

The Shaping and Construction of Female Image by Little Red Book App in New Media Environment

Ying Hong^{1,a,*}

¹Foreign Language College, Xiamen University of Technology, Xiamen, China

a.hongying49m@163.com

*corresponding author

Keywords: Little Red Book APP, KOL, female image

Abstract: With the emergence of KOL in various internet platforms, the image of women has been redefined. This paper concentrates on studying how the app Little Red Book influences the shaping and construction of female image by the method of interview. By interviewing female users of Little Red Book, combining with the operation pattern of the app, the reasons such as the influence of KOL on women's values, social roles and mentality will be analyzed. Additionally, based on consumerism and the theory of Gatekeeper, the social causes of the phenomenon will be discussed.

1. Introduction

With the rapid development of Internet communication technology, a variety of new media tools are emerging. Weibo, WeChat and other online communities have been an important channel for women to express their demands and exchange views. Therefore, with many social platforms such as Weibo, Little Red Book, Douyin and other apps gradually becoming an integral part of women's daily life, KOL (Key Opinion Leader) became a large group that cannot be ignored.

And it is obvious that most KOL whose social pages are positioned as entertainment and self-promotion spread some values about female image, aesthetics, consumption, social positioning and other ideas, which affect a lot of fanatical followers. The Little Red Book is a typical representative of this phenomenon. Unlike the traditional UGC (User Generated Content) marketing model, Little Red Book creates a virtual community where users can share their lives or specific products directly, attracting fans to purchase the same product. This process is often referred to as a behavior of "strongly recommend". But through continuous development, this behavior in Little Red book tends to target the group of young women, and the impact is not limited to promoting women's buying behavior.

2. Literature Review and Research Method

The impact of the existing research on the shaping of women's image is mainly reflected in the following aspects:

New media granted women the right to speak loud. Li Youjun mentions in "*Deconstruction and Construction*" that compared with traditional media, women have gradually grasped the right to speak in the new media environment [1]. They can communicate, exchange their views and appeals

and also promote subject consciousness through various network discourse platforms. Women’s social roles are no longer single and male-affiliated. With regard to the study of Little Red Book, “*Looking at the Culture of Young Women’s Participation from the Little Red Book App*” also expounds that because of the convenience of the platform and the flexibility of the form of participation, women can easily show themselves, express their views, and thus gain identities [2]. This statement is rational to some extent; the new media has indeed become a powerful platform for women to speak, but in the process, whether the female image and their social roles have been fundamentally changed remains to be examined.

The image of women is stereotype. Zhao Dan wrote in “*The Study of Women’s Image in the New Media Environment*” that women’s channels in various websites are still centered on the stereotype of women, and the topics such as fashion, beauty and emotion are still regarded as women’s exclusive[3]. It is true that most new media platforms tend to put emphasis on the traditional image of women, in order to get economic benefits and social responses. On the contrary, the content of women as independent and equal social individuals, especially the pursuit of life, ideal beliefs, personal needs and other issues are rarely reflected. Xu Peng also pointed out in the article “*Consumer Social in the New Media Environment*” that the users of the Little Red Book creates an illusory world of higher level of consumption, and also make consumerism increasingly become a female label [4]. And what we need to think about on this problem is whether this trend has implicitly changed the standards that modern women see themselves and other groups of women?

Pornographic consumption of women is still a mainstream. In the article “*The Technology Empowerment*” of He Yayu, we can see that women in the medium are presented partially and selectively. Women are served as objects for male consumption, or as male accessories and escorts. In a patriarchal society, women are still struggling to get rid of the shackles of their gender and external image expectations [5]. This view is easy to illustrate in real life. Under the stereotype of “perfect woman” created by many KOL in Little Red Book, the aesthetic image for women has become extreme, and the concept of “appearance is power” affects everyone. What we need to think further is whether this concept is the product of patriarchal society, or are there any other causes?

To sum up, the existing research has clearly showed that the new media has reshaped women’s image and ideas. But whether the role and values of women have changed in real life and social factors behind it need further research.

This paper mainly uses the interview method to study. Through online one-on-one interviews, four post-90 female college students were investigated, as follows:

Table 1: The introduction of interviewee.

	Age	Occupation
Interviewee1	21	Undergraduate
Interviewee2	21	Undergraduate
Interviewee3	19	Undergraduate
Interviewee4	27	Undergraduate

The main questions that this paper intends to solve: to explore the usage of Little Red Book among young women; to analyze how Little Red Book affects women’s values and to explore the reasons behind them.

