

A Study on the Impact of KOL Live Marketing on Consumers' Willingness to Purchase Casual Foods

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Abstract. With the rapid development of e-commerce in China in recent years, live-streaming has become a vital marketing idea. The revenue generated by live-streaming KOLs has attracted high interest from academia and industry. This paper focuses on the casual food industry and explores the impact of various factors of KOL live streaming on consumers' purchase intention from the perspective of consumers' perception. Firstly, this research defines the influencing factors related to living marketing and consumers' purchase intention through theoretical analysis and puts forward theoretical hypotheses. Secondly, based on the academic study, the degree of influence of each influencing factor on consumers' purchase intention is analyzed using methods including factor analysis and regression analysis. The main points are as follows: firstly, KOL live marketing can significantly and positively affect consumers' purchase intention; secondly, in the leisure food industry, the intuitive factors of live bandings, such as KOL appearance and live interactivity, have the most profound influence on consumers' purchase intention. Third, consumers jointly determine the strength of purchase intention based on a more balanced consideration of multiple factors. This paper illustrates the characteristics of KOL live-streaming marketing in the casual food industry, providing theoretical support and reference suggestions for enterprises, e-commerce platforms, and KOLs.

Keywords: live marketing; purchase intention; consumer perception; regression analysis.

1. Introduction

In 2016, China entered the "first year of the live webcast" e-commerce ushered in rapid development, with the continuous development of low and medium-consumption groups and consumers in third and fourth-tier cities, giving rise to the business model of huge profits through the creation of live e-commerce net red to drive the traditional marketing industry and e-commerce platform. Currently, the netroots live broadcast has completed a critical stage of development from the original fragmented business model to industrial transformation. Under the high-pressure environment brought about by the homogenization of live content and brand positioning, KOLs (i.e., opinion leaders) have come into being. And from 2019 to 2022, influenced by the new crown epidemic, live-streaming with goods has become a new marketing idea for corporate businesses. The phenomenon of some KOLs with massive fan bases gaining hundreds of millions of sales from a single live broadcast and its low-cost and high flexibility features are favored by enterprises. KOL marketing has received much attention from academia and the industry.

In recent years, more and more scholars have researched aspects such as the mechanism and influencing factors of KOL marketing. With the in-depth development of the KOL industry, many problems have been exposed, for example, companies expect to achieve product promotion and establish a positive brand image through live-streaming, but it happens that live-streaming sales are disastrous or even damage the brand image. Previous studies have focused on KOL marketing and strategy from the perspective of enterprises and on the factors of live streaming in the field of communication. In contrast, the number of studies on the influencing factors of live streaming based on consumers' perceptions is relatively tiny. Therefore, this paper focuses on an essential category of live streaming - the casual food industry - from the perspective of consumer perceptions and investigates the influence of KOL live streaming factors on consumers' purchase intention. This paper combines theoretical and quantitative empirical research, using literature research, in-depth

interviews, and questionnaires to analyze the influencing factors of willingness and their importance. Firstly, combining literature research and in-depth interviews, this research makes hypotheses on the factors that influence consumers' desire to purchase through KOL live streaming; secondly, this research obtains first-hand data through questionnaire surveys and constructs a model of consumers' willingness to purchase through principal component analysis and multiple regression analysis; finally, this research makes suggestions about the current situation of KOL marketing. It analyzes the consumer perception perspective for KOL marketing research. It provides theoretical support and reference suggestions for platforms to improve conversion rates, corporate KOL selection strategies, and KOLs to improve their competitiveness.

2. Theoretical Review

The advantages of live marketing under the Netflix economy are apparent: it can give full play to the interpersonal effect, optimize brand image, increase product sales, reduce publicity costs, make more consumers pay attention to the brand, and promote the virtuous cycle of the enterprise. Research on Netflix marketing started late but has shown a clear upward trend since 2010, reaching a peak in recent years. Overseas research has mainly focused on social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. It is dominated by research in technical fields such as big data, the Internet of Things, artificial intelligence, and other highly sophisticated technologies. In contrast, less research has been conducted in marketing and relevance analysis perspectives—a

