

Research on the Influence of KOL on Consumer Persuasiveness

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Keywords: Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs), Persuasiveness, Credibility, Expertise, Interactivity.

Abstract: This study aims to explore the impact of different Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) (celebrities and influencers) on consumer trust and persuasiveness. Studies on the impact of KOL's identity characteristics on consumer trust remain relatively limited. This research takes celebrities and influencers as two types of KOLs and constructs a theoretical model that includes credibility, expertise, and interactivity as mediating variables to explore their impact. The study proposes that the identity characteristics of KOLs significantly influence their perceived credibility, expertise, and interactivity. Furthermore, these factors (credibility, expertise, and interactivity) are hypothesized to positively affect persuasiveness. Data were gathered via structured questionnaires. The findings reveal notable differences between celebrities and influencers in terms of credibility, expertise, and interactivity. Specifically, the credibility of celebrities appears to exert a stronger influence on persuasiveness, whereas the expertise of influencers demonstrates a more pronounced impact on persuasiveness. The findings will enrich the theoretical framework and provide a basis for enterprises to select KOLs for marketing cooperation, thereby promoting the healthy development of the social e-commerce and digital marketing industries.

1 INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of social media has profoundly transformed the consumer purchase decision-making process. Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs), as an emerging marketing force, have gradually become a crucial factor in brand promotion and product sales, thanks to their extensive influence and strong persuasiveness. KOLs share their personal insights, recommend products, and interact with their followers on social media platforms, thereby shaping consumers' perceptions and trust in products and brands. Regarding the identity characteristics of KOLs, celebrities and influencers may play different roles in shaping consumer trust and persuasiveness. For instance, celebrity influencers, by utilizing their status as public figures and their extensive popularity, are capable of drawing significant attention rapidly. This ability allows them to generate immediate engagement and influence consumer behavior effectively within a brief timeframe. In contrast, influencers and live-streamers, through long-term content creation and in-depth interaction with their followers, establish closer connections. This difference may lead to significant distinctions in

consumer trust building and persuasiveness. While prior studies have investigated how Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) affect consumer behavior, the majority of research has concentrated on the holistic impact of KOLs or their connection to consumer trust (Liua, 2024). There is still a lack of in-depth discussion on the specific impact of different identity characteristics of KOLs on consumer trust and persuasiveness. For instance, when a KOL on Xiaohongshu (Little Red Book) recommends a certain skincare product, consumers may change their purchase decisions due to their trust in the KOL's professional knowledge and personal experience with the product. Studies have indicated that the credibility of KOLs affects the perceived credibility of the information by consumers and is strongly positively correlated with consumers' positive attitudes toward brands.

2 RESEARCH DESIGN

2.1 Research Hypotheses

H1: Expertise has a positive impact on persuasiveness.

H2: Credibility has a positive impact on persuasiveness.

H3: Interactivity has a positive impact on persuasiveness.

H4: Compared to influencers, the credibility of celebrities has a greater impact on persuasiveness.

H5: Compared to celebrities, the expertise of influencers has a greater impact on persuasiveness (See Figure 1).

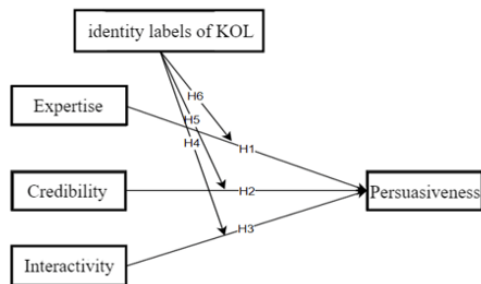


Figure 1: Relationship between KOL identity tags and persuasive factors

2.2 Research Subjects and Grouping

In constructing the research framework, this study references the methodologies employed in earlier investigations. The research by Schouten et al. explored the role of celebrities and internet celebrities in advertising, involving the characteristics of celebrities and internet celebrities and their impact on consumers, which resonates with the setup of the influencer group and celebrity group in this study.