3. Little Red Book: Content Sharing Platform

To create a UGC content sharing community, the target groups of Little Red Book are expanding. From female users with shopping needs or overseas shopping needs, to users with all kinds of

shopping needs. And the slogan “Mark my life” means to enhance the content sharing function of Little Red Book. Due to the expansion of the target groups, the content involved is also constantly enriched. The main way users can share on the Little Red Book platform is to post “notes” in the form of videos or graphics, at the same time they can watch and read notes posted by other users.

According to the data provided by iResearch, the main users of the Little Red Book are young girls from the first and second-tier developed city, who pursue beauty and exquisite life. To serve the main users, the main content of the book is also centered on the discussion of fashion, skin care, and lifestyle, covering fashion wear, makeup skincare, tourism, food recommendations, fitness and other 18 topics. It can be seen that the topics in Little Red Book involves all aspects of young girls’ lives.

The selection of topics in Little Red Book has two characteristics. First is the meticulous. The same topic divides according to different dimensions, such as user’s growth path, user’s life scene and category, which are committed to making it more convenient for readers to find the content. Second, combined with current topics with the highest discussion, topic planning is carried out to attract more readers’ attention and also produce a higher degree of discussion. For example, during the outbreak of coronavirus, most people have to stay at home; Little Red Book planned a number of related topics, such as, “gym at home”, “making food by myself”, “home is the best place to travel”, “work at home” and so on.

And the reason that the notes in Little Red Book are highly readable also depends on the following characteristics. First, the structure is clear. There are fixed templates for users to post video and photos, including user’s information, pictures, tags, titles, body, likes, comments, collections, related notes, so that users can publish notes with comprehensive and clear information. The second is high participation. Each user is able to publish original notes; the platform will select and promote the user’s original notes, to stimulate the user’s willingness to participate.

There are three main sources of content: User Generated Content (UGC), Professional Generated Content (PGC) and Professional User Generated Content (PUGC). Each user can produce notes independently every day, and the platform also creates a lot of incentives for users to encourage users to create original notes. For example, the user growth system built by Little Red Book goes through ten levels from the lowest level “diaper potatoes” to the highest level “crown potatoes”. And PGC refers to professional production content, that is, a vertical official account opened through different topics divided. For example, potato captain, dress potato, video potato and so on. PUGC is a professional user-produced content; the specialists are mainly invited from other platforms, or cultivated by Little Red Book themselves. This type of user has grown rapidly in Little Red Book in recent years, providing a lot of high-quality content for platform, and has attracted high discussion and attention.

In addition to being a “life-sharing platform”, Little Red Book is a cross-border e-commerce platform, which is often overlooked by users. Therefore, some notes contain the links that guide users to buy the product directly. In addition, many brands also cooperate with professional users in the platform to promote their products and enhance their brand awareness. For example, in recent years, a lot of domestic beauty brands such as Judydoll, Chioture have promotional cooperation with the Little Red Book.

According to the results of the interview, most women trust in the contents of the Little Red Book, and use the app frequently. What they are interested in covers many aspects of life, including beauty, skincare, travel, fitness, shopping, food, fashion outfit sharing and other topics that are discussed frequently in the female community. The content that can be shared is not limited to a product, but also life experiences. Therefore, although the Little Red Book is an e-commerce platform, unlike the traditional e-commerce, it is more like an encyclopedia for users. The personal

notes can be circulated to discuss, which is more authentic and trustworthy to avoid users' resistance.

The using experience has changed compared to the founding time. In terms of content richness, The Little Red Book gradually broadens its range of topics related to women, and also offers more detailed classification of different themes. For example, clothing will be subdivided into clothing shopping sharing, seasonal sharing, dinner dress and other small themes. It's easy to find the corresponding notes by keywords. In terms of the credibility of the content, it has to mention the appearance of KOL. The concept of "opinion leader" has a long history, which refers to "activists" who often provide information to others and influence others in networks [6]. While attracting the attention of fans, they have caused a large number of advertisements to be embedded in the platform, making users who seek a real experience worry about the authenticity of their sharing.

4. The Shaping and Construction of the Image of Women

The target group of Little Red Book is young women, and many of the "Opinion Leaders" cultivated and contracted by the platform in recent years are women. As a result, the notes in Little Red Book will inevitably influence women on certain degrees. Through the interview, it can be seen that KOL of the Little Red Book plays an important role in the reshaping of the image of women.

It seems difficult to know the entire life of every blogger through the limited word-length notes and videos, but it is precisely because you can spy on a person's life from all angles, which can give people more room to imagine. So such fragmented sharing is good for bloggers to create their perfect image.

