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Personal Branding Strategies of Female Entertainment Influencers on TikTok

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Abstract

This thesis employs quantitative content analysis to investigate the strategies used by female entertainment influencers (FEI) on TikTok to attract followers. The study investigated the six FEIs with the most followers on the TikTok and Douyin (Chinese version of TikTok), three each from both platforms. This study focuses on the visual framework strategy as the theoretical basis to analyze female entertainment influencers' videos (N=90). The results show that FEIs tend to wear casual clothes and shoot videos with simple backgrounds. Most shooting angles are half-length or full-body shots, which do not display multiple feminine movements in videos.

Regression analyses were conducted to estimate the relationships between the sixteen categories and the number of likes and reposts for videos. Regression analyses showed that, among the sixteen variables, breast, stance, and facial expression have a noticeable influence on the number of likes while the number of reposts was significantly affected by breast and stance. Moreover, quantitative analysis using the one-way ANOVA test and frequency analysis established differences in strategies between FEIs who use different versions of TikTok. One such difference is the preference of Chinese FEIs to use complicated editing techniques on Douyin, while American FEIs choose simple editing procedures on TikTok. Similarly, only less than a quarter of Chinese FEIs' videos depict the body's casual touching, which is significantly lower than that of American FEIs in frequency.

By collecting videos of each influencer at different phases of their popularity, the author makes an effort to reveal influencers' strategies for establishing personal branding. The findings of this research help extend the current body of knowledge regarding the use of visual framing on emerging social media by recommending better applications of personal branding strategies. Moreover, this study makes up for the lack of literature on the influence and significance of female influencers on the TikTok platform. Influencers build their

personal brands and communities through unique tastes, and the results of this study will be informative for marketing and personal brand building on new social media. This study also provides specific information and guidance for female users for marketing their personal brands targeting specific markets and user groups on TikTok.

Keywords: TikTok, female entertainment influencers, content analysis, social media, visual framing, personal branding

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Introduction

According to Khedher, "Personal branding is a planned process in which people make efforts to market themselves"(Khedher, 2014). Dale Carnegie's (1936) "self-management" mentioned in the article titled "*How to Win Friends and Influence People*" is considered by some people as the origin of personal branding. Other scholars disagree with this conclusion. They think that Erving Goffman's (1959) book "*The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*." had indirectly involved the concept of personal brand. Goffman regards people as performers in real life, and decides what role they play according to different scenes and places. Conforming to Khedher (2014), "In various settings, which are seen by audiences, the actor is on stage and acting in ways that will produce the most favorable impression, and others reactions are influenced by this impression" (Khedher, 2014). Although the origin of personal branding is difficult to determine, one can confirm that people have witnessed the transition of the market; from the physical market to more and more virtualized markets, such as the social media market.

A large number of scholars in recent years have shown that social media is a way for people to present their identities. Several scholar claim that research on social media at the beginning of the 21st century focused on text-based mediums such as blogs and Twitter (Sanderson, 2008; Lebel & Danylchuk, 2012; Weathers et al., 2014). Moreover, in recent years, scholars have focused their research on visual platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat. According to Karaduman (2013), "its ideological and technological structure, social media allows people to promote themselves as brands in a relatively cheap and efficient manner."

Today, the frequency of people using social media has far surpassed that of other mass media such as newspapers, radio, and television. The statistics website, *Daily Time Spend on Social Networking by Internet Users Worldwide* showed a continuously increasing

trend from 2012 to 2019. According to the data of 2019, average users spend 144 minutes on social networks per day (Clement, 2020). In some developed countries and regions, the time people spend on the Internet is even more surprising. In the United States, people spend about 12 hours on media per day, of which 6.35 hours are spent on digital, which means they spend most of their time on smartphones and other electronic devices. The remaining media such as radio, newspapers, and magazines only occupy a very small part. (Wurmser, 2019). In this era, social media has become an essential part of people's lives, even indispensable.

The transition from traditional media to new media did not happen overnight. Denis McQuail was a visionary scholar who predicted that the audience's position would change as early as the beginning of the 20th century when traditional media flourished. This change will transform the audience from passive role to active decision-maker (McQuail, 1997). There is a significant interactive communication characteristic to social media. Just as McQuarrie et al. (2013), "this interactivity allows ordinary users to become influencers who have a more prominent voice, this produces a megaphone effect that enables ordinary consumers to potentially have a mass audience". Images in social media often have high research value, because the displayed images complement the influencer's personal brand building which explains why some influencers grab the megaphone and advance their position within specific fields. In addition to training a large number of influencers, social platforms also attract a massive number of potential influencers and users. Instagram created a prominent influence by image aesthetics. Data show that at least 130,000 users register for Instagram account every week in order to create their own photo wall and share life details (Morre, 2011). In the past two years, new social media has also attracted people's attention.

Compared to Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, the emergence of TikTok was unexpected. TikTok is mainly based on short videos within 60 seconds. It does not focus on

friends-oriented social platforms like Facebook, nor is it famous like Twitter for talking about real-time events. Nevertheless, “TikTok is one of the most popular app downloaded through App Store and Google Play 1.5 billion people downloaded this app in 2019” based on Patel and Binjola’s article (2020). Most scholars will focus on the functional differences between TikTok and other social media. Different from the content display in other social media platforms, TikTok focuses on letting users watch only one video at a time and switch videos by sliding up and down (Anderson,2020).However, people tend to pay attention to the surface phenomena but ignore the cultural significance behind TikTok. Charli d’ Amelio, who was a smash hit on TikTok, is only sixteen years old that has 41.4 million followers in her account. According to the latest data, the number of followers has increased to 98.5 million (Leskin, 2020). This phenomenon is widespread on TikTok. What strategies do they use to attract a large number of followers? Is it similar to how influencers on Instagram became famous? In social media, visual content is a momentous component.

When it comes to media communication, we can't skip the visual content, but the application of framing theory is mostly based on text-based research (Geise, 2017). In the digital age, visual research can be extended beyond textual content and pictures. Although other scholars have done content analysis on influencers on similar social platforms, there is a lack of literature exploring this concept on TikTok.

