Analysis of Aesthetic Homogeneity Based on the Theory of The Society of the Spectacle — Taking Xiaohongshu as an Example

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Abstract. Nowadays, people always pursue the trend of the popular new things and thus gradually have similar aesthetics to others, resulting in the homogeneity of people's aesthetics. For example, Xiaohongshu provides contemporary young women with aesthetic guidelines on life and cosmetics. Users of Xiaohongshu are also willing to accept and imitate such an aesthetic style. In addition, in the process of communication, it built a false spectacle. The algorithm mechanism of big data and the KOL role of bloggers make the contents of Xiaohongshu in the spectacle similar, resulting in the homogeneity of aesthetic contents. To research whether Xiaohongshu has aesthetic homogeneity, by using the content analysis method, this study analyzes whether the content of Xiaohongshu has aesthetic homogeneity. The study finds that Xiaohongshu has aesthetic homogeneity in the aesthetic keywords and types and then discusses the reasons for homogeneity.

1. Introdution

In contemporary life, most people pursue popular new things. Popularity is a common social psychological phenomenon in which things, ideas, and behavior patterns that appear in the society or are advocated by an authoritative figure are accepted and adopted by people, and then quickly gain popularization and even disappear. People advocate and imitate popular culture and aesthetics so that their aesthetics gradually become similar to those of others and their minds are deadened to the diversified aesthetics. Taking the aesthetics reflected in the contents of Xiaohongshu as an example, Xiaohongshu, with young women as the main users, provides a new online social platform for young people to show themselves and share their lives. Its popular content focus on such categories as cosmetics, hairstyle, dressing and manicure. After attaining mature development, Xiaohongshu provides aesthetic guidelines in life and beauty for contemporary young women. Xiaohongshu users are also willing to accept the aesthetic style on the platform and imitate it on a large scale, such as the popular atmosphere-based style and pure and sexy style. Finally, there has appeared the aesthetic homogeneity of the contents on Xiaohongshu.

Although the homogeneity of aesthetics reflects the popular trend, the content homogeneity can make the public inert to the diversified aesthetics and afraid to try new things. For example, people now have figure anxiety and appearance anxiety mainly because they often compare their own figures and appearance with the tall and slim stars who have big eyes and high noses, thus limiting the diversified aesthetics. People pursue the same popular aesthetics and even try to get the same own appearance and figure by going on a diet and doing cosmetic surgery. For life in reality, firstly, this study reflects the aesthetic homogeneity of Xiaohongshu, which plays a significant role in the content innovation of Xiaohongshu; 2. It can prevent most people from pursuing the homogeneous aesthetics of the spectacle by taking extreme actions. In terms of the theoretical significance, of this study makes a case analysis of Xiaohongshu to research the theory of aesthetic homogeneity and the theory of The Society of the Spectacle, making some supplementary contributions.

As for the theory of "The Society of the Spectacle" mentioned in the study, Debord, the author of "The Society of the Spectacle", did not give a clear definition of the concept of the spectacle, but it can be regarded as an eye-catching object made by media and presented in the public view [1]; Another "homogeneity" mentioned in the study originally referred to the similarity of products and services in management, the content, quality, technical content, and use value, despite differences in forms. Then, the aesthetic homogeneity is a universal and average aesthetic, and the audience also has no knowledge during this period but is instilled with "cramming" aesthetics after reading the information[2].

In the book "The Society of the Spectacle" [3], Debord argued that the essence of spectacle "is to control people's desire identically or unconsciously", and to reject dialogue. The spectacle is a deeper invisible control that dispels the resistance and critical negativity of the subject. In the fascination of spectacle, people can only follow it one way.

Influenced by Hegel, Marx and young Lukacs, Debord took contemporary capitalism as the social background but also emphasized its omnipresence. Spectacle "has spread to all aspects of reality in an all-pervasive manner", so this book provides theoretical value for this study.

