

**‘My White Moonlight’ or ‘Merely Industrial Porcelain’:  
Chinese users perceptions towards Finnish design  
products on Xiaohongshu through the use of  
Appreciation resources**

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Kandidaatintutkielma

## Humanististen tieteiden kandidaatti, kiinan kieli

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### ‘My White Moonlight’ or ‘Merely Industrial Porcelain’: Chinese users perceptions towards Finnish design products on Xiaohongshu through the use of Appreciation resources

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#### Tiivistelmä

Tämä kandidaatintutkielma tutkii, millaista arvioivaa kieltä kiinalaiset käyttävät Iittalaa ja Arabiaa käsittelevissä julkaisuissa sosiaalisen median alustalla. Lisäksi tämän pohjalta tarkastellaan, millainen käsitys kiinalaisilla on suomalaisesta muotoilusta.

Tutkimusaineisto koostuu julkaisuteksteistä ja kommenteista, jotka on kerätty Xiaohongshu (小红书) -alustalta. Tutkimuksen teoreettisena viitekehyksenä toimii J.R. Martinin ja P.R.R. Whiten (2005) kehittämä suhtautumisen teoria (*Appraisal Theory*), joka keskittyy siihen, millaisin kielellisin resurssein voidaan ilmaista suhtautumista eli tunteita, asenteita ja arvioita. Viitekehys koostuu kolmesta keskenään vuorovaikutuksessa olevasta osa-alueesta, joista tämä tutkimus hyödyntää asennoitumisen (*attitude*) osa-aluetta ja sen alakategoriaa *Appreciation*, joka puolestaan keskittyy ei-inhimillisten asioiden tai ilmiöiden arvottamiseen.

Tutkimuksessa aineisto luokitellaan tämän alakategorian kolmeen sisäiseen ryhmään, jotka ovat *reaction* eli arvioitavan kohteen vaikutus ja vetovoima, *composition* eli arvioitavan kohteen muoto, rakenne ja näiden välinen eheys tai järjestys, sekä *valuation* eli arvioitavan kohteen arvokkuus tai merkittävyys.

Tässä tutkimuksessa vallitsevin ryhmä, *reaction*, viittaa siihen, että kiinalaisten käyttäjien käsitykset suomalaisesta muotoilusta keskittyvät ensisijaisesti estetiikkaan ja tuotteen visuaaliseen ulkoasuun. Tätä tukevat myös aineistossa eniten esiintyvät ilmaisut 好看 eli “hyvän näköinen” ja 美 eli “kaunis”. Vaikka tutkimuksen perusteella näkemykset suomalaista muotoilua kohtaan ovat pääasiassa myönteisiä, käyttäjät ilmaisevat myös kriittisiä näkemyksiään tuotteista. Osa arvioista sisältää sekä myönteisiä että kielteisiä näkemyksiä etenkin, kun käyttäjät vertailevat eri tuotteita tai vanhempia ja uudempia tuotesarjoja keskenään. Lisäksi osa käyttäjistä ilmaisee mielipiteensä muuttuneen aikaisemmasta näkemyksestään. Tutkimustulokset antavat myös alustavia viitteitä muista asenteista tuotteita kohtaan. Näitä ovat muun muassa tuotteiden sopivuuden arvioiminen erilaisiin tilanteisiin ja käyttötarkoituksiin sekä Suomen vertaaminen toisiin maihin tuotteiden laadun kannalta.

Tämän kandidaatintutkielman tulokset voivat tarjota hyödyllisiä näkökulmia suomalaisille muotoilualan yrityksille sekä tarjota mahdollista apua markkinointikielen sopeuttamisessa ja kohdentamisessa.

**Avainsanat:** appreciation, Appraisal theory, Finnish design, Chinese, evaluative language

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## 1 Introduction

Pounds (2015) defines evaluative language (EL) as expressing attitude or stance with the use of linguistic resources. Attitude or stance towards something thus carries one's perceptions of it: A positive perception would be saying "that looks good", while its' counterpart negative perception could instead be expressed by saying "how ugly". Social media is one platform providing a place for evaluative discourse, i.e. sharing of and discussing the aforementioned perceptions. This study aims to investigate what types of linguistic resources are used by Chinese users online when discussing Finnish design, and how these lexical units illustrate their perceptions of it. The following research questions will guide this study: First, what evaluative language Chinese users use on Xiaohongshu in regard to Iittala and Arabia products? (RQ1) Second, what thematic group(s) is most prevalent in this online discussion on Iittala and Arabia products? (RQ2) Lastly, what perceptions Chinese users have about Finnish design? (RQ3)

This research has both practical and scholarly significance. From a practical standpoint, this study can help Finnish design brands understand which product qualities Chinese consumers care about the most on social media, and building on this modify their marketing language accordingly. Academically, this study contributes to quantitative Appreciation-level lexical data in the contexts of Chinese social media discourse and Finnish design, which is underrepresented in existing Appraisal Theory research.

This study focuses on the concept of evaluative language use defined earlier by Pounds (2015) in the context of Finnish design, or more broadly Nordic design. The scope of this study is limited to two Finnish design brands Iittala and Arabia, as well as one social media platform Xiaohongshu (小红书).

Previous research has examined Chinese evaluative language use online (Wang et al. 2022; Wang and Zhang, 2022; Qi & Jing, 2024), as well as Chinese online language use in relation to the Nordic countries specifically (Ge, 2026). However, there seems to be a lack of quantitative research collecting lexical data of Appreciation-level evaluative language specifically in the context of Finnish design. This study aims to address this gap through analysis of online discourse on Finnish design brands' products.

Current study employs a mixed-method research approach combining quantitative data collection of Appreciation tokens with qualitative analysis in reorganizing the data into the

thematic groups. Data was extracted from social media posts' texts and comments discussing the products of the aforementioned two Finnish design brands, following inclusion and exclusion criteria discussed in later chapters. This research implements *Appraisal theory* in linguistics developed by James R. Martin and Peter R.R. White (2005), focusing on particularly the Appreciation subcategory under Attitude. This framework helps reorganize the lexical data into meaningful thematic groups to better understand emerging themes within the differing perceptions.

This bachelor's thesis is organized as follows. After Introduction, Chapter 2 examines existing research and literature relevant to this study, as well as discusses chosen theoretical framework. Chapter 3 focuses on research processes of data collection and analysis method. Chapter 4 presents findings of the research, while Chapter 5 discusses these results guided by the research questions, in the context of Chinese perceptions towards Finnish design. Lastly, Chapter 6 presents conclusions and recommendations for future research.

## **2 Literature review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter reviews the chosen theoretical framework and existing research relevant to understanding evaluative Chinese language use online in the context of Finnish design. The review first presents the chosen theoretical framework guiding this research, then examines current and relevant research on evaluative language use online, Country-Of-Origin effect, as well as Nordic perception, and finally identifies gaps which this study aims to address.

### **2.2 Theoretical framework**

This study applies J. R. Martin's and P. R. R White's Appraisal theory for the analysis of the data. Appraisal theory is situated within the Systemic Functional Linguistics (in short, SFL), with its concern, simply put, on writers/speakers expression of attitudinal evaluations, their positioning in respect to other voices, as well as the linguistic ways of adjusting the force and focus of these evaluations. Within the theory, Appraisal is divided into three distinct resources – Attitude, Engagement and Graduation.

This study will utilize Attitude subsystem within the Appraisal theory, and more specifically the Appreciation domain within the Attitude. Attitude concept in Martin and Whites (2005) theory involves positive and negative feelings (i.e. Affect), judgements of behaviour (i.e. Judgement) as well as evaluation of things or phenomena (i.e. Appreciation). Last one is deemed most useful for this study due to its focus on evaluation of 'something': this study focuses on the use of evaluative language towards 'things' i.e. 'something'. Martin and White further divide Appreciation into three categories which are Reaction to the 'thing', its' Composition as well as its' Value. These three categories will be adapted in the semantic categorization and analysis of the collected data.

The SFL as well as Appraisal theory have been utilized in several previous studies. As an example, Wang and Zhang (2022) in their study of the attitude resources in Chinese and English online reviews on the Amazon platforms, utilized Martin and White's Attitude subsystem (among other theoretical bases) for their analysis. While the data of current study is not derived from customer review per se, it can be considered to be similar in the evaluative nature in the context. Another example, de Leon (2024) analysed the language use in students' online comments regarding their teachers in respect to Martin and White's Attitude systems of affect, judgement and appreciation. Although the context here differs from current

study's product evaluation, de Leon's (2024) study similarly also collected online comments as its' data. These studies show the applicability of the chosen theoretical framework for the current study.

It is worth noting, some studies have discussed the need of context specific adaptations of Appraisal theory and have thus suggested different approaches or categorizations. For example, Su's (2016) study argued for need of context-specific approach for studies on evaluation. To demonstrate this argument, building on data from Amazon UK customer review texts, Su (2016) proposed an Appraisal-informed framework of evaluation, consisting of Quality, Satisfactoriness, Recommendability and Worthiness.

Similarly, Hommerberg and Don (2015) also argued for context-specific approach with Appraisal theory: They argued how in the specific context of wine appreciation, there was a need for sub-categories within the established groups of reaction, composition and valuation (Hommerberg & Don, 2015). In addition, this study had two analysts annotate the same corpus of texts, and through the similarities and differences between the annotations, discussed the imprecisions and inter-subjectivity when applying Appraisal framework in analysis of a specific context (Hommerberg & Don, 2015).

While previous studies show Martin and White's (2005) framework's adaptability in analysing evaluative language use, the studies mentioned above (Su, 2016; Hommerberg & Don, 2015) also have discussed the possible challenges faced with different categories, and in different product specific contexts.

### **2.3 Chinese evaluative language use online**

The study of language uses online, such as in the context of online reviews or online comments, as well as the study on evaluative language use online are both extensive.

Wang et al. (2022) analysed the Product-Centered Language Styles (in short, PCLS) in online review comments of women's clothing. The data is composed of online reviews from Taobao organized and compared according to three age groups of young, middle and senior. The results showed diversity in what categories, such as affordability, colour or size, are focused and thus likely expressed by which age group, as well as polarisation between these age groups in terms of higher or lower similarity in language style.

Wang and Zhang (2022) also analysed online consumer reviews but through a different lens. While Wang et al. (2022) did comparisons between age groups, Wang and Zhang (2022) compared between two different cultural regions, as their data is composed of English and Chinese reviews from each country's Amazon websites. As stated previously in the framework section, Wang and Zhang (2022) employed several theoretical basis for their analysis, namely Attitude system as well as Hofstede's cultural dimensions, and Hall's high- and low-context cultures. In terms of Appraisal theory's Attitude system, this study found differences in use of Affect, Judgement and Appreciation resources. In addition, their analysis found some differing patterns of polarity in positive and critical reviews: Consumers from United Kingdom used many positive resources in their critically framed reviews, while Consumers from China used many negative resources in their positively framed reviews.

Similarly to Wang et al. (2022), Qi and Jin (2024) also collect online review data from Taobao as well as from AliExpress, but did comparison between Chinese and English customers similarly to Wang and Zhang (2022). Qi and Jin (2024) focused on Engagement resources of Appraisal system, when Wang and Zhang's (2022) study focused on Attitude resources.

