

Analysis of Application of Persuasion Principles by the Influencers in the Live-Streaming Commerce on Douyin–Take Chimu Gangxian and Sam Chak as Examples

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Abstract: As a new form of e-commerce, in recent years, live-streaming commerce has been accepted by more and more people, which shows great potential and economic effect in Chinese e-commerce market, so Chinese live-streaming market has also developed to a high level. As a form of sales, the use of persuasion principles must be indispensable in the process of live-streaming commerce. Using content analysis of two influencers' communication behaviors in their live-streaming shows, this research studies how these influencers and their teams use persuasion principles in their live-streaming shows to affect consumers' purchase intentions and finds that most of the persuasion models are used in live-streaming commerce, except consistency. This research studies a new form of consumption that has sprung up in China in recent years, providing theoretical analysis basis and improvement suggestions, helping influencers improve their communication behaviors, and helping consumers shape their rational shopping mind to prevent impulsive consumption. At the same time, for those countries where live-streaming commerce has not yet appeared or become the mainstream, this study can provide some good examples of how persuasion principles are used in live-streaming commerce system.

1. Introduction

In the past days, some shopping apps (e.g. *Taobao*, *Jd.com*) constituted the vast majority of online shopping methods of Chinese netizens. Recently, for different groups with different needs, some specific platforms have also begun to appear and gradually become popular, providing more choices, richer varieties and more secure sources of goods for online shopping. These platforms have never broken the traditional image of shopping platforms, but the emergence of live-streaming commerce has broken the boundary between shopping platforms and video platforms, creating a new and more interactive shopping experience. Using the different nature of the platform as the standard, e-commerce live-streaming can be mainly divided into three modes.

First, the live-streaming module embedded in the traditional e-commerce platform, mainly including *Taobao*, *jd.com* and *Pinduoduo*. The second is the live-streaming module embedded in the social e-commerce platform, mainly *Douyin*, *Little Red Book* and *Kwai*. Third, the platform started with e-commerce live broadcast, mainly including *Weizan*, *Yangtou* and *Hongdoujiao*. According to *Analysis on The Development Status and Prospects of China's Live-streaming Industry* published by Zhiyan Consulting Institute (2022), until December 2021, the number of live-streaming users in China reached 703.37 million and increased 86.52 million when compared with the number in December 2020, accounting for 68.2% of Chinese Internet users[1]. At the same time, affected by the COVID-19, the offline economy has been hit, which has further promoted the development of the live-streaming industry. Now, live-streaming has become a very popular way of consumers' consumption life and reached a new height of development in the whole industry. The rise of live streaming commerce has opened up a new battlefield for all walks of life. Whether it is food, groceries and clothes, or even luxury goods, consumers can buy them in the live-streaming show at a lower price than usual or get more gifts. Live-streaming not only brings special discounts to the audience, but also creates huge benefits for businesses in the short term so more and more businessmen, brands and offline retailers, country men who market their own products, or even the

CEO of company chose live-streaming to sell their products. At the same time, in order to stimulate people's consumption, a lot of stars began to hold their own live-streaming, using their existing influence to attract fans and sell products.

At first, the system of live-streaming commerce was not developed, and the credibility and acceptance were also in a very low level. However, with more and more businesses entering this market, the market supervision bureau has introduced more and more management regulations, as well as the supervision, attention, and suggestions of netizens. Now, Chinese live-streaming market has grown rapidly and reached a relatively perfect state within two years and those who engaged in live-streaming commerce have been identified as a formal occupation - internet marketer. Report from the research institute Insight & Info (2021), in "double 11" (the biggest internet shopping festival in China) pre-sale night, the total number of consumers who watched Li Jiaqi's and Weiya's (the most famous two influencers in the e-commerce industry) reached to several hundred million. The turnover of the two live-streaming shows in one day was almost reached 19 billion yuan (Insight & Info, 2021). According to *Market Prospect and Investment research report of China's e-commerce live streaming industry from 2021-2025*, published by Chinese Business Industry Research Institute (2020), the size of live-streaming commerce in China reached 1201.2 billion yuan in 2021 and this report predicted that the total size will achieve about 1507.3 billion in 2022[2-4].

In the academic field of communication in China, although there has been a lot of research on online influencers, most of them are about the image of influencers and language characteristics, and few of them use the existing framework to systematically analyze the rules in their language. By studying the communication behaviors of chosen influencers in their live-streaming show, this study will analyze how the influencer and their team uses the persuasion principles (Cialdini, R. B. & Goldstein, N. J. 2002) to affect the audience's consumption intention in the live-streaming show[5].

