Social Sciences and Humanities
ISSN Print: 3104-4328
ISSN Online: 3104-4336
CD ISSN: 3104-4344
https://doi.org/10.63313/SSH.9135

User Profile Differences and Advertising Placement on Chinese Social Media Platforms: An Analysis across Gender and Educational Attainment

Hui An
College of Publishing, University of Shanghai for Science and Technology, Shanghai, China
Email: 1225480715@qq.com

How to cite this paper: An, H. (2026). User Profile Differences and Advertising Placement on Chinese Social Media Platforms: An Analysis across Gender and Educational Attainment. Social Sciences and Humanities, 5(2), 24–33. ISSN Print: 3104-4328, ISSN Online: 3104-4336.
https://doi.org/10.63313/SSH.9135
Published: 2026-09-22

Copyright © 2026 by author(s) and Erytis Publishing Limited.
This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).
http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/
CC BY 4.0

Abstract

As platform algorithms and content marketing continue to evolve, advertising on new media platforms has become an important way for brands to engage users and deliver targeted messages. However, frequent advertise exposure has also increased advertising fatigue and avoidance. This study aims to examine how gender and educational attainment relate to platform choice and to explore their implications for advertising receptivity and placement. Data from 121 valid ques-tionnaires completed by Chinese social media users were analyzed using descrip-tive statistics, Pearson's chi-square tests, and Cramér's V in SPSS 22. The sample was relatively balanced by gender, while respondents with an associate's degree or above accounted for 62.0%. Douyin was the most frequently selected platform. Within the current Chinese sample, neither gender nor educational attainment was significantly associated with platform choice, and both associations were weak. These findings suggest that demographic characteristics alone are insuffi-cient for advertising decisions. Advertisers should combine user profiles with platform attributes and behavioral data to support targeted delivery, plat-form-specific placement, and tiered marketing.

Keywords

Chinese Social Media; User Profiles; Advertising Receptivity; Targeted Advertising; Audience Segmentation

1. Introduction

According to the 57th Statistical Report on China's Internet Development, China had 1.125 billion internet users as of December 2025. The internet penetration rate reached 80.1%[1].The emergence of internet media has changed how advertisers reach consumers. It has also reshaped the traditional dissemination of advertising information.The number of social media users continues to grow, as does the time

they spend on these platforms. This growth has created a substantial market for advertising. User engagement has also increased on individual platforms. The average daily time spent on Xiaohongshu, a Chinese lifestyle-oriented content community also known internationally as rednote,increased by 12.1% year over year.User engagement on Douyin, a leading short-form video platform in China, also continued to strengthen.[2].These trends suggest that social media use is characterized by frequent use, extended sessions, and active content search. Together, these behaviors generate substantial traffic and create diverse touchpoints for advertising.

In response to these changes in user behavior, advertisers have continued to adjust their social media advertising strategies. Douyin offers diverse short-form video content and a powerful algorithmic recommendation system. These features attract entertainment-oriented users across age groups. The platform has therefore become an important channel for creative brand marketing and rapid content dissemination. Xiaohongshu, by contrast, is primarily an image- and text-based social media platform[3]. It focuses on curated lifestyle content for young urban women. The platform plays a key role in targeted product recommendation and word-of-mouth marketing.With large user bases, increasingly sophisticated infrastructure, and rapid, wide-reaching communication, social media platforms are reshaping conventional forms of advertising. However, advertising on these platforms has also created several problems. Exposure to homogeneous advertising content and repetitive interaction patterns can evoke resistance and other negative responses. Unintentional interactions with advertising may also undermine brand perceptions or reduce brand trust. Advertisers must therefore align ad placement with the user profiles, platform identities, and audience preferences of different social media platforms. This alignment is essential when developing advertising strategies and placement plans.

2. Research Background and Research Questions

2.1. Literature Review

QuestMobile's review of China's new media ecosystem in 2025 reports that Douyin, Xiaohongshu, Bilibili, Sina Weibo, and Kuaishou—a Chinese platform centered on short-form video and livestreaming—collectively reached more than 90% of internet users. The total time spent on these platforms increased by 5.4% year over year[4]. To enhance their commercial value, these platforms increasingly compete for high-value user segments. Image- and text-based platforms such as Xiaohongshu have used this strategy to narrow the competitive gap with short-form video platforms such as Douyin.User activity on social media platforms continues to increase. Platforms also improve content quality and technical capabilities to encourage users to stay longer. The report identifies a shift from passively waiting for users to actively expanding usage scenarios and reaching users within these

contexts[4]. Platforms further expand their scale through technological capabilities and ecosystem development.

