Live Stream e-Commerce:
Factors that Motivate
the Evolving Consumer Patterns

Paula Ray 🆔
ICL Graduate Business School (New Zealand)
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2979-5604

Lijun Zou 🆔
ICL Graduate Business School (New Zealand)
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9099-4533

ABSTRACT: Live streaming e-commerce (LSE), as a product of the digital era, is a form of e-commerce that uses live streaming as a channel to achieve marketing purposes. Since the launch of the live shopping function on e-commerce platforms in 2016, live e-commerce has grown rapidly. In spite of the pandemic we find ourselves in, the live e-commerce market size has maintained an average annual growth rate of over 200% in the past two years. LSE has not only driven the consumer industry, but has also impacted consumers' consumption habits in very many ways. It is not surprising that the highest impact of the LSE-driven market has been evidenced in China, which is considered the largest growing economy in the world with a PPP only second to the US.

This paper aims to investigate LSE as an upcoming business model, leading to evolving consumer patterns, as well as exploring the motivators of such consumption. The objective of this research is to provide SMEs with recommendations on the developing markets and inputs on how to maximise sales in a pandemic-affected world. In depth interviews were conducted with LSE consumers based in China, to understand their shopping experiences, explore their psyche and motivations behind such consumption.

As a result of a qualitative research approach, it was found that the use of streaming anchors act as an external stimuli in LSE which affects consumers' perceived value. This, in turn, affects consumers' trust and purchase intentions. The use of utilitarian and hedonic shopping motivations affect consumers' willingness to engage in an actual purchase and consequent shopping pleasure.

KEYWORDS: e-commerce, digital marketing, consumption patterns, shopping experience, online retail, pandemic shopping, live streaming

Corresponding author:
Dr. Paula Ray, ICL Graduate Business School, 10-14 Lorne Street, Auckland 1010, New Zealand.
E-mail: paularay1001@gmail.com

1. Introduction

■ **Live Stream e-Commerce (henceforth referred to as LSE) refers to the emerging trend in e-commerce whereby anchors – in the form of weblebrities or web celebrities, key opinion leaders or KOL and key opinion consumers or KOC – promote products via live videos (Li, 2018). According to Statista, the e-commerce industry in China has been booming, with online retail transactions and growth rates ranking among the highest in the world (Ma, 2021). The online shopper population in China has reached 710 million, with online retail transactions at RMB 10 trillion, accounting for 25% of total retail sales, and a more than 24% compound annual growth rate between 2017–2019 (Kaplan, 2021). This transformation in the retail industry has made LSE the dominant sales channel in China in the past few years, especially since the COVID-19 lockdowns.**

In 2020, Alibaba generated US$7.5 billion in sales within the first 30 minutes of its pre-sale campaign for Single's Day on Taobao, an online shopping platform headquartered in Hangzhou, China (Arora et al, 2021). While the rest of the world's retailers are not as popular as China in terms of pursuing live commerce in general, there is currently a phenomenal increase in annual sales based on the fact that they are using streaming media. According to Frost & Sullivan, in 2018, only 3% of sales worldwide accounted for online retail. However, in China, it accounted for 8.5% of online sales in 2017 and is set to grow rapidly to 15% by the end of 2022 (Newswire, 2019). Since the time of global pandemic, major retailers such as Amazon and QVC have their own LSE platforms (Wowza Media Systems, 2019). Live streaming of Dior's Autumn 2020 collection was watched by 12 million viewers, despite having only 3.5 million followers (Bellheather, 2020).

Compared to regular e-commerce shopping, "shorter consumer decisions" and "attractive price offers" (Lee & Chen, 2021) are the main reasons why consumers choose to shop in real time. With the combination of streaming media and e-commerce, customers have a shopping experience quite similar to one in a physical shop (Sun, 2019). For example, there is a remarkable difference in the shopper's experience when a dress is presented in a static format, as opposed to a dynamic format. The latter prevents the consumer from making a poor choice that could result in a return or a refund. This reduces the after-sales workload for retailers. In addition, with the assistance of increasingly sophisticated streaming commerce technologies such as pop-ups or live video, the merchant-customer relationships can be developed more easily than in face-to-face retail (Hu et al., 2017).

Consumers, on the other hand, choose to shop live on the web because they believe that not only do they get a more comprehensive presentation of products to choose from, but a good price makes the choice of products viable. Thus, these consumers look forward to special offers in advance from weblebrities, KOLs or KOCs. 'Influencers' encourage consumers to show interest in a product by making agreements with retailers for price concessions depending on the number of viewers. This way the viewers can buy the goods at a discounted price (Newswire, 2019). Thus, celebrities, as influencers, are more attractive to consumers. In addition to good prices, consumers put more value on the expertise of the celebrities in terms of 'product selection' and also have higher expectations of the quality of the content in the live streams. Real-time interaction between consumers and live broadcasters is a characteristic of streaming media, and the multi-channel, real-time interaction with live hosts when demonstrating the product's features simultaneously, arouses the consumers' desire to purchase (Chen, 2018).

According to The Interactive Advertising Bureau of NZ (2018), 70% of live shopping consumers watch live streaming once or several times a day and 17% watch live streaming once a day. Only 9% of consumers don't watch digital video at all. However, under the influence of the pandemic, LSE has become exceptionally popular, and many enterprises and entrepreneurs have invested in live e-commerce with the aim of finding a sales path for their goods, which is the short-term effect of live e-commerce. In this era of the transformation of enterprise, digital intelligence and LSE help establish a better user connection, thereby forcing businesses to achieve a digital intelligence upgrade (Kava, 2021). In the longer run, businesses need to focus on understanding the factors that motivate buyers to make purchase decisions in a way that is as seamless as in-person shopping.