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In the meantime, in the domestic paper Critical interpretation of aesthetic homogeneity in the era of media spectacle(2021), Chen Kai discussed the theoretical research on The Society of the Spectacle and homogeneity mainly in three aspects: At the performance level, aesthetic homogeneity is mainly manifested in the homogeneity of the aesthetic object, aesthetic emotion, aesthetic time and aesthetic space[1]; At the cause level, the important reasons for the emergence of aesthetic homogeneity are the aesthetic induction of consumer idols made by media spectacle and the disappearance of aesthetic depth and distance caused by the proliferation of postmodern culture. Aesthetic homogeneity has also resulted from human convergence and the desire for recognition. Assimilated by social aesthetics and art, people often have a strong sense of identity with such photos and accept and have the same feeling, thus obtaining happiness from them. At the consequence level, the spectacle of the media paralyzes the aesthetic imagination, and the intuitive images or videos prevent people from thinking deeply and inhibit the exertion of the aesthetic imagination. "

In the paper Different Aesthetics, Liu Liangliang (2017) expounded on four aspects: the reasons for people's blind obedience and lack of independent thinking ability; the hazards of this phenomenon; solutions; as well as the consciousness phenomenon, and also pointed out that homogeneity is attributed to human convergence and the desire for recognition[4]. People have this kind of satisfaction precisely due to the weakening of self and the compromise of others and society to obtain their own recognition. Moreover, Liu also mentioned the methods to solve the homogeneity phenomenon, that is, to find and explore new things to meet people's curiosity but to find "points" that can stimulate artistic inspiration and cultivate aesthetic consciousness after examining and summarizing in daily life[4].

Few studies once researched "spectacle". The 108 core journals in CNKI combined the big algorithm mechanism, audio-visual communication, etc., and mainly focused on new media, subcultures, etc. This study researches the current popular new media Xiaohongshu to apply aesthetic homogeneity to real life.

2. Method

Through the research on the aesthetic homogeneity of the contents of Xiaohongshu, using the spectacle theory as a tool and the content analysis method, this paper analyzes whether the contents of Xiaohongshu have aesthetic homogeneity and mainly carries out the research in data acquisition, category construction, and keywords sorting.

First, collect data to determine whether the popular content of Xiaohongshu has aesthetic homogeneity, that is, whether the beauty they express in the popular content of Xiaohongshu is the same or similar. Secondly, build categories, and divide the contents of Xiaohongshu into four categories: hairstyle, makeup, dressing, and manicure. Then, in these four categories, the study sorts out about 20 Xiaohongshu notes posted between November 2021 and January 2022 that can reflect the aesthetic tendency with

more than 5,000 likes and more than 10,000 followers of bloggers, to make a classic case analysis. The reason why it is divided into four categories is that in the content classification of Xiaohongshu, these four types can better reflect the blogger's aesthetic compared with the food or mother and baby; The reason for selecting this period of sample time is that it can better reflect the latest trends; The bloggers are mainly beginners and medium influencers, which can play a certain role as KOLs and were more representative.

Then, carried out the two-level classification for the major categories of hairstyle, cosmetics, dressing, and manicure into the title, thump-up amount, followers, posting time, aesthetic style keywords, and aesthetic types. Among them, the aesthetic style keywords come from the label of Xiaohongshu post; The aesthetic type is what is beautiful and what is not beautifully conveyed in the blogger's graphic or video copy. For example, the content of a note is to convey that if ordinary people want to have the same model of a certain star, they can increase the three-dimensional sense and improve the flat face by painting cute eye bags. This can be summarized as the aesthetic appreciation of this note is to compare ordinary people with stars, pursue the same style of stars, and imply that the three-dimensional face is more beautiful than the flat face.

After constructing the category, the main ideas of the research are as follows: first, sort out the total style keywords, and sequence the keywords based on the number of occurrences. The more aesthetic keywords appear in all notes, the more they can reflect that their aesthetics are the same or similar. 2. Sort out the aesthetic types, and summarize what is beautiful in all notes, and what are the keywords of beauty, such as the pursuit of the same style of stars, the pursuit of loose hair, round head and high skull top. 3. Compare the aesthetic types corresponding to the same keyword. For example, the aesthetic keywords of the two notes are atmosphere. One of their aesthetic types is the high skull with fluffy hair, and the other is curly hair with big waves. Take wearing as an example. The aesthetic type also pursues notes with a wide upper body. Their aesthetic keywords are different. One is Korean style and the other is American style. From the above, we know the main style keywords and aesthetic types, and what different aesthetic styles represent.

