

Research Article

Yang Yang*

TikTok/Douyin Use and Its Influencer Video Use: A Cross-Cultural Comparison Between Chinese and US Users

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Abstract

Purpose: This cross-cultural comparison study between China and the US aimed to examine the short video-sharing social media platform, TikTok/Douyin, particularly its use in the two countries. Because China and the US have some evident differences in cultural values, they are ideal for cross-cultural comparison between Western and Asian countries. Other than knowing the platform itself, how people use it, and their influencer video use, the study further explored how cultural values influenced user behaviors on TikTok/Douyin.

Design/methodology/approach: Two survey studies were conducted in each country. The questionnaire asked the same question but in two language versions—Chinese and English. Questions asked about participants' demographic information, TikTok/Douyin use preference, influencer preference, and cultural values.

Findings: In general, Chinese participants had a more extended time experience of using Douyin, and they spent more time on Douyin every day. Participants had a different preference for influencers' expertise on each platform. US participants favored music influencers while Chinese participants favored food influencers. Moreover, Chinese participants were more likely to be persuaded by influencers to make purchase decisions than US participants. Besides, Chinese participants claimed a higher individualism score and a lower power distance score than US participants, which contradicts with Hofstede's original cultural scores for each country.

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***Corresponding author: Yang Yang**, School of Media and Communication, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, USA E-mail: yyangdo@bgsu.edu. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3271-0483>

Practical implications: Marketing practitioners should consider the demographic characteristics and use preferences of TikTok and Douyin users for their marketing practices. Moreover, the cultural scores (individualism and power distance) have changed between Chinese and US participants compared to original Hofstede's cultural scores. Besides, the study confirmed that cultural values influenced users' TikTok/Douyin use in some conditions. Therefore, practitioners should apply the new findings when making decisions when considering cultural differences.

Originality/value: This is the first study to compare TikTok/Douyin use between the US and China and enhanced our understanding of Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory. Furthermore, it demonstrates helpful and detailed information on the general platform use and how it is influenced by the cultural differences between the two countries.

Keywords: China, USA, cultural studies, TikTok, Douyin, influencer, survey

1 Introduction

China and the US are both crucial markets for influencer marketing. China is the second-largest economic entity globally; however, many foreign brands have not entered the Chinese market yet, and one of the most efficient approaches to target Chinese audiences is to collaborate with Chinese social media influencers (Dudarenok 2021). The 2017 Digital Commerce Trends Report indicated that 63% of interviewed brands in China would focus on influencer marketing to achieve the goal of brand and product promotion. In addition, a Hootsuite report revealed that over two-thirds of US retailers utilized some forms of influencer marketing, and almost half of the US digital marketers spent at least 10% of their marketing communication budgets in influencer marketing (Newberry 2021).

Meanwhile, China and the US have distinct cultures. According to the cultural dimension score from Hofstede Insights (2021), the US is highly individualistic (individualism score of 91), while China is highly collectivist (individualism score of 20). Moreover, China scores much higher than the US in the power distance dimension (87 vs. 26), which means inequality amongst people is more tolerant in China than in the US. Furthermore, the masculinity score is similar between China and the US, and both of the score is relatively high (66 vs. 62). Hence, the current study will focus on the commonly high masculinity between the US and China and use the dimension to examine how gender value determined by the masculinity dimension influences social media influencers' endorsement effectiveness in the two countries.

There are many social media platforms for influencers to endorse products. Short video platforms are gaining popularity in both the US and China. Interestingly, TikTok, known as Douyin in China, is a comparable social media platform for China-US comparison because TikTok is the non-Chinese or international

version of Douyin in China and is gaining high popularity in the US. Douyin's main target users are Chinese young generation aging between 15 and 25 years old, and the US is the biggest overseas market (Campagin 2019). Videos on both platforms are ranging from 15 s (default length) to 5 min (extended length) with music or sound effects. So, it has become the typical social media platform that researchers can use to compare consumers in the US and China.

In March 2019, TikTok announced more than 500 million monthly active users worldwide on the platform, which is a sizeable lucrative audience for advertisers (Chen 2019), and the active daily Douyin users in China have exceeded 400 million as of January 2020 (AsiaTravelClub 2020). In 2017, only 17% of advertisers had the intention to try short video social media platforms such as TikTok, and this number jumped to 65% in 2018 (Chen 2019); since then, the marketing value of TikTok has been seen by more and more marketers and advertisers. There are insufficient studies examining cultural diversity in the online context through the lens of the cultural framework (Sheldon et al. 2017). In addition, although lots of research focus on social media, the further cross-cultural investigation is needed to understand users' adoption behavior and their usage of social media since cultural difference may influence it (Fietkiewicz 2018). Moreover, few studies have examined TikTok and Douyin user characteristics and user behaviors. The current study aims to fill this gap and explores the demographic characteristics and user behaviors of TikTok and Douyin users in the US and China through the cultural framework. Besides, the study also wants to examine whether the demographic and cultural differences impact influencer endorsement effectiveness. It is well known that TikTok and Douyin are the leading short-video platforms for influencer marketing. The theoretical and practical implications are discussed in the discussion part.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

Hofstede's cultural dimensions were proposed in his pioneer book regarding cultural differences, *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values*, in 1980. Later in 2001, Hofstede published an updated version entitled *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organizations Across Nations*. The author's cultural value dimensions have inspired thousands of cross-cultural research studies, and much of subsequent culture research has been based on the core concepts of culture developed by Hofstede (Venaik et al. 2013).

According to Hofstede (1980), individualism is “a loosely-knit social framework in which people should only take care of themselves and their immediate families.” Meanwhile, collectivism “is characterized by a tight social framework in which people distinguish between in-groups and outgroups, they expect their in-groups to look after them, and in exchange for that they feel they owe absolute loyalty to it” (Hofstede 1980, p. 45). The author defined the individualism-collectivism dimension as “the degree to which people in a country prefer to act as individuals rather than as members of groups” (1980, p. 6), which indicated a preference for group or individual orientation (An and Kim 2006). Furthermore, “Power distance” is defined as “the extent to which a society accepts the fact that power in institutions and organizations is distributed unequally” (1980, p. 45), which indicates the societal desire for a power hierarchy (An and Kim 2006). Finally, “Uncertainty avoidance” is defined as “the extent to which a society feels threatened by uncertain and ambiguous situations and tries to avoid these situations by providing greater career stability, establishing more formal rules, not tolerating deviant ideas and behaviors, and believing in absolute truths and the attainment of expertise” (Hofstede 1980b, p. 45), which refers to the societal preference for the avoidance of uncertainty (An and Kim 2006).

