Marketing And Promotional Effectiveness in Social E-Commerce: How Key Opinion Leaders Can Stimulate Consumers' Desire to Buy

Ming Wang *

School of Foreign Studies, Changzhou University, Jiangsu, China

* Corresponding Author Email: 2100920217@smail.cczu.edu.cn

Abstract. Social e-commerce (SEC) promotes and sells products or services on social media platforms, building customer relationships through social interaction. It achieves "People Bring Goods" marketing through the influence of individuals or communities. Key opinion leaders (KOLs) play an important role in social e-commerce, and their influence can stimulate consumers' purchasing behavior. Use the Social Network Analysis (SNA) perspective to design a questionnaire, which focuses on the connection between brokerage and subgroups or communities. Based on a questionnaire survey, this paper examines how KOLs stimulate consumers' desire to buy and prompt their purchasing behavior. The study used ELM model to analyze the data collected from the questionnaire and proposed three hypotheses, by analyzing the results of the questionnaire, hypothesis one and two were confirmed, but hypothesis three was unconfirmed. Therefore, the results of the study suggest that KOLs stimulate consumers' purchase desire and purchase behavior by providing detailed information and showing their expertise.

Keywords: Questionnaire method, social e-commerce, marketing promotion, key opinion leader (KOL), ELM model.

1. Introduction

With the rapid development of digital technology, people's daily life is increasingly dependent on the Internet and smartphones. This digital society provides a favorable ecological environment for live banding and social e-commerce. At the same time, the rise of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok overseas, and WeChat and Xiaohongshu in China have become the daily social tools of hundreds of millions of people, and they are also effective platforms for brands and individuals to market their products. This provides a rich social channel for social e-commerce. Consumers today are increasingly inclined to shop online, especially the younger generation. They prefer to get product information through social media and live shows rather than traditional advertising. Personal branding and influence on social media become the capital for success. Social e-commerce and live streaming bandwagons offer individuals the opportunity to turn their influence into business opportunities. Social e-commerce often promotes and sells products or services through social media platforms, while this kind of marketing model is human-centric and uses social networks to promote the spread and sale of goods through the influence of individuals or communities.

This is the so-called "People Bring Goods" marketing [1]. Social e-commerce companies actively use private traffic for sales conversion, live broadcasting on social platforms or creating product catalogs on the page, with links directly to the online store. Meanwhile, Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) are individuals or organizations that have a certain amount of influence and a fan base in a specific field or on social media. Individuals can play the roles of KOL, live anchor or celebrity spokesperson at the same time [2]. KOL collaborates with social e-commerce companies, and both parties work together on marketing. KOL and team members need to create high-quality content in order to attract and retain the attention of viewers. The content should be authentic, interesting, and highlight the features of the promoted product or brand. The KOLs then share the collaborative content to their social media platforms, and the e-commerce platforms can promote the content on their own channels for more exposure. At the same time the e-commerce platform can offer exclusive deals and promotions to the KOL's followers and subscribers to encourage them to buy the product.

There are many different branches of research in this field today, and many researchers have done extensive and rewarding studies on how personal influence on social media affects brand partnerships and sales. They have observed and analyzed how social media celebrities, internet celebrities and opinion leaders are making money through live streaming. In addition, researchers are interested in consumers' decision-making processes and psychological responses in live streaming and social e-commerce environments. The influence of trust, social factors and virtual shopping experience on purchasing behavior is explored through the control variables method. With the development of science and technology, including augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR), there are also many experts who have begun to study how these technologies will affect the future of live banding and social e-commerce. Live banding and social e-commerce represent a major change in retail and marketing in the digital age, and they are having far-reaching impacts at both the social and business levels.

Researchers are actively studying these phenomena to better understand their potential impact on business development and to provide practical advice on how to succeed in this emerging field. As technology and society continue to evolve, research in this area will continue to thrive. In this research context, this paper discusses the topic of how key opinion leaders, i.e., KOLs, can stimulate a shift in consumer beliefs and thus a shift in purchasing behavior.

2. Research Method

The research method adopted in this paper is the questionnaire method. Before designing the questionnaire, this paper firstly reviews the cited studies on social e-commerce, including the relevant articles on KOL bandwagon, in order to facilitate the establishment of the questionnaire framework. For the existing research on social e-commerce, this paper introduces the perspective of social network analysis in the questionnaire design stage to design the questionnaire, which is the novelty of this study. After that, this study obtained the questionnaire results by distributing the questionnaires on multiple social platforms. With multiple questionnaires collected, this study needs to introduce a research framework to systematically analyze the results. Therefore, this paper uses the ELM model to make hypotheses before analyzing and then verify whether the hypotheses are confirmed or not based on the collected results.

