

Stereotypes and Gender Controversies in Cycling: A Study of the “Cycling Yuan” Phenomenon in the Beijing Sonic Cycling Team

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Abstract:

Recently, the phenomenon of “Cycling Yuan” (qixing yuan) has gained widespread attention and debate across social media. This label typically focuses on the appearance and self-presentation of female cyclists. Most existing discussions remain confined to online spaces, with limited empirical research into the real motivations, behaviors, and experiences of these women. This study takes the Beijing Sonic Cycling Team as its research case and adopts a mixed-methods approach that combines field observation, in-depth interviews, and questionnaire surveys. The goal is to examine the authenticity and formation mechanisms of the Cycling Yuan phenomenon and determine whether it reflects the genuine behavior of female cyclists or is largely driven by gender stereotypes and cultural bias. The findings show that, although negative public perceptions of female cyclists are common online, women who actually participate in cycling are motivated by goals such as improving health, shaping their bodies, and challenging themselves. Furthermore, gender bias on social media directly affects women’s cycling experiences and mental well-being. In addition to exploring how social media reinforces stereotypes about female cyclists, this study also proposes strategies to improve the participation environment for women in cycling, aiming to promote a more inclusive and equitable sports culture.

Keywords: Cycling Yuan; stereotypes; social media; stigmatization; cycling culture

1 Introduction

In recent years, the phenomenon of “Cycling Yuan”

has sparked extensive social attention and public debate. This topic not only touches on the relationship between gender and sports but also reflects society’s

perception of women's roles and the biases that underlie them. On social media, the term "Cycling Yuan" frequently appears, often used to describe female cyclists who pay particular attention to appearance and image management while riding^[1].

The term first became popular on social networking and short-video platforms. With the rise of these platforms, the images of such female cyclists—through photos, videos, and livestreams—have been widely shared and viewed. Across multiple platforms, the typical Cycling Yuan image depicts women in bright, form-fitting cycling outfits, with full makeup, and sometimes wearing designer items or stylish accessories. They often take photos or short videos during their rides and share them online to attract attention and likes. Compared with those who engage in cycling purely as a sport, Cycling Yuan are portrayed as promoting a healthy, refined lifestyle while emphasizing personal image and social influence.

Despite the widespread online discussions, there has been little research into the real motivations or impacts behind this phenomenon. Online debates often rely on isolated cases and subjective impressions, labelling female cyclists as people who care more about appearance than about the sport itself. Such generalizations ignore the diversity and complexity of women's cycling experiences, reinforcing social misunderstandings and biases. As a result, the real needs, motivations, and experiences of female cyclists are often simplified or dismissed in public discussions.

To address this gap, this study aims to explore the authenticity and formation mechanisms of the Cycling Yuan phenomenon using an objective and empirical approach, providing evidence-based insights into the broader social context.

First, the study seeks to verify whether the Cycling Yuan label truly reflects real-world behavior through fieldwork and data analysis. Using the Beijing Sonic Cycling Team as a case study, the research explores several core questions: (1) Are female cyclists in real life significantly influenced by appearance and social expectations? (2) Do their motivations and behaviors align with the online portrayals?

By analyzing these questions, the study aims to clarify whether Cycling Yuan is rooted in actual behaviors or mainly shaped by gender stereotypes and sociocultural bias.

Secondly, this study also examines the disconnection between online narratives and real-life experiences. In today's highly digital environment, social media can easily amplify certain topics and profoundly shape public perception^[2]. However, discussions around Cycling Yuan often simplify the diversity and complexity of female cyclists and sometimes reflect strong prejudice. This gap

between media portrayals and real experiences creates a distorted public understanding. By collecting real-world data and conducting field research, this study aims to correct these misconceptions and provide a more balanced, evidence-based perspective on the issue.

Furthermore, the research also investigates the actual impact of the Cycling Yuan discourse on female cyclists. While cycling is a fun and empowering activity for many women, the stigmatizing label may reduce their willingness to participate and negatively affect their self-perception and mental well-being. If the Cycling Yuan phenomenon is indeed a manifestation of gender bias, exposing its mechanisms may help mitigate these effects.