1.1. Factors that motivate consumerism – a theoretical framework

The motivational factors for user engagement include three models:

(1) The *Utilitarian and Hedonic Framework*, as a motivator of LSE, attributes consumer satisfaction to the functionality and usefulness of a product. Utilitarian motives can be divided into cost reduction and convenience (e.g., money, time, effort). It is an objective expression of value, which may come from an affirmation of the value of the product itself, such as ease of use, aesthetically pleasing results (Cai et al., 2018). Utilitarian motivations are only associated with utilitarian intentions (product scenarios), and hedonic motivations are significantly predictive of hedonic intentions (celebrity scenarios) in the live streaming area. Hedonic comprises the emotional satisfaction that consumers derive from the shopping experience, such as fun, entertainment and sensory stimulation. It is a subjective expression of value that consumers can derive from the shopping activity either with or without the purchase (Childers, 2001). As such, e-commerce businesses promote their products by inviting celebrities on live streaming platforms, to endorse their products, which is much more effective than investing in commercials (Liu, Zhang, & Zhang, 2020).

(2) In 1974, Mehrabian and Russell proposed the *Stimulus-Organism-Response* (S-O-R) framework, which consists of three elements: stimulus, organism and response. The stimuli are usually external stimuli (e.g., marketing stimuli, website stimuli), internal stimuli (consumer personality traits) and situational stimuli. The organism is the whole process of consumption and is the second element that mediates stimuli and reactions. The reaction, a factor closer to the behaviour, is the positive action in a specific context, such as an online purchase, an online communication (Chan, 2017). The S-O-R framework has a direct impact on cognitive and emotional states of consumers, which has a direct impact on the three elements. These findings provide insight into how live streaming affects viewers' cognitive and emotional states, and thus impact consumer behaviour in a live streaming environment.

(3) Mischel & Shoda (1995) proposed a *Cognitive-Emotional Systems* theory, which entails that individual behaviours are variable, and that context is an important factor influencing human behaviour, emphasising the recognizability of human cognitive functions and that the differences that individuals show in different contexts are a response to an internally stable and organic personality structure (Mischel et al., 1995). Emotion, on the other hand, is the personality unit of feelings, emotions, and emotional responses, including physiological responses (Sofi, 2020). The feelings and emotions felt by an individual have a significant impact on social information processing and behavioural processing. Individuals' processing of important social information often has an emotional and emotionally arousing function, e.g., cognitive beliefs about the self and personal future.

1.2. Consumer decision-making in practice

Cognition and emotion are important in shopping decisions (Sofi, 2020). Emotions are the internal emotional response of consumers to external stimuli and play a decisive role in consumer evaluation and decision-making. Consumers react emotionally and cognitively to their surroundings when shopping. In the consumer shopping process, the emotional process and the purchase decision process are interrelated and influenced by the consumer's perception of the product (Baumeiste, 2002). It is only with a certain perception of things that a purchase decision can be executed (Hashim et al., 2008). For example, some consumers show indecision due to their uncertainty about the perception of a product. A positive emotional drive facilitates a purchase decision (Rook, 1987). For example, consumers in a happy mood can easily make a purchase decision. Hence, in the psychological activity of consumer buying, cognition and emotion are interacting to influence the consumer's buying activity.

In streaming commerce, the cognitive and emotional reactions of live viewers are analyzed in terms of their information processing and purchase intentions. It is the quality of the information that has a significant impact on the perceived usefulness of the information to the viewer. Host trust, host attractiveness and professionalism have a significant impact on viewers' perceived usefulness of information, with host attractiveness having the greatest impact on viewers' perceived usefulness. Host professionalism did not have a significant impact on user perceived usefulness and emotional attitude. This is because the anchor's product recommendations are likely to involve several different categories of products, rather than a specific variety. Moderating positive affective attitudes of

live viewers had a significant impact on purchase intentions. Impulse buying behaviour is more likely to be influenced by product recommenders and less by information about product quality (Qi et al., 2020).

A more realistic picture of consumer motivation and behavioural intentions can be obtained by analyzing and exploring both the cognitive and emotional dimensions. Viewers are more likely to have positive emotional attitudes towards live streaming if they perceive the quality of the content and the professionalism and trustworthiness of the anchor during the viewing process, and if they are also highly engaged. Conversely, if the content is poor or if there are many mistakes made in the live broadcast, viewers will have a negative attitude towards the broadcast.

2. Methodology

The primary objective of this project is to know the dominant reasons that aid consumers make quick shopping decisions on a streaming media. Consumers' purchase intentions and motivations are also an aspect explored in this research. For this quest, a qualitative research method is applied, because this approach facilitates probing the psyche of respondents to understand their responses thoroughly, as the interviewer/researcher tries to understand consumer motivations and emotions that help them make their decisions (Bartos, 1986). This will help to develop a marketing strategy for businesses that live stream their products. Based on this research objective, the researcher conducted a series of one-on-one interviews.

Six questions were asked to each respondents as part of an in-depth interview around the experience of LSE shopping. They are:
1. What motivates consumers to buy on live streaming platforms?
2. What kind of streamers encourage consumers to make decisions easily?

3. How often do consumers shop using live streaming?
4. What are the difficulties they experience when shopping using LSE?
5. How did they resolve those issues experienced while shopping using LSE?
6. What kind of after-sales services retain customer loyalty?

2.1. Data collections

To ensure that the interviews ran smoothly, an interview guide was designed to ensure that important questions were not forgotten during the interview process. Natural, conversational language was used to ask questions, jargon was avoided or technical terms that the interviewee may not be aware of. This allowed the interviewees to relax and talk about their experiences of the live streaming. This also gave the interviewer an opportunity to adapt the questions to the individual interviewee's responses, focusing on the depth of information explored and learned.

To be able to help capture the full extent of the informative data from the interview, the interviewer chose to audio-record all interviews, for which consent was sought from the interviewees. This is a relatively easy way to capture information and also facilitates transcription at a later date. The prerequisite of getting consent from the interviewees before recording is more important when the interviews are collected via a social media platform, where the interviewees cannot see the voice recording device.

