

A Study of Online Celebrities Who Sell Knowledge: Perceived Attractiveness and Users Willingness to pay

Presented by

Chen Xiaoyu (Doctor of Philosophy in Information Studies)

Thesis Advisory Committee:

Assoc Prof Alton Chua (Supervisor)

Asst Prof LG Pee (Co-supervisor)

Assoc Prof Joanna Sin (TAC member)

Asst Prof Ben Choi (TAC member)

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BACKGROUND & MOTIVATION

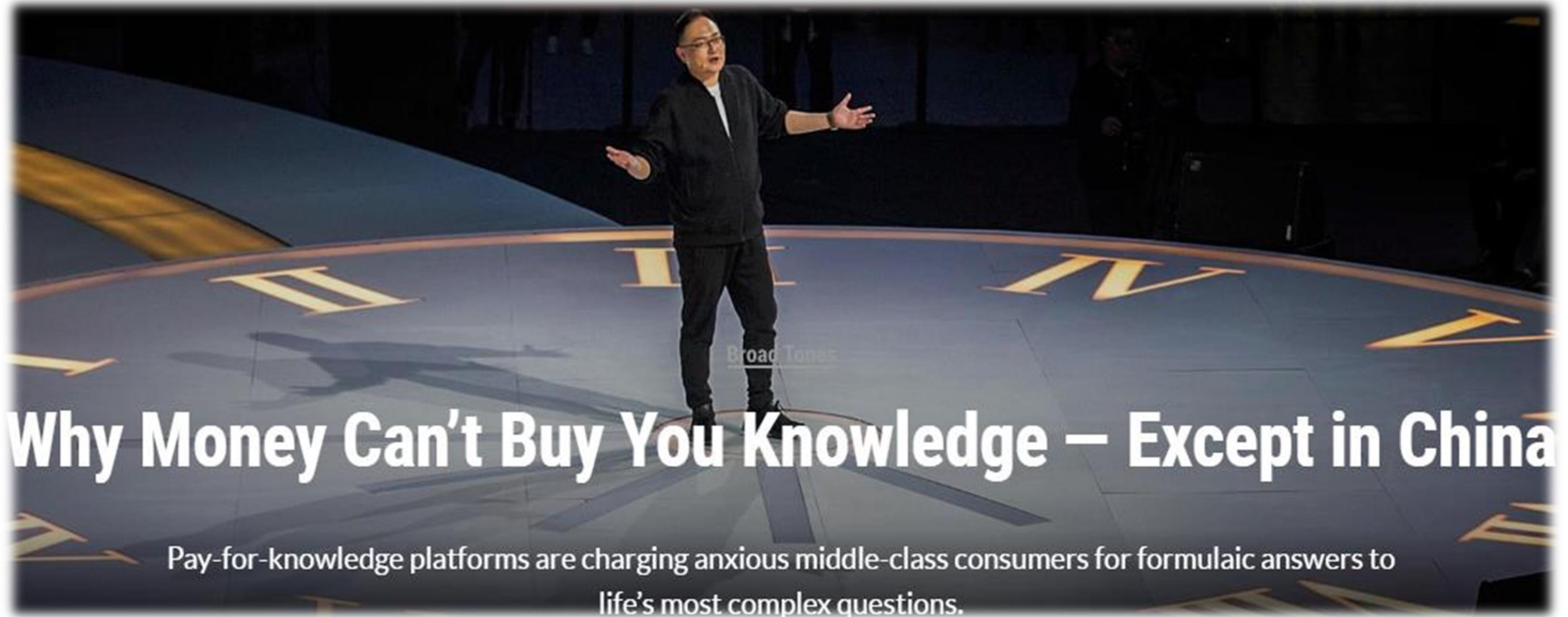
Background

Online celebrities (influencers/*Wanghong* “网红”)

- ❖ Online celebrities can attract a sizable following (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017)
- ❖ Several of them are hired for marketing and advertising as they can shape audiences' attitudes and behavioral intentions (Abidin, 2018)
- ❖ In such cases, they can draw them to pay for endorsed brands (Lou & Yuan, 2019)



Background (Cont.)



Source: <https://www.sixthtone.com/news/1001161/why-money-cant-buy-you-knowledge-%E2%80%94-except-in-china>

Background (Cont.)

