

The Impact of Live Streaming Shopping on Luxury Cosmetic Brand Consumer Decision Making Process in the Internet Economy —— Chinese Young Female Consumers

Yiqi Yu^{1*}

^{1*}n10410651@qut.edu.au

¹Business School, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia

ABSTRACT—Live streaming is a relatively new business model, which allows vendors to face and interact with consumers in real-time directly. Live streaming has continued to increase rapidly in recent years in China. There are still limited studies on live streaming towards the consumer decision-making process. This study focuses on the consumer decision process in live streaming commerce. An online survey was implemented, and 200 responses were collected. In this study using the structural equation modelling, the results indicate that the perceived benefits of watching live streaming positively correlate with willingness to buy online. In addition, there is a positive relationship between positive electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and willingness to buy online. These two parts of the discussion are appropriate to live streaming strategy and positive eWOM. Furthermore, this paper finally provides some managerial and practical findings based on our findings. By examining live streaming on consumer purchase behaviour, this study enriches the theoretical understanding of live streaming in e-commerce.

Keywords: Live streaming commerce; eWOM; consumer decision process; willingness to purchase

1 INTRODUCTION

Over the past decades, cyber appearances such as image, text, and quality information have significantly influenced consumer purchase. It is difficult for consumers to touch, smell, and try on the product [1]. Live streaming is a new popular form of media that enables brands to present items differently. Streamers present the product and describe what an item touches, feels, smells like. Consumers directly interact with brands, streamers through the live streaming chat room. Such shopping experiences decrease consumers' feelings of uncertainty [2]. Live-streaming creates content resulting in real-time social interaction. It is different from traditional social media such as Instagram and Facebook.

Most main S-commerce and E-commerce, such as TikTok and Taobao.com, have live streaming channels on their websites. Taobao.com (similar to Amazon) is the largest online shopping website in China, and it has had a live streaming platform since April 2016. According to Alibaba's 2020 annual report, Taobao Live generated over 400 billion yuan (US\$61.7 billion) in gross merchandise volume (GMV) [3]. International luxury cosmetic brands such as Lancome,

Saint Laurent, and NARS started shifting their focus to brand-run live streams, training their brand streamers. The designer of Luxury high-end fashion Diane Von Furstenberg (DVF), said live streaming is a key component of its Chinese marketing plan [4]. Alibaba 2020 annual report indicated that live streaming E-commerce model [3].

Live streaming is a relatively new concept. There is growing academic research around this topic. Pires et al. discussed the live streaming systems and found the difference between YouTube and Twitch, including uploader behaviour and environment maturity [5]. Haimson and Tang introduced the streamer' motives across different platforms, such as Facebook, Snapchat, and Periscope [6]. Cai and Wahn examined the relationship between consumer purchase intention and motivation about live streaming, pointed out consumer motivation is positively related to purchase intention [7]. Todd and Melancon discussed different gender motivations to view live-stream broadcasts [8].

Although live-streaming shopping has been a mainstream of E-commerce, qualitatively and insightful research is scarce, especially in the consumer decision-making process. Herein, this study is conducted to understand the five stages of consumer decision making when they watch live streams and why people prefer E-commerce websites with live streams—understanding decision-making and choice behaviour prior to their live streams purchase.

This study introduces the literature analysis, questionnaire survey approaches and structures the review as follows. First, this research introduces live streaming from a social media perspective. Then, this research summarizes the current live streaming research related to consumer-decision making and integrates them with decision-making process theories. This study uses the Engel, Blackwell, Miniard (EBM) model to present survey results of closed and open-ended questions [9]. Overall, this study has attempted to understand how live-streaming influences consumer purchase behaviours towards luxury cosmetic products.

2METHODOLOGY

2.1Systematic Literature Review

Literature analysis is defined as an overview of the prior published papers related to a specific topic, finding definitions, and analyzing it in a generalized way [10]. The introduction part uses the literature analysis to identify research related to living streaming. Also, the literature analysis is used in the introduction to find the unknown gap of existing research, which is the decision-making process of live streaming.

This study used a two-stage process to search qualified academic and peer-reviewed journal articles related to living streaming and consumer decision-making process. This research applied the systematic electronic search method to identify relevant articles, which included Social Citation Index (SCI), ABI/IFORM Global (ProQuest), Journal STORage (JSTOR), Social Science Citation Index (SSCI). This study did the research based on keywords, such as "live streams," "live streaming shopping," "e-commerce," "consumer behaviour," and "consumer decision process."