For this interview we took five participants of different age-groups and with diverse shopping experiences. Although they are all women, they come from different professions: teachers, sales, and business owners. All the interviewees are based in China. The age distribution ranged from 18 to 45 years old, of which 40% were 26–35 years old; 40% were 36–45 years old; and 20% were 18–25 years

Table 1. Profile of Interviewees

Number	Age Range	Sex	Shopping Experiences	Education	Occupation
1.	26–35	Female	A lot (10–15 times per month)	Bachelor	Sales
2.	18–25	Female	Moderate (5–10 times per month)	Bachelor	Student
3.	26–35	Female	A lot (10–15 per month)	Bachelor	Marketing
4.	36–45	Female	A lot (10–15 per month)	Master	Business owner
5.	36–45	Female	A few (1–5 times per month)	Master	Teacher

old. Educational qualifications include 60% bachelor's degree and 40% postgraduate degree. In addition, interviewees' level of LSE shopping experience was differentiated according to experience in on-site shopping. For example, we described having 1–5 live shopping experiences in a month as 'a few', 5–10 times in a month was defined as 'moderate' and 10–15 times in a month meant 'a lot'.

According to Table 1, it is not surprising to find that 60% of the participants have extensive practical shopping experience, with 20% having intermediate shopping experience and 20% having beginner shopping experience respectively. This provides a comprehensive insight into the investigation of this study, as it enriches the research perspective to a significant extent. The diversity of consumers' age range, education levels and shopping experiences, shows that the data provided is likely to vary in terms of their individual background and consequent personality. To meet the needs of individuals at all levels, streaming platforms may need to offer different services to build or maintain long-term relationships. Building quality interactions with consumers and providing convenient services through the needs expressed by consumers from all segments of society is key to a brand's need to find the right streamer. As a platform provider it is also important to recognize the issues involved in live stream shopping and maintain oversight and service in order to sustain this emerging shopping format.

3. Findings

3.1. Technological Development

The rapid growth of live e-commerce is due to the increasingly advanced communication devices. As more and more consumers own smartphones, they can watch live programmers wherever there is internet access. As consumer A stated that,

> With the popularity of smartphones, it is increasingly easy to shop online and to access various shopping platforms anytime, anywhere.

Digitalization accelerated the change in consumer behaviour during the pandemic. Since the outbreak, repeated and extended lockdowns allowed new segments of consumers to start using online shopping, accelerating the trend of consumers moving from traditional retail to online channels, found China Consumer Report (McKinsey, 2021). Chinese mass consumers spend more than

seven hours a day on the mobile internet. An increasing number of users are looking at social media, KOL/KOC and friends for information to make purchase decisions (Achille et al., 2020).

3.2. Financial Benefits

When live e-commerce first emerged, most consumers thought that live streaming was the same as low-cost shopping. Consumers are also willing to buy things from live streaming because of the deals available, especially those of head anchors or celebrities. In their live broadcast rooms, users can enjoy competitive low prices compared to the entire network of retailers. At the same time, limited supply of goods stimulates consumers to make quick purchase decisions, thus appealing to the psychology of goods, ultimately creating a situation where more consumers place orders in the live streaming room.

> Usually, I buy something on live streaming for the low price of the products, because the famous host of live streaming can offer the lowest price of the product in the market. So I can save money and buy frequently.

The most important reason for consumers to watch live streaming is to learn more about a certain product and to get information about the special offers of a retailer through live streaming. Product cost-effectiveness and likability are key factors in shopping decisions. The number one reason for converting to shopping by watching a live broadcast was that the product was cost effective (60.1%); secondly, the product shown was liked (56.0%); thirdly, the price was good (53.9%); and fourthly, the limited time offer (43.8%). Overall, the main reason that attracts consumers to decide to shop is still the cost effectiveness of the products themselves.

3.3. Effective Interaction

Live shopping solves the pain points of traditional e-commerce, where the information consumers get through the internet is always insufficient for shopping decisions (Glaser, 2021). For example, when buying clothes, cosmetics or cars, users need a more comprehensive understanding in order to make a consumer decision. Their experience is much better when they are physically present at a store and a salesperson explains the features of a product of choice, which traditional e-commerce cannot do.

Based on the fact that consumers who watch live videos have a more comprehensive understanding of the product or service, the visual information dimension is much richer than that of pictures and text. Through interactive forums such as demonstrations and answering questions by the anchors, live streaming solves the problem of 'explanation' as a shopping guide. Compared to traditional TV shopping, live streaming is instantly interactive, and viewers can ask questions to the anchors, as well as communicate with other people watching the broadcast through pop-ups and other means of chatting. In this sense, live e-commerce has some social characteristics, which makes it competitive and preferred by consumers.

> ...... I like the sense of interactive atmosphere in a live streaming, especially those hosts who are very good at moderating the atmosphere. That kind of sales model is very addictive for me to watch. Sometimes, I really enjoy watching live streaming because of their instant feedback for the customers and I placed my order without realising it.

Undeniably, it is time consuming for users to learn about goods through live streaming. However, if watching live streams enables more effective decision-making, the overall decision-making efficiency actually becomes higher. Also, consumers can choose what they are interested in by watching through the preview of live streaming videos. This helps to cut down on time wasted watching products/celebrities who are not of interest to the consumers.

> However, the forecast usually helps me to pick the right time to watch the live programmers I am interested in.

3.4. Satisfying psychological needs

People require a sense of peace, fulfilment, or happiness in order to satisfy their psychological demands. These psychological demands include things like curiosity, helping others, and bravado (Martin, 2012). According to the findings of this study, many consumers will make a purchase based on these requirements. Some interviewees actually stated that in the LSE scenario, they had dropped their expectations for product quality, especially when it came to charitable promotions. During the pandemic, some platforms launched live e-commerce to help sell agricultural products, as farmers were deeply affected by the situation. Online users supported the drive widely through word-of-mouth promotion and subsequently raised revenues for the retailers. This charitable act aimed at helping others gained traction, as it was done to support farmers who were suffering and the consumers were not concerned about what the products were nor their quality.

> I don't buy a lot of things on live shopping, but I have bought some products on a live platform for charity, like buying an item and the merchant donates a portion of the money to some welfare organization. I've bought fruits and vegetables.

