

The Influence of Social Responsibility of Internet Celebrities on Brand Loyalty of Chinese Consumers in Jiangsu Province

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the impact of Internet celebrities' social responsibility on consumer brand loyalty. The research questions include: (1) Identify the social responsibility issues faced by Internet celebrities; (2) Determine the social responsibilities they should fulfill; (3) Identify the mediating variables and moderating variables in the social responsibility relationship and their influencing mechanisms. To this end, a structured interview was conducted with 30 experts in Jiangsu Province who have conducted in-depth research on the social responsibility of Internet celebrities and consumer brand loyalty. Data saturation was reached after the 14th expert was interviewed. The test-retest method was used to evaluate the reliability of the interview questions, and the member checking method was used to verify the validity of the interview results. Qualitative content analysis was used to analyze the fulfillment of Internet celebrities' social responsibilities and their impact on brand loyalty.

The research results show that: (1) Internet celebrities often face problems such as the inability to guarantee product quality and false product introduction, which highlights the necessity of fulfilling their responsibilities such as guaranteeing product quality and providing accurate product information. (2) Brand trust, brand reputation and perceived value are important mediating variables between the social responsibility of Internet celebrities and brand loyalty, among which brand trust is the most critical mediating variable; (3) Internet celebrity popularity, professionalism and interactivity are key moderating variables that affect the relationship between social responsibility and mediating variables, among which popularity is the most critical moderating variable. In short, this study identified and clarified the mediating and moderating variables between Internet celebrities' social responsibility and consumer brand loyalty, providing inspiration for academia and industry to improve brand loyalty through the social responsibility behavior of Internet celebrities.

Keywords: Internet celebrities; social responsibility; brand loyalty; mediating variables; moderating variables

Introduction

With the rapid development of the Internet, internet celebrities have emerged as a powerful marketing force profoundly influencing consumers' purchasing decisions and brand choices. Leveraging their massive fan bases and extensive influence on social media, they have become core channels for brand promotion and have transformed traditional business models through formats like live e-commerce. However, this powerful influence also subjects internet celebrities to higher expectations and challenges in fulfilling their social responsibilities (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). When promoting products, internet celebrities, in addition to pursuing sales performance, need to assume corresponding social responsibilities, such as ensuring the authenticity, quality reliability, and compliance with ethical standards of the products they endorse (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

In recent years, with the improvement of consumer protection awareness, consumers have paid increasing attention to whether internet celebrities fulfill their social responsibilities during the promotion process. Studies have shown that the social responsibility of internet celebrities not only affects consumers' purchasing behavior but also has an important impact on their brand attitudes and brand loyalty (Lee & Watkins, 2016). Consumers hope that when promoting products, internet celebrities can provide accurate information and instill a sense of trust through their words and deeds, thereby enhancing the brand's trust and reputation (Chu & Kamal, 2008). Despite the attention given to the issue of internet celebrities' social responsibility, there is still a lack of systematic research on the specific social responsibility issues they face, the responsibilities they should fulfill, and how these responsibilities influence consumer brand loyalty through mediating and moderating mechanisms (Cheung & Thadani, 2012).

Brand loyalty has always been considered a key factor for companies to maintain long-term success. Oliver (1999) defined it as consumers' continued preference for a brand and willingness to repurchase. With increasing market competition, how companies can improve brand loyalty through the social responsibility of internet celebrities has become an urgent problem to be solved. Morgan and Hunt's (1994) research showed that the formation of brand loyalty depends not only on the brand itself but also on mediating factors such as brand trust and brand reputation. Therefore, understanding the relationship between internet celebrities' social responsibility and brand loyalty, as well as the mediating and moderating mechanisms therein, has important theoretical and practical significance.

This paper aims to fill this gap by exploring the social responsibility issues that internet celebrities face, determining the social responsibilities they should fulfill, and identifying the mediating and moderating variables along with their influencing mechanisms in the relationship between internet celebrities' social responsibility and consumer brand loyalty. Addressing these research problems is essential because understanding the impact of internet celebrities' social responsibility on brand loyalty can help companies effectively leverage them in marketing strategies, enhance brand trust and reputation, and ultimately improve consumer brand loyalty. Additionally, this research provides valuable insights by systematically analyzing the mediating and moderating mechanisms involved, which is significant for both academic research and practical applications.

