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**Short video applications by key opinion leaders as online marketing on social
media**

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for the Bachelor of Science in Global Business

by

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to investigate how Chinese key opinion leaders influence and impact the marketing in social media platforms in China. In particular, with regards to customers' trust towards KOLs and customers' purchase motivation. The Chinese short video application industry is a burgeoning and valuable market with more than 820 million monthly active users and 22 hours monthly usage time per capita, which offers marketing managers a powerful tool with which to reach their target customer (QuestMobile, 2019). Tik Tok and Kuai Shou, the two most dominant Chinese short video Platforms, account for more than 70% of monthly active users (QuestMobile, 2019). Their operational models are totally different, Tik Tok is more centralized as the platform bases most of its recommendation resources on KOLs. On the contrary, Kuai Shou is highly decentralized, which means that any user has almost the same chances to get exposure as long as the video is approved. The study uses both quantitative and qualitative research methodology. The primary data is collected by an online survey with over 253 respondents. Regarding the result of this study, product comparison, product effect display, and professional product data are the contents that have a positive influence on the trust towards KOLs of Chinese generation z and close relationships with KOLs, good previous purchase experiences, adorable brand, and good reputation of KOLs are regarded as factors that stimulate his or her purchase desire by Chinese generation z. The results of this study may help KOLs to produce high-quality content in the future and may help companies to locate and reach the appropriate KOLs more efficiently and more effectively.

Keywords: *KOL, Short video platform, Online Marketing.*

INTRODUCTION

Key opinion leaders (KOLs) or influencers are the people with a huge amount of credibility in a field. Those people usually are online celebrities and real celebrities. The reason why KOLs and influencers are so critical in today's business is the valid credibility they have and the significant number of followers they owned.

Key opinion leaders' effects can be classified into three categories. First, with the function of the content output of key opinion leaders, more customers are usually attracted through the suggesting or advertising behavior of influencers as those suggestion contents are directly pushed to the customers that followed certain influencers. Second, the suggestion or introduction content carried by a video or a tweet can maintain the present customer of a certain brand, which is critical to a company as it cost fewer to maintain the present customer than to attract a new one. Besides, it can also promote or stimulate the consumption of customers as the customer is usually more willing to purchase a certain product after watching a promotional video that has good content.

Key opinion leaders and their effects are critical and powerful in Chinese marketing now, especially in the E-commerce area. Several reasons cause this situation. First, regarding the advertisement cost, hiring a key opinion leader to promote a product is relatively cheaper when comparing with hiring a celebrity. Second, regarding the advertisement effectiveness, the effect of launching a advertisement made by a KOL is much more concentrated and accurate as companies can choose KOL based on the follower composition of this KOL, which means if the target customer of a company is young ladies that interested in cosmetics, they can select a cosmetic KOL with high concentration of young female followers.

LITERATURE REVIEW - BACKGROUND

There appears to be limited in the existing research focusing specifically on the impact of short video applications in online marketing in Chinese social media. The Chinese short video

application industry is a burgeoning and valuable market with more than 820 million monthly active users and 22 hours monthly usage time per capita (QuestMobile, 2019), which offers marketing managers a powerful tool with which to reach their target customers. Key opinion leaders play an essential role in Chinese social media and Chinese Online Marketing.

Key Opinion Leader

Key opinion leaders are people that have a certain extent of influence or reputation in some fields and usually believed and respected by others (NASDAQ OMX's News Release Distribution Channel, 2017). Also, KOLs can educate or induce people in many ways. KOLs have developed as a new-style business function that is close to customer relationship management. KOLs now are significant components in marketing (2017).

In the Chinese network and social media, even though there are various of governing laws, some “demotic” people are becoming online celebrities now. They usually mask themselves with celebrity culture. Besides, the attraction of being famous and the demand for outside approval applied by accumulated likes and followers on social media has popularized the pursuit of online celebrity (Sullivan & Kehoe, 2019).

The influencer, who possesses high credibility in some fields and has a huge number of followers on social media, is usually believed by his followers concerning his suggestions in those fields. However, the information or suggestions provided by influencers usually have connections with misleading or even false advertising, which means the information is camouflaged (Nieto, 2018). Influencer marketing will become a burgeoning business model in the online marketing field (Wirtschaftsinformatik & Management, 2018).