Some consumers will buy products or snacks that celebrities are using daily through live streaming as a way to satisfy their curiosity, as stated by Consumer E. In this way, not only is the celebrity promoting a product but also finding consumers for that product to increase sales. This proved an invaluable strategy to influence consumer behaviour during the recent lockdowns resulting from the pandemic.

> ... I usually like to brush up on some short videos to kill time. At that time when I see someone on live streaming like a star or blogger (KOL) eating nice-looking food or a girl with gorgeous make-up introducing the makeup products she uses, I might click through and buy them.

3.5. Creating Demand

In 2021, China's live streaming e-commerce market reached $300 billion in sales, a figure that is predicted to continue to rise in the next few years. According to an e-Marketer survey (2021), snacks were among the most popular products among live buyers, followed by apparel and skincare products (Lebow, 2021). Daily necessities like snacks, socks, towels and mugs, at low prices, trigger a higher purchase rate. Even if they are not used immediately, they can be bought at a lower price now and used later, says Consumer D.

> Some things that I am interested in include delicious food, skincare products, beauty cosmetics.

## 3.6. Customers' Attitude towards LSE

In the interview, two questions were included about the current problems with streaming. The interviewees gave their views on the issues they encountered during the shopping experience. The majority of respondents had a positive attitude towards the development of streaming, but also stated their concerns about this shopping platform. The main issues are regarding the quality of the product,

false promotions and warranties. The rapid development of live e-commerce also comes with certain inevitable problems. Figure 1 shows the top 4 concerns of shopping in live streaming commerce from Chinese respondents. According to a Chinese survey (Yihan 2020) on live streaming commerce, 65% of respondents were concerned about receiving low-quality goods when shopping via live streaming sales. During live streaming shopping, almost 55% of respondents mentioned that a lack of warranty was a big issue.

> I chose to return to vendors. it's an easy way to get a refund.

> I would have chosen to return, but I don't often do this as it's a bit of a trouble to return the goods, or at least to reach a verbal agreement with them. I would more often choose to exchange the goods. For example, last time I bought a book but found the quality of the paper was really bad, so I asked them to exchange it and the merchant finally sent me a better-quality book.

Figure 1. Concerns of shopping in live streaming commerce among Chinese consumers
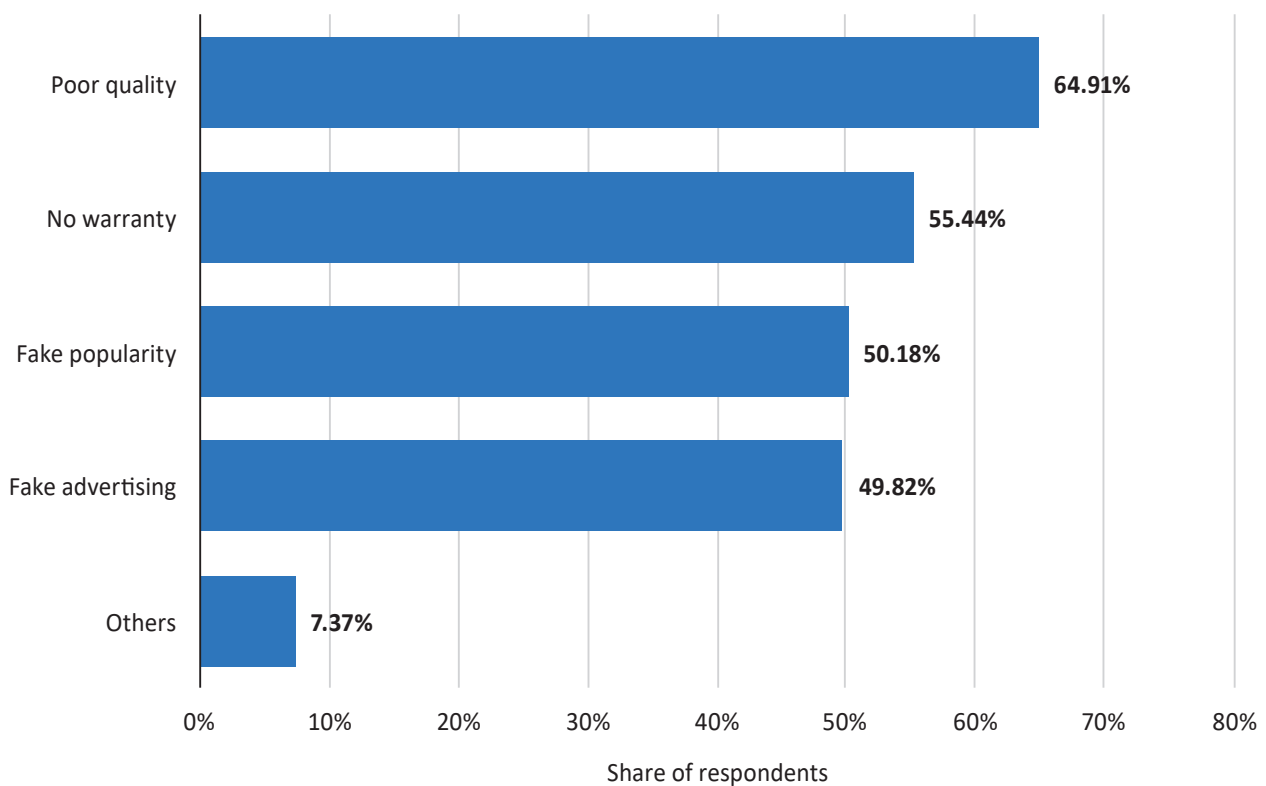
Source: Statista.com (Yihan, 2020).

3.7. After-sales Service

In the contemporary retail industry, market competition is in customer satisfaction. Whether selling products or services, customer satisfaction is the test of success or failure of a marketing team. As such, after-sales service is one area that all retailers compete in. The participants of these interviews did not have many complaints about the after-sales service, in general. They didn't consider contacting the businesses post-purchase a problem at all. They felt the inclusion of this question was a waste of time because they considered this service as a natural part of the purchasing experience.

