

KOL Marketing Strategies on Short Video Platforms——A Case Study of Film Promotion on Bilibili

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Abstract:

This study aims to systematically analyze the application and effectiveness of KOL marketing in film promotion on Bilibili, a short video platform. It explores specific marketing strategies and implementation paths, assesses their impact on audience behavior and film dissemination, and discusses the unique advantages of this marketing approach. Through this research, we hope to provide valuable marketing insights for the film industry to maximize promotional effectiveness on Bilibili and similar short video platforms.

Keywords: KOL, short video, marketing, advertising, film

1. Introduction

With the growing popularity of short video platforms, KOLs (Key Opinion Leaders) play an increasingly significant role in film marketing. Utilizing KOLs for film promotion not only allows for precise targeting of the intended audience and boosts the visibility of film projects but also enhances viewer engagement and loyalty. Therefore, studying KOL marketing on short video platforms for film promotion holds substantial importance. On one hand, it can uncover new trends and models in film promotion within the new media landscape, offering innovative marketing strategies to the film industry. On the other hand, such research can enrich digital marketing theory, promote the film industry's transformation in the digital era, and provide practical guidance and theoretical support for companies facing a competitive market environment. Recently, studies on KOL marketing have increased, primarily focusing on product sales. However, there is a research gap in KOL marketing

for film promotion on short video platforms. To address this gap, this study proposes an exploration of KOL marketing for film promotion on short video platforms, thus compensating for the lack of research in this area. Consequently, this study holds significant theoretical and practical value.

2. Literature Review

International research on KOLs in advertising and marketing originated mainly with Schouten et al. (2020), who examined the impact of influencer endorsements on consumers. Since 2020, KOL marketing has gained widespread attention, becoming a popular focus among scholars and achieving significant progress, which can be categorized into five main streams. The first stream focuses on the impact of influencer endorsements on advertising effectiveness. Schouten (2020) primarily discussed the advantages of influencer endorsements over traditional celebrity endorsements. The second stream investigates how

influencers can improve their marketing effectiveness; Audrezet (2020), for instance, explored the factors that affect KOL marketing and provided insights on how influencers can enhance their marketing techniques in collaboration with brands. The third stream examines the impact of KOL marketing on consumer purchasing decisions. Ki (2019) analyzed the factors that influence consumer behavior and found that consumers inspired by influencers are more likely to emulate their consumption choices, thus promoting sales. The fourth stream studies how influencer content influences followers, with Casaló (2020) identifying factors in posts—such as originality, uniqueness, quality, and frequency—that positively affect influencers' perceived leadership among followers. The fifth stream examines differences in KOL marketing strategies across platforms. Hughes (2019) analyzed the distinctions between platforms like Facebook and blogs, concluding that while factors such as network characteristics, blogger traits, and content features affect engagement, platform engagement level and activity intent are crucial for success.

In China, scholars primarily focus on KOLs' influence on consumer decision-making and psychological effects. Research suggests that KOLs effectively stimulate consumer decisions, satisfy psychological needs, and rapidly disseminate product information. For example, Shi Tingting (2021) noted that the KOL marketing model is built on consumer trust in KOLs and KOLs' understanding of consumer needs and psychology, which enhances brand exposure, strengthens brand content, and quickly drives consumer decisions from initial interest to purchase. Additionally, Chen Xiaoyu and Dong Yifan (2021) identified four needs in users' interactions with KOL short videos: emotional transformation, interpersonal relations, self-verification, and environmental monitoring, each leading to "satisfaction" through "usage."

In summary, domestic research primarily emphasizes the influence of KOLs on consumers. However, there remains a gap in existing research on KOLs' role in film marketing on short video platforms.

Recently, the development of marketing on short video platforms has attracted significant attention in academia, becoming a focal point for many scholars and resulting in numerous research achievements. These findings can be divided into four main streams. The first stream focuses on identifying conditions within short videos that can boost product sales. Ge JJ (2021), for example, analyzed various factors in short video advertisements and concluded that videos made by sellers tend to negatively impact sales, whereas those made by buyers promote sales. Additionally, short videos with bright colors and music were found to positively impact product sales. The

second stream examines market expansion of short video platforms in different regions. Wang SJ (2023) found that TikTok successfully retains rural users by providing content that aligns with their interests, fostering community awareness, and offering valuable information that meets their expectations. The third stream analyzes the impact of short video platforms on users during special periods. Xu DD (2022) studied knowledge-sharing behaviors on short video platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic, finding that appropriate knowledge sharing helped provide sufficient information and develop effective coping strategies, thus reducing casualties and economic losses. The fourth stream investigates the influence of short video platforms on consumer attitudes. Vladimirova K (2024) found that short video platforms play a dual role in fashion consumption: on one hand, they encourage overconsumption and normalize the rapid obsolescence of fashion, while on the other hand, they raise awareness about unsustainable practices in the industry and promote more sustainable consumption alternatives.