Masculinity is defined as “the extent to which the dominant values in society are ‘masculine’—that is, assertiveness, the acquisition of money and things” (Hofstede 1980, p. 46). In contrast, femininity is opposed to masculinity and prioritizes feminine traits (Hofstede 2001), such as being kind, caring for others, and maintaining relationships. The masculinity-femininity dimension relates to the cultural preference for masculine or feminine values and notes gender roles across countries (An and Kim 2006). Numerous studies suggest that the difference in gender roles is less in feminine cultures than in masculine cultures (De Mooij 1998). Men in feminine cultures do not mind taking on female roles, while women in masculine cultures are rarely portrayed as taking on men’s roles (De Mooij 1998). Masculine cultures embrace the idea that men can always perform better than women (Yoo et al. 2011).

China and the USA were identified in cross-country studies as being two distinct cultural clusters: the Confucian cluster (China) and the Anglo cluster (USA) (Gupta et al. 2002). Among those cultural values, individualism and power distance were widely used to compare the western and Asian cultures (Chu and Choi 2011). Besides, due to the difference between China and the US regarding the two cultural values, China and the US are ideal for cross-cultural comparison studies (Lu 2018). Hence, only individualism and power distance cultural dimensions were addressed in this study. Individuals in an individualistic culture care about themselves and are willing to subordinate the in-group goals to their personal

goals. In contrast, individuals in a collectivist culture are interdependent and willing to give in their personal goals to in-group goals (Triandis et al. 1988).

2.2 Social Media Use and Cultural Differences

Research finds that culture impacts how social media are perceived and used (Balakrishnan et al. 2017). Besides, cultural norms can be reflected on social media profiles and influence how people express and describe themselves online (DeAndrea et al. 2010; Sheldon et al. 2017). Different generations and genders have different motivations to use social media; it is more evident in the younger generation, born after the twentieth century and seen as “digital natives” than in the older generation (Fietkiewicz et al. 2018). However, most information we can access on social media about its users is what they do instead of who they are. Mancosu and Bobba (2019) are concerned about the insufficient information about social media users’ personal and demographic characteristics for social and political research in the current literature. Several studies confirm the importance of personal information, such as demographics and personal traits, and social characteristics like the number of intimate friends, on our understanding of social media use and users’ attitudes and behaviors on social media (Grieve 2017; Hargittai 2007; Scott et al. 2020). Kim et al. (2013) indicate that the current social media research emphasizes the general trends instead of individual differences among social media users. Those differences influence users’ social media use patterns. Hence, there is a need for social media research on the information about users’ characteristics.

Social media use differs in different cultures; for example, people in individualistic and collectivist cultures use social media differently (Cho 2010). Jackson and Wang (2013) find that people in collectivist societies like China spend more time in real-life relationships, such as with their families and friends, less time on social media use. They also have fewer online friends than their counterparts from individualistic cultures like the US because they value group membership rather than self-promotion. Hence, social media is more important to US users than Chinese users, and US users are more likely to use social media than Chinese users (Jackson and Wang 2013).

The predominant difference in the key cultural dimensions, such as individualism/collectivism and high/low power distance between China and the US, makes the two countries ideal for cross-cultural comparison (Lu 2018). The dominant cultural values in a society are perceived to influence people’s way of communication, social interaction, and online behavior (Choi et al. 2011; Chu and Choi 2011). Balakrishnan et al. (2017) raise the concern of the shortage of literature

on cultural impacts on social media. Su et al. (2021)'s study compares the difference between traditional mainstream media (TV) and new media (Internet) in China. They point out that television (state-controlled) shapes collectivism because it promotes patriotism and national value.

In contrast, the Internet shapes individualism because of the particular level of free speech on the Internet. Moreover, state-controlled media play an essential role as the government's mouthpiece, and the Internet allows people to create and disseminate their self-generated content, which strengthens their personal freedom and interest. Research confirms that individuals who spend more time expressing themselves on Facebook are seen to connect with more freedom of speech (Swigger 2012).

2.3 Short-Video Sharing Platform, TikTok and Douyin, and Cultural Differences

The short video refers to "video content that is shorter than 5 min distributed via digital media platforms" (Kaye et al. 2021, p. 230). Most short video platforms are mobile applications, and they are convenient for users to create, edit, and share self-generated video content and view other short videos online (Zhou 2019). TikTok and Douyin are the leading short video-sharing social media platforms, which is different from other video-sharing platforms featuring relatively long videos, such as YouTube. TikTok became the most downloaded non-game mobile app of 2020, mainly for short and entertaining video production and dissemination (Cuesta-Valiño et al. 2022). Besides its business value in advertising and influencer marketing, Douyin is perceived to be the No. 1 short video-sharing app for the younger Chinese generation to socialize online (Ge et al. 2020). However, when you open up TikTok/Douyin, there will be a "for you" page instead of friends feed, promoting trendy videos or videos you may like based on your prior interactions with videos. Those short video-sharing platforms that are easy to use and allow users to get access to the full, up-to-date video content in a short period bring fast culture to social media (Campaign 2019).

The video content on TikTok/Douyin also reflects the representation of the specific location's life, culture, and value; in particular, the cultural characteristics of videos from different geographic regions are expected to be set apart from each other (Sun et al. 2020). Sun et al. (2020) find that static and indoor subjects are more common in Douyin videos, and TikTok users capture more diverse and outdoor items. More family and fewer individual events are shown in Douyin than in TikTok videos; moreover, Douyin videos are more attached to family members. TikTok videos have more interaction with friends and strangers, which is inconsistent with

Chinese and US culture's individualism/collectivism literature. Scherr and Wang's (2021) study of Douyin use in China identifies the gender and age differences in social media use. They argue that females use social media for social and communication purpose, and males use it for entertaining and functional purposes. In terms of different generations, younger users embrace social media's entertaining gratification more than older users, and the motivations for social media use are diverse and changing all the time. Douyin has become the most famous music video application in China, especially among users under the age of 30 (Patrick 2018). Future research needs to study users' personal and cultural characteristics on the two platforms. It will either optimize the platform itself or provide important information to advertisers and marketers about who are involved in their marketing practices because TikTok/Douyin is easy to access, and users are from different cultural backgrounds.

2.4 Social Media Influencer and Influencer Marketing on Social Media

Social media influencers are the newest type of opinion leaders who are native to social media. They are originally regular Internet users before becoming stars in online communities. Besides, social media influencers are seen as online celebrities with specializations or niches in specific areas. They are "a new type of independent third-party endorser who shapes audience attitudes through blog, tweets, and the use of other social media" (Freberg et al. 2011, p. 90). According to Dhanesh and Duthler (2019), "A social media influencer is a person who, through personal branding, builds and maintains relationships with multiple followers on social media, and has the ability to inform, entertain, and potentially influence followers' thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors" (p. 3). Followers of the influencers consider influencers to be trustworthy and credible sources because they are authentic, approachable, and ordinary (Chapple and Cownie 2017). Social media influencers act like peers of the consumer.