This study used the four steps conventional systematic review methodology to include and exclude the relevant articles [10]. The intention is to enable the used articles to be qualified and

relevant. The four steps were the following: (1) published academic and peer-reviewed papers; (2) live streaming and consumer decision-making process were the major focus of findings in the article; (3) researches had a defined sample; (4) publication that addressed the elements influences different stages of the consumer decision process in live streaming shopping.

2.2 Questionnaire Survey

2.2.1 Participants

An online survey was designed and distributed on Wenjuanxing, a Chinese platform providing functions equivalent to Amazon Mechanical Turk, ages between 18 years to 35 years. The online survey related to living streaming shopping, and this study dropped those who failed the attention check (n=101). The attention question appeared at the front of the survey, "Have you ever watched a live stream shopping?" Only participants who answer "yes" to it were qualified. Hence, all respondents have some relevant experiences of live streaming shopping.

The first round of pretesting was done on three undergraduate students and three working adults. The survey was revised based on obtaining feedback, and there were no negative comments. The survey was ready to collect data. The message announcing the survey was posted in various online interest groups to reach the young female live streaming visitors. The survey was repeated postings five times a week to encourage more participants.

Besides being posted in several online groups and communities, survey links also send to social media users individually.

The total number of participants was 301. This study cleaned the dataset by the opened-ended question answers and excluding invalid questionnaires. Only luxury cosmetic users who watch live streaming shopping were chosen. The final valid respondents were 200. The sample is representative, with 66.4% of the respondents belonging to the age group between 18-year-old and 35-year-old.

2.2.2 Survey Measures

All stages of the consumer decision-making process were adapted from previous research. The measure includes Likert-type statements, measured on five points scale ranging from (1) "strongly disagree" to (7) "strongly agree." The appropriate wordings of the items were applied to the context of the Internet.

Open-ended questions are also used in this online survey. In the middle of the survey, it asked, "What aspects impact you bought luxury brand cosmetics after seeing it on a live stream?" Then the survey asked, "Why did you shop on live streaming sites rather than other online shopping sites?" Finally, the survey asked, "How do you share your purchase experience?"

3 RESULT

3.1 Luxury Cosmetics Market

Luxury brands do not have a widely accepted definition. The luxury brand is a relative concept [11]. Researchers have several challenges to define, including the concept of "luxury" change

over time [12]. According to Vigneron and Johnson [13], luxury is the highest level of a prestige brand. They have several emotional and psychological values, including conspicuous and hedonic values. Tynan, McKechnie, and Chhuon, defined luxury brands as high quality, expensive, non-essential products/services that features were rare, exclusive, authentic, consumers perceived a high level of hedonic/emotional values [14]. In this study, luxury cosmetic brands are defined as high quality, expensive, limited supply, and functional use and personal fulfilment.

The luxury cosmetic brand is increasing due to consumers being more beauty conscious and changing lifestyles. The Chinese cosmetic market increased from 26.3 billion yuan (US\$4.1 billion) in 2015 to 47 billion yuan (US\$7.26 billion) in 2019 [15]. In China, the luxury cosmetic market major consumers are no longer about wealthy older consumers, marketers shifting their focus to young females between 18 and 30 years who live in first-tier cities [16]. In 2018, generation Y and generation Z were responsible for 43% and 28% of the spending in the Chinese luxury market, respectively [17].

Luxury brands offer high social and symbolic value for young consumers, enabling them to stand out among peers rather than fit in with society [17-18]. Although younger consumers are relatively lower earnings, they are highly brand conscious and invest in the luxury brand for a higher level of quality and taste [19]. Generation Y (1977-1994) and Generation Z (1997-2014) are different compared with their parents. They purchase luxury at a younger age and are willing to pay more for it [17, 20-21].

In 2020, Covid-19 had a vital negative influence on the makeup industry. The makeup industry experienced a rapid sales decrease due to home quarantine measures and wearing masks [16]. The global market good personal luxury goods market sales decrease 23% in 2020 [22]. Most beauty-product consumers prefer in-store shopping before Covid-19, including generation Y and generation Z [22]. Despite the global luxury shopping sales decreased, online luxury cosmetics soared, especially in the US and China. For instance, Sephora's US online revenue increase 30 percent versus 2019 [23]. Tmall Global reported the cosmetic eye sales increased by 40 percent versus 2019 [24].