To explore these research problems, this study employs qualitative analysis methods to deeply investigate the impact mechanisms of internet celebrities' social responsibility on brand loyalty, focusing on identifying mediating variables such as brand trust, brand reputation, and perceived value, as well as moderating variables like internet celebrity popularity, professionalism, and interactivity (Hayes, 2017). By revealing the roles of these variables, this study hopes to provide companies and academia with more insights on how to enhance consumer brand loyalty through the social responsibility of internet celebrities.

Research Objectives

The research objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To determine the social responsibility issues that Internet celebrities have and the social responsibilities that they should fulfill.
2. To determine the mediating variables of this study and their influencing mechanisms.
3. To determine the moderating variables of this study and their influencing mechanisms.

Literature Review

Based on previous studies on the social responsibility of online celebrities, brand loyalty, brand trust, brand reputation, perceived value, Internet celebrity popularity, professionalism and interactivity, this study identified the relevant concepts of each dimension of this study.

1. Internet celebrities and social responsibility

Internet celebrities have extensive influence on social media and live e-commerce platforms, and their words, deeds and promotional behaviors have an important impact on consumers' purchasing decisions. The social responsibility of Internet celebrities covers many aspects, including ensuring product quality, providing true and accurate information, safeguarding consumer rights and interests, and maintaining professional and ethical standards of behavior (Lee & Watkins, 2016). As the influence of online celebrities expands, consumers' requirements for their social responsibility are also increasing. Studies have shown that the social responsibility performance of online celebrities can significantly affect consumers' brand attitudes and purchase intentions (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

2. Brand loyalty

Brand loyalty refers to the continued preference and purchasing behavior of consumers for a specific brand. It is one of the important factors for a company to achieve long-term success (Oliver, 1999). High brand loyalty can not only increase a company's market share and profits, but also enhance brand competitiveness. Under the influence of online celebrities, consumers' brand loyalty is significantly affected by their promotional behavior and social responsibility performance (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

3. Mediating variables

Mediating variables refer to factors that play a bridging role between online celebrities' social responsibility and brand loyalty. Existing studies have shown that brand trust, brand reputation and perceived value are important mediating variables (Brodie et al., 2013). Brand trust is the consumer's confidence in the brand's fulfillment of its promises, and it plays a key role in building brand loyalty (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Brand reputation

involves the public's perception of the brand's overall image, and a good brand reputation can enhance consumers' brand loyalty (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Perceived value refers to consumers' overall evaluation of products or services, and brands with high perceived value are more likely to gain consumers' continued support (Oliver, 1999).

4. Modifying variables

Modifying variables refer to factors that affect the strength of the relationship between online celebrities' social responsibility and brand loyalty. Studies have shown that the popularity, professionalism and interactivity of online celebrities are important moderating variables (Chu & Kamal, 2008). Internet celebrities with high profile tend to have greater influence, and their positive effects of socially responsible behavior are more significant (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Internet celebrities with high professionalism are more persuasive and credible, and their behavior has a greater impact on brand trust and reputation (Lee & Watkins, 2016). Internet celebrities with strong interactivity can further enhance brand trust and reputation through active communication with consumers (Brodie et al., 2013).

Research Scope

The interviewees included information on gender, age, position, title, length of service, and education. The interviewees were half male and half female, aged between 36 and 57, and all lived in Jiangsu Province, China. Their main positions were teachers and marketing directors. Among them, the teachers were all professors, and the marketing directors had rich marketing experience. The teachers had a long length of service, generally more than 20 years, while the length of service of the marketing directors was concentrated between 15 and 21 years. All teachers held a doctorate degree, one of the marketing directors held a bachelor's degree, and the rest held a master's degree.

Research Methodology

1. Research Methodology

This study adopts qualitative research, collects interview data through structured interviews, and uses the test-retest method to test the reliability of interview questions. The validity of the interview results is tested by member checking. The interview data is analyzed by qualitative content analysis. Six main questions are designed for the interview, of which Q1 and Q2 explore the respondents' views on the social responsibility of Internet celebrities, and Q3 to Q6 explore the mediating variables and moderating variables between the social responsibility of Internet celebrities and consumer brand loyalty (Silverman, 2016). The structured interview questions are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Structured interview questions