Knowledge Wanghong (“知识网红”)

- ❖ Online celebrities who can create and sell knowledge products (Kim, Freberg, Friedman, & Weed, 2021)



Background (Cont.)

Knowledge Wanghong (“知识网红”)

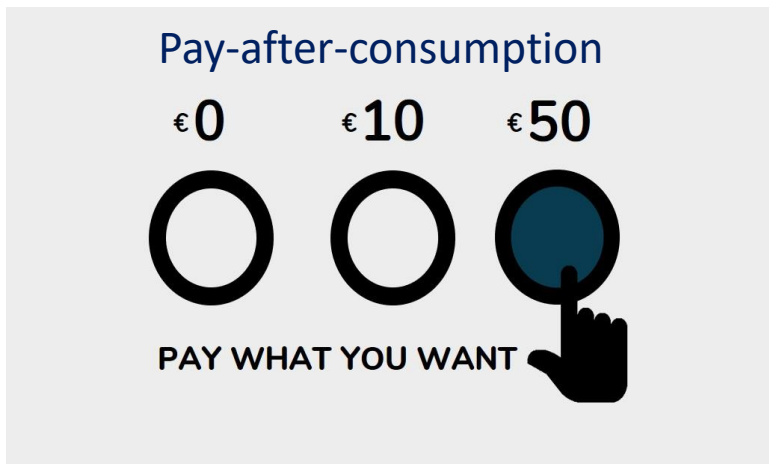
- ❖ Online celebrities who can create and sell knowledge products
- ❖ They tend to be professionals/semi-professionals in various knowledge domains
 - Psychology
 - Education & Training
 - Financial management
 - Fitness and health
 -



Background (Cont.)

Pay-for-knowledge platforms

- ❖ Developing features that enable Knowledge Wanghong to monetize knowledge contributions through users' payment
 - Pay-after-consumption, also known as *pay-what-you-want* (Wan et al., 2017)
 - Pay-before-consumption (Liu et al., 2021)



Motivation

What we know

- ❖ Users on pay-for-knowledge platforms are *attracted* to Knowledge Wanghong and eventually *willing to pay* for knowledge products

Motivation (Cont.)

What we know

- ❖ Users on pay-for-knowledge platforms are attracted to Knowledge Wanghong and eventually willing to pay for knowledge products

What we do not know

- ❖ Perceived attractiveness of Knowledge Wanghong → Users' willingness to pay

Research Question

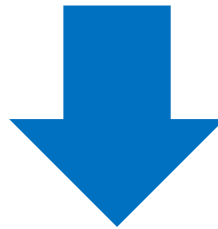
How and to what extent the perceived attractiveness of Knowledge Wanghong affect users' willingness to pay?

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RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Problem Statement

How and to what extent the perceived attractiveness of Knowledge Wanghong affect users' willingness to pay?



- ❑ Knowledge Wanghong : *What characteristics?*
- ❑ Perceived attractiveness of Knowledge Wanghong: *What factors?*
- ❑ Users' willingness to pay: *Why?*

Theoretical underpinning

A social informatics perspective (Meyer, Shankar, Willis, Sharma, & Sawyer, 2019)

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- How knowledge practices such as production, distribution, and use of knowledge are embedded within and enabled by digital technologies
- How such knowledge practices cause social impacts (e.g., Pee, Pan, Li, & Jia, 2020)

Theoretical underpinning

A social informatics perspective (Meyer, Shankar, Willis, Sharma, & Sawyer, 2019)

- How knowledge practices such as production, distribution, and use of knowledge are embedded within and enabled by digital technologies
- How such knowledge practices cause social impacts (e.g., Pee, Pan, Li, & Jia, 2020)
- For this research
 - ❖ Knowledge Wanghong offer self-created knowledge products and draw users to pay on pay-for-knowledge platforms

Revisiting research question using social informatics perspective

How and to what extent the perceived attractiveness of Knowledge Wanghong affect users' willingness to pay?



