# From Brand Loyalty to KOL Dependence: Analysis on User Conversion Mechanism of Product Marketing on the TikTok Platform

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Abstract: An increasing number of brands carry out marketing via TikTok. Meanwhile, the process uses Key Opinion Leader (KOL) as a promotion window. KOL establishes the stickiness between live streaming and fans through face-to-face interaction with users and then promotes the brand through live streaming, short plays, and explanations. However, due to the lack of case studies on the success of the in-depth transformation of users by KOL, brands are still faced with great challenges in brand loyalty transformation. Therefore, this article will focus on whether the brand can convert KOL fans into loyal customers, especially the audience that is satisfied with the product. This paper takes "Perfect Diary" as an example to discuss the relationship between brand loyalty and KOL dependence, establish short-term brand loyalty, emotional trust, and brand identity, and establish a long-term brand loyalty mechanism to obtain a KOL-driven user transformation and brand loyalty model, and finally confirm the feasibility of the transformation of user mechanism from KOL dependence to brand loyalty. A strategic deployment that requires constant adjustment and implementation.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

With the development of the Internet, the TikTok platform promotes brands through the head KOL for topic manufacturing and the waist KOL for quality content output, effectively enhancing brand attention. Some KOL will use the fan base to allow users to participate in the use of the product and real-time feedback and then combine a large number of bottom KOC to build word-of-mouth. This behavior encourages users to enter the fan base for the free trial of the product, increasing their fan engagement and thus increasing the influence of KOL. This article will examine how brands can leverage influence to turn fans into loyal customers. This study will use literature analysis to further provide basic information for the transformation mechanism analysis. This provides development ideas for the overall brand marketing direction from brand loyalty to KOL dependence.

## 2 KOL AND BRAND COOPERATION USER CONVERSION MECHANISM

With the awakening of Chinese cultural consciousness and the promotion of video media, the rise of domestic cosmetics has set off a "national hot tide". In many domestic cosmetics to perfect diary as an example, since the establishment of the brand in 2017, the use of KOL for brand marketing, starting from online stores, and then gradually expand offline stores. As the first brand to create a domestic cosmetics track, Perfect Diary uses offline experience to build a private community platform to maintain users' re-purchase and retention issues. Perfect Diary's online + offline omni-channel marketing has a clear division of labor (Su et al., 2023). The significance of the opening of offline stores is not to make profits and there is no trend of profit, but the focus is on increasing contact with users to change the brand image in the minds of consumers. In the process of contact, it will join the enterprise WeChat by entering the store as a gift or scanning the code into the group to have a surprise and enter the preset

CRM clue pool that belongs only to the "perfect diary".

## 2.1 KOL Influence and Brand Fit

Perfect Diary releases data on the TikTok platform through the release of a variety of new product planting notes. For example, TikTok will answer questions and solve doubts for users who get the product for the first time through creative makeup shows and makeup tutorials. Then through the makeup challenge to attract user attention, as the exposure increases, the use of star effect to select the brand positioning, brand story spokesperson, reach all potential customers, and expand the brand's attention. It will be promoted periodically by inviting Kols. Perfect Diary will make good use of current hot things or "people around" to promote brand reputation (Jia and Bei, 2021). Taking the eyeshadow plate jointly launched by the Perfect Diary and the Internet red IP as an example, this use of its own heat and molding IP way to increase the flow effect of KOL itself can encourage consumers to re-buy. Using the knowledge of IP, it is easier to stimulate consumer interest, attention, and consumption desire.

## 2.2 User Conversion Path and Emotional Marketing

With the development of The Times, people began to shift from "quantitative needs" and "qualitative needs" to "emotional needs". The Internet platform takes this opportunity to carry out emotional marketing to meet the needs of users. Compared with the rational and direct marketing means of discount promotion, emotional marketing lacks the support of long-term product benefits. The brand positioning and story of "Perfect Diary" is the stepping stone to impress users' consumption. Using the emotional value of goods gives emotional support between users and brands that cannot be replaced.

Today's Kols interact with users through live streaming video, providing a range of reference information such as product presentations and purchase decisions in the process. Taking the recent star spokesperson of "Perfect Diary" as an example, first of all, big data promotion will push the window to users who have a star effect. On the other hand, the KOL-concerned users who are interested in related fields have basic stickiness, so the brand determines its brand audience when selecting Kols that meet the brand positioning.