Social media's role in spreading and reinforcing such labels is also a key focus. In recent years, platforms like Xiaohongshu (REDNOTE) have become central to shaping public opinion about this topic^[3]. Many women who genuinely enjoy cycling face not only real-world gendered stereotypes but also the pressure of online scrutiny. This pressure affects their cycling experience and can have long-term psychological consequences. Through interviews and surveys, this study explores how women perceive these online discourses and how social media shapes public views of female cyclists.

In summary, this research aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the Cycling Yuan phenomenon, revealing how gender stereotypes influence cycling culture and exploring their real impact on women riders. The study seeks to offer a more objective understanding of female cyclists, challenge unfair perceptions, and promote gender equality and women's participation in sports.

By combining survey data, in-depth interviews, and participant observation, this research not only contributes empirical insights to gender and sports studies but also offers practical recommendations for policymakers and cycling organizations. The ultimate goal is to help improve women's participation environments, enhance their sense of inclusion and safety, and foster a fairer, more inclusive cycling culture.

2 Literature Review

In modern society, cycling has become not only a popular form of exercise that represents a healthy lifestyle but also an important means of cultural expression and social interaction. However, when it comes to women's participation in cycling, gender controversies and stereotypes still persist. In recent years, scholars have examined how media representations shape female athletic identities and reinforce gender stereotypes^[4]. These studies provide an essential theoretical foundation for understanding gender controversies within cycling culture.

2.1 Gender Stereotypes and Media Representation

The portrayal of female athletes in the media has long been a central topic in gender studies. Cooky et al. found that women's sports have historically been marginalized in sports news and media coverage, and when covered, women athletes are often represented through gendered stereotypes^[5]. This lack of visibility not only diminishes women's presence in the sports arena but also limits the public recognition of their achievements.

Fink further pointed out that sports media tends to highlight the physical appearance and femininity of female athletes rather than their athletic ability or professional accomplishments^[6]. This type of coverage reinforces gender stereotypes in the public imagination. Similarly, Bruce noted that even though women's participation in sports has increased significantly, the media continues to rely on gendered narratives that reproduce traditional gender roles^[7].

Harrison et al., using linguistic and visual data analysis, demonstrated that gender bias in sports reporting is not a reflection of women's actual athletic characteristics but rather the product of broader social and media reproduction mechanisms^[8]. Overall, mainstream media continues to present women athletes within restrictive and stereotyped frameworks, which obstructs progress toward gender equality in sports.

2.2 Social Media and the Stigmatization of Women in Sports

With the rapid development of social media, online platforms have become powerful tools for shaping public opinion and constructing collective perceptions. Zhou et al. found that social media plays a critical role in the stigmatization of women's participation in sports^[9]. Users who act as "stigmatizers" label and otherize women athletes through specific symbols, such as clothing, makeup, or behavioral cues, creating negative and gendered narratives.

These online labels not only reinforce existing gender stereotypes but also intensify conflicts between groups through discourse and symbolic opposition^[10]. In the case of the Cycling Yuan phenomenon, social media discourse often simplifies and distorts women's real motivations for participating in cycling, turning their behavior into moralized or aesthetic debates rather than recognizing their athletic engagement.

2.3 The Research Gap on the "Cycling Yuan" Phenomenon

Although the literature on gender and media representa-

tion provides valuable insights, research specifically focusing on the Cycling Yuan phenomenon remains scarce. Most existing studies concentrate on how online discourse shapes public perceptions of female athletes, often through textual and symbolic analysis of gendered bias in media^[11]. However, few of these works are supported by empirical data.

Particularly within the field of cycling, little attention has been given to whether the Cycling Yuan label truly reflects actual behavior or is primarily a projection of gendered assumptions. Existing studies rarely address how online discourses about Cycling Yuan differ from the real experiences of women cyclists. This gap limits our understanding of the phenomenon and hinders the development of strategies to counter its negative effects.

2.4 Research Significance and Direction

Against this background, this study seeks to fill these gaps by combining fieldwork and data analysis to verify the authenticity of the Cycling Yuan label, explore its formation mechanisms, and assess its real-world impacts on women cyclists. By connecting online social media discussions with real-world experiences, the study aims to provide a more balanced and objective perspective, challenge gender stereotypes, and promote gender equality and women's inclusion in sports.

