A Study of Persuasion Success Among Content Creators on Short Video Platforms: A Case Study of Douyin

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Abstract

Background and Aim: The rapid rise of short video platforms, particularly Douyin (TikTok), has transformed digital media consumption and commerce in China, with Generation Z (ages 18–24) emerging as key drivers of its economy. Despite the growing influence of top content creators, existing research lacks a systematic analysis of their persuasive strategies. This study investigates how leading Douyin creators synergize Aristotle's Modes of Persuasion (Ethos, Pathos, Logos) and Acting Style Theory (Movement, Diction, Emotion) to shape audience psychology and consumer behavior.

Materials and Methods: A qualitative case analysis was conducted on the top five creators from Douyin's 2024 live-stream sales rankings: Time with Yuhui, Jia Nailiang, Xinjiang Hetian Jade Lao Zheng, Cai Lei Breaking Ice Relay Station, and Luo Ge. Data included video content, live-stream clips, user comments, likes, and shares supplemented by media reports and academic studies. Thematic analysis categorized findings using the dual frameworks of persuasive modes and performance styles.

Results: The findings reveal that successful creators strategically combine credibility-building with storytelling and data-driven logic, reinforced by expressive body language and verbal precision. For instance, knowledge-based content achieved a 12% conversion rate—more than double the industry average. Emotional narratives and urgency-driven diction significantly increased viewer engagement.

Conclusion: The findings offer strategic guidance for optimizing short video content, emphasizing the integrated use of persuasive and performative elements. Beyond Douyin, this framework applies to creators and marketers across global short video platforms. Future research should explore genre-specific strategies and cross-cultural adaptations in digital persuasion.

Keywords: Modes of Persuasion; Acting Style; Douyin (TikTok); Live-stream Commerce; Content Strategy; Audience Engagement

Introduction

The rapid rise of short video platforms has solidified their role as a cornerstone of global digital media. Douyin (TikTok) dominates the market in China through its intelligent recommendation algorithms, highly interactive content, and live-streaming e-commerce model. By 2024, Douyin's monthly active users will have exceeded 700 million, with Generation Z (ages 18–24) emerging as the primary audience and the core driving force of the platform's economy. Within this context, the success of content creators has become pivotal in shaping the platform's ecosystem and competitive dynamics. Top creators leverage persuasive models (Ethos, Pathos, Logos) and acting styles (Movement, Diction, Emotion) to amplify brand influence and commercial conversion. This convergence of persuasion and performance reflects not only commercial innovation but also an urgent need to understand digital influence in real time. As livestream commerce rapidly evolves, creators are becoming central agents of cultural production, marketing, and audience mobilization.

However, research in this field remains fragmented, lacking a systematic analysis of the success factors behind leading creators. In particular, no studies to date have systematically combined classical

persuasion theory and acting style frameworks within the specific context of Douyin's livestream ecosystem, creating a significant theoretical and practical gap.

To address this gap, this study focuses on Douyin's top content creators, employing case analysis to dissect their persuasive strategies. (Creator-specific details moved to Methodology section for conciseness.) The research selects the top five creators from Douyin's 2024 live-stream sales revenue rankings: "Time with Yuhui," "Jia Nailiang," "Xinjiang Hetian Jade Lao Zheng," "Cai Lei Breaking Ice Relay Station," and "Luo Ge." These creators are briefly introduced in this section, while specific selection rationale and data collection procedures are elaborated in the Methodology. They exemplify excellence in content innovation, audience engagement, and commercial monetization, standing as benchmarks for success on the platform.

Through in-depth case studies, this research aims to decode how these creators synergize persuasive frameworks and acting techniques to shape audience psychology and consumer behavior. The findings seek to provide actionable insights for optimizing content creation and dissemination, ultimately empowering creators to enhance viewer interaction and commercial outcomes.

Objectives

This study aims to delve deeply into the persuasive strategies of Douyin's top content creators, specifically focusing on how they utilize persuasive models (Ethos, Pathos, Logos) and acting styles (Movement, Diction, Emotion) to shape audience psychology and consumer behavior. Through case studies of the top five creators from Douyin's 2024 live-stream sales revenue rankings, the research will uncover their practical approaches to building audience trust, evoking emotional resonance, and delivering rational arguments while exploring how their performative techniques amplify content appeal and persuasive power. The findings provide actionable guidance for short video creators to optimize content creation and dissemination strategies, ultimately enhancing audience engagement and commercial conversion effectiveness.

Literature review

In recent years, the rapid evolution of short video platforms has cemented their status as a cornerstone of global digital media. Douyin (TikTok) has revolutionized user content consumption in China and reshaped content creators' influence and business models through its intelligent recommendation algorithms, highly interactive content, and live-streaming e-commerce model. By 2024, Douyin's monthly active users will have surpassed 700 million, with Generation Z (ages 18–24) dominating the primary audience and a key driver of the platform's economy (Chen et al., 2024; Tan, 2021).

User behavior patterns on Douyin have become a focal point for researchers. Studies indicate that the fragmented nature and strong social interactivity of short videos often lead to media dependency and even addictive usage behaviors (Yang, 2022). Additionally, content quality and interface design significantly impact users' viewing experiences and engagement (Liu & Wu, 2023). Douyin's business model primarily relies on user-generated content (UGC) and precision recommendation algorithms to achieve rapid growth in traffic monetization and advertising revenue (Tan, 2021). However, few studies have critically examined how these platform characteristics influence the specific persuasive mechanisms employed by top creators, especially in high-stakes commercial contexts like livestream sales.

Persuasive communication theory, rooted in Aristotle's triad of Ethos (credibility), Pathos (emotion), and Logos (logic), has been widely applied in short video communication to enhance audience receptivity and interaction. Dontcheva-Navratilova (2023) examined how creators strengthen credibility through

professional delivery, personalized branding, and trustworthy visual presentation, thereby increasing user trust. Pelclová & Lu (2018) highlighted the critical role of emotional tactics—such as storytelling, emotive language, and music—in shaping audience attitudes, particularly in consumer decision-making and social issue advocacy. Despite the dominance of fast-paced, visual-driven content, Hills (2018) emphasized the enduring importance of data-driven arguments and factual accuracy in bolstering persuasive power. While these works provide foundational insights into individual persuasive dimensions, they often treat Ethos, Pathos, and Logos as discrete elements rather than exploring how they function interactively in live-streaming scenarios. This lack of integration limits their explanatory power in highly dynamic and multimodal environments like Douyin.