- ❑ What characteristics (Knowledge Wanghong)? → Online identities + Attributes of knowledge products
- ❑ What factors of the perceived attractiveness? → Considering characteristics of Knowledge Wanghong and their social interactions with users
- ❑ Why are users willing to pay? → Mechanism underlying the relationship between perceived attractiveness of Knowledge Wanghong and users' willingness to pay

Research objectives

- ❖ **RO1:** To shed light on the characteristics of Knowledge Wanghong by comparing the attributes of knowledge products across different online identity types
- ❖ **RO2:** To identify and validate the antecedents of the perceived attractiveness of Knowledge Wanghong according to their characteristics and social interactions with users
- ❖ **RO3:** To examine the direct and indirect effects of the perceived attractiveness of Knowledge Wanghong on users' willingness to pay

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RESEARCH DESIGN & PROCESS

Research design

- ❖ **RO1:** To shed light on the characteristics of Knowledge Wanghong by comparing the attributes of knowledge products across different online identity types
Duration, Frequency, and Diversity

Research design (Cont.)

- ❖ **RO1:** To shed light on the characteristics of Knowledge Wanghong by comparing the attributes of knowledge products across different online identity types
Duration, Frequency, and Diversity



- **Study 1:** Using a unique data set containing 2,617 Knowledge Wanghong's self-portraits and attributes of knowledge products on a leading pay-for-knowledge platform in China (Zhihu)

Research design (Cont.)

- ❖ **RO2:** To identify and validate the antecedents of the perceived attractiveness of Knowledge Wanghong according to their characteristics and social interactions with users
- ❖ **RO3:** To examine the direct and indirect effects of the perceived attractiveness of Knowledge Wanghong on users' willingness to pay

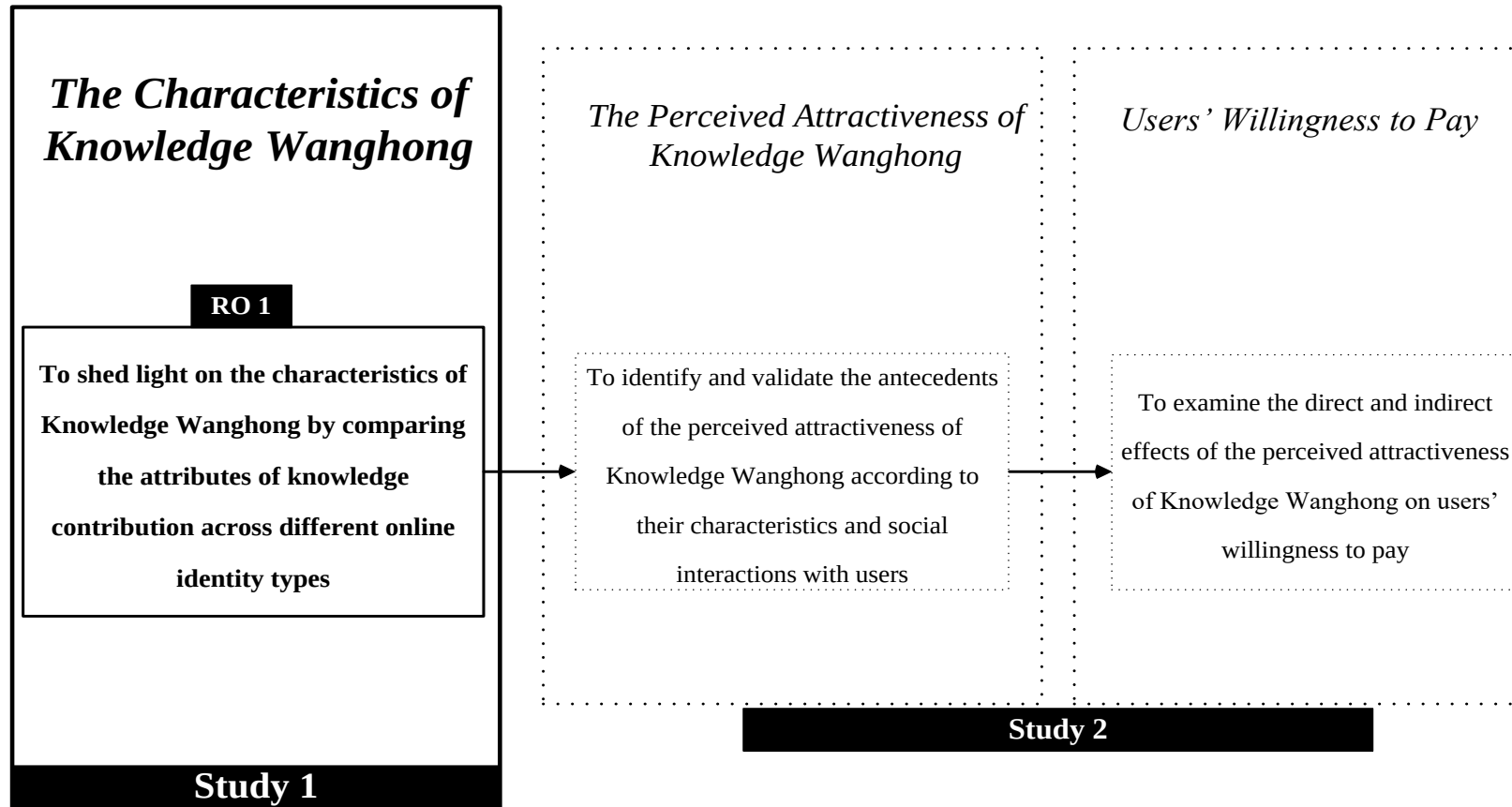
Research design (Cont.)

