

HOW TO CHOOSE THE IDEAL KOC ON THE TIKTOK PLATFORM TO BOOST FOLLOWERS' ATTRACTION TO PURCHASE: THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND THE PROMO CODE IN THE UNCERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES POST COVID-19

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ABSTRACT:

Amidst the ongoing economic crisis, consumer purchasing power is weaker. The use of KOC's promotional codes is seen as a solution to stimulate buying behavior and relieve economic strain. This study analyzed major factors that affect the choice of Key Opinion Consumers (KOC) on TikTok to increase their followers and, in turn, encourage people to buy things on this platform. In this study, social interaction theory was used to explore the elements of a KOC's attractiveness to their followers. The results show that reputation and honesty are essential elements of a KOC to attract long-term followers. Moreover, the promotional codes offered by KOCs serve to alleviate financial strain and encourage client transactions.

Keywords: Key Opinion Consumers, Tiktok Shop, promotion code, economic crisis.

1. Introduction

Key opinion consumers (KOCs) refer to members of the public who provide authentic feedback on different products and services. This characteristic enhances their credibility in contrast to traditional celebrities or influencers, who may be seen as getting remuneration for recommending products or services (Jayasimha & Aditya, 2016). Consequently, organizations may reach a wider audience by using KOC marketing strategies. Key opinion leaders (KOCs) actively engage with their audience across several social media channels (Duygu & Selcan, 2020). The folks actively interact with comments and queries, often arranging contests and offering rewards. This strategy

enables the formation of relationships with their audience and promotes active involvement with the brand. KOCs use their social media platforms to effectively engage their intended demographic and establish a personal rapport with them.

Nevertheless, customers sometimes have difficulty discerning personal endorsements from commercial material in sponsored postings by KOCs (Zhu et al., 2020). When there is a strong alignment between the KOCs and the product, it results in positive sentiments towards the product, increased intention to buy, and referrals. The alignment between the brand and the customer also impacts brand sentiment and purchase intention. The legitimacy of the source, which

includes elements like beauty, knowledge, and trustworthiness, has a significant impact on the success of influencer endorsements. Furthermore, the research will assess the regulatory function of promotional codes (promotional strategies) on the TikTok platform that KOCs use to stimulate their followers' purchase behaviors during the economic decline. To solve the problems, the following research questions have been raised: What specific attributes do KOCs possess that will engender long-term consumer loyalty? And what is the influence of promotional codes of Key Opinion Consumers (KOCs) on purchase intention and economic crisis?

1.1. Theoretical background

Parasocial interaction (PSI)

Wohl and Richard (1956) introduced the concept of parasocial contact to explain the unilateral, virtual connection that the audience forms with media personalities during media interactions, which closely resembles real-life interaction. Similarly, Rubin (1985) introduced the concept of parasocial contact as the interpersonal engagement between media consumers and media figures, characterized by behaviors such as seeking direction from media personalities, seeing them as friends, and having a desire to meet them in person. PSI refers to the unilateral process in which media viewers perceive and form an instant connection with media personalities throughout their media consumption experience. The parasocial connection is formed by the ongoing progression of parasocial contact, which may be seen as a dynamic process of virtual engagement.

1.2. Hypotheses

1.2.1. Reputation

Credibility indicates the trust that a person can build based on their reputation and honest through a certain time (Jason et al., 2020). Reputation plays a crucial role in influencer marketing since it directly impacts how customers perceive and make decisions (Masuda, Han, & Lee, 2022). Identification of the influence of emotion, follower count, and branding on engagement (Holiday et al.,

2023). Influencers' reputation, personal traits, and the establishment of a personal social responsibility (PSR) all together impact customers' interest and desire to buy. Thus, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H1: Reputation of KOC positively impacts on Key Opinion Consumers attraction

1.2.2. Honest

Honesty is a crucial factor in several situations. Research in the field of advertising has shown that making assertions of honesty and non-sponsorship in social media postings may increase trustworthiness, expertise, positive attitudes, and intentions to make a purchase (Marco, Simona, Michela, & Silvia, 2016). The establishment of genuine parasocial connections, which subsequently influence purchase intentions, is influenced by the richness and naturalness of media (Nurashikin Nazer, Nor Ariza, & Kartinah, 2023). Social media influencers must provide reliable information to persuade clients to embrace the information and impact their purchasing inclinations. Thus, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H2: Honest of KOC positively impacts on Key Opinion Consumers attraction