The rise of digital media technologies and short video platforms has challenged traditional theories of acting styles in explaining modern content-creation practices (Li, 2022). To address the high-speed, information-dense nature of short videos, scholars have proposed refined frameworks that categorize creators' performance styles into three dimensions: movement (body language/camera dynamics), diction (verbal expression), and emotion (affective delivery) (Arby, 2024). This framework comprehensively analyzes how creators amplify their influence and audience retention through multi-dimensional performance strategies (Oresanya, 2022). However, few studies have directly compared or linked performance styles to persuasive effectiveness, particularly in live commerce contexts. In addition, most existing works on acting styles draw from traditional media or theater, raising questions about their applicability to short-form digital content.

Existing research offers preliminary insights into persuasive strategies among short video creators but lacks a systematic synthesis. Dontcheva-Navratilova (2023) identified how creators build Ethos through professionalism and visual authenticity. Pelclová & Lu (2018) underscored Pathos as pivotal in shifting consumer attitudes, while Hills (2018) argued for the complementary role of Logos in enhancing credibility. Yet, there is limited discussion on how creators dynamically balance or prioritize these appeals based on audience characteristics or content goals. Moreover, the relationship between performance (e.g., emotional tone, gesture, speech rhythm) and persuasive effect is rarely theorized in tandem.

In summary, the literature highlights key components of persuasion and performance but fails to offer a unified model that captures how these elements interact in Douyin's livestreaming context. This fragmentation necessitates an integrative framework. Therefore, this study adopts a dual-dimensional analytical model that combines Aristotle's Modes of Persuasion with Acting Style Theory to explore how top content creators synthesize rhetorical and performative strategies. This conceptual framework (Figure 1) is directly informed by the gaps identified in the literature and aims to bridge the divide between persuasive theory and performance analysis in short video research.

Conceptual Framework

This study integrates Aristotle's Modes of Persuasion (Ethos, Pathos, and Logos) with Acting Style Theory (Movement, Diction, and Emotion) to construct a dual-dimensional analytical model (Figure 1), aiming to decode the generative mechanisms of persuasive power in short video content.

These two theoretical frameworks were selected because they capture both the rhetorical and expressive dimensions of short video communication. Aristotle's persuasive appeals explain how creators influence cognition, emotion, and trust, while Acting Style Theory accounts for how visual and performative techniques shape attention, immersion, and engagement.

In Douyin's livestream context, where immediacy, emotional resonance, and credibility converge within seconds, this integration is particularly relevant. Persuasion without effective delivery risks being

ignored, while performance without persuasive substance lacks conversion power. Thus, their synergy is essential to explain how content creators simultaneously appeal to logic, emotion, and performance aesthetics in driving audience behavior.

Figure 1 below presents a unified, clearly labeled diagram combining the two frameworks. The figure has been refined into a single version for clarity, avoiding previous duplications. Labels are aligned, and arrows indicate the bidirectional influence between rhetorical modes and performance elements, where persuasive intent (Ethos, Pathos, Logos) can shape performative choices (Movement, Diction, Emotion), and vice versa.
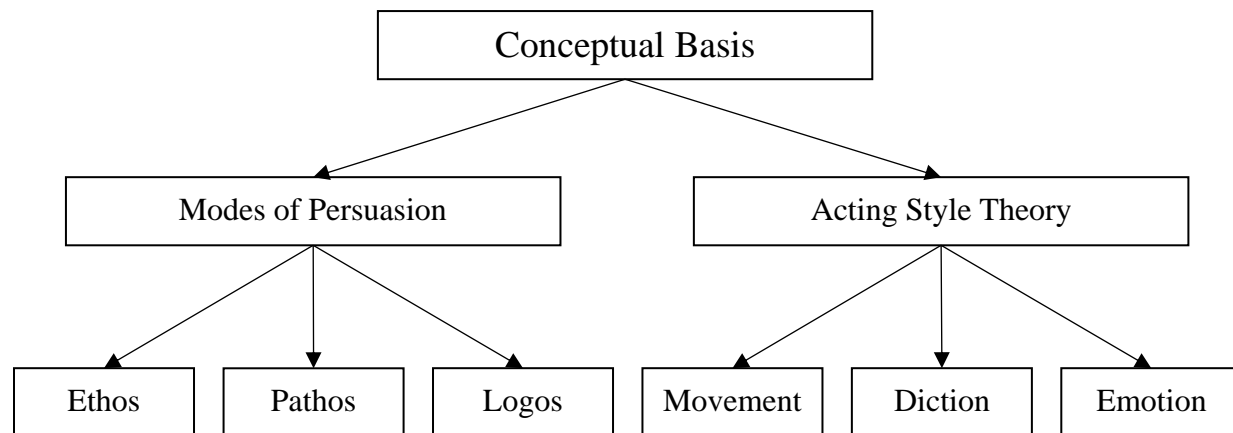

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Ethos, Pathos, and Logos are the three core dimensions of Aristotle's Modes of Persuasion. Ethos focuses on gaining the audience's trust by establishing authority, credibility, and a sense of moral responsibility. Pathos aims to build deep user identification through emotional appeal and shared values. Logos emphasizes gaining cognitive alignment from the audience through rational argument, data support, and structured information processing.

Movement refers to the physical movement of the body or objects, such as gestures, posture, and camera transitions. In performance or content creation, movement can convey information and enhance expressiveness. Streamers use gestures to emphasize key points or guide the audience's attention through camera movement to convey information and boost expressiveness. Diction refers to the choice of words and pronunciation in language expression, focusing on accuracy and suitability. Streamers use conversational vocabulary to build rapport or employ technical terms to establish authority, which are examples of "diction strategies. "Emotion refers to the emotional state conveyed through facial expressions, tone of voice, and content design. Livestreams use an enthusiastic tone for promotions or tell inspirational stories to evoke empathy, primarily to engage the audience's emotions and encourage interaction and conversion.

Methodology

This study adopts a case analysis method, focusing on top content creators on Douyin to analyze their persuasive strategies in depth. Case analysis is a qualitative research approach particularly suited for exploring complex phenomena and understanding behavioral patterns of subjects. The research selects the top five creators from Douyin's 2024 live-stream sales net income rankings as subjects. These creators were selected based on publicly released platform data from Douyin's official 2024 annual sales report, which ranks livestreamers by total gross merchandise value (GMV). This ensures objectivity and relevance to commercial persuasion effectiveness. These creators demonstrate outstanding capabilities in content

creation, audience influence, and commercial monetization, representing the platform's highest level of content creation.

