

# Domesticating Social Commerce: How Douyin Becomes Embedded in Everyday Consumer Practices in China

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## Abstract

Douyin has become an important part of daily life in China since it combines entertainment, social interaction, and online shopping. This study investigates how Douyin shapes consumer behavior and how users make it part of their everyday routines. Based on domestication theory, this study uses semi-structured interviews with 15 Chinese users who use Douyin for both relaxation and shopping. The findings reveal that Douyin is not only a platform for fun but also changes how people make buying decisions. Users often follow influences, trust product reviews, and rely on algorithmic recommendations, where the comment section plays a key role in helping users check product quality and share opinions. There are many users admitting that emotional states and marketing content can easily lead to impulse purchases, but they also show growing awareness and control over their spending habits. Overall, it is Douyin that turns users from simple shoppers into cultural consumers, linking lifestyle, emotion, and consumption in daily life.

## Keywords

Douyin, Consumer Behavior, Domestication Theory, Social Media, Online Shopping

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## 1. Introduction

Douyin—the Chinese version of TikTok—has not only gained significant traction in the realms of entertainment and social interaction but has also emerged as a salient force in the shaping of consumer shopping behavior and the cultivation of brand engagement. Building on this trend, a national online survey involving 382 college students in China conducted by Yang and Ha (2021) discovered that users'

intention to make purchases of recommended products increased, as gratification from socialization fostered greater persuasion knowledge and intensified parasocial bonding with influencers. Extending beyond youth demographics, additional studies have addressed diverse populations—such as the “New Middle Class” (Jia et al., 2024). However, few have examined Douyin’s propensity for the normalization of shopping behaviors across social strata, leaving a gap in understanding how this platform transcends demographic boundaries. Amid these developments, Douyin—empowered by the affordances of digital technology and fueled by the ever-expanding richness of its content—has evolved into a ubiquitous platform for online shopping and immersive brand participation among Chinese consumers, particularly as algorithmic recommendation systems contribute to the conflation of entertainment and commerce.

Previous studies have primarily concentrated on how digital technologies are adopted by various demographic groups (Livingstone, 2003), and how such technologies become interwoven into family life and patterns of personal consumption (Courtois et al., 2012). For instance, research has demonstrated that social media platforms are increasingly embedded in users’ everyday routines—particularly within domestic environments (de Graaf et al., 2018). Despite a growing corpus of research examining the influence of digital platforms on consumer behavior in China, few studies have rigorously employed domestication theory to unpack the specific role of Douyin in this transformation.

This study thus contributes to bridging the theoretical-practical gap in understanding how domestication theory can be applied beyond domestic or family contexts to commercialized digital platforms—particularly Douyin, where entertainment, sociality, and commerce are intricately entangled. By reframing consumption as both a technological and cultural domestication process, this research underscores the transformative role of short-video media in shaping the moral economy of everyday life.

Focusing on the dynamic interplay between users and technology, domestication theory explores how individuals integrate digital tools into their daily lives—redefining, appropriating, and personalizing them in the process (Ribak, 2001; Bakardjieva & Smith, 2001). Addressing this underexplored intersection, the present study applies domestication theory to investigate how Douyin is being seamlessly integrated into the everyday lives of Chinese consumers—shaping their purchasing habits, altering decision-making processes, and transforming digital consumption norms.

The central research questions driving this inquiry are as follows: In what ways is consumer behavior on Douyin becoming increasingly normalized and widespread? What perceived benefits and challenges do users associate with shopping via the platform? By addressing these questions, this study seeks to generate fresh insights into the socio-technological dynamics underpinning Douyin’s influence on contemporary Chinese consumer culture.