The purpose of this study was to test the theory of visual framing to determine strategies of top female entertainment influencers that could increase audience engagement on TikTok. However, the identities of influencers and audiences seem to be interchangeable. Lovink (2008) has pointed out a situation that not every blogger succeeds in gaining an audience. This situation is even more common nowadays, with so many social media platforms. What has to be theorized is the personal branding strategies that allow female entertainment influencers to realize the newfound possibility of building a mass audience and

become a style icon, as an ordinary individual. McQuarrie, Miller, and Phillips (2013) calls this prominent phenomenon in social media “the megaphone effect”, because individual users gain a large number of followers through unique tastes. The transformation process from ordinary users to influencers with voice and authority is worthy of attention and discussion. There are both correlations and differences between this study and the megaphone effect. This study takes the megaphone effect as the source, which is taking influencers on TikTok as the starting point. The difference lies in the fact that the author extends the research group of this phenomenon to the influencers in emerging social media rather than bloggers, and the visual content of the research extends from images to videos.

This research represents a step towards understanding TikTok as a social media phenomenon. Meanwhile, it marks a more dynamic direction for the visual framework and provides a unique perspective for female entertainment influencers’ content analysis. The impact of short video-based communication is that as a new trend of visual communication, the types of content posted by influencers on social media platforms are no longer limited to images or text.

Literature Review

According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), “Social media as a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and the technological foundations of Web 2.0, and it allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content”. Laroche, Habibi, and Richard (2013) imply that “the content is not consumed by people passively; instead, it is produced shared and consumed by users' actively generated content.” When users mastered active control, the content published is not always random and untraceable. Some users have successfully attracted followers, who usually have unique styles on social media. Obvious or latent strategies form these styles.

The author provides a way to analyze the style leader’s communication

strategies, especially for female entertainment influencers under the megaphone effect. The megaphone effect and theory are two critical concepts in this study because both of these concepts highlight the central idea to support the initiative of user's behavior.

The Megaphone Effect with style leader

French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu suggest that “a new kind of consumer behavior has emerged online in the past decade. The web has made it possible for ordinary consumers to reach a mass audience; to grab hold of the megaphone”. He firmly believes that the research direction should not only focus on social status, but turn to the capital accumulation of individuals in certain specific fields. The concept of taste leader is an extension of Bourdieu's view of someone leading a special field further. Taste leaders in particular fields turn taste into capital because as McQuarrie et al. (2013) mentioned that “taste as distinction-between draws boundaries, creates groups, and fosters solidarity. It is local in its operation and acts to cluster like-minded individuals and sequester them from others with different tastes. Taste as distinction-over asserts preferment, claims status for one above others and sustains hierarchy” (McQuarrie, Miller & Phillips, 2013).

For example, the taste of fashion bloggers will be reflected in the choice of clothes. “Taste as preference, can readily be used to identify the community or (sub) culture to which the wearer belongs: hipsters or clubbers or indie rockers” (Elliott & Davies 2005; Goulding, Shankar& Elliott 2002).

Today's consumers are very different from before, and they have more opportunities to reach other consumers in different regions and races than their predecessors. This wider dissemination opportunity can be said to be unprecedented (McQuarrie, Miller & Phillips, 2013). This phenomenon is called the megaphone effect. How does this effect play in social media? According to research of McQuarrie, Miller, and Phillips (2014) found:

“Bloggers have won a large number of audiences as cultural capital by publishing fashion suggestions and collocations with personal taste. Even a 13-year-old girl was able to "grab hold of the megaphone" and reach thousands of other consumers despite having neither an institutional position nor a family background in the fashion business. This blogger took hold of the megaphone by her own actions.”

In order to explore the internal causes of this phenomenon, it is found that consumers are gathering. This trend is that consumers voluntarily join a certain field, group or community according to their own taste (Arsel & Thompson, 2011; Arsel & Bean, 2013). People with the same tastes form communities on social media, and the taste leaders are influencers in the community. A phenomenon like this not only exists in blogs or Instagram but also on TikTok. The author used the megaphone effect as a precursor to explaining how some influencers use this phenomenon for personal branding on TikTok. Discussion on personal branding on social media cannot be separated from visual content.

Human beings are surrounded by visual content. As reported by Shuhan, “Visual content brings about profound changes to human social systems in which meanings flow through different modes of communication” (Shuhan, 2019). The visual content displayed by the influencers is deliberate. These deliberately designed contents show the emphasis on visual content, as expressed by the influencers. The theoretical source of visual content design of salience is the framing theory.

Framing theory with visual content

In the field of communication, the concept of frame mainly emphasizes the influence of text on recipients. Selection and salience are two essential factors of framing theory. According to Entman (1993) defined: “a frame as selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to

promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (P.52). The application of frame theory is not limited to the study of text. In their research, Messaris and Abraham (2001) realized that framing theory should be extended to visual content, because most of the research ignored images and engage in textual content (P.368).

Later research proved that framing theory plays an influential role in selection and salience both in terms of text and vision. Propaganda and framing theory often appear together to achieve the desired effect. This phenomenon is particularly evident in the country's political propaganda. Seo's (2014) study analyzes the photos released by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and Hamas' Alqassam Brigades in Twitter during the Gaza conflict. Protection harmony were the mainly theme of images showed by IDF. Hamas' chosen to display the people's disaster and pain as much as possible in the picture, and resist the theme of IDF tenaciously on Twitter. The visual content enhanced according to the screening is themed or intentional. Conforming to Schroeder (2013) that “it is necessary to observe these influencers' intentional style and discover the uniqueness and characteristic traits of these images. This style can be perceived as strategic imagery, which refers to images that persuade, promote, or perform strategic intentions.”

Strategic imagery phenomenon applies not only to promotional images but also to videos on social media. Xie, et al. (2011) used visual memes to track news on YouTube. The authors pointed out that there are two ways of interaction in content sharing networks like YouTube, one is explicit online interaction (such as like, commons) and the other is latent interaction (such as quoting, or remixing, parts of a video). Their research aims to analyze how users express their opinions by editing the same video in different ways using latent interactions. Although the study involves the differences between users groups, the differences are not analyzed in-depth based on visual content.

Female users with personal Branding

The study of user interactions and behavioral disparities caused by gender differences of users has always been a significant part of communication. Some research that discusses the dissimilarities between male and female user behavior in social media. For example, A study used Facebook as the primary research platform to analyze the differences in the purpose of how men and women use social platforms (Mazman & Usluel, 2011). Moreover, more and more researches aimed at social platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, which have been in the market for nearly a decade. Baker, Ferszt and Breines' (2019) research attend to female college students, and discusses how social media like Instagram affects the body shape of this group. Even though the effects of social media on female users is unquestionable, it is the influencers who create these influences.

