

AFFECT IN COMMENTS ON SENSUAL CONTENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA X: AN APPRAISAL STUDY

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KEYWORDS

Affect,
Appraisal Theory,
Sensual Content,
Social Media

ABSTRACT

Social media is now a means of communication, information search, and interaction. One of the most widely used platforms is social media X. On this platform, users can not only share information but also freely upload various types of content, including photos and videos. The content published is also very diverse, ranging from general topics to explicit content, including vulgar and even pornographic material, without any strict restrictions from the platform. One example is the X social media account of June Liu, an adult actress from China with more than 1.7 million followers, making her one of the most influential figures in the digital world. Through this platform, users can participate in discussions by commenting on each post. In these interactions, affective expressions often appear, reflecting a wide range of emotions, both positive ones that show appreciation or pleasant emotional responses and negative ones that show dislike or unpleasant emotional responses. Affect itself is one of the components in the Appraisal system that refers to the expression of emotions in language, either directly or indirectly. In this study, data in the form of Mandarin comments were collected using purposive sampling and analysed using content analysis. The results of the study show that two types of affect emerge, namely: (1) positive affect with the categories of happiness, security, and satisfaction, and (2) negative affect with the category of dissatisfaction.

APA 7th Citation:

Zaftika, I.R., Adha, T.K.R., Yusuf, M. (2026). Affect in Comments on Sensual Content on Social Media X: An Appraisal Study. *Wacana: Jurnal Penelitian Bahasa, Sastra dan Pengajaran*, 24 (1), 11-21

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33369/jwacana.v24i1>

INTRODUCTION

In the digital age, social media has become the primary platform for individuals to communicate, share opinions, and express emotions. Social media is an internet-based platform that allows users to interact flexibly and selectively present themselves, either in real-time or delayed, to a wide or limited audience, who benefit from user-generated content and the perception of interaction with others (Carr et al., 2015). One platform widely used for interaction in the digital world is Social Media X. According to Kemp (2025), data from X's advertising resources shows that in early 2025, the number of users of this platform in Indonesia reached 25.2 million, or around 8.8 per cent of the total population. On social media X, users can not only share information, but also freely upload various types of content, including videos and photos. The content published covers a wide range of material, from general topics to explicit content, including vulgar and even pornographic material, without any strict restrictions from the platform.

Through this platform, users can participate in various discussions by commenting on available posts. In these interactions, affective expressions often appear, reflecting a range of emotions, both positive (such as joy and appreciation) and negative

(such as anger and disappointment). Affect is one component of the Appraisal system that refers to the expression of emotions in language, either directly or indirectly (Martin & White, 2005). In Appraisal theory, Martin and White (2005) explain that affect is part of the Attitude system, which encompasses various emotional expressions. Affective expressions in social media comments are not always conveyed directly. Some users use explicit words to express their feelings, while others prefer implicit forms such as sarcasm, irony, or emojis. This study focuses on analysing Mandarin-language comments written by followers of a Chinese adult actress on the social media platform X. Comments accessed through the actress's account comment section will be examined to reveal the affective expressions that emerge in digital interactions.

Research Problem

1. What are the variations in affect that appear in Mandarin comments on sensual content on the X social media account of an adult actress of Chinese nationality?

'Content Analysis of the YouTube Channel Satu Persen (Case Study of Social Media's Impact on Mental Health)' by Hasanah and Abidin (2023) examines the impact of social media on mental health. Using descriptive qualitative methods and content analysis, this study found that social media can trigger social comparison, lying, blaming others, and feelings of dissatisfaction, all of which negatively impact an individual's emotional state. This study provides a basis for understanding how digital media affects affect but has not yet examined affective expressions in online interactions.

'Pornography in Adolescents: Causes and Effects' by Ramdhani and Asfari (2022) examined the affective impact of pornography addiction on adolescents. This study shows that exposure to pornography can trigger the release of dopamine, which creates a sense of comfort, causes addiction, and ultimately disrupts emotional control and affective abilities. Using a literature review, this study found that pornography addiction is influenced by internal factors (curiosity, spirituality, emotions) and external factors (internet access, peers, lack of sex education). The negative effects include disturbances in cognition, emotions, social behaviour, and sexual behaviour. Unlike this study, which discusses the influence of pornography on the adolescent brain, the upcoming study will examine affect in comments on the social media platform X that uses Mandarin. This aspect has not been widely researched in the context of affective analysis.