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## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Social Media and Consumer Behavior

Social media platforms—particularly Douyin—have emerged as salient tools in the shaping of contemporary consumer behavior, especially regarding shopping practices and brand engagement. Research increasingly indicates the mechanisms through which social media exerts influence on purchasing decisions. For instance, [Muralidharan and Men \(2015\)](#) found that peer communication and engagement on social media significantly affect consumer shopping behavior through the reinforcement of trust and the enhancement of perceived value. In addition to peer influence, there are digital and social media marketing strategies playing a crucial role in shaping consumer attitudes and the direction of behavioral responses. [Stephen \(2016\)](#) illustrates how brands strategically employ social media in the construction and maintenance of consumer relationships. It is through the delivery of personalized and interactive content that brands can ameliorate consumer hesitations, facilitate the enhancement of trust, foster loyalty, and ultimately promote purchasing behavior. What these findings underscore is the pervasive and multifaceted impact of social media platforms on the consumer journey—from awareness and engagement to conversion and retention.

Social media platforms are now integral to the shift from traditional e-commerce to social commerce. [Ali Taha et al. \(2021\)](#) highlight that during the COVID-19 pandemic, social media became a key space for consumers to make purchases directly. The study demonstrates that social media platforms, like Douyin, are merging entertainment, social interaction, and shopping into one seamless experience. Platform domestication emphasises how technology is integrated into users' daily contexts and, through repeated practice, becomes an integral part of life. For Douyin users, the platform serves both as a venue for viewing short videos and creators' work, and as a social space for interacting with friends and family while sharing content. As usage stabilises during fixed periods (such as before bed, during commutes, or while resting), the platform embeds itself within daily rhythms, rendering consumption opportunities ubiquitous throughout life. Emotional factors also play a role in this domestication process. Users are more prone to impulse purchases when experiencing low moods, heightened stress, or under the influence of trends and fan dynamics. As the platform becomes increasingly ingrained in daily life, users transition from occasional users to highly engaged consumers. As [Haddon \(2017b\)](#) observes, this domestication process demonstrates how technology becomes a structural element of life through repeated practice and contextual embedding. This integration of Douyin into daily routines ultimately becomes a significant driver of sustained consumption.

Social media marketing has played a central role in changing consumer behavior, especially by promoting social commerce. [Rachmad \(2022\)](#) explains how social media platforms have encouraged consumers to shop in ways that blend entertainment and shopping. This shift reflects the growing role of social media in consumer purchasing decisions, with platforms like Douyin offering an engaging

and interactive shopping experience. By combining product discovery, social interactions, and brand engagement, social media platforms have made shopping more enjoyable and accessible.

While much research has focused on the general impact of social media on consumer behavior, little attention has been given to how Chinese consumers specifically use platforms like Douyin for shopping and brand engagement. Existing studies often focus on the overall effects of social media, but they do not explore how Douyin has been domesticated by Chinese consumers for their everyday shopping habits. Consequently, it becomes imperative to move beyond descriptive analyses of social media marketing and instead interrogate the micro-practices through which users integrate digital commerce into habitual routines—how, when, and why they translate algorithmic suggestions into everyday consumption. Such a focus allows domestication theory to intersect with consumer culture theory, revealing the reciprocal adaptation between platform design and user behavior. This study will address this gap by examining how consumers adapt Douyin for their specific shopping and brand engagement needs. Thus, we ask the following research question:

**RQ1: How do Chinese consumers appropriate Douyin into their everyday lives as a platform for shopping and brand engagement?**

## **2.2. Douyin's Role in Shaping Consumption in China**

Douyin has become an important part of many people's daily lives in China. Its features not only entertain users but also shape how they shop.

One major feature of Douyin is its algorithm-based content feed. This feed shows users videos based on their previous likes and interests. [Xiao \(2024\)](#) found that food videos on Douyin often make viewers want to try the same food. These videos may lead users to buy products they were not planning to buy. Livestreaming is another popular feature. [Jia et al. \(2024\)](#) exhibited that many users trust livestream hosts, especially when they are from the "new middle class." These hosts share personal experiences with products, which makes the shopping process feel more real and trustworthy.

