

User Perspectives on Rednote: Exploring Migration Trends and Opportunities for Connection among Social Media Users

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Abstract: This study explores the phenomenon of TikTok users migrating to Xiaohongshu (Rednote), revealing the complex attitudes and social dynamics of existing Xiaohongshu users towards this migration. With TikTok being banned, over 500,000 users have quickly turned to Xiaohongshu in search of online communities that meet their social needs and interests. The research utilizes semi-structured interviews to gather perspectives from 25 original Xiaohongshu users, focusing on their views of TikTok migrants, concerns about changes in community culture, and motivations for connecting with new users. The results indicate that existing users generally welcome the arrival of new users, viewing it as an opportunity for cross-cultural exchange, but they also express concerns about potential changes in content recommendation algorithms. Users' social experiences have significantly changed with the influx of new users, particularly in the use of chat features, fostering deeper interactions and understanding. However, some users feel a diminished sense of belonging, especially those who focus on Chinese news and entertainment content. This study emphasizes the importance of cross-cultural communication and provides valuable insights for the management and development of social media platforms, particularly in the context of user migration.

1. Introduction

The recent closure of TikTok has led to a significant influx of users migrating to Xiaohongshu (Rednote), a phenomenon that has garnered considerable attention. According to a Reuters report, more than half a million users have quickly become "TikTok refugees," seeking a new social media platform to replace TikTok. Users are not merely searching for a new space to share content; they are looking for online communities that meet their social needs and interests. This migration underscores the rapid adaptability of social media users and highlights the vital role of social media in contemporary life ^[1].

This migration from TikTok to Xiaohongshu reflects the connection between platform migration and cultural connection. The transition between these platforms is not just a matter of changing applications; it represents a quest for a new social environment that offers a sense of belonging and identity. Xiaohongshu, known for its emphasis on lifestyle and consumer culture, fosters an

environment where users can share personal experiences and connect over shared interests. This movement reveals not only the profound needs and expectations users have in social media but also provides an academic avenue to explore how these platforms shape user identity and social connections.

Despite the increasing focus on platform migration and cultural connections, there remain notable gaps in academic understanding of original user experiences during such transitions. Existing literature primarily examines the mechanics of social media dynamics, with less attention given to the subjective experiences and narratives of original users as they navigate these changes ^{[2][3][4]}. Thus, it is crucial to investigate original user perspectives on Rednote. Our study aims to fill this scholarly gap by exploring the migration experiences and cultural connections among users, thereby deepening the understanding of the role of social media in contemporary society.

This paper is structured into several sections. In the upcoming literature review, we will revisit previous research relevant to user migration and its implications, while also articulating the research questions that guide this study. The methodology will outline the research methods employed in this study, providing clarity on our approach. Subsequently, the results and discussion section will detail the findings of the research and explore their potential implications. Finally, the conclusion will summarize the key insights of the paper and highlight directions for future research.

2. Literature Review

User migration has become increasingly important in the field of social media research in recent years. As digital platforms evolve, understanding the dynamics of user migration provides valuable insights into user behavior, platform sustainability, and community dynamics. A substantial body of literature has explored various phenomena and motivations associated with users migrating from one platform to another. For instance, it has been noted that users often choose to migrate in search of platforms that better meet their social needs, offer new community cultures, or provide enhanced user experiences ^[5]. Privacy concerns, content moderation policies, and changing trends also play significant roles in prompting users to switch platforms. Notably, the recent phenomenon of users migrating from TikTok to Xiaohongshu has garnered widespread attention due to its unique blend of lifestyle content and community engagement.

Existing research highlights several specific motivations for migration, including the desire for a more supportive community environment, higher expectations for platform functionality, and the pursuit of spaces that align more closely with personal values and interests ^[6]. For example, users may choose to migrate due to dissatisfaction with the original platform's interface or inadequacies in the features offered. Additionally, social psychological theories emphasize how social needs drive users to seek new platforms that can provide a stronger sense of belonging and authenticity ^[7]. Dekker further elaborates on these motivations, arguing that users are increasingly seeking platforms that facilitate deeper connections and more meaningful interactions in a rapidly changing digital landscape ^[8].

Moreover, external factors such as policy changes, community norms, or social movements can also promote user migration ^[9]. For instance, the growing concern over data privacy has led many users to abandon platforms perceived as less secure, such as Facebook or WhatsApp, in favor of alternatives that emphasize user privacy, such as Signal or Telegram. Similarly, social movements like Black Lives Matter encourage individuals to migrate to platforms that better reflect their values regarding social justice and activism, such as Twitter or TikTok during critical moments of activism, while distancing themselves from those seen as dismissive or harmful.

