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Cover Letter

Dear AMA Global SIG Doctoral Consortium Committee,

I am writing to express my enthusiastic interest in participating in the AMA Global SIG Doctoral Consortium in Nice, France. I am currently a third-year Ph.D. candidate at the University of Leeds, specialising in Social Media Marketing and Fashion Consumer Behaviour studies.

The core of my proposed research is a meta-analysis study titled: "A Platform-Specific Meta-Analytic Structural Model of TikTok-Based Fashion Marketing: Cross-Cultural Persuasion Pathways and Attitude-Mediated Effects."

This research directly addresses two core priorities of the AMA Global SIG: emerging trends in international marketing (TikTok) and the complexities of cross-cultural research. By utilising Meta-Analytic Structural Equation Modelling (MASEM), the project aims to integrate fragmented empirical evidence and build the first platform-specific, culturally-sensitive persuasion model for fashion brands operating globally. Crucially, this synthesis is designed to resolve the current fragmentation of empirical findings, offering a complete, structurally validated pathway essential for robust marketing decision-making. In addition, it also tests how regional culture and sustainability cues function as crucial boundary conditions that systematically moderate the effect of hedonic and social cues.

I am actively seeking specialised feedback on the robustness of the MASEM approach in a fast-evolving digital context and guidance on refining the theoretical constructs of platform affordances within the conditional Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). Given the committee's emphasis on developing high-impact research suitable for top-tier journals, I believe the rigorous methodology and high practical relevance of this work make it an excellent fit for the Consortium's collaborative discussion sessions.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration. I look forward to the opportunity to engage with distinguished faculty and peers in Nice next year!

Sincerely,

Jiazheng Nie

Ph.D. Candidate, University of Leeds, School of Design

A Platform-Specific Meta-Analytic Structural Model of TikTok-Based Fashion Marketing: Cross-Cultural Persuasion Pathways and Attitude-Mediated Effects

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Abstract

TikTok has emerged as a globally dominant platform for fashion marketing, yet empirical findings on persuasion mechanisms vary widely across cultural markets and methodological designs. Existing models, often derived from traditional social media environments, sometimes overlook TikTok's unique platform affordances, such as algorithmic personalization, participatory culture, and creator-centric credibility structures. These affordances fundamentally reshape attention allocation, cognitive load, and elaboration likelihood, rendering traditional frameworks insufficient.

This study conducts a PRISMA-guided meta-analysis and Meta-Analytic Structural Equation Modeling (MASEM) to build the first platform-specific, cross-cultural persuasion model for TikTok fashion communication. The analysis synthesizes evidence from at least twenty empirical studies reporting on hedonic cues, social cues, attitude, purchase intention, and brand equity. Meta-regression will examine sub-dimensions such as humor and visual appeal to account for measurement variation. Sustainability cues are included as a moderator due to their inconsistent effects in fashion studies, and regional culture is modeled to capture cross-market differences. The study aims to clarify the structural relationships that drive persuasion on TikTok and to offer an empirically grounded framework that advances cross-cultural social media marketing research. Findings will provide clearer guidance for fashion brands seeking effective communication strategies on this platform.

Keywords

TikTok, marketing, consumer behavior, meta-analysis, MASEM, persuasion, fashion marketing, sustainability cues, and affordances

1. Introduction

TikTok has rapidly evolved into a globally dominant platform whose short-form audiovisual content, algorithmic recommendation system, and creator-led authenticity fundamentally reshape fashion¹brand communication. Unlike earlier social platforms, TikTok introduces distinct persuasion mechanisms, including algorithmically mediated visibility and high-intensity sensory stimulation (Cotter, 2021; Serrano et al., 2022). Affordance-centered studies indicate that persuasion is determined not solely by stimulus but is also fundamentally reshaped by platform features, which consequently influence processing depth, attention, and trust (Bucher & Helmond, 2018). Consequently, models developed for text–image platforms risk conceptual mismatch and limited explanatory value when applied to TikTok.

