

# ***A Study on the Influence of Chinese KOL on the Purchasing Decisions of Chinese GenZ Consumers' Fashion Brands***

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**Abstract:** With the rapid development of Internet technology and the widespread popularity of social media platforms, the purchasing behaviour patterns of Chinese consumers have changed significantly. Consumers can easily obtain rich product information and shopping channels through social media platforms, while paying more attention to the personalisation, emotionality and value resonance of products. Based on this, this paper aims to explore the changes in Chinese consumers' purchasing behaviour patterns and their impact on fashion brands' marketing strategies in the context of the development of Internet technology and social media platforms through literature review and case study analysis, so as to provide fashion brands with effective marketing strategy suggestions. It was found that KOLs significantly influence consumers' purchasing decisions, and the interactive experience on social media platforms closely shapes consumer brand loyalty. Through a case study, this paper further reveals how a fashion brand successfully increased brand exposure and consumer engagement by cooperating with KOLs through social media platforms. Fashion brands should make full use of the influence of social media platforms and KOLs to innovate their marketing strategies in order to meet consumers' personalised needs and enhance brand competitiveness and market share.

**Keywords:** Internet technology, Social media platforms, Consumer buying behaviour, Fashion brand marketing, KOLs.

## **1. Introduction**

In the digital era, the speed of information acquisition and dissemination has accelerated unprecedentedly, and consumers can easily access the Internet anytime and anywhere through terminal devices such as smartphones and tablets to obtain rich product information and shopping channels. Social media platforms such as Weibo, WeChat, Jittery, Xiaohongshu, etc., have become an important place for consumers to obtain product information, share shopping experiences, and engage in interactive exchanges. Key opinion leaders (KOLs), online celebrities, bloggers, etc. on these platforms have had a profound impact on consumers' purchasing decisions by posting content and live streaming with products.

At the same time, consumers have become more rational and discerning in their purchasing behaviour. They are no longer satisfied with the basic functions and quality of products, but pay more attention to the personalisation, emotionality and value resonance of products. Consumers are more

willing to listen to opinions and suggestions from other consumers, KOLs or professionals during the purchase process, and choose the products or services that best meet their needs and preferences through comparison and screening.

The purpose of this paper is to explore in depth how Chinese consumers' purchasing behaviour patterns have changed against the backdrop of the rapid development of Internet technology and social media platforms, and the impact of these changes on fashion brands' marketing strategies. By analysing key topics such as the role of KOLs in consumers' purchasing decisions, the formation mechanism of consumers' brand loyalty, and the innovation of marketing strategies on social media platforms, the paper provides fashion brands with effective marketing strategy suggestions to help them better adapt to the market changes and enhance their brand competitiveness and market share.

## **2. Definition of concepts relevant to the study**

### **2.1. KOL**

KOL, known as Key Opinion Leader, refers to individuals who have significant influence and voice in specific fields or social media platforms. They have become an important force in brand promotion and product marketing by virtue of their deep expertise, unique personal charisma, and the close emotional connection they establish with their fans. In the field of fashion, KOLs convey fashion trend information to consumers, shape brand image and guide consumers' purchasing decisions by sharing their personal dressing tips, reviewing the latest fashion items and participating in brand co-operation activities. Not only do they have a huge fan base, but they are also able to accurately grasp the needs and preferences of consumers through interaction with their fans, thus demonstrating unique advantages in product promotion and marketing. Therefore, the influence of KOLs in the fashion field cannot be ignored, and they have become an important bridge between brands and consumers.

### **2.2. GenZ consumers**

GenZ consumers, referring to the generation born between 1997 and 2012, grew up entirely in the digital age and have a natural affinity and familiarity with social media and internet technology. This generation not only pursues fashion trends, but also pays more attention to personalisation and unique consumer experiences. They are eager to express their attitudes and values through consumption, and also pay more attention to social interaction and are happy to share their shopping experiences and tips on social media. When purchasing fashion brands, GenZ consumers are often more easily influenced by KOLs. Therefore, for fashion brands, understanding and grasping the consumption habits and psychological needs of GenZ consumers, and cooperating with KOLs to carry out effective marketing strategies, is the key to winning the favour of this generation.