2. Literature Review

In the academic field of China, there has already been a large amount of research on Chinese live-streaming market. Yi et al (2021) have suggested that the two advantages of live-streaming commerce are: (1) it is highly interactive, and consumers have more sense of communication and participation; (2) the price is affordable. Live-streaming commerce can achieve the lowest price in the whole network, the products' cost performance is high, and the conversion cost of consumers is low and the purchase motivation of shopping through live-streaming is mainly reflected in three aspects: seeking truth, seeking honesty and imitating or following the crowd. At the same time, Liu et al (2020) also have suggested that the three core categories of consumers' purchase intention (cognitive dimension, emotional dimension and intention dimension) has a significant impact on consumers' online shopping behavior. The real-time, interactive and face-to-face characteristics of live-streaming show, coupled with the atmosphere of the live-streaming show in terms of environment, function, layout and communication, will attract consumers (Gong et al, 2019), make consumers have a sense of empathy and immersion (Feng & Lu, 2020). Liu et al (2020) have argued that Internet celebrities has the characteristics of information source, which act on the inner feelings of the audience, enhance their attention of products and enhance the purchase intention. In addition, Yang et al (2021) mainly research external clues and consumption scenario factors (Zhang et al, 2019) that may affect purchase intention, and concluded two factor which will affect audience's purchase intention: the first is that Because of the asymmetric information between the buyer and the seller, and the lack of consumer information about the goods, a guarantee is needed at this time. The e-commerce influencer is a good intangible brand. The second is the layout design of the live room, the comments of customers, the live broadcasting atmosphere and the feeling of the influencer[6-10].

At the same time, there are also many studies on the analysis of influencers' language characteristics. Yang et al (2021) researched communication behaviors of e-commerce influencer on consumers' purchase intention. He divides the communication behaviors of anchors into three

categories - language communication behaviors, visual communication behaviors and activity communication behaviors, The language communication behavior is subdivided into language style, multi angle explanation of goods, and timeliness of reply; The visual communication behavior is subdivided into the background of the live broadcast room, the influencer's image, and the collocation of goods; The activity communication behavior is subdivided into publicity and lottery. Also, Li (2021) takes Weiya and Li Jiaqi (the most famous two influencers in the e-commerce industry) as examples to analyze the language characteristics of the influencers' speech community and found that their content topics can be divided into 3 categories (product introduction, lottery and promotion) and there is not only an unequal power relationship between the influencer and the audience, but also that the influencer will create a sense of closeness with the audience and because of the unique speech characteristics within the speech community, the anchor with goods successfully attracted a large number of fans and audience, and expanded his own influence[11-12].

Zhao et al.(2021) use SOR theory and consumer perceived value theory and constructs a research model on the influencing factors of influencers' characteristics on consumers' purchase intention under the live broadcast mode of e-commerce. Through empirical analysis, it is verified that the interactivity, authenticity, professionalism and popularity of e-commerce anchors have a positive impact on consumers' perceived functional value and perceived emotional value. At the same time, perceived value promotes consumers' trust, so as to further stimulate their willingness to buy. But in order to understand the influencer with a more comprehensive perspective, we also need to analyze influencer's communication behaviors in a persuasion principles model. Based on persuasion principles, this paper will research the words and actions which influencer uses and how these persuasion principles used in a live-streaming show[13].

3. Methods

According to live e-commerce annual data report published by research institute Guoji (2022), in 2021, influencers and businessmen conducted more than 75 million live-streaming commerce shows on *Douyin & Kwai*, a year-on-year increase of 100%, chose to conduct this research two beauty bloggers with different number of fans who held their live-streaming shows on *Douyin*. Then use screen recording software to record the whole process of these live-streaming shows and use Yang's (2021) classification model to record various communication behaviors in their live-streaming show (See Table 1 and Fig. 1).[14]

Table 1 Basic Information And Data of Influencers and Live-Streaming Shows

Name	Gender	Followers	Live-streaming date
Chimu Gangxian	female	5.46m	08/06/2022
Sam Chak	male	12.98m	08/06/2022

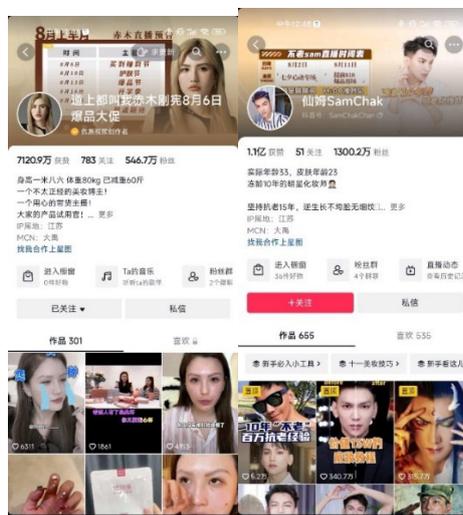


Fig.1 Screenshots from the Two influencers' Account Homepage Selected for Analysis

For data collection and analysis, language communication behavior will be the main type, for this kind of communication behaviors, record the more representative languages in the live-streaming show, and finally integrate similar views and analyze them. For visual communication behaviors and activity communication behaviors, the researcher make direct observation and analysis. Finally, analyze how they use persuasion principles and classify them.