This research operationalizes TikTok-based fashion marketing as the strategic use of creator-centric, short-form audiovisual content within a personalized, algorithmic feedback loop. Given fashion's visually driven nature, its ties to identity, and trend sensitivity, the sector aligns well with TikTok's sensory affordances. However, TikTok often exhibit significant contextual dependence and empirical heterogeneity, making the effects of individual stimulus cues highly ambiguous and context-dependent.

¹ For the purpose of this meta-analysis, **fashion** is broadly defined, consistent with industry scope, to encompass apparel, footwear, and accessories (Hameed & Razaq, 2023). It is fundamentally characterized by its reliance on visual aesthetics, rapid trend cycles, and deep integration with self-expression and identity negotiation (Barnard, 2014).

To model this process, the study integrates the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework with the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). Following established consumer behavior literature, the primary stimulus cues are operationalized across two dimensions: Hedonic Cues (reflecting peripheral route aspects) and Social Cues (reflecting creator influence). Examining these cue types separately is necessary to clarify how they differentially shape purchase motivation and long-term brand equity.

Researchers increasingly foregrounds sustainability and ethical consumption as major consumer concerns (Joy et al., 2012; Henninger, Alevizou, & Oates, 2021). While brands incorporate sustainability messaging, empirical findings on its persuasive influence remain inconsistent. We thus treat sustainability cues² not as a direct predictor but as a moderator, a theoretically supported but empirically unresolved factor whose influence is conditional and cross-culturally variable.

Despite growing interest, existing study designs remain fragmented across diverse contexts and operationalizations, resulting in inconsistent effect sizes and unresolved heterogeneity. A platform-specific meta-analysis is therefore needed to consolidate evidence and identify stable persuasion pathways. By synthesizing cumulative findings and estimating structural relations through MASEM, this study develops a rigorous, cross-culturally sensitive model of fashion persuasion on TikTok.

Aim: This study aims to construct and validate a platform-specific, cross-cultural persuasion model for fashion marketing on TikTok by systematically synthesizing existing empirical evidence.

Objectives:

1. To quantitatively synthesize the magnitude and direction of the relationships among hedonic cues, social cues, attitudes, purchase intention, and brand equity within the TikTok fashion marketing context via a PRISMA-guided meta-analysis.
2. To establish and test the hypothesized attitudinal mediation pathway for fashion persuasion on TikTok using MASEM.
3. To assess the boundary conditions of the persuasion pathway by examining how sustainability cues and regional culture systematically moderate the effect sizes via meta-regression.
4. To deepen theoretical understanding of consumer persuasion in algorithmically mediated, short-video environments by integrating platform affordances within a conditional Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) framework.