In conclusion, while existing research has made significant progress in examining the relationship between media and gender stereotypes, empirical studies focusing on cycling remain very limited. Research on the Cycling Yuan phenomenon is still in its early stages. This study, therefore, contributes by examining how online discourse and real-life experiences intersect, revealing the expressions and effects of gender bias in cycling culture, and ultimately fostering a fairer and more inclusive cycling environment.

3 Research Methodology

3.1 Fieldwork

Fieldwork is an important qualitative research method widely used in the humanities and social sciences. It involves direct engagement and observation to collect firsthand data and gain in-depth understanding of a specific culture, community, or social phenomenon. The approach emphasizes direct interaction between researchers and participants to ensure authentic and comprehensive insights. Although fieldwork originated in anthropology, its application in China has gradually become localized, integrating unique cultural contexts and practical conditions

to enrich academic inquiry^[12].

In this study, the researcher conducted immersive fieldwork with the Beijing Sonic Cycling Team, primarily through interviews, observations, and participation in daily training and activities (see Figures 1 and 2).

The Beijing Sonic Cycling Team, established in April 2022, is a non-profit youth road cycling club. Its goal is to promote road cycling among parents and young enthusiasts, fostering the development of this sport. The team consists of approximately 60 members divided into three categories: (1)U14 group (ages 14 and below, 10 members); (2)U16 group (ages 14–15, 25 members); (3) Elite group (ages 16 and above, 25 members).

The team is composed primarily of experienced cyclists, including both male and female riders (roughly a 1:3 ratio). This study involved 10 participants from the team (5 women and 5 men) through face-to-face and online interviews, combined with field observation. The research focused especially on female cyclists' behavioral characteristics, motivations, and participation experiences.

During the one-month fieldwork period, the researcher joined the team's rides and training sessions, participated in leisure activities, and engaged in informal discussions. This direct engagement allowed for a deeper understanding of members' attitudes toward the Cycling Yuan phenomenon, their personal cycling experiences, and their views on online discourses. The collected materials provided valuable primary data for both interview analysis and survey interpretation.



Figure 1. Beijing World Expo Cup Finals



Figure 2. Pre-race Strategy Discussion and Briefing

3.2 In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviewing is a common qualitative data collection method. It involves one-on-one, interactive conversations between the interviewer and the respondent to exchange ideas and construct meaning. Through these interviews, researchers can explore participants' motivations, beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions in detail. This method enriches data diversity and helps clarify respondents' genuine thoughts through interactive questioning and dialogue^[13].

For this study, the interview subjects were members of the Beijing Sonic Cycling Team, including both male and female cyclists. After preliminary contact with the team, 10 participants were selected for formal interviews. The interviewees came from different districts of Beijing and represented diverse family backgrounds.

As shown in Table 1, participants were divided into two groups: five female riders (coded F1–F5) and five male riders (coded M1–M5). Each interview lasted between 30 minutes and one hour, averaging about 40 minutes. The interviews were conducted in December 2024, focusing on participants' impressions, experiences, and personal views regarding the Cycling Yuan phenomenon.

Interviews were scheduled at times convenient to the participants to ensure comfort and openness. Before each session, the researcher informed participants of the interview's purpose, duration, and recording procedures, guaranteeing anonymity for all personal information mentioned.

Table 1. Participant Information Summary

Gender	Participant	Age	Length of cycling (year)
Male	1	16	1
	2	15	2
	3	18	1
	4	17	1
	5	20	2
Female	1	15	0.5
	2	17	1
	3	18	2
	4	19	2
	5	20	1

3.3 Questionnaire Survey

A questionnaire survey was also conducted to collect quantitative data and expand the representativeness of the study. Questionnaires allow researchers to efficiently gather large amounts of first-hand information within a short period and remain one of the most commonly used tools for empirical research due to their practicality and accessibility^[14].

Building on the initial field investigation, the questionnaire was designed around the social manifestations of gender stereotypes and controversies in cycling. Respondents included members of the Sonic Cycling Team (both men and women), cycling enthusiasts from social media, and other general cycling participants.

The survey was self-administered and consisted of 16 questions, divided into several sections: (1) Basic demographic information; (2) Perceptions of the Cycling Yuan stereotype; (3) Opinions on promoting female participation in cycling

Among these, 10 were closed-ended and 6 were open-ended. Representative questions included: (1) “Do you think the Cycling Yuan phenomenon has caused negative stigmatization of female cyclists?” (2) “What factors do you think are most important for promoting women’s participation in cycling culture?”