However, existing literature has yet to adequately address the specific phenomenon of TikTok users migrating to Xiaohongshu. This transition not only reflects broader trends in social media

dynamics but also highlights users' adaptability in the face of platform challenges. While TikTok has been immensely popular for its short video format and creative content, certain users find themselves looking for alternative spaces like Xiaohongshu that allow for more nuanced discussions and lifestyle sharing.

Despite some progress in understanding user migration, most research has rarely focused on the perspectives of users on the original platform, exploring how they perceive the integration of new users and the impact on community culture. For example, how do original users view the arrival of new users from TikTok to Xiaohongshu? What expectations or concerns do they have regarding these new community members? This lack of exploration from the original user perspective limits a comprehensive understanding of the social dynamics that occur during migration. Traditional studies often focus on user behavior and platform features without considering the emotional and social contexts that shape user experiences. Other scholars point out that integrating user perspectives can provide deeper insights into community belongingness and identity formation within social media environments ^[10]. This gap is regrettable because without considering the viewpoints of original users, researchers miss significant insights into how communities adapt to new dynamics and how these dynamics shape the overall experience of existing users. Understanding their feelings and reactions is crucial for capturing a comprehensive picture of how user migration affects community identity and continuity.

Combining these insights, user migration emerges as a critical area for further academic inquiry. While scholars have made notable contributions to understanding migration as a general phenomenon, the specific case of TikTok users migrating to Xiaohongshu remains underexplored. This article aims to address this gap by focusing on the original users' perspectives regarding the integration of new users into Xiaohongshu. By delving into how original users perceive new entrants and the subsequent impacts on community culture, this research hopes to make a significant contribution to the discourse surrounding social media migration and community dynamics.

In summary, the field of user migration offers ample opportunities for further investigation, especially in light of evolving platforms and changing user expectations. By focusing on specific cases like the TikTok to Xiaohongshu migration and integrating insights from original user perspectives, we can gain a nuanced understanding of how social media platforms function as dynamic communities rather than just content-sharing tools. This study seeks to amplify the voices of original users, fostering a dialogue that enriches our understanding of digital communities in the contemporary social media landscape.

Building on the insights from the literature review, this study seeks to fill the identified gaps regarding original user experiences during the migration from TikTok to Xiaohongshu. By focusing on the perspectives of original Xiaohongshu users, we aim to understand how these individuals perceive the integration of new community members and the subsequent impacts on their social experiences. Accordingly, the following research questions guide this study: 1. How do original Xiaohongshu users perceive the arrival of TikTok migrants, and what expectations or concerns do they hold regarding the integration of these new users into their community? 2. In what ways do original users feel that the TikTok migration has influenced their social experiences and interactions on Xiaohongshu, particularly regarding the sense of belonging and identity within the platform? 3. What motivations do original Xiaohongshu users identify for seeking connections with TikTok migrants, and how do they believe these connections might transform their social media interactions?

3. Methods

In order to explore the research questions, this study adopts a qualitative approach, collecting in-

depth insights from original Xiaohongshu users through semi-structured interviews. This method was chosen to gain a deeper understanding of participants' perceptions regarding the migration of TikTok users to Xiaohongshu.

3.1 Participants

The participants in this study were voluntarily recruited original Xiaohongshu users through posts published on the Xiaohongshu platform. A total of 25 users participated in the interviews, including both male and female participants, with females making up the majority. The backgrounds of the participants are diverse, including both content creators and non-content creators on Xiaohongshu, which provides rich perspectives for the research.

3.2 Data Collection

The interviews were conducted online between December 21, 2024, and January 13, 2025, allowing participants from different cities to conveniently take part. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes and followed a set of open-ended questions designed to elicit participants' feelings about TikTok migrants, their concerns about changes in the community, and the impact of this migration on their sense of belonging within Xiaohongshu. All interviews were recorded with the participants' consent and subsequently transcribed into text for analysis. Throughout the study, strict adherence to ethical guidelines was maintained to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of participants.

3.3 Data Analysis

The transcribed interview data will be analyzed using thematic analysis, aimed at identifying and extracting themes and patterns within the data. During the analysis process, participants' perspectives, motivations, and experiences will be categorized to provide an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of user migration in the Xiaohongshu community.

Through this method, this study aims to provide rich qualitative data that reveals the impact of user migration on community identity and interaction.

4. Findings

The findings of this study reveal the perspectives of existing Xiaohongshu users regarding TikTok users migrating to their platform. Insights obtained from semi-structured interviews demonstrate the complex interplay between welcoming attitudes, concerns, enhanced social interactions, and motivations for connecting with users.

