

# KOLs' IMPACTS ON THE GEN Z's PURCHASE INTENTIONS IN HO CHI MINH, VIETNAM: ANALYSIS RESULT

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## Abstract

In the contemporary era of marketing 4.0, the utilization of technological marketing methods holds significant importance for businesses. Consequently, the emergence of Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) represents a crucial marketing strategy that demands attention. KOLs serve as representatives of firms, engaging with consumers, fostering trust, and influencing favorable consumer behaviors. Hence, this research was formulated to identify and evaluate essential factors associated with KOLs, prioritizing and delineating specific solutions. This research inquiry comprises two main sections: part 1 consolidates pertinent theories to construct models through qualitative methodologies. Subsequently, in this part 2, the study will delve into analyzing data based on the varying impact levels of 04 key influencers on the purchasing intentions of young consumers, namely expertise, likability, reputation, and interactivity, with trustworthiness playing a mediating role in this framework. The findings reveal a hierarchical order of impact for 03 factors: credibility (expertise and likability), interactivity, and reputation. Lastly, this research paper also presents implication management recommendations.

**Keywords:** Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs), Gen Z's, Purchasing Intentions, Credibility, Interactivity, Reputation.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The transformation of technology and the rise of various social media platforms have significantly transformed advertising strategies, moving away from traditional product-focused marketing to more advanced customer-centric approaches. The concept of production-centric marketing is now less prevalent in the field, with companies shifting their focus towards comprehending customer preferences and requirements, as well as developing products and services tailored to meet those needs effectively (Dutt, 2023). Therefore, the integration of diversity into contemporary marketing methodologies is crucial, illustrating the existence of five unique generations within present-day society.

The surge in Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) is linked to the prevailing belief among today's young population, who perceive KOLs as relatable and well-informed individuals (Fay, 2020). Consequently, a key strategy in the digital landscape involves the utilization of Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) for product promotion, as emphasized by Hua, Bao & Wu (2021), as these influential figures have the ability to influence consumers' purchasing decisions, especially within younger age groups. Through online platforms, KOLs can showcase their personas and interests, shaping consumer preferences effectively.

By means of product endorsements, reviews, and recommendations, KOLs aid companies in broadening their market outreach and establishing consumer confidence (Lailiyah, 2023).

Research conducted in China reveals that 70% of Generation Z individuals make purchases via social media platforms, with this demographic being significantly swayed by endorsers such as KOLs when selecting branded items through social media channels (Sun et al., 2022). Moreover, studies conducted by Tran & Uehara (2023) underscore the vital role played by KOLs in conveying the advantages of eco-friendly products, serving as a potent marketing instrument within this sector.

Generation Z emerges as a notable and influential consumer cohort within the contemporary retail sector, offering substantial prospects for enterprises. Presently, marketers encounter the arduous challenge of catering to Generation Z clientele due to their distinctiveness from Millennials in terms of decision-making processes rooted in digital platforms. Leveraging key opinion leaders (KOLs) within a go-to-market approach emerges as a promising strategy to impact Gen Z's product possession and purchasing behaviors (Eastman, Iyer, & Thomas, 2013; Obal & Kunz, 2013).

The primary objective of this research is to conduct an in-depth exploration of the role played by KOLs in scrutinizing the buying intentions of Generation Z, with a specific focus on their engagements within the retail setting on digital sales platforms in Ho Chi Minh City. By scrutinizing the influence wielded by KOLs on Gen Z transactions, this targeted analysis seeks to furnish invaluable insights for a wide array of brands aiming to entice consumers. This article will delineate specific findings subsequent to analysis using SPSS 26.0 software.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Purchasing Intention**

In the contemporary digital age, the inclination to purchase a product is further influenced by the convenience and utility of search activities on electronic commerce platforms. A study conducted by Doan (2020) in Vietnam has revealed positive outcomes pertaining to the effects of new technologies on online platforms, significantly impacting the surge in buying intentions among the youth. In this context, Doan has utilized the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) to validate the aforementioned correlation. During the utilization of technological platforms for online shopping, consumers are likely to come across influencer marketing tactics, which constitute a pivotal aspect of contemporary digital marketing. Presently, influencers are perceived as credible sources, possessing a profound understanding and adeptness in elucidating the attributes of a brand and its offerings, a fact substantiated in the recent study by Nguyen, Nguyen & Luu (2022).