Algorithmic affordances refer to the action possibilities platforms provide users through algorithms, and how technical design guides user behaviour. Unlike earlier social platforms that relied on active interactions, such as likes and comments, Douyin's algorithm recommends content based on viewing duration, swiping frequency and interaction data. This fosters unconscious dependency among users. By continuously recommending videos, reviews, and products aligned with interests, the algorithm deeply embeds shopping within the entertainment experience. The more users rely on algorithms to filter information for them, the more inclined they become to regard recommendations as credible choices. This makes it easier to complete purchases along the "watch video-desire-place order" pathway. [Poell \(2020\)](#) notes that platforms structure user behaviour through algorithms, shaping the actions users are likely to take. As dependency increases, users become

more deeply entangled in the platform's commercial logic. Algorithms thus become the pivotal mechanism for converting interest into purchase intent, and subsequently into actual consumption behaviour.

Trust plays a key role in Douyin shopping. Users often buy products recommended by influencers they follow. *Jiayi and Nellikunne (2023)* found that these influencers are seen as friends, not just sellers. *Yang and Ha (2021)* explained that people build emotional connections with influencers. This makes it easier for users to believe their advice and buy the same products. Shopping becomes more personal and social.

Douyin is also part of people's habits. Many use it before bed, during breaks, or while commuting. Watching videos and participating in live-streamed chats has become a daily routine. *Jia et al. (2024)* noted that for some users, shopping on Douyin is a way to relax or reward themselves. The platform turns shopping into a fun and emotional activity.

Affective infrastructures describe how platforms construct a persistent emotional atmosphere through content, interfaces, interactions, and algorithms, fostering users' emotional dependence on the platform. Douyin's rhythmic short videos, real-time interactions in livestreams, and emotional resonance within comment sections collectively form an affective environment. This enables users to experience companionship, pleasure, and a sense of community belonging during usage. As this emotional dependency accumulates, the platform becomes a fixed mechanism for emotional regulation. This mechanism manifests as users "enjoy scrolling, habitually scrolling, scrolling daily". Within this emotional cycle, consumption behaviour becomes naturally embedded. For instance, users are more inclined to try new products when emotionally elevated, while feeling low makes them more susceptible to impulse purchases. Seeing products recommended by many further triggers herd mentality. *Berker (2024)* observes that users actively participate in constructing technology's emotional and social infrastructure, transforming it into a mediating system that fulfils daily needs. Consequently, Douyin's emotional infrastructure not only sustains long-term engagement but also directly converts emotional experiences into consumptive momentum.

Although it is clear that Douyin affects consumer behaviour, few studies have examined how people use the app in their daily lives. We still know little about how users understand the pros and cons of shopping on Douyin. To explore these issues, this study asks:

**RQ2: In what ways does Douyin influence consumer trust, preferences, and purchasing behavior through its platform features?**

**RQ3: How do users experience and interpret the advantages and limitations of shopping on Douyin within their domestic routines?**

### 2.3. Domestication Theory and Social Media

The theory of domestication explains how people incorporate new media into their everyday lives. It helps us to understand how users interact with and adapt

to technology. There are four main ideas in domestication theory: appropriation, objectification, incorporation, and conversion (Haddon, 2017a). These steps show the process by which people initially adopt a new technology, integrate it into their homes or lives, and ultimately share it with others. This theory focuses on how users can change the way technology is used. Researchers have used this theory to study different platforms. Watulak and Whitfield (2016) looked at how college students used Facebook in their daily lives. Huang and Miao (2021) revealed how WeChat users in China adjusted their habits to reduce stress. Other studies have explored how people use Instagram, WhatsApp, and video services at home, work, and in public spaces (Meilinda et al., 2024; Carlo & Buscicchio, 2023). These studies show how culture, time, and place influence media use. This theory can help us understand how people in China use Douyin. On Douyin, shopping is not just about buying things. It is also about how users feel, where they are, and what role the app plays in their daily life. Zhu and Miao (2021) pointed out that people use the same app differently at work and at home. This may also be true for Douyin. Even though Douyin is widely used in China, little research has explored how it becomes part of users' habits and identities. We still do not understand how users incorporate Douyin into their shopping lives in cultural and social terms. Thus, this study asks:

**RQ4: What are the cultural and behavioral implications of Douyin's domestication on the transformation of consumer identity?**

### 3. Methods

#### 3.1. Research Design

Using domestication theory as a guide, this study adopts a qualitative approach to explore how the Douyin platform integrates into the daily lives of Chinese consumers and influences their shopping behaviours and brand interactions. The research design combines semi-structured in-depth interviews and focus groups to present complementary perspectives of individual experiences and group perceptions.