4.1 Perspectives and Concerns Regarding TikTok Migrants

Existing Xiaohongshu users generally welcome the arrival of TikTok migrants, viewing this influx as a new opportunity for cross-cultural exchange. Many users are attracted by the delightful content shared by new users, such as adorable cat pictures—often referred to as “cat tax”—which has become symbolic of community interaction. One respondent expressed, “I really enjoy the cat photos they post; it makes me feel a special connection to them, and their cute shares make me very happy.” This friendly initial interaction promotes openness and curiosity among users, many of whom anticipate gaining new insights about cultures from the U.S. and other countries through connections with these newcomers. Another respondent added, “I hope to improve my English by

communicating with them, so I'll be more confident when I travel abroad in the future."

However, existing users also express some concerns. Some worry that Xiaohongshu might alter its recommendation algorithms to cater to new users, potentially resulting in undesirable content. One user candidly stated, "I fear that the platform will become completely different from what I remember, and I don't want to see content that doesn't interest me." Others are concerned that if a distinction is made between new and old users, it could affect the diversity of the content available. Regarding this potential change, another respondent noted, "If the platform starts to isolate us from outside users, it will lose its appeal."

4.2 Impact on Social Experience and Sense of Belonging

The arrival of TikTok migrants significantly affects the social experience of existing Xiaohongshu users, particularly regarding the use of the chat room feature. Previously, users tended to interact more through browsing images and videos; now, they find themselves increasingly engaging in real-time discussions. One user remarked, "I never thought I would be watching more live chats on Xiaohongshu than videos and photos. In the chat room, I discover that we can discuss many practical issues in life, like housing prices and living costs." With the deepening of these exchanges, users are beginning to talk about more relatable life topics. These discussions promote a deeper understanding of each other's real lives and help break down preconceived notions.

Users describe Xiaohongshu as becoming increasingly internationalized, but they do not feel a loss of identity; rather, many embrace this trend. One respondent expressed pride, saying, "We are witnessing history! I feel like I'm part of a friendly global dialogue." They begin to adopt more multilingual communication methods, using translation tools to enhance understanding among different users. However, a minority of existing users, particularly those studying abroad, indicate that their sense of belonging has diminished following the influx of new users. This group finds that the frequency of content related to their original interests—especially information about Chinese news and entertainment—has decreased, resulting in a feeling that Xiaohongshu is becoming unfamiliar. A studying abroad student shared, "I used to find a lot of content about my hometown here, but now that information is becoming less frequent, and I feel like Xiaohongshu is no longer the place I used to know."

4.3 Motivation to Connect with TikTok Migrants

Various motivations to connect with TikTok migrants were identified. Notably, users show a strong interest in the cat pictures shared by newcomers (referred to as "cat tax"), which has become a gateway for interaction. Existing users also demonstrate significant interest in the beautiful landscapes, food, and culturally related music and dance shared by new users. One user stated, "Seeing them share food and scenery opens my eyes; I feel it's a cultural exchange." For some users, improving their English skills is a crucial motivation for engaging with new users, and they proactively seek opportunities for interaction.

Additionally, existing Xiaohongshu users have taken on the role of guides, helping new users navigate platform norms, such as usage guidelines and choosing appealing Chinese names. One user shared, "I really enjoy helping new users, as it enhances their understanding of the platform while also enriching our friendship." Some original content creators have begun posting content related to Chinese culture and scenery, hoping to provide TikTok migrants with a genuine understanding of China. Another content creator expressed their hopes: "I look forward to more foreign friends coming to China in the future to experience our culture firsthand." , as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Theme Analysis Results

Theme	Sub-theme	Key Points/Description	Supporting Quotes
Welcoming Attitude	Opportunities for Cultural Exchange	Users generally welcome new migrants, viewing them as opportunities for cross-cultural exchange	"I really enjoy the cat photos they post; it makes me feel very happy."
		Some users hope to learn more about foreign cultures through interaction	"I hope to improve my English by communicating with them, so I'll be more confident when I travel abroad."
User Concerns	Changes in Content Recommendations	Users worry that the platform may change its original recommendation algorithms	"I fear that the platform will become completely different from what I remember; I don't want to see content that doesn't interest me."
		Some users worry that isolating new and old users may impact content diversity	"If the platform starts to isolate us from outside users, it will lose its appeal."
Increased Social Interaction	Use of Chat Room Functions	Users actively use chat rooms to enhance interaction and communication	"I never thought I would be watching more live chats on Xiaohongshu than videos and photos."
		Chat room discussions cover practical life topics and promote deeper understanding	"We can discuss many practical issues in life, like housing prices and living costs."
Changes in Sense of Belonging	Decreased Information Diversity	Some users feel that the frequency of content related to their original interests has decreased	"I used to find a lot of content about my hometown here, but now that information is becoming less frequent."
		Existing users feel Xiaohongshu is becoming unfamiliar	"I feel like Xiaohongshu is no longer the place I used to know."
Motivation to Connect	Improving Language Skills	Users hope to improve their English by connecting with new users	"Seeing them share food and scenery opens my eyes; I feel it's a cultural exchange."
		Existing users actively help new users become familiar with the platform	"I really enjoy helping new users; it enhances their understanding of the platform while enriching our friendship."