> In case of poor quality goods, I will still go to the official platform or relevant parts of consumers to complain about businesses. Most of the problems can be solved by contacting the after-sales customer service of the platform.

> ---recently, I bought shampoo from live streaming. I returned it because it did not comply with my expectations, even though I got the refund, but I spent much time communicating with them, so I don't think this is a good shopping experience.

On what kind of after-sales service can lead to increased customer loyalty, all the respondents agreed that product quality is critical. Secondly, live streamers should give an objective assessment

of the product, rather than catering to the manufacturer's exaggerated promotions that mislead consumers. Finally, timely follow-up on customer service and reasonable prices are also important ways to increase customer satisfaction, the respondents felt.

> I definitely think about the quality of the product. If the products have good quality, I'll keep going for sure. The second is the price. If the price of products are reasonable, I also will keep going.

> ---the most important thing is the quality of the goods sold. High quality goods can always attract customers to buy again.

> The most important thing is streamers need to judge the products objectively. They should describe the advantages or disadvantages of the products at the same time, and not exaggerate the products. It may cause troubles for consumers, because it is a responsibility to your customers.

4. Discussions

The findings of the study, summarised above, will be discussed and analysed now in an attempt to respond to the research questions. The in-depth interviews showed that two dimensions can be used to explain the motivations of consumers to shop via live streaming platforms – they are Utilitarian and Hedonic Motivations; and S-O-R Framework. Besides, we find that Emotions and Cognition can also be used to illustrate consumer motivation.

4.1. Utilitarian and Hedonic Motivations

What motivates consumers to buy can be grouped under two major categories: Utilitarian and Hedonistic motivations. Even if the consumer does not end up making a purchase decision in the end, these are the motivators that catch their attention in the first place which prompts them to engage in the shopping experience. This is because utilitarian shoppers see the shopping experience as a problem-solving act or a chore (Cai, 2018). For them, convenience takes precedence over entertainment. They are rational decision-makers and are not swayed by variety, quality or pricing. Hedonistic shoppers (Childers, 2001), on the other hand, find enjoyment in shopping. They often refer to it as retail therapy, whereby they derive pleasure and satisfaction from engaging in the act of shopping. Examples of such an experience include feelings of excitement, joy, entertainment, fantasy, and expressions of self-consciousness and identity.

> Sometimes I feel that I watch live streaming just to kill time, because it's interesting and makes me happy. That's why a lot of people will become addicted to live streaming.

In the context of LSE, utilitarian shopping is influenced by three aspects, namely monetary savings, choice and convenience. All of these factors have been highlighted by the respondents as their motivation stimulants. With the pandemic at our doors and the consequent lockdowns, convenience and the comfort of choice from our bedrooms have definitely boosted LSE, with the consumer numbers rising every day. The live streaming retailers, with lower overheads, have managed to sell the same product at competitive prices, without having to compromise on quality. This has also drawn consumers to the LSE platforms in huge numbers, especially during the reduced purchasing capabilities caused by the pandemic (Su et al., 2020).

Arnold and Reynolds (2003) point out that there are *six types* of hedonic shopping experiences: value, personal fulfillment or gratification, social, adventure, role, and idea. *Value* shopping translates to looking for low prices. Consumers may perceive hedonic meaning and the satisfaction of personal *fulfillment* or gratification through low prices, which provide them with increased sensory engagement and excitement. This is indicated by the respondents who are lured to LSE by the competitive deals they receive, which has them going back repeatedly to experience the same excitement, even if the product isn't of immediate use to the consumers. The two aspects of motivation – *social* interaction and entertainment – are particularly prominent in consumers' hedonistic shopping (Cai, 2018). On the one hand, increased social interaction has led to more hedonistic shopping value for consumers, with people showing an increasing tendency to shop and increased participation as anchors share products to viewers during live streaming. In this way, people take pleasure in the social connection of shopping.

Adventure shopping motivation refers to the feeling of an increased sense of adventure when it comes to shopping; the consumer has fun and excitement from shopping, making the purchase decision more likely to take place. Thus, we can assume that the adventure shopping motive has a significant influence on the purchase decision (Pui-Lai, 2014). In addition, the *role of shopping* motivation, which is a higher form of motivation, is felt when

shopping and buying gifts for people close to us. This motivation invariably leads to a higher probability of a purchase decision, as this tendency to buy in order to please others has a positive impact (Kusuma, 2013) on the buyer/consumer. It was also confirmed from the interviews that buying toys and books for one's children is also in line with this role-based motivation. For an ideal shopping motivation, the tendency to shop in order to keep up with trends and to be fashionable also has a cumulative effect on making shopping decisions (Trang et al. 2007).

Consumer psychology research (1994) shows that individual consumption behaviour not only *fulfills or gratifies* the task of buying and satisfies people's needs, but also influences consumer happiness. This happiness factor is dependent on the degree to which an individual perceives quality of life or life satisfaction, and shopping happiness can be expressed as a subjective evaluation of the shopping process (Tybout & Artz, 1994). This is one factor that is present in abundance in LSE, as indicated by the respondents. People shop not only to satisfy their own needs, but also to seek psychological satisfaction. Consumers may not be overly concerned with the final item they purchase. Instead, they are more concerned with the subjective shopping happiness they feel from live shopping. Relating the type and intensity of hedonic motivation to specific shopping behaviours, we find that certain hedonic shoppers are accompanied by impulse buying and compulsive spending. One important distinction between compulsive and impulse shopping is the intrinsic motivation for shopping. Impulse shopping is largely unplanned and occurs in response to an external stimulus, such as seeing something you want in a shop. Compulsive shopping, on the other hand, is more internally driven. Compulsive shoppers use the shopping experience as a way to avoid or relieve uncomfortable internal feelings, such as to de-escalate anxiety or even boredom.

4.2. Stimulus-Organism-Respond (S-O-R) Framework

This project constructs a research model on the influence of e-commerce host characteristics on consumers' purchase intention based on S-O-R theory. Interactivity, authenticity, professionalism and popularity were selected to characterize e-commerce host characteristics, and argue that host characteristics as external stimuli in the process of live streaming, can affect consumers' perceived value, which in turn affects consumers' trust and purchase intention. The research model in Figure 2 shows that environmental stimuli when applied to an individual, have an effect on the individual's state, causing approach or avoidance behaviours.