This study is centred on the four core stages of Domestication Theory—appropriation, objectification, incorporation, and conversion. The study focuses on the ways in which users engage with the Douyin platform. It also examines how Douyin has evolved from a technological medium into an integral part of users' daily lives and social interactions.

#### 3.2. Researcher Reflexivity

The researcher shares a similar cultural background and educational experience with the participants, as a Chinese national with academic training in media and communication. Most participants were fellow students, acquaintances, or recruited online; a few were friends of friends. While some degree of familiarity existed, prior to the interviews there was no knowledge of their specific experiences with online shopping or Douyin usage. This helped reduce the risk of pre-existing

assumptions or personal bias. During the research process, the relationship between researcher and participants was handled with care to maintain a balance between rapport and neutrality. All interviews followed a consistent guide, and responses were recorded and interpreted based solely on participants' own expressions. Reflective notes were kept throughout the process to identify and minimize any potential bias or over-interpretation.

### 3.3. Recruitment of Participants

Volunteer sampling is used in this research. Participants were recruited through three main methods. First, initial screening was conducted among the researcher's friends and classmates via social media, based on their frequency of Douyin use and online shopping habits. Second, several participants were recruited through referrals, where friends introduced their own contacts who fit the criteria. Third, additional participants were sourced through online recruitment posts targeting frequent online shoppers and individuals working in media-related fields.

### 3.4. Participants (Table 1)

**Table 1** presents the basic demographic information of the 15 interviewees involved in this study, including their gender, age, occupation, interview duration, and interview date.

**Table 1.** Basic information table of the interviewees.

ID No	Gender	Age	Occupation	Interview time	Interview Date
01	female	25	student	34 min	2025.5.14
02	female	26	Account Manager	31 min	2025.6.2
03	female	24	student	28 min	2025.6.22
04	male	24	student	28 min	2025.6.14
05	male	24	Recent graduates seeking employment	30 min	2025.6.12
06	female	26	student	26 min	2025.6.16
07	female	23	student	29 min	2025.7.13
08	female	25	Influencer	25 min	2025.7.20
09	female	25	Publicity Department staff	27 min	2025.7.25
10	female	25	teacher	25 min	2025.7.31
11	female	26	Chinese teacher	31 min	2025.9.7
12	female	24	Recent graduates seeking employment	32 min	2025.9.18
13	male	55	Electrical Engineer	22 min	2025.11.15
14	male	60	Sales	21 min	2025.11.23
15	male	50	farmer	23 min	2025.11.25

### 3.5. Procedure

The study was conducted with consumers in mainland China who have active ex-

perience using Douyin and have engaged in shopping behaviours on the platform. Purposive sampling was used to select interviewees, aiming to cover different genders, ages, occupations and regions to enhance sample diversity.

This study used semi-structured in-depth interviews to collect and analyse qualitative data around the use and consumption behaviours of the Douyin platform. Researchers conducted interviews with fifteen participants aged between 20 and 60, including undergraduate students, postgraduate students, and individuals already in employment. The interviewees were mainly from my circle of friends and group of classmates, and a small number of them were contacted through friends' referrals or online social networking platforms.

Before the formal interview, the researcher had a preliminary communication with each interviewee, briefly introduce the purpose of the study, the topic and direction of the interview, and also give some sample questions to help them think and prepare in advance. Considering that some interviewees are busy in their daily lives, the researcher try to be flexible in scheduling the interviews according to their schedules to ensure that the interviews can be conducted in a comfortable manner for both parties.

Since most of the interviewees were not in the same city or country as me, The researcher mainly used online meeting software (e.g. Zoom, WeChat voice/video) to conduct the interviews. Each interview lasted between 30 and 45 minutes, with the length adjusted according to the richness of the interviewees' expressions.

