

THE INFLUENCE OF KEY OPINION LEADERS ON PURCHASE INTENTION OF GRAB APPLICATION AMONG BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS 2023 AT UPI

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the influence of Key Opinion Leaders (KOL) on purchase intention of Grab application among Business Education students at UPI. The research employed a quantitative approach with a survey method. The population consisted of 97 Business Education students from the 2023 cohort, with a sample of 50 respondents determined using the Slovin formula with a 10% margin of error. Data were collected through questionnaires using a Likert scale and analyzed using simple linear regression. The results showed that Key Opinion Leader had a significant positive effect on purchase intention. These findings indicate that KOL marketing strategies are effective in influencing students' intention to use the Grab application. Companies should collaborate with credible and attractive KOLs to enhance consumer purchase intention.

Key words: Key Opinion Leader; Purchase Intention; Digital Marketing; Grab Application; Business Students

INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has fundamentally changed the marketing landscape, where social media has now become the main platform for companies to reach consumers. The online transportation industry in Indonesia is experiencing very rapid growth, with Grab as one of the major players dominating a significant market share. Facing increasingly fierce competition, digital marketing strategies through Key Opinion Leaders (KOL) have become an increasingly popular alternative as they are considered more effective in influencing consumer decisions compared to conventional advertising. Students as a potential market segment have unique characteristics as digital natives who are very active in using social media and tend to seek information and recommendations from trusted digital sources before making purchase decisions.

The role of Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) in influencing consumer purchase intentions has been the focus of various academic studies. Research by (Shahira Khoirunnisa & Pinandito, 2023) emphasized that KOL attributes, such as attractiveness, expertise, and credibility, contribute positively to the formation of a strong brand image, which then influences consumer purchasing decisions (Gustian et al., 2024) showed that KOLs have a positive and significant influence on brand image, which in turn influences consumer purchasing decisions.

The identified research gap shows that although many studies explore the effectiveness of influencer marketing in general, a deep understanding of how specific dimensions of KOL (credibility, attractiveness, and expertise) influence consumer purchase intention on app-based services still needs to be deepened. Furthermore, demographic characteristics and educational background of audiences can influence the relative weight of each KOL dimension, but this aspect has not been widely explored in the context of business education students who have higher marketing literacy than general consumers. The use of Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) in marketing strategies has proven effective in increasing consumer purchasing intention and brand awareness in various sectors, including education. Research by (Shahira Khoirunnisa & Pinandito, 2023) shows that the trustworthiness attribute of KOLs significantly influences consumer purchasing intention in online bootcamps, contributing 48.38% and exhibiting a strong positive correlation.

Research on the concept of Purchase Intention has been conducted in several industries, including (Nam et al., 2017), who examined the factors influencing consumer purchase intention for eco-friendly sportswear, including expectations and perceptions. A study by (Kamboj et al., 2023) found that consumer knowledge about organic food and its health benefits influences purchase intention. (Rausch & Kopplin, 2021) identified a gap between intention and behavior for purchasing sustainable clothing. By exploring the research gaps mentioned above, it is hoped that a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing consumer purchase intention across various industries can be gained.

The novelty of this research lies in its specific focus on Business Education students at UPI who have in-depth understanding of marketing strategies and tend to be more critical in evaluating promotional content. Unlike previous studies that used general consumer samples, this research explores how knowledge background in business influences perceptions of KOL and its impact on purchase intention. Research by (Arieantony & Ina Oktaviana Matusin, 2023) shows that digital marketing has a significant influence on consumer purchase intentions, with brand equity acting as a moderator that strengthens this relationship. Similar findings were also expressed by (Maharani & Effendi, 2023), who found that digital marketing strategies, including product diversity and promotions through social media, play a significant role in increasing purchase intentions and loyalty.

The context of Grab application as a research object also provides an important contribution considering the characteristics of online transportation services that have high frequency usage, low switching cost, and strong network effects. These characteristics differ from products or services studied in previous studies, so KOL influence patterns may differ significantly. In addition, this study also comprehensively analyzes three dimensions of purchase intention (usage interest, preference interest, and referral interest) to understand not only the intention to try but also the intention to make it a primary choice and recommend to others, reflecting a more complete customer journey.