Fig.2 Screenshots from the Two influencers' Live-Streaming Shows

4. Findings

Through the analysis, the researcher conclude that 5 kind of persuasion principles used in their live-streaming shows. Here are specific examples and analysis based on different principles:

4.1 Liking

4.1.1 Language Communication Behaviors

First, when introducing the products, the two influencers like to use some intimate words to call the audience, such as “baby”, “babe”, “dear” or “beauties and handsome boys”. This form has narrowed the distance between the influencers and the audience to a certain extent, thus increasing the audience's good feeling. In addition, when introducing the product effect, the two influencers will say: “babies with such problems or needs, must buy this product!” What Chimu does better is that because everyone's problems and needs are different, there will be many female assistants with different characteristics around her. When she says these words, she will use one or two female assistants as models to show the product effects more comprehensively and create more similarities with the influencers and their team. At the same time, the influencers also like to say, “the price of our live-streaming today was obtained after long or many negotiations with the brand side. It is the benefit we have worked hard for the baby who watch my live-streaming show, you guys must buy it.” Such language makes the audience feel that the influencer is on their side. This is the allies in liking principle.

4.1.2 Visual Communication Behaviors

Usually, the influencers themselves draw more delicate makeup to match their own identity and give the audience better visual effects. This is the law of physical attractive. However, the two influencers adopted different ways in displaying makeup products. Chimu would choose to remove the makeup on her face and take herself as a model to show these products to the audience; Sam prefers to use his female assistants as the model to test products. This may be because most of the audience of the live-streaming show are women, and such behavior may better show the similarities between them to most of the audience. This is the law of similarity. In the visual design of the live studio, Sam is obviously more careful than Chimu, and he use many decorations to make the whole live studio more beautiful. This is also to increase the audience's love by making it more visually attractive.

4.2 Reciprocation

4.2.1 Language Communication Behaviors

The two influencers both love to say: “in order to thank you for coming to my live-streaming,

our team has won a very low price for you. At the same time, there are nearly free-cost products and a lot of gifts for you. If you continue to watch my show, you will have the opportunity to participate in the lottery and get gifts.” And “it's very important for us that you buy it right and use it well.” Or “our purpose is to let everyone buy suitable products at the cheapest price. If they think it is good and cost-effective, then you can watch my live-streaming and buy things on it again and promote my live-streaming to your family and friends in need. “

4.2.2 Visual Communication Behaviors

In terms of visual communication behavior, the principle of reciprocity is mainly reflected in the words of the anchors, such as “it's very important for us that you buy it right and use it well.” They printed these words on paper or billboards for display when they introduce their products.

4.2.3 Activity Communication Behaviors

At the same time, influencers like to emphasize the process of bargaining, or set an interactive bargaining form during the live-streaming. Influencers will first release a less attractive price, then ask the audience if they want a cheaper price, and then reduce the price to the negotiated price through one or two price reductions. This bargain form is also a manifestation of the principle of reciprocity. At the same time, after the price negotiation, the influencer will usually show some gifts to enhance the attraction, and then carry out the same process as above, interacting with the audience, and then show more gifts. The bargaining process between the influencers and the brand sides is presented to the audience in this interactive form, which increases the interactivity, the audience's sense of participation, and also reflects the principle of reciprocity.

4.3 Scarcity

4.3.1 Language Communication Behaviors

Scarcity is one of the best persuasive principles in live-streaming commerce, because live-streaming show itself is a kind of real-time communication behavior, influencers always emphasize this point in the process of live-streaming several times, for example, “such a large discount and so many gifts are only available once, and there will be no next time.” “Don't hesitate. Once the discount live-streaming is over, there will be no more. If you need it, buy it now!” Or “our live-streaming will be over in ten minutes. Don't miss the discount today, buy it!” At the same time, in the live-streaming show, influencers like to emphasize uniqueness, such as: “This discount can only be seen in my live-streaming show.” Or “this product is only available in my live show.” Or “only in my live show, I can send you so many things (if you buy this product).” While emphasizing uniqueness, they will also repeatedly emphasize the number of products in stock, such as “only 1000 orders, so we need to buy it quickly. ““There are still 200 orders left, don't hesitate.” After all the stocks on are purchased, the influencers will usually stop to appease the friends who haven't bought them, and say that: “Babies who haven't bought them, don't worry. We are now communicating with the brand to see if we can add more stocks.” and then pretend to communicate with the brand side and say to the audience: “we have just communicated with the brand side, and we have prepared 100 more stocks, so we can buy them quickly.” By creating scarcity, the audience will be given a tense atmosphere, thus forcing the audience to make a purchase decision.