As user growth slows, competition increasingly focuses on existing users. Platforms no longer compete only for traffic and user attention. They also compete for users' time and mindshare. Granular user operations have therefore become essential, with competition increasingly centered on high-value user segments.User profile analyses reveal clear differences by gender and age.Women use social media platforms considerably more frequently than men[3][4][5].Young users, as digital natives, spend more time on these platforms and show higher levels of activity. Differences are also evident in geographic location and purchasing power. Users in first- and second-tier cities are more active than those in other cities. Purchasing power is also positively associated with time spent on social media platforms. Different platforms have distinct market positions and develop different content ecosystems.They continue to expand the depth and breadth of their content offerings.This development enables them to address diverse everyday needs and cultivate new user demands. Platform differentiation is now evident in user composition, content ecosystems, consumption contexts, and commercial conversion pathways. Advertising has therefore shifted from broad platform coverage to granular alignment with user profiles and content contexts.

YU and CHEN[6] argue that fragmented audience attention has made effective advertising increasingly dependent on sustained engagement. They emphasize that social media platforms attract advertisers through their broad reach, strong interactivity, and contextual relevance. ZHANG[7] further notes that social media generates advertising value through content production, follower relationships, and creator reputation. YU and CHEN[6] also recommend tailoring advertising content to audience profiles, aesthetic preferences, and platform positioning to improve receptivity and strengthen brand–platform alignment. However, existing research has paid limited attention to differences within audience groups. This study therefore examines how user profile differences in gender and educational attainment may inform advertising placement on new media platforms.

2.2. Research Questions

Based on the findings from the reports discussed above, gender primarily shapes user composition across media platforms and the distribution of potential content interests. Educational attainment, by contrast, influences how users understand and evaluate advertising content through differences in information-processing ability and advertising literacy[8].

For advertisers, core challenges include platform selection, audience matching, advertising formats and persuasive appeals, and increasing ad viewing time. Advertising should incorporate creative strategies to improve content quality and audience receptivity. It should also account for audiences' aesthetic preferences.

Accordingly, this study draws on user profiles and platform positioning to analyze differences in audience composition and advertising placement across social media platforms. Using existing data and prior literature, it examines how factors such as gender and educational attainment relate to audience receptivity. It then considers the characteristics and processes of advertising communication to propose strategies for optimizing ad placement.

In summary, this study addresses three main questions.

First, it examines user composition across social media platforms in terms of gender and educational attainment.

Second, it analyzes the associations of gender and educational attainment with platform use behavior and advertising receptivity.

Third, based on the findings, it proposes differentiated advertising placement strategies for user groups across social media platforms.

3. Social Media User Characteristics and Platform Use

3.1. Data Analysis

To examine whether gender and educational attainment are associated with platform use behavior and advertising receptivity, this study conducted Pearson's chi-square tests. The results are shown in Table 1. Neither gender, $\chi^2(3)=3.556$, $p=0.314$, nor educational attainment, $\chi^2(6)=8.878$, $p=0.181$,was significantly associated with the number of social media platforms used at the 0.05 level. Based on the current sample, no statistically significant association was found between gender or educational attainment and social media platform choice.

The association between gender and platform choice was weak (Cramér's V=0.171), as was the association between educational attainment and platform choice (Cramér's V=0.192). However,25.0% of the cells (2cells) in the gender-by-platform-choice contingency table had expected counts below 5, with a minimum expected count of 1.41. In the educational-attainment-by-platform-choice table, 41.7% of the cells (5 cells) had expected counts below 5, with a minimum expected count of 0.57. The uneven sample distribution may therefore have reduced the reliability of the chi-square test results. Accordingly, this study found no statistically significant association between gender or educational attainment and platform choice. However, the findings do not entirely rule out potential associations. Future research could use larger samples and refined category groupings to examine these relationships further and improve the robustness of the findings.

