



Media Induction and User Impulse Consumption Mechanism in Live E-commerce

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Abstract. In the context of the rapid development of digital technology and the rise of consumer desire, the inner dissatisfaction of consumers has driven live commerce to become a new cultural phenomenon that reshapes the social consumption structure and behavioral logic. Compared with traditional consumption models, live commerce endows products with cultural connotations such as emotion and identity through immersive media symbol encoding, causing consumers to fall into a "consumption vortex" under emotional entanglement and group pressure, and the problem of irrational consumption is prominent. This study takes live commerce as the field, focuses on the impact of media symbol encoding on consumers, and explores the relationship between consumer culture, symbolic induction, and irrational consumption in the digital age. Based on the user end, this study conducts an in-depth analysis with media symbol encoding as the core entry point. The research clarifies the specific role of media symbol encoding on consumers, sorts out the existing deficiencies and innovative directions of research; and finally provides key theoretical references for interpreting consumer culture in the digital age and deciphering the phenomena of media symbol induction and irrational consumption.

Keywords: Consumption Vortex, Digital Media, Live Commerce, Symbolic Encoding, Impulse Consumption.

1 Introduction

The rapid development of the internet, short videos, and electronic technology in contemporary society has led this paper to focus on the realistic context of live commerce. Leveraging its real-time and interactive characteristics, live commerce constructs an immersive consumption domain, reshaping traditional consumption forms and decision-making logic, thereby triggering phenomena such as unplanned purchases and impulse buying, collectively termed the 'consumption vortex'. This research holds significant importance in elucidating the formation logic of media-induced mechanisms in live commerce, analyzing the pathways leading to irrational consumer behavior, and providing theoretical and practical support for standardized industry development and the guidance of rational consumption. This study specifically unfolds by examining the construction of the media symbol encoding system in live commerce, the persuasive strategies employed in streamer discourse and scene setting,

and their impact on consumer psychology and behavior. A literature analysis method is employed to sort and analyze relevant media theories and consumer behavior data. This approach aids in precisely controlling the theoretical framework and core logic of the research, clarifying the causal pathways of the 'consumption vortex'.

2 Literature Review

Advances in digital media technology, combined with the integration of online e-commerce scenarios and rising consumption levels, have propelled live-streaming e-commerce from a new sales model into a new consumption structure. According to the "2020 China Live E-commerce Ecosystem Research Report" by i Research, 2019 marked the first year of 5G commercialization, ushering in a boom period for e-commerce live streaming [1]. E-commerce live-streaming combines the immediacy of live video with the convenience of online shopping, offering consumers an online shopping platform that features immersive product demonstrations and real-time interaction; it has become the mainstream online shopping channel for consumers in China [2]. Existing research suggests that what distinguishes live-streaming e-commerce from traditional consumption models lies in its immersive nature, interactivity, real-time delivery and strong sense of participation. Meng Lu, Liu Fengjun, Chen Siyun and Duan Shen in "Can I Inspire You? — A Study on the Mechanisms by Which the Characteristics of Information Sources from Different Types of Live-Streaming Influencers Influence Consumers' Decisions to Purchase Hospital Services. This article examines how social presence enhances consumer identification, thereby increasing purchase intent; it also finds that, for entertainment-focused live-streaming influencers, the characteristics that most significantly engage consumers are attractiveness and interactivity; For live-streaming influencers who sell products, the characteristics that most effectively engage consumers are trustworthiness, expertise and interactivity [3]. However, there is limited discussion regarding symbolic encoding and the reasons for generating consumption vortices. This paper will delve into symbolic encoding and the shift towards product symbolization for a more detailed investigation, aiming to fill the existing research gaps. With the continuous development of internet technology, e-commerce live-streaming is attracting more and more users and businesses to participate in product live-streaming. With the continuous development of internet technology, e-commerce live-streaming is attracting more and more users and businesses to participate in product live-streaming. Nevertheless, the live streaming experience can lead to different attitudinal shifts among various viewers, consequently influencing consumers' impulse purchasing behavior.