Study shows that more than 75 percent of customer has the experience that consulting their relatives or friends. Besides, corporations become aware of the importance of word-of-mouth marketing as well as influencer marketing. However, companies still cannot effectively utilize this information resource (Doyle, 2007).

Short Video Platform

Tik Tok is a short video application or platform, which supports the creative activities of the new generation and provides people with convenience when they are filming their 15 seconds short videos and sharing with friends and the world. The contents of the video are diverse. No matter it is comedy, dance, free-style or performance, Tik Tok always motivates its users to expand their imagination and to share their lives (PR Newswire Asia, 2018).

The short video platform is a burgeoning and promising social media in China, which active users around 353 million in 2018. However, even those short video platforms provided people with high-quality contents, there are still contents with vulgarity and pornography, and cases of injury caused by people imitating short video (Beijing Review, 2018).

According to China Daily (2018), “many short video clips have gone viral on social media platforms in the past few years. But instead of concentrating on the number of views they get; short video clips should be positive and promote correct values.”

Social Media

The rapid growth of social media made it possible to spread the event that happened in the real world even faster on social (Zhou et al., 2017). Due to the rapid development and explosive popularity of new communicative technologies, many corporations start using social media in organization-public communication (Luo & Jiang, 2012).

Online Marketing

The continuous development and revolution of electronic commerce are always influenced by the growth of information technology (Liu & Ji, 2018). According to Kumar (2017), volatile online marketing such as the seasonal distribution of advertising budge may be helpful at the top-line but may be ineffective at the bottom-line.

Generation Z

According to Hampton and Welsh (2019), the Z generation people were commonly defined as people born after 1995 (aged ≤ 24). The generation z, who identify themselves and their lives in digital version, know well about various technologies. The usage frequency of Internet searches of generation z is much more than other generations (Zorn, 2017).

However, according to Fernández-Cruz (2016), there is an obstruction in the development of digital competence of generation z, which is the limitation of teacher's teaching and technological skills.

Another problem that may happen to generation z is that they have unlimited sources of information while they need a clear framework to assist them to understand the information (Moore, Jones, & Frazier, 2017).

STATEMENT OF HYPOTHESIS

For several reasons, the generation z is the main study population in the study. According to Zorn (2017), The usage frequency of Internet searches of generation z is much more than other generations.

Based on the existing body of knowledge reported above, the following hypotheses are derived.

Research Question (RQ): What effects does the advertising and suggestion behavior of KOLs of short video platforms have on the purchase motivation of Chinese generation z?

H1: Regarding customers' trust

1a –KOLs' product advertising videos or tweets will increase customers' trust towards those KOLs.

1b – KOLs' product advertising videos or tweets will decrease customers' trust towards those KOLs.

H2: Regarding customers' purchase desire

2a – Previous purchase experience related to the KOL, relationship with the KOL and the number of followers of the KOL have influence on customers' purchase desire.

2b – Previous purchase experience related to the KOL, relationship with the KOL and the number of followers of the KOL have no influence on customers' purchase desire.

METHODOLOGY

Pilot Study (Qualitative Method)

Due to the shortage of the existing body of literature on this specific topic. A pilot study was conducted to indicate the most relevant and popular questions and most frequently used answers to the online survey. The interview used the qualitative method. The qualitative method can investigate the "why" question regarding people's motivation for certain behaviors or actions (Rosenthal, 2016). In academic research, interviews and focus groups are helpful to collect participants' experiences and thoughts (Rosenthal, 2016).

Interviews with 16 Chinese generation z (8 males, 8 females) were hold, all participants claimed themselves as being both followers of some Internet KOLs of short video platform and active users of short video platforms.

The four interview questions are the following:

Question 1: What are the most used short video applications on your smartphone?

Most of the participants answered both Tik Tok and Kuai Shou. Some participants mentioned that Sina Weibo is also a type of short video application as it has short video filming and sharing functions.

Question 2: How many KOLs you followed from any short video platform?

