

A Multimodal Study of Women's Lingerie Advertisements on Xiaohongshu: From a Feminist Perspective

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Abstract. Currently, domestic women's lingerie advertising is trending toward diversification, as evidenced not only by the richness of brands and designs but also by the diversity of the text, imagery, settings, and underlying values conveyed in these advertisements. With the rise of women's consciousness and feminism in recent years, some brands have begun to frame their advertising narratives from a female perspective. Based on the current state of women's lingerie advertising in China, this study focuses on women's lingerie advertisements. Using a multimodal approach that combines qualitative and quantitative research methods, it examines the values and feminist discourses presented in women's lingerie advertisements on Xiaohongshu and reaches the following conclusions: there is a certain degree of contradiction in the values conveyed by the text and imagery in lingerie advertisements; celebrity endorsements boost popularity but divert attention from the product to the celebrity; and contemporary women's perceptions of the body, consumption, and attitudes toward feminism are complex.

Keywords: Lingerie, Advertising, Feminism, Multimodal

1. Introduction

In recent years, with the emergence and dissemination of feminism and women's consciousness across the internet and various media platforms, lingerie advertisements—as a medium connecting women's bodies and consciousness with societal consumption patterns and values—deserve further research and discussion. Existing studies on lingerie advertisements from gender and feminist perspectives have largely focused on analyses of advertisements from a single or two specific brands, or on the one-way dissemination of advertising content, lacking a comprehensive examination of the current landscape of lingerie advertising as a whole.

Domestic scholars have charted a clear and multi-layered academic trajectory regarding this topic: beginning with analyses of marketing strategies, the focus has gradually shifted toward value-based critiques. Early studies discussed how advertisements cater to female consumers; while acknowledging the potential of the female market, these works had not yet escaped the commercial logic that flattens the female image [1]. Subsequently, scholars began to systematically and rigorously examine the cultural power relations presented in advertisements, thereby effectively critiquing how lingerie advertisements, as vehicles for "the Other's desire," discipline women's bodies [2]. More notably, recent research has observed positive changes: advertisements by the

emerging brand NeiWai showcase diversity in body types and ages, promoting body confidence and self-acceptance, which resonates with contemporary feminist values [3].

This paper takes women's lingerie advertisements as its subject matter and intends to employ both qualitative and quantitative methods to systematically analyze the text and video content of such advertisements on the Xiaohongshu platform, as well as the values and feminist discourses they present. This study overcomes the limitations and one-sidedness of existing research on lingerie advertisements and combines advertising content with user interactions to facilitate a two-way analysis and discussion. Through this analysis, the paper aims to illustrate the development of new advertising models within the lingerie industry.

2. Literature review

2.1. Evolution of creative appeals and forms in lingerie advertising

The earliest domestic study on lingerie advertising was published by Duan Wanyi in 1998 [1]. While the study highlighted the potential of women as a massive consumer group and considered creating advertisements from a female perspective, it reduced women to a superficial image of pursuing fantasies and prioritizing appearance, which had certain limitations. Since the beginning of the 21st century, the creative appeals of lingerie advertising have become more diverse. Through research on the theory of sexually appealing advertisements, Huang Xiaoman [4] demonstrated the influence of the female body imagery inherent in lingerie on advertising creation. At the same time, other scholars have analyzed advertising appeals and their effects through empirical research; for example, Jin Yu [5] used eye-tracking analysis to verify the significant impact of factors such as model recognition in advertising creation. Furthermore, the forms of lingerie advertising have also diversified. Some lingerie brands [6] combine fruits and vegetables with lingerie imagery, while a large number of gender-reversed endorsement advertisements have emerged. However, as Li Yuzi [7] noted, such advertisements must maintain a balance between appropriateness and novelty. Surprisingly, narratives linked to women's perspectives, values, and spirit are increasingly appearing in lingerie advertising, a topic to be discussed in detail in the next section.

2.2. Values in lingerie advertising and feminist expression

The earliest domestic study to explore lingerie culture from a female perspective was published by Qin Xiaoning [8]. Adopting a gender-based approach and drawing on the evolution of lingerie in both Eastern and Western cultures, the study not only highlighted the social value of this unique garment but also revealed the societal oppression of women underlying its evolution, thereby prompting women to reflect on both lingerie and their own identities. In the 2010s, domestic scholars focused on researching how lingerie advertisements discipline the female body and reflect the patriarchal society's gaze upon women. Tong Miao [2] analyzed lingerie advertisements and culture through the lenses of consumer culture and visual culture, revealing how the desires of the "other" construct female imagery and how media symbols discipline the female body. Jia Linyi [9], through a study of advertisements for the single lingerie brand "Victoria's Secret," revealed the pervasive nature of public voyeurism and the disciplining of the female body. In recent years, within the broader context of the dissemination of feminist consciousness, the narratives of some lingerie advertisements have shifted toward emphasizing bodily diversity and the concept of natural comfort. Scholars' attitudes toward the study of lingerie advertising have undergone a significant transformation. In their research, Deng Lingqi [3] and Kang Yujia [10] both affirm the inclusive

stance of the emerging lingerie brand "Neiwai" and its advertising narratives, expressing support for lingerie advertisements that promote the liberation of women's minds and bodies and foster self-awareness.