Bloggers mainly influence women's value by presenting their image with following characteristics:

High quality of life, active life, self-discipline. Videoing one's meals, fitness experience, learning for one day became popular in the platform, which has also sparked discussion and practice about self-discipline in the female community. Many women are starting to focus on ways to improve their quality of life and buy some high-end household products to improve their "happiness in life".

Leader in many fields. Bloggers studying abroad, who usually have a good record in many fields, present an almost omnipotent image. One interviewee explained in detail the blogger she had seen: "I've been following a blogger in Little Red Book about fitness and yoga. The blogger said she started learning yoga from 13, 14 years old, I think she is quite positive and active. She is also an author of a bilingual column, so I think she sets a good example for me."

The superior family condition and high level consumption. Interviews show that the general impression of KOL is that they can buy anything without hesitation. Buying a full set of beauty products and luxury brand bags is nothing new. They have more leisure time to go out to play and travel. In addition, many of the full-time bloggers of Little Red Book seems to earn money far easier than normal people. For young women, especially students and white-collar workers, this kind of life is far remote but desirable.

Superior fit and shape. There is no doubt that most bloggers attract the attention of bulk fans in reason of their outstanding appearance in photos and videos. Some bloggers even looks like superstars and models, bringing direct and violent visual impact to users.

Independent. In keeping with the femininity of the new era, some bloggers put the label "independence" to create their own personal image. One interviewee mentioned such bloggers: "There is a blogger, she is probably born after 1995, but she born a baby quite a long time ago. I agree with her on the reason why she born a baby at such an early time. As long as you reach the legal age, and then have financial ability to raise your children, you don't have to care about others

opinions.”It’s easy to find bloggers getting glorious appearance and working hard after establishing their own family.

Little Red Book is the epitome and true reflection of women’s perception of their own image today. Compared with the traditional female image of attaching to family, it’s more and more serious for women to pursuit freedom and equality. For most women, they think that they are no longer accessory for men; they have the right to pursue a happy life and realize personal value. Under this circumstance, KOL plays an important role in the “leap forward” of female value. In the process of putting their demand for freedom and equality into practice, they get substantive and directional guidance and even template, which has a positive impact on the altar of women’s social role. But the resulting problem is that most women stay on the imitation level and do not really understand and think about their social roles, resulting in new social psychological problems.

First of all, women shuttle in the bloggers’ beautiful home page day after day, attracted by their beautiful appearance and perfect life, and regard this kind of bloggers as a standard to examine their own life. Then inevitably envy, jealousy and even inferiority arise. Almost all of the interviewees got this feeling, with one saying: “We are not as free and rich as the bloggers; sometimes we can’t help ourselves being envy.”It cannot be ruled out that there are more extreme cases in which some women are trapped in the quagmire of inferiority. In this process, not only women lose the courage to continue making progress, but also they cannot clearly understand themselves, appreciate themselves. Not only do women see themselves with more standards, but they also evaluate other women more harshly. Compared with the perfect girl in the Little Red Book, the person in real life inevitably seems normal. Thus women cannot positively appreciate themselves, and cannot evaluate others objectively. As a result, they add numerous rules and constraints for themselves.

Second, although it is promoted that women are no longer affiliated with men, women are essentially not freed from the eyes of men. In addition to the Little Red Book, other online celebrities on social media have shown that people excessively pursuit of women’s appearance. From makeup to clothing to body, women’s natural task is to learn to make them beautiful, otherwise they will be criticized. As we can see from the posts on Little Red Book, the image of women in the new media era is still being “seen”. For example, “male’s favorite makeup”, “boyfriend’s favorite color”, “boyfriend’s favorite outfit.” Bloggers claim that “dressing up is to please themselves”, but in fact, they don’t tell the truth.

Third, the wrong view of consumption spread by bloggers thrives in recent consumerist society. The hot themes in the Little Red Book are “luxury bag sharing,”“luxury bags that girls must own,”“lipstick you must own in your make-up cabinet.” It can be seen that women shopping is no longer based on demand and practical consideration. Instead, they follow others blindly. And the purchase of luxury goods is also more and more popular, many office workers and even students sacrifice everything in order to get a new luxury bag. The trend of over-consumption affects a large number of women. Some Interviewees have strong feeling about it: “They are creating a bad consumption culture, including popular slogan, encourage people to buy more. I think this kind of consumption habits is actually quite negative, but when people around you are all accept this conception, you won’t realize it is a problem. “