Table 1. Chi-Square Test Results for the Associations of Gender and Educational Attainment with Chinese Social Media Platform Choice

Variable	χ^2	*df*	*p* value	Cramér's V
Gender	3.556	3	0.314	0.171
Educational attainment	8.878	6	0.181	0.192

3a. For gender and platform choice, 25.0% of cells had expected counts below 5, and the minimum expected count was 1.41. For educational attainment and platform choice, 41.7% of cells had expected counts below 5, and the minimum expected count was 0.57.

To describe the respondents' demographic characteristics and social media platform choices, and to provide a data basis for the subsequent analysis of advertising strategies, this study used SPSS 22 to calculate frequencies and percentages for 121 valid questionnaires. The results are presented in Table 2.

In terms of gender, men accounted for 47.1% of the respondents, while women represented a slightly higher proportion at 52.9%. Regarding educational attainment, respondents with associate or bachelor's degrees formed the largest group at 43.0%. This was followed by those with a high school education or below at 38.0%, and those with a postgraduate degree or above at 19.0%. Overall, the sample showed a relatively high level of educational attainment.Regarding platform choice, Douyin was the dominant platform, selected by 59.5% of respondents. It was followed by Xiaohongshu (19.8%) and WeChat Channels (18.2%), while other platforms accounted for smaller proportions. Platform choice was therefore highly concentrated within the sample, with Douyin having the largest user share. This distribution provides a descriptive basis for subsequent comparisons of advertising exposure behavior and advertising receptivity across platform users. However, these results reflect only the characteristics of the current sample and should not be generalized directly to all social media platform users.

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics and Primary Platform Choices of the Sample (N = 121)

Variable	Category	Frequency, *n*	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	57	47.1
	Female	64	52.9
Educational attainment	High school or below	46	38.0
	Associate or bachelor's degree	52	43.0
	Master's degree or above	23	19.0
Primary platform choice	Douyin	72	59.5
	WeChat Channels	22	18.2
	Xiaohongshu	24	19.8
	Other platforms	3	2.5

3.2. Sample Demographic Characteristics and Platform Use Distribution

This study used SPSS 22 to conduct descriptive statistical analyses of gender, educational attainment, platform choice, and other variables. The analysis presents the basic composition of the sample. It also provides a data basis for examining potential differences in advertising receptivity, behavioral preferences, and content engagement across user groups, and for developing more targeted advertising strategies.

First, in terms of gender composition, women accounted for a slightly larger share

than men, at 52.9%. Overall, the gender distribution of the sample was relatively balanced. This pattern may also indicate, to some extent, that women use social media platforms relatively frequently.Findings from social surveys and existing reports suggest that women show relatively high levels of content engagement on social media platforms. They are more likely to follow specialized content on lifestyle, beauty, and parenting, and tend to prefer formats that combine images and text with short-form videos[3][5].Accordingly, advertising content targeting women may place greater emphasis on emotional appeals, integration into everyday contexts, and visual aesthetics. These elements can strengthen the fit between advertising content and the target audience and improve advertising receptivity among women.

Second, the educational profile shows that respondents with an associate's degree or above accounted for 62.0% of the sample. As the largest educational group, these users tend to have stronger information-evaluation and rational decision-making abilities[8]. When exposed to advertising, they place greater emphasis on the authenticity and logical coherence of information and prefer knowledge-oriented and value-driven content. They also pay close attention to brand tone, product specifications, and service systems.Accordingly, advertising content targeting users with higher educational attainment should remain concise and accessible while incorporating professional information, product value, and brand stories. It should avoid excessive entertainment and exaggerated claims to enhance the credibility and persuasiveness of advertising messages.

Regarding platform choice, Douyin, as a leading short-form video platform, had the highest selection rate among respondents. Xiaohongshu and WeChat Channels also had stable user bases. These findings indicate that users primarily encounter social media content and advertising through short-form video and content-based community platforms.In terms of communication characteristics, Douyin focuses on short-form video, offers efficient algorithmic recommendations, and reaches a broad user base[3][4]. It therefore provides brands with an effective channel for expanding their reach and increasing advertising exposure. Advertising on Douyin should emphasize rapid pacing, visual appeal, and efficient information delivery. Xiaohongshu is characterized by lifestyle content and user-generated recommendations[3][4][5]. It is well suited to contextualized communication and product recommendation. Advertising content should emphasize authentic experiences, contextual presentation, and electronic word of mouth. WeChat Channels draws on existing social networks and offers advantages in community-based communication, user relationship management[3][4], and conversion within private user networks. Advertisers can therefore use its platform ecosystem to promote community interaction and maintain user relationships.