A more recent study has also linked Chinese online language use to Nordic countries' context: Ge's (2026) study analysed the mechanisms of how Chinese users on Xiaohongshu have emotionally and symbolically reinterpreted Nordic cultural concepts, thus touching on a new context of Chinese online language use in relation to Nordic countries specifically. Notably, Ge (2026) brought forward the Chinese Filter framework made up of the following three stages: "perceptual anchoring", "platform-aligned expressions", and "iterative re-signification". In other words following these stages, the foreign signs would first be interpreted into local familiar vocabularies, then these vocabularies would be re-expressed according to platform-specific communication norms and algorithm priorities, and lastly with repeated use these vocabularies and phrases would become stable localized shortcuts for expressing emotional concepts (Ge, 2026).

These four studies (Wang et al., 2022; Wang & Zhang, 2022; Qi & Jin, 2024; Ge, 2026) showcase how current literature has explored the Chinese online review language of different age groups, from different perspectives of Appraisal theory, as well as through comparisons between English and Chinese online language use. Furthermore, Ge (2026) extends the

current research into the Nordic context, focusing on interactions of country branding with cultural and emotional interpretations in online discourse.

## **2.4 Country-of-origin effect**

While the current study aims to examine the evaluative language use of Chinese consumers on Finnish design products, it is important to also discuss the national origin effect.

Consumers' perceptions and evaluations of a product or design can be built from multiple different affecting cues, Country-Of-Origin (in short, COO) being one. Schooler (1965) studied the effects of country label on evaluations of products, and found it to be an influencing factor. Later built on this concept of product bias from Schooler's (1965) study, the Country-Of-Origin effect has become a popular research approach for studies on product perceptions.

In recent COO research, the origin isn't necessarily limited to 'made in' labels but also focuses on how varying themes and influencing factors interact with each other. As an example, Halkias et al. (2016) study focused on country stereotypes and perceived brand globalness and localness in attitudes towards brands and purchase intentions. Their study specifically drew from the Stereotype Content Model (SCM), with judgements of competence and the perceived warmth effect, contrasted against perceived brand globalness and brand localness.

Product specific effect is apparent in multiple COO research papers: Balabanis and Diamantopoulos' (2004) study found how consumer preference can differ among different products categories even if they were from the same foreign country, and that home country isn't always favoured. Notably, the economic competitiveness or cultural similarity were also not found to affect the relation between Consumer Ethnocentrism and preferring or avoiding foreign products (Balabanis and Diamantopoulos, 2004).

Similarly, Pappu et al. (2007) study also found consumer preference to differ between products, with one product category (here cars) being more subject to country image influence than another product category (here televisions).

These studies (Schooler 1965; Halkias et al., 2016; Balabanis & Diamantopoulos, 2004; Pappu et al., 2007) show COO effect is a complex yet present factor in product perceptions, interacting with and influenced by a multitude of other variables, one notably being the product category.

## 2.5 Perceptions of the Nordic region and the “Nordic brand”

When discussing perceptions of the Nordic region, terminology linked to this region needs to be made clear. As Törnqvist (1997) discussed, the terms ‘Nordic’ and ‘Scandinavian’ have been used inconsistently, including and excluding different countries in different contexts. In other words, which regions are part of ‘Nordic’ grouping, and which are part of ‘Scandinavian’ one, can change one way or the other. Furthermore, Ge (2026) also points out how this ambiguity is shown in Chinese social media context: Outside of some culturally iconic instances, Finland is often rather discussed as part of or in comparison to the Nordic people or the Nordic region, not as an individual country.

‘Nordic region’, depending on how the divisions are made, is made up of five countries of Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Iceland, as well as Åland, the Føroyar /Faroe Islands, Kalaallit Nunaat/Greenland and the Sápmi areas. ‘Scandinavia’ can refer to some or all of these depending on the person and approach to this region, for example it may refer to the Scandinavian peninsula (Sweden and Norway) with or without Denmark together (Törnqvist, 1997). With all this in mind, even when grouped together, there are varying characteristics between each participant in the group of ‘Nordics’ or the group of ‘Scandinavia’, whether related to language (Scandinavian languages versus non-Scandinavian languages), political affiliations (e.g. EU and non-EU members), borders between areas (nation states versus autonomous territories and transnational region of Sápmi) and so on (Strang et al., 2021).

There are often certain perceptions or stereotypes associated with different regions and people residing in those regions, and ‘Nordic region’ is no different from this. Shi (2024) in the Nordic Asia Podcast discussed concept of “北欧风” or “Nordic Style” in Chinese context, which encompasses idealized portrayals of and associations with Nordic countries, including perceptions of minimalism, functionality and sustainability (Shi, 2024). Shi (2024) notes on the ongoing research on the topic of digital misinformation and ‘Nordic design’ on Chinese social media, finding commercial content to oversimplify the ‘Nordic style’ (with monochromatic colour and low-budget), while portion of independent creators challenging these views and introducing more vibrant and diverse perspectives, intending to inform and educate on this topic (Shi, 2024).

Lerøy Sataøen (2021) in their study focused on Nordic branding strategies and national stereotypes through analysing official promotional portals for visitors of five Nordic

countries. The study found, while with differing approaches and specifics, all Nordic countries' portals showcased common themes of nature (as exotic, untouched but accessible), happiness (and welcoming people), as well as fresh, pure and clean food (Lerøy Sataøen, 2021). Hiltunen (2018) master's thesis focused on the country image of Finland in China through a questionnaire. Among its' findings, similar themes of nature (coldness, snow, beautiful sceneries, natural, lakes et cetera), as well as associations related to friendliness (friendly, warmhearted), were found.

To summarize, While each individual region grouped under the terms 'Nordic' or 'Scandinavia' has their own distinct features, cultures, traditions and languages, and can evoke different perceptions in different contexts, they also share common perceptions or even stereotypes. Some common associations include minimalism, functionality and sustainability when discussing design (Shi, 2024), as well as associations with nature, and friendliness (Lerøy Sataøen, 2021; Hiltunen, 2018) as well as purity and cleanliness (Lerøy Sataøen, 2021).

Furthermore, perceptions of one can also affect the other. As an example, Niss (1996) discussed in their study how the well-regarded image of Scandinavian countries can help to substitute for Denmark's lack of industrial country image and consequently give a possible competitive edge.

## **2.6 Research gaps**

While existing research covers multitude of perspectives and offers deep understanding for this field of study, several gaps seem to appear. While the current research covers extensively Chinese online review language, several of these studies have focused on product review platforms (i.e. Taobao and Amazon) as well as cross-cultural language comparisons. There seems to be less focus on user-generated social media platforms such as Xiaohongshu, especially in relation to foreign design brands. While Ge's (2026) study combines Chinese online language and Nordic countries contexts with research on Xiaohongshu, the focus is on a cultural perspective, while the current study aims analyse lexical linguistic choices.

## **2.7 Study rationale**

This study addresses the identified gaps by collecting a lexical data of Chinese online evaluative language use from social media platform Xiaohongshu. Applying the theoretical framework outlined at the beginning, the current study examines what type of evaluative

words Chinese users use in their discussions on Iittala's and Arabia's products online, and which thematic categories are most prevalent in these discussions. The findings will contribute to the understanding of Chinese evaluative language use as well as understanding of the Chinese consumers' perception towards Finnish, or more broadly Nordic, design.

## 3 Methodology

### 3.1 Research design

This study employs a mixed-method research design combining quantitative research with qualitative analysis (Creswell, 2023): counting the frequencies of evaluative tokens across Appreciation categories (quantitative), and interpreting and coding these tokens into three attitude groups of *Reaction*, *Composition* and *Valuation*, as well as according to their polarity (qualitative). For this study quantitative approach was chosen because this study aims to collect a lexical data of evaluative language use, while the qualitative approach brings more depth into the analysis of said data to understand what trends and themes arise, and what they reveal about the perceptions towards Finnish design.

### 3.2 Materials and the setting for data collection

For the current study, the data was collected from Xiaohongshu platform and consists of post texts and comments, while visual elements (such as emojis), text from photos and hashtags were excluded. The general topic of the collected posts was Finnish design, and more specifically Iittala's and Arabia's design products. Products evaluated in the collected data included but were not limited to (For Arabia) Paratiisi, Sunnuntai, Arabia24h, Mainio, Runo, Poppoo, Pomona, as well as multiple vintage or out-of-production products (such as Koralli, Ruija, Uhtua and Ruska, among many others), as well as (for Iittala) Kastehelmi, Sato, Taika, Helle, Mariskooli, Paadar, Teema, Ultima Thule, lasilinnut (by Oiva Toikka), and Aalto malja. In terms of range of products, the dataset included mugs, plates, cups, tealight holders, flower vases, glass decorations, as well as children's cutlery.

In terms of post types, the topics varied between lifestyle posts and product reviews. Lifestyle centered posts included atmospheric afternoon tea or coffee sessions, dinners with friends and family as well as one love letter to a wife. Product review posts compared between products or asked opinions and experiences from other users. In addition, a couple of posts showed products as gifts from friends or showcased their own travel souvenirs. Focus towards the products or other topics also varied between posts, for some Iittala's and Arabia's products were the main focus, while for others they appeared either as a sidenote or in comparison to other foreign or Chinese brands.

### 3.2.1 Xiaohongshu as chosen data collection site

Zappavigna (2012) analyses, among other things, a corpus of Twitter texts and other elements against *Appraisal theory* (Martin & White, 2005) to showcase the use of evaluative language patterns within this context. As Zappavigna (2012) shows, social media platforms, as a ground of interactive and fast-paced discussion between people, can provide data for language research. Other studies discussed in previous chapter also include the example of Ge (2026), who specifically used Xiaohongshu to analyse discourse and language within the social media domain.

Multiple reasons were considered when choosing the specific platform for data collection. First, the data would need to be mainly in Putonghua (普通话), narrowing it down to Chinese language platforms. Second, there would need to be enough data around the topic and the chosen brands. Xiaohongshu (also known as Rednote) is a Chinese lifestyle platform where according to Xiaohongshu's official website, users can share their daily lives, common interests, and interact through different mediums of video, photo and text format (Xiaohongshu, n.d.). First trial data collection and familiarity with this platform showed there exists sufficient user-generated content about the chosen brands on the platform. For these reasons, Xiaohongshu was chosen as the data collection platform.

Both social media platforms and commercial-focused platforms can provide data for evaluative language use research, and both options were considered at the beginning stages, namely the platforms Xiaohongshu and Taobao respectively. Xiaohongshu provides a blending of the two, with social media aspects and e-commerce options, while Taobao is primarily an online shopping platform with ways to review products and interact with people, but also provides some additional features such as a game centre or inviting and chatting with friends. With Xiaohongshu as chosen platform, the data collected, while more or less reviewing in its nature, was gathered from the general users' posts and is thus different to ones collected from purely commercial platform reviews.

### 3.2.2 Iittala and Arabia as chosen representatives of Finnish design

This study aims to investigate the evaluations and perceptions towards Finnish design, with the main focus being on brands Iittala and Arabia.

Originally the plan was to focus solely on Iittala, however after a trial data collection, multiple posts were found to discuss Arabia as well. For example, with a keyword "Iittala", one of the

top posts instead discussed four different Arabia products. It was deemed necessary to also include Arabia to not lose meaningful data.