3 Overview of Core Concepts and Theoretical Foundations

3.1 The Role of Live-streaming E-commerce in Stimulating Impulsive Purchasing Behaviour Among Consumers

Contemporary consumers have shifted their focus from the practical value of goods to the pursuit of their symbolic value. Impulse buying was originally an unplanned act driven by external stimuli and personal emotions; however, the emergence of live-streaming e-commerce has increased the likelihood of impulse buying and significantly expanded the scenarios in which it occurs. With the continuous development of Internet technology, e-commerce live streaming is attracting more and more users and merchants to participate in product live streaming. More specifically, self-presentation and virtual coexistence have a more significant impact on one's social presence within live-streaming e-commerce than on the social presence of other viewers [4]. However, the live streaming experience leads to different attitude changes for different viewers, which in turn affects consumers' impulse consumption behavior [5]. Factors such as the streamer's real-time explanations during the live broadcast, 24-hour availability for purchase, wide selection, pressure to compare prices, and limited-time discounts. This significantly increases the likelihood of impulse purchases. Interaction with live streamers has a markedly positive impact on consumers' cognitive trust and emotional engagement, thereby boosting their willingness to make impulse purchases; cognitive trust and emotional arousal mediate the relationship between streamer interaction orientation and impulse purchase intention, and there exists a chained mediating path of 'streamer interaction orientation → emotional arousal → cognitive trust → impulse purchase intention' [6]. In the highly media-driven consumption environment of live-streaming e-commerce, the practicality of products and their symbolic significance are not separate entities, but are closely linked to the consumer's psychology. In the highly media-driven consumption environment of live-streaming e-commerce, the practicality of products and their symbolic significance are not separate entities, but are closely linked to the consumer's psychology. The awakening of consumer sentiment, the stimulation of consumer desire, the affirmation of self-worth and the rise in feelings of dissatisfaction have laid the groundwork for the production of symbolic codes. The constant stimulation and influence of these media symbols on consumer psychology ultimately leads consumers into the trap of uncontrolled spending. The magic of live-streaming e-commerce lies not in the products themselves, but in the process of imbuing them with symbolic meaning, gradually transforming 'useful goods' into 'meaningful objects' and endowing them with unique value. For consumers, the goods they purchase are not merely commodities; they represent emotional value—the emotional resonance and comfort that these goods provide. By linking these goods to 'self-worth' and 'self-affirmation', they create an illusion for consumers: that owning such an item brings them closer to their ideal self and serves as a confirmation of their self-worth. It is precisely through the interplay of these emotions and symbolic elements that impulse buying has been transformed into a carefully orchestrated, induced behaviour; live-streaming e-commerce platforms utilize contextual, identity-based and emotional coding to effect a shift in the perception of goods from purely utilitarian to symbolic.

3.2 The Semiotic Turn in Commodities

In traditional consumption models, the core of a product lies in its usability and applicability. Emphasis is placed on functionality. Live-streaming e-commerce, however, has downplayed its functional aspects and emphasised its symbolic attributes, transforming products into vehicles of meaning. In live-streaming e-commerce, the camera work, setting, storyline, presenters, comments section and script are woven together to form the core narrative. Through an immersive, fast-paced style featuring substantial discounts and strong emotional appeal, this approach draws viewers into the experience and enhances their sense of engagement. Zhao Dawei and colleagues have revealed that the charm of live streamers—including their appearance and unique personal style—can attract consumers and exert a strong influence on their propensity for impulse buying. Interactivity, as the defining characteristic that distinguishes live streaming from traditional e-commerce, not only enhances a sense of social presence and immersion through real-time Q&A sessions and real-time comments, but also effectively builds structural and relational social capital between streamers and consumers [7]. By capitalising on modern consumers' sense of dissatisfaction and their pursuit of high quality, it utilises core coding techniques to encode the scenario, rendering it an 'indispensable' part of the experience. For example: in beauty live-streams, presenting a refined, sophisticated and flawless everyday look. In furniture live-streams, the aim is to create a soothing, homely, warm, tasteful and high-quality home environment, positioning the products as the gateway to an ideal lifestyle and consistently conveying their value. Transforming goods from items of practical value into symbols of change that embody identity, emotional comfort, a sense of ritual in daily life, and social mobility. The medium imbues the commodity with a compelling significance, enabling it to transcend the object itself. At the same time, purchasing goods is seen as equivalent to adopting a particular lifestyle; these goods have become both a ticket to the ideal life and a status symbol for consumers.