The four-step model for building a personal brand emphasizes the importance of structuring a personal brand. Philbric agreed with the view and suggested that communication through self-media is beneficial to increasing consumer trust, dividing customer value into utilitarian, hedonic and social values [1]. That perceived value affects consumers' willingness. Jin analyzed various types of celebrity flat shots with solid online influence, confirming the traffic realization ability of the Netflix group [2]. Kim et al. investigated the effect of customer value on consumer loyalty by combining theories related to live-streaming motivation and proposed that consumers have utilitarian and hedonic intentions to watch live streaming with goods [3]. A review of the current research reveals that the marketing model of live-streaming with goods, as an essential part of the Netflix economy, is key to influencing consumers' purchase intentions and that consumer motivations have become more diverse with the addition of the social media environment.

A search on the China Knowledge Network (CKNI) for the keywords "live marketing" and "live with goods" yielded a total of 9,338 academic journals and 1,144 dissertations. From the year and number of journal publications, more relevant research must be conducted before 2005. From 2008 onwards, there has been a rising trend of research on transportation integration, and from 2019, a rapid rise, and 2021 reached a peak. This is because from 2019 to 2021 KOL placement market continues to grow, the platform marketing ecosystem upgrades and the volume of KOLs available for placement rapidly expands. At the same time, e-commerce ushers in a new development period fuelled by the epidemic, bringing the number of relevant literature to 2,180 in 2021.

Under the influence of the new crown epidemic, live webcasting with goods as a new marketing method for companies has created a new value chain in which all people can participate. Analyzed the intrinsic mechanism of webcast marketing driving consumer behavior and found that webcast marketing can effectively attract consumers' attention and thus drive consumer behavior [4]. Feng Xuesong argues that live-streaming with goods shortens the distance between consumers and businesses, and the inclusion of government figures improves the credibility of live-streaming marketing [5]. Su Boya and other scholars launched an analysis of live-streaming examples on Taobao's live-streaming platform to obtain that the effect of live-streaming with goods is influenced by KOL's brand influence and e-commerce brand interaction and then proposed strategies for the development of the net popularity economy [6]. Scholars such as Sun Jiami and Zhang Haoya put forward optimization suggestions for the practical operation of live-streaming with goods from the perspective of consumer demand [7,8].

Through a review of the academic community about live marketing research, it can be found that the domestic KOL live marketing started almost the same period as foreign unfolded and focused on the beginning of research traffic integration-related topics from 2020 due to the new crown epidemic in late 2019 hit, and based on the nature of Internet communication, the new media era at home and abroad almost at the same time, the research papers in recent years reached the peak of recent years, but overall the number of studies remains low. Domestic research is more widely segmented, and its perspective mainly focuses on the role of platforms and KOLs on consumer behavior and perceptions. Mainland China has noticed the importance of live-streaming in promoting economic development earlier than some governments in Western countries and has gradually standardized the market of Netflix economy, playing the role of market players while controlling it, making domestic attention more focused on the relationship between the three parties and their mechanism of action. In the future, China's live-streaming marketing research results will be more abundant, and the research capacity will show a continuous upward trend.

3. Study Design

The questionnaire development was conducted in conjunction with literature research and in-depth interviews and was mainly measured using a ten-point scale and single- and multiple-choice questions. To further improve the questionnaire, one serving university teacher whose research involved the food industry was invited to suggest changes and improvements to the questionnaire, which was collated to obtain the questionnaire for this study. The questionnaire was distributed to an all-age group of Chinese Internet users, and the questionnaire was distributed mainly in an online format, with 227 valid questionnaires returned. After a small batch survey test, the final questionnaire consisted of three sections: basic information, live viewing, and essential indicators of live streaming.