This underscores the necessity of incorporating KOLs marketing strategies (as a digital strategy) to influence purchase intentions, given the significant impact KOLs have on consumer purchasing sentiment and expertise, consequently swaying consumers'

proclivity towards making a purchase, especially within the younger population (Liu, 2024).

## 2.2 KOLs – Key Opinion Leaders

Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) are recognized as individuals who possess a high level of expertise within a specific field, conducting original research that yields valuable insights and drives new developments or trends (Meffert, 2009). With their knowledge and sharing, KOLs garner admiration and trust from a wide audience, positioning them as influential figures capable of significantly impacting word-of-mouth communication.

Recent research conducted by Nguyen et al. (2021) identified four key factors of TikTok Influencers that have a direct impact on the online purchasing behavior of Generation Z individuals in Hanoi: expertise, followers, image investment, and negative information. Moreover, within smaller community groups, the influential power of KOLs becomes even more apparent (Xiao & Lei, 2021).

## 2.3 Evaluation Indexes and Conditions

When analyzing the measurement model outcomes in SPSS, prioritize evaluating the observed variables, including the quality of the 25 observed variables (indicators), reliability, EFA and Linear regression in findings of the scales.

- **Reliability**

When an experiment is plagued by numerous errors, its reliability diminishes, leading to less credible research outcomes (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). Put simply, reliability informs the researcher about the ability of a method to consistently measure a phenomenon. High reliability in measurement scales ensures that the same results are obtained when the same method is applied to identical samples under similar conditions. Conversely, unreliable measurement techniques may yield inconsistent results (Fiona Middleton, 2019). Hair et al. (2019) suggest that researchers can utilize bootstrap confidence intervals to ascertain if the reliability of a construct significantly exceeds the minimum recommended threshold. A construct's reliability is deemed acceptable if the lower limit of the 95% confidence interval is above 0.70 (Agus & Yuli, 2021).

- **EFA Analysis**

Hoang & Chu (2020) highlight that while the original factor matrix reveals the associations between factors and individual variables, it often generates factors that are challenging to interpret clearly. By applying factor rotation, the factor matrix can be simplified, making it more straightforward and interpretable.

- **Linear Regression**

In research settings, authors frequently examine hypotheses concerning the relationship between two or more variables, with one variable acting as the dependent and one or more as independent variables. When the model comprises a single independent and dependent variable, it is a univariate regression (SLR) model. Conversely, when the

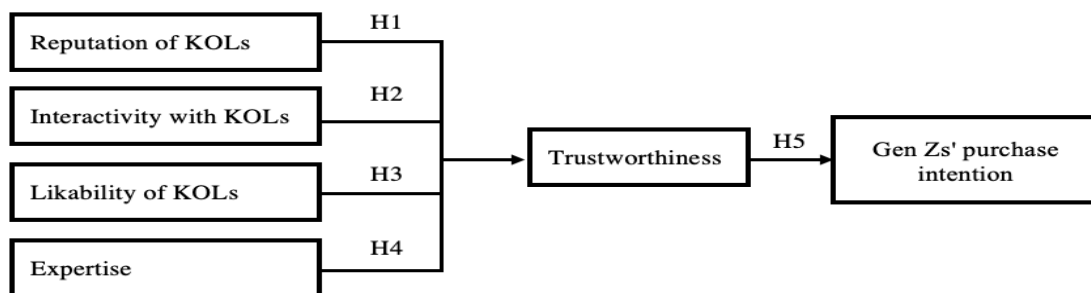
model includes multiple independent variables and one dependent variable, it is termed a multivariate regression (MLR) model.