No.	Interview questions	Purpose of question
1	What social responsibility issues do you think Internet celebrities have in the process of selling down jacket products through live broadcasts?	Determine whether this article’s research on the social responsibility of Internet celebrities is accurate and comprehensive
2	What social responsibilities do you think Internet celebrities should fulfill during their live broadcast of selling down jacket products?	
3	In what ways do you think the social responsibility of Internet celebrities can have a strong impact on consumer brand loyalty?	Determine mediating variables
4	What role do you think these channels play between the social responsibility of Internet celebrities and consumer brand loyalty?	Determine the influence mechanism of mediating variables
5	In the relationship between the social responsibility of Internet celebrities and these channels, what moderating factors do you think may exist?	Determine the modulating variable
6	How do these moderating factors affect the relationship between the social responsibility of Internet celebrities and these channels?	Determine the influencing mechanism of modulating variables

2. Data Collecting

The interview subjects are 30 experts who have in-depth research on online celebrities, social responsibility and consumer brand loyalty. These experts not only have deep academic attainments, but also have actually participated in or observed the relevant activities of online celebrities, and have rich practical experience and theoretical basis for the research topic.

The structured interview was conducted in Nanjing, Jiangsu Province in March 2024. The 30 selected experts have all purchased Jiangsu Province down jacket brand products through Internet celebrity live broadcasts, so they have a deep understanding of Internet celebrity live broadcasts, social responsibility and consumer brand loyalty. The interview content is saved by recording or handwriting (Patton, 2002). During the interview, when the data of the 14th interviewee was collected, it was found that no new information appeared and the data reached saturation, so data collection was stopped (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Data analysis

1. Reliability test

The reliability test of this study adopts the test-retest method. The specific operation is as follows: After the initial interview, wait 14 days and interview the same group of respondents again using exactly the same structured interview questions (Yin, 2017). The consistency of the interview results is evaluated by comparing the results of the two interviews. In order to quantify the reliability, this study uses the Kappa coefficient for statistical analysis. The Kappa coefficient is a statistic that measures the consistency of

classification and takes into account the possibility of accidental consistency (Cohen, 1960). In this study, the Kappa coefficients of each interview question were greater than 0.80, which, according to Cohen's (1960) standards, indicates that the interview results have high consistency and reliability. The reliability test results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Reliability test results

No.	Kappa Coefficient
Question 1	0.951
Question 2	0.951
Question 3	0.932
Question 4	0.932
Question 5	0.877
Question 6	0.869

The results of the test-retest method show that the main views on the social responsibility of Internet celebrities and brand loyalty are highly consistent in both interviews. For example, on social responsibility issues such as product quality and true and accurate product introduction, most respondents mentioned the same views in both interviews. This consistency shows that the respondents' views on the social responsibility of Internet celebrities remain stable at different time points, further verifying the reliability of this study.

2. Validity test

The validity test adopts the member checking method, that is, the research results are fed back to the participants, and the participants are encouraged to check the researcher's interpretation and conclusions of their interview content to confirm whether the information correctly reflects their views (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The specific operation is as follows: First, the data after the structured interview is sorted and preliminarily analyzed, the main themes or findings are extracted, and preliminary conclusions are formed. Then, feedback materials are prepared, including research background, research purpose, interview questions and summary answers, and preliminary analysis results. Finally, a feedback meeting was held with the 14 experts who participated in the structured interview to explain the purpose of member checking to them, provide feedback materials, and solicit their opinions and suggestions. The feedback opinions of the experts are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Expert feedback

No.	Perspectives on preliminary analysis results	Modify or add suggestions	Recommendations for improving the quality of research
Expert 1	The results accurately reflect the relationship between social responsibility and brand loyalty of Internet celebrities.	Add more case studies to support conclusions	Survey using a wider sample
Expert 2	Analysis is in-depth and enlightening	Consider the differences between internet celebrities in different industries	Introducing more quantitative data to strengthen the argument
Expert 3	Results are consistent with current market trends	Explore the impact of different cultural backgrounds	Conduct cross-cultural comparative research
Expert 4	The results are consistent with the theory	Explore the possibility of more mediating variables	Use advanced statistical methods for data analysis
Expert 5	Key mediating and moderating variables were accurately identified	In-depth analysis of the interactions between variables	Add experimental designs to test hypotheses
Expert 6	The results have high practical value	Consider the impact of personal characteristics of Internet celebrities on research	Apply mixed methods research to enhance the reliability of results
Expert 7	The results help guide practical operations	Consider the long-term effects of Internet celebrity influence	Conduct case studies to provide specific examples
Expert 8	Results are comprehensive and detailed	Add more analysis on consumer behavior	Conduct long-term tracking studies to observe changing trends
Expert 9	Brand identity may not play a mediating role	Delete this intermediary variable	2-3 mediating variables are appropriate
Expert 10	Results reflect the importance of online celebrity	Emphasis on the performance of social responsibility on different platforms	Consider social media influence
Expert 11	Results help understand brand building	Increase analysis of consumer psychology	Conduct qualitative interviews to gain deeper insights
Expert 12	The innovativeness of Internet celebrities may	Delete the innovative moderator variable	2-3 moderator variables help conduct research