The survey was distributed electronically via WeChat to ensure diversity in sampling. Respondents included Sonic Team members, social media followers, and other cycling enthusiasts. Questionnaires were distributed on November 19 and collected by December 6, yielding 158 responses, of which 150 were valid.

All data were recorded and analyzed to assess public perceptions of the Cycling Yuan phenomenon, participants’ cycling motivations, and their views on gender stereotypes. The findings provided solid quantitative support for the study’s qualitative insights.

3.4 Participant Observation

Participant observation refers to the method in which the researcher enters the natural setting of the study population, simultaneously acting as both participant and observer. The approach requires neutrality, accuracy, and a balance between insider perception and outsider judgment. It involves three major stages: entering the field, collecting data, and analyzing and theorizing the observations^[15].

As an active member of the cycling team, the researcher took part in regular rides and events, including weekend long-distance rides, midweek short-distance sessions, and group gatherings. During these activities, the researcher interacted with members to learn about their backgrounds, experiences, and opinions on the study topic.

Using a mobile phone for field notes, the researcher documented small details, for example, observing that many female cyclists prioritized comfort and safety when choosing equipment rather than appearance alone. After each event, informal conversations were held with participants about their motivations, challenges, and perspectives on the cycling community. These conversations included both female and male riders to obtain a balanced understanding.

Through this sustained engagement, participant observation provided a deeper, context-rich understanding of women’s real experiences and the social dynamics of gender in cycling culture.

4 Research Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Genuine Motivations and Needs: Cycling as a Core Activity

In traditional gender discourse, women’s bodies have often been treated as passive objects—subject to the male gaze, protected rather than empowered, and shaped by

gendered ideals of beauty and social discipline^[16].

Public perceptions of female cyclists often reinforce the negative stereotypes associated with Cycling Yuan. As shown in Figure 3, among 158 general respondents, 66.46% believed that the main characteristics of Cycling Yuan involve showcasing personal style, and 63.92% associated it with active social media sharing. This indicates that many people view female cyclists as being more focused on fashion and social attention than on cycling itself. Only 19.62% identified fitness goals or cycling experience as the primary motivation, suggesting that many assume women cycle mainly for social display rather than sport.

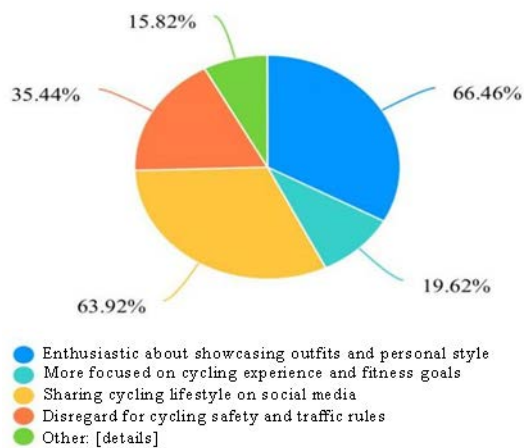


Figure 3. Public Perceptions of the Main Traits of Cycling Yuan

However, the fieldwork findings tell a different story. Compared with online assumptions that Cycling Yuan ride merely for attention or monetization, women who actively participate in cycling tend to emphasize health, body shaping, and self-challenge. They experience tangible physical and emotional growth through cycling—far beyond the notion of “dressing up for photos.”

For example, one participant described: *“When I first joined the team for long-distance rides, I was always worried about not having enough stamina. A few days ago, we did a 100-kilometer loop, and I was really nervous—I thought I wouldn’t make it. But after finishing, I realized nothing is impossible. Cycling helps me release academic stress. During rides, I forget about exams and just enjoy the air and nature. Of course, I feel the bias sometimes—people think women aren’t strong enough for cycling or that we just care about looking pretty. But that’s not true. We have the same passion and ability as men do.”* (F1)

In short, the women who actually cycle focus far more on health, self-discipline, and inner growth than on external validation. Cycling provides them with confidence, resilience, and joy, directly contradicting the narrow online

portrayal of Cycling Yuan as attention-seekers. Their real experiences reveal that women are actively redefining what it means to participate in a traditionally male-dominated sport.