Data was collected from public sources, including creators' video content, live-stream clips, user comments, likes, and shares. Media reports, industry analyses, and academic studies were also referenced to ensure comprehensive and accurate data. The collected data were categorized based on Aristotle's modes of persuasion theory (Ethos, Pathos, Logos) and acting style theory (Movement, Diction, Emotion). Specifically, the analysis examines how these creators enhance audience trust and purchase intent by establishing credibility, evoking emotional resonance, and providing rational arguments. It also explores how they use elements of acting styles—such as body language, verbal expression, and emotional delivery—to boost content appeal and persuasive power.

Thematic analysis was conducted following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework: (1) familiarization with data, (2) generation of initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report. Through thematic analysis, key themes and strategies were identified in each creator's application of persuasive modes and acting styles. Examples include how "Time with Yuhui" builds credibility (Ethos) through a professional image and knowledge-driven content; how Jia Nailiang strengthens emotional resonance (Pathos) through sentimental storytelling; and how "Xinjiang Hetian Jade Lao Zheng" provides rational arguments (Logos) using data and factual demonstrations.

Results

Guided by the objectives of this study, this paper employs a case analysis method, selecting Douyin's five top content creators—Time with Yuhui, Jia Nailiang, Xinjiang Hetian Jade Lao Zheng, Cai Lei Breaking Ice Relay Station, and Luo Ge—as research samples to dissect their content creation strategies. Grounded in Aristotle's Modes of Persuasion and Acting Style Theory, the study explores how these creators integrate ethos (credibility), pathos (emotion), logos (logic), and elements of acting styles—such as body language, verbal delivery, and emotional expression—to achieve effective information delivery and commercial conversion.

Figure 2 "Time with Yuhui" host Dong Yuhui

Time with Yuhui, originally named Dong Yuhui, is a leading content creator on the Douyin platform. As of 2024, he has amassed 24.67 million followers, with an annual sales volume exceeding 9 billion yuan.

Figure 3 Jia Nailiang, the operator of "Non-stop Livestream"

Jia Nailiang, who transitioned from a traditional film and television star to the operator of Douyin's "Non-stop Livestream," reached 48.41 million followers on Douyin by 2024. His annual sales exceeded 8 billion yuan, establishing a personal brand that is both content-rich and highly influential.

Figure 4 Lao Zheng, anchor of "Xinjiang Hetian Jade Lao Zheng."

Xinjiang Hetian Jade Lao Zheng, with his unique business model and content strategy, has consistently ranked among the top ten in sales within the jewelry and jade livestream e-commerce sector. By 2024, he had garnered 1.93 million followers on Douyin, with an annual sales volume exceeding 7.6 billion yuan.

Figure 5 Cai Lei, founder of "Cai Lei Breaking Ice Relay Station"

Cai Lei Breaking Ice Relay Station is a public service live e-commerce brand founded by ALS (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis) activist Cai Lei. By 2024, it had accumulated 5.19 million followers on Douyin, with annual sales surpassing 6 billion yuan.

Figure 6 Emerging content creator Luo Ge

As an emerging content creator, Luo Ge reached 1.352 million followers on Douyin by 2024, with annual sales exceeding 5.7 billion yuan.

Modes of Persuasion

1. Time with Yuhui

Regarding Ethos, the host of "Time with Yuhui," Dong Yuhui, has established a strong foundation for the brand by creating an authoritative image through professionalism and personal charisma. The success of "Time with Yuhui" largely depends on the professional image Dong Yuhui has built in his short videos. According to the "2024 Douyin Top Creators List, "Dong Yuhui's account ranks at the top with an annual sales volume of 9 billion yuan. One of the key factors in his success is creating an authoritative and trustworthy personal brand that enhances audience trust. In "Time with Yuhui" videos, the creator uses multiple visual and auditory symbols to establish an authoritative and professional image. First, in the introduction, Dong Yuhui uses a formal outfit, a neat appearance, and a confident tone to convey a professional image. Additionally, the carefully designed background in the videos, such as a consistent brand color scheme and a tidy environment, further strengthens the audience's positive perception of his brand. When building a personal brand, content creators need to focus not only on their external image but also on their internal behavior standards and professional content to gain the audience's trust. Dong Yuhui has established his professional image as a knowledge-based host by wearing a neat suit, using precise language, and adopting an engaging style. His live streams often cover topics such as culture and history. In this knowledge-driven livestream model, Dong Yuhui builds high trust with the audience through clear explanations and high-level expression.

Regarding Pathos, the creator uses storytelling techniques to guide the audience's participation, enhancing their emotional connection and identification with the product. In one livestream, Dong Yuhui shared his experiences and deep emotions for his hometown's farmers, illustrating the hardships of wheat farming and the farmers' deep connection to the land. He mentioned: "When the wheat in your house ripens, you go back to harvest it. Remember when we were kids? Every time harvest season came, our family was so preoccupied with the weather that they could not think about anything else—worrying about rain, worrying if the wheat would rot. In the old days, we used sickles to harvest, and later, we used harvesters, but we were still worried about whether the harvester would make it. When the wheat blossoms, we worry

about the weather changing, the drought, or the flood. It is about grain, planting, harvest, joy, reproduction, vitality, and an undying civilization. "These stories, deeply rooted in farmers' struggles, deeply resonated with the audience, creating a strong emotional bond. This livestream garnered 32.6 million likes and 18,000 comments. Through this emotional storytelling, Dong Yuhui successfully established an emotional connection between the audience and the product, significantly increasing the viewers' purchase intent. Dong Yuhui also uses "the boy in the cornfield" as a core memory symbol, frequently referencing his rural upbringing. Many rural college students "packed their bags in fertilizer bags" and "memorized words under streetlights. "By recreating detailed scenes, he activates nostalgic emotions in his audience. This type of narrative resonates with Generation Z's emotional need for "struggle stories. "His story-based videos average 2.58 million likes, 63% higher than his knowledge-based content. Embodied Narrative, through mirror neurons, creates a sense of immersion for the audience. The comment section frequently features emotional expressions like "This is me" and "I cried watching this. "Dong Yuhui not only used storytelling to share the origin and emotional backdrop of the product but also leveraged this emotional resonance to create a deep identification with the product. This demonstrates the significant role of emotional resonance in brand communication. By telling stories filled with genuine emotion, creators can effectively close the gap with their audience, foster brand loyalty, and ultimately drive sales conversions.

