

## Original Research Article

### Building WOM from Hedonic Experience of Social Media in the Field of Gastronomy

#### Abstract

With the popularization of mobile phones and the Internet, users of social media platforms have formed the habit of surfing the Internet. Watching food programs has become one of the most important leisure activities. Food platforms on social media have low barriers to entry, and it is not easy to maintain high popularity, high performance, and high profits. In this context, it is extremely important to continue to gain word-of-mouth from fans. The objective of this study aims at investigating the relationships among hedonic experience, attachment, and word-of-mouth of social media in the field of gastronomy. Data were obtained through interviews and questionnaires. Through the analysis, this paper finds several ways to obtain the word-of-mouth of food programs, namely, hedonic experience - platform attachment - word-of-mouth. This study suggests that platform operators should provide relaxed and pleasant program content and atmosphere to meet users' needs of leisure and learning. For future researchers, future studies can try to add the comparison between utilitarianism and hedonism.

Keywords: hedonic experience, social media, platform attachment, word-of-mouth, gastronomy

#### 1. Introduction

With the development of the Internet, e-commerce has grown exponentially [1]. In the context of Internet convenience, constant competition puts great pressure on existing and new competitors [2]. These pressures are related to the acquisition of customer word-of-mouth and repurchase behavior [3]. How to continuously obtain customer word-of-mouth and repurchase behavior has become a very important research topic.

In traditional marketing literature, the ways to obtain word-of-mouth include motivation and image [4], emotion [5], satisfaction and attachment [6], etc. Less discussion of the influence of hedonism on word-of-mouth was presented [7]. For social media and e-commerce, it is hoped that they can gain more word-of-mouth and share the benefits, and gain benefits from them by providing users with pleasure

experience process services. Research's indicated that in a competitive business environment, higher revenues and profits can be generated through emotional connection and customer loyalty [1]. It can be seen that the experience brought by such hedonism is conducive to the development and profit of social media and e-commerce. However, in the relationship between social media platforms and users, few studies have validated the current situation of hedonistic experience, and the extent of its impact on word-of-mouth and platform attachment. Clarifying these theoretical gaps may be beneficial to improve the theory of the relationship between social media and users. Moreover, it can promote the sustainable development of social media and e-commerce.

In summary, the purpose of this study was to validate the current situation of users' perceived hedonic experience, platform attachment and word-of-mouth; to clarify the relationship between the three variables; and to put forward suggestions. In order to achieve the above goals, this study selects food program on Xiaohongshu platform for empirical study and analyzes the relationship between platform users and them.

## **2.Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction to XiaoHongshu Platform**

Xiaohongshu is a daily platform for celebrities to share clothes matching, beauty tutorials, travel guides, food reviews, etc. It allows fans(users) to publish 100 products per minute on the platform. The majority of users are female, up to 86.05%, while males only account for 13.95%. The post-90s users account for more than 70%. Those aged 24 and below account for 21.32%; those aged 25-30 account for 29.32%; those aged 31-35 account for 35.12%; those aged 36-40 account for 11.88%; and those aged 41 account for 2.35%. XiaoHongshu has a serious impact on the lifestyle and consumption mentality of this generation.

In terms of marketing strategy, UGC (user-generated content) is a direction model adopted by Xiaohongshu. Through online communities, consumers can realize rapid information identification, including product information, collected classic articles, and consumer preferences. The contents of Xiaohongshu are labeled, and the contents of shopping notes are differentiated. It does not only reflect regional differences, but also classifies according to brands and specific uses. It effectively improves the identification of consumer products. Not only that, it fully collects consumer reviews, habits, wish lists and so on. It can timely upgrade products to meet the personalized needs of consumers. Therefore, it can realize accurate product recommendation, provide personalized product purchase and selection guidance, and consumers will actively learn when they need it.

## 2.2 The concept of word-of-mouth

Word-of-mouth is the informal communication of consumers about the functions and attributes of a particular product/service, or the use of it [8]. Traditionally, a product/service has been rated positively or negatively through face-to-face communication [2,9]. In the era of the Internet, consumers let other consumers know about the functions and symbols of brands through online ratings and reviews, which is called online word-of mouth or e-WOM [8]. In addition, due to the popularity of social media, online word-of-mouth can also help consumers form their expectations for the brand before purchase [10] and reduce the uncertainty in the decision-making process of consumers [11]. The influence of online words of mouth has been steadily increasing. Therefore, this paper adopts the definition of online word-of-mouth, which is defined as Internet users' comments on the characteristics and attributes of a specific product/service or brand through the Internet platform.