1.2.3. Key Opinion Consumers (KOC) attraction

KOCs have a substantial impact on consumer purchase choices. Studies indicate that KOCs' electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) significantly influences consumers' online choices, especially when it comes to experience-oriented products that get favorable e-WOM feedback (Nicola & Wayne, 2009; Sandra & Ješs, 2021). Opinion leadership and social contagion in social networks, with contagion visible via network linkages, have an impact on the acceptance of new products (Jayasimha & Aditya, 2016). In general, KOCs have a big influence on what customers buy, so marketers can carefully target them to increase product acceptance. Thus, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H3: Key Opinion Consumers positively impacts on purchase intention

1.2.4. Economic crisis

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a substantial influence on consumer purchasing behavior, resulting in alterations in purchase patterns and motives (Daniel, Jia, David, & Michael, 2021; Gulati & Ugo, 2020). Moreover, the epidemic has resulted in a surge in e-commerce as customers prioritize their health and safety. Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that the epidemic's effects on the economy have also had an impact on consumer behavior, potentially influencing purchasing decisions. Brands can adapt to the economic crisis by understanding consumer motivations (Elhajjar, 2023). Thus, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H4: Economic crisis mediates the relationship between Key Opinion Consumers attraction and purchase intention

1.2.5. Mediator - Promotion of Key Opinion Consumers (KOC)

The consumers' reaction to daily deal promotions is contingent upon the quantity of offers acquired, while this impact is contingent upon other things. Monika and Lan (2017) found that the quantity of deals purchased by others has an impact on customers' assessments and purchase intentions, particularly when there are no or insufficient intrinsic product and deal signals. Perceived value and anticipated regret mediate the impact of promotion framing on users' purchase intention in mobile applications (Zhu et al., 2020). Thus, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H5: Promotion of Key Opinion Consumers (KOC) mediates the relationship between Key Opinion Consumers attraction and purchase intention

1.2.6. Moderator - Promotion of Key Opinion Consumers (KOC)

The way a promotion is presented might impact customers' perceptions of luck and enhance their inclination to buy the advertised product package. One-for-one promotions, in which a firm provides a product like the one sold for each transaction, might

increase the likelihood of purchasing utilitarian items but decrease the likelihood of purchasing hedonistic products (Kashef & Michel, 2019). Robust companies should embrace nonmonetary promotions, while weak brands should embrace monetary promotions (Riley, Joshua, & Joshua, 2021). Thus, promotion is considered to enhance purchasing, and reduce the pressure during recession. Therefore, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H6: Promotion of Key Opinion Consumers (KOC) moderates the relationship between Economic crisis and purchase intention.

2. Methodology

2.1. Data collection

This study report used a quantitative market research methodology to get a more profound understanding of the significance of follower-KOC congruence in the correlation between influencer marketing and consumer purchasing behavior. In addition, the study used the probability sampling method, which was selected due to its capacity to obtain a sample that accurately represents the target audience and allows for the generalization of research findings to the full population. The use of simple random sampling in this study ensures that all social media users within the defined target demographic have an equal chance of being included.

2.2. Measurements

All scales are taken from previous research and adjusted to fit the content of this study. The scale used is Likert, 1-Strongly disagree, 5-Strongly agree. Reputation was adapted from Han and Ki (2010) and Erdem, xfc, lin and Swait (2004). Honest was adapted from Xie and Peng (2009) and Newell and Goldsmith (2001). Economic crisis was adapted from Michalis Skordoulis (2018) and Elhajjar (2023). KOC attraction was adapted from Ki, Cuevas, Chong and Lim (2020). Promotion code of KOC was adapted from Garretson, Fisher and Burton (2002). Purchase intention was adapted from Dodds, Monroe and Grewal (1991).