3.1 Description of Variables

In this paper, 25 questions were developed based on six potential variables: visibility, appearance factor, live streaming environment, interactivity, professionalism, and speed of product presentation, and relevant questions were asked for each influencing factor. The specific measurement scales and sources of variables are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Sources of variables for measurement scales

Potential variables	Measured variables	Source of variables
Popularity	Number of fans	Do you think the anchor has a large following
	Frequency of media coverage	You often see the anchor being featured in other media.
	Reputation and social status	The anchor is ranked good reputation on the live platform.
Physical appearance factors	Body weight	I prefer products recommended by anchors who appear lighter in weight.
	Face score	I would give priority to products recommended by high-value anchors.
	Make-up filters	I would give priority to products recommended by the Exquisite Makeup anchors.
Live Streaming Environment	Live streaming proficiency	The anchor is skilled in live streaming and can handle all life situations.
	A clean and tidy environment	Clean and hygienic environment for live broadcast
	Operational hygiene	Clean and hygienic anchor operation
Interactivity	Plug-in interaction	The anchor often uses platform plug-ins for interaction.

	Relational social interaction	The anchor often interacts with fan comments or community communication.
Professionalism	Business Visibility	The anchor has expertise in the field of everyday foods.
Product Showcase	Level of product knowledge	The anchor has a high level of knowledge about the product.
Willingness to buy	Display speed	Longer trials of individual products by anchors
	Overall willingness to buy	Willingness to buy for KOL live streaming

3.2 Research Hypothesis

The current definition of the casual food industry is largely agreed upon, i.e., food is eaten for leisure, a type of FMCG. The upgrading of the consumer structure and the increasing diversification of consumer needs have led to greater personalization in the snack food industry. Scholars have analyzed consumer concerns from several perspectives, and this paper proposes a hypothesis on the factors influencing consumers' willingness to purchase KOL live.

H1: There is a positive influence of the opinion leader's popularity on purchase intention.

Opinion leaders will bring in different traffic sizes depending on their fan base, while popularity also impacts consumer trust to a certain extent. Research by Meng Fe suggests that opinion leaders can increase the purchase rate of their fan base, and the more extensive their fan base, the greater the sales and long-term attention they bring to the shop [9]. Some other scholars have argued that the frequency with which KOLs are covered by other media is also an essential part of their popularity, and their social status and reputation affect consumers' willingness to buy.

H2: There is a positive influence of the opinion leader appearance factor on purchase intention.

Opinion leaders' appearance is the most intuitive perception of consumers' attitudes toward live marketing, in contrast to the common perception that "people who can eat" are associated with a more significant body weight, three of the interviewees believe that smaller consumers are more likely to attract purchases due to the prevalence of healthy eating and that their face and make-up will also influence attitudes towards watching live broadcasts.

H3: There is a positive effect of live environmental hygiene on purchase intentions.

The live broadcast environment is critical in the food industry. In interviews, four respondents said that the live broadcast environment can cause consumers to associate food safety aspects and that when the live broadcast environment or the anchor's operation is not hygienic enough, it can seriously affect the perception of the product and the brand, and thus abandon the purchase of the product.

H4: There is a positive effect of live interactivity on purchase intention.

Interactivity refers to the degree of communication and interaction, and Roger argues that interactivity between KOLs and their fan base positively affects fans' willingness to communicate [10]. Lin. Y et al. suggest that relational social interactions can bring consumers and anchors closer, affecting the effectiveness of live streaming. Anchors use both the platform's form of interaction and social interaction to bring them closer to consumers, impacting consumers' purchase behavior and purchase intentions [11].

H5: There is a positive effect of live professionalism on purchase intentions.

Live marketing provides product information to potential consumers by explaining the product. Thus the professionalism of the explanation directly affects consumers' perception of the product Yao Xi and Zhang Meizhen proposed and confirmed that consumers could also develop business friendships with the anchor while gaining product information while watching the live broadcast [12]. The higher the knowledge base of the anchor about the product and related fields and the more skillful the broadcast is, the more likely it is to impact consumers.

H6: There is a negative effect of the speed of product presentation on purchase intention.

During the interviews, some respondents suggested that the speed of product presentation during the live broadcast of KOL products also affects the willingness to buy, and the longer the anchor's

presentation time or eating time for the product, the more likely it is to leave a deep impression, which in turn affects the willingness to buy.

