

A Study on Trust Mechanisms and Communication Effectiveness in Social Media KOL Marketing —— A Case Study of Rednote

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Abstract

This study aims to conduct an in-depth analysis of the trust mechanism and communication effectiveness in social media KOL (Key Opinion Leader) marketing, revealing its underlying logic and interconnections. With the rapid development of social media, KOL marketing has become a crucial promotional strategy for brands, where trust mechanisms and communication effectiveness serve as core elements. Using Rednote, a popular social media platform, as a case study, this research systematically examines KOL marketing phenomena on the platform. The findings reveal that the trust mechanism in Rednote KOL marketing primarily consists of three aspects: KOL's personal characteristics, fan interactions and platform mechanisms. Communication effectiveness is reflected in content reach, differences in promotional formats across content types and commercial value conversion. Notably, the trust mechanism significantly enhances communication effectiveness, while communication effectiveness also exerts a reciprocal influence on the trust mechanism. These two elements complement each other, jointly determining the success of KOL marketing. This study provides theoretical foundations and practical guidance for brands, platforms, and KOLs to optimize marketing strategies and improve promotional outcomes.

Keywords

Social media; KOL marketing; trust mechanism; communication effectiveness; Rednote

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of Social Media KOL Marketing

In today's digital age, social media has become the core channel for information dissemination, with its influence permeating every aspect of brand promotion and consumer decision-making. With the rapid development of internet technology, traditional media communication models are gradually being replaced by new communication approaches dominated by user-generated content (UGC) and key opinion

leaders (KOLs)[1]. As crucial nodes on social media platforms, KOLs leverage their professional expertise, influence, and strong fan interactions to become an indispensable part of brand marketing. Studies show that KOLs not only rapidly enhance brand awareness but also profoundly influence consumer purchasing behavior through emotional connections and value transmission[6]. Particularly in opinion-driven online consumption platforms, KOLs achieve efficient commercial monetization by building personal brands, publishing high-quality content, and leveraging platform algorithms[11]. This trend indicates that KOL marketing has evolved from a simple traffic acquisition tool into a comprehensive brand communication strategy, with the underlying trust mechanisms and communication effects warranting in-depth research.

1.2. Current Status of KOL Marketing on Rednote Platform

As a leading social e-commerce platform in China, Rednote (a Chinese social commerce platform) has attracted a large number of young users with its unique community atmosphere and content ecosystem, rapidly rising as a popular arena for KOL marketing. According to official data, as of May 2025, Rednote's domestic monthly active users reached 242 million, with the vast majority being post-90s and post-00s generations who show high interest in fields such as beauty, fashion, and lifestyle[5]. This user profile makes Rednote an ideal choice for brands to conduct targeted marketing. Meanwhile, Rednote's UGC model further enhances the platform's content diversity and credibility, as users share genuine usage experiences and consumption preferences, creating a powerful "grass-planting" effect[7]. Additionally, the platform emphasizes collaboration between KOLs and brands, promoting high-quality development of the KOL marketing model through optimization paths such as data evaluation and matrix linkage[1]. These characteristics collectively form Rednote's unique advantages in the KOL marketing field, making it a typical case for studying trust mechanisms and communication effects.

1.3. Research Purpose and Significance

This study investigates the trust mechanisms in social media KOL marketing and their impact on communication effectiveness, using Rednote as a case study to analyze their intrinsic connections. Specifically, it examines how KOL characteristics, interactive behaviors, and platform mechanisms collectively shape user trust, while evaluating key metrics including reach, user engagement, and conversion rates[12]. Theoretically, this research enriches existing academic discussions on KOL marketing, particularly addressing gaps in understanding the relationship between trust mechanisms and communication outcomes. Practically, the findings provide actionable guidance for brands to develop more scientific marketing strategies, Rednote to optimize its content ecosystem, and KOLs to enhance professional competencies[15]. Therefore, this study not only holds significant academic value but also offers prac-

tical recommendations for industry stakeholders.