During the pre-interview period, some respondents expressed hesitation to participate in the interviews, fearing that they would not be able to express themselves successfully or that they would not be able to "speak well". In response, the researcher usually explained to them that the interview topic was close to their lives, and that there was no standard answer, and that the researcher would flexibly adjust the direction of the question if they were unfamiliar with it or were unwilling to answer it, so as not to cause any pressure.

During the actual interview, some interviewees expressed themselves very smoothly and were able to describe their experiences and emotional reactions in detail, while others gave shorter or even vague initial answers. Faced with this kind of situation, the reasearcher would guide the questions to areas they are familiar with according to the keywords or points of interest they mentioned, for example, to talk about consumption from "dressing content", and emotional regulation from "learning to swipe Douyin", so as to try to stimulate their willingness to express themselves.

At the end of the interviews, the researcher sorted out and summarised each respondent's answers verbatim. The interviews were conducted in Chinese, with transcripts translated by the researcher and utilising translation software. When the researcher found that there were difficulties in understanding or ambiguities in certain content, the researcher would contact the interviewees again via WeChat or other means to add details or confirm the information to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the information. Though this member checking, the research attempted to ensure the credibility of the present study.

On the whole, this round of interviews focuses on both the comfort of the interviewees' expression and the depth and diversity of the content, aiming to outline the logic of daily behaviours and changes in the consumption psychology of Douyin users through authentic and delicate individual narratives.

### 3.6. Data Analysis and Coding Procedures

The data analysis followed the grounded theory approach (Pascua Jr., 2024) to ensure systematic interpretation and theoretical generation. All interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and subjected to multiple rounds of coding. In the first stage, open coding was conducted line by line to capture participants' expressions about their everyday use of Douyin. This process emphasized staying close to the data, using participants' own language to form initial conceptual labels such as "buying under mood," "trusting influencers," and "learning from comments." Approximately 180 initial codes were identified, representing a wide range of behavioral and emotional interactions with the platform.

In the second stage, axial coding was performed to cluster similar open codes into broader conceptual categories and to identify relationships among them. The researcher examined causal conditions, actions, and consequences that connected these codes. This process resulted in a set of core categories that reflected users' domestication practices in emotional, social, and material dimensions.

Subsequently, selective coding was employed to integrate the categories around a central theme—the domestication of Douyin as a hybrid platform combining entertainment, trust, and consumer desire. Finally, a thematic synthesis approach (Naeem et al., 2023) was applied to connect these dimensions to the theoretical framework of domestication and platform consumption. NVivo 12 software was used to organize and visualize the coding hierarchy, and iterative comparisons confirmed data saturation by the fifteen interview, ensuring analytical completeness and conceptual coherence. Coding categories were iteratively refined in relation to domestication stages, allowing empirical themes to be theoretically anchored rather than descriptively grouped.

### 3.7. Ethical Consideration

All respondents have signed the informed consent form. The data recordings and transcriptions were used only for the analysis of this study and were handled in strict confidentiality to ensure the participants' right to privacy. The study has passed the university ethical review process.

## 4. Results

Based on the data from interviews, this study has generated the following findings to four research questions.

### 4.1. Appropriation & Incorporation

**RQ1: How do Chinese consumers appropriate Douyin into their everyday lives**

### as a platform for shopping and brand engagement?

Research findings indicate that Douyin has become an important media platform in respondents' lives, initially adopted for leisure and communication purposes. Nearly all participants reported frequent use, with average daily usage of 2 - 3 hours. At the stage of appropriation, users primarily understood Douyin as a tool for relaxation and social connection rather than a shopping platform.

Relaxation and entertainment represented the most common motivation for initial use. All respondents mentioned browsing short videos to relieve stress after study or work. As Respondent 07 noted, "Scrolling through Douyin has become a habitual form of relaxation, much like others watching dramas or listening to podcasts." In addition, social interaction played a key role in the platform's early adoption. Many respondents shared videos with friends or family, using Douyin content as a conversational resource and a means of maintaining relationships. Respondent 06 emphasised, "Each share is more than just a 'forward'—it's a way to nurture relationships."

At this stage, Douyin was primarily perceived as an entertainment and social platform, with consumption not yet positioned as the core function.