Through the research, it is found that among the types of aesthetic styles, there are 23 times of atmosphere-based style, 18 times of Korean style, 11 times of elegant style, 9 times of Ins style, 7 times of indolent style, 6 times of noble style, and 5 times of maidenly style. Atmosphere-based and Korean styles account for a large proportion. The style keywords of the content as a whole are atmosphere and Korean style, and the bloggers' styles basically have the same set of fixed aesthetic thinking. For example, they think that fluffy hair and simple color matching, etc. are related to the atmosphere. At the same time, bloggers also follow the same style of Korean style and idols. Topics related to this include leading female performers in Korean dramas and women idols. Although Korean styles are divided into different styles, the basic aesthetic types are similar in terms of makeup, hairstyle, dressing, and manicure. Some styles do not appear in some

categories at all, while others account for a large proportion. The above proves that there is aesthetic homogeneity in the content of Xiaohongshu.
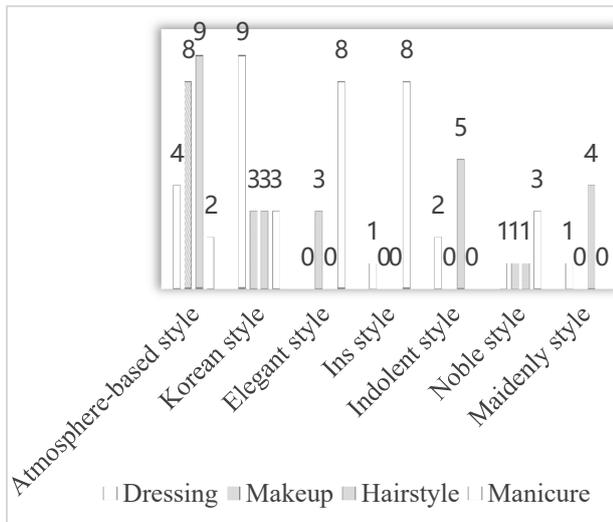

Fig.1. Xiaohongshu notes posted between November 2021 and January 2022

3. Result & Discussion

This study shows that the content of Xiaohongshu is aesthetically homogeneous for the following three reasons. From the perspective of publishers, most of the publishers are medium influencers and beginners, with the demand for attracting more followers and commercial demand, which proves that the spectacle will guide and create people's desire, thus driving the production of businesses.With the help of social media, they define "what is beauty" and exaggerate some insignificant details, so that netizens can notice the "seriousness of the situation". In this way, audiences can feel a sense of urgency and a sense of crisis of self-identification. In other words, they think that they do not follow the popular aesthetics. At this time, XiaoHongshu brings aesthetic pleasure to the audience through aesthetic skills, arouses netizens' demand for beauty and generates their own psychological need to change. At this time, the media also completes the standardization of netizens' aesthetic appreciation. Baudrillard believed that people always use objects as symbols that can distinguish themselves. The consumer psychology of conformity, comparison and difference seeking is essentially the desire for symbols that can reflect superiority, which is a kind of false demand for things. From the perspective of the audience, in the XiaoHongshu app, users can selectively access the content they are interested in. Under the algorithm mechanism of big data, XiaoHongshu will generate user portraits according to users' browsing records to provide personalized services for users. In the long run, users no longer pay attention to the outside world, but are immersed in such personalized and homogenized information, thus forming an "cocoon of information". In this way, the content pushed by users' pages will become more and more single and solidified, resulting in aesthetic homogeneity[8]. Besides, The social psychological

mechanism that the audience desires to seek identity. When users are exposed to cocoons of information and see content that is generally aesthetically consistent, they lose their ability to judge independently, causing intense anxiety. Because they cultivate similar aesthetic preferences through XiaoHongshu on the Internet, users learn about or consume commodities based on social relations in XiaoHongshu and learn how to beautify themselves to integrate into the society. This is actually a kind of social psychological mechanism, which weakens the self-aesthetic and satisfies the aesthetic of mass communication.