2. Literature review

2.1. Theories of Social Media KOL Marketing

Key Opinion Leader (KOL) marketing, as an emerging marketing model, fundamentally relies on influential individuals or groups disseminating information within specific domains to shape consumer attitudes and behaviors. The concept originated from Lazarsfeld's Two-Step Flow Theory in his seminal work 'The People's Choice', which describes how information flows from mass media to opinion leaders before influencing general audiences[6]. This theory provides crucial theoretical support for KOL marketing, particularly in social media environments where KOLs serve as pivotal nodes in information dissemination. Additionally, media ecology theory offers new perspectives for understanding KOL marketing. It posits that mediaization of marketing activities isn't merely about media "colonization," but rather the mutual influence and co-creation between media and social phenomena[6]. Platforms like Rednote demonstrate deep mediaization through KOLs' content creation and user interactions. This model not only transforms traditional advertising methods but also redefines the relationship between brands and consumers.

In practical implementation, the success of KOL marketing relies on the combined effects of multiple factors. For instance, the professionalism of opinion leaders, the strength of their social connections, and their level of product engagement have all been proven to significantly influence consumer purchasing decisions [10]. These factors collectively form the theoretical foundation of KOL marketing and provide a rich analytical framework for subsequent research. A review of existing literature reveals that while scholars have differing views on the specific mechanisms of KOL marketing, there is broad consensus on its crucial role in information dissemination and commercial conversion [2].

2.2. Research Progress on KOL Marketing Trust Mechanism

Trust mechanisms form a cornerstone of KOL marketing, with their development involving multiple dimensions. Research both domestically and internationally indicates that KOLs' professionalism, visibility, and image cultivation are key determinants of user trust. Professional competence serves as the foundation for trust-building. KOLs' demonstrated expertise and experience in specific domains significantly enhance the credibility of their recommendations[4]. For instance, on Rednote, beauty KOLs have gained substantial user trust by sharing detailed skin-care tutorials and product reviews. Visibility also plays a crucial role. A large follower base and strong influence are often seen as symbols of KOL authority, thereby increasing content acceptance[10]. However, over-reliance on visibility may lead to the "traffic-first" pitfall, necessitating comprehensive consideration of other factors.

In the process of trust-building, the interaction between KOLs and their followers plays a crucial role. Research shows that timely responses to comments and live interactive activities can significantly enhance users' trust [12]. This engagement not only bridges the gap between KOLs and users but also strengthens trust mechanisms through emotional connections. Additionally, platform mechanisms play a vital role in trust-building. For instance, Rednote's certification system and content moderation policies provide users with extra trust assurance, thereby improving overall marketing effectiveness [5]. In summary, the construction of trust mechanisms is a multidimensional and dynamic process that requires collaborative efforts from KOLs, users, and platforms.

2.3. Research Status of KOL Marketing Communication Effectiveness

Research on KOL marketing communication effectiveness primarily focuses on two dimensions: reach and commercial conversion. Regarding reach metrics, engagement metrics such as views, likes, and shares are widely used. Studies indicate that topic popularity and KOL follower activity significantly influence dissemination scope [13]. For instance, on Rednote, content addressing trending topics typically achieves higher engagement metrics, thereby achieving broader reach. Additionally, content formats substantially impact communication effectiveness. Text-and-image content and video content, as two primary formats, each possess distinct advantages and application scenarios. Text-and-image content, with its concise and clear nature, is better suited for rapid information delivery, while video content more effectively resonates with users through its rich visual presentation [3].

In commercial conversion, the effectiveness gap between soft and hard advertising has drawn significant attention. Soft ads, with their subtle nature and relatable lifestyle appeal, are generally more readily accepted by users, resulting in higher conversion rates [8]. For instance, Rednote's popular "planting grass" notes effectively integrate product recommendations through daily sharing, successfully reducing user resistance. In contrast, while hard ads can rapidly boost brand awareness, their communication effectiveness is often constrained by user aversion [12]. Additionally, extensive research has established the correlation between communication effectiveness and product sales. Studies indicate that factors such as product features, pricing, and user needs collectively influence sales conversion success rates [9]. Therefore, when developing marketing strategies, it's crucial to holistically consider these elements to optimize communication impact.