The makeup market shows a clear trend of digitalization and diverse development. Live streaming is the next trend in beauty [25]. Core Research estimated the live streaming market to reach \$25 billion by 2023 in the US [25]. Luxury brands delayed employing live streaming marketing because they want to be exclusive and scarce [4]. However, luxury makeup brands including Armani, Chanel, TF opened Tmall flagship stores and had run their live stream channels to engage with consumers [16]. Huda Beauty partnered with a famous streamer Austin Li on Alibaba's Taobao Live, which attracted over 12 million views [26]. Live streaming effectively increases consumer purchase intention and creates brand loyalty [27-28].

3.2 Consumer Making Decision Process and Live Streaming

3.2.1 Descriptive Data

This study asked how often they shop online and watch live streaming to understand consumer general shopping frequency (Table 1). The results indicated most people (35%) shopping online two or three times, and major consumers (34%) watched live streaming two or three times a month (see Figure 1). Hence, live streaming and online shopping have become mainstream

consumption patterns. Consumers prefer watching live streams before shop online because they wanted more product information and a new engaging way [7]. When asked which live streaming shopping sites they preferred before purchasing the luxury cosmetic product (multiple choices allowed), most consumers had used Taobao Live (85.5%), followed by Douyin (TikTok Chinese version), Red.com (30.5%), JD.com (5.5%), Kuaishou (5%).

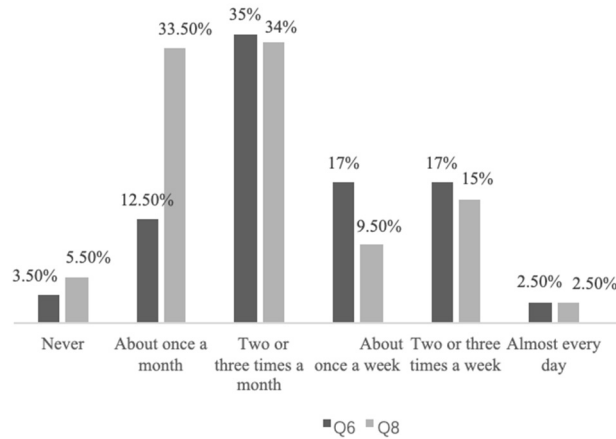


Figure 1. Live streaming and online shopping frequency

Note: "In the past six months, how often did you shopping online? (Q6), how often did you shop online after watching a live stream? (Q8)"

TABLE 1. OVERVIEW OF THE SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

| | |
|---|--|
| Database | 1. Research Gate, MDPI, Pro Quest, and Emerald 2. Top Marketing journals, including Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing, Journal of Business Research, Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management, Journal of Marketing, Journal of Marketing Research 3. Top Service journals: International Journal of Services, The Service Industries Journal, Journal of Retailing Consumer Service |
| Search query | Live streams OR Live streaming shopping OR E-commerce, Consumer behaviour, Consumer decision making process, Willingness to buy, Luxury cosmetic product OR Makeup brand |
| Publication date range | 1968 – 2021 |
| Results from the search engine | 70 articles |
| Inclusion criteria | a) Original research articles b) Both conceptual and empirical works |
| Results based on inclusion criteria | 36 articles met inclusion criteria |
| Exclusion criteria | There is no substantial focus on the consumer decision-making process in live streaming luxury cosmetic products. For example, articles deemed out of scope included studies investigating the source credibility of watching live streaming. |
| Results based on exclusion criteria (abstract reading) (1) | 8 articles were eligible |
| Results based on exclusion criteria (full-text reading) (2) | 12 articles were eligible |

| | |
|--|--|
| Number of included based on the manual search that based on exclusion criteria (Google Scholar search) (3) | 16 articles were included |
| <i>Final number of articles selected for literature review (1) + (2) +(3)</i> | 36 articles |
| Manuscripts included for the review were published in the following sixteen journals | The 36 manuscripts included for the review were published in the following nine journals (listed in alphabetical order and the numbers of articles reviewed from each journal is shown in brackets): Academy of Marketing Science Review (1); Consumer Behaviour (1); In Proceedings of the 2018 ACM International Conference on Interactive Experiences for TV and Online Video(1); Internet Research(1); In Proceedings of the 6th ACM Multimedia Systems Conference (1); Internet Research (2); International Journal of Services (1); In Proceedings of the 2017 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing System(1); Information Systems Research (1); Journal of Marketing Research (1); Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing (1); Journal of Business Research (1); Journal of Business Research (3); Journal of Marketing (1); Journal of Competitiveness (1); International Journal of Electronic Commerce (1); Journal of Retailing Consumer Service (2); Journal of Retailing (1); Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management (3); Omega (1); Pew Research Center (1); Psychology & Marketing (1); Semiotica (1);The Service Industries Journal (1); Technology and Management (1); The Service Industries Journal (1); |

