A Case Study of Gender and Feminist Awareness among Users of Short Video Platforms in China: Taking Series of Videos of a Woman Eating Fruit on the Roof of a Rural Building on Tik Tok Platform as an Example

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Abstract: Short-form video platforms are growing rapidly, and users are often expressing their opinions on them. These users come from different social classes and regions, which leads to a higher likelihood of heated discussions and even attacks. This study focuses on the discussion of gender issues on short video platforms such as TikTok, and the feminist awareness among female users. The method used in this study is text analysis. The analysis revealed that the themes of the comments changed over time, with many sub-themes appearing at different times and sometimes guided by the blogger. The theme ranged from eating fruit, which was closely related to the content of the video, to arguing against constraints on women's lifestyles, and then to criticizing the male group. The sub-themes include controversial issues such as "spying", "foreign forces", "urban-rural differences" and "marriage" on the Chinese Internet today. The female users of the Tik Tok platform have a certain degree of gender awareness and are more sensitive to related topics. However, they often stay in refuting and attacking the male group, without forming a systematic anti-discrimination. The comments of female users are often an emotional vent rather than a logical construction based on theory.

Keywords: short video platforms, text analysis, gender awareness, feminism

1. Introduction

Gender-based discrimination has long been a social issue that has generated much discussion. "All human development and human rights issues have their gender dimension" [1]. With the popularity of the internet and the development of short video platforms, gender issues have also been brought online by users of short video platforms. Users of internet platforms are privileged with a certain degree of anonymity, and it is difficult to directly relate to real-life people just from a person's ID and homepage. Gibson introduced the concept of cyberspace. Within this field, one can exist freely within it, free from the confines of the body. Internet discussions and verbal attacks are separated by wires, and the opponents of the argument are "not present". "They appear on two sides of the Internet screen, and the virtual network link blurs and conceals this polarization of power [2]." It is extremely easy

for users to get rid of the psychological moral burden and for the debate to escalate into an endless tirade of abuse.

Feminist-related issues have been developed worldwide for a long time, and there have been many studies on the empowerment of women on media platforms and women's development. In her article 'The Origin of Cyberfeminism', Gao Liyan suggests that "after the 1980s, post-feminism took on a new dimension, with the emergence of cyberfeminism, a fusion of information and network technology. The cyberfeminism was born " [3]. It is also worth noting that Chinese feminism and Marxism have connections. After feminism entered China, Marxist feminism and socialist feminism achieved certain development [4].

Within the cyberspace, feminism has taken on a new step. Cyberfeminism, came into being and is considered by the American postmodern feminist scholar Haraway as a direction to end female identity anxiety. This feminism is different from the feminism that originally developed in the real world. Donna, an American postmodern feminist, has pointed out that "Cyborg transcends the feminist philosophical stance on science, blurs the boundaries between man and machine, and in ending female identity anxiety, will likely guide people to re-examine the relationship between women and science and technology [5]." Compared with the mature feminism that has formed a more complete theoretical system, cyber feminism is still in the stage of untamed, folk and free.

There are currently many directions of domestic and short video and gender research, and there are roughly three main categories. One is linked to the uniquely Chinese online phenomenon, with studies related to male bloggers who perform humour in reverse as women. There is also a category on the subject of labour and women, which mostly focuses on the representation of rural women on online platforms. The last category is more about gender-awareness, focusing on the discipline of women in unequal gender relations, women's self-perception and so on. This research belongs to the last category, focusing on a specific case study, examining the discussion of gender issues on short video platforms such as Tik Tok, as well as the development of female users' self-awareness and feminist awareness.

2. Method

This study adopts a text analysis method to analyse the comments on a series of videos of a woman eating fruit on the roof of a rural building on the Tik Tok platform. The content of the videos mainly consisted of a woman eating fruit on a rooftop after returning to her hometown, with the text "Now I'm waiting for a matchmaker to come to me", which led to discussions in the comment section. A small number of men expressed their disapproval of the lifestyle, while many women said that women are free to choose their own lifestyle. The video screen publisher currently has 14 videos from the series in question, with likes ranging from 1,090 to 221,000. The study documented some important parameters of all the videos of the blogger and selected the top 50 comments from each of the top three most popular videos in the video series "Eating Fruit on the Rooftop of a Rural Building " for further analysis.