## 2.3 The concept of hedonic experience

The concept of hedonic experience comes from hedonism, a process in which people pursue happiness (eudaimonia) after work and life, as well as a social phenomenon in pursuit of happiness [7]. When we claim to be happy, it is sometimes our self-assessment of our overall contentment. It may be the pleasure of the moment or activity, and something may be related to state measures of eudaimonia and hedonia [12,13]. For example, when we complete a small task (activity) in a short period of time, we feel happy. This happiness is a small self-actualization. Or, we have a cup of coffee by ourselves or with others, and the feeling is a hedonic feeling (hedonic feeling) after completing this small task. So when we engage in a particular activity for a particular period of time, feeling of meaning, elevation, accomplishment, and personal accomplishment expressiveness), or high self-awareness (self-connectedness), it is very close to the concept of self-actualization [14,15,16,17,18]. Such self-actualization is hedonism, and the activity of realizing hedonism is hedonic experience [7]. From an eastern point of view, the hedonic experience is all about **living the moment** and carpe diem.

Furthermore, the self-actualization of hedonism is basically positive [13]. That is, when we are happy, we want to share with our friends and tell them something happy and interesting. Conversely, hedonic experiences are sometimes negative [19]. When we are sad about failure, we will tell friends what we are sad about. Empirical study also points out that in the relationship between users and liveing programs, hedonic experience will promote word-of-mouth and sharing [7]. Therefore, in the relationship between Xiaohongshu platform and users, users' perceived hedonic experience may

affect their word-of-mouth. Since hedonic experience can be measured by positive and negative emotions, hypothesis 1 and hypothesis 3 are proposed in this study.

**Hypothesis 1: In the relationship between Xiaohongshu platform and users, positive emotions perceived by users may affect their word-of-mouth.**

**Hypothesis 3: In the relationship between Xiaohongshu platform and users, negative emotions perceived by users may affect their word-of-mouth.**

In addition, studies have pointed out that positive emotional experience, negative emotional experience and carefree experience are significantly correlated with dependence and identity. The carefree experience has been proved to have a significant and positive impact on place attachment in tourism literature [13]. This means that when XiaoHongshu users watch food shows, their positive and negative emotional experiences may be related to attachment. In other words, when fans feel relaxed, healed, happy, disgusted and sad while watching food programs, they may become more dependent on and identify with food platforms. Moreover, both positive and negative emotional experience belong to the measurement aspect of hedonic experience. Empirical studies also confirm that both positive and negative emotional experience can affect users' platform attachment [7]. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed in this study:

**Hypothesis 2: In the relationship between Xiaohongshu platform and users, the positive emotions perceived by users may affect their platform attachment.**

**Hypothesis 4: In the relationship between Xiaohongshu platform and users, users' perceived negative emotions may affect their platform attachment.**

#### 2.4 The concept of platform attachment

Attachment is an individual psychological bound, reflecting the degree to which individual values are linked to specific scenes [20]. It often covers the short-term dependence on the facilities and situations and emotional identification generated by long-term linkage [7,21]. For example, the psychological link generated by users to the XiaoHongshu platform is attachment, which may be caused by users' dependence on the setting of the food programs, or the recognition caused by users' long-term watching behavior of food programs or food anchors. In other words, this kind of user's dependence and identification behavior on the food programs, as well as the psychological link formed by it, is platform attachment.

Moreover, attachment has been shown to have the potential influence to behavior. For example, place attachment can help enhance tourists' travel loyalty to the

destination [22] and willingness to revisit the destination [23,24]. When tourists have a high degree of place attachment to a specific destination, they will have positive behavioral intentions and behaviors, such as word-of-mouth, recommendation, revisiting, etc. [25]. As far as the relationship between Xiaohongshu platform and users is concerned, the higher the degree of user attachment to the platform may lead to more positive sharing and word-of-mouth. Accordingly, hypothesis five is proposed in this study:

**Hypothesis 5: In the relationship between Xiaohongshu Food platform and users, users' perceived platform attachment may affect their reputation.**

### 2.5 The mediating effect of platform attachment

In existing studies, attachment often acts a mediating role. For example, the attachment has validated to mediating identification and word-of-mouth relationship [26], and the relationship between satisfaction and reputation [21,27]. Taking satisfaction-attachment-word-of-mouth as an example, when consumers perceive satisfaction, they will give higher word-of-mouth while attachment has been fostered. Moreover, satisfaction can enhance the predictive power of word-of-mouth through the mediating effect of attachment.