2.1. Questionnaire Survey

First of all, in the questionnaire design stage, this questionnaire needs to fit the theme of the article, so before designing the questions, this paper needs to summarize what kind of role KOL plays in social e-commerce with goods. For example, during shopping festivals, such as mid-year 618, year-end double eleven, a large number of KOL will produce a class of video for shopping sharing, the list of goods in a wide range of categories, which may cover the daily chemical, beauty, food, electronics and so on, in order to stimulate consumers' shopping needs. Accordingly, it can be summarized that the role of KOL in social e-commerce is mainly embodied in driving sales and market dissemination, KOL through the release of product recommendations, use experience, trial reports and other content on social media [3]. They use this to attract the attention and interest of fans, thus stimulating the desire to buy and contributing to the sale of products, and their recommendations and sharing can quickly spread to a large number of users, bringing more exposure and brand influence [4].

Then this paper redesigns the questionnaire questions according to the KOL banding process and banding characteristics, including from the social network analysis (SNA) perspective [5]. The theme around which this questionnaire is centered is to find out consumers' preferences when watching KOL banding. Preferences include the product information that consumers need, the role of KOL in spreading the information and the characteristics that consumers want KOL to show in the bandwagon, and these are the answers that need to be collected in this questionnaire.

Respondents need to answer the questions according to their own feelings and actual experiences when they watch the KOLs they are interested in bringing goods. In question 2 of the questionnaire,

if the respondent chooses not to support KOLs to bring goods, it will be regarded as a questionnaire. In the statistics section of the questionnaire results, the link to the questionnaire was shared and the samples were recovered through WeChat groups, Xiaohongshu, Douban groups, and QQ space, and 135 confirmed questionnaires were recovered from 163 copies.

2.2. ELM Model

For how to analyze the collected questionnaire data, this paper will cite ELM model as the analysis framework. In the ELM model, there are two ways for consumers to process the obtained information, the core path and the edge path, and this paper also starts from these two paths for verifying how KOL stimulates consumers' purchase desire [6]. Regarding the core path and edge path, this paper makes three hypotheses.

2.3. Three Hypotheses

In the core path, when consumers are highly motivated and capable, they will consider and push through all aspects of the information and analyze the product's concept, performance, etc. in depth and evaluate it carefully, and the KOL's establishment of a consumer brand identity among the target consumers can lead to positive brand attitudes and behaviors [7]. Hypothesis 1 is proposed accordingly.

Hypothesis 1: KOL gives detailed product information positively stimulates the effectiveness of consumer recognition information.

In the edge path, the requirements for consumers to deal with information is lower, consumers often only need to deal with some surface edge information, do not spend too much energy for information to identify and deep thinking, because consumers cannot judge the authenticity of some information content, only through some information peripheral factors to determine the credibility of the information, thus mixed with emotional factors. At this time, KOL through certain social media roles and their content is particularly favored by others, showing his/her unique role in social media [8]. This can stimulate the senses of consumers, so that consumers will be linked to the product and the KOL itself, this impression will form the consumer's emotional attitude towards the product. Accordingly, hypothesis two is proposed.

Hypothesis 2: KOL's attraction positively stimulates consumers' purchase desire and purchase behavior.

As a peripheral factor in the edge path, KOL professionalism can be observed from two aspects [9]. First, consumers can judge from daily tweets and content output whether KOLs are familiar with product details and performance, and the correct way to use the product. Secondly, consumers can judge the degree of professionalism from the real-time interaction between KOL and the audience in the live broadcast, such as the professional questions raised by the audience KOL can fluently answer and answer effectively, also reflecting its degree of professionalism. KOL's professionalism can stimulate consumers to learn more about the products they are interested in. Accordingly, hypothesis three is proposed.

Hypothesis 3: KOL's professionalism positively stimulates consumers' purchase desire and behavior.

3. Results

3.1. Presentation of Questionnaire Results

Firstly, the following tables and charts are made based on the results of the 135 confirmed questionnaires collected, meanwhile, the data collected from this questionnaire is less different from the trend of the data from the previous e-commerce related research. For different variables, the data quoted in the pie charts below are all within Table 1.