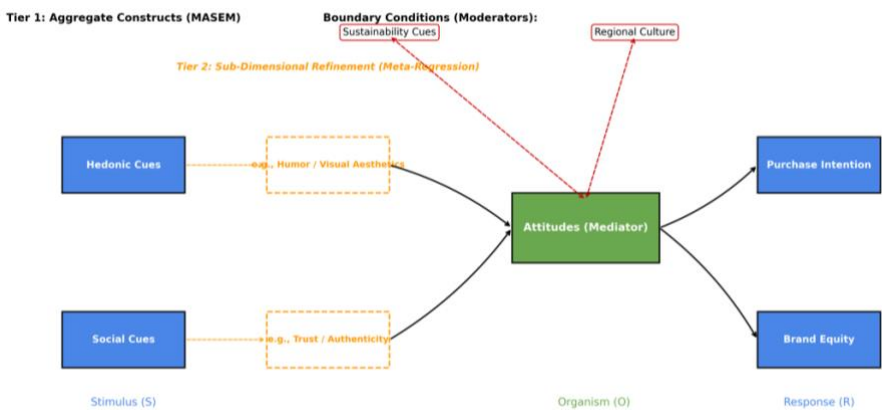
2. Theoretical Background

This research employs a platform-adapted integration of the SOR (Stimulus–Organism–Response) framework and the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). SOR remains a dominant framework in digital marketing because of its ability to map external stimuli to internal psychological states and behavioral responses while remaining flexible to different media formats (Eroglu, Machleit, & Davis, 2003). However, TikTok’s affordances modify classical consumer processing assumptions. Audiovisual intensity can increase cognitive load, pushing users toward heuristic responses (Lang, 2000). Conversely, personalization and exposure frequency can elevate perceived relevance and elaboration likelihood (Tam & Ho, 2006; Schmidt & Eisend, 2015). These opposing dynamics render ELM’s central–peripheral distinction conditional rather than binary on TikTok. The combined SOR–ELM framework, therefore,

² **Sustainability cues** in fashion marketing refer to communication signals designed to convey the brand's commitment to minimizing environmental impact (e.g., eco-friendly materials, reduced waste) and ensuring social fairness (e.g., fair wages, ethical labor practices) across the supply chain (Henninger&Alevizou, 2021; Clark, 2008). This term is often employed as an umbrella construct, interchanged with concepts like ethical fashion, green consumption, and slow fashion (Carey&Cervellon, 2014).

functions as a flexible, affordance-sensitive theoretical backbone, aligning with calls for integrating persuasion theories with platform-specific affordance models (DeVito, 2021).

Figure 1. Research conceptual framework diagram



For effect-size predictors, the study follows standard meta-analytic identification protocols. Predictors are limited to constructs appearing in sufficient numbers and representing theoretically grounded stimulus types: hedonic cues (entertainment, immersion), social cues (credibility, trustworthiness), and attitudes as the central mediating mechanism leading to purchase intention and brand equity.

Table1. Key effect-size predictors specification

Construct Category	Construct Name	Expected		Justification for Inclusion
		Minimum Sample Size (k)	Key Representative Literature	
Stimulus (Predictors)	Hedonic Cues (Entertainment, Immersion, Vividness)	~20	Lu, Fan, & Zhou (2016); Gong & Zhang (2022)	Core Peripheral Route Stimulus: Aligns with TikTok's high sensory stimulation. Used as an aggregate construct to ensure statistical power for MASEM. To address operational heterogeneity (e.g., humor/ visual aesthetics), subgroup analysis and meta-regression will be employed by coding specific content dimensions as second-level moderators (Hunter & Schmidt, 2004).
	Social Cues (Creator/Influencer Credibility, Trustworthiness, Authenticity)		Hui, Jin, & Lu (2022); Sokolova & Kefi (2020)	
Organism (Mediator)	Attitudes (Attitude toward the Brand/Content, Engagement)	~40	Eroglu, Machleit, & Davis (2003); Tam & Ho (2006)	Central Psychological Mechanism: Functions as the primary internal response (O) in the SOR model and the necessary mediator between persuasive stimuli (S) and behavioral responses (R), following the core tenets of ELM.
Response (Outcome)	Purchase Intention (PI)	~45	Ajzen (1991); Gazzola et al. (2020)	Short-Term Outcome: Represents the immediate behavioral consequence (R) of the persuasion process, necessary for providing actionable managerial insight into conversion.
	Brand Equity (BE)	~20	Keller (1993); Choi & Johnson (2019)	Long-Term Outcome: Measures the long-term strategic value and brand attachment, necessary to distinguish between transient conversion and sustainable brand building.

	Sustainability Cues	White, Habib, &	
Boundary	(Presence/Absence of	Hardisty (2019);	Theoretical Boundary Condition: Included to resolve empirical inconsistencies by
Conditions	Ethical/Green	Erz, Marder, &	testing its function as a contingent factor that enhances (or reduces) the salience
(Moderators)	Messaging)	~50 Osadchaya (2022)	of other cues, rather than a universal direct predictor.
		All	
	Regional Culture	included Hofstede (1980);	Global Marketing Requirement: Crucial for examining cross-cultural
	(Categorical/Dimensional	studies Yoo & Donthu	heterogeneity and testing whether cultural norms influence elaboration
	Mapping)	(<i>k</i>) (2005)	likelihood and the preference for social vs. hedonic cues.