'Indonesian Language and Literature Students' Perceptions of Participating in the MBKM KKN Thematic Programme: A Review of Martin & Rose's Appraisal System' by Arianti, Mahmudah, and Jährir (2023) analyzes affect, appraisal, and appreciation in students' perceptions of the MBKM KKN Thematic Programme. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, this study applied the Martin & Rose Appraisal System to examine students' statements, with data collected through questionnaires and interviews. The results showed both positive and negative attitudes, manifested in affect, appraisal, and appreciation. This study serves as a foundation for understanding affect analysis using the Appraisal system, but it has not yet examined affect in digital interactions. Therefore, future research will examine affect in Mandarin-language comments on the social media platform X.

'Psychological Profile of Body Shaming Victims: A Review of Body Dissatisfaction with Self-Esteem and Negative Affect' by Restiana & Dwiastuti (2021) examines the

relationships among self-esteem, negative affect, and body dissatisfaction among young adult victims of body shaming. Using a descriptive correlational quantitative design, this study involved 42 participants at the Fhadin Gymnastics Studio, recruited through purposive sampling. Data were collected using the Eating Disorder Inventory-3 (EDI-3) body dissatisfaction subscale, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, and the Multidimensional Emotion Questionnaire. The results showed that most victims of body shaming had high body dissatisfaction, with varying self-esteem and low negative affect. In addition, a significant negative relationship was found between self-esteem and body dissatisfaction, as well as a significant positive relationship between negative affect and body dissatisfaction. This study provides a basis for understanding the impact of negative affect on individuals, but it has not examined affective expression in the digital environment. Therefore, this study will focus on affect in Mandarin-language comments on the social media platform X to further explore how emotional expression emerges in the online context.

'Positive Affect as a Mediator in the Relationship between Self-Efficacy and Emotional Attention Bias in Adolescents' by Parahita & Handayani (2022) examines the role of positive affect in mediating the relationship between self-efficacy and emotional attention bias. This study involved 87 high school/vocational school students and used the General Self-Efficacy Scale, the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule, and the emotional Stroop task. The results of the analysis show that positive affect fully mediates the relationship between self-efficacy and emotional attention bias towards words related to happiness and threats. This study explains the role of affect in adolescent cognitive processes, but it has not explored affective expression in digital environments. Therefore, this study will focus on affect in Mandarin-language comments on the social media platform X to understand emotional expression in online interactions.

Appraisal Theory was developed as an analytical framework that not only maps affective expressions but also includes evaluation and appreciation, thereby enabling a more comprehensive understanding of how speakers or writers convey evaluation through language. This theory is strongly rooted in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), developed by Halliday, particularly in the interpersonal metafunction, which explains the role of language in building social relationships and conveying attitudes. This theory was developed by Martin and White (2005), who were inspired by Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) theory. In Halliday's theory, language has three main functions: conveying ideas, building social relationships, and structuring text coherently. The Appraisal theory focuses on the social function of language, how people use it to show their attitudes towards something. Martin and White divide evaluation into three main types: Affect (feelings or emotions), Judgement (moral or social assessment of individuals), and Appreciation (evaluation of the quality or value of objects and phenomena). All three describe how attitudes and reactions are expressed explicitly or implicitly through language choices.

The main focus of this discussion is affect, the component related to a person's emotions or feelings. In Appraisal theory, affect reflects how writers or speakers express their emotional attitudes towards people, objects, events, or situations. Affective expressions can be further classified into two broad categories: positive and negative

affect, each of which plays an important role in shaping interpersonal meaning in a text. Understanding these two forms of affect is very important in analysing how evaluations and attitudes are expressed through language, both in oral and written communication. Positive affect refers to emotional expressions that reflect pleasant, happy, satisfied, loving, proud, or hopeful feelings. In texts or speech, positive affect is used to build harmonious interpersonal relationships, show support, express appreciation and respect, and strengthen social cohesion among individuals. In professional or academic communication, positive affect shows appreciation for others' contributions and fosters a constructive, collaborative atmosphere. Positive emotions such as happiness, satisfaction, enthusiasm, and affection are often used to express acceptance of conditions or other people, as well as to mark positive emotional involvement in an event or relationship.