3.2.2 Demographic Profile of Respondents

The total valid response is 200, and online interested communities comprise 139 responses. For the survey link, a total of 61 survey links were sent individually, 61 replied. This study used a sour bias test to identify a difference between respondents from online interested communities and those from personalized survey links. The chi-square test result on a demographic profile indicates no significant bias in the response (Table 2).

The Table 2 demographic profile indicates that most respondents are students (89%). First-tier cities (41%) and new first-tier cities (21%) made up the majority, which was slightly higher than the 34% reported in Deloitte China research [16]. The Chinese city tier system divides Chinese mainland cities into five tiers due to population size, gross demographic product (GDP), infrastructure, level of political administration, availability of commercial resources [29]. The response was relatively lower earnings, 69.5% income lower than 3000 yuan per month (US\$463.15), but the majority of them (40.5%) spend more than 500 yuan (US\$77.19) per month on luxury cosmetics (see Table 2). Makeup product has become an essential part of their monthly expenditure. These results are similar to Li et al.. It is a culture for consumers to consider cosmetic products as a daily routine [30]. All responses were collected randomly online.

TABLE 2. DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

| Demographic Profile | Survey Link | Interested Online Community | Total | Percent | Chi-square |
|---------------------|-------------|-----------------------------|-------|---------|-------------|
| Career | | | | | |
| Student | 40 | 138 | 178 | 89 | df=3 |
| Employment | 6 | 12 | 18 | 9 | chi-sq=4.4 |
| Housewife | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0.5 | p=0.22 |
| Unemployment | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1.5 | |
| Income | | | | | |
| 3000 and below | 27 | 112 | 139 | 69.5 | df=4 |
| 3000-5000 | 13 | 25 | 38 | 19 | chi-sq=5.6 |
| 5000-8000 | 4 | 9 | 38 | 6.5 | p=0.23 |
| 10000-15000 | 3 | 4 | 7 | 3.5 | |
| 15000 and above | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1.5 | |
| City | | | | | |
| Tier 1 | 18 | 64 | 82 | 41 | df=4 |
| New Tier 1 | 8 | 34 | 42 | 21 | chi-sq=3.25 |
| Tier 2 | 15 | 38 | 53 | 26.5 | p=0.52 |
| Tier 3 | 6 | 10 | 16 | 8 | |
| Tier 4 and below | 1 | 6 | 3.5 | 3.5 | |
| Spending | | | | | |
| 500 and below | 22 | 97 | 119 | 59.5 | df=4 |
| 500-1000 | 20 | 34 | 54 | 27 | chi-sq=7.5 |
| 1000-1500 | 4 | 5 | 19 | 9.5 | p=0.11 |
| 2000-5000 | 2 | 5 | 7 | 3.5 | |
| 5000 and above | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0.5 | |

3.2.3 Engel, Blackwell, Miniard (EBM) Model

This study examined the EBM model, an extension of Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell (EKB) [28]. The EBM attempts to explain the consumer decision-making process, including need recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, purchase, and after purchase evaluation [9]. This study focuses on the core decision-making process, i.e., alternative evaluation, purchase, after purchase evaluation. The model includes the effects of the perceived benefits of live streaming [7], willingness to purchase [29], purchase, post-purchase satisfaction [9], recommendation [31].

3.2.4 Effect of Live Streaming Perceived Benefits on Online Purchase Intention

Results from SEM indicate a significantly positive relationship between perceived benefits and willingness to buy ($r=0.006$, $p<0.05$) (Table 3). This is consistent with previous research by Zhang et al., which showed live streaming perceived benefits positively influence consumer purchase intention interaction [32].

For consumers watching live streaming purposes, researchers explored hedonic and utilitarian motivations [7]. When asked why they watched live streams, the most popular reason was the

ability to obtain detailed information of certain products (68%), followed by price promotion (59%) (see Figure 2). Enriching information plays a vital role in live streaming because it effectively decreases consumer uncertainty, especially for unfamiliar products [32]. Uncertainty is a key factor influencing online shopping purchase intention, and it negatively affects consumer willingness to buy [33]. Consumers have a strong desire to obtain more concrete product information pre-purchase to reduce uncertainty [7]. This result indicates product information is a key factor to decrease consumer uncertainty that affects consumer decision-making behaviour.