In other words, in the relationship between Xiaohongshu platform and users, that hedonic experience is likely to directly affect word-of-mouth, and platform attachment is likely to influence word-of-mouth, platform attachment is likely to better enhance the predictive power of user word-of-mouth, is suspected in this study. This study suspects the mediating role of platform attachment. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

**Hypothesis 6: In the relationship between Xiaohongshu platform and users, users' perceived platform attachment may have an intermediary effect on the relationship between positive emotions and word-of mouth.**

**Hypothesis 7: In the relationship between Xiaohongshu platform and users, users' perceived platform attachment may have an intermediary effect on the relationship between negative emotions and word-of mouth.**

### 2.6 Research Framework

After the above literature review, the research framework of this paper is shown in Figure 1. First of all, in terms of the direct relationship of variables, in the relationship between consumers' browsing of food programs, consumers' motivation (hedonism) will directly affect their willingness to platform word-of-mouth (H1, H3);

and it is likely to form platform attachment through continuous browsing of food programs and participating behaviors (H2, H4). Finally, platform attachment is likely to affect platform word-of-mouth directly (H5). Moreover, consumer motivations (hedonic experience) is likely to affect the words of mouth through platform attachment, that is, both of the positive and negative feelings may affect the word of mouth through platform attachment intermediaries (H6, H7).

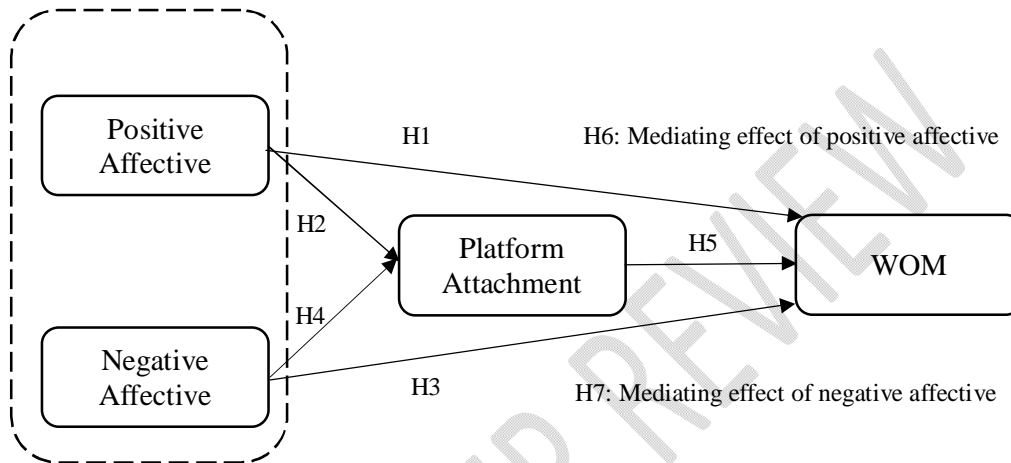


Fig. 1 Research Framework

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Research design

For the purpose of this study, the relationship between hedonic experience, platform attachment and word-of-mouth perceived by users of Xiaohongshu platform is adopted in this research design, which combines qualitative and quantitative research approach. First of all, through interviews and analysis of food program users, this study determines the relationship between users' perceived hedonic experience, platform attachment and word-of-mouth. In terms of interview questions, hedonic experience is a kind of consumption motivation. This study basically discusses the correlation between motivation and behavior. Therefore, this study designed "What attracts you to browse the food programs", "What problems do you think the food platform has" and "How happy do you feel after browsing the food programs? How will you behave?". In terms of the interview population and sample, this study focuses on female users aged between 20 and 30 since there are a large number of young female users of XiaoHongshu. A total of 12 interviews are conducted, including 9 females and 3 males, which basically conforms to the gender ratio of XiaoHongshu users. Quota sampling method was adopted in this study to solicit interviewees aged 20-30 to participate in the

interview. Finally, 12 interviewees were successfully invited and each interviewee was interviewed for about 10 minutes.

Secondly, the second study verifies the hypothesis model through questionnaire survey. The definition and measurement of variables and questionnaire survey are described below.

### 3.2 Definition and measurement of variables

In terms of the definition and measurement of variables, referring to the studies of [Yen \(2022\) \[7\]](#), [Lee and Jeong \(2021\) \[13\]](#), hedonic experience is defined as the evaluation of mood and emotional states generated by watching food programs by users on Xiaohongshu. It includes an assessment of Positive Affect and Negative Affect.

Based on the research of [Yen \(2022\) \[7\]](#), [Lee and Jeong \(2021\) \[13\]](#) and considering the research objectives and responses, six questions were used for positive emotion, such as "I feel very relaxed and happy", "let me stay away from worry", "I feel very good", "I feel very positive", "I feel very interesting", "I feel very helpful", etc. Two questions were used for negative emotions, such as "I feel bad" and "I feel unhappy".