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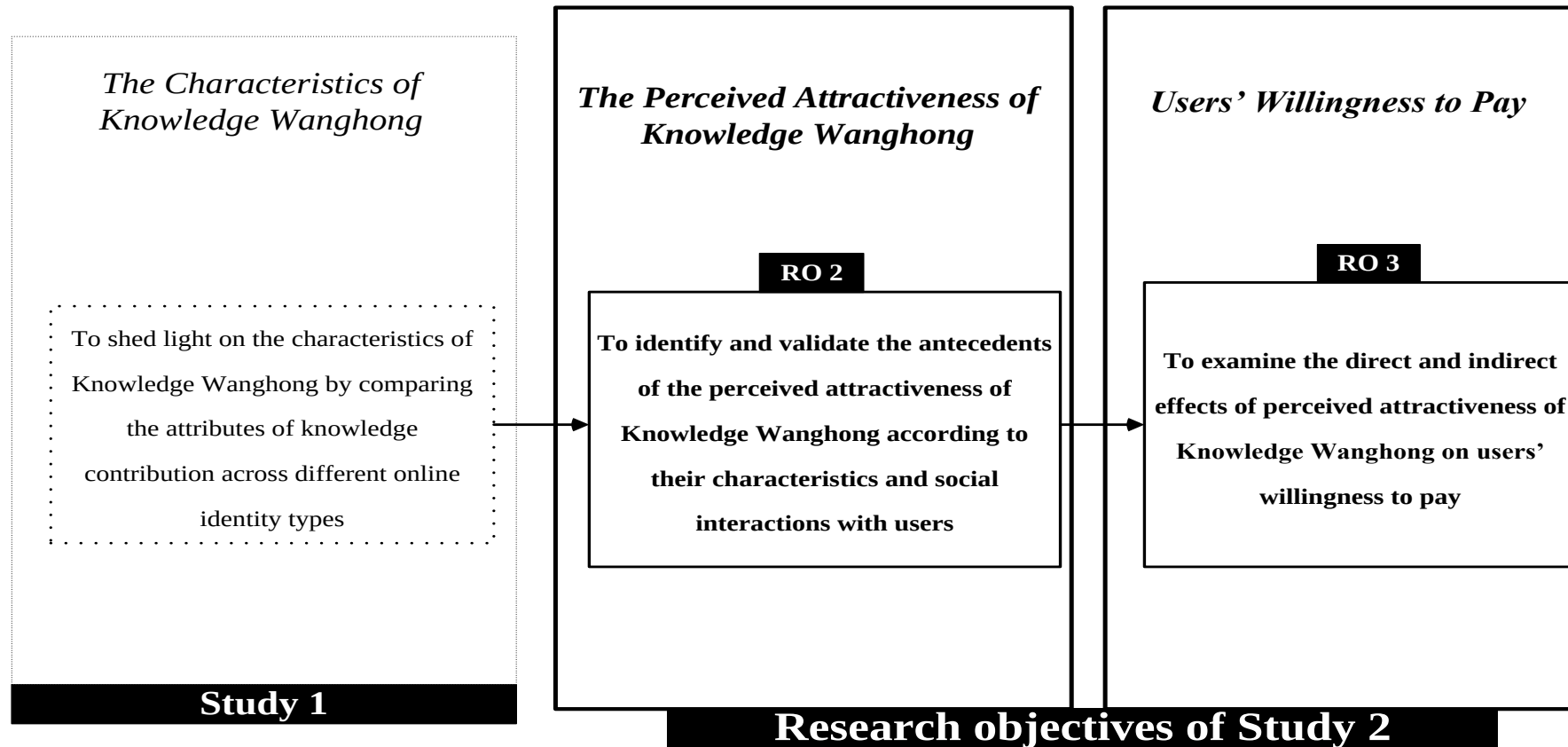
- **Study 2:** Interviews with Knowledge Wanghong ($N=28$) and paid users ($N=15$) *plus* a survey of the users ($N=402$) were employed to address the two objectives