4. Results of the Study

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

The information collected based on the sample is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the sample

Type of indicator	Features	Frequency	Percentage/%
Gender	Male	112	49.34
	Female	115	50.66
Age	17 years and under	2	0.88
	18 to 24 years old	57	25.11
	25 to 32 years	90	39.65
	33 to 40 years	60	26.43
	41-49 years	14	6.17
	Other	4	1.76
	1000 and below	26	11.45
Monthly personal consumption level	1001 to 2000	66	29.07
	2001 to 3000	58	25.55
	3001 to 5000 RMB	35	15.42
	5000 or more	42	18.50
Number of online purchases per month	0 to 3 times	31	13.66
	4 to 6 times	103	45.37
	Seven times and above	93	40.97

The research subjects are mainly young and middle-aged consumers who have a strong desire and ability to consume and have a thorough understanding of e-commerce platforms and are mostly aged between 18 and 40. As shown in Table 1, 49.34% of the respondents were male, and 50.66% were female, which is a balanced gender ratio. In terms of the distribution of the monthly personal consumption level of the survey respondents, the main focus is on the level of RMB 1000-3000, followed by the class of more than RMB 3000, which is basically in line with the overall consumption level in China. The number of shopping trips per month is mainly concentrated at four times or more, which is more concerned with e-commerce platforms and meets the needs of this research. The overall sample of this paper is reasonable, and further data analysis and processing can be collected.

4.2 Reliability and Validity Tests

4.2.1 Reliability tests

In this paper, the validity of the collected questionnaires was first tested for reliability before processing the data obtained.

Table 3. Reliability statistics

Cronbach Alpha	Cloning of Bach Alpha based on standardized terms	Number of items
0.826	0.835	14

From the results of the reliability test, it can be seen that the α values of the proposed 14 measurement variables are all above 0.810, the overall α values of the questionnaire are all 0.826, and the α values based on standardized items are all 0.835, indicating that the questionnaire is highly reliable; and the "single-item-total correction coefficient" of each measurement variable of this

questionnaire The "single-item-total correction coefficient" of all the variables measured in this questionnaire is greater than the standard value of 0.5, therefore, the overall data of this paper has high reliability.

4.2.2 Validity tests

In this paper, the structural validity of the questionnaire was validated by adopting exploratory factor analysis and validation factor analysis. The validity test results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Validity tests

Measurable variables	Factor					
	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5	X6
X11	0.742	-	-	-	-	-
X12	0.729	-	-	-	-	-
X13	0.778	-	-	-	-	-
X21	-	0.625	-	-	-	-
X22	-	0.878	-	-	-	-
X23	-	0.828	-	-	-	-
X31	-	-	0.563	-	-	-
X32	-	-	0.827	-	-	-
X33	-	-	0.634	-	-	-
X41	-	-	-	0.772	-	-
X42	-	-	-	0.755	-	-
X51	-	-	-	-	0.566	-
X52	-	-	-	-	0.787	-
X61	-	-	-	-	-	0.705
KMO values	0.843					
P-value of Bartlett's test	0.000					

As shown in Table 3, after validated factor analysis of the questionnaire research data, an overall KMO value of 0.843 can be obtained, which is greater than the standard value of 0.7, and the significance of Bartlett's spherical test is 0.000, indicating that the data in this paper is suitable for factor analysis. The six factors and the variables corresponding to the factors obtained are the same as the factors and measured variables set out in the previous hypothesis.

4.3 Analysis of the Results of the Empirical Study

This paper uses multiple linear regression analysis to regress the six factors with consumer purchase intention, and the regression results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Results of multiple regression analysis

Factor	Unstandardized factor		Standardization factor	P
	B	Standard errors		
Constants	7.665	0.076	-	0.000
X1	0.409	0.077	0.264	0.000
X2	0.491	0.077	0.317	0.000
X3	0.448	0.077	0.289	0.000
X4	0.539	0.077	0.348	0.000
X5	0.469	0.077	0.302	0.000
X6	0.037	0.077	0.024	0.627
R ²			0.466	
F			31.943	