With continued use, Douyin gradually became embedded in respondents' daily routines, transforming from a leisure application into an internalised lifestyle tool. Participants reported using Douyin during fixed moments of leisure or relaxation, with some spending 6 - 7 consecutive hours scrolling. Through repeated and routine use, the platform became seamlessly integrated into everyday life.

Within this process of incorporation, shopping emerged as a natural extension of daily use. Several respondents reported being drawn to recommended products during moments of emotional fluctuation, leading to spontaneous purchases. As Respondent 08 observed, "When feeling low, seeing appealing clothes, beauty products, or pet supplies makes it easy to place an order." This reflects what Silverstone described as the "moral economy of the household" (Hirsch & Silverstone, 2003), here reinterpreted as a digital moral economy of everyday life in which leisure and consumption become inseparably fused.

Overall, Douyin fulfils three interconnected functions in respondents' lives: relaxation, socialising, and shopping. This pattern demonstrates how the platform moves beyond initial adoption toward deeper incorporation, reshaping daily routines and normalising consumption as part of everyday media use.

## 4.2. Objectification

### RQ2: In what ways does Douyin influence consumer trust, preferences, and purchasing behavior through its platform features?

This study reveals that Douyin serves not only as an entertainment and relaxation tool but also significantly influences users' consumer trust, preferences, and purchasing behaviour through its platform features. Respondents' usage habits and consumption decisions demonstrate that Douyin fulfils multiple roles in emotional regulation, social interaction, and information presentation, thereby indi-

rectly guiding purchasing decisions.

Firstly, emotion-driven purchasing behaviour represents a key mechanism through which Douyin impacts consumers. Respondent 09 noted: “When work pressures mount or I’m feeling upset with family or friends, I find myself instinctively opening Douyin to distract myself.” Evidently, during emotional fluctuations, Douyin’s entertainment content and product recommendations divert attention while triggering impulse purchases. The platform’s personalised recommendations and engaging content further amplify this emotionally driven shopping tendency, enabling users to form purchase decisions rapidly and achieve instant gratification.

Secondly, social interaction and trust-building play pivotal roles in consumption behaviour. Respondent 07 expressed trust in recommendations from favoured content creators, with this reliance deepening through prolonged viewing. Extended exposure to content fosters a “semi-acquaintance relationship” of trust with creators. This trust not only increases acceptance of recommended products, but also encourages users to experiment with new items that align with their tastes. This shapes their purchasing preferences and actions.

Finally, the way information is presented and the shopping experience shape user preferences and purchasing tendencies. Respondent 11 highlighted that live streaming provides an immediate demonstration of product effectiveness and usage scenarios, heightening the immediacy and impulsiveness of shopping. The diverse formats of short videos and live streams not only offer richer product information than traditional text-and-image content but also foster visual and emotional immersion, increasing interest in products and purchase intent.

Overall, Douyin comprehensively influences consumer trust, preferences, and purchasing behaviour through three functionalities: emotional triggering, social trust, and information presentation. The platform not only fulfils entertainment needs but also subtly guides consumption decisions, making Douyin an indispensable part of users’ daily lives and shopping experiences. Its personalised algorithms and interactive features continuously shape and influence consumer behaviour while users engage in leisurely entertainment.

### 4.3. Conversion

#### **RQ3: How do users experience and interpret the advantages and limitations of shopping on Douyin within their domestic routines?**

This study reveals that when using Douyin for shopping in daily life, users experience both the convenience and limitations offered by the platform, evaluating their shopping experience based on personal habits and life scenarios. Douyin has not only transformed users’ consumption patterns but also shaped their perceptions of shopping methods.

Firstly, convenience stands as a major advantage of shopping on Douyin. Respondent 01 noted that Douyin seamlessly integrates browsing with purchasing, allowing users to passively discover appealing products while scrolling through

videos. This “passive discovery” mirrors the experience of physical shopping, unlike Taobao which requires a clear objective. Users can complete purchases during leisure time without additional searches or planning, seamlessly integrating shopping into their daily rhythm. This effortless experience significantly enhances efficiency and convenience.