To meet different needs, KOL can enhance consumers' understanding of products through communication and interaction such as connection and bullet screen, thus increasing brand exposure (Zhou and Fan, 2021). At the same time, ordinary people will ask questions or share similar experiences. The interactive behavior of KOL will reduce consumers' purchase risk or increase users' empathy ability and sense of identity and increase consumption desire through emotional impression factors. The amount of consumer orders is public, which will stimulate the user's herd mentality. If the KOL offers limited-time offers or exclusive benefits, it will prompt consumers to buy in the tight environment of the time limit and quantity range.

The user's expectations of a product are highly related to KOL language and the user's actual experience. The more closely user satisfaction and KOL are recommended, the higher the user's trust and stickiness in KOL, and the brand's re-purchase will be improved (Zhang and Jing, 2024). The repetition of such steps will enable consumers to have a high degree of identity with the brand, and then develop into long-term stable consumption objects.

## 2.3 Brand Loyalty and Private Traffic Conversion

Perfect diary through the "head live KOL+ domestic star style endorsement + open up the international market star endorsement of a variety of IP contracts" is relatively long-term stability, the output of the fan economy to increase continuous exposure, users will understand the brand from different dimensions, whether it is the precise positioning of the brand itself traffic to attract potential and target users. Or through a large number of relevant Kols in line with their tonality to carry out the soft promotion of the product "planting grass" in the way of evaluation. Compared with the traditional product placement in the past, this marketing model is more suitable for young consumer groups (Wang, 2022).

When consumers receive products, they will have a red envelope card to convert them to a public number. Not only will they consume online, but offline stores will also carry out exclusive private customized consultants or mini program shopping guides. Enable consumers to receive real-time updates and interactions through brand campaigns on other channels. The addition of social private areas has increased re-purchase rates and user conversion rates. "Perfect Diary" then through the release of interactive activities, "daily selfie + new product release + real person fitting + new product store experience + life entertainment" way to make users also become a part of the ordinary KOC, so that users

feel real and trustworthy evaluation, thus deepening the sense of trust and identity of the brand. During the promotion activities, social culture was introduced into the exclusive shopping mall to achieve sales transformation (Liu and Wei, 2023). Such a closed loop of operation will prompt users to switch from relying on KOL to the brand itself, because consumers will self-judge the value ratio of products in the process of use, in the case of excellent products and brand value, users will choose products with more brand trust under the same choice, and even rely on the effect and value brought by the product.

## 3 ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BRAND LOYALTY AND KOL DEPENDENCE

### 3.1 KOL's Short-Term Boost to Brand Loyalty

KOL live broadcast is different from the traditional sales model in the past, its timeliness, interaction, and affinity promote consumers' purchase decisions, and through professional explanation, personally try on or select tutorials to make consumers a more intuitive understanding of products, identify product quality, stimulate consumption desire, and improve the purchase rate. At the same time, KOL uses its own charm and professional knowledge to attract a large number of fans' trust and conducts marketing with him as a window to accumulate highly engaged users for its sales platform (Wang and Deng, 2017). However, due to the homogenization of content and KOL and the high frequency of live broadcasts, users will have aesthetic fatigue or reverse psychology. In addition, there is no clear boundary between the quality and quality of KOL. Once a public opinion crisis occurs, it will not only directly affect the life cycle of KOL, but also affect the brand. Compared with the user stability of the original traditional offline sales, this is not the only way out for long-term development.

The traffic peak of each KOL is fixed, and the brand mechanism he faces is also not fixed. The same KOL will not only promote and market a brand but there is a competitive market among similar products. In the short term, users will enhance brand awareness through KOL, but they will also face similar competitive products. Therefore, short-term promotion through KOL is not lasting and is fungible in user psychology.

KOL usually attracts consumers to buy products through simple and crude prices as an important means of market competition. Generally, KOL uses the form of short video preheating or the previous day's live broadcast preheating or brand special to inform their user groups that their brand mechanism is unique to the entire platform, and often the "most", "unique" and "special" labels are very attractive to users, regardless of whether they will buy will increase the traffic of the broadcast room. However, such behavior may exist in the significance of KOL consumption festivals or the value of their IP, which frequently adopts this model to overdraft the market share, which will lead to the continuous decline of the profit limit of the enterprise, and even not only cannot achieve the significance of promotion but will damage the brand hidden assets established in the early stage of the enterprise.

### 3.2 The Interaction Between Emotional Trust and Brand Identity

KOLs use the scene as a language symbol to create a familiar atmosphere, and the explanation of the product in the live broadcast is more like a kind of recommendation and sharing to family and friends. Indirectly tell users who enter the live broadcast room or watch videos that the brand wants to convey the emotional concept and reduce the thinking logic that users can independently bring into commercial marketing. The KOL's willingness to introduce the brand shows that he has a trusting relationship with the product, and his role should be to share his experience with users and enhance consumers' sense of identity with the brand through the output of content and product positioning.