According to Karaduman (2013), "Personal branding is the process whereby people and their careers are marked as brands, and it differs from reputation management and impression management for its purpose. It is directly intended to create an asset and brand equity that pertains to a particular person or individual." Compared to TikTok, it's easier to find personal branding on Instagram. In the digital era, there will undoubtedly be challenges which similar to improper protection of personal information privacy. Still, it is also an opportunity for anyone to maximum participate in the social world and enjoy the opportunity of building personal brands with a low threshold. In 2019, an article aimed at young people in cities and discussed their efforts in personal brand building. In the era of social media, brand building is no longer limited to advertisers and enterprises, but gives every social media participant the same opportunity to make every brand full of personality (Mukhlisiana, 2019). Most academic papers for female influencers discuss topics such as beauty, fashion, and fitness. The classification of influencers has always been very vague, basically based on the proportion of content published by influencers. Just as Gross and Wangenheim (2018) claim

that “the influencers can be divided into four types: snoopers, informers, entertainer, and infotainers. Among them entertainers provide amusement, enjoyment, and relaxation to their audience by creating entertaining content.”

Entertainment information has different influences on gender differences. Female users are often attracted by beauty products, while men are attracted by technical or game information in social media. It is found that the entertainment of information is the most important feature of users in social media, followed by informativeness (Lokithasan, Simon, Jasmin & Othman, 2019). The entertaining nature of information and what it means for contemporary people have always been hot topics discussed by scholars. According to Cunningham and Craig (2017),

“Research developed an analytical framework to understand the modes to address of native-to-online content types (gameplay, do-it-yourself (DIY), beauty, personality vlogging). These types of content differ sharply from established screen entertainment and constitute from intrinsically interactive audience-centricity and appeal to authenticity and community in a commercial space, which we call 'social media entertainment.’”

The significance of social media entertainment lies in that, for a great many, especially young viewers, this is what television is now. However, for social media like TikTok that has been around for two years, there is little literature about female influencers. There is currently a niche genre on TikTok that is female entertainment influencers, who use their creativity to create plots in 15-60 second videos. This group has also gained a large number of followers, just like the female influencers on Instagram or Snapchat.

Since TikTok is a newly emerging social platform, quite a few people are not clear about its functions and positioning. In order to understand the function and positioning of TikTok more intuitively, Zhenfeng (2018) introduced TikTok through two organizational

charts. The author translated and refined his organization chart, see Figure 1 and Figure 2.

Since TikTok is a young and novel platform, looking at this niche style of female influencers in this emerging platform from a comparative analysis perspective is lacking in academic research. This research will focus on strategies used by female entertainment influencers when building personal brands to attract followers. Through the content analysis of influencers and the analysis of the process of building a personal brand, the dynamic changes of influencer styles and the attitudes of followers can be seen in recent years. The way people communicate with each other in social media and the photos of sharing life reveal the personal information of users to a certain extent. Visual culture like pictures can convey cultural values and social knowledge (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996). Whether the content published by influencers is pictures or videos, it is a way for them to communicate from the virtual society to the real world. This is also the core idea that the visual framework theory has always emphasized.

Based on Entman's (1993) theory, "dividing the frame propagation process into four locations: the communicator, the text, the receiver, and the culture. All four locations include similar functions: selection and highlighting, and use of the highlighted elements to construct an argument about problems and their causation, evaluation, and/or solution." Framing strategies are ways to solve people's doubts about the megaphone effect in social media. Specifically, taking this article as an example, the author analyzes the techniques of certain types of influencers that are commonly used in social media to attract followers.

Shuhan believes that "Instagram is the reflection of real life, a database version of day-to-day lives" (Shuhan, 2019). This argument should be extended to the broader social media platform, including TikTok. The value of this research is twofold. This research combines the neglected nascent platform TikTok with the female entertainment influencers. This research aims to study the strategies used by female influencers to build their personal

brands through visual content published on TikTok. It is also intended to fill the gap in the existing scholarship related to how female influencers employ visual framing strategies to post entertainment videos on social media.

Research Questions

RQ1: What framing strategies are used when female entertainment influencers build personal brands through TikTok?

RQ2: How does the framing strategies vary based on the version of TikTok used by female entertainment influencers?

Method

In the research of content analysis, researchers realize to a great extent that the text is not only a cold object, but also pays more attention to the cultural significance behind the object. Moreover, these objects have emotional connection with a certain group or community. Krippendorff (2012) points out the significance of content analysis and text classification, which provides a reliable basis for the research on the visual content of short videos.

The purpose of this study is to explore the strategies for female entertainment influencers to build brands on TikTok. Quantitative research is a kind of research method that quantifies research problems through a large amount of data and analyzes their inherent patterns or code of behavior (DeFranzo, 2019). According to Fico's (2014) statement:

“Quantitative content analysis was defined as the systematic assignment of communication content to categories according to rules, and the analysis of relationships involving those categories using statistical methods (p.3). Moreover, he emphasizes the systematic nature of the quantitative content analysis.”

The purpose of the current study is to explore the strategies for female entertainment influencers to build brands on TikTok. This study is satisfactory using quantitative content analysis for the following three aspects. First of all, the research using content analysis as a method is conventional in the literature of exploring strategies. Secondly, with the research questions as the leading factor, establishing a coding scheme and a codebook can well solve the problems in this research. Last but not least, the data sources in this study are easily accessible, and the ranking data resources are open and authoritative. The openness of information can ensure the authenticity of the research.

The coding scheme for this study is mainly composed of three studies on gender and influencers. Duncan (1990) mainly studies the gender differences in athletes' photographs, which will be of great significance to the research on female influencers. Shuhan's (2019) research is based on framing theory, and analyzes the strategies of food influencers to attract viewers on social media. This study is a good template because she summarized Duncan's theoretical research and generated thirteen variables for the influencers. Among them, six variables are the type of attire, contingent category, and facial expression, proximity to influencer, video's color and scene decoration which can be used for reference for female entertainment influencers. Smith and Sanderson's (2015) study on athlete self-presentation on social media provided me with more valuable coding variables. There are 18 variables in their research, among which seven are options that can be applied to the influencers on TikTok. These seven items are type of shot, stance, size, breast, genitals or buttocks, touch, and instruction. Since the above three studies are aimed at athletes or food influencers, this study adds three more items which are frames montage, haircut and self-adornment of influencers to test the efficacy of this patterns more comprehensively. Synthesizing the above three studies with Frequency-text, regression analysis, and one-way ANOVA can solve both research questions about female entertainment influencers.

Sampling

In order to ensure the authenticity of samples, this study based on the data provided by TikTok official platform. Since TikTok is divided into two versions, the Chinese version (DouYin) and the overseas version, to ensure that the sample is fair and universal, three influencers were selected in both Chinese version and overseas version of the statistical data. A total of six influencers were selected as the sample sources of this study.

