, consumers are mainly focused on sharing oversea shopping experiences with the community and later this sharing boundary was continuously expanded with touching all aspects of consumer experience and lifestyle. In March 2014 Xiaohongshu completed multi-million-dollar series A financing and in November 2014 completed ten million of dollars of B-round financing (20). Xiaohongshu is now valued at USD 3 billion in its series D round June 2018 and get the support of the most popular investors including Alibaba, Tencent, Genesis Capital, ZhenFund and GGV capital. According to the Black Friday analysis in 2017 Xiaohongshu was ranked as the #1 App in the cross-border e-commerce app category with 15.4 million MAUs (7). In 2016, Xiaohongshu completed their c round financing of 100 milloin USD from the Genesis capital, Tencent, and Tiantu capital (10). According to the statistics the Xiaohongshu sales reached 1Yi Yuan within two hours. As well as in the apple app store Xiaohongshu ranked as first in the June 6th 2017 (13). The half year sales of the little red book were 700 yuan that is around USD 109 million in September 2017. The Xiaohongshu expand their e-commerce platform by increasing the USD 1 billion to USD 15 billion valuation (22).

In December 2014, Little Red Book officially launched the e-commerce platform “Welfare Society” upgrading e-commerce from the community and completing the business closed-loop. Basically, in

early 2015 Xiaohongshu officially put self-operated bonded warehouse into operation (20).

Lulu Yilun Chen (23) highlighted that in startup level of Xiaohongshu required at least \$200 million at a valuation or more than \$ 2.5 billion to quicken its expansion in a heated e-commerce space. As well as co-founder Miranda Qu stated that Xiaohongshu expected to another round of fund raising through an initial public offering within two or three years (23).

In Everyday, 100,000 new contents are added, with a total of 780 million product contents. Even it is also a cross-border e-commerce platform; it often let people to think of it most as a sharing platform. The Little Red Book app already shaped partnership with several foreign brands which are originating in the United States, Japan and Korean to market them on the Chinese territory (21).

In the second half of 2016, Xiaohongshu expanded its third-party platform as brand merchant and whole category of sku grew rapidly. Further,it has launched Redelivery international logistic system which support the query of the complete international logistic link information and users can find out which flight to take their product to the country (20).

Exactly Xiaohongshu is not a cheap platform to operate because it has 15-20% to brands and often charges an additional 5-10% of sales. Often Xiaohongshu earn 10,000 to 60,000 RMB per month (7).

It has emphasized that China's cross-border social shopping platform Xiaohongshu (Little Red Book) has been growing fast since its formation five years ago, attracting investors such as Tencent and acquiring its latest \$300 million Series D round of capital from investors including Alibaba (24).In November 2017 Xiaohongshu basically acquire breakeven point (20).

#### *Competition*

Xiaohongshu is not provided display ads services as their marketing strategy. The cross-border e-commerce platform basically promotes their products by using social interactions and KOLs. It follows

different sales campaign and runs a 4 hour count down sales events 3 times per day platform. This competitive strategy helps to make a big competition among other e-commerce platforms (7). The Xiaohongshu become more successful e-commerce platform within 4 years surviving against strong cross border e-commerce platform like tmall international and JD global. It is differentiated the social sharing platform and building up the trust between the platform and consumers to face fierce competition of multi-homing in cross border e-commerce platform (10).

Oliver verot highlighted that Xiaohongshu become extremely popular within short period of time especially among the Chinese females. It has rapidly created top trending topics on weibo attracting over 22 million viewers. The Meilishuo and Mogujie are most popular competitors of Little Red Book. Because, those platforms are provided an e-commerce business model for female community who are passionate about fashion, cosmetics, and shopping of foreign countries (22).

Further, it can be distinguished from the other e-commerce and social media platforms because of the several reasons such as perfect targeting, unique combinations of e-commerce and social media features, Word of mouth, share, review and purchase at the same platform, brands are already leveraging the platform, brands are already leveraging the platform, targeted visibility and reputation and it has powerful key opinion leaders and influencers. These features help to Xiaohongshu compete with others successfully (22).

However, it has emphasized the due to the imperfect number of products in the national stores and the increasingly mixed quality from sellers on Taobao and other platforms, majority of users have begun to drift towards Xiaohongshu (16).