2.4. Research gaps and innovation points

While existing literature has conducted in-depth explorations of the trust mechanism and communication effects in KOL marketing, several research gaps remain. First, most studies focus on single-dimensional analyses, lacking systematic investigation into the relationship between trust mechanisms and communication out-

comes[4]. For instance, existing research predominantly examines how trust mechanisms influence communication scope, while paying insufficient attention to the reverse effects of communication outcomes on trust mechanisms. Second, current studies exhibit limitations in sample selection and methodological design. Many investigations rely on questionnaire surveys or case studies, lacking large-scale data support, which compromises the generalizability of research conclusions.

The innovation of this study lies in its pioneering integration of trust mechanisms and communication effects within a unified analytical framework, while exploring their interactive dynamics. Using Rednote as a case study, we employ empirical research methods to investigate how user trust influences content dissemination scope and commercial conversion outcomes, while simultaneously examining the feedback effect of communication effectiveness on trust mechanisms. By addressing these research gaps, our study aims to provide targeted marketing strategy recommendations for brands, Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs), and platform operators.

3. Analysis of Rednote KOL Marketing Trust Mechanism

3.1. The Impact of KOL's Own Characteristics on Trust

3.1.1. Professionalism

The professionalism of KOLs is a key factor in earning user trust. Their deep domain knowledge and practical experience enhance the authority and persuasiveness of their content, increasing user acceptance of their recommendations. For instance, in the beauty industry, KOLs with professional skincare expertise and product testing skills often provide actionable shopping advice through rigorous scientific analysis[2]. Furthermore, professionalism manifests in their keen insight into industry trends and accurate anticipation of emerging patterns. On Rednote platform, some KOLs have successfully established "expert" credibility by sharing detailed skincare routines, ingredient breakdowns, and user experiences, thereby boosting content trustworthiness [4]. Empirical studies show that opinion leaders' professionalism not only significantly impacts secondary communication effects but also directly influences consumer purchasing decisions[10]. Therefore, KOL professionalism serves as both a vital component of personal branding and the foundation for building user trust.

3.1.2. Awareness

The visibility of KOLs (Key Opinion Leaders) is typically measured through metrics like follower count, engagement data, and social influence, which largely determine users' trust in their content. High-profile KOLs are often regarded as "industry benchmarks" in their respective fields, with their recommended products or services being more readily accepted by users and converted into actual purchases[1]. For instance, some top KOLs on Rednote leverage their massive follower base and

extensive social networks to rapidly generate widespread discussions and attention, creating powerful viral effects [11]. However, it's crucial to note that visibility isn't solely determined by follower numbers, but rather depends on a KOL's ability to consistently produce high-quality content and maintain deep engagement with their audience. Research indicates a significant positive correlation between opinion leaders' visibility and their influence on consumer purchasing decisions, demonstrating that visibility not only reflects a KOL's influence but also serves as a vital source of user trust[10].

3.1.3. Image Building

The image crafted by KOLs through persona development and content style design plays a vital role in earning user trust. On Rednote platform, many KOLs have successfully captured their target audience by building unique personal brands such as "career women", "travel influencers", or "cosmeceuticals experts". This image-building not only clarifies the KOL's positioning but also enhances users' sense of identity and belonging to their content[4]. For instance, some KOLs create relatable and trustworthy personas by sharing lifestyle content like home decor and way of daily dressing, effectively bridging the gap with their followers[7]. Moreover, the consistency and uniqueness of content style are crucial elements in image building. By employing witty language or visually appealing presentations, some KOLs further solidify their distinctive status in users' minds. In summary, KOL image-building serves not only as a marketing tool but also as a key strategy for establishing long-term trust relationships.