Conversely, negative affect refers to unpleasant emotional expressions, such as anger, disappointment, sadness, fear, or anxiety. Negative affect expressions are used when the writer or speaker wants to show disapproval, dissatisfaction, rejection, or resistance to a condition, action, or situation. Negative affect is often used in the context of criticism, protest, or resistance to certain values or norms. The use of negative affect is not always destructive; on the contrary, it can be part of a legitimate and important evaluative strategy in social discourse, such as in argumentative texts, media opinions, or political discourse, where the writer or speaker wants to assert their position or challenge a particular authority.

Both positive and negative effects in Appraisal theory have diverse semantic and grammatical dimensions. Linguistically, affects can be expressed explicitly (inscribed affect) or implicitly (invoked affect). Inscribed affect refers to emotional expressions that are stated directly through lexical choices, such as 'angry', 'happy', 'proud', or 'afraid'. Meanwhile, invoked affect is an effect implied in the text, interpreted by the reader based on the context or connotation of a particular statement. For example, the sentence 'He did not greet me throughout the event' can convey disappointment or offence, even though it does not explicitly mention these emotions. This dimension is important in discourse analysis because it shows that emotional attitudes are not always expressed directly but can be inferred from other linguistic signs, such as word choice, sentence structure, and situational context.

In addition, affects in Appraisal theory can be categorised based on their orientation towards happiness/unhappiness, security/insecurity, and satisfaction/dissatisfaction (Martin & White, 2005). These categories help in analysing emotions more specifically. For example, positive affect in the domain of happiness includes emotions such as joy, excitement, and cheerfulness, while negative affect in the same domain includes sadness, grief, and loneliness. In the security domain, positive affect includes feelings of security and confidence, while negative affect reflects fear or anxiety. In the satisfaction domain, positive affect includes feelings of satisfaction and pride, while negative affect includes feelings of disappointment and frustration.

Overall, Appraisal theory is an evaluative framework for examining how speakers or writers convey judgements, attitudes, and reactions in communication. According to Martin & White (2005), this evaluation process involves three main components. Affect refers to the way feelings or emotions, such as happiness, sadness,

anger, and fear, are conveyed through word choice and language structure. Judgement relates to the assessment of a person's character or behaviour, while appreciation concerns the evaluation of the quality or value of an object, work, or phenomenon. However, there are other approaches to evaluative language analysis, such as Hunston & Thompson (2000), who highlight lexical and grammatical aspects in the explicit expression of attitudes, and Halliday's (1994) approach in Systemic Functional Linguistics, which emphasises general interpersonal meaning. Martin & White's approach offers a more comprehensive framework for understanding evaluation. They do not focus solely on grammar or word choice, but also dynamically integrate evaluative elements to examine how evaluation is created and negotiated in social interactions.

With these advantages, Martin & White's Appraisal Theory (2005) was chosen as the theoretical basis for this study, as it provides a comprehensive analytical framework for understanding how evaluation is expressed in language, especially in the context of complex digital communication.

METHODS

The study entitled 'Analysis of Affect in Sensual Content Comments on Social Media X: An Appraisal Study' is a qualitative study using a content analysis approach. Through this approach, this study will explore in depth the variations of affect in comments on Social Media X.

Qualitative research is an in-depth approach that emphasises interpretation, contextual understanding, and the subjective meaning of a phenomenon. Through direct interaction between the researcher and the subject, this method allows for a comprehensive exploration of social, cultural, and human life complexities, thereby providing richer insights (Rachman et al., 2024).

Qualitative research is descriptive in nature and focuses on in-depth analysis of a phenomenon. This approach emphasises understanding the processes and meanings within an event, supported by theory to ensure alignment with field reality. Data is collected through interviews, observations, and text or discourse analysis, enabling the exploration of language use in various communication contexts (Ramdhan, 2021).