Secondly, interactivity and information transparency bolster user trust. Respondent 10 noted she prioritises reviewing comment sections before purchasing, particularly focusing on negative feedback. If complaints centre on quality or after-sales issues, she typically abandons the purchase; conversely, numerous positive reviews bolster her confidence. She views comments as a form of pre-purchase trial experience, helping mitigate decision-making risks. This demonstrates how Douyin leverages comment sections and user feedback to make the shopping experience more participatory and credible, while enabling consumers to assess product value more rationally.

However, impulse buying remains a potential issue with Douyin shopping. Respondent 12 mentioned that Douyin’s “grass-roots style” recommendations can lead to passive consumption, where users initially scroll through videos to pass the time but may end up placing immediate orders for featured products. While this immediacy and entertainment value enhance the shopping experience, it can also trigger impulse buying, causing users to make spending decisions without fully assessing product necessity or cost-effectiveness.

Overall, the Douyin shopping experience exhibits three defining characteristics: convenience, interactivity, and impulsiveness. Convenience and review feedback enhance shopping efficiency and trust, transforming the platform into an efficient, immersive shopping tool; yet impulsive consumption serves as a reminder for users to maintain rationality. While enjoying the convenience and entertainment Douyin offers, users must also exercise self-management to balance convenience with risk.

#### 4.4. Moral Economy & Identity

##### **RQ4: What are the cultural and behavioral implications of Douyin’s domestication on the transformation of consumer identity?**

Douyin’s integration into users’ daily routines not only shapes their shopping habits but also influences their cultural and behavioral identities. Over time, users’ consumption experiences reflect a shift from being simple “shoppers” toward a more complex self-concept shaped by aesthetics, lifestyle preferences, and cultural engagement.

Douyin’s integration into users’ daily lives has not only shaped their shopping habits but also influenced their cultural and behavioural identities. Over time, users’ consumption experiences reflect a shift from simple “shoppers” to more complex self-concepts shaped by aesthetic preferences, lifestyle choices, and cultural engagement.

Firstly, the transformation in self-image and lifestyle identity is the most direct

manifestation. Respondent 03 noted: “I’ve gradually become more confident. I see this as a positive change, making me more mindful of my appearance and enhancing my self-worth.”

This shift indicates that after prolonged exposure to Douyin content, users begin to place greater emphasis on their outward appearance and personal aesthetic, thereby elevating their sense of self-identity. Simultaneously, Respondent 04 emphasised: “Douyin doesn’t directly urge you to buy; instead, it subtly sparks your interest, fantasies, or desires in a particular field through its content.”

Through this insidious content influence, Douyin gradually shapes users’ interests and preferences, which manifest in daily choices and consumption behaviours. This impact extends beyond shopping decisions to encompass lifestyle choices, interest cultivation, and social interactions.

In summary, Douyin’s domestication usage and content mechanisms gradually transform users from mere shoppers into cultural consumers with distinct aesthetic sensibilities, interests, and lifestyle affiliations. This evolution demonstrates the platform’s profound shaping of consumer identity, while also reflecting digital media’s subtle yet significant role in molding behavior and cultural affiliation within contemporary life.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study examined how Douyin use influenced consumer behaviour among Chinese young adults. Drawing on domestication theory, this study proposed that the interaction between platform features, cultural values, and individual habits shaped users’ purchasing decisions. Unlike earlier domestication studies focused on family media integration, Douyin’s domestication unfolds through algorithmic governance and emotional engagement. This research embeds instances of Douyin’s algorithmic and affective domestication within commercialised scenarios, where consumption is influenced and determined by preferences and emotions through social media usage.

Specifically, we predicted that Douyin would not only encourage impulsive consumption through algorithmic recommendations but also help users develop selective and reflective buying habits. We also expected that emotional states and trust in content creators would mediate the link between Douyin use and consumer actions.

The results generally supported our predictions. Douyin use was positively associated with users’ emotional engagement and purchase intention, indicating that the platform played a key role in shaping consumer behaviour (RQ1). Users were more likely to make purchases when they felt emotionally connected to the content or trusted the influencer who promoted the product (RQ2). However, participants with stronger self-control and consumer awareness showed more rational decision-making, often checking reviews or comparing prices before buying (RQ3). Emotional satisfaction and perceived authenticity also mediated the influence of Douyin use on purchase behaviour (RQ4). These findings suggested that

Douyin consumption was not only affected by algorithms, but also by users' emotions, trust, and individual values, reflecting the domestication of social media within everyday consumer life in China.