This research focused on consumers as the primary subjects, with the sample divided into two segments: one comprising celebrities and the other comprising influencers. The celebrity group was based on a well-known film and television actor and singer, while the influencer group was based on an influencer who shares beauty content on social media (Zhang et al., 2020).

3 RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Questionnaire Survey

Basic Information: This study collected information on respondents' age, gender, and frequency of social media usage.

Situational Survey: The study involved presenting respondents with background information about celebrities and influencers. Following this, participants rated a collection of statements related to

KOL characteristics using a Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The dimensions evaluated included expertise, credibility, interactivity, and persuasiveness.

3.2 Measurement Tools

Expertise: Measured by statements such as

"Do you think the KOL has extensive knowledge and experience in the field they endorse?" (Ohanian, 1990).

"Do you think the KOL can clearly express their views and demonstrate a high level of professionalism?" (Schouten et al., 2020).

"Do you think the KOL has professional skills in the endorsement field (such as the application of beauty techniques)?" (Martensen et al., 2018).

Credibility: Measured by statements such as

"Do you think the KOL is honest?" (Ganesan, 1994).

"Do you think the KOL is trustworthy?" (Prices, 1992).

"Do you believe the KOL will comply with the terms and conditions they publish?" (Sako, 1998).

Interactivity: Measured by statements such as

"When the KOL promotes a product, can you communicate with them instantly?" (Zhong & Zhou, 2024).

"Can the KOL answer audience questions promptly while introducing a product?" (Zhong & Zhou, 2024).

"During a KOL live stream, can you use comments to discuss and interact about the product?" (Zhong & Zhou, 2024).

Persuasiveness: Measured by statements such as

"Are you inclined to accept products recommended by KOLs?" (Novak & Hoffman, 2009).

"Are you inclined to follow the advice provided by KOLs?" (Schouten et al., 2019).

"Between self-acquisition and KOL recommendations, are you more inclined to obtain product information through KOLs?"

(Schouten et al., 2019).

3.3 Data Analysis Methods

Reliability Analysis: To measure the reliability of each variable, Cronbach's α coefficient was employed to examine internal consistency.

Factor Analysis: Principal component analysis and Kaiser normalization maximum variance method were used for factor extraction and rotation to verify the structural validity of the measurement model.

Regression Analysis: Through multiple linear regression analysis, the research investigated how KOL identity characteristics affect persuasiveness, mediated by factors such as credibility, expertise, and interactivity.

Comparative Analysis: Data from the celebrity group and influencer group were analyzed separately to compare the differences in the impact of credibility, expertise, and interactivity on persuasiveness between the two groups.

4 RESULTS

4.1 The Positive Impact of Expertise, Credibility, and Interactivity on Persuasion

4.1.1 Reliability Analysis

Table 1: Reliability analysis

	Cronbach's Alpha
Expertise	0.904
Credibility	0.914
Interactivity	0.854
Persuasiveness	0.913

From Table 1, the Cronbach's alpha values for expertise, credibility, interactivity, and persuasiveness are 0.904, 0.914, 0.854, and 0.913, respectively. The reliability coefficients of each dimension are greater than 0.7, indicating that the scale has good reliability. The collected data are relatively reliable.

4.1.2 Validity Analysis

Table 2 Validity analysis.

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.952
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1945.6
	df	91
	Sig.	0.000

The exploratory factor analysis validated the structural validity of the pre-set consumer cognition model architecture. According to Table 2, the KMO value is 0.952 (Bartlett's) and the high significance of the Bartlett's sphericity test ($p < 0.001$) indicates that the measurement data have good structural characteristics and are suitable for factor analysis. After principal component analysis and Varimax rotation, four factors were extracted (cumulative

variance explained 81.328%), and all measurement items had highest loadings on the measured variables.