In terms of platform attachment, it is defined as "the psychological connection of Dependence of Xiaohongshu users to the food program" refer to the studies of [Teng and Chen \(2020\)](#), [Chen, Dwyer, and Firth \(2018\)](#), [Yen \(2022\) \[6,7,22\]](#). It includes two aspects: Platform Dependence and Platform Identity. Referring to the studies of [Teng and Chen \(2020\)](#), [Chen, Dwyer, and Firth \(2018\)](#), [Yen \(2022\) \[6,7,22\]](#), and considering the research objectives and responses, a total of 7 questions are adopted. For example, "It is better than short food videos on other platforms", "it can better meet my leisure and pleasure needs", "it is a very important leisure and pleasure activity for me", "it has a strong sense of identity", "it has become a part of my life", "the food content has extraordinary significance", "the food content brings me many beautiful memories", etc.

In terms of word of mouth, referring to the research of [Yen \(2022\) \[7\]](#), word of mouth is defined as "the positive evaluation of Xiaohongshu users on watching food programs". Three measurement questions are used, such as "I will take the initiative to review the content of the platform" and ". I will tell others about the advantages of the platform ", "I will tell others about the features of the platform", etc. All questions were measured by five-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating strong disagreement and 5 indicating strong agreement. The higher the total score of the dimension, the higher the degree of agreement. In addition, the questions used in the questionnaire have expert validity after expert discrimination and modification.

### 3.3 Questionnaire Survey

In this study, online questionnaires were used to collect data from fans watching Xiaohongshu platform. In terms of the number of samples, there are 18 questions in this study, and it is generally suggested that the number of samples should be at least 5-10 times of the number of questions. In addition, considering the needs of subsequent model analysis, it is estimated that more than 380 valid samples will be collected in this study. The questionnaire was posted on WeChat in November 2022 and forwarded to WeChat and Microblogging friend groups for recruiting respondents. Respondents were asked to point to a food show they had watched recently (within six months) before they could continue to answer. By the end of December 2022, a total of 450 questionnaires were obtained, excluding 39 samples with single answers, and 411 were valid, with a valid questionnaire rate of 91%.

In terms of sample characteristics, male respondents accounted for 32.4% and female respondents accounted for 67.6%. In terms of age, 17.3% are under 18 years old, 50.1% are between 18 and 25 years old, 14.8% are between 26 and 30 years old, 8.8% are between 31 and 40 years old and 9% are over 40 years old. In terms of educational attainment, secondary schools accounted for 2.4%, higher vocational schools 23.6%, junior colleges 23.1% and universities 50.9%. In terms of occupations, teachers accounted for 4.4%; 13.8% were production technicians; 25.8% were administrative personnel; 8.1% were sales and customer service personnel, and students accounted for 44%. In terms of the average monthly income, 39.9% of respondents are less than RMB 3,000, 33.1% are between 3001-6000, 13.4% are between 6001-8000, and 13.6% are above RMB 8,000. In terms of the frequency of watching food programs in the latest week, 21.7% of respondents watched less than 4, 20.2% watched 5 to 8, 27.7% watched more than 9, while 30.4% of respondents had no fixed viewing habits. In terms of channels on food platforms, TikTok had the most clicks (70.6 percent), followed by Kuaishou (11.9 percent) and XiaoHongshu (11.2 percent).

## 4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Result

#### 4.1 Results of qualitative interview

In the interview, we found that when reading the content of XiaoHongshu, most users will choose to collect and share the content they are interested in and enjoy. Although it may be forgotten in the favorites folder, it is the simplest and most convenient operation. Sharing is to share your favorite content with friends for discussion and joy. Secondly, there will be some specific content acquisition requires the user to "hit - favorite - comment" operation, in order to obtain the author's

background tutorial sharing. In other words, sharing behavior does occur when users perceive hedonic experiences; Moreover, these sharing behaviors are a kind of word-of-mouth behavior. Therefore, it is confirmed that users' perceived hedonic experience will affect word-of-mouth. Examples of actual interview responses are as follows:

**"For example, two kinds of works, optimistic and sad and empathic, may be shared with different people. They may be shared with people who have emotional resonance with them to gain recognition. Most of them are articles or videos that inspire them and encourage them to do something to gain their sense of identity. According to the content posted by the blogger, there will be some funny stories/emotional resonance that have happened to them, and they will be shared in the comments section "(a1)**

**"When XiaoHongshu users see content they like or enjoy, they will like it and post their opinions in the comments section. If the content is useful to them, they will further collect it" (a2)**