In "Time with Yuhui's" video on Shanxi's historical and cultural heritage, the content design follows a three-part logical framework:" cultural background, anchoring-functional value analysis, cost optimization. " When recommending the book Records of the Grand Historian (Shiji), the creator first anchors the culture by analyzing the modern significance of Sima Qian's historiography, then compares the reading difficulty of different versions to explain its functional value, and finally offers a"15 minutes of history reading per day plan" to optimize decision-making costs. This structure reduces cognitive load, turning complex information into more digestible forms, which results in a 12% conversion rate for knowledge-based products, well above the industry average of 5%.

Regarding Logos, "Time with Yuhui" strengthens rational argumentation through data presentation and factual comparisons. Specifically, the creator uses before-and-after product comparison shots and specific numerical data to explain product effects, such as charts or data markers that illustrate changes. This data-driven logical argument allows the audience to quickly receive precise and reliable information, helping them form a rational judgment and, to some extent, driving their purchasing behavior.

2. Nailiang Jia

Regarding Ethos, Jia Nailiang transitioned from a film and television star to a professional livestream host. Leveraging the public recognition he gained during his acting career, he built a dual image that blends "approachability" with "professionalism. During live streams, he interacts with viewers by dancing and jumping rope while showcasing carefully selected products, which undergo a strict screening process by a team of over 100 people, with more than 90% of products being from major brands. His live streams are known for their iconic humor and rigorous product selection process, maintaining entertainment value while reinforcing his professional credibility. During the 2024 June 18 shopping festival, his livestream achieved a GMV exceeding 450 million yuan in a single session through four layers of subsidies (national, brand, personal, and platform subsidies). The sales of Midea air conditioners alone surpassed 100 million yuan, directly reflecting users' trust in their product selection abilities. Jia Nailiang has faced controversies about "price gouging, " particularly during the 2023 Double 11 shopping festival, when his livestream sold down jackets and beauty devices at higher prices than other channels. In response, his team used explanations such as "differences between old and new models" and "price comparisons with unofficial channels are

invalid," and recorded a video emphasizing "absolute transparency in the process, " partially alleviating user concerns.

Regarding Pathos, Jia Nailiang excels at linking products with universal emotional symbols like family, struggle, and self-care. For example, when recommending liquor, he often uses the theme of "heritage passed down from parents," emphasizing the family memories embedded in the product. In his agricultural livestreams, he elevates the purchasing behavior to a sense of social responsibility, linking it to "supporting rural revitalization" by showcasing the stories of farmers behind the products. This strategy combines individual consumer needs with collective value identification, emotionally elevating personal sentiment to group belonging. During a 2024 livestream in Shenzhen, he tied the sale of down jackets to the metaphor of "resisting the cold of life" through a narrative centered around "city strivers," achieving sales of 140 million yuan in a single session, validating the effectiveness of this emotional symbolism strategy.

Regarding Logos, Jia Nailiang's livestreams build a foundation of rational trust through a "full transparency" model. His team has established an in-house quality inspection system with over 100 staff members, strictly adhering to national standards. It even conducts surprise checks on international brand production lines and background checks on their qualifications. During a livestream showcasing cultural tourism, he presented the cultivation and logistics cost calculations of fruit farmers in Daliang Mountain, and through traceability live streaming, displayed the processes in the packaging factory and cold chain logistics, transforming the abstract concept of product quality into a visualized "trust infrastructure. "This approach aligns with consumers' rational expectations of 'product quality being a hard currency' but also reduces perceived risks through standardized post-sale compensation processes, making persuasion more rigorous and objective.

3. Xinjiang Hetian Jade Lao Zheng

Regarding Ethos, Xinjiang Hetian Jade Lao Zheng strengthens his professional authority through a "source "live streaming strategy, emphasizing the supply chain advantage of "no middlemen to inflate prices. "His account page clearly states, "Bringing jade jewelry to the common people at affordable prices, so more people can wear jade. "He uses short videos to showcase daily scenes from the jade selection factory and the use of flashlights for jade identification, crafting an image of an "expert. "Pre-event videos frequently feature labels such as 'direct source' and 'high-quality goods from the source,' along with topics like 'the battle between the poor and the rich' and 'noble people,' which resonate with the values of middle-aged and elderly audiences, enhancing their trust in the authenticity of the products. Although jewelry and jade categories have a high cognitive threshold, Lao Zheng simplifies the terminology during his livestreams, using terms like "flesh-like crystal structure" and "luster," making the information easier to understand. He also emphasizes the selection standard of "never selling inferior goods. "When viewers urged him to put products on sale, he directly responded, 'We are not on the same wavelength; if you cannot stand it, leave, 'maintaining his professional authority with a strong attitude. This strategy not only meets the demand for "easy-to-understand" content from middle-aged and elderly users but also solidifies competence trust by reinforcing knowledge barriers.

Regarding Pathos, Lao Zheng is skilled at moving his audience through storytelling. For example, during a livestream in December 2023, while introducing a piece of ancient jade passed down through generations, he shared the story of his family's tradition of jade identification. He described how his ancestors could identify genuine jade with a keen eye, while soft background music added a warm, sentimental atmosphere to the live stream. This emotional narrative resonated with the audience, helping

them understand the product's cultural value and emotionally connect with it. After the live stream, viewers shared their feelings about traditional culture in the comment section, further validating the effectiveness of the emotional strategy.

Regarding Logos, Lao Zheng uses data and visual comparisons to enhance his persuasive power during the livestream. In a May 2024 livestream, he compared the same piece of jade under different lighting conditions. He used charts to highlight identification standards and price ranges, illustrating genuine and fake jade differences. The rational data argument effectively complemented the emotional expression. Lao Zheng used precise numbers and comparison charts to give viewers a solid basis for judgment, enhancing the product's credibility. During the live stream, viewers continuously asked for specific data and comparison details, demonstrating the practical impact of the logical argument.