### **2.3. Purchase decisions**

Purchase decision is a series of complex psychological and behavioural processes that consumers go through when purchasing a product or service, including key aspects such as need identification, information search, evaluation of choices, purchase decision and post-purchase behaviour. For GenZ consumers, this process is particularly complex and variable. In this series of links, KOL's influence is omnipresent, not only by sharing their personal experience and recommendations to stimulate the consumer's desire to buy, but also to provide consumers with detailed product information and professional reviews to help customers make informed choices. More importantly, through long-term brand cooperation and real feedback, KOLs build a bridge of trust between brands and consumers, so that consumers are more inclined to trust and choose those brands and products recommended by KOLs when making purchase decisions.

### **3. The Influence of Chinese KOLs on GenZ Consumers' Fashion Brand Purchasing Decisions**

#### **3.1. Influence of KOL on GenZ consumers' motivation to buy fashion brands**

In today's digital age, Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) are playing an increasingly important role in influencing consumer purchasing decisions, especially amongst the younger generation, the GenZ consumers. KOLs use social media and short-form video platforms to build strong connections with their target audience, which in turn influences their motivation to buy from fashion brands. [1]

##### **3.1.1. Increased desire to buy**

First, KOL promotion can significantly enhance GenZ consumers' purchase desire. According to a study by Carrie Gan and Carol Cheng, the characteristics of short-video KOLs, such as authenticity and affinity, can effectively enhance the purchase intention of GenZ beauty consumers. [2] Studies have shown that when KOLs share personal experiences or usage tips related to the brand, they can stimulate consumers' emotional resonance, which enhances their interest in the product and desire to purchase. This emotional connection makes consumers more susceptible to influence, which in turn drives purchase behaviour. In addition, another scholar points out that although over-marketing may lead to consumer burnout, moderate KOL marketing can still be effective in enhancing brand appeal. Her research shows that KOLs can effectively reduce consumer decision fatigue and increase the sense of urgency to purchase by sharing the unique appeal and usage scenarios of fashion brands. [3] Therefore, the influence of KOL is not only reflected in the brand awareness enhancement, but also in stimulating consumers' intrinsic purchase motivation.

##### **3.1.2. Changing brand attitudes**

In addition to enhancing purchase desires, KOLs also play an important role in changing GenZ consumers' attitudes toward brands. A study by Yujun Zhou et al. [4] examines the impact of KOLs on consumers' purchase intentions and brand trust through content marketing and traffic steering. They found that when KOLs appeared as trustworthy figures and shared positive information about the brand, consumers' brand attitudes significantly improved, leading to higher purchase intentions. [4] This phenomenon is particularly evident in the fashion industry, where GenZ consumers typically hold high expectations for brand authenticity and values. When KOLs demonstrate a brand's culture and philosophy through authentic storytelling and visual content, consumers are more likely to identify with and build an emotional connection to the brand. This emotional connection not only enhances the brand's appeal, but also strengthens consumers' brand loyalty.

#### **3.2. Influence of KOLs on GenZ consumers' fashion brand purchasing choices**

KOLs in today's marketplace not only influence consumers' purchase motivations, but also play an important role in fashion brand selection and product comparison criteria. For GenZ consumers, this generation's brand selection and product evaluation processes are deeply influenced by KOLs.

##### **3.2.1. Influencing brand choice**

First, KOLs directly influence GenZ consumers' brand choices through their "grass-raising" content. Research has shown that KOLs' content on social media platforms, if carefully optimised, can effectively increase consumers' attention and interest in a particular brand. [5] These KOLs often share information on product experiences, collocation suggestions, and fashion trends, making it easier for consumers to feel the urge to buy, thus influencing their choice of brand. Fang et al.'s [6]

study further highlights the impact of KOL-brand association on consumer preferences. They found that when luxury brands collaborated with famous KOLs to launch co-branded models, consumers' preference for these brands significantly increased. Such collaborations not only increased brand exposure, but also established the brand's fashionable and high-end image in consumers' minds. [6] Thus, KOLs not only influence consumers' perceptions in brand selection, but also shape their identification with the brand, making GenZ consumers more inclined to choose these brands associated with KOLs.