From a theoretical perspective, this research integrates the source credibility model with diffusion of innovation theory in the context of digital marketing, where KOL acts as opinion leaders facilitating the adoption of new technology. However, the specific mechanism of how KOL dimensions contribute to purchase intention on digital services still requires further empirical validation, especially in the educated consumer segment that has critical evaluation capabilities toward promotional content.

Based on the identified research gap and novelty, this study aims to analyze the influence of Key Opinion Leader on Purchase Intention of Grab application among Business Education students at UPI cohort 2023, with the hypothesis that Key Opinion Leader has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Intention. This research is expected to provide theoretical contributions in enriching the literature on influencer marketing in the context of digital services, as well as provide practical implications for online transportation companies in designing effective KOL marketing strategies for the student segment.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach with a survey method, as commonly used in research examining the effect of influencer credibility on consumer behavior (Cao et al., 2025) (Sesar et al., 2022). The research population consisted of 97 Business Education students at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI) cohort 2023. The sample size was determined using the Slovin formula with a 10% margin of error:

$$n = N / (1 + N \cdot e^2) = 97 / (1 + 97 \times 0.1^2) = 97 / 1.97 \approx 50 \text{ respondents.}$$

This approach aligns with quantitative sampling techniques that emphasize representativeness in small populations (Najar et al., 2024) (Zhao et al., 2024).

The sampling technique used was simple random sampling, ensuring that each respondent had an equal chance of being selected (Tran et al., 2023). The research instrument was a questionnaire with a four-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 4 = Strongly Agree), following common measurement practices in digital marketing and influencer studies.

The Key Opinion Leader (KOL) variable (X) was measured through three dimensions — *credibility*, *attractiveness*, and *expertise* — each represented by three items, adapted from prior validated instruments (Tarabieh et al., 2024). The Influencers' Attributes and Customer Purchase Intention, 2024). Meanwhile, the Purchase Intention variable (Y) consisted of three dimensions: *usage interest*, *preference interest*, and *referral interest*, referring to models of consumer intention widely used in influencer marketing research (Tran & Uehara, 2023).

Data were analyzed using simple linear regression with SPSS version 26 software, consistent with prior quantitative studies that assess the influence of source credibility on purchase intention (Gubalane & Ha, 2023) (Chen et al., 2024). Before hypothesis testing, prerequisite tests were conducted — including normality, linearity, and heteroscedasticity tests — to ensure the validity of regression assumptions. Hypothesis testing used the t-test at a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$, as recommended in quantitative behavioral research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study produced significant scientific findings regarding the influence of Key Opinion Leaders on Purchase Intention of Grab application among Business Education students at UPI. Simple linear regression analysis results show that Key Opinion Leader has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Intention, with substantial predictive capability where more than half of the variation in Purchase Intention can be explained by the Key Opinion Leader variable. Among the three KOL dimensions studied, the expertise dimension received the highest rating, followed by credibility and attractiveness. This indicates that Business Education students pay great attention to KOL competence in providing information about Grab application, as business students tend to be more critical in evaluating promotional content and appreciate substance over mere popularity.

In the Purchase Intention variable, the referral interest dimension obtained the highest score, indicating that KOL content not only influences students' personal decisions but also encourages them to become brand advocates who actively recommend Grab to others. This finding demonstrates a significant multiplier effect of KOL marketing strategies.

Practical implications of this research show that online transportation companies like Grab need to prioritize collaboration with KOLs who have relevant expertise and credibility, not just based on follower count. KOL content should be designed to encourage not only trial intention but also referral intention, emphasizing substantive information and educational aspects. For the student segment who are digital natives with high digital literacy, content strategies should focus on delivering honest, objective, and comprehensive information about service features and advantages, as they can distinguish authentic content from overly polished promotional content.