Social media influencers are individuals who are knowledgeable and have expertise in a specific area. They share knowledge, experience, and skills on social media, and facilitate the welfare of their communities. An increasing number of marketing and advertising professionals expect to use influencer endorsers to enhance their communication and engagement with consumers. Before the influencer becomes a star, he/she draws people's attention by their original and unique content on their social media accounts. Audiences like their content or the online persona. Social media influencers and their followers are connected

through social media. Even though they have a communal-oriented relationship, there is no interaction between them in a real-life setting.

Most research classified social media influencers by grouping their follower size and how many non-competing products they endorse such as micro-influencers and macro-influencers, the platforms they were on (such as Instagrammers and YouTubers) and their specialty such as fashion or beauty influencers. Micro-influencers were defined as followers with less than 10,000 followers but more than 1000 followers. Meso-influencers were defined as those between 10,000 and 100,000 followers (Boerman, 2020). Macro-influencers were defined as those with 100,000 to one million followers. Mega-influencers were defined as those with more than one million followers (Influencer Marketing Hub 2020). Such follower size classification varies by country and population size. Marketers seek different types of influencers for collaboration to fulfill different marketing purposes. For example, if the purpose of influencer marketing is to enhance brand awareness or reach as many people as possible, working with a macro/mega influencer is the best choice. Meanwhile, micro-influencers are perceived to maintain an intimate relationship with their followers, and they are more engaged and connected with their audience than macro/mega influencers (Boerman 2020). In their investigation of the impression management of A-list bloggers, Trammell and Keshelashvili (2005) first identified bloggers as opinion leaders who shared their thoughts, experiences, and politics on blogs.

Followers of the influencers consider influencers to be trustworthy and credible sources because they are authentic, approachable, and ordinary (Chapple and Cownie 2017). Recent studies found that a product recommendation is perceived as more credible when it is promoted by an influencer on Twitter rather than by the brand itself in advertising and promotional messages (Jin and Phua 2014). Further, the literature on source credibility suggests that the credibility of an endorser has positive effects on consumers' content acceptance (Shan et al. 2019). Furthermore, source credibility is evaluated in three dimensions: expertise, trustworthiness, and physical attractiveness. Social media influencers are seen to be trustworthy because they provide user-oriented product reviews and recommend products in a real-life setting (Schouten et al. 2019). Influencers are seen to devote themselves to a specific domain to establish their careers, and they are perceived to be more knowledgeable if the endorsed products fit their expertise (Schouten et al. 2019). Physical attractiveness is not always the key. It matters when the endorsed or promoted products by the influencer are attractiveness-related (Kapitan and Silvera 2015), such as beauty products and fashion items.

Many researchers believe social media influencers were only influential in their areas of expertise (e.g., Kolo and Haumer 2018; Lee and Eastin 2020; Peres 2020). However, social media influencers are not as limited to their own area of

expertise. Their intimate social relationships and trustworthiness made them influential on other social issues. Beta's (2019) ethnography of the Internet explored female influencers' persuasion power over young Muslim women in Indonesia. Instead of emphasizing influencers' persuasion power for commercial purposes, the article addressed young female influencers' participation in politics in Indonesia, in particular their influence on their followers regarding Muslim identity and subjectivity of Muslim womanhood. Bi et al. (2018) content analysis of Chinese verified account Weibo influencers' influence on the expired vaccine scandal in China showed that the influencers' negative opinion of the scandal greatly influenced the public's perception on the scandal. In the content analysis and network analysis study of Xu et al. (2014), the authors explored the topic of opinion leaders in a political activism network on Twitter. Users with higher connectivity were perceived to have a greater influence on the information flow on Twitter. Perceived homophily, authenticity and parasocial relationships between influencers and their followers have been identified by researchers as the three factors explaining the persuasiveness of influencers.

Based on the literature above and the purpose of this study, there are three research questions are expected to be answered in this study:

- 1) How are US TikTok users' demographic characteristics and general TikTok use different from Chinese Douyin users'?
- 2) How are US TikTok users' influencer video preferences different from Chinese Douyin users', and how do influencers influence purchase behavior in each country?
- 3) Do cultural values impact TikTok/Douyin use between Chinese and US users in terms of their time spent and the number of followers on the two platforms?

3 Methodology

A self-administrated online survey was adopted as the data collection method for this study. The online survey is widely accepted and cost-effective and is popular in empirical research in many fields, such as psychology, marketing, and communication.

3.1 Sampling and Recruitment

The population of this study is the US TikTok user and the China Douyin user. The regular TikTok/Douyin users over age 18 and following TikTok/Douyin influencers are considered qualified participants for this study. The US sample was recruited

through Amazon MTurk starting on January 20, 2021, and the China sample recruitment started on Mar 29, 2021 through Survey Star. The survey for US sample was created using the Qualtrics software with the researcher's university logo. A Qualtrics survey link was linked to Amazon MTurk. MTurk workers took the survey by clicking the Qualtrics survey link and submitted the survey using the completion code randomly generated by Qualtrics. In order to ensure the result quality, this survey was only available to Workers residing in the USA, with the approval rate greater than 90%, which means only small portion of their HITs were rejected before.

The data collection for the China sample started on Survey Star on March 29, 2021. Survey Star is a sample recruitment company which is similar to Qualtrics (www.wjx.cn). The sampling pool of this survey company is large including participants in different gender, age, ethnicity, income, education level, and from different parts in China. The Survey Star provided the full service of data collection. Unlike MTurk, there was no direct communication between the researcher and the respondents in China with Survey Star. The researcher only provided the questionnaire and requirement, such as gender quota, passing attention check question, as well as their survey completion time.

Finally, the research added one more criterion in selecting the final data pool for both countries: the participant's age. Since TikTok and Douyin users are primarily young generation and who are addicted to the Internet and social media, the age group of qualified respondents were restricted to 18 to 49. Therefore, the final qualified responses for the US sample were 220, for Chinese sample were 221.

3.2 Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire was initially designed in English. Then it was translated into Chinese by the researcher, who is native Chinese. There are two ways to secure the equivalence of items in both versions: 1) back-translation (the researcher translate the English version into Chinese, and ask another Chinese English speaker to translate back to English, and check if they transmit the similar/same meaning); 2) pretest (asking Chinese friends who studied/is studying in the USA to answer questions in both versions and pointing out the translation problems in the two questionnaires).