KOLs use the product name as a hook to get closer to users. Through the description of the text, the user is brought into the atmosphere he has set, so that consumers can be more acceptable, and even leave a shallow desire to consume. When the user himself encounters a similar portrayal situation, he will think about similar emotional needs, and thus convert the user to pay for the brand.

### 3.3 A Mechanism for Building Long-Term Brand Loyalty

The brand transfers users to the brand's private domain platform through the public domain platform and KOLs as the medium. In its brand field, there are no content restrictions and revenue sharing of other platforms. One-to-one two-way interactive communication through customer service and

assistance can be closer to the user's consumption psychology and purchase tendency. This kind of behavior is unattainable by public domain platforms in terms of cost, user repurchase rate, and long-term stable user base. In this way, the cost saved by marketing can be used to update and develop products, so that the product itself has value, the user's sense of experience increases, and only a virtuous circle can promote the long-term survival of a brand.

The virtual character "Maruko", who is a "perfect diary", plays the role of KOC and shopping guide in the circle of friends, enhancing the brand trust of users, and even narrowing the relationship with consumption, to enhance the brand identity and trust. However, there will also be problems with the product itself, which will make consumers have a bad experience, which will touch the rebellious mentality, and consumers' trust in the brand will decline, so it is not too exaggerated and touted when describing the product.

Of course, not all brands are suitable for private domain marketing, for example, luxury goods with a service nature, food with a long update cycle, and electronic products with weak substitutability are more suitable for other marketing models. However, the premise of opening the private domain marketing model is that the brand has accumulated enough funds to support the first round of public domain platform traffic in the early stage. In addition to having a good brand positioning and products, an emerging brand also needs to increase brand awareness and promote sales through KOLs. When users subtly accept the emergence of new products and good KOC feedback in the early stage, there will be a tendency to buy. For example, after a user of Perfect Diary purchases a product of Perfect Diary, it is possible to add "Xiao Wanzi" to the card prompt that comes with the product, completing the transition from the public domain to the private domain (Tong, 2022).

The new users of "Perfect Diary" also wait for the brand's offline experience stores to open in various cities one after another, and only complete the transformation after participating in the activities of draining the private domain in the process of offline experience, which requires long-term capital operation and public domain platform traffic maintenance in this process.

Private domain platforms and public domain platforms need to pay attention to the change in the way they interact with users, and it is a long-term process for users not to ask them to add to the shopping cart immediately to pay. Brands should look for the frequency range in long-term user observation and cannot send frequent messages and blindly recommend products for a long time, which will implant the psychology of forced consumption to consumers, thereby consuming users' time and patience, thereby reducing the user experience and leading to withdrawal from private domain platforms. It is more necessary to invade all aspects of the user's daily life from multiple angles so that the target group can naturally accept the promotion of the brand.

## 4 DISCUSSION

### 4.1 KOL-Driven User Conversion and Brand Loyalty Models

By analyzing how "Perfect Diary" realizes the transformation from a public domain platform to a private domain platform, it summarizes the model about how to face user conversion and brand loyalty after using KOL to drive the brand.

When the brand product has a high-cost performance and is enough to drive consumers to make brand purchases, people can refer to Figure 1. Flow chart for sales conversion.
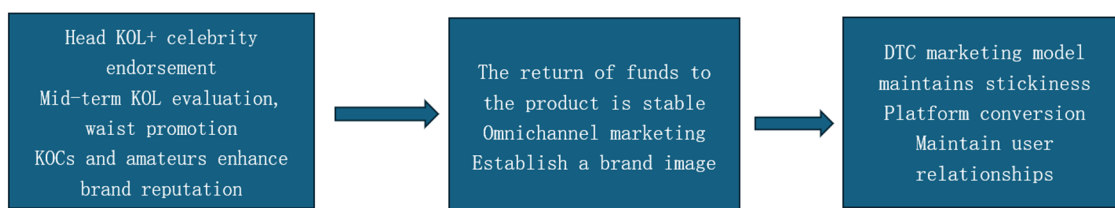


Figure 1. Sales conversion flow chart (picture credit original).