TABLE 3. MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS (SD), AND CORRELATIONS

| | Mean | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|-----------------------|------|-------|---------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1. Benefit | 2.57 | 1.42 | | | | |
| 2. Willingness to buy | 3.86 | 0.585 | 0.006* | | | |
| 3. Purchase | 3.58 | 0.832 | -0.118* | 0.481* | | |
| 4. Satisfaction | 3.69 | 0.629 | -0.043* | 0.209* | 0.297* | |
| 5. Recommendation | 3.64 | 0.765 | 0.044* | 0.346* | 0.375* | 0.401* |

*Correlation is significant at $p < 0.05$

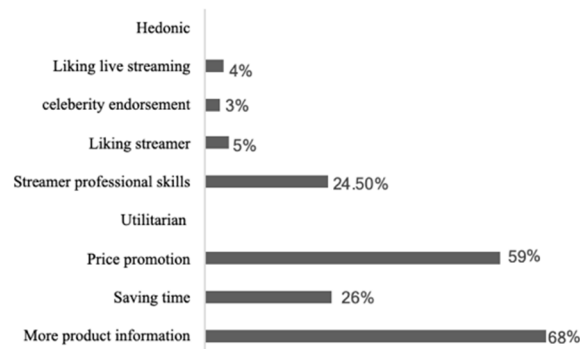


Figure 2. Perceived benefits of live streaming

3.2.5 Effect of Product Recommendation on Live Streaming

Consumers are sensitive to the product's price when deciding where to buy the product [34]. Price promotion is a key marketing tool of live streaming, and it plays a significant role in attracting visitors (59%) (see Figure 2). Live streaming offers a deep discount price with a limited period to increase live viewers on streams and encourage purchase. Hence, price is a vital variable influence consumer purchase decision [34]. Price promotion is an effective tool to increase consumer purchase intention and attract new consumers [35].

The results show a significant positive relationship between informal product-related recommendations and willingness to buy ($r=0.346$, $p < 0.05$) (see Table 3). The result indicates most people prefer to face to face communication (39%), the second frequent answer is recommending the product to friends by social media (35.5%), followed by share positive purchase experiences on an interested online community (14%) (see Figure 3). With the

popularity of social networking sites, eWOM plays a vital role in live streaming strategy. This is similar to past research by Teo and Yeong, which found that positive eWOM significantly influences purchase intention [36]. The results Generation Y and Generation Z use the internet and social media from a very early age. They prefer to post their consumption-related recommendation or opinions on their profile page on social networking sites.

Social eMOW has influenced young consumers' online purchase intention because consumers found user-generated content is more trustworthy and reliable than brand-generated content [37]. It is difficult for consumers to evaluate the product features before purchase [38-39]. More consumers look for product reviews online while collecting pre-purchase product information [40]. Hence, marketers need to encourage consumers to post positive word of mouth on social media platforms and live stream text chat rooms.

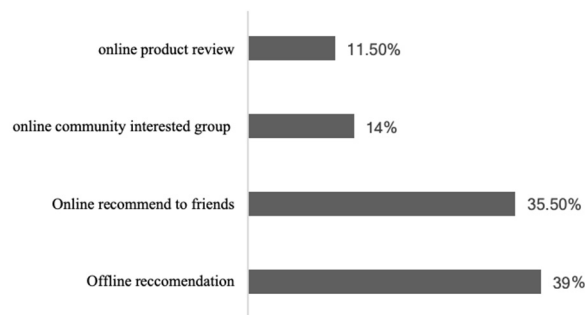


Figure 3. Product purchase experiences

4DISCUSSION

4.1Live Streaming Strategy

This research supports the idea that perceived benefits have a positive relationship with consumers' willingness to buy. Consumers evaluate the relationship between purchase benefits and costs. Benefits could be functional and operational such as lower price and high quality, and costs include financial and non-financial costs, such as time and effort [41].

The information technology allows consumers to compare product prices and benefits with the ease of use and accuracy. Managers must understand which variables influence consumer willingness to buy. Some consumers want more detailed information to decrease the uncertainty, whereas others are sensitive towards the price. Hence, consumers are oriented by various segments. Managers should identify which live streaming strategy is appropriate for their target segments.