Table 1. Statistics on the results of the questionnaire survey

Variant	Options	Number of people	Percentage
Age	< 18 years	24	17.78
	19 to 35 years	96	71.11
	> 35 years	15	11.11
Type of information that consumers want to obtain from KOL	Complete	93	68.89
	Exact	87	64.44
	Updated	87	64.44
Buying behavior after gaining information	Check the product by oneself online and then buy from KOL	24	17.78
	Purchase after comparing other ways	90	66.67
	Trust KOL to buy directly	9	6.67
	Wait and see	12	8.89
Characteristics of KOLs that make consumers want to buy	KOL actively interacts with their fans	39	28.89
	KOL is reliable and focuses on user needs	86	63.7
	KOL does an interesting live streaming or output	10	7.41
Characteristics of KOLs that make consumers decide to buy	KOL knows that product well	93	68.89
	KOL makes an effective assessment of the product	57	42.22
	More discounts on KOL's live streaming	24	17.78
	KOL live streaming room atmosphere is good and attractive	36	26.67
Attitude towards KOL bandwagon	NOT immaterial	46	34.07
	Acceptability depends on product quality	78	57.78
	Sick	11	8.15
Attitude towards KOL bandwagon ADs	More receptive to hard ADs	114	84.44
	More receptive to soft ADs	21	15.56
Attitude towards multiple KOLs recommending one product at the same time	NOT immaterial	77	57.03
	Disappointed	46	34.07
	Favorable	12	8.89

Combining Table 1 and Figure 1, in the bar chart made from the results of this multiple-choice question, most consumers want the information given by KOLs to be complete (68.89%), accurate (64.44%), and updated in real time (64.44%).

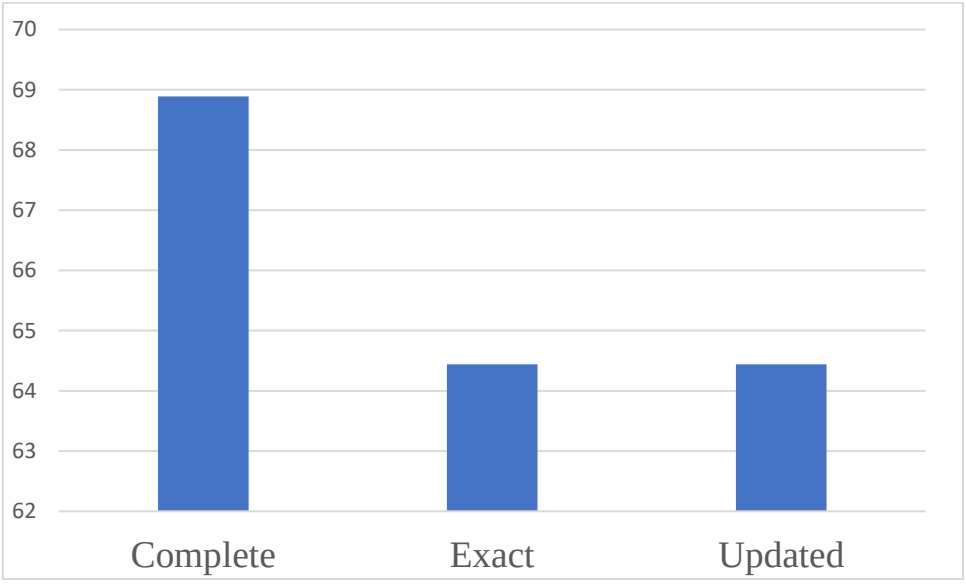


Fig. 1 Type of information that consumers want to obtain from KOL.

Combining Table 1 and Figure 2, according to this pie chart, this questionnaire found that most of the consumers (66.67%) chose to compare other ways to make a purchase after knowing the product information, followed by a part of the consumers (17.78%) will choose to check the information by themselves and then purchase from KOL.



Fig. 2 Buying behavior after gaining information.

Combining Table 1 and Figure 3, in this pie chart, this questionnaire found that the majority of consumers (63.7%) believe that reliable, KOLs that can focus on users' needs will stimulate their own desire to buy.