No.	Perspectives on preliminary analysis results	Modify or add suggestions	Recommendations for improving the quality of research
	not play a moderating role		
Expert 13	Results accurately reflect current market dynamics	Explore the impact of technological developments on research	Stay up to date on the latest market trends
Expert 14	The results have important implications for brand management	Emphasize the differences between different consumer groups	Conduct stratified sampling to obtain more comprehensive data

In the feedback meeting, most participants recognized the research results and provided constructive feedback. For example, some experts suggested adding more analysis on consumer behavior to more fully understand the formation mechanism of brand loyalty. By sorting out and analyzing these feedbacks, the research results can be further revised and improved to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the research conclusions. The consistency ratio was calculated and the results showed that the consistency ratio was 85.71%, which was greater than 80%, indicating that the research had high internal validity (Shenton, 2004).

$$\text{Consistency Ratio} = \frac{\text{Number of confirmed participants}}{\text{Total number of participants}} = \frac{12}{14} = 85.71\%$$

The results of the member checking method showed that the participants had a high degree of recognition of the research results and believed that the research conclusions accurately reflected their views and opinions. For example, regarding the role of brand trust and brand reputation as mediating variables, most participants expressed recognition and emphasized the important role of these factors as a bridge between the social responsibility of online celebrities and brand loyalty. Through member checking, the validity of the research results was further verified, ensuring the authenticity and reliability of the research.

3. Qualitative research data analysis

This study uses qualitative content analysis to analyze structured interview records.

First, data preparation is carried out, and the interview records of 14 experts participating in the interview are sorted out. The interview records are transcribed into text format. The interview records of each expert correspond to a separate text, and the interview records of 14 experts correspond to 14 texts.

Second, the coding unit is defined, and the structured interview questions and interview records are analyzed to determine the coding based on the theme.

Third, a coding scheme is developed, and a coding scheme is created based on the structured interview questions and interview records, including primary coding, secondary coding, and tertiary coding. Define the specific meaning and scope of each theme.

Third, code the data, use the coding scheme to code the interview record text, and mark the text part related to each code. The secondary coding of the social responsibility issues of Internet celebrities includes the inability to guarantee product quality, the inability to guarantee after-sales service, false product introductions, and vulgar words and deeds; the secondary coding of the social responsibilities that Internet celebrities should fulfill includes product quality, after-sales service, product introduction, and words and deeds.

Finally, data analysis was conducted to code and query the first-level nodes of the problems of social responsibility of Internet celebrities. The results showed that the inability to guarantee product quality and false product introductions were the main problems considered by experts. Code query was conducted on the first-level nodes of the social responsibilities that Internet celebrities should fulfill. The results showed that product quality and product introductions were the areas that experts generally paid attention to. The results of the data analysis of Internet celebrities' social responsibility are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Results of the data analysis of Internet celebrities' social responsibility

Secondary Node	Expert Number	Encoding Frequency
Product quality	1, 2, 3, 7, 8,12,14	7
After-sales service	3, 4, 9,10,13,14	6
Product description	1, 5, 6, 7, 8,9,12	7
Words and deeds	4, 5,10,11,12,14	6

For the coding query of mediating variables, brand trust was mentioned 9 times and is the most critical mediating variable, followed by brand reputation and perceived value. Although brand identity is considered a mediating variable, it is the least critical mediating variable in the eyes of experts. In the coding query of moderating variables, the popularity of Internet celebrities was mentioned 9 times and is the most important moderating variable. The professionalism and interactivity of Internet celebrities are also considered important moderating variables, while the moderating effect of innovation is relatively weak. Therefore, this article does not use brand identity and innovation as mediating and moderating variables. The data analysis results of mediating and moderating variables are shown in Table 5.