4. Cai Lei Breaking Ice Relay Station

In terms of Ethos, Cai Lei, former Vice President of JD. Com, a key promoter of electronic invoicing in China, brings his elite business background to "Breaking Ice Relay Station," providing initial credibility for the brand. After being diagnosed with ALS, he transitioned into a "scientific entrepreneur" and founded Aiscon Medical Technology, creating the world's largest ALS research data platform, "Jianyuhuzhijia" (ALS Mutual Help Home), which has reached over 15,000 patients. His work has accelerated the development of over 100 drug pipelines, shortening the ALS drug development cycle by more than 50%. This shift from a business leader to a medical and public welfare advocate has enhanced his dual symbolic capital of "professional authority" and "social responsibility." Cai Lei's team collaborates with over 70 top scientists and more than 60 research institutions, establishing eight joint laboratories. By publishing the "Product Selection White Paper," they openly share supply chain details, merging scientific data with commercial practice. Medical devices sold in his livestream are accompanied by third-party testing reports to ensure "verifiability," which bolsters user trust.

Regarding Pathos, Cai Lei is adept at storytelling to evoke emotional resonance with his audience. He shares his experiences of perseverance in adversity and how he transformed personal suffering into public welfare action, filling his livestream with warmth and strength. During one product promotion, Cai Lei told how he and his family overcame hardships, using the label "entrepreneurship with illness" to evoke sympathy and support from the audience, creating an emotional resonance that led viewers to support his cause. Meanwhile, viewer interactions and emotional feedback in the comments section reflected the success of his emotional delivery strategy.

In terms of Logos, although emotional factors play a significant role in Cai Lei's livestream, he also emphasizes using data and facts to enhance persuasion. He uses comparison charts, price anchoring, and authentic user reviews during product presentations to demonstrate the product's value. For example, when promoting a particular household item, he showed precise before-and-after comparison data, highlighted the price difference between the market price and the livestream discount, and shared genuine feedback from loyal customers, forming a clear and rational argument. Through this data-driven approach, Cai Lei ensures that his product recommendations have emotional appeal and a solid rational foundation for persuasion, significantly improving conversion rates.

5. Luo Ge

Regarding Ethos, Luo Ge has established high credibility through a consistent personal image and professional content presentation. Specifically, he typically wears simple yet elegant clothing at the beginning of his videos. He pairs it with a clean, uniform background design, such as a brand logo and a product display wall, creating a strong visual identity. Luo Ge uses a confident and steady tone during self-

introductions and product explanations. Conveying his professional knowledge of the product and industry experience. Building personal brand credibility in digital media requires consistency between internal and external perceptions. In one product review video, Luo Ge showcased product details and drew on his long-term personal usage experience to emphasize his "professional, meticulous, and reliable" image, quickly fostering trust among viewers.

Regarding Pathos, Luo Ge skillfully uses storytelling and emotional language to evoke resonance from his audience. Specifically, in his product usage descriptions, he often conveys his genuine feelings through vivid narratives, such as how the product changed the details of his life or solved real-life problems while accompanying it with warm, motivational background music to create an emotionally resonant atmosphere. Emotional expression plays a significant role in shifting audience attitudes in short video content. Luo Ge adjusts his speech speed and tone. When discussing success stories, he occasionally adds exaggerated emotional expressions to close the psychological distance with his audience, prompting them to develop emotional identification. For example, in a product comparison video, he introduced the product specifications calmly. Then, he used emotional descriptions and vivid user feedback to successfully spark the audience's anticipation for how the product would improve their quality of life.

Regarding Logos, Luo Ge builds a solid argument structure based on data and facts. In his videos, he often uses product before-and-after comparisons, charts, and price anchoring techniques to present the product's advantages to the audience visually. For example, in a video explaining product functions in detail, he synchronized data changes (such as before-and-after effect comparisons and specific parameter changes) on the screen and user reviews to create a rational argument. This complemented the subjective nature of emotional expression. Additionally, Luo Ge frequently references professional test reports or certification logos in his videos, making the argument process more objective and rigorous, providing the audience with sufficient rational grounds that further build trust in the product beyond emotional identification.

Table 1 Key Persuasive Strategies by Creator

Creator	Key Ethos Feature	Dominant Pathos Strategy	Primary Logos Technique	Notable Metrics
Time with Yuhui	Professional educator image	Rural memory & nostalgia	Structured info + data charts	12% conversion rate
Jia Nailiang	Celebrity + trust	Humor & family values	Transparent pricing system	450M RMB in one session
Lao Zheng	Expertise in jade sourcing	Generational storytelling	Visual product comparison	7.6B RMB/year
Cai Lei	Entrepreneurial + medical credibility	Illness narrative	Scientific reviews + price anchoring	6 B+ RMB/year
Luo Ge	Consistent persona + trust	Life improvement stories	Before/after + certifications	5.7B RMB/year

Acting Style
1. Time with Yuhui
In terms of Movement, in "Time with Yuhui" videos, the creator stands confidently with a steady posture and a firm gaze, presenting a self-assured and professional image. When showcasing products, he

uses both hands to hold items, gently brings them closer to the camera, or employs a "disappear-reappear" dramatic technique, visually conveying information to the audience. The rhythmic and dynamic movements align with the fast-paced nature of short videos, significantly enhancing the immersive experience for viewers. Based on these theories, Performance Style Theory suggests that through precise design and use of Movement, creators display personal charm and significantly enhance their professional image. In one video promoting home goods, "Time with Yuhui" starts with a stable stance, then uses natural and smooth gestures to show the product details, followed by a brief off-camera moment and returns to create the "disappear-reappear" effect, allowing the audience to absorb a wealth of comparative information quickly. Overall, his consistent and varied physical expressions increase the video's appeal and strongly support the persuasion strategy, strengthening the audience's trust in the product and the creator. During a livestream, Dong Yuhui tasted a dish and dramatically reacted with an exaggerated expression of pain before disappearing from view. Upon reappearing, he exclaimed, "This is delicious!" This dramatic "disappear-reappear" technique led to viewers commenting, "Are you still selling this?" Dong Yuhui replied, "Those who love it, love it beyond measure, passionately and profoundly. "