5. Discussion

From the survey results, it can be seen that in the casual food industry, KOL live streaming can have a significant positive effect on consumers' willingness to purchase, and the question that consumers' desire to purchase is significantly increased after watching live streaming has a mean score of 7.68, which is highly validated. The results of the empirical analysis show that there is a slight difference in the degree of influence of each factor. The various considerations of consumers watching live streaming will have a relatively balanced effect on purchase intention. Among the factors influencing consumers' purchase intention, the interactivity of KOL live streaming (0.539, 0.000) has the most significant favorable influence on consumers' purchase intention, followed by the appearance factor of KOL (0.491, 0.000). The more significant impact of these two dimensions may be because, in the casual food industry, consumers are more concerned with the shopping experience brought about by intuition than the product itself, and the attractiveness of the anchor to consumers through interaction and appearance can effectively translate into consumers' purchase intention. KOL popularity (0.409, 0.000), professionalism (0.469, 0.000), and live streaming environment (0.448, 0.000) also had a significant positive effect on consumers' purchase intention, with all three being of equal importance. This suggests that information that needs to be converted is less influential than intuition but is also a key consideration for consumers. The pacing of the product presentation in the live stream (0.037, 0.627) did not show a significant correlation with consumer purchase intentions, which may be because live stream viewers in the casual food industry are looking for more entertainment rather than efficiency from the stream. Based on such a situation and considering the current consumption trends in the casual video market, this paper provides corresponding countermeasure suggestions for live streaming from consumer perceptions in the informal food industry for both companies and KOLs.

Firstly, in the selection or cultivation of the KOL of the live broadcast of casual food, priority should be given to screening or focusing on cultivating and improving these two advantages of the anchor through the interactivity and appearance of the anchor's live broadcast; secondly, for the balanced improvement of the visibility and professionalism of the live broadcast, ensure that the anchor's exposure is high while increasing its professionalism in the casual food industry, and develop a certain depth of professional knowledge. The speed of the product display can be adjusted according to the actual situation when the food is displayed, and the focus should be on keeping the live environment and the operation of the food clean and hygienic. The platform for the live broadcast of the casual food industry can be guided appropriately based on the above suggestions to improve the advantages of the platform in the food category; enterprises and KOLs can enhance the willingness of users to buy after watching the live broadcast through the above suggestions, thus increasing the number of transactions and enhancing their value.

6. Conclusion

Webcast marketing started in 2016 and will only see a new period of rapid development between 2019 and 2022, peaking in 2021. The relevant research reports and accurate data were only released to the public at the end of 2021. Most current research focuses on qualitative analysis, while the number of quantitative analyses is low. This paper focuses on KOL marketing in the casual food industry and explores and correlates the factors of KOL live streaming factors on consumers' purchase intentions. Through factor analysis and multiple regression models, specific data is presented to show the factors influencing consumers' preferences and the importance of KOL live streaming. There needs to be more research on the significance of KOL live factors analysis. There is some research on the causes and innovative articles. This paper takes consumers' willingness to buy as the evaluation target, through KOL live factors analysis, evaluates the problems that still need to be improved in the live marketing of the cross-casual food industry, promotes the KOL of the casual food industry to be more efficient, provides KOL selection strategies for enterprises and KOL anchors to provide live optimization improvement direction. The objective of the evaluation is to promote more efficient

KOL marketing in the casual food industry and to give the companies KOL selection strategies and KOL anchors directions for live broadcast optimization.

Although this paper refers to a large amount of literature and adopts a more scientific approach to research and analysis, there are still shortcomings and limitations, mainly in the following aspects. This paper only focuses on the live broadcast forms of mainstream e-commerce platforms. Still, social media platforms have now derived various forms of the live broadcast with new technologies, such as combining with AI intelligence, so there are gaps in the influencing factors of different live broadcast forms. This paper's research has limited adaptability to the current non-mainstream live broadcast forms. The theory in this paper is aimed at all consumer groups. It needs to be categorized, while in practice, there needs to be a gap between the purchase intentions and influencing factors of different consumers in live streaming. Targeted marketing to specific consumer groups must adapt to the company's situation. In the future, the theory will be of more practical value if it can target different consumer categories. In this paper, this research has only studied some of the factors that influence consumers' willingness to buy by opinion leaders in the casual food industry based on previous research and in-depth interviews, mainly focusing on the facts that consumers perceive, but not on more diverse factors such as consumer psychology and KOL language style, which this research expect to verify in future research.

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