5. Discussion

5.1 Contributions and Differences of Current Research Findings

This study reveals the complex attitudes of existing Xiaohongshu users towards the migration of TikTok users, filling a significant gap in the literature regarding user migration. Unlike previous

research that primarily focused on user behavior and platform characteristics, this study emphasizes users' subjective experiences and emotional responses, particularly how existing users perceive the arrival of new users and its impact on community culture. This shift in perspective allows for a deeper understanding of the dynamics of social media platforms, especially in the context of user migration. By focusing on the feedback from existing users, we can identify the tension between their welcoming attitudes towards new migrants and their underlying concerns, providing new insights for future social media research. Furthermore, this study highlights the importance of cross-cultural exchange, demonstrating users' adaptability and cultural identity in the face of platform changes.

5.2 Possible Reasons for Current Research Findings

The formation of current research findings may be attributed to several factors. First, compared to users of other Chinese social applications, Xiaohongshu users generally exhibit higher overall quality and are predominantly younger. This characteristic makes Xiaohongshu a more attractive social platform, especially for those seeking high-quality content and positive interactions. Young users tend to have an open attitude towards new experiences, making them more receptive to the inclusion of new users and willing to engage in cross-cultural exchanges. This openness and inclusivity provide a fertile ground for the migration of TikTok users, facilitating smoother interactions between new and existing users.

Secondly, the cultural confidence strategy in China has also contributed to existing users' perspective. With the increasing emphasis on cultural confidence by the state, more Chinese users are beginning to take pride in their culture and wish to share and promote it on social media. This sense of cultural pride encourages existing Xiaohongshu users to welcome TikTok users, viewing their arrival as an opportunity for cultural exchange. Users hope to enhance their cultural identity through interactions with newcomers while also showcasing the diversity and charm of Chinese culture. These factors collectively shape the current research findings, reflecting users' expectations and needs regarding community culture and social interaction during migration.

5.3 Impact of Current Research Findings

The findings of this study have significant implications for the management and development of social media platforms. Understanding existing users' attitudes and expectations towards new users can help platforms formulate more effective strategies to promote interaction and understanding among users. Platform managers should pay attention to user feedback and flexibly adjust content recommendation mechanisms to balance the needs of both new and existing users. Additionally, platforms can enhance user connections by organizing online events and discussions, fostering community cohesion. This not only aids in the integration of new users but also reassures existing users that their culture and interests remain valued, thereby strengthening their sense of belonging.

In summary, this study explores the perspectives of existing Xiaohongshu users regarding the migration of TikTok users, filling an important gap in the research on social media migration. The findings reveal the complex relationship between users' desire for cross-cultural exchange and their concerns about changes in community culture, emphasizing the importance of social needs in user interactions. These insights provide valuable guidance for the management and development of social media platforms, enhancing our understanding of user migration phenomena.

6. Conclusions

This study explores the perceptions of existing Xiaohongshu users regarding the migration of

TikTok users, revealing the complex emotions and social dynamics that users experience during this process. The results indicate that while the original users generally welcome the arrival of new users, viewing it as an opportunity for cross-cultural exchange, a small portion of these original users express concerns about changes to community culture and a weakening sense of belonging. This finding fills a gap in the research on social media migration and highlights users' expectations regarding community identity and social interaction during migration.

Through an in-depth analysis of user migration phenomena, we find a tension between users' open attitudes and their desire for new content and their concerns about platform changes. Original users find new value in using Xiaohongshu through interactions with new users; however, they are also worried that the platform may change its algorithmic recommendations, making it feel unfamiliar to them. Additionally, the influence of cultural confidence strategies has led to an increasing number of users willing to share and promote Chinese culture, providing a solid foundation for communication between old and new users.

Despite offering important insights, this study has some limitations. The interviews conducted did not sufficiently focus on a particular group of original users—those who have been using both Xiaohongshu and TikTok for a long time and are original content creators. These users have accumulated a relatively high level of attention and influence on the platform, but with the influx of TikTok users, they might face the threat of being surpassed by new users. This dynamic may impact their creative motivation and sense of community belonging, yet it was not thoroughly explored in this study.

Therefore, future research could place more emphasis on this minority group to uncover their unique experiences and challenges during the migration process. By interviewing these original content creators, researchers can discover their views on new users, feelings about content competition, and how they adjust their creative strategies to adapt to the new community environment. This would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of user migration on community culture and content creation and provide more targeted recommendations for social media platform management.

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