To navigate the inherent trade-off between statistical power and analytical granularity in meta-analysis, we adopt a two-tiered strategy for construct specification. Tier 1 involves using aggregate constructs (e.g., Hedonic Cues, Social Cues) to ensure sufficient effect size counts (*k*) for robust MASEM path estimation (Tier 1). However, recognizing that different operationalizations (e.g., humor vs. vividness) introduce substantial heterogeneity (Q_E), Tier 2 employs meta-regression. In this second tier, we code the specific sub-dimensional focus of the cues (e.g., *Trust-based* vs. *Expertise-based* social cues) as study-level moderators. This approach allows us to retain the statistical stability required for structural modeling while simultaneously dissecting the sources of variance and providing fine-grained insights into which specific cue subtypes drive persuasion effects (Hunter&Schmidt, 2004).

Sustainability cues and regional culture are included strictly as moderators. Regional culture is posited to moderate elaboration likelihood by shaping culturally ingrained heuristic biases and affective response thresholds to intense audiovisual stimuli, which is distinct from traditional advertising contexts. Beyond macro-level cultural indices, we adopt a nuanced view, focusing on culture-specific digital socialization processes that influence cue salience. This approach allows us to test if regional variance systematically accounts for the observed heterogeneity in the effectiveness of hedonic and social cues.

3. Proposed Research Design

3.1 Search Strategy

A PRISMA-guided systematic review will be conducted across Scopus, Web of Science, EBSCO Business Source Complete, Taylor & Francis Online and Emerald Insight.

Table 2. Article inclusion criteria

Dimension	Criterion	Justification
I. Platform & Medium	Studies must feature TikTok ³ (or Douyin) as the primary research context.	Ensures the development of a platform-specific model, vital for addressing the unique persuasion dynamics mediated by TikTok's distinct affordances (Bucher & Helmond, 2018).
	Research must focus on fashion-related consumer behavior.	Fashion is defined broadly to include apparel, footwear, and accessories (Hameed & Razaq, 2023). This ensures the findings are relevant to the high sensory, trend-sensitive nature of the industry (Barnard, 2014).
III. Time Scope	Publication dates must range from 2018 to 2025.	Captures the period corresponding to the platform's rapid global dominance and expansion, ensuring temporal relevance.
IV. Data Report &	1. Must report quantifiable data	Essential for the core statistical procedure of Meta-Analysis and MASEM (Hunter & Schmidt,

³ Throughout this study, **TikTok** is used as an umbrella term, encompassing the international version of the short-video platform, as well as its mainland Chinese counterpart, Douyin, and any other localized or specialized regional versions. This approach ensures comprehensive coverage of the platform's global ecosystem.

Methodology	convertible into effect sizes (e.g., 2004). correlation r , t/F values, means/SDs). Acknowledged minimum standard for the reliable estimation of population parameters in meta-analytic methodology (Valentine et al., 2010).
	2. Sample size must be ≥ 20 . Must utilize a platform-exclusive sample or provide platform-partitioned effect sizes for Mitigates confounding effects and unmanageable contextual variance introduced by
V. Platform Exclusivity	TikTok/Douyin specifically. amalgamating data from conceptually distinct social media environments (DeVito, 2021). Must be English-language articles
VI. Publication Type	published in peer-reviewed journals. Ensures the quality and scholarly rigor of the synthesized evidence (Cooper, 2017).

While cross-platform studies provide valuable insights, we exclude studies where the reported effect sizes aggregate data from conceptually distinct social media environments, as this practice introduces unmanageable contextual variance into the meta-analytic pool.