Research process and approach



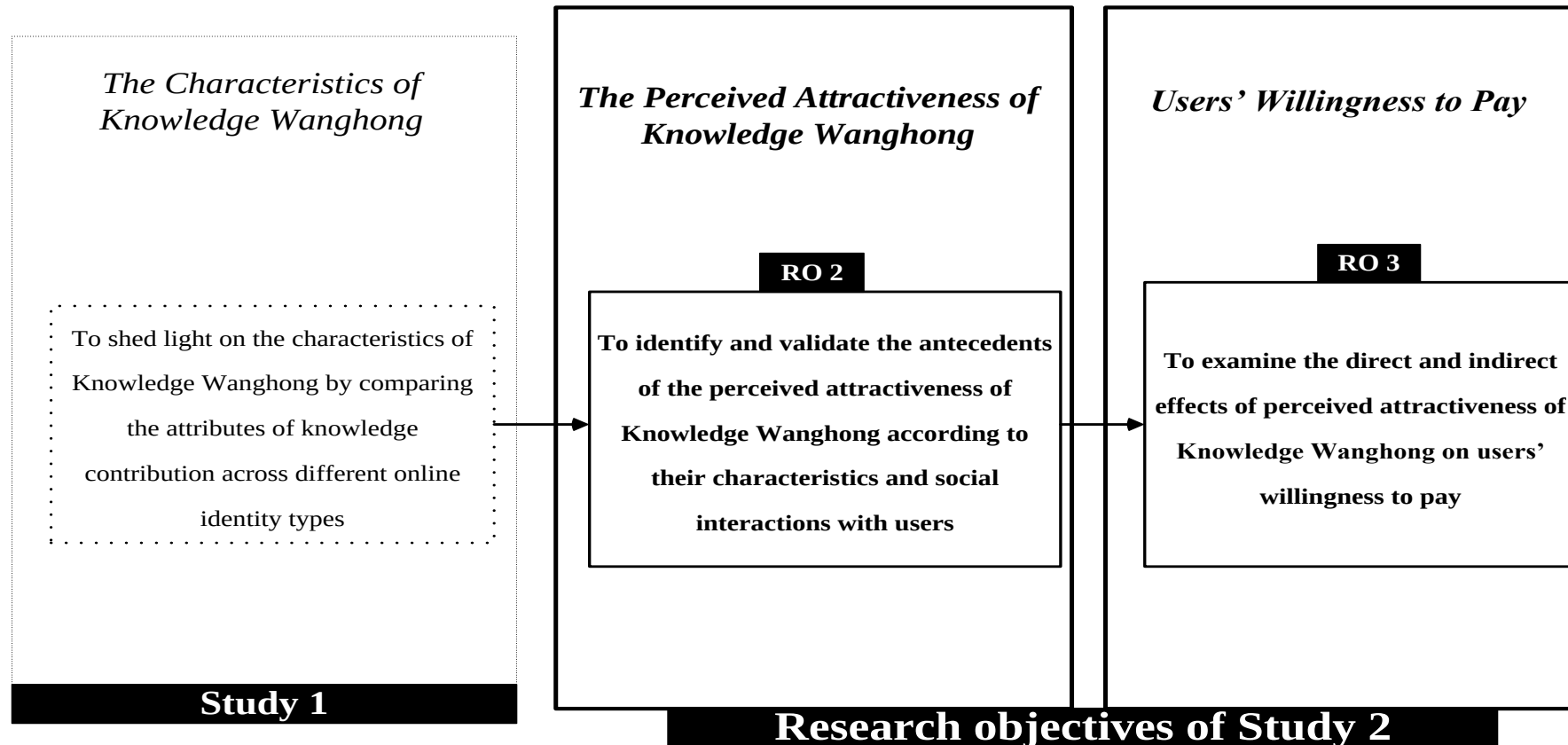
Study 1(RO1): LDA topic modeling + ANCOVA