The questionnaire consists of four sections. First, the survey questions asked participants' social media use habits, influencer video use preferences, cultural values, and demographic information. Then, after answering the demographic question, the respondent was asked to identify an influencer they follow. Then participants were offered three scenarios of the product their identified influencer

endorsed. The three product categories: beauty products (female product)), foods & drinks (gender-neutral product), and alcoholic products (male product) were determined from Douyin's 30-Day Popular Goods List (CBNData 2019). Therefore, participants' purchase behaviors were measured by three dimensions. Furthermore, a combined score of their purchase intentions was used to analyze the influencers' influence on participants' purchase intentions. Finally, participants answered the questions measuring their cultural values (individualism and power distance).

3.3 Measures

Other than demographic information, the rest of the items used in the questionnaire mainly consisted of a five-point Likert scale adapted from past research to address the research questions of this study.

3.4 Purchase Intention

Five items in the purchase intention scale were adopted from Lu et al. (2014). Items include 1) "I would consider buying this product;" 2) "I have no intention to buy this product (Reverse scored);" 3) "It is possible that I would buy this product;" 4) "I will purchase (this brand) the next time I need a (product);" 5) "If I am in need, I will buy this (product)."

3.5 Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions at an Individual Level

Two out of six of Hofstede's cultural dimensions were chosen in this study measured at an individual level: individualism and power distance because they are most relevant to this study. Since the original scale items have been used for decades and were work-oriented, they are inappropriate for the current study. All the items are adopted from Yoo et al. (2011). Yoo et al. (2011) developed a 26-item scale to measure five cultural dimensions proposed by Hofstede (1980): power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism, masculinity, and long-term orientation. The scale "shows adequate reliability, validity, and across-sample and cross-nation generalizability" (Yoo et al. 2011, p. 193).

3.6 Individual's Individualism Value

Six items in the individualism scale were adopted from Yoo et al. (2011), which measures the individualism value at an individual level, and all items were reversed scored. Items include: 1) Individuals should sacrifice self-interest for the group; 2) Individuals should stick with the group even through difficulties; 3) Group welfare is more important than individual rewards; 4) Group success is more important than individual success; 5) Individuals should only pursue their goals after considering the welfare of the group; 6) Group loyalty should be encouraged even if individual goals suffer.

3.7 Individual's Power Distance Value

Five items in the power distance scale were adopted from Yoo et al. (2011), which measures the power distance value at an individual level. Items include: 1) People in higher positions should make most decisions without consulting people in lower positions; 2) People in higher positions should not ask the opinions of people in lower positions too frequently; 3) People in higher positions should avoid social interaction with people in lower positions; 4) People in lower positions should not disagree with decisions by people in higher positions; 5) People in higher positions should not delegate important tasks to people in lower positions.

4 Results

There were 221 Chinese respondents, 111 males and 110 females, and 220 US respondents, 116 males and 104 females. The average age of Chinese and US respondents was 29.42 and 33.17, respectively. Most Chinese respondents had two or more years of experience of using Douyin (74.9%), and most of them spent 11–59 min on Douyin every day (70.9%). On the other hand, most US respondents had less than two years of experience using TikTok (68%), and most of them spent 11 min to 2 h on TikTok per day (78.9%).

Several descriptive and frequent analyses were conducted in the two samples to examine the difference of the TikTok and Douyin users between China and the US and how they consumed this short-video platform differently based on their cultural differences.

The first comparable demographic information between Chinese and US participants was their highest education degrees. All possible highest education degrees were divided into, before high school, high school or equivalent, college

but no degree, associate degree, bachelor's degree, and graduate degree (including masters' degree and doctorate degree). Most participants earned a bachelor's degree in both countries (60.3 vs. 65.2%). 17.3% of US participants earned a graduate degree, in the second place, followed by the associate degree (7.7%), in the third place. In China, a similar number of participants earned an associate (14.9%) or a graduate degree (11.4%), which were in the second and third place among the answer to this question. There were 15.3% of US participants and 8.6% of Chinese participants not getting any higher education degree. Hence, Chinese Douyin users were generally more well-educated than US TikTok users.

Most participants in both countries claimed they had either a part-time job working 1–39 h a week or a full-time job working 40 h or more per week. The percentage in the US was 90.9, and the percentage in China was 86. Besides, 3.2% of US participants were full-time students, and the rest did not have a job. Meanwhile, 12.2% of Chinese participants were full-time students, and the rest did not have a job.

54% of US respondents lived in the city. 32.5% of them were from suburban areas, while 13.5% of them were from rural areas. 91.5% of Chinese respondents lived in city areas. 5% of them lived in suburban areas, and the other 3.2% of them lived in rural areas. The result showed that most US TikTok users and Chinese Douyin users were from city areas, and more US TikTok users were from suburban and rural areas than Chinese Douyin users.

Income is a piece of popular demographic information in the survey questionnaire. However, how income is measured in the survey is different between China and the US. Salary or annual income is common in US culture, and monthly income is common in Chinese culture. Hence, in the Chinese survey, the answer to the income question was grouped by participants' monthly income, and in the US survey, the answer was grouped by their annual income. There were seven answers under each income question, starting from a low to a relatively high income. For instance, in the Chinese survey, the lowest monthly income option was less than 1000 RMB ($\approx$ 157 US dollars), and the highest monthly income option was more than 20,000 RMB ($\approx$ 3144 US dollars). In the US survey, the lowest annual income option was less than \$10,000, and the highest annual income option was more than \$150,000. Most of US participants made \$25,000–\$49,999 a year (30.1%), following by \$50,000–\$74,999 a year (25.6%) and \$75,000–\$99,999 a year (19.2%). Most of Chinese participants made 7001–10,000 RMB a month, following by 10,001–20,000 RMB a month (25.8%) and 5001–7000 a month (19.9%). Both US participants' annual income and Chinese participants' monthly income were in the middle range of each country, and only a few of them made the lowest or highest annual or monthly income.

There were also differences between Chinese Douyin users and US TikTok users regarding their time consumption on TikTok/Douyin in particular. In the questionnaire, six time intervals started from less than 10 min to over 3 h to measure their average time consumption on social media and TikTok/Douyin. The most popular time intervals in the US were 31–59 min (27.9%), 11–30 min (26.9%), and 1–2 h (26.5%), while in China, the sequence should be 1–2 h (40.7%), 31–59 min (30.8%) and 2–3 h (12.2%). The number of participants in each time interval was relatively equal in the US, and there was a big difference in the number of participants in each time interval in China. In both samples, less than 10 min and over 3 h were two time intervals that were least favorite, which indicated that TikTok/Douyin was an attractive social media platform for most users, and they were willing to spend a reasonable period in the short-video consumption on this platform.