In addition to aforementioned, shifting the focus to both brands has multiple other supporting reasons. First, both brands are under same corporation Fiskars group and thus are closely linked to each other. Arabia products are also sold under Iittala's website and physical retail stores. Second, both brands focus on and are known for similar products, i.e. tableware and design ornaments. Another Finnish design brand Marimekko also produces tableware. However, this brand is popular especially for their print designs and fashion, and thus was deemed distinguishable from the other two brands and excluded from the study. In addition, Marimekko is a separate brand not under Fiskars group, separating it at a corporate level from the other two brands.

Iittala has their own official account on the Xiaohongshu platform with varied number of comments on the account's posts, which demonstrates an interest towards as well as a presence of the brand among the users. Furthermore, both of these brands have foreign trade and are associated with Finland, making them suitable for the current study's objective.

### **3.3 Data collection**

Data was collected in two rounds. First round on 14th of March 2026, with in total 40 posts collected. Before analysis one post was excluded due to new criteria to not include Moomin products. While Moomin tableware is produced and sold under Arabia brand, Moomin itself is its' own distinctive brand and thus after further consideration not deemed similar enough to be grouped as one with the other two brands. Due to insufficient amount of data, a second round of data collection was conducted on 24th of March 2026, with 40 new posts added to data. Collected posts and comments were from between the years 2020-2026, and in total, 643 tokens of evaluation were collected.

Originally plan was to collect data from Iittala's official account's posts, however due to insufficient amount of data the plan was shifted to collecting data from general users' posts. Furthermore, to gain a more accurate understanding of differing perceptions, it is ideal to have both positive and negative perceptions included. It was anticipated that it will be improbable to find negative toned data from Iittala's official posts' comments.

The following keywords were chosen to guide the data collection: "Iittala", "伊塔拉" (Yitala, Iittala), "Iittala 玻璃鸟" (Boli Niao, glass bird), "Iittala 鸟" (Niao, bird), "Iittala 花瓶" (Hua

Ping, flower vase) and “Iittala 杯子” (Beizi, cup) for round one. For the second round of data collection, the following new keywords were added: “Arabia”, “Arabia 马克” (Make, mug), “Arabia 餐具” (Canju tableware). The keywords were chosen to include a wide range of product types and series from both brands, with the intention to reflect broader perceptions of brands and their designs, rather than be narrowly limited to one or two specific product lines.

Besides the keywords, two search filters were used to control the suggested posts. First search filter controlled the type of posts to show only picture format posts. This way other formats, i.e. video posts, were excluded. Consequently, the focus of current study is on analysing text data, and not video format spoken data. Second search filter controlled the number of comments on a post to first show the ones with most comments. Purpose of second filter was to aid with gathering more data per post.

Data was collected while considering multiple exclusion criteria. First, posts must feature Iittala and/or Arabia, but if other brands also appeared, only text relevant to Iittala or Arabia were analysed. In the collected data, short comments were common and often ambiguous in what they were addressing. In these cases, if the post included multiple other elements, without explicit mention of brand name Iittala or Arabia, or associated products, the topic of the comment or text would be ambiguous and excluded. Second, only text explicitly in the context showing perception or evaluation towards the products were included. This criterion excluded comments, while perhaps in relation but not purely about the products. For example, comments about the weather, the person shown in the pictures et cetera, were not analysed and counted for token list. Lastly, seller profile posts’ texts (and comments from these profiles) were excluded but comments from other users under these posts were included.

After recording all the keywords and links to posts found under each keyword, the posts’ texts and comments were manually copied onto a separate file. Second step was transferring this data into an Excel file for analysis. A python code was utilized to reorganize text data into three columns of date, username and comment/post text. With the help of a friend and later AI model DeepSeek, the Python code was adjusted to reorganize data in differing formats. The organized data in different columns was manually checked against the posts’ texts and comments shown on the platform. One problem arose during the manual inspection: Data of comments and posts from 2026 were copied but organized into wrong columns by the code. This was manually corrected and reorganized.

### 3.4 Data analysis process

Data analysis was guided by the theoretical framework discussed in chapter 2. After reorganizing data into Excel-file, each of the posts was analysed separately. First in the analysis, all evaluations of Iittala's and Arabia's products were marked. Second, these tokens were categorized into the three thematic groups defined according to Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal theory's appreciation subsystem. After this, each token was marked as positive, negative or neutral in evaluation. Lastly, the whole comment or section of text was marked as either positive (praising), negative (critiquing) or mixed in tone.

Following Martin and Whites (2005) definitions and examples the following criteria was set for the analysis of collected data:

Words grouped to *Reaction* would show subjective perception, impact and impression of the product. This would include words such as 美 (beautiful), 惊艳 (exceptionally beautiful) as positive tokens, and 难看 (not good-looking) and 平庸 (mediocre) as negative tokens respectively.

Words grouped to *Composition* would comment on the products shape, structural composition or design features. This would include words such as 简单 (simple) and 杂乱 (mixed/disorderly).

Words grouped to *Valuation* would showcase the netizens opinions of the product in terms of its' value, importance and meaning, in other words suggesting these as descriptions or qualities to be true of said product. This would include words such as 耐用 (durable) as positive token and 工业瓷而已 (mere industrial procelain, or 'merely mass produced') as negative token respectively.

Any ambiguity or confusion in organizing into these thematic groups is discussed in Chapters 4 (Findings) and 5 (Discussion). Similarly, the decisions regarding specific decisions for word polarity are discussed in aforementioned chapters. As the current study focuses on *Appreciation* subsystem, words otherwise showing perception but not fitting this criterion were excluded. As an example, showing liking, hating or loving something was excluded as they are commonly regarded as tokens of *Affect* subsystem (Martin and White, 2005).

Ambiguity in this regard will also be discussed in later chapters.

### **3.5 Ethical considerations**

Following guidelines of Townsend and Wallace (2017) framework for Ethical research with social media, multiple aspects were considered: While social media posts and comments are often, and completely in the case of this study's data, publicly available, the privacy of individuals should be considered. For this reason, while in the Excel-file the data is presented with the usernames, later in chapter 4 Findings and Chapter 5 Discussion, all identifying data will be removed. Furthermore, the full collected data and analysis will be stored securely and not be published by the author.

### **3.6 Limitations**

Several methodological limitations should be acknowledged.

First, an algorithm bias needs to be mentioned. The data was collected on author's own account. As a result, when searching for different posts, the posts suggested as results were influenced by algorithm, in other words, the results were influenced by the user's previous activity on the application.

Second, the filter for excluding video format posts, as well as exclusion criteria for analysed texts lead to exclusion of possibly meaningful data. As a part of selection criteria, data related to either other brands, to products with foreign designer collaborations, or ambiguous data discussed above were all excluded. These exclusions were decided to better answer the research questions, but as a trade-off meant losing a portion of possible data.

Third, while chosen framework has been used in other studies with data in languages other than English, it is a framework built on English language. The example words guiding this study's decisions on coding words into thematic groups were also in English, which introduces a language limitation possibly affecting the analysis processes, as well as inclusion and exclusion criteria for data.

Lastly, as current study's analysis was done manually, possible mistakes in calculations, marking of appreciation tokens, or interpretation bias are inevitable limitations.

## 4 Findings

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings on data collected from online posts' texts and comments. In total, 80 posts were collected, of which 5 posts were excluded due to new inclusion criteria (excluding Moomin, posts from seller accounts with no evaluative comments, as well as posts about products with foreign designer collaboration). Out of the remaining posts 11 gave no usable data for this study, leaving 64 posts in total for the final analysis. The two rounds of data collection were done in March 2026, and the posts and comments were posted between the years 2020-2026. The products discussed in posts ranged from mugs and similar tableware to glass ornaments and decorations.

As outlined in the Methodology chapter, the collected data was manually analysed using Martin and White's (2005) *Appraisal Theory* and specifically the subsystem *Appreciation*. In total 643 tokens of appreciation were coded into thematic groups (Section 4.2) and divided by polarity (Section 4.3). Lastly ambiguous cases are presented (Section 4.4) with tokens excluded from the final list.

The findings are presented in relation to the three research questions guiding this study:

RQ1: What evaluative language Chinese users use on Xiaohongshu in regard to Iittala and Arabia products?

RQ2: What thematic group(s) is most prevalent in the online discussion on Iittala and Arabia products?

RQ3: What perceptions Chinese users have about Finnish design?

### 4.2 Findings 1: Thematic groups

Collected 643 appreciation tokens were divided into three thematic groups which are as follows: *Reaction* (377 tokens), *Composition* (143 tokens) and *Valuation* (123 tokens). Within one group, tokens were grouped together according to the main component of evaluation, excluding intensifiers such as 太.....了 (expressing extreme degree, similar to "too" or "very" in English) or comparison words such as 更 ("more", "even more") For example, tokens 好看, 太好看了, 超级好看, 很好看 were all grouped under the heading "好看". Complete list of tokens under each group is shown in the index at the end of this study. Most

prevalent thematic group was *Reaction*, second prevalent *Composition* and lastly group with least tokens was *Valuation*.

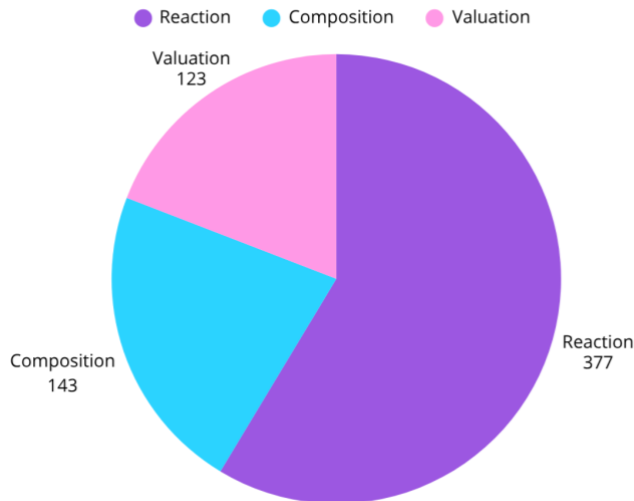


Figure 1, Thematic groups and the number of tokens  
(*Reaction* in purple, *Composition* in blue, and *Valuation* in pink)

#### 4.2.1 Reaction

The tokens in *Reaction* group show what kind of impact the product had on commentors, as well as immediate experience of said product. Martin and White (2005) use example pairs such as “captivating” and “boring”, “beautiful” and “ugly” for this group. This study’s dataset also included descriptions of atmosphere such as “红红火火快快乐乐的氛围” (‘lively and joyful atmosphere’) as well as product’s influence on appetite such as in the comment “降低食欲” (‘reducing appetite’).

With 377 tokens *Reaction* was the most prevalent thematic group in this dataset. Within the group, most used positive tokens were “好看” (‘good-looking’, occurred 146 times), “美” (‘beautiful’, occurred 59 times) as well as “可爱” (‘cute’) and “漂亮” (‘pretty’) which occurred 19 and 17 times respectively. Most popular negative tokens were “不好看” (‘not good-looking’, occurred 7 times), “难看” (‘unpleasant to look at’, occurred 3 times) and “丑” (‘ugly’, occurred 3 times). Two tokens were grouped as neutral tokens, with “无感” (‘indifferent’ or ‘no feelings towards’, occurred 4 times) being the most used.