3. Data analysis and results

3.1. Demographic information

48% of participants earned less than 3 million VND each month. 8% (17) of respondents earned 5-10 million VND each month, while 26% (56) earned 3-5 million. Paid workers in Vietnam earn 7.9 million VND a month (Statista, 2023). Most respondents had below-average Vietnamese incomes. According to the research, 91% of participants are currently enrolled in undergraduate studies, and 8% have completed post-graduate degrees. The poll found that 1% of respondents had vocational training and 1% were in high school. This shows that most of the sample members are undergraduates. The bulk of participants (78%) are students, which matches the research population. Office occupations make up 17% of the workforce,

while business and agency jobs make up 1%. The remaining 3% are "others," encompassing many additional occupations within the analyzed group. A large share (48%) of research participants earns 1-3 million VND each month. 26% of respondents earned 3-5 million VND, 8% and 9% earned 5-10 million and 10-15 million, respectively. Additionally, 9% earn above 15 million VND every month.

3.2. Reliability and validity assessment

The collected data was tabulated and analyzed to estimate the Cronbach's Alpha value which is measured to estimate the internal consistency and understand how closely related a set of items are as a group. The reliability test was implemented for all study variables and the results are overviewed in Table 1.

Table 1: Scale reliability with Cronbach's Alpha, AVE, and CR results

Construct	Items	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Economic crisis		0.791	0.805	0.621
EC1	0.865			
EC2	0.890			
EC3	0.826			
Reputation		0.808	0.822	0.722
REP1	0.876			
REP2	0.788			
REP3	0.882			
Honest		0.890	0.891	0.819
Honest1	0.914			
Honest2	0.903			
Honest3	0.899			
Promotion code of KOC		0.919	0.921	0.805
PRO1	0.904			
PRO2	0.917			
PRO3	0.872			
PRO4	0.895			

Construct	Items	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Purchase intention		0.883	0.885	0.741
PI1	0.827			
PI2	0.860			
PI3	0.879			
PI4	0.876			
KOC attraction		0.852	0.857	0.691
KOC1	0.838			
KOC2	0.816			
KOC3	0.836			
KOC4	0.836			

Table 2: Correlations

	EC	Honest	KOC	PRO	PI	REP
EC	1.000					
Honest	0.634	1.000				
KOC	0.496	0.556	1.000			
PRO	0.498	0.440	0.425	1.000		
PI	0.459	0.524	0.506	0.448	1.000	
REP	0.382	0.396	0.518	0.510	0.504	1.000

Note: EC: Economic crisis, KOC: KOC attraction; Pro: Promotion Code; PI: purchase intention; REP: Reputation.

In term of Correlations, if the test sig is less than 0.05, the pair of variables is linearly correlated; If sig is greater than 0.05, the pair of variables does not have a linear correlation (assume a significance level of 5% = 0.05) (see Table 2).

3.3. SEM and hypothesis testing

Table 4 displays the findings of the model analysis, indicating that reputation and honesty are the two elements that contribute to an appealing KOC. The influence of honesty (0.416) is larger than that of reputation (0.353), thereby confirming the validity of hypotheses H1 and H2. The attractiveness of KOC positively influences purchase intention; hence, H3 is validated. As anticipated, the economic crisis leads to a decrease in sales, resulting in the approval of H4.

3.4. Mediator and Moderator

The table 5 below shows the mediator role of Promotion code in the relationship between KOC and Purchase intention. KOCs have promotional codes that will motivate consumers to buy more products. Promotion, in its role as a moderator of economic crisis, and purchase intention, also has the effect of adjusting the relationship between economic crisis and purchase intention, from negative to positive. Thus, promotion is an advantage that KOC has, especially in this difficult economic period.

4. Conclusion

Key opinion leaders' characteristics, encompassing expertise, authenticity, physical attractiveness, and homophily, play a pivotal role in the attraction of followers (Ki, Cuevas, Chong, &

Table 3: Relationship results

Ho	Relationship	β	P values	Results
H1	REP → KOC	0.353	0.000	Approved
H2	Honest → KOC	0.416	0.000	Approved
H3	KOC → PI	0.318	0.000	Approved
H4	EC → PI	-0.014	0.021	Approved

Note: EC: Economic crisis, KOC: KOC attraction; Pro: Promotion Code; PI: purchase intention; REP: Reputation.

codes might serve as a persuasive incentive for customers to persist with their purchasing choices. Comprehending the intricacies of promotional code methods is essential for organizations aiming to effectively handle economic crises. Through the planned implementation of promotions that are in line with consumer demands and economic circumstances, companies have the potential

Table 4: Relationship results

Ho	Role	Relationship	β	P values	Results
H5	KOC → Pro	0.236	3.100	0.002	Approved
H6	Pro → PI	0.217	3.496	0.000	Approved
H7	Mediator	KOC → Pro → PI	0.135	0.000	Approved
H8	Moderator	Pro x EC → PI	0.144	0.000	Approved

Note: EC: Economic crisis, KOC: KOC attraction; Pro: Promotion Code; PI: purchase intention.