The six samples in the study were three qualified influencers selected from the annual most popular influencers rankings (ranked according to the number of followers) in the two versions. According to the research questions, the keywords were extracted as female and entertainment. Moreover, guided by the megaphone effect, the sample selection must be ordinary users rather than celebrities who were already famous before using TikTok.

Therefore, the sample selection must meet the following three criteria:

- (a) Female users
- (b) Non-celebrities
- (c) The published videos are mainly on entertainment content

The sampling used was the total number of works from the first video posted on TikTok by the influencer until September 1st, 2020. In this study, stratified sampling is adopted, which is to reduce fault and pursue greater representativeness of sample (Baxter & Babbie, 2004).

Data Collection

The researcher extracted 15 videos of each influencer for the data analysis stage. The fifteen videos posted by the sample come from three parts: the first five videos of the researcher's sample influencers; the middle five videos from all the videos posted by the sample influencer prior to September 1st, 2020 (for example, if the total number of videos posted by the sample is 100, the videos selected would be the 48th, 49th, 50th, 51st, 52nd

videos); the last five videos posted by the sample influencers before September 1st, 2020. Fifteen videos were selected using stratified sampling from each of six female influencers' TikTok accounts, obtaining a total of N=90 videos.

Coding Procedures

Tufte (1997) points out the importance of data in quantitative analysis studies. He firmly believes that unambiguous and wonderfulness thinking of researchers is as important as unambiguous and wonderfulness data. The sorted data will give insight into behavior because the designed scheme has been tested by practice. The coding scheme is mainly based on three scholars' research on image content analysis. Duncan (1990) offers a visual analysis via contextual readings of visual, photographic imagery, which will be the partial basis of the coding categories for this study. Duncan created a set of categories, including camera angles, physical appearance, body positions, and emotional displays that were used to emphasize women's sexual differences. The above classification will greatly help research the content publishing strategies for female entertainment influencers. Shuhan (2019) added more categories based on Duncan's study when exploring the influencer's food aesthetic strategy, such as the photo's color and decoration. The codebook designed by Shuhan is aimed at the image, and the author changes the photo's color to the video's color according to the video sample. Also the decoration is subdivided into two variables: scene decoration and self-adornment of influencers. Therefore, a total of seven variables were extracted from the study of Duncan and Shuhan. In the previous methodology, there are seven variables in the codebook established by Sanderson's (2015) study, which is to study the combination of the content published by athletes in social media and self-presentation theory. The author added two new variables: haircut and frames montage. In Bereczkei and Mesko's research (2006), the conclusion showed that women with long hair are more attractive. Hair length may be one of attractive strategies for female influencers. Based on the

author's own experience, videos with mature editing skills are more enjoyable in social media. Therefore, the author adds frames montage as a new variable to the codebook. A codebook was developed for framing strategy analysis of videos of female entertainment influencers. In order to make the above research more suitable for video content analysis, the author summarizes sixteen categories (see Table1).

It is worth noting that N/A in the coding scheme in Table 1, is for situations where the coding is difficult to judge or does not exist. Based on the experience of using TikTok for a long time, typical examples are as follows: some users in TikTok do not show their appearance or physical characteristics in the video, but only use background sounds. Situations like this are not applicable to some categories in Table 1. Before starting the video content analysis, it was necessary to introduce the coding scheme for each category one by one to unify the classification standards and ensure the reliability of data interpretation by the final coder. To unify the classification standards as much as possible and ensure the reliability of the final coder to interpret the data.

- Type of attire referred to the dressing style of female entertainment influencers in the video. One of the strategies used by female influencers can be judged by classifying and coding the types of attire used in the process of establishing personal brands. Different attire styles may be one of the ways to attract a specific group of followers.

- Contingent category means the total number of influencers in the video. The number of people filmed in the video is related to the strategies commonly used by female influencers to build personal brands.

- Facial expression denotes the exploration of female influencers emotions through certain specific expressions in videos. So that to achieve resonance with followers. Duncan (1990) points out that facial expression may be connoted with sexual difference. Female-specific facial expression characteristics will be one of the strategies of influencers to

attract followers. For example, using a gentle smile strategy to reduce the sense of distance to get the audience's love.

- Proximity to influencer implies the distance between camera and female influencers. When the camera in the video shoots influencers from a faraway distance, a sense of distance and mystery is created. When the camera takes close shots of the influencer, it shows more details of the influencer, such as facial expressions or makeup, and the distance between the influencer and the audience is greatly reduced. The shooting distance used in the video should also be considered as one of the strategies for influencers to attract followers.

- Video's color suggests video of high saturated or low saturated color. The high-saturation picture is mainly to highlight the subject which means in this study is the female entertainment influencer. The low saturation picture is relatively dimmer, but it can imply depression and other emotions in the heart of the presenter. Whether it is a high-saturation color or a low-saturation color in the video, it may be a strategy adopted by influencers to express a specific purpose and theme.

- Scene decoration represents the degree of decoration for the scene that appears in the video. The frequent appearance of complex and gorgeous scenes or simple scenes in the video has become an influencer's own unique style symbol in the process of establishing a personal brand.

- Self-adornment of influencers indicates the degree of self-decoration of the influencer. Specifically, it can be expressed in the makeup and jewelry level of female entertainment influencers. This variable is very similar to the scene decoration. All to explore different personal styles of female influencers in the video to attract followers through scene arrangement and personal decoration when they building personal brand.

- Frames montage specifies video editing skills. The superb editing skills make the viewability of the video increase. This method is especially important for short

videos that are only 15-60 seconds in TikTok. However, simple editing techniques may mean that influencers tend to be more fluid narratives rather than eye-catching. Frames montage can be a significant category in this coding scheme.

- Type of shot signifies the angle between the position of the video camera and the position of the performance object. In this study, the camera angle is not strictly limited, but the various camera angles are summarized into three types. The significance of the coders is to find the most used shooting angles to explore whether this angle is related to the strategies used by the influencers.

- Stance denotes the posture shown by the influencers in the video. According to the information, different postures of the subject may show different emotions and hearts. Usually tall, giant size and rectitude are connect with masculine. On the contrary, feminine is usually regarded as fixedness, runty, and lying on back (Duncan, 1990).