Regarding Diction, "Time with Yuhui" adopts a steady and well-structured communication style. His tone is calm, and his speech rate is moderate, creating an engaging communication mode. During live streams or recorded videos, he often speaks directly to the audience in the second person, frequently responding to comments, creating an "exchange while speaking" interactive atmosphere. The appropriate tone, speech rate, and choice of words in short videos are crucial for shaping the creator's brand. This stable and engaging linguistic rhythm improves information transmission efficiency and builds a trustworthy and approachable image. In a beauty and skincare livestream on May 20, 2024, Dong Yuhui applied a product to his hand while speaking in a steady, modulated tone, explaining its ingredients:" This facial cream contains only water, Astragalus root extract, and glycerin. Most moisturizers on the market contain just water and glycerin, but this product uniquely adds a large amount of Astragalus extract, which provides stronger nourishment and repair. "When he mentioned 'a lot of Astragalus extract,' comments flooded in asking questions like, 'What is Astragalus used for?' and 'Does Astragalus extract irritate the skin?'" Dong Yuhui responded using simple language while incorporating professional terminology, explaining Astragalus's antioxidant and moisturizing properties, and replying to viewers' questions in real-time, creating a "demonstration $\rightarrow$ explanation $\rightarrow$ interaction" loop. Through this "demonstration and explanation + real-time interaction" expression model, Dong Yuhui helped the audience quickly understand the product's unique selling points and reinforced his professional image and credibility. This language strategy played a crucial role in information transmission efficiency and interactive depth, providing a solid foundation for emotional resonance and credibility in the overall persuasion strategy.

In terms of Emotion, Dong Yuhui displays warm and appropriate emotional delivery in "Time with Yuhui" livestreams. He skillfully uses facial expressions and tonal variations to subtly convey his strong confidence in the product and deep care for his audience. For example, when discussing the product's advantages, his voice naturally becomes slightly more enthusiastic, allowing viewers to feel the product's unique charm and value genuinely. When addressing user pain points, he immediately slows his pace, and his tone softens, showing empathy and making the audience feel understood and cared for. Dong Yuhui's emotional expression is sincere and appropriately measured. His authentic and moderate emotional expression enhances the audience's immersion and increases interaction rates. For instance, during a live stream on August 24, 2024, where he spoke about his career transition, Dong Yuhui shared his journey from teaching to becoming a livestream host. His tone began to steady as he calmly reflected on the past.

However, as the memories deepened, especially when recalling the time spent with students and the challenges of staying true to his educational mission after transitioning, his voice became somewhat choked, and his speed fluctuated. He expressed concern about the changes in education and the potential loss of pure learning joy for children, while feeling proud to continue sharing knowledge on a new platform. These complex emotions conveyed through his genuine outpouring resonated deeply with the 600,000 viewers, making them feel they were all part of the same emotional experience. The viewers understood his struggles and perseverance, identified with his educational passion, and projected their experiences, significantly enhancing their fondness and trust in Dong Yuhui. His balanced and sincere emotional delivery added a rich human element to the livestream content. Whether sharing personal experiences or telling user stories, he conveyed key information through appropriate emotional modulation, providing strong support for the emotional dimension of the persuasion strategy, further enhancing viewer interaction and trust. This allowed the audience to gain product information and experience emotional fulfillment and resonance during the livestream.

2. Nailiang Jia

In terms of Movement, physical actions play a key role in digital video communication, quickly grabbing attention and enhancing message delivery. Douyin hosts Jia Nailiang's movements during live streams, demonstrating a blend of professionalism and approachability. His upright and steady posture exudes a confident and friendly aura from head to toe. This professional demeanor, developed through years of experience as a TV host, aligns well with the need to convey an authoritative and trustworthy image in the new media environment. He uses moderate yet visually impactful gestures to accompany his explanations when showcasing products. For instance, combining "tasting+facial reactions" draws viewers into food-related live streams. Dramatic body language effectively increases the audience's engagement time from 12 to 28 minutes, helping them better understand the product's functionality. He also pays attention to facial expression control and eye contact, adjusting his expressions according to the content of the livestream. For example, in an "Autumn Fen" meme video, his affectionate gaze and perplexed expression, combined with the suspenseful plot, garnered over 70 million views, driving high popularity and sales in the live stream, significantly boosting audience trust and participation, thereby increasing persuasive power. Additionally, Jia Nailiang uses dynamic camera angles to complement his body movements, such as slight zoom-ins and zoom-outs during product experience live streams, creating a "slow-motion" and "quick cut" effect that enriches the rhythm of the video, enhances information delivery, and amplifies visual impact, fully enhancing the live stream's effectiveness.

Regarding Diction, Jia Nailiang's language strategy in his live streams demonstrates precise rhythm control and emotional stimulation. His average speaking rate is 240 words per minute. During promotional "countdown launches," he accelerates his speech to 300 words per minute to create a sense of urgency. His high-frequency signature phrases, like "close your eyes and buy" and "slow hands lose, "have influenced purchasing decisions significantly. For instance, in a home appliance livestream, the phrase "close your eyes and buy" was used 27 times and drove 52% of the sales for a particular product. Moreover, his "repeated questions+professional answers" mode, where he frequently addresses comments like "Can oily skin use this?" increases comment participation by 18%, strengthening credibility and approachability while maintaining viewer retention. This interactive strategy has helped build a unique linguistic ecosystem in his livestreams.

Regarding Emotion, Jia Nailiang's emotional expression strategy relies on the collaborative use of multimodal emotional symbols to construct emotional transmission and audience resonance deeply. His

facial expression management follows standardized features, using micro-expressions like a 15° upward smile, 20% enlargement of the eyes, and deepening furrows between the brows to enhance the emotional warmth and audience immersion in the content. In terms of tone modulation, Jia Nailiang employs an emotional progression mode of "choking-up-silence-firmness" (as seen in his charity agriculture livestreams), which resulted in a sharing rate of 15%, far surpassing the average sharing rate of 6% in regular livestreams. Through the coordination of multimodal emotional cues(such as fluctuating background music and slow-motion close-ups), his livestreams generate dual emotional stimuli via visual and auditory channels, strengthening the audience's emotional connection. In his storytelling, Jia Nailiang shares personal experiences and user stories, building a sense of identity and trust in purchasing decisions. This systematic emotional expression strategy preserves the appeal of his celebrity status while using strategic performance to create a collaborative effect between emotional bonding and rational persuasion.

3. Xinjiang Hetian Jade Lao Zheng

Regarding Movement, Lao Zheng's body language during live streams is highly distinctive. He consistently maintains a steady stance, and when showcasing jade, he slowly and solemnly picks up the stone, using a "pick up-place down" motion to simulate the traditional jade appreciation ritual. In an April 2024 livestream, when introducing a rare jade, he calmly picked it up and slowly rotated it for display, making detailed observations in front of the camera. This seamless sequence of movements demonstrated his professional expertise and enhanced the visual effect and ceremonial atmosphere. Carefully designed movements greatly enhance the immersion and persuasive power of the video.