Past research indicates that emotions significantly influence how people purchase goods on social media. [Xiao \(2024\)](#) found that when users feel close to influencers, they are more likely to make impulse purchases. [Yang and Ha \(2021\)](#) also noted that people primarily use Douyin for entertainment and emotional gratification. In this study, emotion remains important, yet users demonstrate greater caution. They frequently develop interest in products after viewing videos, but the majority will consult reviews, compare prices, or await more favourable pricing before purchasing. This indicates that emotion initiates interest, but rational thought determines the final action.

Earlier research indicates that Douyin's algorithm significantly influences users' purchasing decisions. The system encourages people to buy items they do not genuinely require. However, [Jia et al. \(2024\)](#) suggest that users can exert control over their online experience. My research concurs with this notion. Many users recognise Douyin's powerful push notifications, yet they do not allow it to dominate their decisions. They utilise features such as "favourites" and "shopping carts" to deliberate before purchasing, and read reviews to verify product authenticity. This demonstrates that users are not passive. They make deliberate choices and strive to strike a balance between desire and control.

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the participants were mainly young adults studying or living in urban areas, which may limit the generalisability of the findings. Older users might have different patterns of social media use or consumer behaviour, as age can influence response rates and participation in interview-based research ([Herzog & Rodgers, 1988](#)). Furthermore, research on users in rural areas remains scarce, despite these groups potentially offering more diverse perspectives on how social media influences everyday consumption behaviour. Therefore, future research should include participants from different age groups, occupations, and regions to improve the inclusiveness and reliability of the findings.

Second, this study relied solely on qualitative interviews, which provided rich insights but limited the scope of data interpretation. Since qualitative findings are based on a relatively small and purposive sample, they may not fully capture broader behavioural trends or statistical relationships. Future studies could adopt a mixed-method design to combine qualitative depth with quantitative breadth, providing more comprehensive and generalisable evidence for analysis ([Berko-witz, 2013](#)). In particular, survey data could complement interview results by identifying correlations between variables such as user motivation, screen time, and purchase intention, which would strengthen the empirical foundation of this research topic.

In addition, this study may be subject to social desirability bias. As some participants were recruited from the researcher's circle of friends, classmates, or ac-

quaintances, they may have been inclined to present their consumption practices in a more socially acceptable or self-controlled manner during interviews. This is particularly relevant when discussing impulse buying and spending regulation on Douyin, where respondents may have understated excessive consumption or overstated their ability to manage shopping behaviour. Although participants were encouraged to speak openly and assured that there were no right or wrong answers, the relational proximity between researcher and interviewees may still have influenced how certain experiences were framed.

Finally, this research focused only on Douyin users in China. As social media practices are culturally embedded, future research could conduct cross-cultural comparisons to explore how platform use and consumer behaviour differ across national and cultural contexts. Such comparisons would help identify whether Douyin's influence on consumption is a global trend or a culture-specific phenomenon. Although these limitations exist, the current study still offers valuable insights into how Chinese users domesticate Douyin in their everyday consumer practices, contributing to a deeper understanding of the relationship between digital platforms, culture, and consumption.

In conclusion, this study illustrates that Douyin has become an important part of daily life for many Chinese people. It is not only a place for watching short videos but also for shopping, relaxing, and sharing feelings. Based on domestication theory, the study finds that people use Douyin in many ways such as for fun, for learning, and for making shopping decisions. Its recommendation system and live-streaming features help users build trust in products and connect with them emotionally. As a result, Douyin shifts how people think about shopping and how they express themselves. Overall, Douyin turns online shopping into a daily habit and an important part of modern culture in China. However, this also brings challenges, as people may become more dependent on the app or influenced by impulsive buying. Future studies could explore how users can balance enjoyment and self-control when using Douyin.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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