The experience of using TikTok/Douyin was also different between the two samples. In the US, 100 participants (46.1%) claimed they had used TikTok for one to two years so far, followed by less than one year (24%), two to three years (18.4%), and more than three years (11.5%). In the Chinese sample, most participants claimed that they had two to three years of experience of using Douyin (39.4%), followed by more than three years (35.7%), one to two years (22.6%), and less than one year of experience of using Douyin (2.3%). The result showed that the length of time as a Douyin user was longer than that of a TikTok user (Table 1).

As a social media platform, socialization is a crucial feature of TikTok/Douyin. Hence, to comprehensively understand the difference between TikTok and Douyin users, the number of followers and the number of followings matter to this study. Table 5 shows the number of participants’ followers on TikTok/Douyin in each country. Participants chose one answer in the survey, which indicated the general

Table 1: Frequency and percentages of time spent on TikTok/Douyin per day and length of time as a TikTok/Douyin user.

	US (N = 219)	CH (N = 221)		US (N = 217)	CH (N = 221)
	Time spent on TikTok/Douyin per day			Length of time as TikTok/Douyin user	
1. ≤ 10 min	9 (4.10%)	0 (0%)	1. < 1 yr	52 (24.00%)	5 (2.30%)
2. 11–30 min	57 (26.90)	23 (10.40%)	2. 1–2 yrs	100 (46.10%)	50 (22.60%)
3. 31–59 min	61 (27.90)	68 (30.80%)	3. 2–3 yrs	40 (18.40%)	87 (39.40%)
4. 1–2 h	58 (26.50)	90 (40.70%)	4. > 3 yrs	25 (11.50%)	79 (35.70%)
5. 2–3 h	21 (9.60)	27 (12.20%)			
6. > 3 h	13 (5.90%)	13 (5.90%)			

range of their followers on the platform. In the US sample, most participants argued they had 51–100 followers on TikTok (21.1%), followed by over 300 followers (20.6%) and 11–50 followers (17%). In the Chinese sample, most participants had 11–50 followers on Douyin (33.9%). Fewer participants picked 51–100 followers as their answer to this question (22.6%), followed by 101–150 followers (12.7%). Only 16 Chinese participants claimed that they had more than 300 followers on Douyin (7.2%), and 251–300 was the least favorite answer to this question (1.8%). Overall, 51.8% of US participants had more than 100 followers on TikTok, while 33% of Chinese participants claimed they had more than 100 followers on Douyin. This number indicated that more interaction and socialization might happen between US TikTok users than Chinese Douyin users.

Another critical feature of TikTok/Douyin is the emerging influencers. With this concern, this study examined users’ general TikTok/Douyin use and their preference of influencer video consumption, and the influence of influencers’ persuasion on users’ purchase behaviors. Table 2 describes the number of influencers followed by the participant. Most US (27.9%) and Chinese (40.7%) samples claimed that they followed 11–50 TikTok/Douyin followers. Besides, the answer of 51–100 influencers was the second most popular answer to this question in the US (17.8%) and China (24%). The answer of 101–150 influencers

Table 2: Frequency and percentages of No. of followers and No. of following of influencers on TikTok/Douyin.

	US		CH	
	No. of followers (N = 218)	No. of following (influ- encers) (N = 219)	No. of followers (N = 221)	No. of following (influ- encers) (N = 221)
1. ≤ 10	22 (10.10%)	27 (12.30%)	23 (10.40%)	8 (3.60%)
2. 11–50	37 (17.00%)	61 (27.90%)	75 (33.90%)	90 (40.70%)
3. 51–100	46 (21.10%)	39 (17.80%)	50 (22.60%)	53 (24.00%)
4. 101–150	23 (10.60%)	34 (15.50%)	28 (12.70%)	29 (13.10%)
5. 151–200	14 (6.40%)	22 (10.00%)	13 (5.90%)	22 (10.00%)
6. 201–250	16 (7.30%)	11 (5.00%)	12 (5.40%)	9 (4.10%)
7. 251–300	15 (6.90%)	7 (3.20%)	4 (1.80%)	4 (1.80%)
8. > 300	45 (20.60%)	18 (8.20%)	16 (7.20%)	6 (2.70%)

took third place in both US (15.5%) and Chinese (13.1%) participants. Therefore, the preference of the number of influencers followed by TikTok/Douyin users was relatively similar in the US and China. However, similar to the number of followers on TikTok/Douyin, more US participants (18 or 8.2%) followed more than 300 influencers than Chinese participants (6 or 2.7%). The result indicated that US TikTok users were more likely to follow and be followed by many other TikTok users than Chinese Douyin users.

Participants were asked to list one TikTok/Douyin influencer who was their favorite and then identified their favorite influencers' expertise. Influencers are a group of TikTok/Douyin users who are content creators with a niche in specific areas. This study categorized the influencer's expertise into eight groups, including music, travel, beauty, fashion, food, pet, fitness, and others. Music, fashion, and beauty influencers on TikTok were followed by most US participants, accounting for 25.1, 18.3, and 5.5% of the total US participants. Pet influencers were the least favorite influencers identified by US participants (0.9%). In China, beauty, food, and fashion influencers were most frequently identified as participants' favorite Douyin influencers, accounting for 31.2, 27.1, and 17.2% of total Chinese participants. Pet influencers were also the least favorite Douyin influencers, and no participant picked pet influencers as their favorite influencers, followed by fitness influencers (0.5%).

Moreover, participants' influencer preference was examined by their age groups. Participants' age range in this study was between 18 and 49, and 30 was used as a cutoff to divide all participants into young and old age groups. Participants aged 18–29 were grouped into the young group, and participants aged 30–49 were grouped into the old group. In the US sample, the result showed that music (22.1%), fashion (22.1%), and beauty (18.4%) influencers were the most popular TikTok influencers, while pet influencers were the least favorite influencers (0%) in the young age group. In the old age group, participants preferred music (27.3), fashion (16.8%), and beauty (14%) influencers, and only two participants chose pet influencers as their favorite influencers, which made pet influencers the least favorite (1.4%).

In the Chinese sample, most participants in the young age group chose beauty (35.5%), fashion (21.8%), and food (20.9) influencers to be their favorite Douyin influencers. On the other hand, in the old age group, most participants identified food (33.3%), beauty (27%), and fashion (12.6%) influencers as their favorite influencers. On the other hand, only one participant in the young age group chose fitness influencers as their favorite influencer, and no participant in this group chose fitness influencers to be their favorite influencers. In addition, no one identified pet and fitness influencers as their favorite ones in the Chinese old age group.

Table 3: TikTok/Douyin users’ influencer expertise preference grouped by age.