According to Bell (2001), “content analysis as opposed to semiotic analysis: Visual content analysis usually isolates framed images (in publication) or sequences of representation (scenes or shots in television or film). However, unlike semiotic analysis, content analysis classifies all the tests on specified dimensions (variables) to describe the field or totality. It is not concerned with ‘reading’ or interpreting the texts individually” (p.15). The sixteen variables in Table 1 must have a unified measurement standard, so that the experimental conclusions can be drawn fairly. In the social media era, there are many factors to measure whether the visual content is popular or not, among which the number of likes and reposts are very intuitive and open data indicators. By collecting the total amount of likes and reposts for each video extracted from the samples, the author can find out which essential strategies are used by the influencers to get the most number of likes and reposts. Using this method, the first research question of this study can be solved. The author used regression analysis to determine common strategies used by six female entertainment influencers. In

order to answer the second research question, the author divided six influencers into two groups according to different versions of TikTok: non-Chinese and Chinese female entertainment influencers. Combined with one-way ANOVA test, the differences are determined, and specific differences are obtained according to frequency analysis. The detailed process is to divide the six influencers into two groups according to their nationality. Then sixteen variables were run through one-way ANOVA, and when the value of P (Sig.) is less than 0.05, it shows that there are apparent differences between the two groups. Then, according to the frequency analysis of source data, the concrete manifestation of differences can be obtained.

Reliability

In order to ensure the reliability of this content analysis study, the second coder was trained by the researcher to randomly analyze 10% of videos for coding just as mentioned in Shuhan Yang's framework strategy for food influencers to test the credibility of the code book (2019). For the internal consistency of the codebook, two reliability test results were performed. The first test was conducted using 10% of the total number of videos and the second test with the total number (100%) of videos. An obtained by Cronbach's alpha value was obtained to establish the reliability of the coding scheme.

Results

The internal consistency of randomly (10%) selected samples by the second coder was 0.935, and the internal consistency of all samples(100%) of the researcher (first coder) was 0.888. Tavakol and Dennick (2011) indicated that the acceptable range of Cronbach's alpha is between 0.7-0.9. Therefore, this study has good credibility.

According to the rules of screening influencers, as outlined in the research methodology, three female entertainment influencers from Douyin (Chinese version of TikTok) and TikTok were ranked based on their number of fans. Zhu Xiaohan, Li Ziqi, and Yi

Tiao Xiao Tuantuan were selected from Douyin whereas Addison Rae, Charli d' Amelio, and Loren Gray were selected from TikTok as samples. The author selected fifteen videos of each influencer in their early, middle and latest periods, and the total number sample videos of six influencers were 90 videos. Each video was encoded according to sixteen variables of the codebook. Some independent variables of Yi Tiao Xiao Tuantuan were not applicable because in most of her sampled videos, she doesn't have the camera show her self-appearance, and the content mainly based on game experience is only matched with her voice. Therefore, the variables about the influencer's type of attire or shooting angle and self-decoration do not apply to her. Except for some data of Yi Tiao Xiao Tuantuan data, other influencers' data were included in the data analysis stage. According to the existing data, the results of the research came from three statistical methods. Regression analysis combined sixteen variables with the number of likes and forwarding to answer the first research question about the common framing strategies used by female entertainment influencers. One-way ANOVA test and frequency analysis answered the second research question about the differences between Chinese and non-Chinese female entertainment influencers when they build their personal brand. When looking at the findings of result, taking the number of likes as dependent variable and sixteen strategies as independent variables, regression analysis shows that breast, stance and facial expression have significant influence on the number of likes; there are several significant differences between Chinese and non-Chinese female entertainment influencers in choosing strategies when establishing personal brands.

RQ1: What framing strategies are used when female entertainment influencers build personal brands through TikTok?

Research question one mainly tests the brand-building strategies used by six top female entertainment influencers in videos. Sixteen variables investigated in the sample are divided into two groups: influencers themselves and videos.

The researchers found that the data of influencers themselves showed that the influencers' type of attire tended to choose casual (N=68, 75.5%) compared with sexual (N=7, 8%). As for the contingent category, the influencers mainly show themselves (N=57, 63.3%) were higher than two (N=20, 22.2%) or more than three people (N=11, 12.1%) in the video. Smiling (N=49, 54.4%) accounts for most of facial expression as one of the strategies of influencers. The influencers focuses more on the simple (N=41, 45.6%) or normal (N=29, 32.2%) self-adornment rather than exquisite. In terms of stance, 59% (N=53) of the female entertainment influencers did not show masculine or feminine, 41% (N=37) of videos show feminine stance. In most of the video samples, the female entertainment influencers have long hair (N=72, 80%) and normal size (N=74, 82.2%). Breast, genitals and buttocks variables were not the focal point in most of the sample videos, only about 13% of the videos had a somehow emphasized. No touching (N=35, 39%) and casual touch (N=40, 44.4%) often appeared in videos. Instruction was not exhibiting in 80% of influencers' videos.

The second group of variables is about video, and the data shows that the distance of shot in video is mostly close to the influencer (N=67, 74.4%). Eighty-one percent of the video's color variables adopted high contrast higher than seventeen percent low contrast. 60% of the scenes decoration by influencers in videos were simple. Frames montage refers to the editing skills of influencers, in which simple editing accounts for 41% (N=37) and complex editing accounts for 29% (N=26). The main shooting types of female entertainment influencers are half body (N=32, 35.6%) and full body (N=27, 30%), with 16% (N=14) taking selfies.

In order to have a unified evaluation standard for sixteen variables, the researchers take the number of repost and likes as dependent variables respectively, and obtain the most commonly used ranking of framing strategies through regression analysis. The reason why author choose the number of likes and reposts as independent variables is

that these two assessment criteria are the marks to judge whether the video is popular or not. A lot of likes and reposts often have their reasons behind them. In studying the psychological secret behind why users like Facebook, Seiter (2020) pointed out that users like some kinds of content because it represents identity, empathy and practical use. Sharing and repost content represent the reasons of self-fulfillment, connecting with the society, supporting certain problems or groups, and defining oneself.

Taking the number of likes as independent variable, regression analysis was carried out on 16 dependent variables of strategies. After verification, the results show that breast, stance and facial expression have significant influence on the number of likes. Breast: $\beta = .513$, $P = .024$; Stance: $\beta = -.435$, $P = .003$; Facial expression: $\beta = .369$, $P = .021$;

In the same way, after regression analysis with the number of reposts as independent variable, the breast and stance has a significant impact on the number of reposts. Breast's standardized coefficient (β) = $.484$, $p = .031$; Stance: $\beta = -.441$, $p = .004$.