4.1.3 Regression Analysis

Table 3: Summary of the multiple regression analysis model

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.822a	0.676	0.670	0.60768
a. Predictors: (Constant), intaracitivity, expertise, credibility				

Table 4: ANOVA analysis: persuasiveness by professionalism, interactivity, and trustworthiness

ANOVAa					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	117.314	3	39.105	105.897	0.000b
Residual	56.129	152	0.369		
Total	173.444	155			
a. Dependent Variable: persuasiveness					
b. Predictors: (Constant), intaracitivity, expertise, credibility					

Table 5: Regression coefficient table.

Coefficientsa					
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	
1	(Constant)	0.068	0.214		0.751
	expertise	0.226	0.088	0.202	0.011
	credibility	0.483	0.082	0.468	0.000
	intaracitivity	0.249	0.085	0.222	0.004
a. Dependent Variable: persuasiveness					

Table 3 shows that the adjusted R-squared value is 0.676, indicating that the model has good explanatory power. The overall fit of the model is good ($R^2 = 0.676$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.670$). Among them, the trust consumers have in KOLs is a core factor affecting their persuasive effect. As shown in Table 4, ANOVA results reveal that the three independent variables significantly account for 67.6% of the variance in persuasiveness ($F(3, 152) = 105.897$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 117.314 / 173.444$). Credibility ($\beta = 0.483$, $p < 0.001$), expertise ($\beta = 0.226$, $p = 0.011$), and interactivity ($\beta = 0.249$, $p = 0.004$) have a significant impact on persuasiveness (see Table 5).

4.1.4 Summaries

The results show that credibility, expertise, and interactivity have a positive impact on persuasiveness.

4.2 Comparison Between Celebrity and Influencer Groups

4.2.1 Reliability Analysis

The Cronbach's alpha values for expertise, credibility, interactivity, and persuasiveness in the influencer group are 0.911, 0.909, 0.810, and 0.896, respectively, and in the celebrity group are 0.897, 0.916, 0.886, and 0.927. All coefficients exceed 0.7, indicating good internal consistency and overall reliability of the scale.

4.2.2 Factor Analysis

Table 6: Validity analysis of influencer group

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.898
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	783.582

For influencer group, exploratory factor analysis confirmed the measurement validity of the proposed consumer cognition model. The KMO value is 0.898 (Bartlett's), and the Bartlett's test of sphericity is highly significant ($p < 0.001$) (see Table 6), indicating that the measurement data have good structural characteristics and are suitable for factor analysis. After principal component analysis with varimax rotation, four factors were extracted (cumulative variance explained rate is 83.908%), and the loading values of all measurement items are the highest on the measured variables.

Table 7: Validity analysis of celebrity group

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.943
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	950.764
	df	66
	Sig.	0.000

For celebrity group, The exploratory factor analysis validated the structural validity of the pre-set consumer cognition model architecture. The KMO value is 0.943 (Bartlett's) and the high significance of the Bartlett's sphericity test ($p < 0.001$) (see Table 7) indicates that the measurement data have good structural characteristics and are appropriate for factor analysis. After principal component analysis

and Varimax rotation, four factors were extracted (cumulative variance explained 84.565%), and all measurement items had loadings highest on the measured variables.

4.2.3 Regression Analysis

Table 8: Summary of the multiple regression analysis model of influencer group

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.769a	0.591	0.574	0.65716
a. Predictors: (Constant), interactivity, expertise, credibility				

Table 9: ANOVA analysis of influencer group

ANOVAa					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	46.190	3	15.397	35.652	0.000b
Residual	31.958	74	0.432		
Total	78.148	77			
a. Dependent Variable: persuasiveness					
b. Predictors: (Constant), interactivity, expertise, credibility					

Table 10: regression coefficient table of influencer group

Coefficientsa					
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	
1	(Constant)	-0.020	0.383		0.959
	expertise	0.309	0.127	0.273	0.017
	credibility	0.352	0.131	0.337	0.009
	interactivity	0.301	0.117	0.261	0.013
a. Dependent Variable: persuasiveness					

For influencer group, Table 8, 9 & 10 shows that the adjusted R-squared value is 0.574, indicating that the model has good explanatory power. The model fits well overall ($R^2=0.769$, Adjusted $R^2=0.574$), and the regression model significantly explains the variation in the dependent variable persuasiveness ($F(3, 74)=35.652$, $p < 0.001$).