Lim, 2020). These attributes function as essential relational resources, crucial in shaping follower trust, consequently fostering follower loyalty, and yielding positive marketing outcomes such as favorable product attitudes and heightened purchase intentions. The specific domains of interest of influencers further nuance these effects. These effects are subject to moderation by post characteristics, including post type and correspondent inference. This congruence not only attracts followers but also generates favorable attitudes, purchase intentions, and intentions to recommend, thereby solidifying the effectiveness of influencer marketing strategies.

4.1. Theoretical implications

Promotional codes may mitigate the adverse effects of economic concerns on customer purchase intention by providing discounts, special offers, or incentives. This suggests that implementing effective promotional campaigns may act as a protective measure, enhancing the attractiveness and affordability of items for customers during difficult economic times. The potential for cost savings or other advantages linked to promotional

to not only increase immediate sales but also foster long-term customer loyalty and establish favorable brand connections.

4.2. Practical implications

Practical consequences may include enhancing the content strategy by focusing on the specific subject area. Customizing content to match the interests and preferences of the audience within certain categories may increase engagement and resonance. Analyze the impact of various media settings on parasocial interaction to inform practical adjustments. Customizing content and interaction techniques to align with the unique attributes of certain platforms or media environments may optimize efficacy. People may use practical knowledge on how personal traits impact parasocial interaction. Practical applications include the development of efficient communication strategies on social media platforms. By considering the unique attributes of individuals, the specific subject matter, and the prevailing media landscape, one may create compelling and genuine material that enhances engagement.

4.3. Limitation and Future Research

The current study solely focuses on inquiring about the promotion codes used by Key Opinion Consumers (KOC), without addressing the specific combination of promotional strategies employed by brands. To broaden the scope of the study, it is crucial to analyze the manner in which key opinion consumers (KOCs) engage with consumers and assess their degree of integrity. This study might center on examining the extent

to which KOCs incorporate and respond to comments from their followers, including analyzing the frequency and characteristics of their interactions. Simultaneously, content analysis which involves contrasting shared messages with actual activities can determine the degree of authenticity. This will provide a deeper comprehension of the credibility of KOCs and their adeptness in fostering a robust rapport with their audience ■

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YẾU TỐ CHỌN KOC LÝ TƯỞNG TRÊN NỀN TẢNG TIKTOK ĐỂ TĂNG SỨC HẤP DẪN MUA HÀNG CỦA NGƯỜI THEO DÕI, ĐỘNG LỰC ĐĂNG SAU MÃ KHUYẾN MÃI TRONG NHỮNG TRƯỜNG HỢP KHÔNG CHẮC CHẮN SAU COVID-19

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TÓM TẮT:

Trong khủng hoảng kinh tế hiện nay, người tiêu dùng có khuynh hướng giảm dự định mua hàng. Việc sử dụng các mã khuyến mãi của người tiêu dùng có ảnh hưởng (KOC) được xem là một giải pháp để thúc đẩy hành vi mua hàng, giúp giảm áp lực về kinh tế. Nghiên cứu này nhằm tìm hiểu các yếu tố quan trọng để lựa chọn các KOC trên nền tảng Tiktok để tăng thêm người theo dõi, từ đó kích thích hành vi mua hàng trên nền tảng này. Lý thuyết tương tác xã hội đã được sử dụng để xác định các yếu tố xây dựng thu hút của một KOC đối với người theo dõi. Kết quả cho thấy danh tiếng và sự trung thực là yếu tố quan trọng xây tạo sự thu hút của một KOC đối với người theo dõi trong dài hạn.

Từ khóa: người tiêu dùng có ảnh hưởng, cửa hàng trên Tiktok, mã khuyến mãi, khủng hoảng kinh tế.