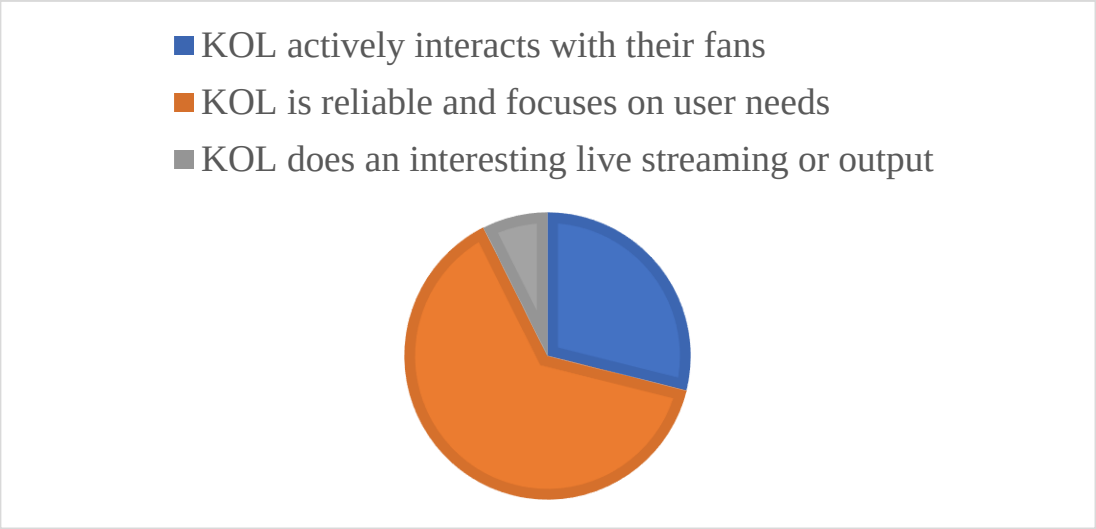


Fig. 3 Characteristics of KOLs that make consumers want to buy.

Combining Table 1 and Figure 4, in this bar chart, this questionnaire found that the feature of KOL knowing the product very well made most consumers (68.89%) make the decision to buy the product from the KOL, while the KOL' s ability to evaluate the product effectively also prompted a larger portion of consumers (42.22%) to make the purchase decision.

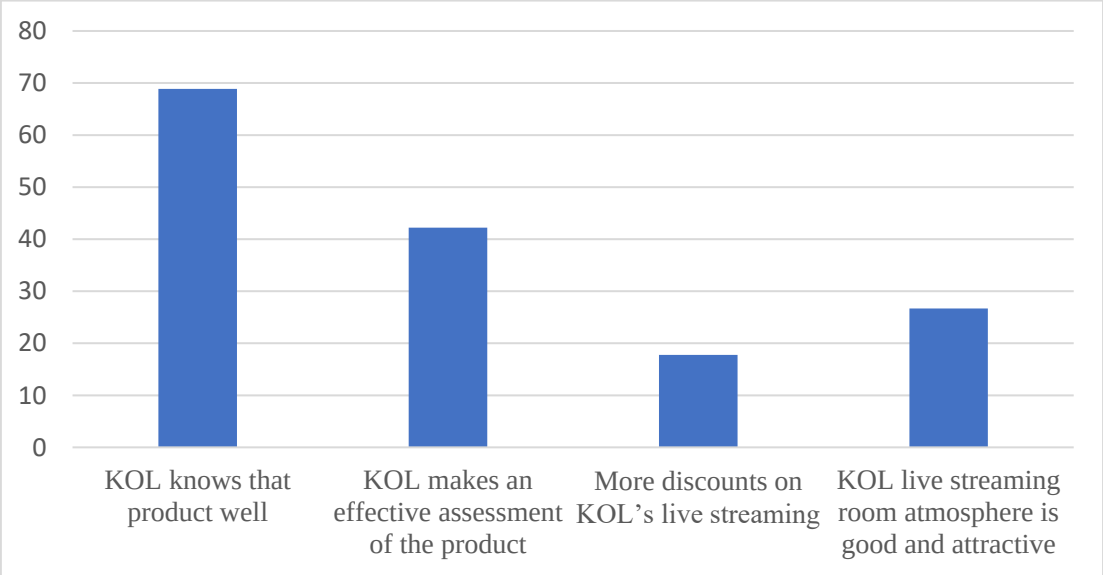


Fig. 4 Characteristics of KOLs that make consumers decide to buy.

Secondly, according to Table 1, most consumers (57.78%) have an acceptable attitude towards KOL banding, but the degree of acceptance varies with the quality of the product, and most consumers (84.44%) are more accepting of hard advertising than soft advertising; and as for multiple KOLs recommending the same product, more than half of the consumers (57.03%) think that they will not be affected and have their own shopping judgment, and some of the consumers (34.07%) have a disappointed attitude towards KOLs, believing that KOLs do not know enough about product information.