Research process and approach(Cont.)



Study 2 (RO2): Qualitative coding analysis of the interview transcripts + Structural equation modeling of survey data

Research process and approach(Cont.)



Study 2 (RO3): Structural equation modeling of survey data
+ Qualitative coding analysis of the interview transcripts

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FINDINGS

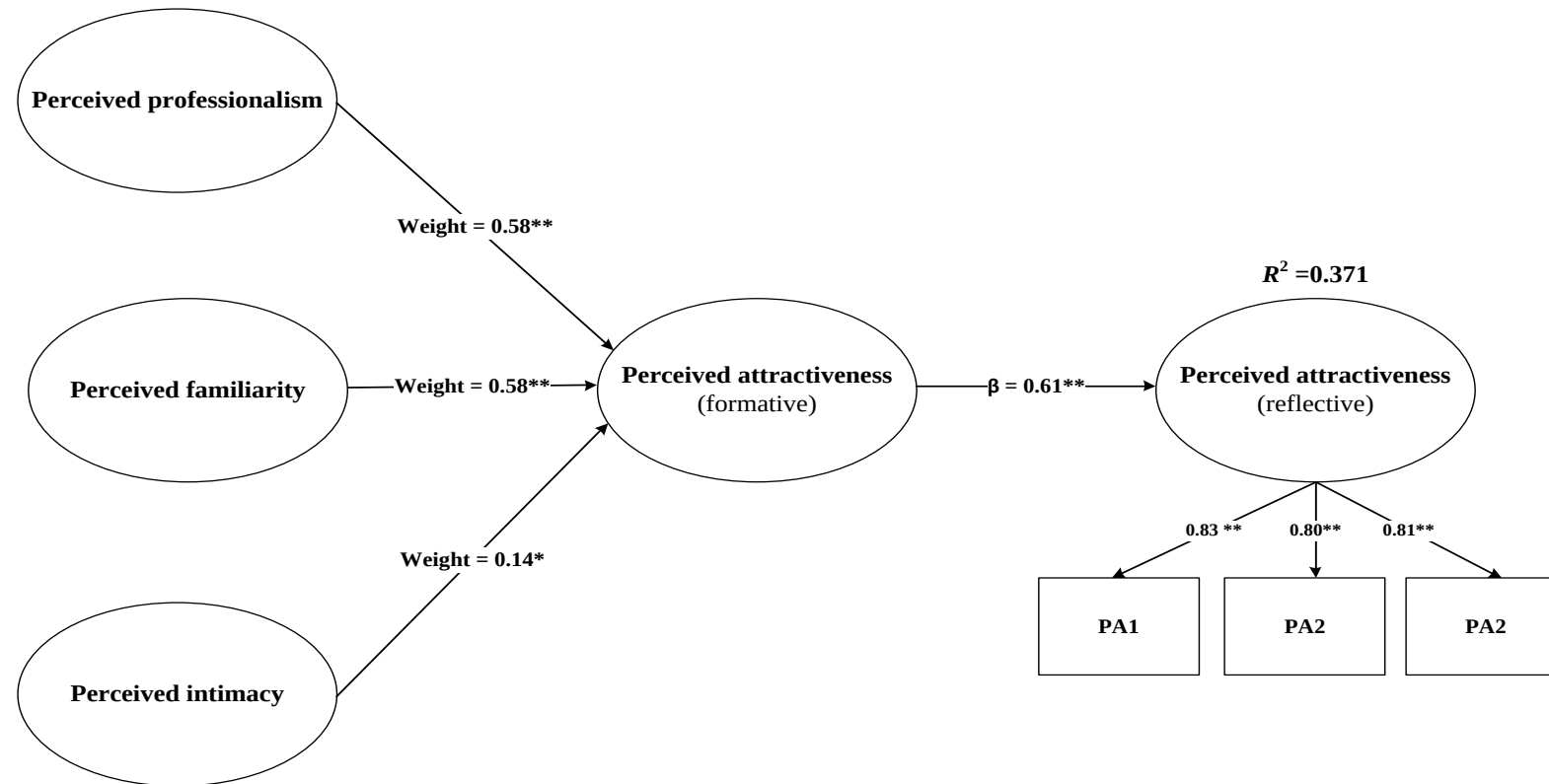
Findings of Study 1

- ❖ Developing a typology with four online identities—*mentor*, *broker*, *storyteller*, and *geek*—among Knowledge Wanghong, the results suggest that their *duration*, *frequency*, and *diversity* of knowledge products differ across the four types