**"I have an emotional value for XiaoHongshu, which is emotional resonance, immersive five senses. For example, if you watch the vlog of living alone, you will feel healed and relaxed, yearning for this kind of life and even take actions to imitate it. For example, if you watch an art experience video and you think the work is beautiful and you enjoy the process, you might follow suit and go to the store to experience it or share it with your friends." (a3)**

Secondly, as XiaoHongshu gets more and more interesting content, users will increase the frequency of Xiaohongshu and increase their dependence. Sometimes, they use the XiaoHongshu as software to pass the time. These changes in usage habits are inseparable from the precise push of XiaoHongshu software and the depiction of big data users. Through user perception of operation, they push their favorite content, which makes users more dependent on and identify with XiaoHongshu. In other words, the more hedonic experience users perceived, the higher their dependence on and identification with the platform. Accordingly, it is confirmed that users' perceived hedonic experience will affect platform dependence. Examples of actual interview responses are as follows:

**"When you trust a piece of software, you habitually rely on the information you want to know, and you use it more frequently." (a1)**

**"Users like the layout of Xiaohongshu or have a unique love for other similar software. In this case, users will feel comfortable when using XiaoHongshu. If this comfort is not provided by other software, Xiaohongshu will be the first or only choice to bring users happiness when they want to watch videos. Users have a strong attachment to Little Red books." (a2)**

**"For example, sports and health-related activities dominate, food and diet, followed by extensions such as travel, entertainment and everyday wear. In pursuit of high-quality and healthy life, XiaoHongshu users become more dependent on XiaoHongshu." (a3)**

Finally, the more users depend on the platform and identify with it, the more sharing and participation they will take. As mentioned above, when users identify with a particular work of a platform blogger, they will go to its main page to see other works and save or share them with others. In other words, the higher a user's perceived platform attachment, the lower their word-of-mouth. Examples of actual interview responses are as follows:

**"If I can get another article or several articles shared by the same blogger and I like them very much, I will open the homepage of the blogger and read other content published by the blogger. If the blogger is my favorite type, I will follow and continue to share and collect" (a2)**

#### 4.2 Descriptive statistics, validity and reliability analysis

In terms of data processing, statistical software SPSS 22 was used for statistical description, validity analysis and reliability analysis of sample data. The analysis results are shown in Table 1. As a whole, the average value ranges from 2.13 to 4.35, ranging from somewhat disagree to generally agree. The standard deviation ranged from 0.90 to 1.45, with higher average agreement as positive emotion and lower average agreement as negative emotion. In addition, the absolute value of skewness coefficient is less than 3 (-1.7 to 0.28) and the absolute value of kurtosis coefficient is less than 10 (-1.5 to 2.7), and the sample data does not violate the normality hypothesis.

Secondly, in terms of validity, questions come from literature, which has theoretical basis and content validity. It has been tested by experts and has good expert validity. Factors with eigenvalue greater than 1 were extracted through Principal component analysis (PCA) and eigenvalue was more than 1 by Varimax Method. The results of factor analysis showed that the KMO value of all construct surfaces was greater than

0.5, and the Bartlett test reached a significant level ( $p < 0.01$ ), indicating that all construct surfaces were suitable for factor analysis. The cumulative variation extraction amount after testing was 59% for positive emotion, 83% for negative emotion, 69% for platform attachment and 81% for word of mouth, all with factor load greater than 0.7. On the whole, the scale used in this study had appropriate construct validity.

Finally, in terms of reliability, Cronbach's Alpha values ranged from 0.798 to 0.927, indicating high reliability and good internal consistency of the measurement tools. Accordingly, the follow-up analysis was carried out in this study.

Table 1 describes statistics, validity and reliability analysis (n=411)

Items	M	SD	SK	KU	FL
Positive affective (VE=59%, Cronbach's Alpha =0.860)					
1. I feel very relaxed and happy	4.35	.985	-1.719	2.715	.736
2. It let me stay away from worry	4.21	1.082	-1.480	1.643	.706
3. I feel very good	4.23	1.026	-1.406	1.487	.739
4. I feel very positive	4.24	1.012	-1.422	1.630	.801
5. I feel very interesting	4.29	.965	-1.484	1.998	.809
6. I feel very helpful	4.33	.909	-1.539	2.456	.825
Negative affective (VE=83%, Cronbach's Alpha =0.798)					
1. I feel bad	2.13	1.450	1.054	-.337	.914
2. I feel unhappy	2.64	1.639	.288	-1.596	.914
Platform attachment (VE=69%, Cronbach's Alpha =0.927)					
1. It is better than other platforms	4.13	1.050	-1.084	.478	.793
2. It can better meet my leisure and pleasure needs	4.19	1.008	-1.215	.956	.796
3. It is a very important leisure and pleasure activity for me	4.08	1.153	-1.168	.484	.846
4. It has a strong sense of identity	4.16	1.015	-1.148	.706	.845
5. It has become a part of my life	4.05	1.165	-1.154	.488	.834
6. The food content has extraordinary significance	4.09	1.126	-1.115	.415	.852
7. The food content brings me many memories	4.12	1.077	-1.079	.327	.874
Word-of-mouth (VE=81%, Cronbach's Alpha =0.883)					
1. I will take the initiative to review the content of the platform	4.01	1.181	-1.090	.336	.896
2. I will tell others about the advantages of the platform	4.15	1.088	-1.301	1.078	.906