First of all, most of the participants mentioned that they have followed more than 10 influencers. And half of the participants have followed more than 20 influencers. Those numbers could be exaggerated as all the participants are the active user of short video platforms.

Question 3: What types of content of advertising videos or tweets posted by KOLs increase your trust towards them?

Three applicable types of content were mentioned frequently in this question. The participants mentioned that the videos or tweets that comparing the advertised product with other homologous products are more trustworthy as audiences can understand the differences between those products. Besides, detailed and professional data contents are mentioned as well. For some specific products such as cosmetics, participants mentioned that the user experience demonstration of certain products is critical.

Question 4: What factors about the KOL will influence your purchase desire towards the advertised product?

The participants mentioned that the previous experience of the product recommended by the KOL is critical. When the previous experience is good, participants appear to have more purchase desire on the present advertised product. Besides, the relationship with the KOL was mentioned frequently. Participants argue that they have higher purchase motivation towards the product advertised by the KOL when this person has a close relationship with them.

Instrumentation Design (Quantitative Method)

The objective of the study is to offer a comprehensive investigation of how KOLs from Chinese short video platforms influence and impact the Chinese generation z. In particular, with regards to the customers' trust towards KOLs and customers' purchase desire.

The quantitative method is more appropriate to answer the question “how much” or “how many” than the qualitative method does. Besides, the quality of primary data is more important in quantitative research (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). To accomplish the objective, the primary source of information was utilized and collected. Primary data was collected by an online survey.

The survey consisted of 4 multiple-choice questions and 2 questions that the respondents had to answer with a 7-point Likert scale, which is a fundamental and regularly used tool in academic and social sciences research (Joshi, Kale, Chandel, & Pal, 2015).

The aim was to survey with 300 people from generation Z from 1-15 October 2019 between in Wenzhou-Kean University. Respondents were given 5-10 minutes to fill in the survey, and 283 people responded. Because not all surveys were fully completed, 253 survey results were included in the analysis.

Prior to analyzing the data, the outliers and missing data were removed from the dataset. According to the “outlier labeling rule”, the value that broken the calculated range were outliers (Hoaglin & Iglewicz, 1987). The data were analyzed by software Jamovi.

ANALYSIS / RESULTS

A total number of 253 valid online survey results were collected. Basic information which includes gender percentage and age groups was integrated into Table 1. The age groups of respondents range from age below 18 to age beyond 30. Certainly, most of the respondent is from age 18 to age 24 as the main respondents are college students and the focus population is Chinese generation z. According to the results, 42.69% of respondents are male and 57.31% of respondents are female, showing a defect that gender diversity may influence the research purpose which focuses on Chinese generation z instead of the gender differences on this topic. Besides, respondents from age 18 to age 24 account for nine-tenths of the whole.

Age Groups	Female	%	Male	%
<18	7	87.50%	1	12.50%
18-24	129	56.09%	101	43.91%
24-30	8	72.73%	3	27.27%
>30	1	25.00%	3	75.00%

Table 1: Frequency distribution with gender comparison (Age Group)

Table 2 shows the number of KOLs followed by the respondents. Surprisingly, around 94% of respondents claim they are the follower of some KOLs. Moreover, 20.16 % of respondents have followed more than 25 KOLs and 56.13% of respondents have followed more than 10 KOLs. According to Table 2, following from 11 to 25 KOLs (24.51%) is the most frequent response in the female group while following from 1 to 10 KOLs (21.74%) is the most frequent response in the male group.

Number of KOLs Followed	Female	%	Male	%
0	5	2.00%	10	3.95%
1-10	41	16.21%	55	21.74%
11-25	62	24.51%	29	11.46%
26-100	31	12.25%	11	4.35%
>100	6	2.37%	3	1.19%

Table 2: Frequency distribution with gender comparison (Number of KOLs Followed)

Table 3 is The Exploratory Factor Analysis of the survey's results. The total of 13 items was divided into 4 factors based on their similarity and capability in interpreting a specific question. 4 factors were grouped given their similarity. In the first factor, 6 items share the same feature that they may have a positive influence on customers' purchasing desire. The second factor, which includes 3 items (Bad Experience, Disliked Brand and Follower < 1000) indicates the same capability that may have a negative influence on customers' purchasing desire. Besides, factor 3 shows the possibility of increasing the credibility of KOL's video or tweet while factor 4 shows the possibility of decreasing that.