Based on expert explanations, qualitative research is descriptive and emphasises interpretation, contextual understanding, and subjective meaning. Through direct interaction and theoretical support, this method explores the complexities of social, cultural, and communication dynamics using interview techniques, observation, and text or discourse analysis.

Instruments

This study utilised Purposive Sampling techniques. According to Etikan et al. (2016), in their article Comparison of Convenience Sampling and Purposive Sampling, Purposive Sampling (also known as judgment sampling) is a non-random sampling technique in which researchers deliberately select participants based on certain qualities or characteristics relevant to the research objectives. Still, according to Etikan et al. (2016), Purposive Sampling has several methods, including: Maximum Variation Sampling, Homogeneous Sampling, Typical Case Sampling, Extreme/Deviant Case Sampling, Critical Case Sampling, Total Population Sampling, and Expert Sampling.

In this study, the Purposive Sampling technique, using the Homogeneous Sampling method, was applied to select data with uniform characteristics or criteria.

This method focuses on exploring certain aspects in detail, as the data collected shows a high degree of similarity in the expression or intensity of affect.

This study obtained data through primary data sources, namely comments found on June Liu's social media account X. These comments are freely accessible to the public through June Liu's social media account X. This data source was chosen to ensure the authenticity and relevance of the data used in the study by directly accessing the existing comments.

Data Analysis Procedures

This study utilizes content analysis techniques to examine data and understand the process of meaning formation in selected comments. This method helps identify expressions of attitude and emotion in the comments, thereby providing a deeper understanding of the dynamics of communication in this study. Content analysis is a research technique for studying human behaviour indirectly through the content of communication. This method analyses text, images, or other media to reveal the beliefs, attitudes, values, and ideas contained therein, thereby providing a deep understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Fraenkel et al., 2011).

FINDINGS

Positive Affect

Positive affect refers to emotional expressions that reflect pleasant, happy, satisfied, loving, proud, or hopeful feelings. In texts or speech, positive affect is used to build harmonious interpersonal relationships, show support, express appreciation and respect, and strengthen social cohesion among individuals. Positive affect in Appraisal theory can be categorised based on its orientation towards happiness, security, and satisfaction.

1.1 Happiness

Positive affect in the happiness category is affect related to 'matters of the heart' such as happiness, love, and so on. Examples include feelings of joy or pleasure. The following are some comments in Mandarin that contain positive affect in the happiness category:

Comment 1

Hanzi : 美美美 😊
Pinyin : měi měi měi
Meaning : Beautiful, Beautiful, Beautiful 😊

Language Unit	Hanzi dan Pinyin	Type of Affect	Explanation
Word	美 (měi)	Positive	Assessing June Liu's beauty.

The comment '美美美 😊' (měi měi měi) expresses positive emotion. The word '美' (měi: beautiful) is repeated three times, adding emotional reinforcement that shows admiration for June Liu's visual appearance. The addition of the 😊 emoji emphasises that the emotion conveyed is one of fondness and admiration.

Comment 2

Hanzi : 这个外搭+腿环好好看 🤗
 Pinyin : Zhège wàidā + tuǐhuán hǎo hǎokàn
 Meaning : This Outer + this anklet look really good together. 🤗

Language Unit	Hanzi dan Pinyin	Type of Affect	Explanation
Phrase	好好看 (hǎo hǎokàn)	Positive	This phrase is a stronger form of the word 好看 (good-looking/attractive), expressing strong, emotional admiration for a person's visual appearance.

The comment '这个外搭+腿环好好看 🤗' (Zhège wàidā + tuǐhuán hǎo hǎokàn) contains strong positive affect, demonstrated through the phrase '好好看' (hǎo hǎokàn: looks really good) referring to the clothes and accessories June Liu is wearing and the use of the emoji 🤗 as a form of emotional expression of interest in June Liu's appearance.

1.2 Security

Positive affect in the security category is affect related to eco-social well-being, such as self-confidence, trust, and so on. An example is self-confidence. The following are some comments in Mandarin that contain positive affect in the security category:

Comment 1

Hanzi : 拍摄的时候注意保暖别着凉
 Pinyin : Pāishè de shíhòu zhùyì bǎonuǎn, bié zháoliáng
 Meaning : During the photo shoot, keep your body warm and avoid catching a chill.