2.3. Research gap

Existing research on lingerie advertising from a feminist perspective has largely focused on examining the advertisements of a single or two specific brands and either affirming or critiquing the values underlying them, with a lack of research on the overall state of lingerie advertising today. Therefore, in subsequent research, this paper will analyze and explore women's lingerie advertisements on Xiaohongshu—an emerging social media platform popular among women—from a feminist perspective, examining the creators, target audiences, and underlying social values associated with these advertisements.

3. Methods

This paper combines quantitative and qualitative research methods to analyze advertisements and comment interactions for five major lingerie brands on Xiaohongshu.

The selection of these five brands follows a clear and reasonable logic: the official accounts of the five women's lingerie brands with the highest number of followers were chosen as the research sample, specifically Naitangpai, Victoria's Secret, Jiaonei, Ubras, and Neiwai.

For the selection of advertising content samples, the author chose the ten most recent Xiaohongshu posts related to women's lingerie advertising for each brand, ensuring the timeliness and representativeness of the samples. For the selection of interaction samples, the author analyzed one user comment with the highest number of likes for each of the aforementioned five brands' advertising posts to capture audience feedback.

For the analysis of values in the advertising content samples, a research methodology combining quantitative and qualitative analysis will be employed. A coding table will be created as Table 1 to analyze and categorize the values expressed in the advertising content.

Table 1. Value coding table for advertising content

Variable Dimension	Category Definition
Text	1=Self-indulgence
	2=Charm
	3=Functionality/Utility
	4=Equality
Imagery	1=Idealized
	2=Diverse
	3= De-embodiment
Setting	1=Private/Home
	2=Social Life
	3=Sports & Leisure
	4=Natural Setting
	5=No Specific Setting

By coding the samples to assign three codes to each advertisement, we can first identify the distribution of classifications across each dimension, providing an overview of the advertising content, and further conduct cross-tabulation analysis.

Regarding interactive feedback analysis, the qualitative analysis will be divided into two parts. The first is an analysis of advertising effectiveness: first, we will analyze interaction levels by counting comments and likes; second, we will analyze the emotional and behavioral orientations of the comments. The second part is an analysis of female consumers' values, which will examine consumption attitudes and body image perceptions, thereby illustrating both the effectiveness of the advertisements and the current state of contemporary female values.

4. Content and analysis

4.1. Analysis of advertisement samples

First, we conducted quantitative analyses of the three dimensions—"text," "imagery," and "scene"—to identify the core characteristics of each brand.

4.1.1. Text

Table 2. Statistical summary of advertisement text

Brand	1=Self-indulgence	2=Charm	3=Functionality/Utility	4=Equality
Victoria's Secret	0 (0%)	10 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Naitangpai	1 (10%)	0 (0%)	9 (90%)	0 (0%)
Neiwai	6 (60%)	0 (0%)	3 (30%)	1 (10%)
Ubras	8 (80%)	0 (0%)	2 (20%)	0 (0%)
Jiaonei	3 (30%)	4 (40%)	3 (30%)	0 (0%)

As clearly shown in Table 2, "Victoria's Secret" positions female sensuality as its primary selling point, thereby exhibiting characteristics of using micro-power in advertising to discipline women's bodies to drive consumption. Naitangpai emphasizes the practical attributes of its products, while Neiwai is self-care oriented, naturally combining functionality and equality, thus expressing the most diverse set of values. Ubras also has distinct self-care characteristics, complemented by comfort as a value of self-care, while Jiaonei's brand values remain somewhat vague.

4.1.2. Imagery

Table 3. Statistical summary of imagery in advertising samples

Brand	1=Idealized	2=Diverse	3=De-embodiment
Victoria's Secret	10 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Naitangpai	2 (20%)	0 (0%)	8 (80%)
Neiwai	8 (80%)	1 (10%)	1 (10%)
Ubras	10 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Jiaonei	10 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

As can be seen from the data in Table 3, although the textual values are expressed in various ways, 82% of the advertisements feature models with idealized body types. Consequently, this subconsciously reinforces the male gaze toward women, exposes the traces of patriarchy that remain

difficult to completely erase beneath the brands' so-called "self-love and gender equality" rhetoric, and more directly perpetuates body image anxiety. In stark contrast to this is the Naitangpai, where 80% of advertisements employ de-embodiment techniques that align with function-oriented narratives, resulting in a distinctly "gender-neutral" style characteristic of tech products.