	Factor				Uniqueness
	1	2	3	4	
6、 Good Reputation	0.762				0.30029
6、 Engaged in the Product Industry	0.725				0.37806
6、 Favorite Brand	0.689				0.43111
6、 Close Relationship	0.668				0.53949
6、 Follower >1 million	0.641				0.42022
6、 Good Experience	0.627				0.51348
6、 Bad Experience		0.743			0.36242
6、 Disliked Brand		0.742			0.40169
6、 Follower <100000		0.572			0.63083
5、 Professional Data			0.926		0.00500
5、 Product Effect/Usage Experience			0.581		0.41740
5、 Basic Information				0.825	0.09408
5、 Product Comparison and Basic information				0.571	0.47750

Table 3: Exploratory Factor Analysis

Table 4 is the KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy. The KMO score can measure how suitable the data is for Factor Analysis. According to the results, the overall score is 0.784 which is a quite good result as it is bigger than 0.7. Besides, the scores for every single item are bigger than 0.7 except “Dislike Brand” that only scored 0.684. Some of the items are bigger than 0.8, indicating that those items are suitable for the Factor Analysis.

	MSA
Overall	0.784
5、 Basic Information	0.701
5、 Product Effect/Usage Experience	0.782
5、 Professional Data	0.772
6、 Bad experience	0.708
6、 Favorite Brand	0.752
6、 Disliked Brand	0.684
6、 Follower <100000	0.748

	MSA
6、 Follower >1 million	0.818
6、 Engaged in the Product Industry	0.849
6、 Good Reputation	0.859
5、 Product Comparison and Basic information	0.795
6、 Good Experience	0.816
6、 Close Relationship	0.828

Table 4: KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy

The Reliability Analysis Table shows the overall reliability level of those items, which is 0.823. Reliability results of each factor (From Factor 1 to Factor 4) are 0.855, 0.757, 0.828 and 0.759 respectively.

Scale Reliability Statistics	Cronbach's α
Overall	0.823
Factor 1	0.855
Factor 2	0.757
Factor 3	0.828
Factor 4	0.759

Table 5: Reliability Analysis

The Confirmatory Factor Analysis shows that the P values of each item after regrouped are smaller than 0.001, indicating all the items should be interpreted and explained.

Factor	Indicator	Estimate	SE	Z	p
Positive influence on purchase desire	6、 Good Experience	0.674	0.0654	10.30	< .001
	6、 Close Relationship	0.767	0.0701	10.95	< .001
	6、 Favorite Brand	0.727	0.0664	10.95	< .001
	6、 Follower >1 million	0.668	0.0610	10.96	< .001
	6、 Good Reputation	1.041	0.0654	15.92	< .001
	6、 Engaged in the Product Industry	0.895	0.0658	13.60	< .001
Negative influence on purchase desire	6、 Bad experience	1.063	0.0945	11.25	< .001
	6、 Follower <100000	0.682	0.0623	10.95	< .001
	6、 Disliked Brand	1.065	0.0798	13.33	< .001

Factor	Indicator	Estimate	SE	Z	p
Increase credibility	5、 Product Effect/Usage Experience	1.035	0.0703	14.71	< .001
	5、 Professional Data	0.999	0.0713	14.01	< .001
Decrease credibility	5、 Basic Information	1.194	0.1042	11.46	< .001
	5 、 Product Comparation and Basic information	0.883	0.0897	9.84	< .001

Table 6: Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Table 7 is the Likert Scale Interpretation, which is a tool used to analyze and interpret the following results.