Tab1: Regression Analysis of the Number of Likes

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		Std. Error	Beta		
	142.820	168.223		.849	.399
Breast	227.000	98.170	.513	2.312	.024
Stance	-114.653	36.743	-.435	-3.120	.003
Size	134.541	162.397	.393	.828	.410
Facial Expression	68.951	29.114	.369	2.368	.021
Hair Cut	-220.164	154.793	-.362	-1.422	.159
Proximity to influencer	-182.223	110.046	-.351	-1.656	.102
Touch	-77.136	67.379	-.217	-1.145	.256
Type of Attire	54.816	105.159	.174	.521	.604
Genitals/ Buttocks	50.863	101.659	.113	.500	.618

Tab2: Regression Analysis of the Number of Reposts

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.437	3.682		.662	.510
Breast	4.725	2.149	.484	2.199	.031
Stance	-2.392	.804	-.411	-2.974	.004
Touch	-2.829	1.475	-.361	-1.918	.059
Type of Shot	1.129	.681	.289	1.657	.102
Proximity to influencer	-3.285	2.409	-.286	-1.364	.177
Facial Expression	1.104	.637	.268	1.732	.088
Type of Attire	-1.460	2.302	-.210	-.634	.528
Size	1.392	3.555	.184	.392	.696
Genitals/ Buttocks	1.790	2.225	.180	.804	.424

RQ2: How does the framing strategies vary based on the version of TikTok used by female entertainment influencers?

TikTok is divided into two versions, aiming at DouYin in China and TikTok in other regions except China. Three influencers were drawn from each version. The second research question is to explore whether there is diversity in the process of establishing personal brand among female entertainment influencers in different versions of different regions. What are the differences or similarities? In order to answer the second research question, the author obtained the following results by combining one-way ANOVA test and frequency analysis.

“One-way analysis of variance (abbreviated one-way ANOVA) is a technique that can be used to compare means of two or more sample (using the F distribution). This technique can be used only for numerical response data, the “Y”, usually one variable, and numerical or categorical input data, the “X”, always one variable, hence “one-way” as claimed by Howell (2009).

After statistical analysis of 16 variables in 90 videos, we can know that there are six significant differences between TikTok and Chinese version of TikTok (DouYin) influencers in establishing personal brand strategies (See Table 3). In order to further refine the research, according to the nationality of the influencers sample, the following comparison subdivided into American and Chinese female entertainment influencers.

Tab 3: Results of One-way ANOVA test

	F	Sig.	Group	Mean	Std. Deviation
		(P-value)			
Frames Montage	77.642	0	American influencers	1.31	0.468
			Chinese influencers	2.44	0.725
Facial Expression	4.294	0.041	American influencers	1.31	0.661
			Chinese influencers	1.73	1.827
Stance	5.787	0.018	American influencers	0.58	0.917
			Chinese influencers	1.07	1.009
Breast	37.992	0	American influencers	1.31	0.514
			Chinese influencers	1.22	0.471
Genitals/Buttocks	19.225	0	American influencers	0.67	0.477
			Chinese influencers	0.73	0.58
Touch	29.614	0	American influencers	1.64	0.484
			Chinese influencers	0.91	0.763

There are significant differences in frames montage between American and Chinese female entertainment influencers ($F=77.642$, $P=.000$). One-way ANOVA test showed Chinese female entertainment influencers ($M=2.44$, $SD=.725$) use different editing style compared with American influencers ($M=1.31$, $SD=.468$). Frames montage represents the degree of video editing, in which 69% of American influencers are simple editing, and only 13% of Chinese influencers choose simple editing. 58% of the videos from Chinese influencers are complex clips that include shots from multiple cameras with often complex editing, which is different from American influencers.

In the facial expression, one-way ANOVA revealed a significant difference ($F=4.294$, $P=.041$).Ninety-one percent of the videos of American influencers are smiling,

while only 18% of Chinese influencers are smiling. 35.6% of Chinese influencers didn't have much facial expression in their videos. It may be due to the long-range shooting telephoto lens or angle, which is not as obvious as the facial expressions of American influencers. According to the One-way ANOVA test results, American influencers ($M=1.13$, $SD=.661$) are different from Chinese influencers ($M=1.73$, $SD=1.827$).

For stance, a significant finding was found through one-way ANOVA ($F=5.787$, $P=.018$). Most of the American influencers do not show obvious masculinity or feminine posture ($M=.58$, $SD=.917$) in videos. However, more than half of the influencers' videos showed feminine postures in China ($M=1.07$, $SD=1.009$). For example, fiddling with one's hair or sitting with both hands holding knees. The stance of Chinese and American female entertainment influencers in videos were different.

The significant difference were found by one-way ANOVA in the category of breast ($F=37.992$, $P=.000$), genitals or buttocks ($F=19.255$, $P=.000$). Because these two variables have strong similarity, and this similarity is also reflected in the data results of one-way ANOVA. Therefore, the author puts the two variables together for analysis. According to the data obtained by one-way ANOVA, the somewhat emphasized of breast and genitals in the videos of American influencers ($M=1.3$, $SD=.514$), ($M=.67$, $SD=.477$) were higher than that of Chinese influencers ($M=1.22$, $SD=.471$), ($M=.73$, $SD=.580$). No matter the videos of Chinese and American influencers, most breast and genitals are not the focal point. However, American influencers emphasize these parts to some extent in a few videos, but this is not seen in Chinese influencer videos.

For touch, one-way ANOVA revealed a significant difference ($F=29.614$, $P=.000$). More than 60% of the videos of American influencers ($M=1.64$, $SD=.484$) have casual touching of the body, while 35.5% of videos haven't touching the body. However, less

than a quarter of the videos of Chinese influencers ($M=.91$, $SD=.763$) depict casual touching of the body, which is significantly lower than that of American influencers in frequency.

Discussion

Using Entman's (1993) framing theory guide the analysis, this study analysed what strategies female entertainment influencers used to attract followers, and try to explore the strategies difference between Chinese and non-Chinese female influencers in different versions of TikTok. Previous studies have found the differences in publishing styles caused by gender and the strategies of the influencers of a specific style in publishing content on social media. This research not only expands the research field of social platform, but also increases the in-depth analysis of the publishing strategies of female entertainment influencers. More importantly, it makes a quantitative comparison of the released video styles of Chinese and American female entertainment influencers by presents intuitive data results to readers through various statistical methods.