4.1.3. Setting

Table 4. Statistical summary of setting in advertising samples

Brand	1= Private/Home	2= Social Life	3= Sports & Leisure	4= Natural Setting	5= No Specific Setting
Victoria's Secret	1 (10%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	9 (90%)
Naitangpai	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (20%)	0 (0%)	8 (80%)
Neiwai	1 (10%)	1 (10%)	2 (20%)	3 (30%)	3 (30%)
Ubras	2 (20%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (10%)	7 (70%)
Jiaonei	0 (0%)	3 (30%)	1 (10%)	0 (0%)	6 (60%)

It is clear from the existing statistics that "no specific setting" accounts for the majority (Table 4). Therefore, we can conclude that most advertisements currently remain at the stage of product descriptions or image posters, and have not yet effectively and appropriately embedded values into specific real-life scenarios. The brand "Neiwai" stands out as the sole exception, frequently placing female figures within specific life and social contexts such as the home, nature, the workplace, or the streets. This approach transforms female autonomy into a tangible, visual way of life, greatly enhancing the persuasiveness of the values conveyed.

4.1.4. Cross-analysis of text and imagery

A cross-analysis of text and imagery is key to revealing the tension within a brand's values. The author focuses on the mismatch between progressive textual values and conservative visual imagery.

Overall, advertisements with textual codes of "self-indulgence" and "equality" are mostly paired with "idealized" imagery. A typical contradictory example is as follows: In the seventh advertisement sample from "Neiwai," the text promotes "equality," yet the imagery is "idealized." This illustrates how some women's lingerie advertisements call for diversity, inclusion, and gender equality in their text, while the visuals depict body types that conform most closely to traditional aesthetics and the male gaze. There is a suspicion that these ads exploit so-called slogan-style feminism to attract the attention of modern women, yet continue to perpetuate body anxiety and social conditioning.

At the same time, there are highly coherent examples: in the "Naitangpai" advertisement, the "functionality" text aligns perfectly with the "de-embodiment" imagery, successfully sidestepping bodily scrutiny and value-based discussions to focus solely on demonstrating product functionality; in the "Victoria's Secret" advertisement, the "charm" text also aligns perfectly with the "idealized" imagery, continuing the tradition of the male gaze.

Overall, current lingerie advertisements exhibit visual shortcomings in the expression of feminist values, exposing the current state of most lingerie brands as they vacillate between commercial risks and social trends, and casting doubt on the sincerity of their feminist claims.

4.1.5. Cross-analysis of text and setting

A cross-analysis of text and setting helps reveal the specific situations and environments in which brand values are situated. Among the five major brands, when Neiwai conveys messages of female empowerment or self-indulgence, it often places female imagery within concrete life and social contexts such as the home, nature, the workplace, or the streets. This approach transforms female autonomy into a visible way of life, greatly enhancing the persuasiveness of the values.

In contrast, because the textual and visual narratives of Ubras and Naitangpai are disconnected, both brands discuss female self-care or product functionality, yet most of their current advertisements are still produced using studio-shot formats, lacking concrete depictions of real-life scenarios.

Victoria's Secret maintains a highly cohesive approach; its sensual copy consistently resonates with intimate home settings and studio backdrops that showcase the body, thereby effectively embodying traditional notions of sensual beauty. In contrast, Jiaonei exhibits a disjointed style in both copywriting and scene composition, resulting in a vague overall brand image.

In summary, because Neiwai naturally integrates scenes and text, it is able to contextualize the modern feminist trend of self-empowerment and self-love. In contrast, other brands suffer from a disconnect between text and setting or outdated concepts.

4.2. Analysis of interactive samples

This study selected the most popular advertisement from each of the five brands' ten advertising samples and conducted a text analysis of user interaction data. The analysis is divided into two main parts: first, an analysis of advertising effectiveness, including interaction intensity, emotional tendency, and behavioral orientation; second, an analysis of women's values, including body values and consumption concept.

4.2.1. Analysis of advertising effectiveness

Table 5. Advertising effectiveness statistics

Brand	Number of comments	Number of likes
Victoria's Secret	156	2905
Naitangpai	11	856
Neiwai	14	369
Ubras	213	3817
Jiaonei	44	9314

The interaction data first and foremost highlights the stark differences in communication effectiveness across various marketing strategies. It is worth noting that the top three entries in terms of interaction all utilized celebrity endorsements, reflecting the significant advantage of this strategy in driving traffic (Table 5).