Language Unit	Hanzi dan Pinyin	Type of Affect	Explanation
Sentence	注意保暖别着凉 (zhùyì bǎonuǎn, bié zháoliáng)	Positive	Expressing concern in a caring tone that conveys attention and empathy, implying a desire for June Liu to stay healthy.

The comment '拍摄的时候注意保暖别着凉' (Pāishè de shíhòu zhùyì bǎonuǎn, bié zháoliáng) shows positive affect in the form of concern and empathy towards June Liu. In the context of a photo showing a naked body, this comment chooses to express concern for June Liu's health rather than making physical or sexual judgements. Phrases such as '注意保暖' (zhùyì bǎonuǎn: keep warm) and '别着凉' (bié zháoliáng: do not catch a chill) reflect a subtle yet warm form of affection.

Satisfaction

Positive affect in the satisfaction category is goal-related, such as curiosity, respect, and so on. An example is feeling interested. The following are some comments in Mandarin that contain positive affect in the satisfaction category:

Comment 1

Hanzi : 这个白色眼线真的好吸睛!
 Pinyin : Zhège báisè yǎnxiàn zhēn de hǎo xījīng!
 Meaning : This white eyeliner is really eye-catching!

Language Unit	Hanzi dan Pinyin	Type of Affect	Explanation
Clause	真的好吸睛 (zhēn de hǎo xījīng)	Positive	Assessing June Liu's makeup, specifically her eye makeup.

The comment '这个白色眼线真的好吸睛!' (Zhège báisè yǎnxiàn zhēn de hǎo xījīng!) expresses a positive emotion. Instead of focusing on the body, the commenter focuses on the makeup aspect of white eyeliner, which is considered very eye-catching. The phrase '好吸睛' (hǎo xījīng: very eye-catching) shows a strong sense of admiration for June Liu's appearance, reinforced by the adverb '真的' (zhēn de: really) to emphasise the feeling.

Comment 2

Hanzi : 玥姐可不可以私发一张无水印的这张我当壁纸用! 🥰🥰🥰
 Pinyin : Yuè jiě kě bù kě yǐ sī fā yī zhāng wú shuǐyìn de zhè zhāng wǒ dāng bǐzhǐ yòng!
 Meaning : Miss Yue, could you send me the version without the watermark privately? I want to use this as my wallpaper!

Language Unit	Hanzi dan Pinyin	Type of Affect	Explanation
Sentence	我当壁纸用 (wǒ dāng bǐzhǐ yòng)	Positive	Indicates that the photograph is so well-liked that it is desired to be incorporated into one's personal or private life.
Clause	可不可以私发一张无水印的 (kě bù kě yǐ sī fā yī zhāng wú shuǐyìn de)	Positive	Contains a strong personal desire and interest, which is an expression of affection for the object (image).

Comment: "Sis Yuè, could you privately send me a copy of this without the watermark? I'd like to use it as my wallpaper! 🥰🥰🥰" (Yuè jiě kě bù kě yǐ sī fā yī zhāng wú shuǐyìn de zhè zhāng wǒ dāng bǐzhǐ yòng!) shows positive affect, through expressions of admiration and desire to have June Liu's sensual image more privately. The address '玥姐' (Yuè jiě) indicates emotional intimacy and respect. At the same time, the request clause '可不可以私发一张无水印的' (kě bù kě yǐ sī fā yī zhāng wú shuǐyìn de: can you send me a version without a watermark privately) and the sentence '我当壁纸用' (wǒ dāng bǐzhǐ yòng: I want to use it as wallpaper) show a high level of fascination, to the

point that the commenter wants to use the image as wallpaper. The addition of the emojis 🥺🥺🥺 deepens the emotional feeling, expressing our deepest feelings authentically and touchingly.

Negative Affect

Negative affect refers to unpleasant emotional expressions, such as anger, disappointment, sadness, fear, or anxiety. Negative affect expressions are used when the writer or speaker wants to show disapproval, dissatisfaction, rejection, or resistance to a condition, action, or situation. Negative affect in Appraisal theory can be categorised based on its orientation towards unhappiness, insecurity, and dissatisfaction.