The aesthetic homogeneity can exert some bad effects. First, there would be less quality content. In the age of information explosion, attention is scarce. In order to compete for users' attention, meet users' needs and attract more followers, KOLs will also imitate the popular aesthetics, resulting in homogenization of content. Vulgar content continues to crowd into cyberspace, quality content gradually disappear.Second, the audience will be bored after being in the same or similar graphic spectacle for a long time, that is to say, aesthetics no longer depends on individual will. Various fashions and popularity are the result of KOL（Key Opinion Leader） propaganda and guidance, and people's aesthetic feelings are being weakened by homogenized aesthetics[8] The pictures and videos similar to the XiaoHongshu manipulate the senses of netizens. While guiding netizens how to cater to themselves and others through aesthetics, it also classifies individual styles, such as Korean style and atmosphere style, etc. mentioned above. Diversity and individuality are being replaced by single and harmonious types; Third, the homogeneity on the Internet, which is far from the reality, tends to mislead the audience, such as the appearance anxiety and body anxiety at present. Users living in the "information cocoon room" will automatically shield the information of different groups, and the barriers between different "cocoon rooms" will become increasingly wide, which leads to the increasing estrangement between network groups, and the polarization phenomenon continues to intensify. As information technology moves into the age of artificial intelligence, every human-computer interaction will be analyzed and monitored by algorithms. If the people trapped in the "information cocoon" cannot upgrade their cognition, the difference in Internet use will further trap them in the original aesthetic perception under the evaluation and bias of the algorithm, resulting in the inability to clearly understand their actual needs and the loss of rationality, resulting in some psychological problems, such as body anxiety and appearance anxiety; Forth, the homogenized spectacle will cause the obliteration of personality. As Debord said, "in life, if people completely obey the rule of the spectacle and gradually get away from all possible personal experiences, it will be more and more difficult to find personal preferences." Furthermore, It's worth noting and distinguishing that the homogenized content of Xiaohongshu is different from its popularity. The popular aesthetic is essentially a social phenomenon. The young people who grow up in the Internet era will naturally be

influenced by the Internet trend.[8] The features of popularity are ① Timeliness. People are always curious about new fashions. ② Individualization. People often think that popularity is a manifestation of highlighting personal characteristics. ③ Consumptive. Fashion is a kind of enjoyment and consumption of wealth. ④ Periodicity. The time from its formation to its disappearance is short, but it will appear again and again in a number of periods after its disappearance. ⑤ Selectivity. Popularity can be freely chosen by people and has no force. However, homogeneity is a phenomenon of blind obedience. People have lost the ability to think independently about aesthetics. They just accept popular content and consider whether to follow the crowd. This is different from popular personal characteristics.

4. Conclusion

As the fashion and aesthetic leader of most young people, Xiaohongshu has imperceptibly solidified people's aesthetic taste and influenced our lives. For example, the increasingly developed medical beauty industry implies people's pursuit of the same and fixed aesthetic, and there are many current conditions concerning appearance anxiety, body anxiety and diet disorder. To be more specific, the fashion style of people in reality is mainly from Xiaohongshu dressing, hair style and so on, mainly aiming to cover the body defects and deficiencies. Subjectively, the solution to this problem is very complicated, partly because it is difficult to distinguish between fashion and homogeneity. Besides, there are many reasons for the formation of "information cocoon", but in order to break the influence of "information cocoon", we need to give full play to people's inner initiative, that is, from their own point of view, change behavior habits, systematically improve data literacy, and cultivate the system thinking mode in the information age. First of all, the awareness of personal data protection should be generated to minimize the probability of information being interpreted and manipulated by the algorithm; Secondly, the system automatically push the information, should always keep alert; Thirdly, we should isolate fragmented information, return to reality, reshape cognition, try to jump out of the comfort zone provided by the "information cocoon room", break self-isolation, and maintain the balance and timeliness of information. Firstly, for those who blindly imitate the XiaoHongshu, they need to gradually build up confidence and have self-judgment about the Internet and about themselves. In addition, in the context of big data algorithms, people can also consciously break the "Information cocoons" when using Xiaohongshu and browse more posts with different aesthetic styles. Secondly, for Xiaohongshu itself, the platform should improve the algorithm technology to enable the construction of the information society. In May 2022, XiaoHongshu.com launched the Community Business Convention, regularly dealing with MCN（Multi-Channel Network） organizations with cheating behaviors such as buying and selling accounts and liking. But it will take more than that to break the information cocoon

completely[4]. Meanwhile, there are still some deficiencies in this study. For example, the aesthetic type is to refine and summarize the notes of Xiaohongshu, but fail to accurately make a summarization due to the subjective contents in Xiaohongshu; In the overall study of aesthetic homogeneity, it is necessary to clearly distinguish the relationship and difference between aesthetic homogeneity and popularity. There is still a certain lack of research in this regard;

We can find that other studies of the predecessors did not explain the theory of aesthetic homogeneity too deeply, but studied the impact and causes of aesthetic homogeneity. However, this study combines the actual cases of Xiaohongshu to analyze the aesthetic homogeneity and makes some supplementary contributions to the theory of aesthetic homogeneity.

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