### 3. RESEARCH MODEL AND HYPOTHESIS

The authors have synthesized and verified a research model that integrates key factors from established studies to determine the scales impacting youth's online purchasing intentions. Drawing inspiration from various research models, the proposed framework aims to analyze and validate the factors influencing youth's online purchasing intentions:

- Building upon the insights of Giang & Duong (2018), the model incorporates trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness as perceived by Vietnamese consumers towards celebrity brand representatives.
- In Márcia Filipa Martins Botelho's model (2019), tangible elements like likes and followers and intangible aspects such as source credibility indicators (including expertise, trustworthiness, likability, and favorability), interactivity, and argument quality are taken into consideration.
- Leveraging the research of Alotaibi, Alkhathlan & Alzeer (2019), the combined effects of Maroof, SMIs, KOLs, and consumer feedback are explored, shedding light on the formation of consumer purchase intentions within the commerce industry.
- Inspired by Cuong, Quynh, & Phuc's model (2021), the identification of six key factors (attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, familiarity, compatibility, and negative information) associated with brand ambassadors that influence consumers' purchasing intentions in Ho Chi Minh City is integrated.
- Drawing from Hau Le's research model (2022), the significant impact of KOLs' prestige and appeal on fostering trust levels among young Vietnamese consumers is highlighted.

By synthesizing these foundational theories and empirical findings on the influence of KOLs on Gen Z's purchasing intentions, the authors have developed a conceptual research model below:



**Figure 1: Conceptual Model**

(Source: Author)

The model is constructed with the following hypotheses:

- **Hypothesis H1: Reputation of KOLs (RE)** is positively related (+) to Trustworthiness.
- **Hypothesis H2: Interactivity with KOLs (IN)** is positively related (+) to Trustworthiness.
- **Hypothesis H3: Liability of KOLs (LI)** is positively related (+) to Trustworthiness.
- **Hypothesis H4: Expertise of KOLs (EX)** is positively related (+) to Trustworthiness.
- **Hypothesis H5: Trustworthiness (TR)** is positively related (+) to the Gen Z's purchase intention.

## 4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research methodology is conducted in order to ascertain the theoretical foundation of both domestic and international research frameworks, thereby shaping the proposed framework. Subsequently, experts are engaged in group deliberations to consolidate and enhance the credibility of the content within the 25 survey questions. The authors have scrutinized and chosen 5 research frameworks based on their respective merits and demerits, leading to the formulation of the most suitable model.

### 4.2 Quantitative Research

The application of quantitative research methodology is utilized to ascertain the impact of Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) on the purchasing behavior of Generation Z, with a primary focus on surveying individuals within the Gen Z demographic (aged 16-30). The examination involves assessing how the aforementioned 4 independent variables influence the dependent variable by analyzing the data gathered using data analysis software, while ensuring the objectivity of the Gen Z cohort. To survey the targeted sample size of 82 to 384 individuals, the researcher will employ the non-probability sampling technique, specifically utilizing the convenience sampling method across 3 educational institutions: Ho Chi Minh University of Technology (HUTECH); Ho Chi Minh University of Technology and Education (HMCUTE); Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh (UIH).

**Table 1: Measurements**

<b>Reputation of KOLs</b>	
RE1	KOLs that I'm interested in following have many followers, subscriptions, and likes.
RE2	KOLs that I am interested in following have content shared on many different media
RE3	KOLs that I follow have very trustworthy content
RE4	KOLs that I follow have very high quality recommendations
<b>Interactivity with KOLs</b>	
IN1	KOLs that I am interested in following have very easy interaction channels
IN2	KOLs that I follow are willing to interact with people very enthusiastically
IN3	KOLs that I follow have a lot of influence on me
IN4	KOLs that I am interested in following interact with very frequently

<b>Liability of KOLs</b>	
LI1	KOLs that I follow are very friendly and funny
LI2	KOLs that I follow are very simple and approachable
LI3	KOLs that I follow are very trustworthy to listen to and share
<b>Expertise of KOLs</b>	
EX1	KOLs that I follow with interest are experts
EX2	KOLs that I'm interested in following are experienced
EX3	KOLs that I'm interested in following are people with deep knowledge
EX4	KOLs that I am interested in following are professionally qualified
EX5	KOLs that I am interested in following are professionally qualified
<b>Trustworthiness</b>	
TR1	KOLs that I follow are very famous and reliable
TR2	KOLs that I follow are reputable
TR3	KOLs I follow are very straightforward when it comes to sharing content for the benefit of their followers
TR4	I trust what KOLs say in advertising
TR5	I trust the brands and products that KOLs represent
<b>Purchasing Intentions</b>	
PI1	I highly consider buying products/services that KOLs recommend
PI2	I am willing to recommend others to buy the products that KOLs are advertising
PI3	I have been and continue to be willing to buy products recommended by KOLs