It is significant for live streamers to use their professional skills to display the product completely for information-oriented consumers. It is difficult for consumers to know the product smell, touch, texture before purchasing. Digital communication offers face-to-face and in-depth interactions between consumers and streamers, which is unique to live streams. Streamers are expected to offer specific information (color, touch, texture) quickly and even try on certain products to increase consumer willingness to buy. The brand should select streamers with great

communication skills, professional knowledge, and brilliant sales skills. Consumers want to obtain more information, and watching live streaming is not the only way. Hence, streamers should promote the product with honest and high quality to enhance consumer trust.

Except for product usefulness, consumers are sensitive to the price. A price promotion strategy is an effective way to attract consumers. The brand needs to use the price promotion appropriately due to its ineffectiveness in directly building a long-term relationship with consumers [42]. The brand can utilize price promotion as a tool to increase real-time consumer interaction, such as announcing promotion information, sending coupons, setting up interactive games. Also, price promotion is a tool to build a relationship with consumers. For example, consumers only enjoy the promotion if they join the brand VIP club. Givenchy has done a great job on its online VIP club, and its Taobao official account has more than eight million followers. There are more than ten thousand people watch its live streaming at the same time. It is free for people to join the Givenchy VIP club and access generous gifts. VIP members could access discounts while watching live streaming. The flexibility of the VIP club allows consumers to enjoy the luxury cosmetic brand discounts without cheapening the perceived value of the brand.

4.2 Positive eWOM

The results indicate that positive consumer eWOM has a significantly positive relationship with purchase intention. Brands facing fierce competition marketers should realize the effect of eWOM on purchase intention. The brand should attract people to watch live streaming and maintain existing visitors and build a positive relationship with them. The live streaming contents need to be differentiated and continuous, providing useful and complete information to consumers to have positive word of mouth. Streamers encourage loyal consumers to generate positive word of mouth on live streaming chatrooms. Consumers can interact with streamers and other consumers while watching live streaming.

Social eWOM not only gives consumers product information but also recommendations from experienced consumers [43]. If brands want to achieve the success of live streaming, they should also focus on other social media networking sites. Brands could increase live streaming sales by leveraging social networking sites. For example, post the live streaming schedule on the brand social media page and remind followers to watch the live streaming. The finding further suggests that the brand needs to increase positive consumer feelings, encouraging positive word of mouth and increasing purchase intention [43]. Streamers need to interact with consumers in a warm and friendly way, build relationships with consumers, and make consumers feel they have more power.

5 CONCLUSION

The brand needs to understand the consumer decision-making process given the fierce competition in the makeup industry. This study extends the research on live streaming commerce by exploring the consumer purchase decision-making process. Previous studies have focused on streamer' motives across different platforms, motivation of live streaming, the effect of live streaming strategy on purchase intention. However, there were limited studies on the consumer decision-making process in live streaming commerce.

This study has significant implications for the understanding of the consumer decision-making process in live streaming. This research attempts to test the applicability of the consumer decision-making model to live streaming consumer behavior. The results indicate the factors impacting consumer willingness to buy after watching live streaming. This research could be a valuable addition for research to understand consumer purchase behavior in live streaming.

The relationship between willingness to buy and the perceived benefits of watching live streaming is significantly positive. This suggests the perceived benefits of watching live streaming have a significant influence on consumer purchase intention. Information and price are two key variables of perceived benefits. Marketers need to understand consumer demand and identify the appropriate live streaming strategy. For information-oriented consumers, product features and detailed information are the key elements of a live streaming strategy. For consumers sensitive to price, price promotion is an effective live streaming strategy.

The results indicate eWOM plays a significant role in live streaming. This suggests positive eWOM influences consumer purchase intention. Consumers prefer to trust user-generated content compared with firm-generated content [37]. Marketers should encourage visitors to post positive word of mouth on live streaming chatrooms. Also, the brand needs to leverage social media.

This study has some limitations. The data collection process limited the generalizability of the findings. Our participants are females between 18-year-old and 35-year-old, but most of them are college students. Further research should extend the data collection process to more different occupations. Also, further research could analyze the live streaming consumer decision-making process in the different cultural backgrounds, increasing the research generalizability. This research focuses on how to increase live streaming sales by analyzing the consumer decision process. Further research could be done to improve the consumer decision process model's ability to predict live streaming sales.

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