In terms of Diction, Lao Zheng maintains a clear and rhythmic commentary style during his livestreams. His language is concise, and his tone is steady, often incorporating idioms and poetry related to jade culture, which adds a literary touch to the professional knowledge. For example, in a February 2024 live stream, when discussing jade identification techniques, he quoted the idiom "crystal clear and pure as jade." He explained each step in a calm and magnetic voice, making the explanation accessible and insightful. His personalized language enhances the audience's acceptance and identification with the content and bridges the gap between his expert persona and the viewers.

In terms of Emotion, Lao Zheng is skilled at using facial expressions and tone variations to convey his deep affection for jade culture. For instance, in a November 2023 livestream, when recounting the legendary story of an ancient jade piece, his tone shifted from calm to passionate, and his facial expression transformed from indifferent to filled with excitement, making the entire livestream deeply engaging. Lao Zheng's performance allowed the audience to hear expert knowledge and feel his profound emotional connection to traditional culture. After the livestream, many viewers expressed how moved they were by his sincerity, prompting numerous inquiries and orders.

4. Cai Lei's Breaking Ice Station

In terms of Movement, Cai Lei effectively demonstrates the technique of enhancing content expressiveness through carefully designed body movements during his livestreams. During product introductions, he typically adopts a steady posture and natural, fluid gestures, maintaining a professional image while using his body language to guide the audience's attention. For instance, he employs a dramatic "disappear-reappear" technique when showcasing product details, hiding the product off-camera and quickly revealing it, creating visual suspense and impact. These dynamic movements capture the audience's attention and increase the efficiency of information delivery through physical expression. This series of movement designs highlights the product's key features while reinforcing its charm, creating a unique livestream style.

In terms of Diction, Cai Lei uses a straightforward yet engaging tone, establishing an intimate connection with the audience. When explaining products, his speaking rate is moderate, and his tone gradually shifts from calm to more intense, balancing professionalism with approachability. Particularly when discussing charitable products or sharing personal experiences, he adopts a softer, deeper tone to enhance the emotional impact of the information. He also frequently uses memorable phrases like "quality assurance" and "business for good" during interactions, making his messages concise and impactful, easy for viewers to recall. The language style of short video creators directly influences how the audience perceives the brand image, and Cai Lei's precise and rhythmic delivery is key to improving communication efficiency. His performance in this area organizes the live stream content and reinforces key messages by repeatedly emphasizing core points, deepening the audience's impression.

In terms of Emotion, emotional expression is the most impactful aspect of Cai Lei's livestreams in moving his audience. He skillfully uses facial expressions and tone changes to convey his emotions to the viewers authentically. When discussing his public welfare philosophy and personal experiences, his expression gradually shifts from calm to resolute, sometimes even with excitement, adding a heartfelt tone to the livestream atmosphere. This genuine and appropriate emotional expression significantly boosts the audience's emotional resonance and interaction rates. When Cai Lei shares his journey of battling ALS, the determination and tenderness in his eyes allow the audience to see a successful businessman and a real person full of warmth and responsibility. This emotional management and expression not only elevate the content's emotional depth but also greatly enhance the audience's emotional connection, driving higher levels of engagement and making purchasing decisions more likely.

5. Luo Ge

In terms of Diction, Luo Ge is known for his clear, friendly, and engaging language style. His tone in the videos is usually steady and rhythmic, allowing him to accurately convey product information while enhancing audience participation through a "talk-and-interact" approach. Specifically, Luo Ge often uses colloquial, everyday language in his explanations, such as employing vivid metaphors (e.g., "this product is like a little helper in your life") and repetitive catchphrases (e.g., "really great!"), making the information easier for viewers to remember. Moreover, he excels at adjusting his speech rate and tone during interactions with viewers, responding in real-time to comments and questions, and creating a "speak and answer" interaction model. This dramatically increases the video's approachability and the efficiency of information delivery.

Regarding Movement, Luo Ge emphasizes overall body language and dynamic performance. His videos often feature full-body shots from head to toe, using carefully choreographed sequences of movements to capture the audience's attention. Specifically, when introducing products, Luo Ge presents himself with a steady posture, slightly leaning forward and maintaining a determined gaze, conveying confidence and focus. At the same time, when demonstrating product details, he uses hand gestures to present the product in stages, such as "pick up" and " how to place back. "This seamless gesture design is intuitive and dramatic, quickly drawing the viewer's eye. Additionally, he skillfully uses camera techniques during the livestream, incorporating stable single-camera shots and switching between multiple cameras to capture close-ups of facial expressions and hand movements, further enhancing the dynamic visual effect.

In terms of Emotion, Luo Ge creates a strong emotional resonance through facial expressions, vocal tone, and timely emotional transitions. In his videos, when discussing product advantages or showcasing user feedback, his facial expressions shift from calm to excited, and his voice transitions from gentle to enthusiastic, perfectly demonstrating the flow from rational to emotional engagement. In one video where he shares a product experience, Luo Ge starts with a relaxed introduction and gradually moves into sincere emotional expression, raising his tone and speeding up his speech to convey the joy and satisfaction the product brings, all while accompanying the narrative with fitting background music to enrich the emotional

layers. This emotional expression draws the audience closer and helps create empathy, increasing product trust and willingness to purchase. Authentic and nuanced emotional delivery is key to boosting audience interaction and completion rates, where Luo Ge excels.

Discussion

This study identifies how Douyin's top creators combine rhetorical and performative elements to maximize persuasive impact. Across the five cases, Ethos is built through professional image, credibility cues, and domain expertise; Pathos through emotionally resonant storytelling and nostalgic appeals; and Logos through factual comparisons, interactive explanation, and data demonstration. For acting styles, Movement varies from dramatic gestures to subtle emphasis, Diction balances informality with expertise, and Emotion is consistently used to build connection, empathy, and trust.

These integrated strategies proved effective because Douyin's algorithm-driven, fast-paced, and emotionally charged environment demands immediate audience attention and sustained engagement. The combination of real-time interaction and short-form content means creators must quickly establish trust, stimulate emotion, and convey value, making the synergy between persuasion and performance essential.