Table 5 Data analysis results of mediating and moderating variables

Moderator \ Mediating variable	Reputation	Professional	Interactivity	Innovativeness
Brand trust	4	4	3	1
Brand reputation	5	3	3	0
Perceived value	4	1	1	0
Brand identity	1	0	0	0

In summary, the social responsibility of Internet celebrities plays an important mediating role in shaping consumers' trust, reputation, and perceived value of brands. Popularity, professionalism, and interactivity are key moderating variables that affect the relationship between the social responsibility of Internet celebrities and the mediating variables. The finalized scale has been certified by STIU-HREC047/2024.

Research Conceptual Framework

According to the results of qualitative research, the mediating variables of this paper are brand trust, brand reputation and perceived value. The moderating variables are the popularity, professionalism and interactivity of online celebrities, which moderate the relationship between Internet celebrity social responsibility and the mediating variables. The conceptual framework diagram is shown in Figure 1.

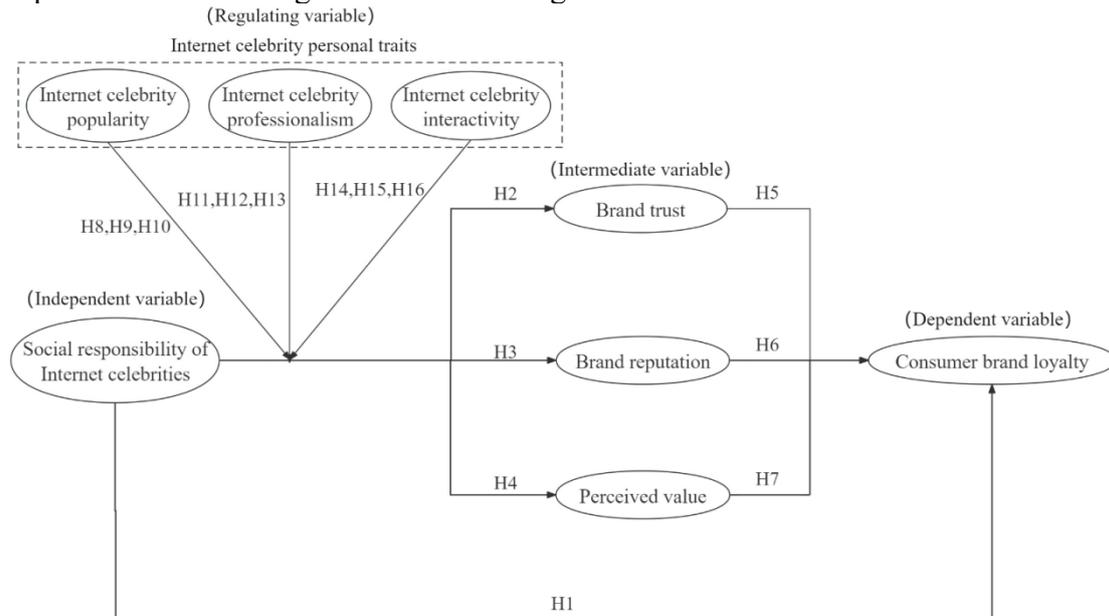


Figure 1 Research Conceptual Framework

Research Results

1. Social Responsibility Issues and Responsibilities of Internet Celebrities

The interview results indicate that Internet celebrities face several social responsibility issues during live sales, particularly concerning product quality, after-sales service, product introduction, and inappropriate words and deeds. Experts generally agree that the inability to guarantee product quality and false product introductions are the most prominent problems, each mentioned seven times. The issues of inadequate after-sales service and inappropriate words and deeds were mentioned slightly less frequently, each six times.

Specifically, experts pointed out that Internet celebrities often lack strict control over product sources and inadequate supervision of product quality, leading to an inability to ensure reasonable quality standards for the products they promote. One expert noted, "Internet celebrities often fail to ensure that the products they promote meet reasonable quality standards, which not only harms consumers' interests but may also damage the reputation of the Internet celebrities themselves." Additionally, false product introductions are a serious concern, with Internet celebrities sometimes exaggerating product effects or concealing defects, thereby misleading consumers.

In terms of the social responsibilities that Internet celebrities should fulfill, experts highlighted the importance of ensuring product quality, providing effective after-sales service, delivering true and accurate product information, and maintaining professional conduct. Product quality assurance and accurate product introductions were the most emphasized responsibilities, each mentioned seven times, indicating that experts consider these as critical obligations for Internet celebrities during live sales. While after-sales service and professional conduct were mentioned slightly less frequently, they are still regarded as essential responsibilities that Internet celebrities need to actively fulfill.