3. Result

Since the first ten comments were selected from the 14 videos of the video collection "Eating fruit on the roof of a rural building" by the blogger "Han Xue's Happy Hometown (Anti-Internet Violence Edition)" on the Tik Tok platform, the results of the content coding and analysis reflect the chronological order of the comments in this case. The results of the content coding and analysis are therefore a chronological representation of the general characteristics and trends of the commentators' comments in this case. The blogger has a total of four video series, namely "Convenience shop food", "Wish pool series", "Fans ordering food series" and "Eating Fruit on the Rooftop of a Rural Building

"(see Table 1). The highest-rated video was "Eating Fruit on the Rooftop of a Rural Building", with 45.205 million views, much higher than the second-rated "Fans Ordering Food", with 1.146 million views.

Table 1: Four video series and parameters.

Series name	Number of videos	Total airplay	Highest number of video likes	Average number of likes	Date
Convenience Store Gourmet	2	81000	1123	1013.5	Mar. 17th
Wish Pool Series	2	156000	3770	2494	Feb.10th-Feb.17th
Fans ordering food series	10	1146000	8293	3813.7	Feb.6th-Mar.9th
Eating Fruit on the Rooftop of a Rural Building	14	45205000	221000	61400	Jan.6th-Apr.6th

The text analysis included the top ten comments on all 14 videos of the "Eating Fruit on the Rooftop of a Rural Building ". The top ten comments were ranked in order of popularity by Tik Tok's automatic comment ranking mechanism, which is based on the replies and likes of the comments. After eliminating a small number of comments that were ranked in the top due to their recent date, this study identified 140 comments for analysis. The number of likes for these 140 comments ranged from 0 to 97,000. The amount of fluctuation in the data is huge, while being more correlated with the times that the video has been played. The ten comments with the highest number of likes were located on the first video, the sixth video, the seventh video, the eighth video and the eleventh video. And these five videos have between 45,000 and 221,000 likes. The highest concentration of highly liked comments was on the first video, which took five of the ten highest liked comments. The number of likes, comments, date and duration of these 14 videos are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Parameters of the video series "Fruit eating series on the roof of a rural building".

No. (date order)	Number of likes (thousands)	Number of comments (thousands)	Number of collections	Duration	date
One	156	48	4391	0:07	Jan.6th
Two	36	6.65	580	0:07	Jan.8th
Three	22	12	379	0:07	Jan.9th
Four	56	19	844	0:07	Jan.10th
Five	45	16	608	0:07	Jan.11st
Six	117	16	1802	0:07	Jan.13rd
Seven	73	13	1239	0:06	Jan.14th
Eight	221	49	4373	0:07	Jan.15th
Nine	42	8.344	597	0:07	Jan.18th
Ten	27	4.400	320	0:13	Jan.19th
Eleven	45	7.312	578	0:07	Jan.21st
Twelve	15	1.716	154	0:06	Jan.22ed
Thirteen	3.21	0.501	65	0:07	Apr.5th
Fourteen	1.912	0.304	29	0:08	Apr.6th

As the video itself is relatively simple in content and set to a short duration, the comments show a high level of topic dispersion. Starting with the blogger's filming of eating various fruits, they expand to the topic to gender.

In the analysis of the information related to the posters of the comments, this study found that women posted the majority of the comments. As a significant number of people did not set their gender on their account pages, only seven people could be identified as male by analysing the videos posted on the commentators' own pages. It is also worth noting that some commentators set the opposite gender to their actual gender. Judging from the China's social circumstance and the habits of Tik Tok users, it is less likely that these seven users set their gender to be transgender, and more likely that they set it to be a different gender on purpose or filled in their personal information casually. The actual psychological motivation behind that behavior is currently unknown.