4.2 Attention to Equipment and Image Does Not Equal “Yuanization”

Cycling, as a sport that combines fitness, leisure, and challenge, naturally involves careful attention to equipment. For cyclists, clothing design—especially for women—must balance comfort, protection, and aesthetics^[17]. Professional cycling apparel is not just about fashion; it plays a crucial functional role.

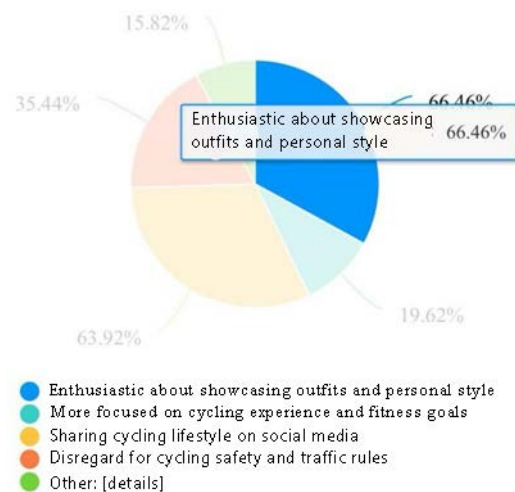


Figure 4. Wearing Tight-Fitting Cycling Apparel to Showcase Personal Style

Yet online, this focus on appearance is often misinterpreted. Women who wear brightly colored or form-fitting outfits are labeled as Cycling Yuan, implying that their intent is to attract attention.

Field interviews revealed that women cyclists are acutely aware of this gendered scrutiny: *“When I ride with my teammates, sometimes men passing by will stare or make comments about our bodies. It’s uncomfortable—they see us as a display instead of athletes. The truth is, tight cycling kits help reduce air resistance. They’re designed for speed and comfort, not for showing off. I don’t want to be left behind just because my clothes aren’t aerodynamic. Cycling apparel is about performance, not vanity.”* (F2)

Indeed, 77% of surveyed female respondents stated that comfort and functionality were their main priorities when choosing cycling gear. Many emphasized that professional gear improves efficiency and reduces discomfort during long rides. On social media, numerous women cyclists post equipment reviews and recommendations focusing on technical performance rather than appearance.

Thus, attention to clothing and image among female cy-

clists should be seen as a rational and practical choice that integrates functionality and self-expression—not as an attempt to attract attention or conform to online stereotypes. In this context, the so-called “feminization” of cycling is not about superficiality but about the professionalization and personalization of the sport experience.

4.3 Respecting Cycling as a Serious Sport

Cycling, as both a transportation and fitness activity, offers physical training, mental relaxation, and social engagement^[18]. Its growing popularity, especially among women—reflects not vanity, but enthusiasm for active living. Survey data also shows strong public support for women’s cycling events. As illustrated in Figure 5, 67.72% of respondents expressed willingness to participate in or support activities promoting female cycling, while only 10.76% disagreed.

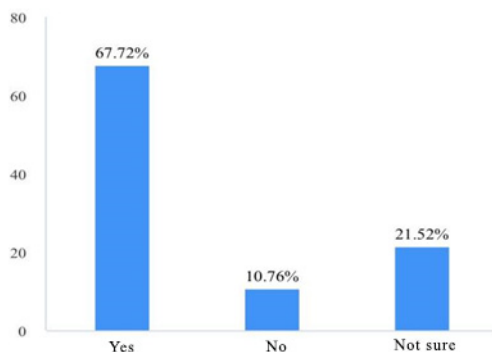


Figure 5. Willingness to Participate in or Support Women’s Cycling Activities

Fieldwork confirmed that many women cyclists actively engage in group rides and communities where they learn techniques, share experiences, and support each other: *“During our regular team gatherings, we discuss route planning, practice bike maintenance, and even do mock long-distance rides. It’s exhausting but fulfilling. We’ve built strong friendships through these activities. Last time I almost gave up halfway, but my teammates encouraged me to keep going. Cycling strengthens not just the body, but willpower and teamwork.”*(F3)

“Once we organized a night ride. Everyone was nervous at first because visibility was low. Some new members were even scared. But after a few group practices, we got used to the rhythm and started to enjoy it. We looked out for each other the whole time—it made me realize how powerful teamwork is.” (F1)

These accounts show that women cyclists approach the sport with respect, passion, and a sense of community. Through mutual support, they gain confidence, develop resilience, and build a collective identity that transcends

external labeling. Cycling becomes not a stage for image performance, but a practice of empowerment, cooperation, and shared achievement.