3.2. Building Trust Through KOL-Fan Interaction

3.2.1. Comment Reply Interaction

The interactive comment replies between KOLs and fans serve as a vital mechanism for building trust. Timely and sincere responses not only enhance fan engagement but also effectively alleviate users' resistance to advertising content, thereby boosting their trust in KOLs [2]. For instance, on Rednote platform, some KOLs have successfully cultivated positive interactions by patiently addressing fan inquiries and providing personalized recommendations for specific user needs. The frequency and quality of such interactions directly influence users' trust perception of KOLs. Research indicates that frequent engagement significantly increases users' favorability toward KOLs, while constructive replies help deepen mutual trust. Moreover, comment section interactions foster peer communication, creating a "community-style" trust environment that further amplifies KOLs' influence [14].

3.2.2. Live interaction

As an interactive format that has emerged in recent years, live streaming has established a more direct and real-time communication bridge between KOLs and their

fans. During live streams, KOLs can effectively enhance fan engagement and trust through Q&A sessions, prize draws, and product trials. For instance, some KOLs on Rednote platform utilize live streaming to launch new products or promote limited-time discounts. By showcasing product effects in real-time and answering audience questions, they successfully stimulate viewers' purchasing desire. Meanwhile, live-stream prize draws not only add entertainment value but also further strengthen fans' support and trust in KOLs. Research indicates that the real-time and authentic nature of live interactions is a key factor in boosting user trust, especially when involving high-value products or services. This interactive format can significantly reduce decision-making risks for users. Therefore, live-stream interactions are not only an essential tool for KOL marketing but also a vital means of building deep trust relationships.

3.3. Rednote Platform Mechanism Boosts Trust

3.3.1. Certification System

Rednote enhances the credibility of KOLs through its robust certification system, enabling users to quickly identify high-quality content creators. The platform currently offers multiple verification methods including identity verification, professional certification, and brand partner certification. These mechanisms not only clarify the background of KOLs but also add authority and reliability to their content. For instance, KOLs certified as "Brand Partners" typically need to meet specific follower thresholds and content quality standards, significantly boosting their trustworthiness in users' eyes. Additionally, the certification system effectively reduces the occurrence of false information and malicious marketing activities, creating a safer content consumption environment. Research shows that the platform's certification mechanism significantly enhances users' trust in KOLs and promotes increased engagement[15].

3.3.2. Content Review

Rednote's content moderation system plays a vital role in ensuring content quality and maintaining user trust. By rigorously screening user-generated content (UGC), the platform effectively filters out low-quality, false, or non-compliant information, ensuring users access authentic and reliable recommendations. For instance, Rednote explicitly prohibits exaggerated promotions and fake transactions, while establishing dedicated complaint channels to promptly address violations. Additionally, the platform employs technical verification methods to assess content authenticity, such as detecting excessive image editing or plagiarism, thereby enhancing credibility [9]. Research indicates that improved content moderation not only boosts user trust but also encourages influencers to prioritize quality, creating a virtuous cycle. Therefore, Rednote's content moderation system serves as both a cornerstone of trust mechanisms and a critical safeguard for the platform's long-term development.

4. Rednote KOL Marketing Communication Effectiveness Study

4.1. Measuring content reach

4.1.1. Reading volume analysis

On Rednote, content engagement varies significantly across KOLs, primarily influenced by three key factors: topic relevance, follower activity, and content quality. Research indicates that topic relevance is a core determinant of content visibility, as trending topics naturally attract more user attention and engagement. For instance, during peak consumption seasons like holidays, KOLs' seasonal content often achieves higher readership. Follower activity also plays a crucial role, as engaged communities not only spread content faster but also boost exposure through interactions. However, content quality remains equally vital. Well-crafted content with unique appeal can gain traction even in low-heat topics. Brands should therefore evaluate KOLs' follower engagement, creative capabilities, and strategic topic selection to maximize their outreach impact.