## 5. RESEARCH RESULT

### 5.1 Reliability

Upon examination of the Cronbach's Alpha reliability of the scales within the 6-Factor, the outcomes of the analysis indicate specifically:

- The factor "Expertise" displays a complete Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.776, > 0.7. Moreover, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient when an item is omitted ranges from 0.713 to 0.764, while the Total Correlation Index of the five observed variables in the scale all > 0.3. So, the scale demonstrates an acceptable level of reliability.
- The factor "Likability" presents a total Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.842 > 0.7. Additionally, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient if an item is removed ranges from 0.735 to 0.803, and the Total Correlation Index of the three observed variables are all > 0.3, indicating sufficient reliability of the scale.
- The "Reputation" factor showcases a total Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.930 > 0.7. When an item is excluded, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient ranges from 0.908 to 0.928, and the Total Correlation Index of the five observed variables in the scale are all > 0.3, signifying adequate scale reliability.
- Similarly, factor "Interactivity" reveals a total Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.925 > 0.7. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient if an item is eliminated ranges from 0.895 to 0.906, and the Total Correlation Index of the four observed variables in the scale are all > 0.3, indicating satisfactory reliability of the scale.

- Furthermore, "Trustworthiness" factor has total Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.862 > 0.7, with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient ranging from 0.826 to 0.839 when an item is deleted. The Total Correlation Index of the five observed variables in the scale are all  $\geq 0.3$ , highlighting the reliability of the scale.
- Dependent factor "Purchasing Intention" has a total Cronbach's Alpha of 0.867 > 0.7. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient if an item is deleted ranges from 0.777 to 0.830, and the Total Correlation Index of the three observed variables in the scale are all  $\geq 0.3$ , indicating the scale's reliability.

**Table 2: Reliability Statistic Results**

Observed variables	Total Correltation	Cronbach's Alpha if lten Deledted	Cronbach's Alpha
<b>Expertise</b>			
EX1	0.464	0.764	0.776
EX2	0.612	0.713	
EX3	0.576	0.725	
EX4	0.622	0.713	
EX5	0.485	0.756	
<b>Likability</b>			
LI1	0.686	0.801	0.842
LI2	0.753	0.735	
LI3	0.685	0.803	
<b>Reputation</b>			
RE1	0.805	0.917	0.930
RE2	0.743	0.928	
RE3	0.843	0.909	
RE4	0.849	0.908	
RE5	0.846	0.909	
<b>Interactivity</b>			
IN1	0.816	0.906	0.925
IN2	0.819	0.905	
IN3	0.823	0.903	
IN4	0.847	0.895	
<b>Trustworthiness</b>			
TR1	0.661	0.837	0.862
TR2	0.707	0.826	
TR3	0.685	0.832	
TR4	0.653	0.839	
TR5	0.695	0.829	
<b>Purchasing Intention</b>			
PI1	0.790	0.777	0.867
PI2	0.735	0.826	
PI3	0.729	0.830	

## 5.2 Reliability

The outcomes of the EFA analysis (3 times) revealed the presence of 15 observed variables organized into 03 groups. These observed variables exhibit factor loadings

exceeding 0.5, thereby indicating their practical significance. Moreover, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) coefficient of  $0.889 > 0.5$ , confirms the suitability of EFA for the dataset. Additionally, Bartlett's test gets  $0.000 < 0.05$ , demonstrating a correlation among the observed variables on a comprehensive scale. Furthermore, the eigenvalue of  $1.892 > 1$ , that fulfills the necessary criteria.

From EFA framework, the study investigates independent dimensions of KOLs within the conceptual model that influences the purchasing intentions of Generation Z. Specifically, the variables "Expertise" (EX) and "Likability" (LI) are amalgamated into the new variable "Credibility" (CR). The assessment of KOLs' impact on the purchasing intentions of Generation Z entails the evaluation of three constructs: Reputation, Interactivity, and Credibility.