Experts suggested that Internet celebrities should rigorously screen the brands they collaborate with and thoroughly understand the products to guarantee the quality and protect consumer rights. As one expert emphasized, "Internet celebrities should take responsibility for screening their partner brands, ensuring that the promoted products meet quality standards to prevent inferior products from entering the market." Moreover, providing true and accurate product introductions is considered vital to avoid misleading consumers.

2. Mediating Variables and Their Influencing Mechanisms

The study identified brand trust, brand reputation, and perceived value as key mediating variables between Internet celebrities' social responsibility and consumer brand loyalty. Brand trust emerged as the most critical mediating variable, mentioned nine times by experts. This indicates a general consensus that brand trust plays a pivotal role in connecting Internet celebrities' social responsibility with consumer brand loyalty.

As a mediating variable, brand trust reflects consumers' confidence in a brand's ability to fulfill its promises. Experts pointed out that when Internet celebrities fulfill their social responsibilities, they can significantly enhance consumers' trust in the brand, which in turn promotes brand loyalty. One expert stated, "When Internet celebrities demonstrate a high sense of social responsibility, they can significantly enhance consumers' trust in the brand, which can translate into brand loyalty."

Brand reputation, mentioned seven times, and perceived value, mentioned four times, also serve as mediating variables, though their impact is somewhat less than that of brand trust. Brand reputation involves the public's perception of the brand's overall image, and responsible behavior by Internet celebrities can improve brand reputation, thereby enhancing consumer brand loyalty. Perceived value refers to consumers' overall evaluation of a product or service, and fulfilling social responsibilities can enhance the perceived value, contributing to increased brand loyalty.

3. Moderating Variables and Their Influencing Mechanisms

The study identified Internet celebrity popularity, professionalism, and interactivity as significant moderating variables that influence the relationship between social responsibility and the mediating variables. Popularity was considered the most influential moderating variable, mentioned nine times by experts, and was noted to have a particularly strong moderating effect on brand trust and brand reputation.

Experts indicated that high-profile Internet celebrities have greater influence, and their socially responsible behaviors are more readily recognized and trusted by consumers, thus amplifying the positive impact on brand trust and reputation. One expert mentioned, "High-profile Internet celebrities can strengthen the formation of brand trust through their influence, thereby enhancing consumers' brand loyalty."

Professionalism and interactivity were also identified as important moderating variables. Experts believe that Internet celebrities with high professionalism are more persuasive and credible, and their socially responsible actions have a more significant positive impact on brand trust and reputation. Interactivity reflects the quality of interaction between Internet celebrities and consumers, and highly interactive Internet celebrities can further enhance brand trust and reputation through active communication with consumers.

Discussion

This study set out to explore the impact of Internet celebrities' social responsibility on consumer brand loyalty, aiming to identify the social responsibility issues they face, the responsibilities they should fulfill, and the mediating and moderating variables influencing this relationship. The research revealed that Internet celebrities often grapple with significant social responsibility problems, particularly the inability to guarantee product quality and the dissemination of false product information. Experts emphasized that ensuring product quality and providing accurate product introductions are critical responsibilities that Internet celebrities must uphold. These findings underscore the pressing need for ethical practices in influencer marketing, as consumers increasingly demand transparency and accountability from those who promote products.

The identification of brand trust, brand reputation, and perceived value as key mediating variables provides valuable insights into the mechanisms through which Internet celebrities' social responsibility affects consumer brand loyalty. Brand trust emerged as the most critical mediator, indicating that when Internet celebrities fulfill their social responsibilities, they significantly enhance consumers' confidence in the brand's ability to deliver on its promises. This enhancement of trust fosters stronger brand loyalty among consumers. The roles of brand reputation and perceived value, although slightly less pronounced, also contribute to strengthening brand loyalty by shaping consumers' overall perceptions and evaluations of the brand.

Furthermore, the study found that Internet celebrity characteristics such as popularity, professionalism, and interactivity serve as significant moderating variables that influence the strength of the relationship between social responsibility and the mediating variables. Notably, popularity was identified as the most influential moderator. High-profile Internet celebrities can amplify the positive effects of their social responsibility on consumer perceptions, thereby enhancing brand trust and reputation more effectively. Professionalism and interactivity also play crucial roles, as highly professional and interactive Internet celebrities are more persuasive and credible, and their active engagement with consumers strengthens the emotional connection, further promoting brand loyalty.