3.2. Discuss Whether the Hypotheses are Confirmed According to the ELM Model

For Hypothesis 1, when KOLs give detailed product information, consumers can analyze all aspects of the information, and they will check other ways to make a purchase based on the information content. Therefore, KOLs giving detailed product information will positively stimulate consumers' perception of the effectiveness of the information. Hypothesis one is confirmed. For hypothesis 2 and 3, according to the statistical results of the questionnaire, comparing whether the

KOL with goods interacts actively with fans and whether the live broadcast style and content are interesting, more consumers focus on whether the KOL with goods should pay attention to the needs of the users, be reliable and know the product very well, and have relevant knowledge and experience. Therefore, compared with the attractiveness of KOL, the professionalism of KOL can positively stimulate consumers' desire to buy and purchase behavior, hypothesis 2 is confirmed, hypothesis 3 is not confirmed.

4. Discussion

For consumers involved in product marketing and promotion in the central path, KOL gives more detailed product information. This action has a significant impact on the perception of the effectiveness of consumer information. KOL show themselves and products in the live broadcast and content output. Subsequently, the major social media APP or shopping platform APP will push this kind of content to affect the browsing consumers, so that the consumer clicks and participates in the promotion of the product. This kind of personalized advertising meets the consumer preferences [10]. So that they feel pleasure, excitement, shopping desire is stimulated. At this time, the degree of involvement is high, consumers tend to process information in the core path. KOL gives detailed product information will further promote consumers to retrieve information more effectively, and then consumers will make decisions based on the content of the information, after careful consideration, this process undoubtedly improves consumers' understanding and ability to utilize information.

For consumers involved in product marketing and promotion along the edge path, KOL professionalism has a greater impact on stimulating consumers' desire to buy and purchasing behavior. KOLs with stronger professionalism can provide more in-depth information on product usage and produce more effective product reviews, i.e., higher professionalism, which can provide a more reliable source of information, and satisfactory communication will positively strengthen the relationship bond and improve consumer's dependence and trust, thus stimulating consumer purchases [11]. In hypothesis 3, KOL's attractiveness, live style and other KOL attraction factors vary from person to person, and the stimulus consumers get is not all positive, and emotional factors such as aversion may be counterproductive to KOL bandwagon [12]. Therefore, the hypothesis 3 is not confirmed by this validation.

Meanwhile, for the highly motivated and capable consumers who participate in product marketing and promotion in the central path, KOLs need to provide more accurate, complete and real-time updated product information. Nowadays, consumers can often compare the advantages and disadvantages of products through multiple ways and channels, and there are cases of online false propaganda by soft advertising fraud [13]. Therefore, KOLs need to make product information open and transparent. For the edge path to participate in product marketing and promotion of consumers who do not want to spend too much energy, KOL needs to show its expertise in the field to stimulate consumer shopping desire. It can release more horizontal comparison conclusions of products to meet consumer demand.

5. Conclusion

The significance of this study to the field is to use the ELM model to hypothesize and validate how KOLs stimulate consumers' desire to buy and purchase behaviors in product promotion. Among the three hypotheses made by using the ELM model in this paper, according to the survey results, it is judged that hypothesis 1 and hypothesis 2 are true, and hypothesis 3 is not true. Assuming that a KOL giving consumers more detailed product information will arouse consumers' desire to buy, this hypothesis can be deduced based on the number of respondents selected. At the same time, hypothesis two is that KOL professionalism will arouse consumers' desire to buy, and hypothesis three is that KOL attraction will arouse consumers' desire to buy. Comparing the survey results, it is found that

more consumers choose KOL's strong professionalism as their reason for purchasing, while KOL attractiveness is not a factor for most consumers to make a purchase decision. Therefore, hypothesis 2 is confirmed but hypothesis 3 is not. Hence, the conclusion is that KOL gives detailed information about the product, which can stimulate consumers to utilize the information to improve the effectiveness of information utilization. KOL's professional performance can also stimulate consumers' desire to buy and purchase behavior, which makes consumers further participate in the process of product marketing and promotion. However, KOL's attractiveness may not efficiently stimulate consumers' buying behavior and buying decisions.

To a certain extent, this paper enriches the research on social e-commerce marketing strategy and gives suggestions on how to promote KOL in the face of different types of consumers, which is practical and practicable. The data analysis part can be further deepened, and the research direction can be further deepened towards the study of the social e-commerce marketing model.

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