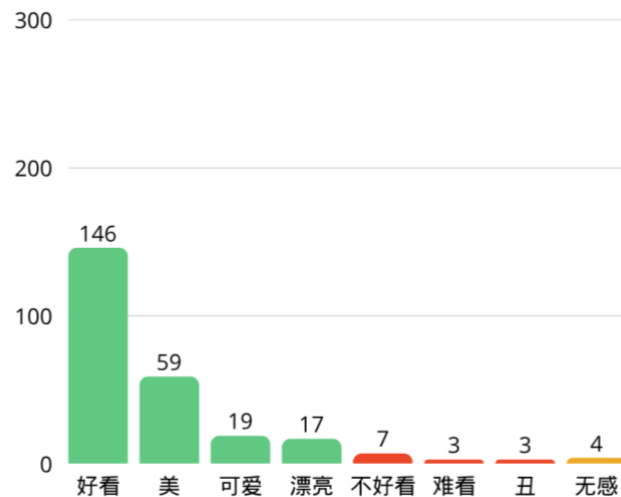


Figure 2, Most used tokens in *Reaction* group

(Positive tokens in green colour, negative tokens in red colour, and neutral tokens in yellow colour)

#### 4.2.2 Composition

The tokens in *Composition* group show evaluations of the construction of an object, in other words, how the parts fit together, its balance, complexity, detail, material feel and so on.

Martin and White (2005) use example pairs such as “simple” and “ornate”, “harmonious” and “discordant”. This dataset also included evaluation of “suitability” (适合) in relation to the objects size or when appearance components (such as colour or pattern) affected suitability.

With 143 tokens Composition was the second most prevalent thematic group in this dataset. Within the group, most used positive tokens were “适合”/“合适” (‘suitability’ in terms of composition, occurred 16 times), “精致” (‘exquisite’, occurred 8 times) and 简单 (‘simple’, occurred 5 times). Most popular negative tokens were “重” (‘heavy’, occurred 4 times), and “小” (‘small’, occurred 3 times). One token was coded as neutral “(放在一起) 颇有考眼力的感觉” (‘Testing one’s eyesight when placed together’).

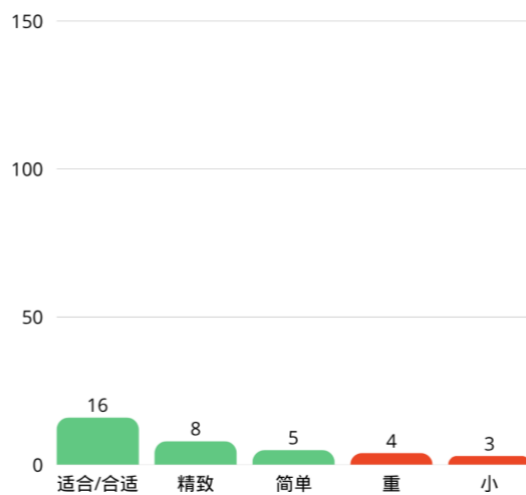


Figure 3, Most used tokens in *Composition* group

(Positive tokens in green colour, negative tokens in red colour, and neutral tokens in yellow colour)

#### 4.2.3 Valuation

The tokens in *Valuation* group relate to ‘worthiness’ given to an object, including but not limited to social worth, cultural worth, functional worth, originality, artistic value et cetera. *Valuation* in other terms shows person’s judgement towards the object. Martin and White (2005) use example pairs such as “creative” and “prosaic”, “unique” and “common”. This dataset also included evaluation of “suitability” (适合) in relation to social worth in gift-giving as well as suitability when not explicitly linking it with size or other composition features. Martin and White (2005) also list “appropriate”, “helpful” and “effective”, and their counterparts, as belonging to *Valuation*. Relying on this reasoning, words describing durability and practicality in use were also included in this group.

With 123 tokens *Valuation* was the least prevalent thematic group in this dataset. Within the group, most used positive tokens were “经典”(‘classic’, occurred 17 times), “适合”/“合适”(‘suitable’, occurred 16 times), and “值得...” (‘worthy’, occurred 9 times). For negative tokens, only “普通”(‘Ordinary’ or ‘common’, occurred 2 times) occurred more than once. Besides positive tokens counterparts, negative tokens also included other expressions such as “工业此而已”(‘merely industry porcelain’). *Valuation* group had no neutral tokens.

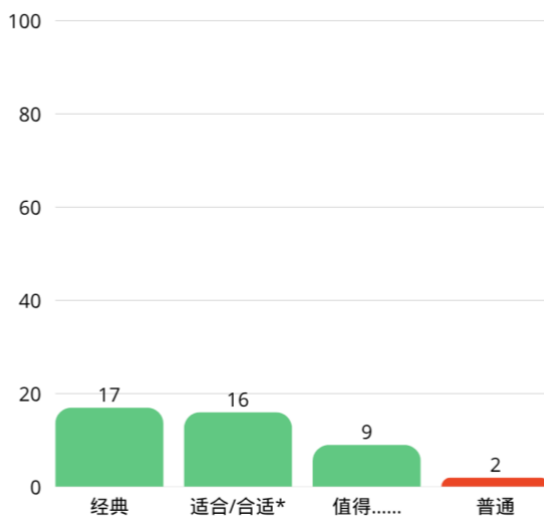


Figure 4, Most used tokens in *Valuation* group

(Positive tokens in green colour, negative tokens in red colour, and neutral tokens in yellow colour)

#### 4.2.4 One token occurrence – common perceptions between them

All three thematic groups had multiple tokens only occurring once: while these tokens don't showcase what kind of words are most used to evaluate these design products, however they still showcase some common perceptions people have. For example, in English one might say a product is “captivating”, or “enchating” or “alluring”, all expressing the similar idea of this product holding one's attention. Therefore, after grouping tokens into the three thematic groups, the tokens with one occurrence were reanalysed separately to better see possible common themes or targets of evaluation. These themes will be discussed in relation to the higher frequency tokens in Chapter 5. In *Reaction* group, the following themes arose: Beauty within the product, atmosphere or feeling evoked by the product, and echanting or captivating quality of the product. In *Composition* group the common perceptions included: richness, complexity or vibrancy of the product, naturalness or pureness of the product, commenting on feel or craftsmanship of a product, liveliness of the product, and simplicity of the product, as well as negative perceptions on craftsmanship, complexity and colour. In *Valuation* group the single tokens commented on design, design status or reputation, emotional value and quality.

#### 4.2.5 Ambiguous tokens and dual interpretations

Martin and White (2005) list multiple examples for the three different groups, however some tokens were more difficult to discern and cleanly group only into one of the three.

Tokens expressing suitability, such as “合适” and “适合” were coded according to main focus of evaluation, in other words “what” was deemed suitable. For tokens grouped into *Composition*, the “suitability” was in relation to size such as in the comment “容量合适” (‘capacity/volume is suitable’), or to the pattern and colour of the product such as in the comment “适合冬天” (‘suitable for winter’, about a cup with a snowman pattern). Tokens grouped into *Valuation* were related to social worth such as in “适合作为礼物相送” (‘suitable as a gift’), or otherwise weren’t explicitly linked to the products composition components such as in comments “适合酸奶碗” (‘suitable as yoghurt bowl’) or “适合摆放中餐” (‘suitable for Chinese cuisine’). These tokens could be about the size or pattern, but could also be related to functionality or judgement of worth, and thus are not explicitly linkable to *Composition*.

Multiple tokens could be divided into two or more groups. As an example, “细节之美” (‘beauty in details’ or ‘details are beautiful’) both focuses on details (structure, *Composition*), as well as comments on its beauty (quality, *Reaction*). In these cases, the central component of evaluation was chosen as the guide for which group to choose. For example, in the earlier example, the focus is on beauty of the details, saying how the details are beautiful, and thus this was grouped into *Reaction*.

Martin and White (2005) list example words “good”, “okay”, and “fine” as part of *Reaction*, and thus comments saying colour was good or the pattern was okay were grouped into *Reaction*. These comments evaluate the products’ aesthetic or visual “goodness”, and also answer the guiding question “Did I like it?” (Martin & White, 2005). In Comparison, while tokens commenting on the “texture” or “feel” being good, also have the “good” component, they were instead grouped into *Composition*. For texture/feel tokens, the focus is more strongly on the physical part of the product and rather answers the guiding question “Did it hang together” from Martin and White’s list (2005). “Good” quality on the other hand directly answers the “Was it worthwhile” question given for *Valuation* group (Martin & White, 2005).

Words showcasing durability (“耐用”), practicality in use (“实用”) and convenience in use (“好用”) were first considered to be grouped into *Composition*, especially “耐用” and “好用” which are significantly dependent on the construction, in other words materials, craftsmanship et cetera, of a product, and would therefore fit *Composition* group. “实用” on the other hand is less clear as practicality also leans towards *Valuation* group. In Martin and White’s (2005) example words, *Valuation* group includes the following words: appropriate and ineffective, helpful and useless, as well as effective. The aforementioned set of tokens comment on functionality of a product, which the aforementioned words also centre around. Thus it was deemed appropriate to place all three tokens “耐用” (‘durable’), “实用” (‘practical in use’), and “好用” (‘convenient/easy to use’) into the *Valuation* group.

While tokens praising photography skill, while indirectly praising the product, were excluded, tokens such as “上相” (‘photogenic’) were included and categorized as valuation tokens; while saying a product is “photogenic” comments on its’ balance, harmony and other features of how the product is constructed (i.e. *Composition*), in the context of social media discourse however, “good for photos” was deemed more suitable to be about the product’s worth (i.e. *Valuation*).

### 4.3 Findings 2: Word polarity

In analysis, each token was marked as either positive, negative or neutral. In addition, post texts and comments were marked as positive, negative, or a combination of the two. First the word polarity between and within the thematic groups will be presented (Section 4.3.1) and afterwards the tones of the whole texts and comments are compared to each other (Section 4.3.2).

#### 4.3.1 Token-level polarity

Tokens were assigned as positive, negative or neutral according to their inherent polarity, within the context of social media product reviews, while also, if not otherwise clear, accounting for the whole tone of the text they were collected from. For example token “简单” (‘simple’) could be praising or critiquing the product, but in this dataset was only used to praise them. Similarly, “复古” (‘retro’) while not inherently praising or critiquing by itself, appeared in relation to liking the product, its’ desirability or aesthetic appeal.

Martin and White (2005) divide their examples by positive and negative polarity, while this study also added neutral polarity. This was deemed necessary as some tokens were not clearly suitable or clear enough in context to be grouped as either praising or critiquing the products. Neutral category included tokens expressing lack of feeling or otherwise not certainly praising or critiquing the product in *Reaction*, and tokens commenting on product “testing eyesight” in *Composition*. *Valuation* group had no neutral tokens in this dataset.

Within the different thematic groups, the positive tokens were the majority: 344 (91,2%) for *Reaction*, 110 (79,9%) for *Composition*, and 112 (90,7%) for *Valuation*. This aligns with the text-level polarity in discussed in section 4.3.2. *Composition* had comparatively biggest portion of negative tokens (19,4 %) against positive or neutral tokens.