These results align with and extend existing literature in several ways. The critical role of brand trust as a mediator corroborates Morgan and Hunt's (1994) commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing, which posits that trust is fundamental in building long-term customer relationships. The influence of brand reputation echoes Hennig-Thurau et al.'s (2004) findings on how electronic word-of-mouth and influencer behaviors shape brand reputation and affect consumer behavior. The significance of perceived value aligns with Oliver's (1999) assertion that perceived value is a key determinant of brand loyalty, as consumers are more likely to remain loyal to brands that they perceive as offering superior value.

The moderating effect of Internet celebrity popularity supports Kaplan and Haenlein's (2010) insights into the challenges and opportunities of social media marketing, where influencers with greater popularity wield more substantial impact on consumer attitudes. The importance of professionalism is consistent with Lee and Watkins' (2016) study, which demonstrated that the credibility and expertise of YouTube vloggers influence consumer perceptions of luxury brands and their purchase intentions. The role of interactivity resonates with Brodie et al.'s (2013) exploration of consumer engagement in virtual brand communities, highlighting that active communication and engagement strategies foster stronger consumer-brand relationships.

However, the findings differ from Cheung and Thadani's (2012) work, which suggested that the impact of electronic word-of-mouth is primarily driven by information quality rather than the characteristics of the communicator. Our study indicates that the characteristics of Internet celebrities themselves, such as popularity and professionalism, significantly moderate the impact of their social responsibility on brand loyalty. This suggests that not only the content but also the source attributes are vital in influencing consumer behavior in the context of influencer marketing.

In reflection, this study contributes to the understanding of how Internet celebrities' social responsibility affects consumer brand loyalty through complex mediating and moderating mechanisms. It emphasizes the indispensable role of ethical practices and social responsibility in influencer marketing. By fulfilling their social responsibilities, Internet celebrities can enhance brand trust, reputation, and perceived value, thereby strengthening consumer brand loyalty. The identification of Internet celebrity characteristics as significant moderators offers practical implications for brands in selecting and collaborating with influencers who not only have high visibility but also demonstrate professionalism and actively engage with their audience.

Recommendations

1. Theoretical Suggestions

Building upon the findings of this study, it is evident that there is a need for further academic exploration into the nuanced impacts of internet celebrities' social responsibility on consumer brand loyalty. Scholars should delve deeper into how different types of social responsibilities upheld by internet celebrities influence consumer behavior across various industries and cultural contexts. By examining industry-specific factors and cultural differences, researchers can develop a more comprehensive theoretical framework that explains the dynamics at play. Additionally, incorporating more mediating and moderating variables into future studies could enrich existing models and provide deeper insights into the mechanisms through which internet celebrities' social responsibility affects consumer brand loyalty. Longitudinal studies tracking changes in consumer behavior over time in response to internet celebrities' social responsibility initiatives could also shed light on the long-term implications of these practices in a rapidly evolving market landscape.

2. Policy Suggestions

Given the significant impact of internet celebrities' social responsibility on consumer trust and brand loyalty, regulatory bodies should consider establishing more stringent guidelines and monitoring mechanisms to ensure ethical practices in influencer marketing. Clear policies requiring internet celebrities to provide truthful and accurate information when promoting products can help prevent false advertising and protect consumer rights.

Implementing stricter disclosure requirements for sponsored content and imposing penalties for non-compliance can enhance transparency and accountability. Furthermore, creating mechanisms for consumers to report unethical behavior by internet celebrities would empower consumers and help maintain integrity in the marketplace. Educational programs aimed at informing internet celebrities about their social responsibilities and the consequences of their actions on consumer trust should also be developed to promote a more responsible influencer marketing environment.

3. Practical Suggestions

For industry practitioners, especially brands collaborating with internet celebrities, it is crucial to emphasize the social responsibility performance of influencers in marketing strategies. Companies should develop clear guidelines and standards for internet celebrities promoting their products, focusing on ethical marketing, transparency, and accountability. By ensuring that promoted products meet high quality and ethical standards, brands can safeguard their image and build stronger relationships with consumers. Regular audits and assessments of the social responsibility practices of partnering internet celebrities can help maintain consistent ethical promotion and protect consumer interests. Additionally, fostering long-term partnerships with internet celebrities who demonstrate professionalism, high interactivity, and a strong commitment to ethical practices can enhance brand trust, reputation, and perceived value among consumers, ultimately strengthening brand loyalty.

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