3. I will tell others about the features of the platform	4.16	1.071	-1.203	.764	.902
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#### 4.3 Correlation analysis of variables

In terms of correlation analysis of variables, the results are shown in Table 2. There was a significant and positive correlation between positive emotion and platform attachment and word-of-mouth. It indicates that the higher the negative score of positive emotion felt by fans of food platform, the higher the score of platform attachment and word-of-mouth felt. Negative emotion was not significantly related to platform attachment and word-of-mouth. Platform attachment has a significant and positive correlation with word-of-mouth. The higher their perceived platform attachment score, the higher their word-of-mouth score.

Table 2 Correlation analysis

Var.	M	SD	1	2	3	4
1.PA	25.64	4.59	1			
2.NA	4.77	2.82	-.058	1		
3.PAT	28.82	6.34	.736**	.066	1	
4.WO	12.33	3.01	.658**	.061	.846**	1

\*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01; PA: Positive Attachment; NA: Negative Attachment; PAT: Platform Attachment; WO: Word-of-Mouth

#### 4.4 Hypothesis testing of the initial mode

There are two dependent variables in this study, that is, there are two regression equations in this study, which require two regression analyses. Word-of-mouth was set as dependent variable in Model 1, positive emotion, negative emotion and platform attachment as independent variable. Model 2 set platform attachment as dependent variable, and positive emotion, negative emotion and platform attachment were set as independent variable. The analysis results are shown in Table 3.

In model 1, the allocation of the patterns was appropriate ( $F=345.8$ ) and did not violate the normal distribution assumption ( $VIF<10$ ). The results showed that positive emotion had a significant and positive influence on word-of-mouth ( $\beta=0.082$ ,  $t=2.073$ ). Platform attachment also had a significant and positive influence on word-of-mouth ( $\beta=0.785$ ,  $t=19.929$ ). Moreover, the predictive power of independent variable on word-of-mouth is 0.718, which can predict the variance of word-of-mouth 71.8%. However, the influence of negative emotion on word-of-mouth is not significant. Accordingly, hypothesis 1 and hypothesis 5 are supported, while hypothesis 3 is not.

In model 2, the allocation of the modes was appropriate ( $F=252.9$ ) and did not

violate the normal distribution assumption ( $VIF < 10$ ). The results showed that positive emotion significantly affected platform attachment ( $\beta = 0.742$ ,  $t = 22.403$ ), and negative emotion also significantly affected platform attachment ( $\beta = 0.109$ ,  $t = 3.296$ ). Moreover, the predictive power of the independent variable on platform attachment was 0.554, which could predict 55.4% of the variation of platform attachment. Accordingly, hypothesis 2 and hypothesis 4 are supported.

Table 3 Hypothesis testing of the initial model

Paths	M1		M2	
	$\beta$	t-value	$\beta$	t-value
PA-WO	.082*	2.073		
PA-PAT			.742**	22.403
NA-WO	.014	.510		
NA-PAT			.109**	3.296
PAT-WO	.785**	19.929		
$R^2_{WO}$	.718			
$W^2_{PAT}$			.554	
F	345.8		252.9	
VIF	1.03-2.24		1	

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; PA: Positive Attachment; NA: Negative Attachment; PAT: Platform Attachment; WO: Word-of-Mouth

#### 4.5 Test of mediating effect

The third purpose of this study is to clarify the mediating effect of platform attachment on hedonic experience and reputation. The results are summarized in Table 4 and Table 5 according to the steps of general mediating effect test.