Response Scale	Degree of Frequency		Descriptive Interpretations	Mean Interval
7	Strongly Reliable	Strongly Stimulative	Strongly Positive Effect	6.51-7.00
6	Reliable	Stimulative	Positive Effect	5.51-6.50
5	Slightly Reliable	Slightly Stimulative	Slightly Positive Effect	4.51- 5.50
4	Neutral	Neutral	No Effect	3.51 – 4.50
3	Slightly Unreliable	Slightly Reductive	Slightly Negative Effect	2.51 – 3.50
2	Unreliable	Reductive	Negative Effect	1.51 – 2.50
1	Strongly Unreliable	Strongly Reductive	Strong Negative Effect	1.00 – 1.50

Table 6: Likert Scale Interpretation

The mean of the first item is 3.12 and the standard deviation is 1.37, indicating that contents only contain basic information that is interpreted as a slightly unreliable source of information, which has a slightly negative effect on the customer. The mean of the second item is 3.70 and the standard deviation is 1.25, suggesting that contents with product information and comparison are interpreted as neutral sources of information, which have slightly no effect on the customer. The mean of the third item is 4.68 and the standard deviation is 1.22, revealing that the effects display of product is interpreted as a slightly reliable source of information, which has a slightly positive effect on the customer. The mean of item no.4 is 5.02 and the

standard deviation is 1.51, revealing that the professional data is interpreted as a slightly reliable source of information, which has a slightly positive effect on the customer.

The results imply that Chinses generation z find the contents with more information, such as product comparison, effect display, and professional data are more reliable.

Item No.	Influence of Different Contents on Customers' Trust	Mean \bar{X}	SD	Scaled Responses	Descriptive Interpretation
1	Obvious advertisement contains only basic information about a advertised product	3.12	1.37	Slightly Unreliable	Slightly Negative Effect
2	Obvious advertisement includes product introduction and comparison of competitive products	3.70	1.25	Neutral	No Effect
3	Effects display of the product (for example, the blogger shows the changes before and after using cosmetics for one week)	4.68	1.22	Slightly Reliable	Slightly Positive Effect
4	Use professional data (such as hardware data, components data, etc.) to illustrate the advantages and disadvantages of the product	5.02	1.51	Slightly Reliable	Slightly Positive Effect

Table 7: Respondents' trust level on different contents

The mean value of item no.1 is 2.53 and the standard deviation is 1.51, indicating that poor previous purchase experiences caused by KOLs have a slightly reductive influence on customers' purchase desire, which is a slightly negative effect. The mean value of item no.2 is 5.23 and the standard deviation is 1.09, indicating that good previous purchase experiences caused by KOLs have a slightly stimulative influence on customers' purchase desire, which is a slightly positive effect. The mean value of item no.3 is 4.77 and the standard deviation is 1.18, indicating that close relationship with KOLs has a slightly stimulative influence on customers' purchase desire, which is a slightly positive effect. The mean value of item no.4 is 5.15 and the standard deviation is 1.11, suggesting that an adorable brand has a slightly stimulative influence on customers' purchase desire. The mean value of item no.5 is 3.35 and the standard deviation is 1.33, suggesting that an undesired brand has a slightly reductive influence on customers' purchase desire. The mean value of item no.6 is 3.37 and the standard

deviation is 1.10, implying that a relatively small number of the follower (less than 100,000) of KOL has no significant effect on purchase desire. The mean value of item no.7 is 4.70 and the standard deviation is 1.03, suggesting that a relatively large number of the follower (more than 1,000,000) has a slightly stimulative influence on customers' purchase desire. The mean value of item no.8 is 4.89 and the standard deviation is 1.17, suggesting that KOLs' engaging in a certain industry has a slightly stimulative influence on customers' purchase desire. The mean value of item no.9 is 5.43 and the standard deviation is 1.23, suggesting that KOLs' good reputation has a slightly stimulative influence on customers' purchase desire.

The results imply that Chinese generation z consider good previous purchase experiences, adorable brand, close relationship with KOLs, and good reputation of KOLs are factors that stimulate their purchase desire. Surprisingly, KOLs with a small number of followers do not affect their purchase desire while KOLs with a relatively large number of followers have a stimulative influence on their purchase desire.