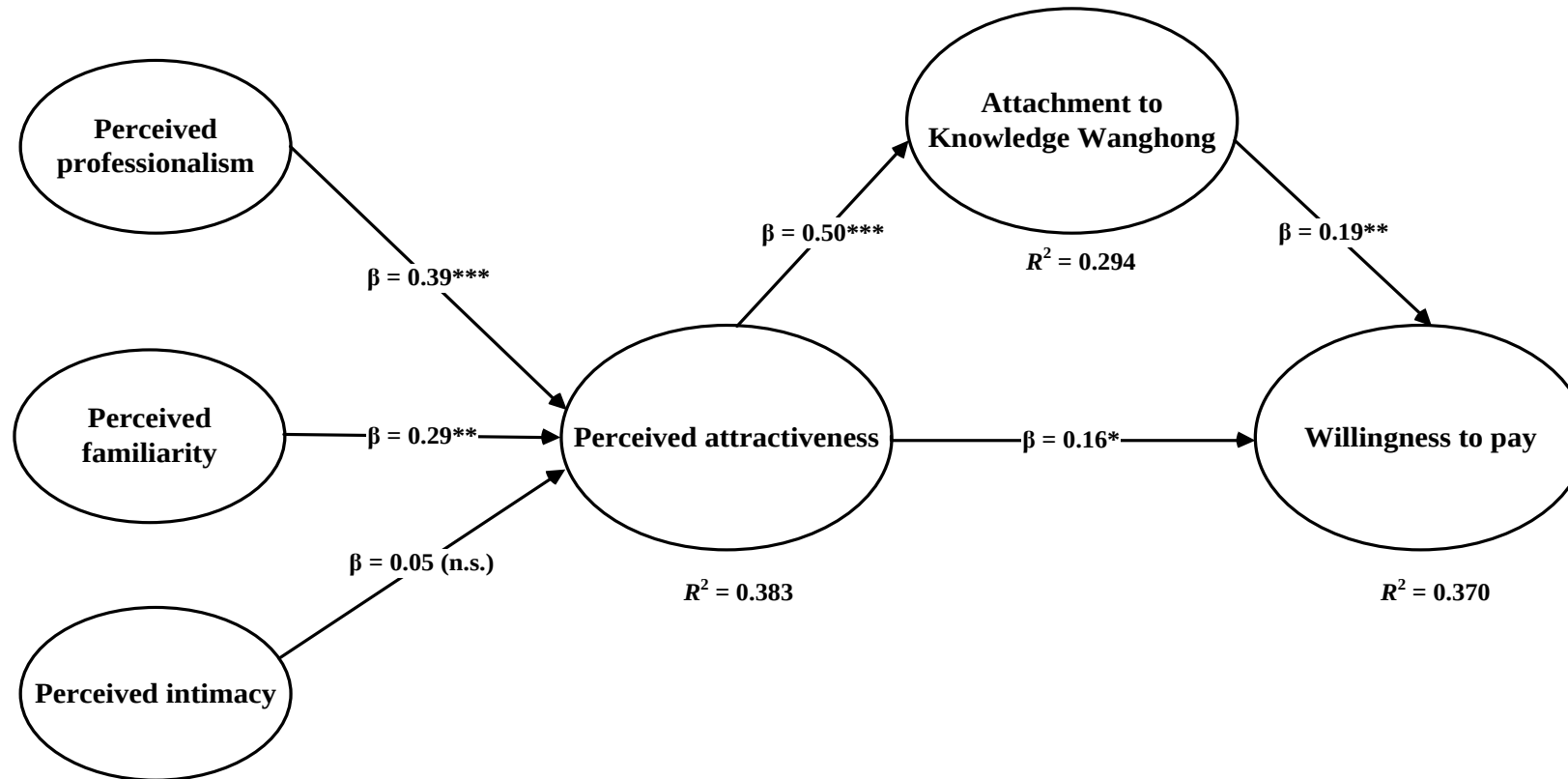
Findings of Study 2

- ❖ Three antecedents—*perceived professionalism*, *perceived familiarity* and *perceived intimacy*—are significant to the perceived attractiveness of Knowledge Wanghong, albeit with varying importance



Findings of Study 2 (Cont.)

- ❖ The perceived attractiveness can *directly affect* users' willingness to pay, or *indirectly* through the role of users' attachment to Knowledge Wanghong



Findings of Study 2 (Cont.)

- ❖ The perceived attractiveness can ***directly affect*** users' willingness to pay, or ***indirectly*** through the role of users' attachment to Knowledge Wanghong

Results of mediating effect analysis						
Total effect of X on Y	Effect	S.E	T value	P-value	LLCI	ULCI
	0.17	0.06	3.04	< 0.01	0.06	0.28
Direct effect of X on Y	Effect	S.E	T-value	P-value	LLCI	ULCI
	0.12	0.06	2.11	0.03	0.01	0.23
Indirect effect of X on Y via M	Effect	Boot S.E.	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI		
	0.05	0.02	0.01	0.10		

Note: X = perceived attractiveness; Y = willingness to pay; M = attachment to Knowledge Wanghong; S.E = standard error; LLCI = lower limit confidence interval under 95% level; ULCI = upper limit confidence interval under 95% level; “Boot” means using bootstrapping method

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CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions

❖ Discussion of the findings

- Construction and Management of Online Identities
 - ❖ Continuous, strategic effort one puts into cultivating their overall self-presentation styles
 - ❖ Knowledge Wanghong may differentiate themselves by constructing and managing a unique online identity
 - ❖ They attempt to establish a unique image of “akin-to-professionals” to draw target knowledge consumers

Conclusion (Cont.)

❖ Discussion of the findings (Cont.)