4.4 Persistent Gender Bias and Safety Concerns

Although gender equality has become a growing social ideal, gender bias remains embedded in everyday life, including in sports. Women cyclists still face doubts about their competence, endurance, or motives. These prejudices often overlap with online narratives around Cycling Yuan, amplifying unfair judgments^[19].

As shown in Figure 6, more than half of surveyed female cyclists reported experiencing inappropriate comments or looks in public, suggesting that stigmatization continues to shape their social experiences.

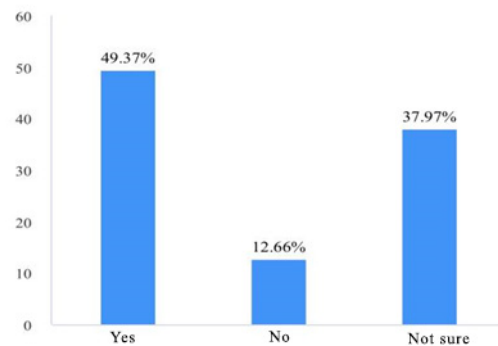


Figure 6. Does the Cycling Yuan Phenomenon Negatively Stigmatize Female Cyclists?

Interviews also revealed that many women riders encounter skepticism from male cyclists, making them feel uneasy in social settings. Others expressed concerns about personal safety—especially during night rides or in remote areas.

“What worries me most during night rides is visibility. Even with reflective clothing and lights, drivers sometimes can’t see us clearly. And when we pass through deserted areas without streetlights, it feels lonely and unsafe.” (F5)

Although women’s motivations are genuine and positive, social biases and safety risks still limit their experiences. Many continue to ride with determination, yet their confidence is undermined by persistent stereotypes and environmental challenges. Addressing these issues requires both cultural change and better urban cycling infrastructure.

4.5 Social Media Amplification and Layered Bias

In the age of social media, women cyclists’ images have become the subject of heated discussion. The term Cycling Yuan—focusing on appearance and performance—

has been widely circulated online, often overshadowing women's athletic skills and contributions. Highly curated or commercialized online content has led to overgeneralization. While a few influencers may post stylized photos, the majority of women cyclists do not conform to these portrayals. Nonetheless, public perception is easily shaped by algorithmic amplification, which privileges visual appeal over authenticity.

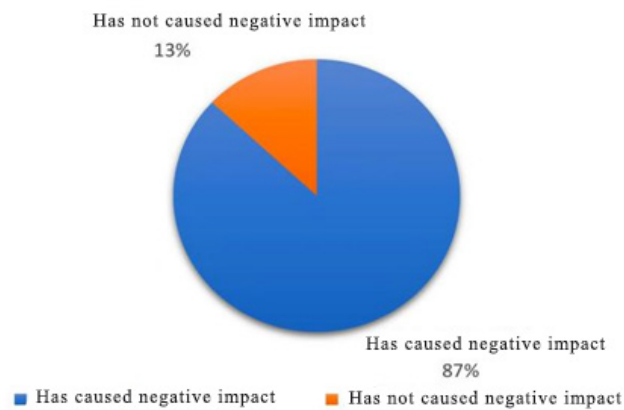


Figure 7. Has Social Media Negatively Affected the Public Image of Female Cyclists?

Survey results show that 87% of women cyclists believe social media has negatively affected their public image. Many expressed frustration that their real experiences—training discipline, performance, and teamwork—are overshadowed by superficial portrayals.

Yet, as Figure 8 illustrates, some women have begun to resist these stereotypes by launching anti-discrimination campaigns on social media, using hashtags and videos to advocate for understanding and respect.



Figure 8. Anti-Gender-Discrimination Campaigns Led by Female Cyclists on Social Media

"After posting about our team's races, I started sharing

real cycling stories and training tips. Other women riders commented about how relatable it felt. I even organized small offline events to encourage more women to join cycling. We want to break stereotypes and show that female cyclists are diverse and capable." (F2)

Through these actions, women are reclaiming narrative power. By sharing genuine experiences, they showcase professionalism and authenticity that challenge gendered assumptions.