Most importantly, People ideally build the perfect female image in their hearts, or use some opinion leaders as a template for life, and to imitate. One interviewee also mentioned the issue, she said, “I realized that the Internet allows us to know people in different circles, at different levels, but the distance between people has not disappeared.”“So in the process of imitating, they get into trouble. The popular themes on the Little Red Book was “Everyone want to be Nana Ouyang”, “Nana’s outfit” and so on, many bloggers also post notes about it, so there appears a batch of “Nana Ouyang”.It is true that people like Ouyang Nana who seems to be enjoying a perfect life, which is inevitably enviable, but this does not mean that her life is suitable for everyone. Any opinion

leaders should not become the standard. However, the influence of KOL is beyond imagination, so they could lead all kinds of aesthetics to a surprising unity.

5. Consumerism and Catering to the Audience

KOL has a profound impact on women's values because it is rooted in consumerism. Consumerism is a kind of value orientation and way of life that advocates possession and pursues excessive consumption in order to meet self-needs and life goals. Since the 1950s and 1960s, consumerism has become the main concept of life in Western capitalist countries with the expansion of capital[7]. In recent decades, because of the increasing standard of living, consumerism has grown and spread.

KOL can have a certain influence on Little Red Book. The impact of their words and deeds on society is actually a projection of popular psychology in the Internet field. Consumerism refuses to think deeply in spirit and takes money and material as a measure of human beings. Looking at the general consumption habits of Chinese, the investment in luxury goods has increased year after year. That all kinds of domestic and foreign e-commerce can have good sales volume in China fully proved the influence of consumerism in Chinese society. This also helps KOL spread the concept of advanced consumption. This extended redefinition of the value of women, that is, the standard that women must be independent, beautiful and rich, is also used by KOL to run their personal channels.

Thus, in the era of consumerism when Internet consumption emerges, it is the drive of commercial interests and the blind obedience of popular psychology that has given birth to the birth of KOL and provided a favorable external environment for the dissemination of their values.

In addition, the nature of information dissemination is also the key reason why KOL's rhetoric has such a huge impact. The gatekeeper theory of communication science points out that although the choice of news and information is restricted by the media's business objectives, audience's needs and social culture, it is easier to select or match the content of the media policy and interests. Various media organizations, as producers and "gatekeepers" of information, should filter and reprocess the information received by the audience. But in the new media era, the role of "gatekeeper" is difficult to show its value. First of all, the large increase of we-media has showed its power to users, which occupy a large proportion, so the standards of information screening are also different. The second is information explosion and fragmentation. All the massive fragmentation of information get together to prove the same values and truth, the traditional method of information control is no longer operable. What we can make sure is that KOL presents themselves on the web in order to gain more attention and thus seek for benefit, which also allows them to deliberately pander to the audience and move closer to the so-called right values.

Under the mass of one-sided Internet information, it is difficult for users to obtain space for personal thinking, so they gradually form the consistent value, which in turn gives the one-sided orientation for we-media. Under the two-way role, some of KOL's opinions can have a profound impact on the audience.

6. Conclusion

During the new media age, a variety of network platforms like Little Red Book have produced many influential key opinion leaders. They focus on women, and some of their opinions have a huge impact on women's social roles, mindsets and perceptions of consumption. The rise of consumerism provides favorable conditions. From the perspective of gatekeeper theory, the difficulty of information screening and the conscious tilt of platform traffic, resulting in more information to cater to users. In the new media era, the audience should get the ability of personal thinking, and information producers also need to think more about the screening of information.

References

- [1] Lee you-jun. *Deconstruction or construction? On the image representation of women from the perspective of new media*. *Journal of the Weinan Normal University*, 2016,3108:75-80.
- [2] Li Zhenan, Liu Bingxin, Yu Xueping. *The participation culture of young women from the perspective of Little Red Book App*. *New Media Research*, May 2019,10:87-90.
- [3] Zhao Dan. *A study of female images in the new media environment J*. *New Media Research*, 2016,208:95-96.
- [4] Peng. *Consumer Society in the new media environment—Taking Little Red book APP as an example. The study of transmissibility*, 2019,316:91-92.
- [5] Luan Yimei, he Yayan. *A study of the female media images in the short video “her image”— enabled by technology*. *Audio-visual*, 201906:36-43.
- [6] Luyun Huang, Wang Yu. *On the influence of opinion leaders on modern women s consumption behavior in the Internet age*. *Late northern literature*, 201702:185.
- [7] Xu Shuihua, Zhang Zhao. *On the essence and transcendence of consumerism*. *Research in business economics*, 201902:49-51