- Knowledge Wanghong make themselves attractive in social interactions
 - ❖ Perceived attractive: A multidimensional construct that incorporates socio-technical components (Elbedweihiy et al., 2016)
 - ❖ Perceived attractiveness of Knowledge Wanghong originated from a mix of their expertise in knowledge domains and effort in social interactions with users

Conclusion (Cont.)

❖ Discussion of the findings (Cont.)

- Users' attachment to Knowledge Wanghong & Two patterns of willingness to pay
 - ❖ Two dimensions of users' attachment: identity-based attachment and bond-based attachment (Ren et al., 2012)
 - ❖ Two patterns of willingness to pay: pay-after-consumption vs. pay-before-consumption (Liu et al., 2021; Wan et al., 2017)
 - ❖ The thesis linked the two dimensions of users' attachment with two patterns of users' willingness to pay

Conclusion (Cont.)

❖ Theoretical implications

- Broadening the current research drawing on the social informatics perspective to study knowledge practices
- Extending the extant literature on the characteristics of online celebrities
- Deepening the understanding of the role of online celebrities in users' willingness to pay

Conclusion (Cont.)

❖ Practical implications

- Knowledge Wanghong: How to draw target consumers
- Operators of pay-for-knowledge platforms: How to design functions and affordances
- Consumers: How to figure out premium knowledge products

Conclusion (Cont.)

❖ Limitations and future work

- Validity and the generalizability of the findings→ Using large-scale field studies with more rigorous sampling across multiple pay-for-knowledge platforms
- Cross-sectional data set regarding self-portraits and knowledge products→ Using a longitudinal panel data set
- Relationship between attachment types and payment patterns→ Conducting empirical investigations into the relationship

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