### **3.2.2. Changing product comparison criteria**

In addition to influencing brand choice, KOLs also play an important role in changing consumers' product comparison criteria, and the importance of endorser identity characteristics in advertising effectiveness should not be underestimated; KOLs with different characteristics may direct consumers to focus on different product attributes. [7] For example, when the KOL appears as a fashion blogger, consumers may pay more attention to the design and trendiness of the product, while when the KOL appears as a professional, consumers may tend to pay more attention to the quality and practicality of the product. Chao-Nan Liu's [8] study further explored the impact of brands building their own virtual spokespersons. His study showed that these hyper-realistic virtual spokespersons were able to attract consumers' attention through unique images and stories, which in turn influenced their brand attitudes and purchase decisions. [8] These virtual spokespersons usually have distinctive personality traits that create emotional resonance with the target audience and change the comparison criteria of consumers when choosing products.

### **3.3. Impact of KOLs on the implementation of GenZ consumers' fashion brand purchase programmes**

KOLs play an important role in the implementation of buying programmes for fashion brands, especially in terms of enabling actual purchasing behaviour and increasing brand loyalty. For GenZ consumers who are looking for personalisation and a sense of style, the influence of KOLs leads to a more positive response during brand implementation.

#### **3.3.1. Enabling actual purchasing behaviour**

On the one hand, KOL's recommendation and promotion can effectively contribute to the actual purchase behaviour of GenZ consumers, and KOL marketing on short-video platforms is particularly effective among beauty brands as it can stimulate consumers' desire to purchase through intuitive visual effects and vivid content. [9] KOLs create a vivid scene by sharing their experience of use, make-up tips, or product effects, so that consumers can experience it psychologically, which in turn enhances their purchase impulse. On the other hand, KOLs are also able to directly guide consumers to complete their purchases through live broadcasts. In these live broadcasts, KOLs often offer unique discounts and limited-time offers to further stimulate consumers' purchasing behaviour. This immediacy and sense of participation makes GenZ consumers more willing to order products as soon as they see them, rather than repeatedly comparing and hesitating.

#### **3.3.2. Increasing brand loyalty**

In addition to enabling purchases, KOLs also play an important role in increasing brand loyalty. In the era of e-commerce, the combination of KOL marketing and relationship marketing theories has led to closer interactions between brands and consumers, which in turn has led to increased brand loyalty. [10] KOLs are able to enhance consumer identification with the brand identity and make

them more willing to continuously purchase the brand's products. Shaozhi's [11] study further highlights the multiple influences on consumer brand loyalty, pointing out that KOL's trustworthiness, professionalism, and emotional resonance are important factors influencing consumer loyalty. When consumers feel KOL's passion and loyalty to the brand, they are more likely to transform this emotion into a sense of brand loyalty and are willing to continue to buy the same brand in the future. [11] In addition, other studies have shown that Jitterbug live banding not only improves short-term sales, but also enhances long-term customer loyalty through effective customer maintenance strategies. [12] KOLs enhance the emotional link between consumers and brands through interaction and feedback mechanisms, helping brands to occupy a higher position in the minds of consumers.

#### **4. Suggestions for Chinese Fashion Brands' Marketing Strategies Regarding GenZ Consumers**

Combined with the results of the above analysis, KOLs play a crucial role in influencing GenZ consumers' purchase motivations, brand choices, product comparison criteria, and purchase behaviour. In order to better meet the needs of GenZ consumers and increase the market share of fashion brands in this group, Chinese fashion brands should optimise their marketing strategies. Below are three marketing strategy recommendations based on the previous analysis:

##### **4.1. Strengthen in-depth co-operation with KOLs to accurately reach target consumers**

With the rise of social media platforms, KOLs have become a key bridge between brands and consumers. For Chinese fashion brands, in-depth co-operation with KOLs can not only increase brand exposure, but also accurately reach the target group - especially GenZ, a young, personality- and value-conscious consumer group. [13] Brands should choose KOLs that fit with their target consumers based on their interests and preferences, especially those with high influence and authenticity. KOLs derive their influence from their authenticity and trusting relationship with their fans, and brands can enhance consumers' emotional identification with their brands through co-operation with KOLs, utilising their recommendations and first-hand experiences.