4.1.2. Likes and Shares

Likes and shares serve as key metrics for measuring content engagement depth. These metrics not only reflect users' level of content recognition but also reveal the diffusion pathways within social networks. Research indicates that liking behaviors typically stem from content resonance or emotional alignment, while sharing demonstrates users' acknowledgment of content value and willingness to share. Specifically, content that addresses emotional needs or provides practical information tends to generate more likes and shares. For instance, lifestyle tips and product reviews often achieve higher engagement due to their relevance to daily life. Moreover, sharing behavior is driven by social influence, so that users aim to enhance their social image through sharing high-quality content. Therefore, brands evaluating KOL marketing effectiveness should focus on tracking trends in likes and shares, while incorporating user behavior psychology analysis to optimize content strategies and deepen content dissemination.

4.2. Differences in the effectiveness of different content and promotion forms

4.2.1. Text and Video Content

Text and video, as two primary content formats, demonstrate distinct communication effectiveness. Text-based content, with its concise and clear nature, excels at conveying information-rich materials like product comparison guides and user tutorials. This format enables users to quickly grasp key details, making it particularly suitable for scenarios requiring rational decision-making. Conversely, video content leverages dynamic visuals and immersive experiences to better evoke emotional

resonance. For instance, beauty influencers demonstrating makeup processes through videos not only visually showcase product effects but also create engaging atmospheres through audiovisual elements, thereby enhancing viewership interest and purchase intent. Moreover, the rise of short video platforms has significantly improved content distribution efficiency, especially among younger demographics [14]. Therefore, brands should flexibly choose between text and video formats when developing content strategies, tailoring approaches to target audience characteristics and marketing objectives to achieve optimal communication outcomes.

4.2.2. Soft and hard advertising

Soft and hard advertising demonstrate distinct differences in user acceptance and dissemination effectiveness. While hard ads primarily rely on direct product displays and promotions to deliver clear brand messages quickly, they often provoke user resistance, especially in social media environments where audiences tend to avoid overt advertising. In contrast, soft advertising subtly integrates brand messages into daily scenarios or engaging narratives, influencing user perceptions and attitudes more discreetly. For instance, when knowledge-based influencers share personal experiences while recommending related products, this approach not only reduces defensive reactions but also enhances brand credibility through KOLs' professional influence. Moreover, soft advertising tends to generate more lasting impact, as users may actively search for related products or share content, creating secondary dissemination. Therefore, brands should prioritize soft advertising formats on Rednote and leverage KOLs' content creation expertise to develop more compelling promotional materials.

4.3. Converting communication effects into commercial value

4.3.1. Brand awareness

KOL marketing significantly boosts brand awareness through extensive dissemination. On Rednote, collaborations between brands and influential KOLs can rapidly expand brand exposure, particularly in vertical markets where target audiences are concentrated. For instance, an international skincare brand partnered with multiple beauty KOLs, successfully attracting young users through detailed skincare tutorials and product reviews. Data shows that during the collaboration period, the brand's search volume and discussion volume doubled, significantly enhancing brand recognition. Moreover, KOLs' content creation skills play a crucial role in shaping brand image. By integrating brand philosophy into everyday scenarios, KOLs not only strengthen brand awareness but also build positive emotional connections, accumulating long-term brand equity. Therefore, brands should fully leverage KOLs' communication advantages combined with targeted marketing strategies to achieve rapid brand awareness growth.

4.3.2. Product sales growth

The relationship between content dissemination and product sales is closely intertwined. KOL marketing directly drives sales conversion by enhancing users' awareness and trust in products. Research indicates that product features, pricing, and alignment with user needs are key factors influencing sales conversion. For instance, when promoting high-functionality products, KOLs can effectively alleviate user concerns through detailed reviews and hands-on experience sharing, thereby boosting purchase intent. For price-sensitive products, strategies like highlighting cost-effectiveness or offering limited-time discounts are crucial to stimulate buying behavior. Additionally, Rednote's "planting grass" (content-driven recommendations) economic model accelerates the sales conversion process. After browsing KOL-recommended content, users can directly access purchase pages via embedded links, creating a seamless shopping experience that significantly improves conversion rates. Therefore, brands should focus on aligning content with product features while optimizing the purchasing process to maximize the commercial value generated by effective content dissemination.