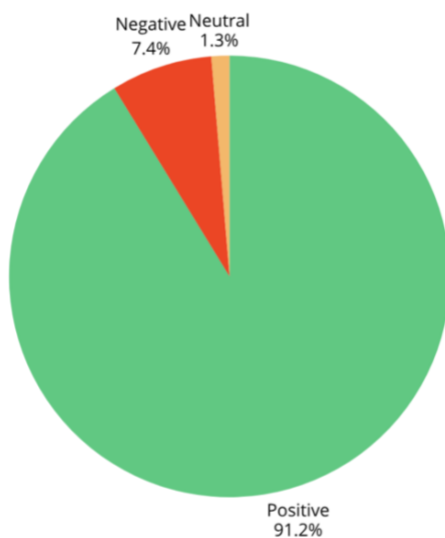


Figure 5, Word polarity in *Reaction* group (Percentage)

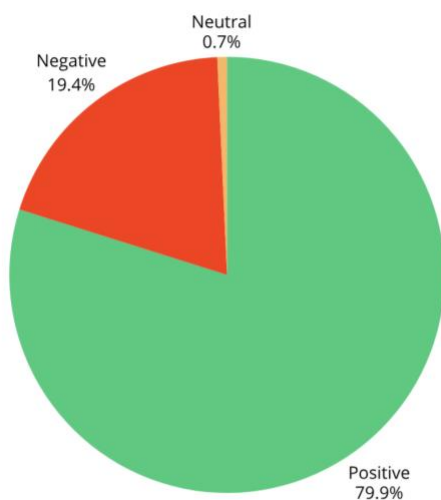
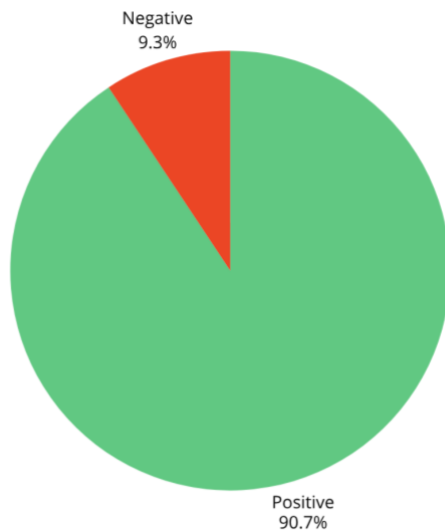


Figure 6, Word polarity in *Composition* group (Percentage)Figure 7, Word polarity in *Valuation* group (Percentage)

#### 4.3.2 Text-level polarity: positive and critical evaluations

In analysing the text-level polarity, only texts or comments including at least one token from this dataset were included. This was done to avoid possibly biased interpretations of which texts would be ‘evaluative enough’ to be included. However, this also brings a limitation of possibly missing indirect criticism and negative evaluations.

When deciding on text-level polarity, the whole text was considered. Out of 416 evaluative comments or post texts, 352 (84,6%) were marked as positive, 20 (4,8%) as negative and 44 (10,6%) as a mix of both, thus in this dataset the majority of perceptions towards these two brands were positive.

Mixed perceptions included both positive and negative perceptions. These comments compared between products’ appearance, for example between colours in “硕果系列我觉得黑白是最好看的，其他两个颜色无感” (‘Black-white colour looks the best, while feeling indifferent towards the other two colours’), or compared between old and new product lines, for example in “如果你也有兴趣收集他们我更推荐从老鸟玩起，新的那些，真的不值得” (recommending to start collecting from the older (glass)birds over the newer ones). Some comments also expressed change in opinion, such as in “这是另外一个初看并不惊艳，但越

看越有味道的杯子” (‘initially was not impressed with the product, but after looking at it, it has more character’).

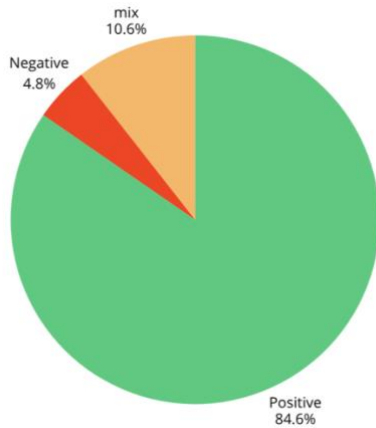


Figure 8, Text-level polarity (percentage)

#### 4.4 Ambiguous data and exclusion criteria

Some tokens, while could be interpreted as evaluative in nature or context, were however excluded following the criteria set in Chapter 3, as well as further considerations listed below.

While words showing perception of worth such as “高级” (‘high grade/quality’) were included in the analysis, evaluations directly commenting on price, such as “太贵了” (‘too expensive’), were excluded. While these show perception towards the product and the brand, the focus is on the price. This price at which these people got the product is store or seller dependent, as one store might sell a product at a cheaper price than another. In the end, two people might have very different perceptions of a product worth based on where they bought it. Thus, these tokens were excluded to avoid price-specific evaluation influence.

The ruling in the analysis was to focus on comments where the product is at the centre of focus. Following this, multiple comments with an outside element affect were excluded. Some examples are as follows: “曲线和花枝的呼应” (‘curves echoing the flower branches’) with both the vase and the flowers being at the centre of focus, and “和我家不搭” (‘not compatible with my home’) with the product and this person’s home being at the centre of focus. However, as a differing additional criterion, comments on the brand or Finnish design in general were included in this dataset: While they are not directly commenting on the

products, they still showed Chinese users' perceptions towards Finnish design, thus answering one of this study's research questions.

A few comments noted on products' popularity with words such as “火“ ('popular') and “冷” (“niche”). These were excluded on the ground of evaluation being more towards others' perceptions rather than the products itself. This aligns with general exclusion criterion on only extracting product focused text.

Similarly, comments with person or outside element (e.g. light, drink, flowers) as equal or dominant force and receiver of evaluation were excluded. Comparing to this, if the product was explicitly framed as causing the effect (such as in “用它治愈我”, 'using it heals me'), the text were included in this dataset.

The line between *Reaction* (under *Appreciation*) and *Affect* (under *Attitude*) was challenging in the analysis. For this the ruling was less on the word, and more on the subject of the whole sentence: For example, comments expressing ‘the design is stunning’ were included, versus comments expressing ‘I was stunned’ were excluded. Similarly some idiomatic expressions such as “抓住了我的心” ('captured my heart'), “让人爱不释手” ('love to a point one is unable to let go') were included in the *Reaction* category: While these show strongly personal liking and are towards the person, they are also heavily linked to the product as the cause and align with Martin and White's (2005) examples of “captivating” and “arresting”.

Social media language can sometimes be quite playful but as a consequence some evaluations become blurred. For example the following comment “适合送给早晨出生的露露” ('suitable to give (as a gift) for the early morning dew'), while showing positive evaluation through the use of “适合” ('suitable'), is more a playful comment and was thus excluded. Product in question was Iittala's Kastehelmi (can be translated into English as 'dewdrop') glass.

Lastly, purely descriptive comments without explicit evaluative aspect, such as in tokens “冰雕感” ('carved-ice feel') and “颗粒感” ('grainy feel'), were excluded. These were deemed not describing perceptions or judgements users have towards these products.

#### **4.5 Summary of findings**

First, regarding the evaluative words or phrases used in discourse and evaluation of Iittala and Arabia products (RQ1), the most used words were about complimenting the products good

looks (“好看”， “美”) or in negative evaluations criticising them (“不好看”， “难看”). Other evaluations included complimenting the products’ suitability (“适合”), simplicity (“简单”), feel or the texture (“质感”), social worth (“经典”) or worthiness to have or collect (“值得”). Criticism also focused on themes of heaviness (“重”), size (“小” and “大”) in *Composition*, as well as lack of speciality (“普通”) in *Valuation*. Some evaluations were more neutral in nature through the lack of feeling towards the product (“无感”).

Second, regarding thematic groups, the most prevalent group in this dataset was *Reaction*, followed by *Composition* and *Valuation* respectively (RQ2). Within all three groups positive tokens were most prevalent.

Third, regarding perceptions towards Finnish design (RQ3), the overall perception leans heavily towards positive perceptions, with some mixed perceptions when comparing between products, or showing a change in opinion.

## 5 Discussion

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings presented in Chapter 4 in relation to the research questions, the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 2, and the existing literature on evaluative language, Country-of-Origin effect, and Nordic perception research. The discussion is organized around the three research questions answered in Chapter 4, which are as follows:

RQ1: What evaluative language Chinese users use on Xiaohongshu in regard to Iittala and Arabia products? (Section 5.2)

RQ2: What thematic group(s) is most prevalent in the online discussion on Iittala and Arabia products? (Section 5.3)

RQ3: What perceptions Chinese users have about Finnish design? (Section 5.4)

The purpose of this chapter is to move beyond the calculated numbers of evaluative tokens and their polarity, and interpret what these findings mean, and what implications they carry for evaluative language use and Chinese users' perceptions towards Finnish design.

### 5.2 Themes and focus of the lexical data

*Dominant theme: Aesthetics and outward appearance*

In this study's dataset, the most used tokens of appreciation towards products were related to how they looked, and whether or not the look was pleasing to the eye. Particularly words for good-looking (“好看”) and beautiful (“美”) totaled up to 205 tokens, accounting for almost 32% of the total number of tokens. Other tokens of “漂亮” (‘pretty’), “可爱” (‘cute’) and “耐看” (‘enduring in appearance’) as well as multiple single frequency tokens such as “美丽” (‘beautiful’) and “美妙” (‘wonderful’, ‘beautiful’) similarly suggested users' perception to focus on positive aesthetic appeal.

Focus on aesthetics on a social media platform can be expected: While social media platforms, including this study's *Xiaohongshu*, create a space for discourse in text-format, with post captions and comment sections, the other dominant part is visual sharing through photos and videos. In addition, specifically *Xiaohongshu* brands itself as “young people's life-style platform” in their introduction page, thus encouraging more aesthetic showing-life type

of content. Comparing to commercial platforms such as Taobao and Amazon, which are more used for buying and reviewing products, Xiaohongshu does not come with the same expectations of having bought or having experienced the product, giving way for purely aesthetic evaluations.

Dominance of positive aesthetic tokens, rather than for example stressing durability or practicality, showcases the importance put on design choices and whether or not they fit the desirable aesthetics – this study’s dataset suggests the products from these two Finnish design brands are for most part conforming to these desirable aesthetics. It would be interesting to analyse further which qualities are grouped together with “good looks”, a perspective outside of this study’s analysis.

While frequency wise the aesthetic qualities were dominant in this dataset, other interesting themes arose with fewer frequency tokens, namely related to suitability, social worth, country-of-origin affect, simplicity and associations with nature.

#### *Suitability and Social worth*

Besides outward appearance, products suitability for different occasions was discussed, both in relation to functional suitability, as well as in relation to social worth in gift-giving.

Evaluations on functional suitability commented on product’s suitable size and volume for different foods and drinks: For example, one commentor compared between different sizes of Arabia 24h series, stating how some sizes were good for soup, while others fit salad. As a large portion of products in this dataset included different types of tableware, such as bowls or cups, it was expected for users to evaluate their functionality in usage with foods and beverages. Functionality also showed in other tokens as well, as some products were described to be easy-to-use (“好用”, n: 6), practical in use (“实用”, n: 5) or durable (“耐用”, n: 3). This study’s dataset, while not dominantly, aligns with the functionality aspect often tied to ‘Nordic style’ (Shi, 2024).