Firstly, the results of this research are consistent with the S-O-R framework. External stimuli motivate customers to make quick decisions around purchase intentions. These external stimuli include the usefulness of the product, the price attributes, the credibility of the streamers and their professionalism. All those factors motivate consumers to develop a purchase intention. For instance, among all the interviewees, their favorite celebrity or an accomplished expert in a particular field was identified as the most important reason for inspiring their desire to buy. Moreover, their purchases are related to their interests. For example, some consumers like to work out. So a fitness blogger they follow or an expert who is skilled in this field, becomes the incentive for them to buy a product. In addition, the convenience of the shopping environment was also considered to be a major factor in shortening the purchase decision. Offering better prices than similar products in the market was also a factor in making a quick purchase decision. About 80% of the interviewees felt that shopping on live streaming was like a group buy. In the sense, the more consumers placed orders at the same time, the more price benefits the consumers received. However, this can also lead to impulsive purchases and the possibility of regret afterwards.

Secondly, based on the 'shopping value theory', shopping motivations are divided into utilitarian and hedonic motivations. This study also supported Utilitarian and Hedonic theory. As the e-commerce industry moves forward, besides providing consumers with the convenience of online shopping, it also wants to address the same shopping experience as shopping in physical shops. Trust plays a significant role in this regard. Therefore, e-commerce platforms use live-streaming technology to simulate physical shops as much as possible shopping, by providing features such as product details display, on-line product trials and instant communication with the merchant. What's more, some services are not even available in physical shops, for example, consumers can discuss and buy products with dozens or even hundreds of potential purchasers. Utilitarian motivation focuses on the product itself and is considered to be related to functionality, instrumentality and usefulness. Hedonic motivations focus on the internal feelings

of people and reflect the values carried by entertainment and emotions. LSE caters to both of these motivations in the consumers.

The content shown in the live video is more informative than the traditional picture and text presentation of static online retail stores. By presenting their products online from different perspectives, consumers can determine more accurately whether they want the product on their own terms. Therefore, showing a real product with detailed information in a live video creates a utilitarian value of the product for the consumer and helps to increase the consumer's trust in the product and the retailer. Live videos with hedonic and utilitarian shopping values may have a positive impact on consumers' attitudes (e.g. trust) and behaviours (e.g. interaction). Besides, participants for this study agreed that shopping through KOLs they knew well in the live streams made it easy to create a sense of trust. Consumers are more likely to trust other buyers than sellers, because other consumers do not have a conflict of interest with them. Therefore, consumers are more likely to search and trust reviews of products from other consumers before making a purchase.

In live videos, sellers often actively encourage consumers to engage with them by playing games and sending bonus packages to enhance their positive perceptions. Consumers with shopping preferences are wary of online sellers. However, in the video interactions made possible by the live streaming technology, the relationship between the buyer and the seller is likely to change from unfamiliar to familiar, and sometimes even become friends. Sellers can also take on the role of 'opinion leaders', prompting consumers to gradually develop a perceived trust in the seller. For example, Taobao host Li Jiaqi, known as the Lipstick Boss, presents products and interacts with viewers in his own unique way on Taobao live videos. His appeal has managed to attract a large number of consumers to watch his videos. Meanwhile, the products he recommends have been trusted and purchased by many consumers. Simultaneously, in our in-depth interviews we also found that customers' perceptions and processing of information while watching the streaming were positive. For example, the attractiveness of the stream, the perceived social relations and the quality of the information influenced cognitive assimilation and arousal.

Interactivity enables the process of information exchange and communication between streamers and consumers. In the context of live e-commerce, interactivity can be understood as a direct form of communication between the host and the consumer, and therefore, eliminate barriers of time and space. Interactivity is a prominent feature of the e-commerce live streaming model, relying on the real-time and visual characteristics of live streaming, the anchor can be highly interactive with consumers, allowing consumers to have a more targeted understanding of product information. In the interactive process, the consumer's shopping experience and sense of presence will be improved, while purchasing products can be psychologically relaxing and enjoyable.

4.3. Emotions and Cognition motivators

We found from the analysis that purchasing decisions made by consumers can be divided into emotions and cognitions. Several scholars use perceived value to explain consumers' buying behaviours. Perceived value is a comprehensive evaluation of a product's utility, including its features and price (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). Live streaming increases the overall value perceived by consumers and their willingness to buy, reducing the overall perceived uncertainty of consumers. Value is perceived as the satisfaction consumers get from a product and different consumers perceive different values for the same product. This is because product features enhance perceived value, while product price weakens perceived value, and consumers make purchase decisions when the enhancing effect is greater than the weakening effect (Zeithaml, 1988).

Trust in marketing can be thought of as comprising two dimensions: the consumer's objective trust in the seller on one hand, and the seller's integrity (Chen & Dhillon, 2003) on the other. As an e-commerce anchor, the seller's professionalism and knowledge of the product determine their ability to recommend products and even the quality of the products they recommend. At the same time, the objectivity of the anchor during the live streaming process and the authenticity of product information are crucial to the anchor's reputation and affect consumer trust (Hasan et al., 2010). Compared to traditional e-commerce marketing methods, the interactive nature of live e-commerce is its most prominent feature, as consumers can interact with the anchor in real time while watching the live broadcast, communicating about the product to obtain personalized information, creating a more realistic shopping atmosphere for consumers and enhance their sense of experience and presence (Glaser, 2021).

> Through the live broadcasting platform, we can directly communicate with the anchor in the form of dialogue and ask the name we need.

> For me, the motivators for purchasing stuff because there are usually some preferential activities through LSE, such as giving coupons, or gifts.