Table 3. Boolean Search String Protocol

Concepts	Keywords	Boolean Logic	Justification
A. Platform (Mandatory)	("TikTok" OR "Douyin" OR "short-video" OR "short-form video")	(A)	Covers the international platform and its Chinese counterpart, as well as the unique media format central to the research.
B. Domain/Category (Mandatory)	("fashion" OR "apparel" OR "clothing" OR "garment" OR "footwear" OR "accessory" OR "luxury fashion" OR "textile")	AND (B)	Ensures focus on the visual, trend-sensitive product category defined in the inclusion criteria.
C. Marketing/Mechanism (Mandatory)	("marketing" OR "persuasion" OR "consumer behavior" OR "purchase intention" OR "brand equity" OR "attitude" OR "influence" OR "engagement")	AND (C)	Captures the core mechanisms and outcomes (S-O-R framework) essential for MASEM analysis.

The protocol is designed to allow dynamic updating, consistent with “living meta-analysis” practices in fast-evolving research fields (Elliott et al., 2014). Following PRISMA inclusion, all primary studies will be rigorously coded to extract convertible effect sizes and identify key study characteristics. The theoretical moderators, sustainability cues and regional culture, will be systematically coded. Sustainability is binary coded (Presence=1/Absence=0) based on ethical or green messaging; for positive cases, specific sub-dimensions (e.g., environmental/ social focus) act as second-level moderators. Regional culture is coded categorically by country of origin, enabling cross-cultural heterogeneity analysis through mapping to established digital socialization patterns or macro-level cultural frameworks (e.g., Hofstede dimensions). This systematic process ensures that observed heterogeneity in persuasion effects can be robustly attributed to these critical boundary conditions.

3.2 Data management and analysis

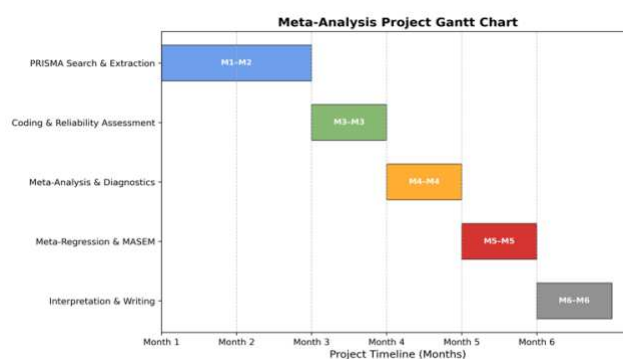
All data processing and MASEM procedures will be conducted in R to ensure transparency and reproducibility. Effect sizes for hedonic cues, social cues, attitudes, purchase intention, and brand equity will be extracted and converted to Fisher's z . Sustainability cues, region, demographics, and brand type will be coded as study-level moderators. After reliability checks, the analysis proceeds with random-effects meta-analysis and heterogeneity diagnostics. Meta-regression will test the influence of sustainability and regional moderators. A two-stage MASEM will then estimate the full persuasion pathway, with robustness examined through sensitivity tests.

4. Intended Contributions

This research offers significant contributions across three dimensions. Theoretically, it provides the first platform-specific persuasion model for TikTok fashion marketing by integrating the SOR framework and conditional ELM in an affordance-sensitive manner. It advances cross-cultural digital marketing theory by conceptualizing sustainability as a boundary condition rather than a universal predictor, offering moderator-based insights. Methodologically, the study demonstrates innovation by establishing a PRISMA-compliant, dynamically updatable meta-analytic framework for short-video platforms and effectively using MASEM to recover latent persuasion pathways across heterogeneous studies. Practically, the findings furnish global fashion brands with evidence-based guidance, distinguishing which content cues drive short-term conversion versus long-term brand equity across diverse cultural markets, thereby supporting efficient resource allocation for international campaigns.

5. Proposed Timeline

Figure 2. Gantt chart



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