In addition to functional suitability, multiple comments pointed out how these products were suitable to give as a gift such as is in the comment “适合作为礼物相送” (‘suitable as a gift’). Gifts are things we might give to people we care about, or for special occasions such as for birthdays. Thus evaluating these product as suitable to give as a gift implies the product has additional worth.

Different products were also deemed to have additional social worth with other words such as “经典” (‘classic’), “值得入手/收/.....” (‘worth collecting/having/...’) as well as when comparing them to “art”. These word-choices suggest that in users’ perceptions these products were not limited to daily products, but rather seen as something with higher social worth.

Personal value was also reflected in one more culturally-tied token of “我的白月光”

(Literally meaning my “my white moon light”, implying a thing is cherished).

The opposite perceptions on social worth also occurred in this dataset: Some thought these products were “just normal cups” (“普通杯子”), overly hyped by people (“被国内炒上天”), or likened them to free gifts given when purchasing health supplements from supermarket (“会以为是大卖场里，买什么保健品赠送的茶杯礼品”). The last example is from a person not previously familiar with the brand but was introduced to it through a gift from a friend: This brings up the questions of how much of these perceptions are affected by interest or knowledge towards the brand and its’ products, as well as the brand’s name and reputation— a perspective beyond this study’s scope.

Last, interestingly in a few comments, products were also tied to specific cuisines, namely Chinese versus western cuisine: two products (Arabia 24h series, and Arabia Ruija mug) were deemed suitable for Chinese cuisine with the comments “适合摆放中餐” (‘suitable for setting up with Chinese cuisine’) and “适合搭配中式早点” (‘Suitable for pairing with Chinese breakfast’), while another product (Arabia Paratiisi series) was seen as more suitable for western cuisine (“白人饭”). When comparing these three product series, Arabia 24h series (Tuokio) and Arabia Ruija are comparatively simple in design: 24h series has a repeated pattern of petal-like shaped dots, and Ruija uses muted brown and green colours in its plant-imitating patterns. Paratiisi on the other hand, while also offers a black-and-white version, has more intricate pattern covering the product.

While the comment for 24h series didn’t include other evaluative tokens, the one for Arabia Ruija also commented on the product’s “retro feel”. Furthermore, as the product in question is a mug, it is reasonable to assume the suitability doesn’t relate to its’ functional suitability but rather aesthetic one, and more specifically to the design not being too ‘captivating’, as the user further wrote “不会抢了食物的风头” (‘It won’t steal the spotlight from the food’). The comment on suitability with western cuisine also evaluated the products’ “good looks”, thus seemingly linking the suitability evaluation to the aesthetic qualities of the product.

While a data portion of three evaluative comments is not enough to make generalizations, these findings suggest the aesthetics of a product to have an affect on its' suitability for certain cuisines, and whether or not a foreign desing product meets or disagrees with these criteria – an interesting pattern for further investigation.

*Country-of-origin and country reputation in craftsmanship and quality products*

Good or an okay feel (“质感”), craftsmanship (“工艺”) as well as exquisitess (“精致”) of a product were also brought up by multiple comments. Positive comments towards these were more common, and when paired with comments generally praising the brand for its craftsmanship in comments such as “世界第一玻璃器皿” (‘The number one glassware’), and “来自芬兰FI的 iittala 做玻璃是有一手的” (‘Iittala from Finland, skilled at working glass’), this dataset showcases a positive perception towards Finnish design quality.

Negative perceptions also existed, with one commentor comparing the products to mere industrial porcelain (“工业瓷而已”), and a few others commenting on these products not meeting their expectations in terms of how exquisite or good-looking they were: “没有想象中那么精致” and “到手觉得没有图片好看”. One commentor even compared these products to those from England and Germany, stating how the quality didn't meet these ‘standards’: “品质不如德瓷、英瓷”. The last one especially directly links the value and *Country-of-Origin effect* together in this dataset.

Both Pappu et al. (2007) and Balabanis and Diamantopoulos (2004) found the effects of COO to vary between products and countries. In this study the product category is design products, and more specifically tableware and decorative ornaments. The comment comparing the products quality to that of two other countries suggests this one user's perception of Finland as a country of inferior quality in design products, and more specifically reflects where Finland stands against other countries in this respect. Comparing to other comment praising glassware as beign “number one” or highlighting “high skills in glassmaking”, this dataset had both perceptions for and against Finland as a country of good-quality design products.

Furthermore, as China also has its own long history with porcelain production tradition (Hansen, 2000), it raises the question of, in Chinese users' context, whether and how strongly home-country porcelain traditions influence evaluations of foreign ceramics (in this case

Finnish ceramics), as well as where Finland stands against other foreign countries in this product category – questions beyond the scope of the current study.

*Simplicity and associations with nature and purity*

Lastly, with multiple tokens only occurring once in this dataset, they might not reveal as much on their own, but when combined some common themes arose. Out of these themes in particular minimalism and nature as well as purity have been linked to other Nordic countries and ‘Nordic design’ perceptions in general (Shi, 2024; Lerøy Sataøen, 2021; Hiltunen, 2018).

“简单” (‘simple’) while occurring only five times, was among the three most popular tokens in *Composition* group. Similar themes of simplicity also appeared with the token 简洁 (‘concise’ or ‘pithy’, n: 3) as well as in the single use tokens of “低调” (‘low-key’ or ‘subdued’), “质朴” (‘simple and unadorned’) and “朴素” (‘plain and simple’). In total this dataset thus had 11 occurrences of evaluations on simplicity. Simplicity, and perhaps more specifically minimalism, is a theme often associated with the ‘Nordic design’ (Shi, 2024), which this study’s findings suggest to be associated with these Finnish design brands as well.

It should be noted, opposite evaluations also occurred in the data, with comments such as “- - 最不喜欢硕果系列 太闹了” (‘- -I dislike the ‘Paratiisi’ the most, it’s too noisy\*’), or “硕果系列我买的黑白的，其余我觉得太花了就没买” (‘Bought the black-and-white version of the ‘Paratiisi’ series, other colours are too trippy/noisy\*’) as examples for negative evaluations. This dataset also had evaluations on “richness” of the design in a positive tone, such as in the comment: “Pomona 系列带着缤纷的色彩、浓郁的风味 - -” (‘Pomona series exudes vibrant colours, rich flavors - -’). While simplicity is more prevalent in comparison with frequency counts, these differing evaluations showcase some perceptions to be varied from the expected “simplicity” association.

While not as prevalent compared to other themes, the findings of this study also included evaluations related to pureness and nature: “设计师透过一条收紧略为暗淡的蓝色来代表湖泊，清新而平静” (‘the designer uses a slightly darker blue hue to represent lake, fresh and tranquil’), “太清透了” (‘so clear - -’), and “Iittala 的玻璃，像极了芬兰的湖泊与天空，空灵，不带一丝污染” (‘Iittala’s glass resembles Finland’s lakes and skies, free and natural, free from any pollution’). While only present in a handful of comments in this dataset, these evaluations align closely with Nordic countries promoted imagery of nature, as well as purity

(Lerøy Sataøen, 2021); While Lerøy Sataøen's (2021) study links purity and cleanliness to food specifically, in this dataset it is a theme found in relation to design products.

### 5.3 Reaction versus Composition and Valuation

*Reaction* was overwhelmingly the most prevalent thematic group in this study's dataset, accounting for over half of the collected tokens. Martin and White's (2005) different groups for *Appreciation* focus on different perspectives of appreciation towards (here) the products: *Reaction* focuses on the product capturing the interest of a person as well as its' appeal to a person; *Composition* focuses on components making up the product as well as relationship between these components; *Valuation* focuses on if the product merits recognition or if it is judged to be of certain worth.

*Reaction* as the most prevalent thematic group indicates perceptions towards Finnish design by Chinese users to be focused on evoked interest and appeal, or lack of either, and furthermore the outward aesthetics of a product. These findings correlate with Wang and Zhang's study (2022), where the units realizing *Reaction* were most frequent for both Chinese and English online consumer reviews, and units realizing *Valuation* were least employed.

#### *Theoretical framework against this study's dataset*

Lastly, this study utilized Martin and White's (2005) *Appraisal theory* and its' subcategory of *Appreciation* as the main guide for analysis. While suitable with many cases of this data, multiple instances of ambiguity arose during analysis process, mainly with concepts of quality and the differences between *Affect* (under attitude) and *Reaction* (under appreciation).

First, quality is a part of the reason why a product "hangs together" suggesting it to belong to the *Composition* group. However, quality also carries evaluations on the worthiness of a product, suggesting it to be suitable for *Valuation* as well. To solve this and similar ambiguous cases, such as with "easy to use" token, author of this study made decisions based on contexts of Chinese language and social media product evaluations, as well as against other tokens. It is worth noting, with the case of "好用", translated as 'easy to use', this study's decision varies from other research papers' codings, as Wang and Zhang (2022), code the token "easy to use" into *Composition*.

Second, in Martin and White's (2005) theoretical framework *Affect* is related to positive and negative feelings of happiness or unhappiness, satisfaction or dissatisfaction et cetera, with

examples such as “I feel happy” or “He was interested”, focusing on conscious participant. Comparing to this, *Reaction* within the *Appreciation* domain is focused on evaluations towards a thing. Martin and White (2005) acknowledge boundary issues with “hybrid realisations” in different invoked attitudes, for example with words “guilty”, “resentful” and “disgust/revolt”. In this study, as discussed in Chapter 4, a handful of tokens, while closely related *Affect*, were in the context of evaluation towards products on Xiaohongshu, instead treated as *Appreciation* tokens.

Third, in this study “适合” (‘suitable’) token was divided between the groups *Composition* and *Valuation*; in the study’s context, Chinese users evaluated products through contextual appropriateness, through both functionality (*Composition*) and social worth (*Valuation*), not cleanly fitting the framework’s categorical boundaries.

These ambiguities suggest that while Martin & White's categories are broadly applicable, the boundaries between them are not always clear-cut in product evaluation contexts — a finding consistent with Hommerberg and Don (2015), as well as Su (2016).

#### **5.4 Perceptions towards Finnish, and further Nordic, design**

While accounting for the discussions above, the current study’s dataset suggests, due to the dominance of *Reaction* tokens, Chinese users’ perceptions of Finnish design focus primarily on aesthetic qualities, and in-use are expressed with specific lexical units of “好看” (‘good-looking’), “美” (‘beautiful’).

Other popular tokens from *Composition* and *Valuation* groups also include “适合” (‘suitability’), “精致” (‘exquisiteness’) as well “经典” (‘classic’) and “值得” (‘worthiness’ to have/collect), suggesting the perceptions to also focus on functionality, skillful craftsmanship and social worth to an extent.

While high frequency patterns of “好看” and “美” suggest dominant perceptions to be towards aesthetics, other lower frequency themes also revealed both expected perceptions of ‘Nordic design’ with minimalism, purity and associations with nature, but also unexpected ones related to suitability for gift-giving or for Chinese versus western cuisines.

In Chapter 2 concepts of ‘Nordic’ and ‘Scandinavia’ were discussed as everchanging terminologies differing in contexts, as well as including Finnish design in the broader concept of ‘Nordic design’. While this study’s findings are related to Finnish design products,

specifically those of Iittala and Arabia, themes often associated with ‘Nordic design’ also occurred, suggesting for the perceptions towards Finnish design to be at least partly related to those associated with ‘Nordic region’ as a whole.