Dissatisfaction

Negative affect in the category of dissatisfaction is affect related to goal achievement, such as boredom, displeasure, and so on. An example is feeling bored. The following are some comments in Mandarin that contain positive affect in the category of dissatisfaction:

Comment 1

Hanzi : 从 19 年底开始关注到现在。感觉胸没有原来好看了

Pinyin : Cóng 19 nián dǐ kāishǐ guānzhù dào xiànzài. Gǎnjué xiōng méiyǒu yuánlái hǎokàn le

Meaning : I have been following her since the end of 2019 until now. It seems that her breasts are not as beautiful as they used to be.

Language Unit	Hanzi dan Pinyin	Type of Affect	Explanation
Clause	感觉胸没有原来好看了 (Gǎnjué xiōng méiyǒu yuánlái hǎokàn le)	Negative	Implies disappointment or dissatisfaction with June Liu's physical changes, especially in the chest area. The use of the comparison '没有原来...' indicates a decline in attractiveness from the commentator's point of view.

Comment: 'I've been following since the end of 1999 until now. I feel like my chest isn't as good as it used to be.' (Cóng 19 nián dǐ kāishǐ guānzhù dào xiànzài. Gǎnjué xiōng méiyǒu yuánlái hǎokàn le) indicates negative sentiment characterised by dissatisfaction with June Liu's physical appearance, particularly her breasts. Although it begins with a statement of long-term attachment, 'I've been following her since the end of 2019 until now' (Cóng 19 nián dǐ kāishǐ guānzhù dào xiànzài), the core of the comment expresses disappointment through the clause 'I feel that her chest is not as beautiful as it used to

be' (Gǎnjué xiōng méiyǒu yuánlái hǎokàn le: I feel like her breasts are not as beautiful as they used to be).

Comment 2

Hanzi : 突然刷到过气女网红

Pinyin : tū rán shuā dào guò qì nǚ wǎng hóng

Meaning : Suddenly, a female internet celebrity who have lost popularity appeared.

Language Unit	Hanzi dan Pinyin	Type of Affect	Explanation
Phrase	过气女网红 (guò qì nǚ wǎng hóng)	Negative	Literally meaning 'to have lost popularity', it conveys a decline in a person's status or value in the public eye.

The comment ‘突然刷到过气女网红’ (tū rán shuā dào guò qì nǚ wǎng hóng) conveys a negative sentiment because it implies that June Liu is no longer popular. The phrase ‘has-been female internet celebrity’ (guò qì nǚ wǎng hóng: a female internet celebrity who is no longer popular) gives a condescending impression, as if the commenter feels that June Liu is a figure who has passed her heyday and is no longer worthy of attention. Coupled with the word ‘suddenly’, this comment conveys a sense of disinterest.

CONCLUSIONS

This study analyses affect in comments on sensual content on social media platform X using appraisal theory. Based on an analysis of 46 Mandarin comments, two types of affect emerged: positive affect, including happiness, security, and satisfaction; and negative affect, including dissatisfaction.

Positive affect was manifested in comments that expressed praise, interest, and admiration for the sensual content posted. This affect was expressed through words that conveyed appreciation or pleasant emotional responses. Although the comments were on sensual content posts, they did not focus solely on body parts; many also commented on June Liu's facial beauty, makeup, hairstyle, clothing, accessories, and attention to physical health.

Conversely, negative affect is manifested in comments that express criticism and disappointment towards the sensual content posted. This affect is expressed through the use of words that indicate dislike or unpleasant emotional expressions. Interestingly, the negative comments that appeared were not directed at June Liu's profession as an adult actress. Instead, the comments only focused on judgments about June Liu's body parts that were considered less than ideal, difficulties in accessing paid sensual content, and judgments about June Liu's decline in popularity.

Overall, this study's findings show that sensual content uploaded on social media X, particularly by June Liu as a sensual content actress, elicits various affective responses from users. Although there are negative affects such as dislike, criticism, and

dissatisfaction, quantitatively and qualitatively, positive affects are far more dominant. The positive affect that emerges reflects admiration, attraction to physical appearance, and even personal affection towards the figure of June Liu. This shows that sensual content on social media does not merely spark controversy but can also build emotional connections between content creators and their audiences.

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