Trust is the most powerful weapon to survive with the competition. It has highlighted that Xiaohongshu business model essentially needs user to user communication. Since the platform delivers reliable information from other users it assists to develop trust in the platform and the products that they sell. It leads

users to believe that since the approvals from others on the platform are quite reliable (16).

It has differentiated their mobile platform using several techniques. Hence, Xiaohongshu is different platform rather than another prominent Chinese social e-commerce site such as Pinduoduo that aims bargain hunters and penny pinchers. The style-obsessed platform has carved up a distinct niche in the heart of 100 million of China's young, middle-class, and mostly female consumers. According to professionals, it's not an e-commerce platform at all (24).

As a competitive strategy it can be used user friendly nice-looking mobile interface to attract the consumers. Open the small Xiaohongshu app, the screen filled with beautiful pictures and beautiful text description. 90% of the Little Red Book home page comprised with attractive pictures (20).

#### *Socio-Cultural impact*

Essentially, the main purpose of the Xiaohongshu is providing oversea shopping facilities to the consumers and it is emphasized that this app is mainly impact the buying behavior of the consumers in china. As well as this app not limited to the china boundaries it is extended up to foreign consumers. Generally Xiaohongshu impact towards the shopping decisions of the consumers. And also time to time reviews on the platform, change their sellers as well as the preference on the products (25).

Pablo Mauron highlighted that Xiaohongshu perfectly illustrates the speed of evolving the e-commerce model in china and it is the most popular e-commerce player which supply many brands for promotion or actual distribution. Further he described this is a unique app that is give shopping recommendations. Besides indicating that chinese are increasingly being viewed as global consumers. It is emphasized that basically this app impact towards the consumer lifestyle of the china. Lauran Hallana shared her views and fancies with the E-commerce website, the Xiaohongshu helps to increase brand awareness in china because it has used very powerful marketing tool called "Word of

Mouth Marketing". Moreover, explained Xiaohongshu has huge impact on e-commerce in China and often consumers use this platform as a research tool. The content in the Xiaohongshu highly influence to purchasing decisions of consumers. Victoria Glanz stated that Xiaohongshu is the best platform that generates preference of buyers regarding the products and mimicking the shopping experience. Miro Li highlighted that instead of only considering low prices, consumers are more and more attracted by good content, which is important to user stickiness. It increases the number of active users, inspires users to stay longer in the app and generate more good content, and at last converts users to customers. Benjamin Joly considered about other aspects and he stated that brands will have to listen on the feedback from the consumers and should be try to optimize their brand experience with quality products. Basically, it is emphasized that Xiaohongshu impact on the business aspects also (26).

Xiaohongshu basically impact of the demographics features of the country which can be identified post-90s urban females who value quality, with relatively high consuming power and premium taste. The Qianfan statistics highlighted that there are 80% female audience who are used Xiaohongshu. Mostly there can be identified users with age between 24 to 30 and less than 24 old (27).

Advertising technique are more than traditional one such as it focusses on a vibrant network of social interactions and KOLs are used to promote the brand. Basically, Xiaohongshu not used display and ads services for their promotion. It has launched several sales campaigns to generate sales, stores and brands. For instance, it also runs a four hour count down sales events 3 times per day platform-wide. And also offered discount for the products such as cosmetic product, health product, food and household items. To host cosmetic products run a "stylish girl" event. Xiaohongshu change the advertising methodology to attract new consumers and this is impact to the marketing activities of other online e-commerce platforms (27).

#### *Privacy of Xiaohongshu*

Xiaohongshu is an user Generated content app because of that false information can be spread. On 21st May, Xiaohongshu official "Potato Butler" published an article saying, "No false data". Since the beginning of the month, the butler has embarked on a series of targeted historical anomaly data cleanup actions, and will promptly clean up the new abnormal data, and welcome everyone to report. In order to ensure that the innocent little sweet potatoes are not accidentally injured, only reports that provide conclusive evidence will be accepted.

As a result, at least 20 small red book bloggers were blocked by the number, and they were only the account number of the "zombie powder" cleaning amount top20 in this action (28).

Every platform has rules, Xiaohongshu writes the rules to maintain the community environment and looks forward to working with users. They are specified "Community Specifications" such as Cannot include advertising sales information in user names, personal data, comments, notes (ordinary notes, long notes, video notes) and albums. It is emphasized that the "Community Norms", which are difficult to convince, trigger users' discussions about fairness (28).

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