Item No.	Influence of Different Factors on Customers' Purchase Desire	Mean \bar{X}	SD	Scaled Responses	Descriptive Interpretation
1	I have purchased the products introduced by this KOL before, and the product experiences are poor	2.53	1.51	Slightly Reductive	Slightly Negative Effect
2	I have purchased the products introduced by this KOL before, and the product experiences are good	5.23	1.09	Slightly Stimulative	Slightly Positive Effect
3	The KOL is your relative, friend or other close relationships	4.77	1.18	Slightly Stimulative	Slightly Positive Effect
4	The brand of the product recommended by KOL is your favorite brand	5.15	1.11	Slightly Stimulative	Slightly Positive Effect
5	The brand of the product recommended by KOL is a brand you don't like	3.35	1.33	Slightly Reductive	Slightly Negative Effect
6	The KOL has followers less than 100,000	3.74	1.01	Neutral	No Effect
7	The KOL has followers more than 1 million	4.70	1.03	Slightly Stimulative	Slightly Positive Effect
8	The KOL is engaged in the product industry	4.89	1.17	Slightly Stimulative	Slightly Positive Effect
9	The KOL has a good reputation in this product area	5.43	1.23	Slightly Stimulative	Slightly Positive Effect

Table 8: Respondents' purchase desire based on given factors

CONCLUSIONS AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

In light of the findings of this study, the researcher was able to establish the following conclusions:

Regarding trust or reliability, Chinese generation z considers video contents with more information are more reliable. In conclusion, product comparison, product effect display, and professional product data are the contents that have a positive influence on the trust towards KOLs of Chinese generation z.

Regarding purchase desire of customers, close relationships with KOLs, good previous purchase experiences, adorable brand, and good reputation of KOLs are regarded as factors that stimulate his or her purchase desire by Chinese generation z. Besides, for KOLs that have a fewer number of followers, it is not a critical factor, which defines whether your tweet or video contents are reliable or persuasive, signifying that those KOLs can also acquire viewers' trust through good contents.

Regarding the practical application of those findings, KOLs or influencers can rebuild their video contents or tweet contents to foster the needs of attracting more followers and customers base on the findings of this study, which means they should produce contents with more information and professional data. Besides, for companies that plan to promote their products, hiring KOLs may be a better choice than hiring celebrities with a costlier expense. Companies can also choose an effective KOL according to the factors that influence customers' purchase desire.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Though some of the mentioned findings of this paper are surprising and some of that are expected, the existence of various limitations was realized along with the proceeding of the research. First, the number of survey respondents is insufficient, which only reaches 253. The limited responses of the survey may arise the inaccuracy of the study. Second, the gender

distribution of the survey is not balanced as 57% of respondents are females while males only account for 43%. The unbalanced gender distribution may influence the results due to gender diversity.

For future research, the topic could build on gender extent, which means gender diversity could be considered in further research. Besides, the age group is another possibility of the improvement of this study as Chinese generation z is the focus population in this study.

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APPENDIX

Survey

A survey on the influence of suggestions and advertising behaviors of short video/social media KOLs

1. What is your gender?
2. What is your age?
3. What is your monthly income/living expenses?
4. What is the number of KOLs on any short video platforms (Tik Tok, Kuai Shou etc.) you follow?
5. When KOL's video or tweet content is

Item No.	Influence of Different Contents on Customers' Trust	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Obvious advertisement contains only basic information about a advertised product							
2	Obvious advertisement includes product introduction and comparison of competitive products							
3	Effects display of the product (for example, the blogger shows the changes before and after using cosmetics for one week)							
4	Use professional data (such as hardware data, components data, etc.) to illustrate the advantages and disadvantages of the product							

6. When a particular factor/situation is

Item No.	Influence of Different Factors on Customers' Purchase Desire	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	I have purchased the products introduced by this KOL before, and the product experiences are poor							
2	I have purchased the products introduced by this KOL before, and the product experiences are good							
3	The KOL is your relative, friend or other close relationships							
4	The brand of the product recommended by KOL is your favorite brand							
5	The brand of the product recommended by KOL is a brand you don't like							
6	The KOL has followers less than 100,000							
7	The KOL has followers more than 1 million							
8	The KOL is engaged in the product industry							
9	The KOL has a good reputation in this product area							