5. The relationship between trust mechanism and communication effect

5.1. The promotion of communication effects by trust mechanisms

User trust in key opinion leaders (KOLs) plays a pivotal role in social media marketing. This trust not only influences content acceptance but also significantly enhances the reach and depth of content dissemination. Research indicates that trust mechanisms amplify content impact by boosting user engagement and willingness to interact[1]. For instance, on Rednote, KOLs' professional expertise, public visibility, and image-building collectively form the foundation of user trust. This trust directly drives users' attention and sharing behaviors toward their content. Specifically, when users perceive a KOL as authoritative in their field, they are more likely to accept and share product/service recommendations from such individuals. Trust-driven dissemination often demonstrates higher conversion rates and broader coverage[10].

Furthermore, trust mechanisms can indirectly enhance dissemination effectiveness by boosting user engagement. On Rednote, interactions between KOLs and their followers, such as comment replies and live Q&A sessions, effectively build and reinforce users' trust in KOLs. This trust motivates users to actively participate in content creation and sharing, expanding influence through actions like liking, reposting, or writing reviews. Empirical studies show a positive correlation between users' trust in KOLs and their participation frequency: higher trust correlates with stronger engagement and significantly improved dissemination outcomes. Therefore, trust mechanisms not only serve as a prerequisite for content acceptance but also act as

the core driving force behind widespread content distribution.

5.2. The reverse effect of communication effects on trust mechanisms

The effectiveness of content dissemination not only relies on establishing trust mechanisms but also creates positive feedback loops that reinforce KOLs' credibility in users' minds. On Rednote, content with strong dissemination effects tends to attract more user engagement, thereby enhancing KOLs' visibility and influence. This virtuous cycle enables KOLs to build stronger trust within their communities, attracting more followers' attention and support[4]. For instance, some KOLs have successfully garnered massive likes and shares through high-quality lifestyle content. Such widespread dissemination not only boosts their exposure but also strengthens users' recognition of their professional competence and authenticity, further solidifying trust in their expertise.

Furthermore, the enhancement of communication effectiveness can be demonstrated through concrete examples that reinforce trust mechanisms. Take the marketing strategy of fast-fashion brand Brandy Melville on Rednote as an example. By collaborating with celebrity KOLs and ordinary users, the brand successfully created a series of "BM-style" product recommendation posts. These posts not only achieved high engagement and repost rates on the platform but also sparked widespread imitation and discussions among users, creating multi-layered information dissemination effects. This successful communication strategy not only boosted brand awareness but also helped KOLs establish stronger trustworthiness in users' minds. Through exposure and interaction with these content pieces, users gradually developed long-term trust in KOLs, laying a solid foundation for their future content distribution. This demonstrates that optimizing communication effectiveness can not only directly enhance brand value but also provide robust support for KOLs' long-term development through strengthened trust mechanisms.

6. Optimization Strategies and Recommendations

6.1. Branding Suggestions

Brands play a pivotal role in social media KOL marketing, where selecting the right KOLs and developing effective strategies directly impacts trust-building mechanisms and marketing effectiveness. First, brands should carefully choose KOLs that align with their target audience's characteristics. For instance, on Rednote, brands need to thoroughly analyze KOLs' follower demographics, which include age, gender, geographic distribution and consumption preferences, so as to ensure their influence reaches the intended users. Additionally, brands should evaluate KOLs' expertise and content creation capabilities, prioritizing opinion leaders with deep domain knowledge and high credibility. By establishing a competency-based KOL screening system, brands can scientifically identify high-quality partners, thereby laying a sol-

id foundation for subsequent marketing campaigns.