In summary, the study sample was characterized by a slightly higher proportion of women, a predominance of users with medium to high educational attainment, and

a concentration on short-form video platforms. These findings provide a preliminary profile of the users represented in the sample. They also offer a practical basis for identifying target audiences, selecting suitable platforms, and optimizing advertising communication pathways. Advertising on social media platforms requires content segmentation based on user characteristics. It should also account for each platform's user composition, content ecosystem, and communication mechanisms to improve the fit between advertising content and the platform.

4. Analysis of Advertising–Platform Fit

The preceding analysis shows that the sample was relatively balanced in terms of gender, while users with medium to high educational attainment accounted for a relatively large proportion. Different user groups also showed some descriptive differences in platform choice and advertising content preferences. When developing advertising strategies, advertisers should consider the characteristics of target users, platform attributes, and content presentation. On this basis, they can improve the fit between advertising content and media channels.

4.1. Optimizing the Targeted Delivery of Advertising Content

The statistical results show that women accounted for a slightly larger share of the sample, while users with medium to high educational attainment represented a relatively high proportion. Based on these findings, advertisers can consider the content needs and media use patterns of different user groups. They can then make targeted adjustments to advertising creativity, information presentation, and content tone to improve the fit between advertising content and the target audience.

Previous studies have found that women often show greater interest in content related to lifestyle, beauty, and fashion[3][5]. Advertising targeting these users may place greater emphasis on emotional appeals, integration into everyday contexts, and visual aesthetics. Authentic usage scenarios, shared user experiences, and everyday narratives can make the content more relatable and strengthen audience identification.

For users with medium to high educational attainment, advertising content should emphasize accuracy, professionalism, and logical coherence. While presenting core information concisely, it may include relevant details about product functions, technical features, brand value, and practical benefits. This can strengthen rational persuasion while avoiding exaggerated claims and ambiguous information.

In addition, content formats should be matched with the platforms most commonly used by target audiences. Based on each platform's attributes and positioning, advertisers should consider user characteristics, content types, and platform contexts together. For example, informative and practical advertisements may be placed on WeChat Channels, Bilibili, and WeChat Official Accounts through in-depth

explanations and case analyses.Lifestyle advertising on Xiaohongshu can emphasize contextual presentation, experience sharing, and electronic word of mouth. By integrating user characteristics, content types, and platform contexts, advertisers can improve the precision of targeted content delivery. This approach also provides a basis for differentiated platform placement and tiered conversion strategies.

4.2. Improving Advertising Conversion through Tiered Marketing

Based on differences in user characteristics and behavior, advertising strategies can draw on applications of the AIDA marketing model[12]. Potential customers can be divided into the awareness, interest, decision, and conversion stages. Advertisers can then develop differentiated strategies for each stage to achieve the progressive conversion of user value.

At the awareness stage, advertisers can use the recommendation systems and traffic advantages of short-form video platforms such as Douyin and Kuaishou. Programmatic advertising can identify potential audiences based on basic user attributes, device characteristics, and behavioral data. In-feed and splash-screen advertisements can then expand brand exposure. Fifteen-second videos with strong visual impact can also improve reach efficiency.

At the interest stage, content communities such as Xiaohongshu and Zhihu, a Chinese question-and-answer and knowledge-sharing platform, serve as the primary communication channels. Advertisers can draw on the influence of key opinion leaders and key opinion consumers to promote product discovery[2]. They can also combine user-generated and professionally generated content, using product reviews, user experiences, and contextualized presentation to strengthen user interest. By using the platform's combined search and recommendation mechanism to match content with users' interest tags, advertisers can guide users from brand awareness to purchase conversion[2][10].For example, Beauty-related posts generally show relatively high levels of user engagement on Xiaohongshu[10]. The platform's dual search-and-recommendation distribution mechanism can precisely match users' interest tags with content keywords, helping convert brand awareness into purchase interest.