In addition to aforementioned, the perceptions towards Finnish design in this study also included polarity: Overall in all three thematic groups, positive tokens were most prevalent, accounting for well over half of tokens in each group. When analysing the text-level polarity, similarly positive perceptions were dominant, accounting for around 80% of the total amount. Both perspectives indicate a highly favourable perceptions towards Finnish design, aligning with Hiltunen (2018) study in this respect.

Overwhelming positive perception does not however exclude the negative or mixed perceptions. In negative perceptions, the most popular themes also centered around aesthetics, specifically critiquing the looks with “不好看” (‘not good-looking), “难看” (‘unpleasant to look at’) and “丑” (‘ugly’), as well as commenting on size or “heaviness” (“重”) of the product. In terms of *Valuation*, criticism focused on comparing products to being “ordinary”. Especially the aesthetic portion also argues for the importance on outwards appearance in users’ perceptions towards Finnish design products.

The mixed perceptions accounted for over 10% of the total amount. Common themes in these mixed evaluations were comparisons between products, comparing old and new series, as well as expressing a shift in opinion. Earlier discussed example of one user liking products to mere free gifts from supermarket, showed the user to have quite negative perception, and this comment was counted as such. However, later in the comment section same user’s opinion changed towards a more positive one with stating in another comment: “越用越好看的感觉” (‘it looks better the more you use it’). These findings, while not answering how perceptions have changed over a period of time, instead showcase a shift in opinion is present.

While this study’s findings showed users having a more favourable perception towards the design products, the possibility of intentional curating needs to be taken into account: On Xiaohongshu the original post creator has the possibility to delete comments under their post, which creates the possibility that some more negative perceptions were deleted before data collection of this study. Particularly, as a portion of this study’s data came from users who showed to be collectors or otherwise clearly showed interest towards and favouring of these two brands. This can, in part, explain the overwhelming dominance of positive perceptions,

but doesn't challenge the whole dataset, as some post creators also showed indifference or criticism towards these products, thus more unlikely curating the negative comments in their posts.

Related to this, the conflict of 'authenticity' of these evaluations should also be discussed: While both Iittala and Arabia products vary in prices, owning a more expensive product, or a design product, can be seen as a statement of 'worth' for some. Consequently, this can encourage more 'performative' appreciation. In other words, one might be praising the product because of the 'worth' owning it brings to the person, rather than because the appreciation is genuine. Similarly to what was discussed above, there is a definite possibility of 'performative' appreciation within the dataset of this study, however it isn't likely to be all encompassing, as not all users owned or showed desire to own these products.

## **5.5 Practical implications**

These findings suggest that brands marketing Finnish design products to Chinese consumers should emphasise aesthetic appeal, and cultural associations, while keeping in mind the functional aspect. While some associations with 'Nordic design' also were linked to these two brand's products, they were not as prevalent as aesthetic qualities.

## **5.6 Limitations**

Several limitations of this study should be acknowledged. First, the sample of 64 posts and 643 tokens, while appropriate for bachelor's level dissertation, cannot be generalized to the larger population, but rather suggests common themes and offers insight to what perceptions might be. Several interesting perceptions came up in analysis but due to low frequency and small data size, these can only be deemed as few user instances, and not common perceptions.

Second, the author's own position as Chinese language major student, but not native speaker, possibly affected the scope of text extraction as well as the depth of analysis and understanding of data. Although different resources and teacher guidance helped in multiple of ambiguous instances, the non-native perception introduces an additional barrier when conducting this type of research. Understanding and application of analytical categories was thus dependent on the author's previous life experience and understanding of Chinese language as a student.

Third, while the chosen brands can be seen as representatives of Finnish design, the dataset is still limited to only two brands and would benefit from including and comparing between

multiple other brands as well. In addition, while Xiaohongshu is a popular Chinese language platform and provides data of everyday users perceptions, this study's dataset cannot make generalizations of the general publics' perceptions or comment on shifting perceptions over time.

Despite these limitations, the findings contribute to the understanding of prevailing perceptions towards Finnish design, as well as to understanding Chinese language use with specific lexical examples in the context of Finnish design, overall providing a foundation for future investigations.

## 6 Conclusion

### 6.1 Summary of the study

This study investigated how Chinese users on social media platform Xiaohongshu evaluated products from two Finnish design brands Iittala and Arabia, and how these evaluations showed different perceptions towards Finnish design. Data was collected manually with 64 posts and 643 tokens of *Appreciation*, and was analysed using Martin and White's (2005) *Appraisal theory*.

This study found that Chinese users on Xiaohongshu evaluate Iittala and Arabia products using predominantly positive evaluative language, with aesthetic-related tokens (such as “好看” meaning ‘good-looking’, and “美” meaning ‘beautiful’) being the most frequent. The data was coded into three *Appreciation* categories, with *Reaction* accounting for the largest share of tokens.

### 6.2 Answering the Research questions

In response to RQ1, aesthetic vocabularies were dominant in this study's dataset, with also dominance in positive polarity. “好看” (‘good-looking’) alone accounted for the largest share of all tokens, with 146 occurrences; compared to “美” (‘beautiful’) as the second in frequency accounted for 59 occurrences.

In response to RQ2, the most prevalent thematic group within this dataset was *Reaction* group, indicating users' focus to lean more heavily on products impact and appeal over formal structure (*Composition*) or judged worthiness (*Valuation*).

In response to RQ3, based on this study's data, perception towards Finnish design seem to be largely positive, with some mixed and negative perceptions as well. Negative perceptions focused on aesthetics as well as physical properties in terms of heaviness and size, while mixed perceptions focused on comparisons between products and products lines, as well as the shift in opinion.

### 6.3 Contributions and Implications

This study contributes to the field in two ways. First, it provides quantitative user-based lexical data of evaluative language in the context of design. Second, it sheds light on prevalent perceptions Chinese users have on Finnish design. In practice, this study's findings suggests

Finnish brands venturing into Chinese markets could benefit from focusing more on aesthetics and outwards appearance, as well as modifying the marketing language accordingly.

#### **6.4 Directions for future research**

Limitations discussed in Chapters 3 and 5 point to some possible directions for future research, such as documenting shifts in perceptions over time, which would help better understand what aspects affect these perceptions the most, as well as what can be expected in the future. Second, incorporating multiple other brands of differing product lines in analysis, as well as comparing between them, would deepen the understanding of perceptions in different areas of design. Lastly, a comparative analysis against brands' own marketing language would offer insight on how closely consumer perceptions align with brand positioning.

#### **6.5 Closing reflection**

Chinese users perceptions might focus on impact and appeal of Finnish design products, but also comment on how forms, patterns, colour and feel interact with each other, as well as worth and utility of these products in differing contexts. In particular, the gift-giving and comparisons between cuisines introduces interesting bases for future research. While dominance of positive evaluations suggests for favourable perceptions, negative perceptions shed light on what is deemed as lacking.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Complete list of tokens

Categorized into thematic groups and by polarity. The amount of tokens in total marked inside brackets ().

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#### *Reaction (377)*

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#### Positive (344)

- 好看 (Good-looking): 146
- 美 (Beautiful): 59
- 可爱 (Cute) : 19
- 漂亮 (Pretty): 17
- 耐看 (Worth a second look/enduring in appearance): 14
- 还行/不错/还好/挺好 (Okay/Not bad/Quite good): 19
- 好 (Good) : 5
- 惊艳 (Astonishing): 3
- 好萌/呆萌 (Endearingly silly, Cute) : 3
- 出彩(Brilliant; Dazzling) : 2
- 喜庆 (Festive): 2
- 不难看 (Not unpleasant to look at): 2
- 颜值在线/抗打 (Attractiveness index on point/uncomparable) : 2
- 有味道 (Has a "taste"/character) : 2
- 陪伴/伙伴 (Companion) : 2
- 治愈 (Healing) : 2

#### Tokens occurring once:

- 美好 (Fine/glorious)
- 美妙 (Wonderful; Beautiful)
- 精妙的美感 (Exquisite feel/sense of beauty)
- 强迫性的美感 (Obsessive feel/sense of beauty)
- 美丽 (Beautiful)
- (保留着) 自然美 (Upholds/Preserves the natural beauty)

- 第二眼美女 (Beauty with the second look)
- 乖 (Well-behaved / cute \*with an affectionate connotation)
- 乖惨 (“super” Cute\* with affectionate connotation + intensifier)
- 阳光的气息 (Sunny atmosphere)
- 很夏天 (Summery)
- 红红火火快快乐乐的氛围\* (Lively and joyful atmosphere)
- 配套就很有氛围感 (Atmospheric as a set)
- 令人愉悦的怀旧气息 (Strong/Pleasant nostalgic atmosphere)
- 注入一丝童话般的诗意 (Touch of fairy-tale poetry)
- 握在掌心时·我仿佛触摸到了旧时光的温柔\* (When held, feeling as if touched the gentleness of old times) ( \*vintage products )
- 上头(Captivating)
- 有趣 (Interesting)
- 击中了我的心 (Captivated me)
- 迷人 (Enchanting)
- 低调地感染着每一个欣赏它的人 (Quietly influencing those who appreciate it)
- 让人爱不释手 (Makes one unable to put down)
- 抓住了我的心 (Capture my heart)
- 惊喜 (Pleasantly surprising)
- 空灵(Ethereal)
- 绝 (Superb)
- ( 配色 ) 一绝 (Unparalleled)
- 清新 (Fresh/pure)
- 平静 (Tranquil)
- 显得更小清新 (Appears even fresher)
- 更胜一筹 (Superior)
- 看不够 (Never tiring to the eyes)
- 惊为天人 (Breathtaking)
- (红格纹的)复古感 (Vintage feel)
- 令人垂涎的组合 (Mouthwatering combination)
- 将怀旧餐具的魅力带入现代餐桌 (Bringing the charm of nostalgic tableware to the modern table)
- 幸福感 (Sense/feel of happiness)
- 顺眼 (Pleasant to the eye)
- 让日常瞬间变得柔软 (Makes daily moments soft)

- 带着食物都变得有食欲了 (Makes food look appetizing)
- 生活被点亮了 (Brightens the life)
- 平凡日子瞬间变精致 (Making ordinary days exquisite)
- 突然发现这个碗吃甜品很哇塞嘛 (Bowl is so "wow" for eating desserts)
- 让人在喝水的同时也能感受到魔法森林的奇遇故事 (Let people experience the tales of magical forest adventures while drinking water)
- 永远的爱 /yyda (Eternal love)

### Negative (28)

- 不好看 (Not good-looking): 7
- 难看 (Unpleasant to look at): 3
- 丑 (Ugly): 3
- 没有(图片)好看\* (Not as good-looking as in the picture) : 2
- 毫无美感/没有啥美感 (No sense/feel of beauty) : 2
- 不惊艳 (Not astonishing): 2
- 降低食欲 (Reducing appetite) : 2

### Tokens occurring once

- 没一个好看 (Not one looks good)
- 真的不可 (Unacceptable)
- 看着都难受 (Not pleasant to look at/Can't bear to look at)
- 不算多出众的外表设计 (Not particularly outstanding in appearance)
- 看腻 (Tired of looking at it)
- (蓝色) 一般 (Ordinary; Mediocre)
- 不如紫拼绿好看\* (Not as good-looking as the purple with green)