Secondly, brands should prioritize aligning content creativity with user needs when developing marketing strategies. Successful KOL marketing cases demonstrate that only by organically integrating brand essence with user interests can brands effectively spark engagement and maximize communication impact. For instance, an international beauty brand collaborated with a popular Rednote beauty influencer to launch a series of short videos titled "Daily Makeup Tutorial". This content not only showcased product applications but also resonated strongly with users through relatable lifestyle scenarios, ultimately driving significant sales growth. Therefore, brands should thoroughly consider actual user needs during content planning and design diversified communication formats like text-and-image posts, videos, and live streams to cater to different user information consumption habits.

Ultimately, brands must cultivate long-term partnerships and strengthen trust-building mechanisms through continuous optimization of marketing strategies. While short-term campaigns may generate temporary traffic spikes, they rarely foster lasting user loyalty. To address this, brands should regularly monitor key metrics (such as page views, likes, and engagement rates) to adjust strategies and enhance content quality. Furthermore, collaborating with other social media platforms can create a multi-channel ecosystem, expanding brand reach and boosting communication effectiveness.

6.2. Suggestions for Rednote Platform

As a key platform for influencer marketing, Rednote bears significant responsibility in maintaining trust mechanisms and enhancing overall communication effectiveness. First, the platform should further improve its certification system to provide users with more reliable trust benchmarks. Currently, Rednote's verification mechanism covers multiple dimensions including identity authentication and professional field certification, yet issues of false information and low-quality content still persist. To address this, the platform could involve third-party authoritative institutions in certification reviews, raise entry thresholds, and strengthen dynamic management of certification results. For instance, regarding certain KOLs claiming specific professional skills without verification, the platform should require them to submit relevant qualification certificates or undergo public testing to ensure authenticity and credibility.

Secondly, Rednote needs to strengthen content regulation to fundamentally ensure quality and maintain user trust. With the platform's expanding user base, the influx of massive information poses significant challenges for content moderation. To address this, the platform could leverage AI technology to conduct real-time screening of posted content, swiftly identifying potential violations such as fake transactions and misleading promotions. Additionally, establishing dedicated complaint channels would encourage active user participation in supervision, fostering a healthy com-

munity environment. Furthermore, for KOLs or merchants who repeatedly violate regulations, the platform should implement strict punitive measures including account feature restrictions, reduced recommendation weights, or even permanent bans, thereby demonstrating the seriousness of rule enforcement.

Finally, Rednote should proactively explore new features and services to meet users' growing demands and strengthen the platform's competitiveness. For instance, the platform could develop interactive tools like online Q&A and virtual try-on experiences to foster deeper emotional connections between KOLs and their followers. Additionally, implementing incentive policies could encourage high-quality content creators to consistently produce valuable content, thereby attracting more users and boosting overall engagement.

6.3. Recommendations for KOLs

As the vital bridge connecting brands and consumers, KOLs' expertise, engagement capabilities, and brand image directly influence trust-building and content effectiveness. First, KOLs should continuously enhance their professional competence through systematic learning and hands-on experience to strengthen their authority in specific fields. For instance, beauty KOLs can deepen their understanding of cutting-edge product technologies and industry trends by attending professional training courses or collaborating with global brands, thereby delivering more valuable insights to users. Additionally, KOLs should focus on refining content quality, avoiding superficial discussions and ensuring each post provides practical solutions or thought-provoking perspectives.

Secondly, KOLs should enhance both the frequency and depth of fan interactions, building mutual trust through diverse communication channels. Research shows that timely responses to comments, live Q&A sessions, and fan-exclusive events significantly boost user engagement and a sense of belonging. For instance, a fitness KOL regularly hosts weekly live workout sessions where they patiently address fans' questions. This consistent interaction not only bridges the gap between creators and followers but also encourages more users to share their workout experiences, fostering a vibrant community atmosphere. Therefore, KOLs should prioritize every opportunity for fan engagement in daily operations, earning user support and trust through genuine communication.