5. Conclusions

The rapid development of the live streaming industry and technology has led to a diversified development of the new internet economy. Live commerce has become a major hit in China lately, especially since the 2020 pandemic. The purchasing power of Chinese consumers has pushed the live industry to new heights. The period between the consumer's understanding of a product and the final purchase has been significantly shortened. In order to understand the reasons for the shortened shopping decision time, this research uses the stimulus response model (S-O-R) as a theoretical framework. Cognitive-Emotional Systems Theory adopts an empirical perspective, addresses the development of the live-streaming economy and the current state of research on consumer purchase intention, combines the empirical studies of research scholars, and conducts in-depth interviews with live-streaming shopping consumers to analyze the factors influencing consumer purchase intention. This research also concludes that the anchor of a live streaming service plays a crucial role. Their looks and personality have a deep influence on the viewers. The discounts offered on the products along with the two-way communication between the anchor and the consumer, as well as among the potential consumers, have a direct impact on the purchase intention. In the mix of all of this, trust and perceived value, created by the anchor, forge the retail transaction.

Live shopping is not only a way of shopping but has also become a leisure activity for some people. In the age of the smartphone, there seems to be no more brainless way to spend time than watching a live broadcast, where the anchor is responsible for explaining the output and the viewer only receives it passively. It is a sales channel; the core competitiveness of the product is the essence of sales. Therefore, for small businesses, improving the core competitiveness of products and using the fast and effective sales channels that live streaming brings is fundamental to business development. In general, streaming commerce will play an increasingly

important role in future market activities. Live streaming will create a new type of consumer boom, with its innovative model, intuitive product presentation, interactive communication and analysis providing ample help to customers. In an era when the development of the pandemic is still uncertain and those companies and businesses that rely on offline sources of customers suffer a greater impact, live-streaming with goods has built a bridge of communication between anchors and consumers through a mobile phone. Online and offline businesses are beginning to use live-streaming with goods as an important operational tool. It can be argued that live streaming has innovated the consumer experience and activated unheard-of market dynamics.

However, there are still some issues with live streaming. The current problems, such as exaggerated product effectiveness, product quality issues and after-sales guarantees, need to be properly addressed. Only with good regulation, responsibility and behavioural norms can the development of the whole industry be based on evidence and rules, and the legitimate rights and interests of consumers can be protected, and live streaming with goods can be put on the right track and develop in a healthy way.

6. Recommendations

The results of this research have practical implications for businesses choosing to expand the market through live streaming. The study shows that live streaming commerce is a trend. As 5G becomes commercially available, the future of live streaming can make use of the gradually maturing 5G, VR/AR and other technologies to achieve a true "0 distance" from the user (Channel, 2020, n.p). The online consumer experience will also be closer to that of a physical shop, or even beyond it. Live streaming commerce will become normalised and universal, and the sales of enterprises will not be limited to time and geography, but will be open online simultaneously, making it easy for consumers to choose and buy.

The live economy, empowered by 5G, has helped to create a flexible supply chain, allowing more producers to see more precise market demand, promoting their focus on product differentiation, personalization and sales customization of order requirements. It's gradually facilitating the formation of a high speed, limited delay in the demand and supply industry chain. A flexible demand and supply system would combine the production side,

the content side and the service side bursting forth to upgrade, while also accelerating the intelligent upgrading of China's industry (Worldwide, 2020). In addition, as the pandemic continues to affect the world, the need for 'contactless shopping' is giving rise to further development of the e-commerce industry. Live e-commerce has become an important direction for many companies to transform. Food companies, especially fresh produce, should seize the opportunity to take advantage of the live streaming platform to ensure adequate supply, stable prices and timely delivery of fresh produce to meet the growing number of 'home-based' consumers. The choice of online one-stop shopping for fresh fruits and vegetables and other daily necessities is now the choice of many families.

Secondly, based on the findings of this research, which support the utilitarian and hedonistic motivation theories as well as the S-O-R theory, American advertising scientist E.S. Lewis proposed the AIDMA marketing law, which states that consumers go through roughly five psychological stages between exposure to marketing messages and purchase behaviour: Attention, Interest, Desire, Memory and Action (Du & Li, 2019). The specific behaviour of users in the different psychological stages of the live broadcast can be expressed as follows: watching the live broadcast to understand the product, interacting and discussing to become interested in the product, collecting user feedback to understand the quality of the product, sharing the product and using the experience. Merchants should keep the following aspects in mind when choosing streaming media for marketing purposes.

The use of external stimuli can enable consumers to make a quick purchase intention during a live broadcast. Merchants can use external stimuli such as financial benefits, effective communication and also, they can meet the psychological needs of consumers (by donating a portion of the profits to charitable causes) to promote products. During the pandemic, many places in China faced traffic constraints and harvest stagnation, while live streaming opened new outlets for the products to sell and activated social awareness of public welfare and responsibility. To combat the pandemic, for example, the 'Hubei Restart Shake to Help – Supports Hubei Recovery Plan' was launched through live streaming on April 8, 2020, as well as the 'Mayor Shows You Hubei'. The total live-streaming time was 284 hours, with over 35 million viewers and 2.63 million users placing orders between April 8 and May 8, 2020. The total amount of goods brought using LSE exceeded 40 million NZD (Wire, 2020).

As e-business continues to develop, the business sales model from the traditional sales model gradually transitions to live mode. Based on the factors influencing consumer buying behaviour (marketing stimulus factors, contextual factors and individual factors), where stimulus is a common marketing method used by businesses to attract consumers, specifically including product price changes, discount strength. Contextual factors refer to the consumer's own purchasing power, the environment around the sale of goods and interactivity. Individual factors refer to the impulsiveness of the consumer, the self-control regarding the purchase behaviour, and the enjoyment of the consumer.

The extent to which the price of goods changes and discounts fluctuate can influence consumer purchasing behaviour. Usually, explicitly priced products with marked discounts are a further incentive for consumers to buy. For example, during the annual Taobao 'Double Eleven' sale, merchants put their products on online shelves at reduced prices, which largely stimulates consumers' desire to buy because they feel a sense of loss if they miss out on a discount, which can lead to impulse buying behaviour. This use of low prices to make goods available to consumers and to develop their interest in them creates potential consumers for the shop. Moreover, low prices bring popularity to the shop and help the shop develop brand loyalty and increase consumer recognition of the product. Even if normal prices are subsequently restored, consumers will always recognize the quality of the product and promote repeat purchases.