Within the category settings, this study has divided three levels based on the topic centre of the comment. In order of closeness to the blogger's video itself, these were "about eating fruit itself", "men's judgement of women's lifestyles", "relationships between men and women" and "Comments on the male population". The 14 videos in the "Rural Rooftop Fruit Eating Series" collection are closely linked in time, with the exception of the last two videos, which were essentially posted once every two to three days between 26 January and 22 January 2023. The topics of comment focus shifted over time. The results based on the coding are shown in Figure 1.
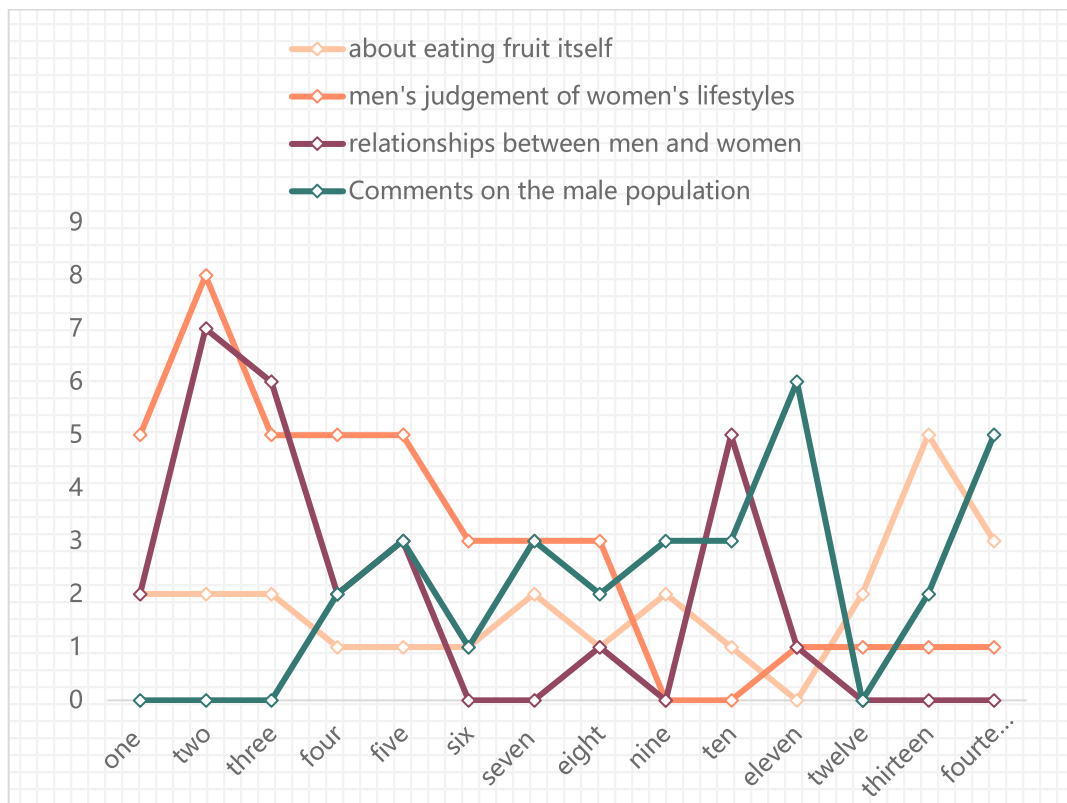

Figure 1: The number of comments on the four topics changes over time (Picture credit: original).

As the same comment may contain more than one subject, this study coded the comments as "1 if the subject is included, 0 if it is not". The data presented in Figure 1 is not in terms of comments, but rather in terms of the number of times the topic was included in the comment. Unlike the expected more regular topic shifts, the topics show some randomness. The topic most closely linked to the content of the videos, 'about eating the fruit itself', remained at a low level before spiking in the last

two videos. Before posting the last two videos, the blogger took a break from updating the videos for almost three months, suffering from depression due to internet violence. The intensifying debate and name-calling was suspended for three months. In the last two videos, the comments section saw a more sober review of the whole incident and an increase in comments about the fruit-eating subject of the video content itself. The least relevant part of the video, 'comments on men', showed an increase over time and were mainly critical and negative of men. This included criticism of men who questioned the bloggers and the online violence, criticism of the pettiness of some men, and irony at the parody of some men. The study also found that some commentators were critical of some groups of men by sharing the views and behaviours of their own fathers and boyfriends. For example, "I was talking to my dad about this and he put down the food with a puzzled look on his face and then said a bunch of poor guys", "My dad got me a dance studio specifically at home, is he going to be expelled as a male?", "My boyfriend just bought fruit for me. I am afraid that this kind of man will have to be expelled from male citizenship by the flustered and exasperated men in the comment section", etc.

In addition to these four themes that run throughout the video series, there are a number of sub-topics that appear intermittently. For example, the topic of spies, extreme feminism and urban-rural differences. These topics are often closely related to the comments shown by the bloggers. One feature of the platform is to post a video reply to a comment. In the second and third videos, the blogger replies to the comment she posted, and from the fourth video onwards, she replies to bad comments. The comment replied to in the fourth video, "A traitor who has been paid by outside forces to stir up confrontation between men and women for 3 days in a row", is from the blogger's third video. This comment appeared below a comment about a female university student being rumoured to be a sex worker, in which the blogger expressed sympathy for the incident, and a commenter posted this comment in response to the blogger's statement. There was also a comment in response to the eighth video questioning the blogger's income, and a comment in response to the tenth video saying "This guy is not qualified for marriage". With the exception of these three comments, all of the comments have been removed by the publisher. Correspondingly, a discussion of spies appears in the fourth video. A discussion of urban-rural differences appears in the eighth. These sub-topics are all controversial topics in China at the moment.