Table 1. Anova

			Sum of squares	df	Main Square	F	sig
Purchase Intention Key Opinion Leader	Between groups	Combined	511.660	11	46.515	4.844	<.001
		Linearity	441.256	1	441.256	45.949	<.001
		Deviation from Linearity	70.404	10	7.040	.733	.689
	Within Groups	364.920	38	9.603			
Total			876.580	49			

(Source: SPSS 27)

From the table above, it can be seen that the regression model testing the relationship between Key Opinion Leader and Purchase Intention shows very significant results. This is indicated by a significance value well below the alpha threshold, which indicates that Key Opinion Leader has a reliable influence on consumer purchase intention toward Grab application among Business Education students at UPI. The variation Between Groups explained by the model shows a significant contribution compared to the variation Within Groups. The high F value confirms that the observed differences are not merely coincidental, but that there is indeed a substantial relationship between the level of Key Opinion Leader and purchase intention.

Furthermore, the deviation from linearity test indicates that the relationship between Key Opinion Leader and Purchase Intention follows a linear pattern. This confirms that the simple linear regression model is appropriate for analyzing the influence of KOL on purchase intention. The linearity of this relationship suggests that improvements in KOL dimensions such as credibility, attractiveness, and expertise will consistently enhance consumer purchase intention in a predictable manner. Overall, the ANOVA results provide strong evidence that digital marketing strategies utilizing Key Opinion Leaders are effective in influencing student purchase intention toward Grab online transportation services.

Table 2. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.709 ^a	.503	.493	3.012

- a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention
- b. Predictors: (Constant), Key Opinion Leader

(Source: SPSS 27)

The model summary table above shows the strength of the relationship between Key Opinion Leader and Purchase Intention variables. The R value indicates a strong and positive correlation between the two variables, demonstrating that Key Opinion Leader has a close relationship with students' purchase intention toward Grab application. The higher students' perception of KOL's credibility, attractiveness, and expertise, the higher their intention to use Grab services.

The R Square value shows that a substantial portion of the variation in Purchase Intention can be explained by the Key Opinion Leader variable. This indicates that the regression model has good predictive capability in explaining the factors influencing students' purchase intention. The Adjusted R Square, which is nearly equal to R Square, demonstrates that this model remains robust and does not suffer from overfitting. The relatively small standard error of the estimate confirms that the model's predictions are quite accurate, making Key Opinion Leader a reliable predictor in digital marketing strategies for enhancing consumer purchase intention.

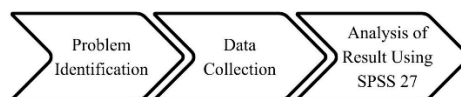


Figure 1. Research Procedure

The figure above illustrates the research procedure conducted systematically in three main stages. The first stage is problem identification, where researchers identify the phenomenon of Key Opinion Leader usage in digital marketing of Grab application and how it affects the purchase intention of Business Education students at UPI. This problem identification process includes literature review, initial observation of digital consumer behavior, and research gap analysis to discover the novelty of this study. The second stage is data collection, conducted through questionnaire distribution to Business Education students cohort 2023 as the research sample. Data were collected using validated instruments with Likert scale to measure respondents' perceptions toward

Key Opinion Leader and Purchase Intention. The third stage is result analysis using SPSS version 27, where the collected data were processed through validity tests, reliability tests, classical assumption tests, and simple linear regression analysis to test research hypotheses and produce statistically accountable conclusions.

CONCLUSION

This study successfully proves that Key Opinion Leaders have a positive and significant influence on Purchase Intention of Grab application among Business Education students at UPI cohort 2023. The dimensions of KOL expertise, credibility, and attractiveness collectively explain more than half of the variation in consumer purchase intention, with the expertise dimension as the most dominant factor. These findings confirm that digital marketing strategies using KOL are highly effective for student segments who are digital natives with high digital literacy, where they appreciate substantive, informative, and authentic content over content that relies solely on popularity.

The strategic implications of this research indicate that online transportation companies need to optimize KOL selection based on expertise relevance and credibility, not merely follower count, and design content that encourages not only trial intention but also referral intention to maximize the multiplier effect of word-of-mouth marketing. Future research is recommended to explore moderating variables such as brand trust and perceived value, expand the scope of respondents across educational institutions, and analyze actual purchase behavior to measure conversion rates from intention to action, in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of KOL marketing effectiveness in the online transportation industry.

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