	US			CH		
	Age < 30 (N = 76)	Age ≥30 (N = 143)	All age (N = 219)	Age < 30 (N = 110)	Age ≥30 (N = 111)	All age (N = 221)
1. Music	16 (21.10%)	39 (27.30%)	55 (25.1%)	3 (2.70%)	10 (9.00%)	13 (5.90%)
2. Travel	6 (7.90%)	13 (9.10%)	19 (8.70%)	1 (0.90%)	2 (1.80%)	3 (1.40%)
3. Beauty	14 (18.40%)	20 (14.00%)	34 (15.50%)	39 (35.50%)	30 (27.00%)	69 (31.20%)
4. Fashion	16 (21.10%)	24 (16.80%)	40 (18.30%)	24 (21.80%)	14 (12.60%)	38 (17.20%)
5. Food	7 (9.20%)	7 (4.90%)	14 (6.40%)	23 (20.90%)	37 (33.30%)	60 (27.10%)
6. Pet	0 (0%)	2 (1.40%)	2 (0.90%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
7. Fitness	7 (9.20%)	10 (7.00%)	17 (7.80%)	1 (0.90%)	0 (0%)	1 (0.50%)
8. Other	10 (13.20%)	28 (19.60%)	38 (17.40%)	19 (17.30%)	18 (16.20%)	37 (16.70%)

Above all, the big difference of participants’ influencer expertise preference between China and the US was their preference on music (US favorite) and food (Chinese favorite) expertise. Besides, more US participants preferred fitness and pet influencers to be their favorite influencers than Chinese participants (Table 3).

Participants’ purchase intentions were measured in three scenarios, and in each scenario, they were measured by a 5-point Likert scale. So, the purchase intention score should be ranged from 3 (unlikely to buy the product) to 15 (most likely to buy the product). Specifically, the mean, standard deviation, and Cronbach alpha value of purchase intentions in each scenario in the two countries were listed in Table 4. Since, in the scenario, all three products were assumed to be endorsed by the identified influencer, the higher purchase score indicated a greater influencer’s influence on participants’ purchase intentions. Overall, the Chinese sample’s mean score of the combined purchase score ($M = 10.81$, $SD = 1.61$) was higher than the mean score in the US sample ($M = 10.39$, $SD = 1.86$). In a following t -test, the result supported the statistical significance of the mean difference between the two country, $t(437) = -2.57$, $p < 0.05$. Therefore, Chinese participants’ purchase intentions were perceived to be more influenced by influencers. Specifically, the mean score of purchase score of young US participants ($M = 10.05$, $SD = 1.65$) was lower than the old participants ($M = 10.56$, $SD = 1.95$), which indicated that participants at the old age group were more influenced by influencers than participants at the young age group in terms of the purchase intention. In the Chinese sample, old participants’ purchase intention ($M = 10.99$, $SD = 1.50$)

Table 4: Users' purchase score grouped by users' age and different product scenarios.

	US Purchase score				CH Purchase score			
	<i>N</i>	Mean	SD	Cronbach's Alpha	<i>N</i>	Mean	SD	Cronbach's Alpha
Age < 30	76	10.05	1.65		110	10.64	1.71	
Age ≥30	144	10.56	1.95		111	10.99	1.5	
All age	220	10.39	1.86		221	10.81	1.61	
Scenario cream	220	3.52	0.73	0.76	221	3.65	0.8	0.86
Scenario soda	220	3.55	0.73	0.73	221	3.72	0.74	0.82
Scenario beer	220	3.31	0.94	0.83	221	3.44	0.88	0.87

was more influenced by influencers than young participants ($M = 10.64$, $SD = 1.71$), as well. However, the t -test result only supported that age group (young/old) mattered in the US sample, $t(216) = -1.95$, $p = 0.05$, but not in the Chinese sample, $t(219) = -1.62$, $p > 0.05$, in terms of the mean difference of purchase score in each country.

The above descriptive analysis was about TikTok/Douyin users' general demographic information, and the researcher tried to understand user differences by comparing the similarity and differences of their demographic information. Moreover, the critical theory used in this study is Hofstede's cultural dimension. Since the original study of Hofstede's cultural dimension was conducted decades ago and in the working condition, everything has changed since then, particularly in today's digital age. TikTok/Douyin users are young and pioneering. Therefore, this study tested individuals' cultural scores instead of considering the original cultural score for the whole country. The descriptive analysis regarding participants' cultural dimension score (individualism and power distance) showed that, in general, Chinese Douyin users had a higher individualism score ($M_{\text{China}} = 2.50$, $SD = 0.75$, $M_{\text{US}} = 2.43$, $SD = 0.90$) than US TikTok users. US TikTok users had a higher power distance score than Chinese Douyin users ($M_{\text{China}} = 2.42$, $SD = 0.88$, $M_{\text{US}} = 3.12$, $SD = 1.16$). Moreover, a following t -test result indicated that the mean difference of individual power distance score differed by country (China/US), $t(439) = 7.16$, $p < 0.01$, but not for individualism score, $t(439) = -0.84$, $p > 0.05$. In addition, the individualism scale and power distance scale consisted of six items and five items respectively. The value for Cronbach's Alpha for individualism scale $\alpha = 0.82$ (China), $\alpha = 0.89$ (US), and the value for Cronbach's Alpha for power distance scale $\alpha = 0.82$ (China), $\alpha = 0.92$ (US).

Since participants' age mattered in this study, their cultural scores were also examined by young and old age groups. On the US occasion, the individualism

Table 5: Individual cultural score grouped by users' age.

	US				CH			
	N	Mean	SD	Cronbach's Alpha	N	Mean	SD	Cronbach's Alpha
Age < 30	Individualism	76	2.49	0.79	110	2.57	0.76	
	Power distance	76	3.07	1.13	110	2.34	0.88	
Age ≥ 30	Individualism	144	2.4	0.95	111	2.43	0.75	
	Power distance	144	3.15	1.19	111	2.49	0.89	
All age	Individualism	220	2.43	0.9	221	2.5	0.75	0.82
	Power distance		3.12	1.16	221	2.42	0.88	0.82

score of the young age group was higher than the old age group ($M_{\text{young}} = 2.49$, $SD = 0.79$, $M_{\text{old}} = 2.40$, $SD = 0.95$), and the power distance score of the old age group was higher than the young age group ($M_{\text{old}} = 3.15$, $SD = 1.19$, $M_{\text{young}} = 3.07$, $SD = 1.13$). The result was similar in the Chinese sample. Young Douyin users reported a higher score in individualism than old Douyin users in China ($M_{\text{young}} = 2.57$, $SD = 0.76$, $M_{\text{old}} = 2.43$, $SD = 0.75$). However, in a following *t*-test, none of the findings regarding age differences (young/old) were supported.

Several regression analyses were conducted to answer the third research question, whether there is a relational relationship between an individual's cultural values and their TikTok/Douyin use. Cultural values were put in the equation as predictors and users' time spent on TikTok/Douyin and their number of followers as outcome variables to test if cultural values influenced participants' platform use.