However, the emotional tone of the three celebrity-endorsed advertising samples is highly homogeneous. In this context, user sentiment is merely an appreciation of and following of the celebrity's aura, and their behavioral orientation is almost entirely driven by celebrity-driven consumption, such as "wanting to buy the same product as the celebrity."

The Naitangpai and Neiwai advertising samples, in contrast, present a different picture: while their interaction levels are not high, their emotional tendency clearly and directly affirms the products. Consequently, the behavioral orientation of both samples exhibits a more pronounced practicality, with interactions for Naitangpai even directly indicating purchase intent. Therefore, we can conclude that while celebrity strategies generate traffic, they often reduce interactions to hollow celebrity worship. Conversely, communication centered on product functionality and user experience fosters genuinely effective interactions that are both informative and have the potential to drive conversions.

4.2.2. Analysis of women's values

Since user comments are public texts, they inevitably reflect users' views on the body and consumption, and thus naturally serve as a window into contemporary women's values.

From the perspective of body values, we can examine the different types of conversations unfolding in the comment sections of various brands: Comments on the brand NeiWai are the most concentrated and unadulterated, with "comfort" as the key keyword. They completely avoid evaluating the models' figures or appearances, resulting in a clear and gentle body-oriented stance—a classic example of "body acceptance." In stark contrast, feedback from the Naitangpai juxtaposes "making breasts look bigger and perkier" with "comfort" as advantages. Behind the notion of "making the bust look larger and more perky" likely lies anxiety about "less-than-ideal" body shapes and a pursuit of standardized curves, whereas "comfort" remains an affirmation of self-acceptance and self-care. The coexistence of these two perspectives within the same comment section serves as an excellent symbol of the complexity of women's body values in reality: the search for balance between social norms and personal experience. Finally, it should be noted that the comment sections for the other three major brand ad samples contained no discussions of body values; users' attention was entirely focused on the celebrities, and the body narratives presented in the ads were effectively ignored by the audience.

From the perspective of consumption values, we can examine the current state of female consumers' values: the consumption motives observed in the comment sections of the Neiwai ad samples were highly consistent, all aimed at achieving the personal experience of "comfort and ease of wear," thus representing typical "self-indulgent" consumption. The consumption outlook of the audience in the Naitangpai ad sample can be summarized as a hybrid of "self-pleasure" and "other-pleasure": consuming for "comfort" is self-pleasure, while consuming to "appear larger and more upright" is a clear "other-pleasure" behavior; these two consumption motivations coexist and complement each other. In stark contrast, the fundamental driving force behind user consumption in the ad samples of the other three major brands is the establishment of a symbolic connection with their idols. What is even more intriguing is that while the advertising copy for the brand Ubras is coded as "self-indulgence," the consumer mindset it elicits is essentially a purely "other-oriented" fan culture mentality. This naturally leads to an important observation: the marketing tactic of "celebrity endorsements" may weaken or even undermine a brand's original core values.

5. Conclusion

This paper conducted a systematic analysis of the advertising content and user interactions of five major lingerie brands on the Xiaohongshu platform, yielding several clear conclusions.

First, current research reveals a clear discrepancy between the values presented in lingerie advertisements and their actual practice: while ad copy frequently employs progressive language

such as "self-love" and "inclusivity," the models featured in the visuals almost exclusively portray women with idealized figures based on traditional beauty standards. It is therefore not difficult to infer that brands are cautiously avoiding commercial risks while aligning with social trends, casting doubt on their sincerity regarding feminism.

Second, celebrity endorsements exhibit contradictory effects in terms of communication impact: while ads featuring celebrities generate excellent engagement metrics, the vast majority of comments focus on the celebrities themselves. In contrast, ads without celebrity endorsements, though generating lower engagement, feature user comments that naturally revolve around the product itself. We can therefore conclude that the volume of traffic does not equate to the depth of value transmission.

Finally, existing user feedback reveals the complexity of contemporary female values: while a "self-indulgent" consumption mindset is emerging alongside the spread of feminism and the development of body awareness, many consumers also hope that the products they purchase will help them achieve a figure that meets societal aesthetic standards. At the same time, the consumption motivation evoked by celebrity-endorsed advertisements has essentially shifted to a "pleasing others" behavior—paying for the idol's symbolic status. Consequently, consumers exhibit diverse, contradictory, and fluid value orientations in response to different advertisements.

Since the sample selected for this study primarily consists of top brands on a single platform and young women on Xiaohongshu, it has certain limitations. Future research should examine a more diverse range of small and medium-sized brands across different social media platforms and employ interview methods to systematically and thoroughly track advertising values.

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