In China, research has primarily focused on the promotional impact of short video platforms on products. Deng Liangliu (2019) examined new approaches to promoting cultural tourism brands via social media, which help establish connections between brands, products, and audiences, enhancing brand credibility and attracting potential customers. Fu Qiaoxian (2020) studied the impact of e-commerce live-streaming platforms on consumer purchasing behavior, finding that KOLs' expertise, interactivity, information delivery detail, and entertainment value in live streams positively and significantly influence consumer knowledge.

3. Theoretical Foundation of KOL Marketing

3.1 Foundation of KOL Marketing

KOL (Key Opinion Leader) marketing is a strategy that leverages influential individuals or groups to reach audiences through their authority, expertise, and appeal in specific fields. It shares similarities with celebrity marketing, which seeks to transfer the positive image and characteristics of celebrities to brands in order to encourage consumers to purchase or use the endorsed products or services (Atkin & Block, 1983)^[1]. The rise of KOLs is tied to the growth of social media, particularly on short video platforms. Through content creation, information dissemination, and interaction, KOLs build trust with their followers, who not only regard KOLs as credible sources of information but are also influenced in their purchasing

decisions (De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017)^[2]. The core advantage of KOL marketing lies in its ability to precisely reach target users and deliver brand or product information in a relatable way, enhancing user trust and acceptance.

In film promotion, the applicability of KOL marketing is reflected in several ways. First, film audiences often have highly segmented interests, and KOLs can effectively attract audiences whose interests align with the KOL's content style. The "New 4C Model" emphasizes reaching specific communities with impactful content in the right context and leveraging social networks to facilitate connections between individuals, thus enabling rapid information dissemination and achieving commercial value^[3]. For example, on Bilibili, content creator Zhang Zhihao (known as "Zhang Zhihao Loves Peeling Grapefruits") specializes in video analysis of *Dream of the Red Chamber*, attracting a large audience (1.172 million followers). Second, KOLs provide diverse promotional channels and content formats for films, whether through original or collaborative content. On Bilibili, this includes genres such as film commentary, montage, and in-depth analysis. Such content not only increases user engagement but also extends the lifespan of the film's promotional reach. Finally, the interaction between KOLs and their followers, coupled with community-oriented operations, encourages more users to discuss and share, thereby further expanding the reach of film content. For instance, analysis videos on *Empresses in the Palace* have fostered a community of viewers who repeatedly engage with the show, significantly extending its lifespan.

Thus, KOL marketing on short video platforms serves not only as a tool for information dissemination but also as an effective means of fostering user resonance and interaction. This has made KOL marketing increasingly important in film promotion.

3.2 Current Status of KOL Marketing in Film Promotion on Bilibili

Within the ecosystem of Bilibili (B 站), KOL marketing has become a crucial strategy for promoting films and television works. Bilibili's unique community culture, youthful user base, and diverse content forms have attracted a large number of users with a strong interest in film content. In the mobile internet era, everyone can become a central node in the dissemination of information, creating a web-like diffusion structure where information spreads from central nodes to general nodes. Film-related KOLs on Bilibili engage users not only through in-depth interpretation and commentary on films but also through secondary creations, plot analysis, and meme culture, cap-

turing users' attention and fostering interaction. By aligning film content with their own content style, KOLs can effectively broaden the reach of films and inspire lively user discussions.

KOL marketing on Bilibili takes multiple forms, commonly including review videos, in-depth analysis of films, entertaining short videos, and collaborative live-streaming events. Through these diverse content formats, KOLs not only help films reach a broad target audience but also encourage users to share and spread the content organically. For example, prominent KOLs often provide detailed reviews or story breakdowns that generate further discussions and deeper interpretations, thereby enhancing the reputation and influence of the film. Connection marketing, which strategically targets emotional connections within communities, achieves better marketing results^[5]. Moreover, Bilibili's culture of bullet comments and comment section interaction amplifies the influence of KOLs, fostering a positive cycle of interaction and content co-creation among users, KOLs, and films.

4. Conclusion

Amid the rapid growth of short video platforms, KOL marketing has become one of the key strategies for promoting films and television content. Platforms like Bilibili, with their unique community culture, strong interactivity, and youthful user base, provide an ideal environment for KOL marketing. Leveraging their influence and expertise, KOLs enhance the visibility and reputation of films through content creation and user engagement. In film promotion on Bilibili, KOL marketing not only effectively achieves precise targeting but also extends the lifecycle of films through creative content and user co-creation, thereby improving overall dissemination. However, KOL marketing strategies face challenges such as content homogenization and user fatigue. Future marketing models need to place greater emphasis on content innovation and deep interaction with users to maintain long-term user interest and engagement. Overall, KOL marketing demonstrates significant advantages in film promotion on Bilibili, opening new avenues for the digital marketing of the film industry.

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