Of the comments analysed in this study, only 12 expressed a neutral stance and attempted to moderate the conflict between men and women, less than a tenth of the total. These 12 comments are scattered throughout the first eight videos, and not from the ninth to the twelfth video. The areas where there is no distribution coincide with the peaks in the topics "Relationships between men and women" and "Evaluation of male groups". In both topics, the majority of women express their dissatisfaction with men. It can be concluded that from the first to the twelfth video, the audience's arguments become increasingly heated, less rational and less discursive, and more aggressive. This fits with the model of increasingly heated arguments common to online events.

The analysis reflects several contrast compared with the expectation. Firstly, the topic of the comments is more complex. Although most of the comments were under fifty words, they contained a great variety of meanings and themes. And the themes show fluctuations over time, reflecting only a general trend of change and not a complete pattern. Secondly, the frequency of emojis is very high. Emoticons appeared in a total of 100 comments. Rather than discussing them sensibly and seriously, commentators reflected a very strong sense of entertainment in their comments, mostly in the form of sarcasm and irony. And many of the publishers of the vicious comments deleted the comments themselves, resulting in the comments that remained being largely supportive of the bloggers and critical of those who raised questions. Finally, many commentators have extended on the content of the video itself. The discussion was not limited to the video. A total of 30 comments showed their lives in the form of pictures. This included eating more expensive fruit, food, etc. As well as some of the food and gifts given by their own fathers, boyfriends, etc. These comments show support for the

blogger in a special way. There were also many commentators who saved screenshots of the bad comment posters or suggested that bloggers take screenshots of the bad comments to save as evidence.

4. Discussion

4.1. Overview and Comparison of Domestic and International Developments

Fuyuki Kurasawa, Elisabeth Rondinelli and Gulay Kilicaslan in their study "Evidential Activism in the Digital Age: On the Rise of Feminist Struggles Against Gender-Based Cyberviolence" mentioned that "Our findings suggest that feminist organisations' online activism builds on existing feminist analyses of gender-based street harassment and cyberbullying."

At the same time, their research demonstrates the capture and documentation of 'digital misogyny' that has emerged in the digital sphere. This action by feminists is in line with the calls of scholars in related fields [6].

In many of the cases analysed in the text of this study, there were also comments posting screenshots of the bad comments and suggesting that the blogger take screenshots of the bad comments and publish them. Underneath the ninth video was the comment "It doesn't matter, I have a screenshot and the poster seems to be a girl", with a screenshot of the bad comment. This screenshot differs from the gender-based online violence mentioned by Fuyuki and others in that the comment is made by a woman and criticises the blogger's behaviour in terms of her level of consumption. The comments are more based on the gap between rich and poor than on gender, and are related to the urban-rural development gap.

Two comments directly suggest that the blogger keep evidence so that men do not say "these are all made up" when confronted with criticism in the comments section. This is a common expression used on Chinese internet social media platforms, usually in the context of more controversial topics such as gender issues that are prone to discussion and even verbal attacks. It is often used to express that the other side's views are based on a false and fabricated reality, and that the other side is deliberately distorting and exaggerating their own opinions, or attributing to them errors that have been created.

In contrast to the evidence-based activism of feminist organisations around the world, the Chinese internet action of 'screenshotting to preserve evidence' has many differences. Feminist activism not only responds to the calls of the academic community, but also uses such actions to lobby or pressure the relevant authorities at the local or national level. This can lead to a change in the law to outlaw gender-based online violence [6]. However, under China's political discourse, there is less space for social organisations to develop, which generally work with the government and assist in management. At the same time, citizens are not used to the practice of putting pressure on the government to achieve their goals. Citizens are more familiar with the system of consultative democracy, which, from a practical point of view, often relies on the NPC deputies to propose motions to improve laws. The Chinese internet trend of "screenshotting and preserving evidence" is itself more of an act without a deeper goal, aiming only to be more persuasive in discussions with those who hold different views.

In this 'unconscious' context, the Chinese women's advocacy of 'screenshots to preserve evidence' has some significance. It can go some way to making men face up to the discrimination and injustice that actually exists, rather than just dismissing women's voices as nonsense akin to persecution paranoia.