**Table 3: EFA Results**

No	Contents	Observed variables	Factors		
			1	2	3
1	Reputation (RE)	RE3	0.883		
2		RE5	0.877		
3		RE1	0.876		
4		RE4	0.873		
5		RE2	0.822		
6	Credibility (CR)	LI2		0.838	
7		LI1		0.802	
8		LI3		0.792	
9		EX4		0.786	
10		EX1		0.632	
11		EX3		0.594	
12	Interactivity (INT)	IN4			0.898
13		IN1			0.866
14		IN3			0.860
15		IN2			0.843
<b>Eigenvalue</b>			5.953	2.926	1.892
<b>Variance extract (%)</b>			39.69	19.50	12.61
<b>Cumulative (%)</b>					71.811
<b>Sig.</b>					0.000
<b>KMO</b>					0.889

### 5.3 Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

The outcomes illustrated in Table 4 demonstrate that the R coefficient is valued at 0.757, indicating a strong correlation among the variables within the model. The results of the model's regression report unveil an R Square value of 0.574, suggesting a model suitability of 57.4%. The Adjusted R Square value, which stands at 0.569 (or 56.9%) and incorporates the F Change test, provides a more precise reflection of the model's fit relative to the overall population. This denotes the presence of a linear regression model between Trust and three influencing factors (RE, IN, CR).



The F-test applied in the analysis of variance serves as a hypothesis test concerning the appropriateness of considering the general linear regression model, stipulating that the dependent variable exhibits linear relations with the complete set of independent variables. Upon inspecting the ANOVA table, it is evident that the F statistical value is derived from the entire R<sup>2</sup> value, which significantly differs from 0, with a value of Sig. = 0.000 (< 0.05), indicating the model's suitability for the dataset and the fulfillment of acceptance standards by all variables (Tolerance > 0.0001). Furthermore, the Durbin-Watson index is recorded at 1.270, falling within the 1.0-2.5 range, thereby confirming the absence of autocorrelation.

**Table 4: Multiple Linear Regression Results**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	t	Sig.	Collinearity statistics	
	B	Std. error	β			Tolerance	VIF
Constant	0.463	0.175		2.650	0.009		
RE	0.043	0.037	0.052	1.165	0.245	0.846	1.182
IN	0.130	0.037	0.166	3.476	0.001	0.752	1.330
CRE	0.667	0.046	0.046	14.623	0.000	0.838	1.193
R	0.757						
R Square	0.574						
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.569						
Durbin Watson	1.270						
F (112,129)	Sig. = 0.000						
Unstandardized Function	Trustworthiness= 0.463 + 0.043*RE + 0,130*IN + 0,667*CR						

The results show that there is one variable that has no significance compared to trustworthiness (TR), which is the reputation factor (RE), because it has a Sig level of significance is 0.245 > 0.05 so it is not accepted in the regression function. Two variables that affect trustworthiness (TR) are Interactivity (IN) and Credibility (CR) because these variables have a significance level of Sig. < 0.000, that should be accepted in the regression equation and all have a positive impact (positive β coefficient) on trustworthiness (TR). Thus, the relationship between the intermediate variable and the two independent variables is shown in the following Standardized Function:

$$\text{Trustworthiness} = 0.166 * \text{Interactivity} + 0,667 * \text{Credibility}$$

#### 5.4 PATH Analysis

The PATH model is used to analyze the influence of two independent variables: Interactivity and Credibility on Generation Z's Purchase Intention (dependent variable) through Trustworthiness in KOLs (median variable).

Analytical techniques include linear regression in which Trustworthiness (TR) is the independent variable, and the purchase intention of Generation Z is the dependent variable.