Effective communication can also be thought of as a form of perceived interactivity – one of the contextual factors that influence consumer behaviour, and it is reflected in three specific aspects: consumers choose merchants according to their preferences, and consumers can control the content of the live webcast according to their needs by clicking to watch their favourite videos. When consumers are curious about a product, they can use pop-up messages and other ways to increase interaction with the anchor, as well as watch other people's comments on the product, bookmark the shop, and when there is a new product at the shop in future, the system will automatically recommend these products to the consumers who usually browse more often or according to their preferences. In the process of interaction, consumers can control the content, so that they can get the information

they want. During the live interaction phase, the consumer's perceived level of control reflects their own sense of efficacy, allowing them to control the type of merchant they browse and decide which live platform to click on to watch.

The cognition and emotion of an individual exhibit varying mechanistic patterns in the generation of their intentions and behaviours (Chien-Huang et al., 2006). The professionalism of the live broadcaster is a precondition for influencing consumer cognition. For example, respondents agree that the expertise of the live streamer in a particular field is one of the most important factors in deciding whether they buy this product or not. The interactive nature of live streaming creates the condition for consumer awareness. The interaction between the host and the viewer during the live streaming makes them aware of the attributes of the product, while also allowing the viewer to find a sense of community belonging – by reinforcing consumer awareness and at the same time creating a sense of trust.

According to this research, e-commerce companies should consider the following aspects when carrying out live marketing activities. *Firstly*, the development of strategies to strengthen the attributes of e-commerce hosts. In choosing hosts, e-commerce companies should choose hosts with relatively high charisma indices. The interview data provides some evidence of the role of the charismatic attributes of e-commerce hosts in influencing the internal state of consumers. It is also confirmed in social psychology studies that appearances that are attractive are likely to be liked by others or to generate positive emotions in others (Chien-Huang, 2006). Besides, they also need to pay attention to strengthening their own professional competency and service quality training, so that consumers can fully and deeply understand the information and functions of the products, thus creating a sense of trust in the hosts and the products they recommend.

Secondly, develop a sales strategy. Companies should focus on shaping their own image, improving their sales skills and stimulating consumer excitement through promotions such as lucky draws and special offers. Live-stream marketing can be employed as a long-term strategy to strengthen customer relationships with broadcaster-endorsed businesses. Online gift visibility in live marketing can be used as a sustainable strategy to stimulate customers' purchase intentions (Su et al, 2020). Live e-commerce has attracted a large number of users with its low-price advantage, and to a certain

extent, users are more concerned about price than the brand itself. However, it is difficult to sustain if live streaming with goods relies only on low prices. The sustainability of live streaming with goods remains in the products themselves, and only by continuously bringing good products and constantly optimizing services can retailers win the trust of consumers.

Thirdly, companies should enhance the trust of their customers by interacting with them and serving each of them sincerely. Trust is the position that a brand and product can occupy in the mind of the consumer, as it will produce a continual purchase. Consumers buy a product when they have a good understanding of the product and have a sense of trust. *Finally*, it is important to develop strategies to enhance the impact of situational factors. According to the S-O-R framework, external environmental stimuli influence consumer decisions. The hosts of the business are constantly strengthening the power of their words and actions during live broadcast, controlling their voice and tone to create a sense of urgency. In addition, the live streaming environment is enhanced to maximise the consumer's desire to buy by means of limited time and purchase restrictions.

Live streaming increases the overall value that consumers perceive and the intention they may have to buy, reducing the overall perceived uncertainty of consumers. The feeling of satisfaction is the basis for repeated product purchases by consumers and is a beneficial tool for maintaining trust. The word-of-mouth spread of products is also largely a result of consumer recommendations after satisfaction has been achieved. Therefore, the sale of a product is not just about selling the product, but also about satisfying the consumer and achieving a win-win situation.

This research identified consumers' attitudes towards live commerce. Based on that, it can be recommended that there are three aspects that consumers are most concerned about this new shopping model: the quality of the product, the after-sales guarantee, and the objective rating of the product by the streamer. Trust comes from the quality of the product. Of those interviewed, all agree that good product quality is their biggest motivation for continued shopping, and that without good quality, even lower prices or more effective interactions will not result in continued purchases. According to an EY survey (Cheng & Luk, 2021), a significant percentage of respondents in China agree that product quality is their biggest concern when shopping online. Therefore, before merchants

advertise their products, they should first ensure the quality of their products and then consider how to use the features of streaming media to promote them. If quality is not put first, even with streaming promotion efforts, the result will be a series of follow-ups such as consumer returns or exchanges, and the worst consequence may be that consumers will never buy again.

The objective assessment of products by anchors during live streaming is also an important point in building a trusting relationship with consumers. As the core of the live marketing model, e-commerce anchors have an important role in influencing consumers' intention to buy online. Therefore, merchants should pay attention to the quality and professionalism of the anchors when selecting them, otherwise it is easy to cause a series of irresponsible problems such as exaggerating the efficacy of the products for the pursuit of sales by the anchors. As an evolving platform of the internet economy, LSE plays a positive role in activating the future online market that promotes consumption and facilitates people's life experiences. However, several prominent problems have been identified in its current state, such as product quality not up to acceptable standards, promotion that doesn't match the real products, unsatisfactory after-sales service and ineffective consumer rights protection and disregard of consumer interests. Therefore, businesses should also devote attention to after-sales service through live promotions. Good after-sales service is, afterall, the basis for building trust with consumers. Satisfactory after-sales service was considered by the majority of respondents to be a major factor in their choice to return to a store.

Future research: This project is limited to one geography, namely China. But it will be interesting to collect comparable data from another country that may or may not engage in LSE, to ascertain the cultural factors that affect decision-making. Perhaps using a different methodology to gather data might also provide us with alternative insights.

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