Credibility ($\beta=0.337$, $p=0.009$), expertise ($\beta=0.273$, $p=0.017$), and interactivity ($\beta=0.261$, $p=0.013$) have a significant impact on persuasiveness (see Table 14). Among them, the trust consumers have in influencers is a core factor affecting their persuasive effect.

Table 11: Summary of the multiple regression analysis model of celebrity group

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.849a	.721	0.718	0.58988
2	0.866b	0.749	0.743	0.56306
a. Predictors: (Constant), credibility				
b. Predictors: (Constant), credibility, interactivity				

Table 12: ANOVA analysis of celebrity group

ANOVAa					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	68.405	1	68.405	196.588	0.000b
Residual	26.445	76	0.348		
Total	94.850	77			
2 Regression	71.072	2	35.536	112.087	0.000c
Residual	23.778	75	0.317		
Total	94.850	77			
a. Dependent Variable: persuasiveness					
b. Predictors: (Constant), credibility					
c. Predictors: (Constant), credibility, interactivity					

Table 13: Regression coefficient table of celebrity group

Coefficientsa					
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	
1	(Constant)	0.509	0.220		2.314
	credibility	0.869	0.062	0.849	14.021
2	(Constant)	0.178	0.239		0.747
	credibility	0.635	0.100	0.621	6.370
	interactivity	0.314	0.108	0.283	2.900
a. Dependent Variable: persuasiveness					

Table 14: Regression coefficient table of celebrity group

Coefficientsa					
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	
1	(Constant)	0.085	0.251		0.338
	expertise	0.165	0.141	0.147	1.175
	credibility	0.593	0.106	0.579	5.593
	interactivity	0.209	0.141	0.188	1.487
a. Dependent Variable: persuasiveness					

For celebrity group, as can be clearly seen from the model summary presented in Table 11, the coefficient of determination (R^2) of Model 2 is 0.749, while the adjusted R^2 value stands at 0.743. The model demonstrates a good fit, with these two variables exhibiting strong explanatory power regarding persuasiveness. Among them, the level of trust consumers have in KOLs stands out as a pivotal factor influencing their persuasive effect.

Upon conducting an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), the results show $F(2, 75) = 112.087$, $p < 0.001$ (as seen in Table 12). Credibility ($\beta = 0.635$, $p < 0.001$) and interactivity ($\beta = 0.314$, $p = 0.005$) indicate that both credibility and interactivity have a significant positive impact on persuasiveness (see Table 13). In contrast, the effect of expertise ($\beta = 0.165$, $p = 0.244$) on persuasiveness is not significant (see Table 14).

4.2.4 Summaries of Model

In comparison between celebrities and influencers, the credibility of celebrities has a greater impact on persuasiveness; in contrast, the professionalism of influencers exerts a more significant influence on persuasiveness.

5 CONCLUSION

5.1 Research Findings

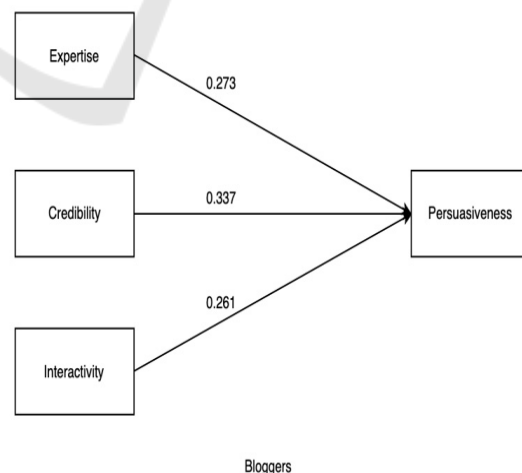


Figure 2: The research findings regarding the influencing factors of consumer persuasion (Influencers).