The data was analyzed in three conditions, the combined sample, US sample, and Chinese sample. Firstly, to test the influence of cultural value on TikTok/Douyin use, the result found that in the combined sample, individualism and power distance did not impact participants' hours spent on TikTok/Douyin per day but did have an impact on participant's number of followers on the two platforms ($\beta_{\text{individualism}} = -0.21, = 0.04, p < 0.01$; $\beta_{\text{powerdistance}} = 0.22, = 0.05, p < 0.01$). US participants' time spent on TikTok ($\beta_{\text{individualism}} = -0.21, = 0.04, p < 0.01$; $\beta_{\text{powerdistance}} = 0.20, = 0.04, p < 0.01$) and the number of their TikTok followers ($\beta_{\text{individualism}} = -0.26, = 0.07, p < 0.01$; $\beta_{\text{powerdistance}} = 0.28, = 0.08, p < 0.01$) were influenced by their cultural value, and this statistical significant relation was not found in Chinese sample (Table 6).

Table 6: Regression analysis between individual's cultural values and their TikTok/Douyin use.

	Combined sample			US			China		
	β	p	R square	β	p	R square	β	p	R square
Individualism	-0.07	0.17		-0.21	0	0.04	0.12	0.08	
Power distance	0.03	0.56		0.2	0	0.04	-0.07	0.26	
DV: Hours on TikTok/Douyin									
	β	p	R square	β	p	R square	β	p	R square
Individualism	-0.21	0	0.04	-0.26	0	0.07	-0.12	0.07	
Power distance	0.22	0	0.05	0.28	0	0.08	-0.07	0.31	
DV: No. of followers on TikTok/Douyin									

5 Discussion

Chinese participants spent more time on social media per day than US participants. It is reasonable that more Chinese users preferred to spend more time on Douyin than US users, which indicated that Chinese users were more addicted to Douyin. One of the activities they could do on Douyin was to watch influencer videos. Hence, their influencer preferences were also crucial for researchers to understand their Douyin use. TikTok/Douyin featured its great potential for socialization as a social media platform. Users could follow and be followed by other users, whether they were ordinary users or influencers. According to the descriptive analysis result, US users were more likely to use TikTok to socialize than Chinese users because their average followers were more than Chinese users. However, Chinese users had a longer experience using Douyin than US users. Most US users had one to two years of experience using TikTok, while most Chinese users had more than two years of experience using Douyin.

Moreover, Chinese users followed more influencers on Douyin than US users on TikTok. It seems like US users preferred to use TikTok as a social platform and to share great moments with their friends/followers, and Chinese users preferred to watch influencer videos on Douyin. So Chinese users might prefer to use Douyin when alone, and Douyin was a tool to pass the time.

Although participants consumed influencer videos on TikTok and Douyin, their preferences for influencers' expertise differed in each country. Most participants identified music, beauty, and fashion influencers in the US as their favorite TikTok influencers, while most Chinese participants chose food, beauty, and fashion influencers to be their favorite Douyin influencers. This preference was perceived to be influenced by the cultural difference in each country. Music plays an essential role in US pop culture. China's food culture has lasted and developed for thousands of years and profoundly influences Chinese in every part of China. Participants in both countries paid much attention to beauty and fashion videos on TikTok/Douyin. One of the reasons was that this was a young platform, and the younger generation was the primary user. They were also significant consumers of beauty and fashion products.

Moreover, fitness was not a popular influencer expertise in both countries, but some US participants chose fitness influencers as their favorite influencers, and almost no Chinese participant chose fitness influencers. It is also related to the pop culture in each country. Americans are more aware of fitness benefits, and going to the gym is like a daily routine to most people. In China, people's consciousness about fitness benefits is growing, but going to the gym or paying for fitness is still expensive and unnecessary to many people.

Furthermore, the study also examined how the influencer influenced TikTok/Douyin users' purchase intentions. Overall, Chinese participants were more influenced by influencers than US participants. In each sample, old participants were more influenced by influencers than young participants. It is known that Chinese participants spent more time on Douyin than US users on TikTok, and also, most Chinese participants had a longer time experience using Douyin than US participants. So, they had a solid commitment to this platform and were more willing to trust the influencer and more likely to be persuaded by the influencer. In addition, young users had more experience using the Internet and social media, and there were more ways to get information. Hence, old users were more easily persuaded by influencers than young users. Therefore, when they came to make a purchase decision on social media, they would have more considerations than old generations.

The individual cultural score in this study was opposite to Hofstede's country scores. According to Hofstede's Insights (2021), the power distance score of China and the US is 80 and 40, respectively, and the individualism score of the two countries is 20 and 91, respectively. In general, China was a collectivist country with high power distance score, and the US was an individualist country with low power distance score. However, everything has been changing since 1980. Incredibly, in line with the rapid development of the Internet, people's lifestyle, their way of knowing the world, and cultural values may change as well. The result of this study reassured the change of people's cultural values. US TikTok users reported a higher power distance score and a lower individualism score than Chinese Douyin users. The result was different from when Hofstede first examined cultural dimension scores in China and the US. Although participants in this study are general people from different industries and backgrounds, and it is different from Hofstede's study, the result of this study still illustrated the change of people's cultural values over time.

The difference between Hofstede's country scores and individual cultural value scores may be explained by age difference. According to Statista (2021), users aged 10–19, 20–29, 30–39, and 40–49 accounted for nearly 80% of active TikTok users in the US, and specifically, each age group accounted for about 20% of active users. According to Oceanengine (2019), Chinese Douyin users were balanced between men (52.2%) and women (47.8%), and users aged under 35 accounted for 70% of active Douyin users. Therefore, most TikTok and Douyin users are younger than the average age quota in the US and China. In particular, the average age of the US sample is older than the Chinese sample, which may be a reason why the US sample has a higher power distance score than the Chinese sample. Besides, due to China's single-child policy, most post-80 (born between 1980 and 1989) and post-90 (1990–1999) generations in China were born under the single child policy. They

possessed all resources of their family, and they were not aware of social inequality or class difference in their times, which could be another reason to explain why they reported a relatively low power distance score in this study.

Moreover, the young generations are more open to new things, challenges, and perceptions. They are more globalized and pay more attention to their personal needs rather than being trapped by social norms than their parents or grandparents. That is why China's post-90s generation has been criticized as the selfish generation. They pursue a world with equal opportunity for everyone instead of men leading the world, and they are intolerant of gender inequality or discrimination. Also, they grow up with the Internet to know the outside world at an early age, which also lays a foundation for them to get rid of some old traditional ideas and accept fresh and reasonable new ideas in the future. Besides, in the past couple of decades, due to the rapid development of China's economy, China has become more open to the world than many other countries and looks for cooperation opportunities with the rest of the world, so Chinese people have more opportunities to know the world and adopt new ideas and technologies. Hence, the open mind of Chinese people and age groups are perceived to be factors that can partly explain why the result regarding the cultural value is not following the original Hofstede's cultural dimension scores.