**Table 5: Linear Regression Results (for PATH Model)**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	t	Sig.	Collinearity statistics	
	B	Std. error	β			Tolerance	VIF
Constant	0.850	0.145		5.858	0.000		
RE	0.752	0.043	0.744	17.667	0.000	1.000	1.000
R	0,744						
R Square	0,553						
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0,552						
Durbin Watson	1.623						
F (112,129)	Sig. = 0,000						
Unstandardized Function	Gen Z's Purchase intention = 0.850 + 0,752*TR						

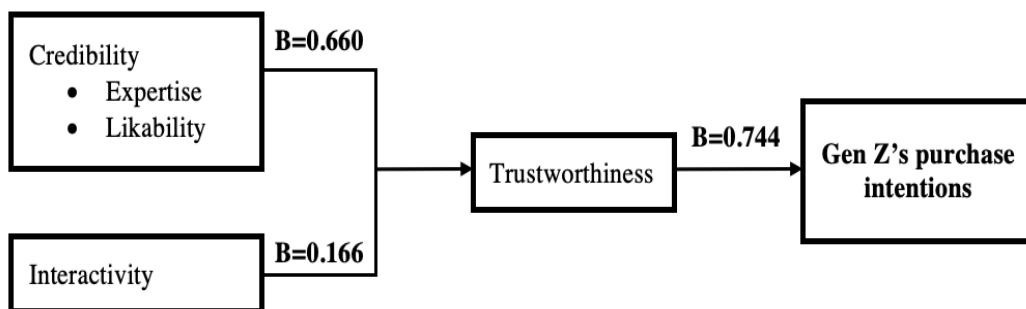
Based on Table 5, from the results of the standardized coefficient, the simple linear regression equation of the influence of Trustworthiness on Gen Z's purchase intention is:

**Gen Z purchase intention = 0.744\* trustworthiness**

To test the influence of the relationships in the model, the formula of the PATH model is used to express the positive influence through the appropriate coefficient as follows:

**RM<sup>2</sup> = 1 - (1 - R1<sup>2</sup>) x (1 - R2<sup>2</sup>) = 1 - (1 - 0.574) x (1 - 0.553) = 80.95%**

From the above analysis, with purchase intention β= 0.744, it can be concluded that the independent variables include Interactivity (IN), Credibility (CR) and the intermediate variable Trustworthiness (TR) explains 80.95% of the change in the dependent variable Purchase Intention of Generation Z.



**Figure 2: Conceptual Model (Final Result)**

**6. DISCUSSION AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS**

**6.1 Credibility**

**• Discussion**

The variable Credibility, identified as the independent variable with the highest influence (β = 0.660), significantly impacts the intermediate variable trustworthiness. The analysis

outcomes indicate that all 6 observed variables of Credibility remain significant, underscoring the crucial importance of Credibility for Gen Z's sense of comfort and trust when engaging with Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) and their subsequent purchase intentions based on expert recommendations from KOLs.

Gen Z, a cohort of youthful individuals immersed in the realm of information technology, possesses considerable knowledge and experience in the domain of online shopping. This group demonstrates a keen awareness of consulting a multitude of information sources, blending insights from social media platforms with real-world experiences. Gen Z exhibits skepticism towards traditional advertising, instead placing greater faith in the recommendations of their immediate social circle and influential personalities such as KOLs, whom they perceive as domain experts renowned for their deep insights and expertise.

The findings from the authors' study suggest a positive correlation between the expertise of KOLs and the perceived trustworthiness by customers. Aligning with the perspective presented in Jessie Mou's (2020) research article on Social Media Marketing Strategy – TikTok and Instagram, the emphasis is placed on the use of KOLs whose expertise resonates with the interests of customers to enhance trust levels, rather than relying on celebrities for endorsements. Customers are more inclined to trust KOLs with high expertise, as their confident product/service recommendations effectively sway customer opinions and foster trust over time.

Engaging with knowledgeable KOLs not only enables customers to efficiently access relevant information but also instills a sense of assurance in the authenticity of the insights shared. The discerning nature of many KOLs in objectively evaluating products/services, rather than merely highlighting positive aspects akin to conventional advertisements, further customers' trust. Additionally, esteemed KOLs possess the capability to engender trust, particularly among Gen Z, by establishing emotional connections that resonate with the younger demographic. Affection towards KOLs, stemming from their charisma, personality, and relatability, influences individuals' perceptions of trustworthiness, as highlighted in Xiao's (2018) study on the factors impacting YouTube influencer marketing trustworthiness.