Cycling, therefore, should not be reduced to a visual spectacle. It is a meaningful physical and social practice that encompasses health, challenge, and community. The diversity of women's participation—ranging from competitive athletes to recreational riders, enriches cycling culture and expands its inclusivity.

In conclusion, the social media discourse around Cycling Yuan often obscures women's real contributions, yet it has also prompted reflection and mobilization. Female cyclists' collective efforts to resist stereotyping are transforming online spaces into arenas for advocacy and empowerment.

5 Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

Overall, this study finds that female cyclists' real motivations go far beyond the superficial interpretations seen in online discussions. Rather than cycling for attention or appearance, most women focus on health management, body shaping, and self-challenge. Cycling provides them with a sense of accomplishment, stress relief, and emotional balance.

Women's emphasis on cycling apparel also stems primarily from the need for comfort, safety, and functionality, not vanity. Professional cycling outfits reduce wind resistance, enhance performance, and prevent physical strain during long rides. While these outfits may reflect individual style, their primary purpose is practical rather than performative.

Furthermore, women who participate in cycling communities display genuine passion and respect for the sport. Through training, experience-sharing, and mutual encouragement, they develop not only physical strength but also willpower and teamwork. These communities provide essential support and a sense of belonging that counters social stereotypes.

However, gender bias and safety concerns continue to pose challenges. Female cyclists are often questioned about their skill or endurance and are sometimes viewed through sexist lenses. Such biases undermine their confidence and affect their mental well-being. Safety

risks, especially at night or in remote areas, add additional stress, limiting women's ability to participate freely and comfortably.

Social media has further complicated this landscape. The overexposure and commercialization of the Cycling Yuan label have amplified gender stereotypes, drawing excessive attention to women's appearance while neglecting their real athletic value and teamwork. This label obscures women's authentic experiences and weakens public recognition of their contributions.

To address these issues, it is essential to promote diversity and inclusivity within cycling culture, encouraging public

understanding, reducing labeling, and ensuring a fair and supportive environment for women cyclists.

5.2 Recommendations

To improve the overall experience of female cyclists and respond to the challenges identified in this research, the study proposes several comprehensive recommendations (see Figure 9). These recommendations were endorsed by 95% of survey respondents during the supplementary data collection stage.