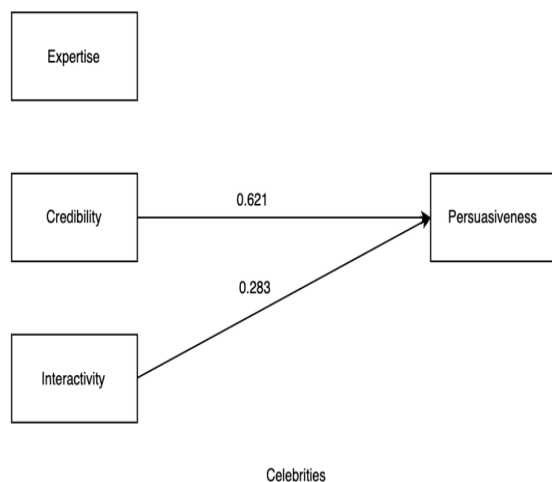


Figure 3: The research results about the influencing factors of consumer persuasion (Celebrity).

Based on data analysis(See Figure2&Figure3), the factors influencing the persuasiveness of KOLs on consumers and their respective intensities are illustrated as follows:

The professional level, credibility, and interactivity of KOLs have a significant positive impact on consumer persuasiveness. In other words, as the professional level, credibility, and interactivity of KOLs increase, consumer persuasiveness will improve to a certain extent.

The following conclusions were obtained through regression analysis:

For celebrities, credibility is the most crucial factor influencing consumer persuasiveness, with professionalism coming second and interactivity having the least impact, and the differences in the importance of these three factors are quite substantial. For influencers, credibility is also the key factor affecting consumer persuasiveness, followed by professionalism and then interactivity, but the differences in the influence of these three factors on persuasiveness are relatively smaller. When comparing celebrities and influencers, celebrity credibility has a more significant impact on persuasiveness, while influencer professionalism has a greater impact on persuasiveness.

5.2 Suggestions

To enhance persuasiveness towards consumers, KOLs can strategically boost their own influence.

Influencers should strengthen their professional capabilities, deeply engage in their endorsement fields, and thoroughly understand the attributes of the products they endorse. Additionally, maintaining

credibility is crucial; they should adhere to principles of honesty and integrity when dealing with consumers, ensuring that promoted products match their descriptions. Furthermore, actively engaging with consumers by monitoring product feedback under promotional videos and relaying this feedback to the brand is essential.

Celebrities can leverage their credibility advantages, carefully considering the brands they endorse and using their influence to vouch for high-quality brands. Additionally, they can interact with fans during live streams to enhance engagement. Furthermore, they should deepen their understanding and acquire professional knowledge about the endorsed products.

Brands can select appropriate KOLs for endorsement based on the product's attributes.

For products with strong professional requirements, brands can choose influencers with high expertise in that area. Utilizing the influencers' professional explanations, the unique attributes of the product can be highlighted.

b. For products where word-of-mouth plays a crucial role, brands can opt to collaborate with celebrities whose image aligns closely with their brand identity. By partnering with these celebrities and leveraging their credibility and extensive influence, brands can initiate relevant topic marketing campaigns.

5.3 Practical Significance

In the highly competitive market landscape, the reliance of business marketing on KOLs continues to grow. The findings of this study offer critical practical guidance for both enterprises and KOLs. For businesses, it aids in accurately matching KOLs with product characteristics and target audiences during the selection process. Promoting specialized products through professional influencers can better showcase their value; focusing on brand reputation should involve celebrities, leveraging their high credibility to enhance product trustworthiness. For KOLs' own development, this clarifies the direction of influence enhancement. Influencers should strengthen their professional abilities, while celebrities need to consolidate their credibility advantages. Both parties should enhance interactivity to gain more market recognition, achieve efficient marketing communication, and promote the healthy development of the industry.

AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION

All the authors contributed equally and their names were listed in alphabetical order.

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