### 4.2 KOL Influence and Brand Exposure Mechanism

The essence of brand exposure is to let more people know, understand and remember the brand. KOL itself is a window that already has traffic, and the interaction between brands and users through the window is actually to broaden brand awareness. In the early stage of searching for Kols, general brands need to pay attention to which are the portraits of target

customer groups, and which Kols are facing potential customer groups (Zhao et al., 2020). Because the influence of different Kols is different, which may be positive or negative, the brand needs to seriously consider, because the window of investment should be fixed and long-term cooperation, and KOL fans are the audience group of the brand, once the audience analysis is wrong, all the preparation in the early stage will fail, and the brand will lead to the user's reverse psychology. So, choose carefully.

After the implementation of the correct preliminary process, small interactions on the brand line can increase the initial attention and sense of participation of users, deepen the impression of users on the brand, and make users more acceptable in the subsequent promotion. Because the KOL promoted by itself is trusted by users, the brand will also realize user transformation and deepen trust in the brand and brand interaction through activities or experiences.

## 4.3 Emotional Resonance and Brand Identity Mechanism

KOL itself has resonance with users in content delivery, from delivering emotional value, finding emotional identity, to precise labels to improve communication efficiency and accurate push. In this process, there is a click-through rate and forwarding rate, and when the KOL content and the user's progress and sense of identity are higher, it is easier to be accepted and spread by users. The services, stories, experiences and functions delivered by the brand are all connected with users through KOL as a medium. Such emotional resonance will greatly reduce the psychological defense line of users, and they will not pay too much attention to whether it is commercial marketing and brand promotion. In today's era, what users buy is not necessarily rational and really used products, more is to pay for the story and concept behind the brand, because users truly identify with the brand will be willing to pay, and once such users buy products, the vast majority of them are highly loyal brand advocates and KOC. This also reflects that brand stories are more communicative, influential and attractive than product prices (Gao, 2021).

## 4.4 Long-Term Brand Loyalty and Private Traffic Conversion Mechanism

After the initial transformation of the brand through the promotion of KOL, with the relay of the omni-channel marketing model, the private domain operation is relatively easy and stable. Through the private domain traffic pool established by the brand itself, through the perspective of KOC, by sharing and delivering some content that is highly resonant with users in spirit, the brand product promotion can gradually increase the dependence of users. When the user stickiness is high enough, a period of long-term and stable brand loyalty will be established. In general, as long as the brand is carefully maintained, it does not consume the user's time, and there is no serious crisis of public opinion, relatively speaking, brand users will not waver.

The success of the conversion of private domain traffic has greatly reduced the cost of the brand in the public domain traffic, and the product itself is worth recommending, the user will be a natural KOC, and once again bring good new users to the brand. In this process, in addition to interactive activity funds, the brand will return to the user, as well as the subsequent related product updates, which will become a virtuous circle, so that the brand awareness and market will gradually expand, and the market share will gradually stabilize. When such a marketing model is successful, the use will no longer be the "perfect diary" and more want to try to convert KOL users to brand long-term loyalty and private domain traffic platform merchants.

## 5 CONCLUSION

The reason why the marketing model of "Perfect Diary" can quickly come out of the circle is that the brand's selection of KOL is very accurate, and at the same time, it has found different levels of KOL to promote, creating a popular trend in the whole network. Use the fan effect of star endorsements to create sales records, from e-commerce to offline stores at the same time as the return of funds. But too much attention to marketing ignores the quality problems caused by the product itself, the problem of user re-purchase rate. From the current results, the brand is creating sales records at the same time, but also swallowing revenue profits. "Perfect Diary" is still in a state of loss, it is obvious that the turnover of offline stores does not solve the problem of difficult online growth. As a result, the "perfect diary" is successful in marketing, and the failure is also in marketing, and the subsequent products themselves cannot keep up with the speed of innovation. Compared with marketing, the brand has less investment in research and development, and the number of appearance patents is less than half of that of similar competitive products. Moreover, the way to

promote sales growth in the early stage is that the brand does not have a good profit tendency in the later stage, and cannot keep up with the subsequent output, resulting in reduced user stickiness and long-term brand loyalty after negative evaluation.

The transition from KOL dependence to brand loyalty user mechanism can actually be done, but the process is long and requires reasonable allocation and operation of funds. User conversion itself is a long-term process, and too fast a change will trigger reverse psychology, as well as unstable brand relationships. If there is no problem in the brand positioning and the selection of target users, the function and value provided by the product to users can gradually increase brand awareness and user loyalty. However, every step of this process needs to be stable, not quick success, otherwise there will be a risk that the brand will not be able to achieve user conversion and be quickly replaced. At present, there is no Amway brand in the full sense of long-term and stable transformation from the birth of the brand to the private domain platform, so this research still has certain practical prospects.

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