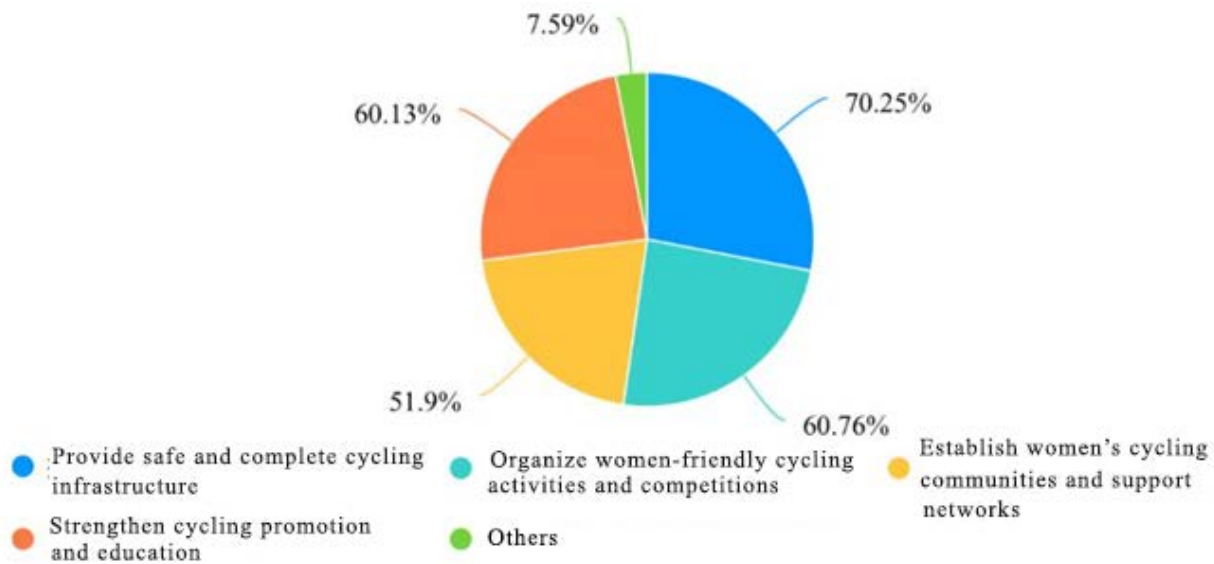


Figure 9. Recommendations for Enhancing Women's Cycling Experiences

(1) **Improve Public Cycling Infrastructure:** Governments and urban planners should invest more in creating safe and inclusive cycling environments. This includes establishing dedicated cycling lanes, improving lighting and surveillance in remote or nighttime areas, and setting up rest stations and repair points. Enhancing the physical environment will strengthen women's sense of safety and comfort while riding.

(2) **Organize Women-Friendly Cycling Events:** Cycling organizations and community groups should host events and competitions that recognize and celebrate women's achievements—such as awards for Outstanding Female Cyclists. These initiatives can serve as positive examples and motivate more women to participate. Family-friendly events could also be encouraged to help integrate cycling into community life and strengthen public recognition of women's contributions to the sport.

(3) **Build Supportive Female Cycling Networks:** Establishing women's cycling clubs and online communities can provide ongoing support and opportunities for growth. Regular workshops on techniques, equipment maintenance,

and long-distance simulation training can boost confidence and competence. Online platforms should also be created to facilitate communication and mentorship between newcomers and experienced riders.

(4) **Promote Public Awareness and Education:** Broader advocacy is necessary to reshape cycling culture. Educational programs—such as cycling culture seminars, women's sports forums, and public campaigns—should be developed to challenge gender stereotypes. Schools and communities can play a vital role in integrating gender equality and sports education, fostering early awareness and respect for female participation. Meanwhile, media outlets and social platforms should consciously portray female cyclists in diverse, authentic ways rather than reinforcing narrow beauty standards.

(5) **Encourage Collaboration Across Sectors:** Businesses, cycling brands, and social organizations should partner with local governments to sponsor women's cycling events, create mentorship programs, and promote visibility for female athletes. Such collaborations can help establish a sustainable, inclusive ecosystem that values

women's agency and achievements in sports.

These multi-dimensional measures aim to break down labels and stereotypes, create safer and more inclusive environments, and offer women cyclists greater opportunities to display their skills and potential. By doing so, cycling culture can move toward a future characterized by diversity, equality, and empowerment.

5.3 Research Contributions and Significance

This study contributes new insights in several ways:

(1) Deep Participatory Observation: By engaging directly as a member of the Sonic Cycling Team, the researcher collected rich first-hand data and captured the authentic experiences and motivations of women cyclists. This approach enhanced both the credibility and depth of the research.

(2) Multi-Dimensional Analysis: The study explored women cyclists from multiple angles—including motivation, equipment, community participation, gender bias, and social media representation—offering a comprehensive analytical framework that reveals the complexity of women's experiences in cycling culture.

(3) Social Impact and Practical Value: By uncovering the challenges and opportunities faced by women cyclists, the study contributes to gender equality advocacy and provides practical guidance for policymakers, sports organizations, and community planners seeking to build more inclusive sports environments.

(4) Theoretical Foundation for Future Research: The findings serve as a stepping stone for future investigations into women's participation in other sports fields, supporting continued academic attention to gender, sport, and digital media interactions.

5.4 Limitations and Future Research

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that future research should address.

First, the sample scope was limited to a specific region (Beijing) and a single cycling team, which may not fully represent the experiences of all female cyclists in China. Future research could expand to multiple regions and cycling groups to enhance generalizability.

Second, this study focused exclusively on cycling. Women's participation in other sports—such as running, swimming, or mountaineering—may exhibit different patterns and gender dynamics. Comparative research across multiple sports could provide broader insights into women's sports participation.

Third, this research relied primarily on qualitative analysis. While interviews and observations provided depth, integrating larger-scale quantitative data could strengthen

the validity and reliability of future findings.

Lastly, as social and cultural environments evolve, women's motivations and experiences in cycling are also likely to change. Future studies should track these changes over time, examining how emerging technologies, social media trends, and shifting gender norms continue to shape women's participation in sports.

By addressing these limitations, future research can offer an even more comprehensive and dynamic understanding of women's cycling culture and its role in promoting gender equality.

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