### Neutral (5)

- 无感 (Unremarkable; No feeling towards): 4
- 像牙齿的 x 光片\* (Like dental x-ray): 1

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*Composition (in total: 143)*

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### Positive (110)

- 适合/合适 (Suitable for) : 16

- 精致 (Exquisite) : 8
- 简单 (Simple): 5
- 质感好 (Texture/Feel is good): 4
- 质感不错/还可以 (Okay/Not bad feel/texture) : 3
- 通透 (Clear/penetrating) : 3
- 细腻 (Fine/delicate) : 3
- 温润 (Smooth; Gentle) : 3
- 简洁 (Minimalist; Uncluttered) : 3
- 有质感 (Has a texture/feel) : 2
- 搭 (好) (Matching well/arranged well) : 2
- 协调 (Harmonious; Balanced) : 2
- 温柔 (Gentle, soft; Tactile feel) : 2
- 光滑 (Smooth; glossy) : 2

#### Tokens occurring once

- 浓 (Rich; Strong)
- 丰富 (Rich; Abundant)
- 自然的形态 (Natural form)
- 清透 (Clear and see-through)
- 像幅油画 (Like an oil painting)
- “敦实”的质感 (Solid feel)
- 手感很不错 (Not bad hand-feel)
- 釉质好 (Good glaze)
- 光亮(釉下彩) (Luminous; Bright)
- 瓷还可以 (Porcelain is okay)
- 优质的陶瓷 (High-quality ceramic)
- 体现了无数种不同的玻璃制作工艺 (Embodies countless different glassmaking techniques)
- 不带一丝污染 (Not a trace of pollution)
- 活灵活现 (Vivid; Lifelike) ( \*about a glass bird )
- 水灵灵 (Alive; Vibrant) ( \* about a glass bird )
- 盈盈一握 (Dainty)
- 胖嘟嘟 (Plump; Chubby) (\*about a glass bird)
- 圆润 (Smooth and round)
- 润滑 (Smooth)
- 灵动 (Lively; Dynamic)

- 生命力 (Vitality; Liveliness)
- 工艺真太牛了 (Craftmanship is awesome)
- 质感这么震撼 (Texture is stunning)
- 饱满 (Plump; Full)
- 流畅精妙的线条 (Smooth and exquisite lines)
- 厚重无暇的玻璃质感 (Thick and heavy, flawless, glass feel/texture)
- 流动的感觉 (Flowy/fluid feel)
- 作工艺非常厉害 (Impressive craftmanship)
- 精美的工艺 (Exquisite craftmanship)
- 工艺最复杂 (Complex craftmanship)
- 线条结构和质感\* (Feel of line and structure)
- (设计的点就不是插满), 通透干净 ((Point of design is not to be filled (with sth, here flowers), clear and clean (presentation desirable))
- 不大不小刚好 (Not too big or small, just right)
- 温润如新的釉水 (Gentle/smooth, like new, glaze)
- 低调 (Understated)
- 质朴 (Simple and unadorned)
- (仍保持) 良好釉水的状态 (Maintain good glaze condition)
- 沉静内敛的棕黑条纹 (Calm and understated brown-black stripes)
- 朴素 (Plain, simple)
- 像点缀的闪烁的红宝石和蓝宝石 (Like dotted shimmering rubies and sapphires)
- 缤纷的色彩 (Vibrant colours)
- 浓郁的风格 (Rich style)
- 优雅 (Elegant)
- 鲜艳 (Vibrant; vivid)
- 大胆 (Bold)
- 细致 (Detailed; Meticulous)
- 生动活泼 (Vivid; Lively)
- (手把) 小小弯弯的 (The handle is small and curved\* affectionate connotation)
- 柔和感 (Soft/gentle feel)
- 深浅适中 (Depth is just right)
- 一汪湖水 (A pool of lake water) (\*about colour)
- \*厚 (Thick)

Negative (32)

- 重 (Heavy) : 4
- 小 (Small) : 3
- 大 (Big) : 2
- 质感不好/差 (Not good/poor texture/feel) : 2
- 花 (Trippy) : 2
- \*厚 (Thick) : 2

#### Tokens occurring once

- 笨重 (Bulky and heavy)
- 不精巧 (Not exquisite)
- 没有想象中那么精致 (Not as exquisite as imagined)
- 平庸 (Mediocre; Commonplace)
- 闹 (Noisy)
- 杂乱 (Disorderly)
- 手感好差 (Bad hand feel)
- 一股“像素不够”的模糊感 (Blurry "not enough pixels" feel)
- 品相不是很好 (Condition not very good)
- 颜色是偏暗 偏灰 (Colour somewhat dark, and grey)
- 又黄又黑 (Both yellow and black)
- 凌乱而繁琐 (Messy and overcomplicated)
- 灰不拉几 (Unattractive grey)
- 盛汤不适合 (Not suitable for soup) (\*reference to size)
- 花里胡哨\* (Flashy)
- 质感一般 (Texture/feel is so-so)
- 薄 (Thin)

#### Neutral (1)

- (放在一起) 颇有考眼力的感觉 (Testing one's eyesight/ eye-catching when showcased together) : 1

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*Valuation (in total: 123)*

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#### Positive (112)

- 经典 (Classic); 17

- 适合/合适/\* (Suitable for) : 16
- 值得入手/收/拥有/收藏 (Worth getting/collecting/having): 9
- 好用 (Easy to use) : 6
- 实用 (Practical in use) : 5
- 艺术 (Art) : 5
- 复古 (Retro) : 5
- 质量好 (Good quality) : 4
- 耐用 (Durable): 3
- (有) 设计感 (Has a sense of design) : 2
- 特色/特别 (Distinctive/special) : 3
- 仪式感 (Sense of ritual/ceremony) : 3
- (我的) 白月光 (My moonlight\* implying sth is cherished) : 2
- 上相 (Photogenic) : 2
- 好清洗/清洗方便 (Easy to clean) : 2
- 高级 (High-quality; premium) : 2

#### Tokens occurring once

- 不娇气\* (Not delicate or fragile)
- 不错\* (Not bad) ( \*in response to asking about 质量, quality )
- 保值 (Maintains value)
- 自然气韵 (Natural spirit)
- 成为芬兰设计的代表 (Representative of Finnish design)
- 设计独特 (Unique design)
- 世界第一 ( 玻璃器皿 ) (World number one (in glassware)
- 天壤之别 (World of difference) ( \*judgement of worth and quality → superiority and worth )
- 超越工艺品的艺术品般的存在 (Work of art beyond craftsmanship)
- 做玻璃是有一手的 (Known for their craft in glassmaking) (\*Finnish design/brand reputation)
- 福气 (Good luck) ( \*about a red glass bird )
- 不只是装饰·更是一份会随着光线和季节与你对话的美好心情 (Not just decoration, but a beautiful mood which converses with you as the light and seasons change)
- 不是单纯意义的花瓶 (Not a mere vase)
- 能一直在家里活着的器物 (An object that can keep "living")
- 又不仅仅是一个花瓶·与其说是一个放花的容器, 倒不如说花朵、阳光和水是它的陪衬 (Not just a vase, as flowers, sunlight and water act as complimenting background)
- 它从未成为“爆款”·但也从未退出过历史舞台 (Never was a "hit", but also hasn't left the "historical stage")

- 这期间无数时尚潮流转瞬即逝，但它却一如从前最初的样子 (countless fashion trends flash by in an instant, but this has remained the same as before)
- 高大上 (High-end)
- 成功的一大半 (Significant portion of success)
- 名不虚传 (Lives up to its reputation)
- 情绪价值拉满 (Maxed out emotional value)
- 顶尖 (Top-tier)
- 属于生活瓷器里质量设计具佳的品牌 (A brand with excellent quality design in ceramic products)
- 纪念意义 (Sentimental value)
- 好物 (Good product)
- 百搭 (Versatile)

### Negative (11)

- 普通 (Ordinary; common) : 2
- 工业瓷而已 (Merely industrial porcelain): 1
- 不值得 (Not worth it) : 1
- 会以为是大卖场里，买什么保健品赠送的茶杯礼品 (Would think it's a tea cup, given as a gift when buying health supplements at a supermarket, \*comparing it to a freebie gift) : 1
- 没有一点这个价位该有的瓷器质感 (There is no porcelain texture or feel this price point (should have)) : 1
- 被国内炒上天 (Hyped up to the skies (in China)) : 1
- 不高级 (Not premium) : 1
- 不好用 (Not easy to use) : 1
- 只适合这种类型的花 (Only suitable for this one type of flower) : 1
- 品质不如德瓷、英瓷 (Quality is not as good as German or English porcelain) : 1

### Neutral (0)

## Appendix 2: AI-use Declaration



### Mandatory AI Use Declaration

BA Dissertation Proseminar (CHIN0012) — Department of Chinese, University of Turku

Name: Susanna Kinnunen Student ID: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Dissertation title: 'My White Moonlight' or 'Merely Industrial Porcelain': Chinese users' perceptions towards Finnish design products on Xiaohongshu through the use of Appreciation resources Date: 17.5.2026

#### 1. Which of the following did you use AI for? (Tick all that apply.)

- Brainstorming or narrowing my topic / research question
- Finding or summarising sources, or replacing reading I did not do
- Drafting paragraphs, sentences, or transitions that appear in the final text
- Translating my own writing between languages (Chinese / English / Finnish)
- Paraphrasing or rewriting passages from sources
- Generating or coding data, examples, tables, or quotations
- Proofreading grammar, spelling, and punctuation only
- Structuring or restructuring chapters / the argument
- Other (specify below)

#### 2. List every AI tool you used (ChatGPT, Claude, DeepSeek, Gemini, Grammarly, Quillbot, DeepL Write, humanisers, etc.):

DeepSeek, Google Gemini

#### 3. Approximately what percentage of the final text was produced with AI assistance in any form (drafted, rewritten, translated, or substantially edited)?

- 0%  1–10%  11–25%  26–50%  51–75%  more than 75%

#### 4. Did you use an AI humaniser, paraphraser, or any tool designed to make AI text sound human or evade detection (e.g. Undetectable AI, StealthGPT, Quillbot humanise, manually inserting errors)?

- Yes  No If yes, which tool and for which sections: \_\_\_\_\_

#### 5. Can you, without AI, explain every argument, source, and analytical decision in your dissertation if I ask you in the viva?

- Yes, all of it  Most of it  Some parts I would need to revisit

#### 6. Open response. Describe honestly how AI shaped your dissertation — what it helped you understand, where you relied on it more than you should have, and what in the final text is most clearly your own thinking. Vague answers ("only grammar") tell me nothing; specific answers build trust.

I used python code (which I got help with from a friend) to organize text data into columns on Excel: the code reorganized the data so that username, date and comment/post text would be on separate columns, which was then manually rechecked.

The original code struggled with some versions of the data text, for example as a result not always separating date from username. I used AI (Deepseek) to change the python code to work with different formats of datatext (e.g. when the text was missing the year in the date section, or had some additional information of location etc, which caused problems with the original version of the code)

When asking for synonyms in academic English, translations from Finnish to English, or translations for words in Chinese, besides dictionaries, I also Googled them and at times checked the Chatbot (Gemini) suggestions.

**Declaration.** I confirm that the above is a complete and honest account of my AI use, and that the arguments, analysis, and critical engagement in my dissertation are my own work.

Signature:  Date: 17.5.2026