Ultimately, KOLs should prioritize long-term brand development by consistently delivering quality content and maintaining a consistent image to build user recognition and loyalty. Specifically, they should define their personal branding based on their unique characteristics while maintaining a consistent style in content creation, avoiding frequent theme changes or excessive commercialization. Additionally, KOLs should proactively take social responsibility by promoting positive values or participating in charitable activities, thereby establishing an uplifting public image that strengthens their standing among fans.

7. Conclusion

7.1. Summary of Research Results

This study examines the trust mechanism in social media KOL marketing through Rednote, analyzing its composition, communication effectiveness, and interconnections. The research reveals that trust in KOL marketing is shaped by three key elements: KOL's personal attributes, fan engagement, and platform mechanisms. Specifically, KOLs' professional expertise, public visibility, and brand image play pivotal roles in building user trust. For instance, KOLs with deep industry knowledge gain credibility through quality content, while carefully crafted personas foster emotional connections. Interactive activities like comment engagement and live broadcasts further strengthen trust, particularly in enhancing user participation and loyalty. Meanwhile, Rednote's verification system and content moderation mechanisms provide robust support for trust-building, significantly elevating overall user confidence in KOL-generated content.

In terms of communication effectiveness, research reveals that three core metrics determine content impact: reach, performance variations across content types and promotion formats, and commercial value conversion. Data analysis shows that KOL content engagement metrics (views, likes, shares) are influenced by multiple factors including trending topics, KOL follower activity, and content format selection. Video content demonstrates superior dissemination depth and user engagement compared to text-based content, owing to its stronger visual impact and information-carrying capacity. Additionally, soft advertising proves more acceptable to users than hard advertising, effectively boosting brand awareness and product conversion rates. These communication outcomes not only reflect the current influence of KOL marketing but also provide crucial data support for brand collaborations.

Notably, there exists a significant mutual reinforcement relationship between trust mechanisms and communication effectiveness. On one hand, users' trust in KOLs significantly expands content reach and engagement, thereby enhancing communication effectiveness. Conversely, effective communication further strengthens KOLs' credibility, attracting more followers' attention and support. This two-way interaction provides a fresh perspective for understanding the success logic of KOL marketing and lays a theoretical foundation for optimizing marketing strategies.

7.2. Limitations and Prospects

Although this study has achieved certain results in the trust mechanism and communication effects of social media KOL marketing, there are still some limitations that need to be improved. First, in terms of sample selection, this study mainly focuses on the Rednote platform and fails to cover other types of social media platforms, such as Weibo and TikTok, which may limit the universality of the research conclusions. Future studies could expand the sample scope and compare the char-

acteristics of KOL marketing on different platforms to reveal more universal patterns. Second, in terms of research methods, this study mainly relies on literature analysis and case studies, lacking large-scale empirical data support. Although some data from related studies were cited, it is still necessary to obtain first-hand data through methods such as questionnaire surveys or experimental designs to further verify the research hypotheses and enhance the scientific rigor of the conclusions.

This study initially examined the correlation between trust mechanisms and communication effectiveness, yet has not systematically elucidated their specific pathways of action or influencing factors. For instance, how users' trust in key opinion leaders (KOLs) affects consumption decisions through psychological mediation mechanisms, and the differential characteristics manifested by various groups in the dimension of communication effectiveness. Future research should integrate multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks from psychology, sociology, and related fields, employing a mixed methodology that combines quantitative analysis with qualitative research for in-depth exploration.

With the evolution of social media technologies and shifting user behaviors, the KOL marketing paradigm continues to transform. Future research should focus on how emerging technologies (such as AI and VR) reshape the KOL marketing ecosystem, while exploring the logic behind trust-building mechanisms in cross-cultural communication within a globalized context and developing dynamic evaluation frameworks for communication effectiveness. This approach will expand theoretical boundaries and provide more forward-looking practical guidance.

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