When reviewing the data results, there are several noteworthy points that need discuss. The interesting point of this study is that it eliminates doubts and gives readers a deeper understanding of TikTok. People's inherent perception is that TikTok is a platform for young people even for teenagers. For instances in order to attract the audience, Sony Pictures has entered the TikTok promotional film, and other brands have also placed the TikTok youth group even teenager group in a vital position (Binns, 2019). However, according to the data, in the TikTok China version (Douyin), users over 30 years old accounted for 46.8% of the total users. Over 60% of Instagram users are over 25 years old on average (Jenn, 2020). For example, the average age of the three top female influencers selected from the Chinese version of TikTok is 27 years old, which is obviously different from the initial predicted user age of many people. The three female influencers of TikTok version are younger than those of Chinese version. This study has expanded the understanding of TikTok of users' age group

on TikTok. Therefore, we can obtain a more objective understanding through the influencer analysis of different age groups. Moreover, this study also reflects a fact: external image or action of female entertainment influencers tends to be daily and random in attracting followers. For example, most of the influencers dress and accessorize casually and daily; their use of breast-emphasizing or provocative actions accounts for a small proportion in the video. Dressing up and posting video daily can bring a sense of closeness to the audience. Clothing is often related to personal cognition and the image that you want to present to the audience. Clothing is often related to personal cognition and the image that you want to present to the audience. Clothing is not a simple object, and everyone's clothing affects their psychological process to varying degrees. Simply put, wearing is also showing personal cognition (Adam & Galinsky, 2012). The universal casual dress is obviously easy for the audience to accept, and the image of the girl next door with a sweet smile has gained a large number of followers.

Secondly, this study found that the types of video content for the six top female entertainment influencers are abundant, and the platform has few restrictions on publishing videos. The findings regarding the RQ2 were largely based on the behavior habits in different countries' cultural backgrounds. For example, in the results, American influencers are more willing to show obvious smiles in videos, while Chinese influencers' videos show more implicit or unobvious smiles. People always have a conventional thinking, which regards touch as one of the unique actions of feminization (Goffman, 1979). However, according to the data collected by variable touching in this study, the female entertainment influencers do not show a lot of touch-based actions in the video. In 39% of videos, the influencers did not show touch-based actions, while in 44.4% of videos, they showed casual touch. This diversity is not caused by versions, but rather by the difference in habits and characteristics in different cultural backgrounds. While these are culture differences, they can also be used as strategies

by potential influencers who want to build personal brands.

The research findings for RQ2 are especially reflected in the fact that video production provides a direction for users. That is, whether the self-portrait dance videos of Addison Rae about their daily and weekly life or like Li Ziqi's videos using multiple camera, a large number of post-edited videos can attract a lot of likes, reposts, and even imitations on TikTok. Moreover, when establishing personal style and brand, female entertainment influencers tend to set up simple scenes and self-decoration, focusing on video content, making their style more remarkable.

Compared with Facebook, TikTok has less supervision and rules in publishing content. Of course, this is one of the reasons why TikTok has been criticized. However, the low threshold limit of social media for publishing content determines the diversity of video types, which undeniably has risks, but it provides more opportunities for women to share their own styles and build personal communities. Social media has become a new platform for women to express their opinions and present themselves. On the contrary, looking back on the influence of former media on view of gender, women are underrepresented which falsely implies that men are the culture stand and women are unimportant or invisible (Wood, 1994). The stereotype like this is shaped by the former media. Now the gender stereotype is disintegrating due to the emergence of social media. For instance, Blakle (2010) believes that social media will end gender discrimination: "To be more specific, the future entertainment media that we're going to see is going to be very data-driven, and it's going to be based on the information that we ascertain from taste communities online, where women are really driving the action. Women take the lead on social platforms because long-term, high participation has a great impact on social media" (Blakle, 2010).

The benefits of this research lies in two aspects: On the one hand, it brings valuable guiding information to user groups and the advertising market. On the other hand,

this study provides timely and multidimensional data about TikTok, especially when many academics have not studied this new social platform. This study also contributes to the scholarship on visual framing fields within the domain of the female entertainment influencers through the development of a new codebook.

For users, this study compares the differences of top female influencers according to different versions of TikTok. The findings related to significant categories can be used as strategies for guiding users to adjust their own personal brand according to their TikTok version. Personal and visual consumption are inseparable in social media. Influencers turn their unique style into a kind of cultural capital, and their followers are the consumers of this visual consumption. Schroeder (2002) thinks that from the consumer perspective, the Web is Singles advertise in personal advertisement, marketing and selling themselves as a bundle of attributes, much like product marketing. We sell our ideas, make a case for our arguments, and so forth. In today's economy, consumer choice is infused with psychological culture and political significance. Market segmentation based on consumer identities is a hallmark of marketing strategy (P.14). primarily a visual phenomenon (P.22):

In this study, the influencers who use different versions of TikTok are properly subdivided, and the framework strategies they use are summarized. The research results have a wide and positive impact on the advertising market to subdivide consumers to put in advertisements. As mentioned earlier, different versions face different cultural backgrounds and user behaviors, so this study is also of guiding significance for the advertising market to enter different regions. The data results provide an effective framework for the strategies used by influencers in different versions, which provides valuable basic information for future research on visual framing or gender research in social media.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Like other studies, this research also had limitations. The first limitation lies in the universality of data. The six influencers sampled in the study were determined according to the number of followers. The number of followers is one of the ways to extract samples. If we extract samples according to different parameters, such as the popularity of videos and the number of videos they posted, this study may get different results. Moreover, the extracted video samples were determined by stratified sampling, and the sample size is 90. The sample size may not be sufficient to generalize findings for all types of influencers, so it is unrealistic to get accurate strategies for everyone.

There are several different directions for future research. One direction will be from the perspective of gender, aiming at the behavior habits of male users and the framing strategies used by male influencers with a large number of followers, so as to explore how influencers' strategy differs based on gender. Another direction would be to interview these female entertainment influencers and find out whether they are aware of the framing strategy mentioned in the findings. Moreover, they can be interviewed about their plans for the continuous improvement of their personal branding in the future. Future research can also be based on the application market, exploring the differences in influencers' strategies on various social media and the changes in advertising effects brought by various platforms.

Conclusion

This study reveals the framing strategies used by female entertainment influencers who use TikTok when building their personal brands. The results show that the influencers like to dress up daily and shoot with a simple background. In videos, they tend to smile and have long hair, but they do not deliberately show feminine actions. Most videos use high-contrast color and utilize certain editing skills. The video's shooting angle is mainly

half-length or whole-body, and compared to Chinese influencers, American influencers prefer to post selfies videos.

Female entertainment influencers must highlight their proud personal taste through social media platforms to establish personal brand and build a cultural community centered on this taste. This demonstrates the use of the megaphone effect by influencers to attract more followers. This process is undoubtedly complicated and tortuous, so the influencers need to establish their visual identity first through framing strategies. According to Hudson (2017), “You cannot go about waltzing around this life without establishing your personal brand identity — how other people view you based on how you’ve presented yourself to them, and continue to do so on a regular basis.”