At the conversion stage, advertisers can build private user networks through WeCom(an enterprise communication platform connected to the WeChat ecosystem), user communities, and mini programs. User inquiries and interactions can then support personalized engagement. For users with previous purchase records, the RFM model can identify different customer value tiers[9]. Advertisers can then develop strategies for conversion incentives, repeat-purchase reminders, and relationship maintenance. For established users, advertising content should emphasize practical value and informational benefits. A combination of short-form videos, livestreams, and long-form articles published through WeChat Official Accounts can create relevant consumption contexts. In community-based operations,

advertisers can combine user communities with livestreaming or group buying to support continued conversion and word-of-mouth communication.

5. Conclusion

The findings of this study should be regarded as preliminary observations based on the sample data. The effectiveness of social media advertising may depend not only on users' demographic characteristics, but also on factors such as platform content ecosystems, recommendation mechanisms, usage contexts, and advertising formats. When developing advertising strategies, advertisers should therefore avoid segmenting users solely by gender, educational attainment, or platform share. They should also incorporate behavioral indicators such as click-through rates, engagement rates, retention rates, and conversion rates to continuously evaluate user needs and advertising performance.

Future research can improve user profiling by integrating demographic characteristics, platform use behavior, advertising content preferences, and actual conversion outcomes. This approach can support the gradual development of a more rigorous advertising effectiveness evaluation system. Dynamic alignment among content, platforms, and users can shift social media advertising from broad audience coverage toward more precise user reach. It can also provide a stronger empirical basis for future advertising strategy optimization.

References

[1] China Internet Network Information Center (2026) The 57th Statistical Report on China's Internet Development. Retrieved September 6, 2026, from https://www.cnnic.net.cn/NMediaFile/2026/0304/MAIN1772588317069TUXN3827X8.pdf. (In Chinese)

[2] Lou, C. and Yuan, S. (2019) Influencer Marketing: How Message Value and Credibility Affect Consumer Trust of Branded Content on Social Media. Journal of Interactive Advertising, 19, 58–73.

[3] Adquan (2025) Social Media and KOL Marketing Trends in 2025. Retrieved September 6, 2026, from https://www.adquan.com/article/352429. (In Chinese)

[4] QuestMobile (2025) QuestMobile's 2025 Review of the New Media Ecosystem: Monthly Active Users across Five Major Platforms Reach 1.149 Billion amid Differentiated Competition in Content and Algorithms. Retrieved July 11, 2026, from https://www.questmobile.com.cn/research/report/2000767092954075138/. (In Chinese)

[5] Qiangua Data (2025) 2025 Active User Research Report: Xiaohongshu Platform. Retrieved September 6, 2026, from https://www.qian-gua.com/Home/ArticleDetail?id=3149. (In Chinese)

[6] Yu, G. and Chen, H. (2025) Challenges and Responses in the Transformation of Media Advertising Operations. China Newspaper Industry, 3, 136–137. (In Chinese)

[7] Zhang, H. (2017) The Business Model of Self-Media Advertising from the Perspective of Reputation Mechanisms. Modern Communication (Journal of Communication University of China), 39, 123–127. (In Chinese)

[8] Eisend, M. and Tarrahi, F. (2022) Persuasion Knowledge in the Marketplace: A Meta-Analysis. Journal of Consumer Psychology, 32, 3–22.

https://doi.org/10.1002/jcpy.1258

[9] Christy, A.J., Umamakeswari, A., Priyatharsini, L. and Neyaa, A. (2021) RFM Ranking—An Effective Approach to Customer Segmentation. Journal of King Saud University—Computer and Information Sciences, 33, 1251–1257. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jksuci.2018.09.004

[10] iResearch Consulting (2023) 2023 Online Marketing Monitoring Report for the Beauty, Personal Care, and Household Cleaning Industries. Retrieved September 6, 2026, from https://report.iresearch.cn/report/202310/4246.shtml. (In Chinese)

https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2018.1533501

[11] Sun, B. and Deng, R. (2024) Advertising Avoidance on Xiaohongshu: Its Manifestations and Influencing Factors. Journalism Lover, 4, 45–47. (In Chinese)

[12] Wang, L. (2024) A Structural Study of Online Marketing, Electronic Word-of-Mouth, and Tourism Intention for Specialty Foods Based on the AIDA Model. Master's Thesis, Henan University, Kaifeng. https://doi.org/10.27114/d.cnki.ghnau.2024.000269. (In Chinese)