First, Table 4 illustrates the mediating effect of platform attachment on the relationship between positive emotion and word-of-mouth in hedonic experience. Model 3 was matched appropriately ( $F = 312$ ) and did not violate the normal distribution assumption ( $VIF < 10$ ). The results showed that positive emotion significantly influenced word-of-mouth ( $\beta = 0.658$ ,  $t = 17.69$ ). Secondly, the allocation of model 4 was appropriate ( $F = 483$ ) and did not violate the normal distribution assumption ( $VIF < 10$ ). The results showed that positive emotion had a significant and positive effect on platform attachment ( $\beta = 0.736$ ,  $t = 21.98$ ). Finally, both the independent variable (positive emotion) and the mediating variable (platform attachment) were used to predict the dependent variable (word of mouth), and the matching of model 5 was appropriate ( $F = 512$ ) and did not violate the normal distribution hypothesis ( $VIF < 10$ ). Positive emotion significantly and positively

affected word-of-mouth ( $\beta=0.078$ ,  $t=2.20$ ), and platform attachment significantly and positively affected word-of-mouth ( $\beta=0.788$ ,  $t=20.29$ ), both of which could effectively predict 71.5% variance of word-of-mouth. Accordingly, hypothesis 6 is supported.

Table 4 Analysis of mediating effect (PA-PAT-WO)

Paths	M3		M4		M5	
	$\beta$	t-value	$\beta$	t-value	$\beta$	t-value
PA-WO	.658**	17.690			.078*	2.020
PA-PAT			.736**	21.986		
PAT-WO					.788**	20.294
$R^2_{WO}$	.433				.715	
$R^2_{PAT}$			.542			
F	312.938		483.379		512.470	
VIF	1		1		1	

\* $p<0.05$ , \*\* $p<0.01$ ; PA: Positive Attachment; NA: Negative Attachment; PAT: Platform Attachment; WO: Word-of-Mouth

Next, Table 5 illustrates the mediating role of platform attachment in negative emotion and word-of-mouth. The allocation of model 6 did not reach the appropriate level ( $F=1.52$ ) and did not violate the normal distribution assumption ( $VIF<10$ ). The results showed that negative emotions did not significantly affect word-of-mouth ( $\beta=0.061$ ,  $t=1.233$ ). Secondly, the allocation of mode 7 did not reach the appropriate level ( $F=1.80$ ), nor did it violate the assumption of normal allocation ( $VIF<10$ ). Finally, both the independent variable (negative emotion) and the mediating variable (platform attachment) were used to predict the dependent variable (word of mouth), and the matching of model 8 was appropriate ( $F=512$ ) and did not violate the normal distribution hypothesis ( $VIF<10$ ). Platform attachment had a significant and positive effect on word-of-mouth ( $\beta=0.845$ ,  $t=31.932$ ), while negative emotion had no significant effect on word-of-mouth ( $\beta=0.005$ ,  $t=0.184$ ). Platform attachment could effectively predict the variance of word-of-mouth by 71.5%. Accordingly, hypothesis 7 is not supported.

Table 5 Analysis of mediating effect (NA-PAT-WO)

Paths	M6		M7		M8	
	$\beta$	t-value	$\beta$	t-value	$\beta$	t-value
NA-WO	.061	1.233			.005	.184
NA-PAT			.066	1.342		

PAT-WO			.845	31.932
R <sup>2</sup> <sub>WO</sub>	.004		.715	
R <sup>2</sup> <sub>PAT</sub>		.004		
F	1.521	1.802	512.470	
VIF	1	1	1	

\*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01; PA: Positive Attachment; NA: Negative Attachment; PAT: Platform Attachment; WO: Word-of-Mouth

#### 4.6 Discussion

In terms of initial model, both positive emotion and platform attachment have significant and positive effects on word-of mouth, and the analysis results are the same as in previous studies [7,21,22]. It shows that when fans of the food platform feel relaxed, happy, interesting, positive and far away from worries about the platform programs, they have a higher willingness to tell others the advantages, features and content of the platform. That is, they are willing to give the food platform a higher reputation after they perceive positive emotions. Similarly, when fans of the food platform believe that the platform programs can meet the needs of fans for leisure and enjoyment, they will also be more willing to actively tell others the advantages. Specifically, when it becomes important activities for fans' leisure and enjoyment, and even bring good memories to fans, they will also be more willing to actively tell others the advantages, features and content of the platform. In other words, they are willing to give the food platform a higher reputation after perceiving the platform attachment.

The study found that "I find it positive," "I find it interesting," and "I find it helpful" carried more weight and contributed more to word-of-mouth on measures of hedonic experience. This shows that the design of food shows must not only make fans feel interesting and positive, but also make fans watch and have a positive effect on food cooking or taste. Secondly, in the measurement of platform attachment, factors such as "food content brings me many good memories", "it is an important leisure activity for me" and "it has a strong sense of identity" have a large load and contribute more to the reputation. This shows the importance of food platforms to make fans have good memories and become an important leisure activity. Moreover, these factors will also become the cause of fans' dependence on and identification with the platform.