“Marketing on social media is very strategic. It requires being both analytical and conceptual, two things that are often mutually exclusive in brain-wiring. So while developing a super strong brand marketing strategy is paramount, being able to execute the vision is where it gets tricky: balancing data and creativity is what makes social endeavors successful” (Hudson, 2017). People can also refer to the marketing strategies of many companies on social media for their personal branding. Content is king in the age of social media, users want to see attractive content and unique taste rather than complicated and elaborate decorations. In other words, everyone is expecting a strong narration. The results of this study also support this inference.

Taking female entertainment influencers as a starting point and TikTok as a platform, this paper discusses the strategies of visual content for grasping users' attention. This study discusses the differences in strategies of female influencers in different regions which supplements the gaps in academic research. Moreover, combining personal branding with visual awareness also is a forward-looking domain for future cooperation between social media influencers and advertisers.

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Appendices

Figure 1: Product Positioning

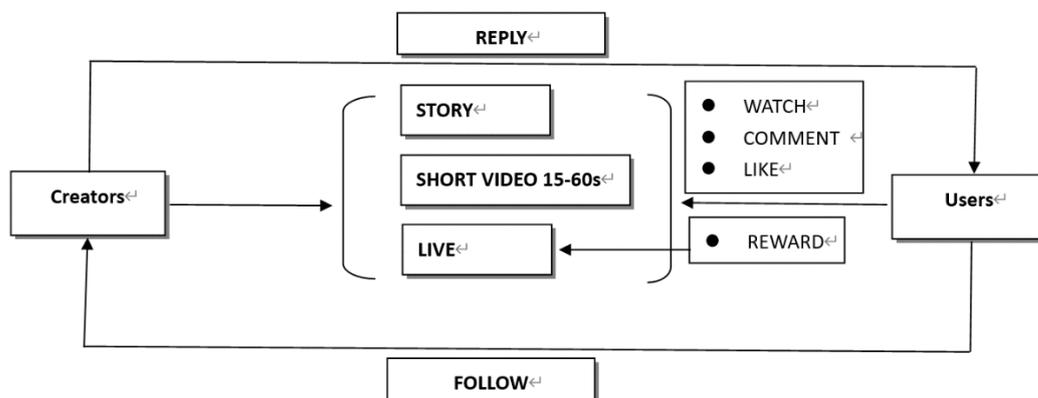


Figure 2: Product Function

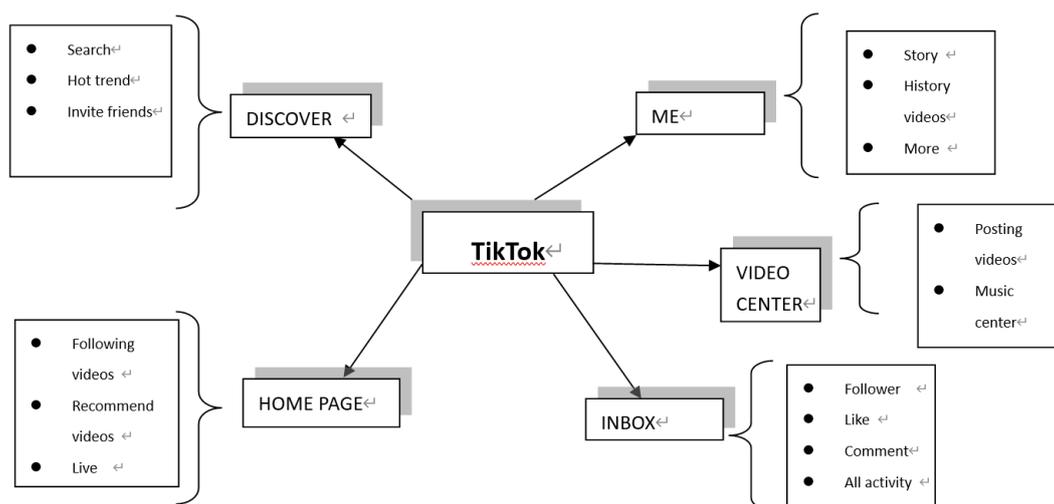


Table 1: Codebook of Study

Variables	Categories	Type , Related H		Coding
Type of attire(if influencer was present in the video)	Uniform/Casual/ Sexual	IV	Descriptive category	1=Uniform 2=Casual 3=Sexual 0=N/A

Contingent category(if influencer was present in the video and if with other,how many people in video?)	Influencer self/two/three or more	IV	Descriptive category	1=Influencer self 2=Two people 3=Three or more people 0=N/A
Facial expression (if influencer was present in the video)	Smiling / angry/depressed /expressionless	IV	Descriptive category	1=Smiling 2=Angry 3=Depressed 4=Expressionless 0=N/A
Proximity to influencer (if influencer was present in the video)	Close to/ away from the influencer	IV	Descriptive category	1=Close to the influencer 2=Away from the influencer 0=N/A
Video's color	High contrast/ low contrast	IV	Descriptive category	1=High contrast 2=Low contrast 0=N/A
Scene decoration	Simple /normal/exquisite	IV	Descriptive category	1=Simple 2=Normal 3=Exquisite 0=N/A
Self-adornment of influencer	Simple/normal/ exquisite	IV	Descriptive category	1=Simple 2=Normal 3=Exquisite 0=N/A
Frames montage	Simple / normal/complex	IV	Descriptive category	1=Simple 2=Normal 3=Complex 0=N/A
Type of shot	Selfie/ Headshot / half body/full body	IV	Descriptive category	1=Selfie 2=Headshot 3=Half body 4=Full body 0=N/A

stance	Masculine/ feminine	IV	Descriptive category	1=Masculine 2=Feminine 0=N/A
Hair cut	Long/Shoulder- length/Short	IV	Descriptive category	1=Long 2=Shoulder- length 3=Short 0=N/A
Size	Larger than life/normal/ Further from view	IV	Descriptive category	1=Larger than life 2=Normal 3=Further from view 0=N/A
Breast	Not a focal point/somewhat emphasized/ major focus	IV	Descriptive category	1=Not a focal point 2=Somewhat emphasized 3=Major focus 0=N/A
Genitals/Buttocks	Not a focal point/somewhat emphasized/ major focus	IV	Descriptive category	1=Not a focal point 2=Somewhat emphasized 3=Major focus 0=N/A
Touch	No touching/casual touch/ Provocative touch	IV	Descriptive category	1=No touching 2=Casual touch 3=Provocative touch 0=N/A
Instruction	Exhibiting/not exhibiting	IV	Descriptive category	1=Exhibiting 2=Not Exhibiting 0=N/A