

## Chapter 13

# The Role of Influencer Trust, Gender Congruency, and Expertise Congruency: A Cross-national Comparison between Douyin and TikTok Users in China and the USA

**Yang Yang**

*University of Southern Indiana, USA*

### **ABSTRACT**

*This chapter explores the mediation role of influencer trust in gender and expertise congruency effects on consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions, focusing on a cross-national comparison between Douyin users in China and TikTok users in the U.S. It investigates how short video platforms, primarily TikTok and Douyin, have become integral in shaping consumer behavior and trust in influencers. The chapter explores the concepts of gender and expertise congruency in influencer marketing, examining how these factors impact the effectiveness of endorsements and consumer trust. The chapter presents a comprehensive analysis of endorsement effectiveness, contributing to the broader understanding of marketing strategies in the dynamic social media landscape. Through its findings, it provides theoretical and practical implications for marketers and advertisers aiming to enhance the efficiency and credibility of influencer collaborations in different cultural contexts.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Short video platforms are gaining popularity in both the U.S. and China. Interestingly, TikTok, known as Douyin in China, serves as a comparable social media platform for China-U.S. comparison due to its widespread adoption in both regions. TikTok and Douyin share similar algorithms and formats, making them ideal for cross-cultural analysis. TikTok boasts over 1.7 billion users globally, with Douyin enjoy-

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ing 750 million daily active users in China (Business of Apps, 2023). Despite bans in India and Iraq in 2021, TikTok remains the fastest-growing app worldwide (Iqbal, 2022). In 2022, there were 80 million active monthly TikTok users in the U.S. (Wallaroo Media, 2022), and as of January 2022, TikTok had 1 billion active monthly users globally (Geyser, 2022).

TikTok's success in advertising earned it the title of Marketer of the Year in 2020 in the U.S. (Ad Age, 2020), generating an estimated \$500 million in revenue from the U.S. market alone in 2020 (Zhang & Dotan, 2020). Additionally, it was the most popular iPhone app in the U.S. in 2021 (Geyser, 2022), with continued growth projected in the U.S., reaching 89.7 million users by 2023 (Statista, 2022). Advertisers have capitalized on TikTok's global reach, with a reported 22.9% reach of global adults outside of China each month (Kemp, 2022). Notably, TikTok generated over \$39.4 million in the U.S. from iOS alone in the second quarter of 2022 (Statista, 2022).

In the realm of social media, authenticity was once considered the paramount attribute for influencers. However, recent market research involving 700 marketers and creators indicates a shift. Relatability, or genuine connection with the audience, has overtaken authenticity as the primary factor in the influencer industry in 2024 (Aspire, 2024). Furthermore, the same research report reveals that 79% of brands and 89% of creators are now prioritizing TikTok.

The aim of this study is to investigate the influence of gender and expertise congruence between influencers and products on consumers' product attitudes and purchase intentions on short video platforms, specifically TikTok and Douyin. Additionally, the study aims to explore the role of influencer trust in these relationships.

This research is significant for several reasons. Firstly, it addresses a gap in the literature by examining the impact of gender and expertise congruence on consumer behavior across different cultural contexts, specifically comparing users of TikTok in the U.S. and Douyin in China. Although many researchers have paid attention to the cross-cultural comparison by applying Hofstede's cultural dimensions, less effort has been devoted to cross-country research in social media advertising and influencer marketing. Also, few studies have compared the cultural differences in online advertising between China and the USA. Secondly, by investigating the mediating effect of influencer trust, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms underlying influencer marketing effectiveness on short video platforms. Lastly, the findings of this study have practical implications for brands and influencers seeking to optimize their marketing strategies on these platforms, ultimately enhancing their effectiveness in reaching and persuading target consumers. Furthermore, these findings contribute to the development of a comprehensive model that elucidates the common relationships among Chinese and US users across various product types.

The research is organized into five chapters: Introduction, Literature Review, Method, Results, Discussion, and Conclusion.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Product-Gender Congruity on Endorser Effectiveness**

Traditionally, women and men have been divided to accomplish different labor activities and play different social roles, for example, men take higher status or agentic role, while women concentrate on domestic work and caring roles (Meulenaer et al., 2019; Eagly & Wood, 2012). This perceived difference

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