This study employs case analysis to investigate how the top five creators from Douyin's 2024 live-stream sales net income rankings utilize persuasive modes and acting styles to influence audience psychology and consumer behavior. The findings reveal that top creators demonstrate highly strategic applications of persuasive frameworks. In terms of Ethos (credibility), they establish professional authority to enhance audience trust. For instance, "Time with Yuhui" cultivates an authoritative personal brand through a polished professional image and knowledge-driven content. At the same time, Jia Nailiang leverages his acting career to blend "approachability" with "professionalism." Such credibility-building strengthens trust in the creators and extends to product credibility, aligning with Dontcheva-Navratilova's (2023) observation that short video creators enhance trust through professional expression and visual authenticity.

Pathos (emotion) plays a pivotal role in short video communication. Top creators evoke emotional resonance through storytelling and emotive language. For example, "Cai Lei Breaking Ice Relay Station" shares his struggle with ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis), eliciting audience empathy and support for his charitable initiatives. This aligns with Pelclová & Lu's (2018) emphasis on emotional expression as critical for shifting consumer attitudes. Notably, this study reveals a novel insight: creators use Logos more effectively by leveraging livestream interactivity. Through real-time explanations, visual demonstrations, and direct Q&A, they transform logic from static presentation to responsive engagement, contradicting prior assumptions that Logos is less adaptable to visual media (Hills, 2018). "Time with Yuhui" employs data visualization and comparative analysis to strengthen rational arguments, fostering audience trust. Hills (2018) similarly highlights the enduring relevance of factual accuracy in boosting credibility, corroborating this study's findings.

In acting styles, top creators amplify content appeal and persuasion through movement (body language), diction (verbal delivery), and emotion (affective expression). For example, "Time with Yuhui" uses a steady posture and natural gestures to reinforce professionalism, while Jia Nailiang employs dynamic hand motions to clarify product functionality. Jia Nailiang's humorous interactions and clear articulation enhance audience engagement, shaping his relatable brand persona. "Cai Lei Breaking Ice Relay Station" combines authentic emotional expression with a resolute tone to deepen audience identification with his cause. These findings resonate with Oresanya's (2022) argument that multi-dimensional performance enhances creator influence and audience retention.

Taken together, these findings offer two key theoretical contributions. First, they extend existing research by demonstrating how rhetorical modes and performative styles operate interactively rather than in parallel. Second, they introduce a dual-dimensional analytical model that is empirically validated in a fast-evolving, commercial digital space. Prior studies tend to isolate persuasion from performance—this study demonstrates their strategic fusion.

However, this study is not without limitations. First, the research is contextually bound to Douyin and Chinese cultural communication styles. Audience expectations for authority, emotional appeal, or humor may differ across platforms (e.g., TikTok, Instagram Live) and cultures. Second, as livestream data is publicly available and commercially generated, it may be affected by platform curation, editing, or algorithmic amplification. These factors may influence visibility and perceived performance success.

Future research should test this integrated framework across other platforms and demographics, incorporating quantitative metrics such as click-through rate, watch duration, and user sentiment to evaluate persuasive-performance interactions with greater granularity.

Conclusion

Top content creators successfully establish authoritative yet approachable personal brands by combining professional image-building, emotional storytelling, and rational argumentation with meticulously designed body language (movement), verbal expression (diction), and emotional delivery (emotion), thereby achieving highly effective audience engagement and commercial conversion. This study demonstrates that such integration is especially effective within livestream contexts, where interactivity, spontaneity, and viewer feedback dynamically shape persuasive delivery. The ability to adjust tone, structure, and emphasis in real time enhances not only emotional immersion but also logical clarity and credibility. They flexibly select and combine persuasive frameworks and performance techniques based on target audience characteristics and content themes. For instance, "Time with Yuhui" seamlessly integrates professional authority (Ethos), emotional narratives (Pathos), and data-driven logic (Logos) with controlled gestures (Movement), articulate speech (Diction), and authentic emotional expression (Emotion), crafting a trusted and relatable brand identity.

Theoretically, this research contributes a dual-dimensional analytical framework that bridges classical persuasion theory with modern acting style approaches. This is the first known application of such a model in the context of short video livestream commerce. It not only confirms the value of rhetorical strategies in digital content but also emphasizes the often-overlooked performative mechanisms that drive engagement and conversion.

Practically, the findings provide content creators, digital marketers, and platform designers with actionable insight into optimizing persuasive impact. The study highlights which combinations of strategy and delivery yield high audience trust and behavioral response, especially useful for training emerging creators.

Limitations of this study include its cultural specificity (focused on Chinese livestreaming norms) and potential commercial bias due to reliance on platform-released performance data. These factors may limit the generalizability of results across global platforms such as TikTok or YouTube Live.

Recommendation

For Content Creators:

1. Build credibility (Ethos) through professional consistency. Creators should prioritize building a professional image using specialized language, expert-led content, and a consistent brand visual identity.

2. Evoke emotional resonance (Pathos) with story-driven content. Share personal or community-based experiences to strengthen identification. Use emotive language, background music, and symbolic memory (e.g., nostalgia) to trigger connection.

3. Deliver rational appeals (Logos) through data visualization and interaction. Use before-and-after comparisons, factual demonstrations, and structured explanations. Leverage livestream functions (e.g., real-time Q&A, visual tests) to dynamically engage audience cognition.

4. Apply acting style techniques.

Movement: Use purposeful body gestures and camera rhythm to sustain attention.

Diction: Adapt language to match product complexity and audience literacy; combine technical accuracy with conversational warmth.

Emotion: Use voice modulation and facial expression to communicate authenticity and empathy.

For Platform Designers and Marketers:

1. Support creators in developing integrated persuasive-performance skillsets. Training programs should include not only content writing or video editing, but also rhetorical techniques and on-camera presence.

2. Optimize algorithmic exposure based on persuasive quality metrics. Beyond views and likes, consider integrating metrics such as emotional resonance (comment sentiment), informational clarity, and retention-to-conversion ratios.

3. Segment creator tools by persuasive strategy tiers.

A layered model could be adopted—for instance, a "persuasion pyramid" placing Ethos as the foundation, Pathos in the middle (emotional bridge), and Logos at the top (conversion trigger).

For Academic Researchers:

1. Apply the dual-framework (persuasion + acting style) to other platforms and contexts. Future studies can examine how this model performs across TikTok or culturally distinct markets.

2. Integrate quantitative tracking (e.g., eye movement, retention analytics, or NLP-based comment analysis) with thematic case studies.

3. Explore how cultural differences shape the reception of Ethos, Pathos, and Logos, especially in cross-border influencer marketing.

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