Moreover, in terms of the mediating model, the analysis results show that the mediating variables of the positive emotion of platform attachment and word-of mouth relationship, and the analysis results are the same as previous studies [7,21,22]. It shows that the effect of food platform on driving word-of-mouth only through positive emotion is limited. In terms of predicting fans' word-of-mouth, platform managers can generate more accurate forecasting power through the influence of platform

dependence and identification. In other words, platform managers should not only think about how a show needs to generate positive emotions, but also, more importantly, how to make fans rely on and identify with the platform. In the short term, making food shows an important leisure activity (platform dependence) for fans seems to be one of the feasible solutions. In the long run, it is still necessary for fans to have a sense of identity and even become a part of life (platform identity).

Finally, negative affective do not affect platform attachment significantly (hypothesis 3), indicating that there are indeed negative emotions in hedonic experience. But, most of the negative emotions are not easy for users to form platform dependence and identification. In other words, it's a common sense that watching food shows can generate emotions. She or he may have said that food shows remind users of sad or episodes in the past, such as broken up boyfriends and girlfriends remembering times when they wanted to watch the show together. Moreover, this sad situation did not significantly affect users' dependence on and identification with food shows. Similarly, since users' negative affective have no significant effect on platform attachment, the mediating effect of platform attachment cannot influence word-of-mouth (hypothesis 7). Moreover, the negative emotions of users will positively and significantly affect the effect of the positive publicity platform. In other words, the behavior of the user browsing food shows may make him/her sad, but the content of the show still has some objective advantages and characteristics, which are worth the user to tell others.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

With the popularization of mobile phones and the Internet, users of social media platforms have formed the habit of surfing the Internet, and it makes watching food programs become one of the important leisure activities. Social media platforms have low barriers to entry, and it is not easy to maintain high popularity, high performance, and high profits. In this context, it is extremely important to continue to gain word-of-mouth from fans. Fortunately, this paper found several paths to obtain the word-of-mouth of food platform through analysis, namely, hedonic experience - platform attachment - word-of-mouth. The research conclusions and suggestions are described below.

### 5.1 Conclusions

- According to the interview data, there are indeed hedonic experience-platform attachment and word-of-mouth correlation in the relationship between food platform and users.
- According to descriptive statistics, in the hedonic experience of the food platform,

the average agreement degree of positive emotion is high. In contrast, negative emotion scores were not as low as expected. Moreover, the degree of dispersion of platform attachment is higher than that of positive emotion on the whole, indicating that respondents' views on platform attachment differ greatly.

- In terms of variable relationship, positive affective is significantly correlated with platform attachment and word-of-mouth, while positive affective is insignificantly correlated with negative affective.
- In terms of mediating effect, platform attachment plays a significant mediating role between positive emotion and word-of-mouth.

For social media platforms, the main contribution of this paper is to simultaneously confirm variable relationships through interviews (qualitative approach) and clarify the mediating effect of variable correlation and platform attachment through questionnaire survey (quantitative approach). Secondly, this paper also provides some suggestions for industry and future research.

## 5.2 Recommendation

Suggestions to firms are listed below.

- For social media platforms, the positive emotion of hedonic experience positively influences word-of-mouth. Therefore, platform operators should provide relaxed and pleasant program content and atmosphere to meet users' leisure and learning needs. When they perceived the food programs of the platform to be relaxed, pleasant, positive and interesting, they are more willing to share the information of the food platform and tell others the characteristics and advantages of the food platform. These positive publicity behaviors for the food platform will help the development of the food platform.
- platform attachment significantly and positively affects word-of-mouth. Therefore, platform managers should strive to improve users' platform attachment degree. Since "leisure activities that are important to me", "a part of my life" and "meaningful to me" have low average scores, food platform managers should prioritize improving these items.
- Finally, both positive and negative emotions of hedonic experience have significant and positive effects on platform attachment. So platform managers don't have to worry too much about negative emotions. Creating positive emotional experience on food platform can help reduce users' dependence and identification on the platform, which is a feasible positive strategy.

Suggestions to future research are listed below.

- For future research, this study has sorted out the relationship between users'

perceived hedonic experience, platform attachment and word-of-mouth on the food platform, and future research can try to add utilitarianism and hedonism to compare the two kinds of experiences.

- Secondly, in terms of research objects, this study only focuses on Xiaohongshu food platform. Future studies can compare multiple food platforms and even analyze the hedonic experience of food delivery platforms.
- Finally, due to limited research budgets, only three variables are considered in this study, and more variables can be added in future studies, such as consumer involvement and brand image.

#### **COMPETING INTERESTS:**

**Authors have declared that they have no known competing financial interests OR non-financial interests OR personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.**

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