For example, fashion brands can use KOLs to produce personalised content, such as "live streaming" or "outfit sharing", to showcase the uniqueness of the product and its usage scenarios, which in turn inspires GenZ consumers' desire to buy. Brands can also consider working with KOLs to create co-branded or limited edition products, leveraging the appeal of KOLs to expand the brand's influence. It is worth noting that the cooperation between brands and KOLs should not be limited to one-time advertisement promotion, but should be developed into a long-term strategic cooperation, so as to maintain a close relationship between brands and consumers through continuous content output, and thus enhance brand loyalty.

##### **4.2. Shaping brand stories and building emotional links through content marketing**

GenZ consumers are not only concerned about the quality and function of the product itself, but also focus on whether the brand's cultural connotation and values are compatible with their own. Therefore, Chinese fashion brands should focus on shaping brand stories and highlighting the core values of the brand through content marketing in the marketing process, and then establish emotional links with GenZ consumers. Brands should spread the brand's story and values through the influence of KOLs, so that consumers can feel the emotions and ideas behind the brand.

Specifically, brands can build emotional resonance of the brand through KOLs sharing their personal emotional experiences with the brand, or through short videos, live broadcasts and other forms of displaying the brand's production process, environmental protection concepts, and so on. For example, certain brands can leverage KOLs' personal experiences to highlight their commitment



to sustainable development and social welfare, thereby appealing to Gen Z consumers who prioritize social responsibility and environmental awareness. Driven by this kind of emotional marketing, consumers will not only be able to build recognition of the brand, but will also be more willing to pay for it and recommend it to others.

In addition, brands can establish open and transparent communication channels through KOLs' interactions with consumers and actively respond to their comments and feedback. By organising regular online interactive activities and brand community building, fashion brands are able to deepen their connection with consumers and enhance their loyalty to the brand.

#### **4.3. Provide personalised products and customised services to meet the unique needs of GenZ consumers**

One of the most important characteristics of the GenZ generation of consumers is the pursuit of personalisation and differentiation, and they are more inclined to choose brands and products that represent their unique personalities and values. Fashion brands need to focus on meeting the personalised needs of GenZ consumers and providing customised products and services during the marketing process.

Firstly, brands can launch customised, limited edition or cross-border cooperation fashion items through association with KOLs to meet GenZ consumers' demand for individuality and uniqueness. For example, co-branded models launched by fashion brands in collaboration with famous KOLs are often highly sought after by consumers due to their uniqueness and scarcity. Brands can also provide personalised recommendations based on consumers' interests and preferences through the online platform, further enhancing the shopping experience. [14]

In addition, brands should focus on providing personalised shopping services and interactive experiences. [15] For example, fashion brands can use big data to analyse the purchasing habits and preferences of GenZ consumers, and enhance the purchase conversion rate through an accurate marketing push and customised product recommendations. In shops and online platforms, brands can help consumers achieve a personalised shopping experience and enhance their sense of identity and loyalty to the brand through virtual fitting, AR technology and other innovative ways.

### **5. Conclusion**

In summary, Chinese KOLs play a crucial role in influencing GenZ consumers' fashion brand purchase decisions. From the motivation to purchase, to the shaping of brand selection and product comparison criteria, to the actual purchase behaviour and brand loyalty, KOL's influence runs through the entire purchase decision process.

In terms of motivating purchases, KOLs enhanced GenZ consumers' desire to buy fashion brands by sharing personal experiences and recommendations, effectively changed consumers' attitudes towards brands and enhanced their appeal by showcasing their culture and philosophy through authentic stories and visual content. In terms of brand choice and product comparison criteria, KOLs significantly influenced GenZ consumers' brand choice through carefully optimised content and co-branding collaborations with brands, and directed consumers' attention to different product attributes, thus changing their product comparison criteria. In terms of enabling actual purchasing behaviour and increasing brand loyalty, KOLs effectively stimulated consumers' purchasing impulses through intuitive visuals and vivid live content, and strengthened their identification with the brand and increased brand loyalty by building authentic relationships and sharing their lifestyles.

Therefore, for fashion brands, cooperating with KOLs to carry out effective marketing strategies is the key to winning the favour of GenZ consumers. Brands should make full use of KOL's influence to establish a close connection with consumers through precise positioning, content innovation and

emotional resonance to enhance brand awareness and reputation, and ultimately achieve sales growth and brand value. At the same time, brands should also pay attention to the selection and management of KOLs to ensure the effectiveness and longevity of the co-operation in order to achieve a win-win situation.

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