4.3.2 Visual Communication Behaviors

Visually, the influencers' team usually prints product information, prices, gifts, and stock on a piece of paper. Especially for those products with low stock, they will highlight the scarcity of products by highlighting the low inventory.

4.4 Social Validation

4.4.1 Language Communication Behaviors

When introducing the product, influencers will often say something that can reflect social recognition, such as “I have tried this product with my team and members of my fan group for more

than half a year, and everyone's evaluation is very good.” “This product has sold more than 30k orders in my live show. Don’t worry, just buy it.” “If you are not confident about the product, you can go to see the sales and comments of the product, which are basically favorable, so you don't need to worry that the product has no effect, otherwise it won't sell so well.” Or “this product has been sold several times in our live show, and each time it has sold very well. Every time, people urge me to start my live show and sell this product as quickly as I can, because they will run out of what they bought.” At the same time, when introducing some products, one of the two influencers will list the evaluations of other well-known influencers in this field on this product to strengthen its social validation effect.

4.4.2 Visual Communication Behaviors

The visual communication behaviors are basically the same as the application of the previous principles, mainly through printing the sales of products on specific paper and posters to emphasize their good sales and evaluation, so as to visually play the role of social validation.

4.5 Authority

4.5.1 Language Communication Behaviors

In terms of authority, Sam will emphasize his status as a senior makeup artist and his achievements to demonstrate his authority when he starts broadcasting or introduces some cosmetics. However, it is not convincing to rely solely on one's own identity as a makeup artist. Therefore, when introducing each product, the anchors will introduce the core ingredients, effects, mechanism of action and various professional knowledge of the product to increase their persuasiveness. When the audience asks some questions about the product, the anchor often has two ways: one is to answer the audience's questions by himself, and the other is to let the audience who have bought the product to answer these questions while watching the live broadcast. At the same time, by mentioning one or two shortcomings of their products, they hope to appear more honest and trustworthy to their potential customers, meaning that prospective consumers will assume that the product is likely to be perfect in all other respects. For example: “this product feels a little oily, so babies with oily skin should buy it carefully, or you can choose to use it at night.”

4.5.2 Visual Communication Behaviors

While introducing the products and effects, the influencers will also display the prepared efficacy certification report, patent certificate, or efficacy function map to visually reflect their authority and increase the persuasiveness of their language communication behavior and products.

5. Conclusion

Through the discussion above, we find that most of the persuasion principles can be applied well in live-streaming commerce. In the live-streaming, the language communication behavior plays the largest role, while the visual communication behavior serves as a supplement and assistance to the language communication behavior, helping these models better play their effects. This research studies a new form of consumption that has sprung up in China in recent years, providing theoretical analysis basis and improvement suggestions, helping influencers improve their communication behaviors, and helping consumers shape their rational shopping mind to prevent impulsive consumption and promoting the steady development of the whole industry.

6. Discussion

Through analyzing the communication behaviors of the influencers in their live-streaming shows, this research classifies these communication behaviors through persuasion model. For the whole industry, this article uses a fairly mature framework to analyze two famous influencers and their live-streaming shows, provides a fairly clear classification and examples for the brand side and the influencers, and provides a series of learning samples for those who are about to engage in or are

engaged in this field who have not fully utilized these principles. For those who have been able to use these principles well, this study provides an opportunity for reflection, because they can think about how to improve the existing behaviors, how to apply these principles in more places, and how to apply those principles that are not useful, so as to better attract consumers. As far as consumers are concerned, this research enables them to better understand the communication behaviors and tricks in live-streaming show, so as to avoid falling into the consumption trap.

In the academic field, as a commercial form rising in recent years, live-streaming commerce has attracted the attention of many students and scholars, but there is still relatively little research in this area and there is a lack of framework constraints. Therefore, this article can also be used as an inspiration to encourage more people to use the existing mature framework to analyze live streaming. Meanwhile, this article is a reflection of China's online consumption culture to a certain extent. Through studying live-streaming commerce, people can see many shadows of China's consumption culture, which can also inspire us to do more meaningful research in this area to a certain extent.

This study also has some limitations. First, because of the selected relatively few objects, the frequency of these persuasion models cannot be predicted; if researchers want to estimate the frequency of use of persuasion models, they can choose more influencers randomly to ensure its applicability and universality. At the same time, these results are only based on the content of beauty and skin care. Researchers don't know whether they can get the same answer in other field or products of live-streaming commerce. In the future study, researchers may be able to get some different conclusions by studying the live broadcast of more types of products and platforms.

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