In essence, the combined attributes of popularity and expertise in KOLs foster a heightened sense of trustworthiness among customers, underscoring the pivotal role these influencers play in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors.

#### • **Managerial Implications**

*Managerial Implication 1:* Utilizing Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) who possess high levels of expertise and are well-suited for the specific business domain is crucial. The efficacy of the conveyed message significantly impacts individuals' perception of information. Hence, selecting KOLs with profound knowledge to deliver quality messages, provide insights supported by robust reasoning, will not only persuade customers but also enhance trust levels and boost the likelihood of purchase intent. Tailoring the choice of KOLs to match the business sector ensures that businesses can effectively and promptly

target customer segments with similar interests. Moreover, endorsements from KOLs who hold credentials, achievements, and a reputable status within the relevant industry carry more weight, creating a perception of credibility and reliability for the endorsing business entity.

*Managerial Implication 2:* Enhancing visibility can be achieved by cultivating a distinctive persona for KOLs. Regardless of the target audience of the KOLs, maintaining a consistent personality and image that resonates positively with the particular community is essential for effective customer engagement. Traits such as a friendly and approachable demeanor, charismatic appeal, and avoidance of controversies and scandals all contribute to the unique allure and appeal of KOLs, enhancing their popularity. Consequently, leveraging these distinctive qualities enables businesses to help KOLs establish a unique identity, stand out prominently, and foster stronger connections with customers. Through the positive rapport cultivated with their customer base, the opinions expressed by KOLs have the potential to become influential factors in building trust.

## 6.2 Interactivity

### • Discussion

Interactivity holds a significant positive (+) correlation with the trustworthiness of Generation Z consumers in Ho Chi Minh City. Findings from the study indicate that the interactivity factor exhibits the second highest degree of impact with a  $\beta=0.166$  influencing trustworthiness. The analysis outcomes reveal that no variables under observation were excluded. The study results align with prior research of Márcia Filipa Martins Botelho (2019). So, interactivity can be viewed as the favorable attitude of social media influencers when communicating with their audience. Consequently, the more Key Opinion Leaders prioritize engaging with their followers, the more positively perceived, liked, and trusted they become. Supporting this standpoint, another investigation on the impact of KOLs in the Chinese fashion domain (Yushan Zou & Fanke Peng, 2019) highlights that social media has revolutionized the dynamics of interactions between buyers and sellers. Presently, social media frequently employs intermediaries like KOLs to enhance the engagement between buyers and sellers. Generation Z commonly holds a neutral, favorable view of highly interactive live streams. Through frequent interactions of this nature, the mutually beneficial engagement between KOLs and their supporters has hastened the spread of collective emotions, minimized the gap between them, and fostered increased and easier trust establishment. Evidently, based on the authors' findings, it is evident that while KOL interaction may not be the most impactful factor on trust, it remains a crucial element for attracting, retaining, and nurturing trust to draw in more customers, thereby progressively enhancing customers' trust in KOLs and the products/services or enterprises they endorse.

### • Managerial Implications

*Managerial Implication 1:* Develop a straightforward, efficient interactive platform. The interactive platform should incorporate numerous innovative features and offer user-

friendly navigation. It should boast a welcoming interface, seamless accessibility, and distinctive attributes to entice customers to engage, aiding them in effortlessly conducting interactive activities (such as commenting, posing queries, sending messages, etc.) with KOLs and even executing essential tasks during shopping independently. Furthermore, the operational speed of the interactive platform must be optimized to reduce response times, ensuring customers feel at ease and engaged, thus encouraging more frequent interactions with KOLs.

*Managerial Implication 2:* Foster interaction between KOLs and followers. Regular engagement with KOLs can transform followers into loyal clientele, establishing a mutual influence. Encouraging interaction not only enhances the visibility and reach of KOLs, but also imparts a sense of value and comfort to customers. Therefore, aside from leveraging popular interaction methods like live streaming and responding to comments, other avenues such as Q&A sessions, and hosting online forums for discussing products or daily life topics should be explored to forge stronger connections between KOLs and customers.

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