Another trend in evidence-based activism is the shift of responsibility for regulating the management and combating of gender-based cyber violence to companies and platform institutions. At the same time, action pins hope on training victims who have experienced this type of violence to become agents of online platforms, able to autonomously retain evidence of this type of online violence and submit reports [6]. There are many similar trends of opinion on the Chinese internet.

However, due to a lack of theoretical awareness of feminism, more commentators start with practice, direct attacks on gender-based online violence, and are not effectively organised. Even within the feminist community, attacks on each other sometimes occur, without a unified view or demand. Another feature of Chinese feminism is the emphasis on criticising women who embrace sexism, in addition to targeting sexist male groups. Chinese feminists often express their views radically without making considerations such as legal changes at the practical level, resulting in a derailment of views from reality. All of this reflects the imperfect and immature development of feminism in China.

Under the Chinese internet discourse, commentators tend to adopt the latter two practices. Feminists do this by morally critiquing sexists, morally stigmatising them and portraying them as a reprehensible and marginalised group [7,8]. Forty-one of the comments in the cases analysed in this study contained satire directed at sexist remarks about men. But these satires often evolved into an attack on the male group as a whole. The psychology of these comments, in addition to being pro-feminist, often included the satisfaction and sense of group belonging that comes from discriminating against a group other than one's own. The practice of female digital citizenship, on the other hand, is different from the first two. It is not based on explaining gender-based online violence to the public, nor does it differ from the second practice approach to moral pollution. It highlights the easily overlooked phenomenon that gender-based online violence can lead women to consciously or unconsciously discipline their own behaviour and reduce their participation in discussions on public topics online [9]. In this study, this theory is reflected in the fact that many of the comments explicitly express encouragement and support for bloggers' behaviour.

However, also as the researcher mentions, this evidence-based activism is a shock to the existing formal institutions and government departments that regulate and combat gender-based online violence. It has developed outside the official normative system.

4.2. Internet Self-presentation

In the past people helped to construct themselves through external things such as clothing and language. In the digital age, on the other hand, people often express themselves through words and pictures.

Russell proposed that there are three states of existence for the self: having, acting and being. In the digital age, there is a dramatic change and convergence of identities on the internet. Geographical and temporal barriers have been broken down and this has led to more dramatic changes in identity.

In this study, the publisher of the video portrays herself as a rural, liberated contemporary woman. The image of enjoying life is constructed by eating fruit at the penthouse. At the same time, the accompanying text of the first two videos mentions "now waiting for the matchmaker to come to my door", presenting a humorous image of the Chinese discursive environment.

This is in line with Eagly et al.'s suggestion that 'while men's communication is more task and individually oriented, women are more interpersonal [10]'. One of the reasons for this difference is the huge base of Internet users in China. Hilbert suggests that there are fewer female users of the Internet in developing countries, whereas in the videos in this study the majority of commentators were female. Within the vast realm of the Chinese Internet, there are many areas of concentration of users with certain identities, in the case of this study, a concentration of Tik Tok users who oppose gender-based discrimination against women, and a concentration of women who are concerned with gender issues. This concentration somewhat exacerbates the information cocoon and echo chamber effect on the internet. Users find identity in their self-presentation and exacerbate this convergence.

At the same time, this study also found that a number of comments self-presented by posting images. A total of 30 comments included pictures, mainly of their own lives, such as eating expensive food, etc. In addition to expressing support for the blogger and criticising the irony of gender-based

cyber-violence, this is also a way of constructing a self-image on the internet. A new kind of "one-to-many" interpersonal interaction is achieved.

5.   Conclusion

Feminism has shown a thriving trend on Internet short video platforms. However, in specific cases, there are still many imperfections in the development of online feminism.

Due to the anonymity of the Internet and the "absence" of both sides of the discussion, users have no qualms about speaking out. Rational discussions and reflections are rare, and heated arguments and objections can easily dominate the conversation. At the same time, the statements of dissident user groups become more irrational over time and can easily turn into attacks on the group. There are many other complications in this process, such as gaining acceptance by presenting oneself and bringing up unrelated or less relevant topics to gain a sense of satisfaction beyond the majority of the group.

Many female users have some gender awareness, but have not developed a theoretical feminist mindset. These users tend to attack the male community and use sarcasm and dark humor to gain mutual recognition, becoming an emerging group on the Internet. Their comments are mostly emotional expressions and venting, with little discursive meaning. However, they are the ground for the flourishing of online feminism.

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