The contradiction between TikTok/Douyin users' individualism and power distance score and the prior literature can also be explained by the concept of value paradoxes proposed by De Mooij (2005) in her book, *Global Marketing and Advertising Understanding Cultural Paradoxes*. She argued that value paradoxes existed within and between cultures. For example, the US is an individualistic country, and there is also a need to belong to its people. She also noted the difference between a desirable life and the desired life. The former indicated the life and value people ought to have because they lived in a particular society. The latter represented the life people wanted to have or the thing they wanted to do. Moreover, it was expected that human beings always wanted something they did not have, and others did have. For example, China is a collectivist society, but the Chinese want individual success and self-promotion instead of group or national glory.

The regression analysis found a predictable relationship between participants' cultural values and TikTok use in the US sample. People's individualistic values negatively predicted their time spent on TikTok and the number of followers. Although US participants claimed a lower individualism score than Chinese participants, the US is known as an individualistic country in general. TikTok is featured by its trends and memes, and its algorithm promotes videos all the time based on the data they track. Hence, the more you are attached to this platform, the more you are influenced by others, which contradicts the core value of individualism.

Moreover, the more friends or followers people have on TikTok, the bigger online community they are building. People with similar interests and preferences come together, and it is easy for them to feel they belong to this community or group. When their group value increases, their individualism value is reduced. Furthermore, no relationship was found between Chinese participants' cultural values and their Douyin use. This study noted that cultural dimensions might be a helpful framework to explain US TikTok user behaviors. However, more frameworks should be explored to investigate the mechanism of Chinese Douyin user behaviors.

6 Theoretical and Practical Implications

6.1 Theoretical Implications

This research makes several theoretical contributions. First, the researcher explores the difference of TikTok and Douyin use between the US and China through the theoretical lens of Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory. As a successful global social media platform based in China, TikTok/Douyin is attracting more scholars' attention to its great potential to make a tremendous global influence. It is also an essential social media platform to make cross-cultural comparisons, especially the cultural difference between West and east countries. Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory has been examined for decades in cross-cultural studies. Although some of the original findings do not match today's situation, it is valuable to see how scholars have developed and redeveloped this theory over the decades. This study focused on two cultural dimensions—individualism and power distance. Moreover, the two cultural dimensions were measured at an individual level. The result is opposite to original Hofstede's cultural dimension scores regarding the individualism and power distance score of China and the US.

The result indicates that China has a higher score in individualism than the US, and the US has a higher power distance score than China. It reminds us that cultural values have been changing over time, and there is a need to examine and reexamine Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory under different conditions. Notably, many cross-cultural studies explore this theory in the social media or Internet condition. Therefore, there will be more considerations when applying it. Moreover, this study explores correlations between TikTok/Douyin users' demographic information, their TikTok/Douyin use preference and their cultural value scores. The result finds that demographic information and TikTok/Douyin use preference correlate with an individual's individualism and power distance scores. Hence, social media use has been an essential factor influencing users'

cultural values. In future research, there is a need to observe and examine how social media use influences individuals' cultural values in society.

6.2 Practical Implications

The current study is a pioneer study that focuses on a comparable social media platform, Douyin/TikTok, with exact features but targeting different audiences. First, advertising and marketing agencies should pay adequate attention to cultural factors when planning to launch marketing campaigns or cooperate with influencers on social media platforms in different cultures. This study provides a very in-detail comparison between US TikTok and Chinese Douyin users, including their general demographic information, TikTok/Douyin use preference and cultural values. The comparison and analysis help marketing practitioners better understand this social media platform, its users, and how culture influences their use preference and their behaviors on this platform. Moreover, besides the general social media use information, this study also points out users' influencer video consumption preference and how users' purchase behavior is influenced by the influencer, which will inspire influencer marketing practitioners to conduct more effective influencer marketing practices.

The result suggests that US participants prefer to socialize on TikTok, and most of them have more followers than their Chinese counterparts, Chinese participants prefer to follow more Douyin influencers, and also, they may consume the influencer video alone. Hence, socialization is not the Chinese users' priority on Douyin. Instead, they pass the time and get information on Douyin alone, and they are more likely to be persuaded by influencers to buy products. Meanwhile, US participants spend time on TikTok to communicate, share information, exchange ideas, and build their communities. So, less attention is paid to influencers' persuasion videos.

Moreover, in both countries, old users are more easily persuaded by influencers than young users. By knowing this, marketing practitioners should pay attention to audience age when they launch any TikTok/Douyin campaigns or when they cooperate with influencers on the platform. Besides, they should consider the aim of their influencer marketing; for example, in the Chinese market, it is feasible to persuade the audience to buy the endorsed or promoted product, and in the US market, it is better to share a positive user experience or some embedded funny videos rather than directly persuade the audience to buy the product. Finally, the most popular type of TikTok influencers in the US are music, fashion, and beauty influencers, and the most popular type of Douyin influencers in China are food, fashion, and beauty influencers. So, cooperating with those

kinds of influencers in each market is expected to reach the most considerable success of influencer marketing.

7 Limitation

The primary limitation of this study is the implications of the convenience samples. The third-party platform recruited participants in both countries with specific requirements, such as TikTok/Douyin users and the gender quota. Hence, the sample used in this study cannot represent the general population in each country, which means the individual cultural score in this study may not be able to explain the cultural value of the whole country. For example, Chinese participants claimed a higher individualism score than US participants, and US participants claimed a higher power distance than Chinese participants, which contradicts the prior literature. This result may be due to the non-representative samples. Therefore, future research regarding TikTok/Douyin user behaviors should try to recruit a more representative sample.

8 Conclusion

This cross-country comparison explored the different use preference of TikTok/Douyin between the US and Chinese participants from the perspective of Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory. The study revealed people's perception of the cultural value (individualism and power distance) in China and the US. The findings noted the change in cultural values in Chinese and US participants. Hofstede's cultural scores measured three decades ago showed that China and the US were evidently different in the individualism and power distance score. The US had a much higher individualism score and a lower power distance score. Nevertheless, this study found that US participants claimed a higher power distance and lower individualism score. The reason can be explained by the age difference, the One Child policy in China, and the cultural paradoxes in each culture. Moreover, the study provides a detailed comparison between TikTok and Douyin users in each country. In addition, Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory is a suitable framework to explain the reason for US TikTok users' user behavior instead of Chinese Douyin users' behavior online. Therefore, future research should investigate other frameworks in the cross-country comparison between China and the US.

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