Live-streaming e-commerce symbolises products by linking them to identity, social circles and lifestyles, thereby imbuing consumer behaviour with specific connotations. It frames affordable goods as embodying a practical, down-to-earth and value-for-money lifestyle, whilst positioning high-end products as representing individual values such as sophistication, good taste and uniqueness. Attributing best-selling products to trends and the hallmarks of popular culture. Goods are gradually becoming cultural symbols of social status, with fashion brands being the most potent symbols for conferring instant value and prestige, as they are socially validated and encoded through digital media. In the digital media era, fashion and consumer symbols increasingly inspire human creativity and innovation; through digital media formats and performances, they inject vitality into people and society, enhancing their appeal and adding value [8].

E-commerce platforms infuse products with a unique emotional resonance through live-streaming scripts—such as personal storytelling and emotional appeal—thereby adding distinctive value to the goods, resonating with consumers on a deeper level and providing them with a rich emotional experience. Driven by the pressures of modern life, countless consumers feel anxious; at such times, the value that products offer them

lies in the notion of treating themselves, being kind to themselves and looking after their own well-being. Commodities are imbued with emotion; they are not merely objects, but emotional symbols representing feelings of love, self-acceptance and self-comfort.

4 Closed Loop of Media Symbol Encoding in Live E-commerce

In traditional consumption, impulse buying is regarded as a unidirectional induction and compliance of the medium towards the consumer, whereas in modern consumption patterns, the consumption process presents as a complete active construction closed loop. Research has found that: all dimensions of the e-commerce live-streaming atmosphere can significantly stimulate consumers' impulse-buying intentions, with the interactive and consumption-oriented aspects of live-streaming proving to be particularly effective for marketing purposes. The atmosphere of e-commerce livestreams can boost consumers' positive emotions through the mechanism of emotional contagion, thereby stimulating their impulse to make purchases [9]. Media symbols serve as carriers of meaning; through live-streaming scripts, visually striking imagery, emotional storytelling and the cultivation of personae, live-streaming e-commerce transforms products into symbolic representations associated with an idealised, fulfilling lifestyle. Research has found that the visual nature, interactivity, authenticity and entertainment value of live streaming all have a positive impact on consumer purchasing behaviour.[10]In consumer meaning-making, consumers make active choices; they do not simply accept media symbols wholesale, but instead select, during this process, product symbols that resonate with them and satisfy their emotional needs and value aspirations. In the process of reconstructing one's self-identity, consumption serves as a means of realisation; consumers affirm their identity and lifestyle through the purchase of goods, internalising symbolic codes as part of their self-identity. In this process, consumption is no longer merely a matter of 'spending money', but rather a practice of self-construction. It is precisely this closed loop that provides the driving force behind the consumer vortex: the media encodes symbols, consumers actively absorb them, and through consumption they develop an inner sense of identification, thereby transforming impulse buying into an intrinsic need.

5 Theoretical Elaboration and Logical Framework of Symbol Encoding and Impulse Consumption

The reason why symbolic coding is capable of creating a 'consumer vortex' lies in its ability to accurately capture consumers' perceptions, psychological needs and social phenomena. On a cognitive level, the need to make quick judgements, the high density of information and the fast-paced commentary of presenters all reduce the time consumers have for rational thought. Live-streaming e-commerce platforms exploit emotions, visuals and sales pitches to trigger an unconscious reaction in consumers, making them feel that 'I need this item; it's perfect for me'. This is achieved through

high-density information and synchronised stimulation from multiple sensory channels, with the medium deliberately accelerating the process; Rapid speech, quick cuts, flash sales and huge discounts overload consumers' cognitive capacity; when faced with cognitive overload, people instinctively rely on intuition. Symbolic cues provide consumers with the simplest way to make a judgement: the host's recommendation equals 'good', and not buying means 'missing out'. The results indicate that time scarcity increases consumers' impulse buying and perceived urgency, but product type only moderates the effect of time scarcity on perceived urgency. On a psychological level, symbolic coding transforms consumers' identity anxieties, emotional deprivation and desire for instant gratification into positive emotions such as healing, personal development and growth, thereby justifying the act of purchasing and putting consumers' minds at ease.

6 Conclusion

Current research in the field of live commerce consumption still has certain limitations: on the one hand, existing studies mostly focus on single or unidirectional dimensions such as users, platforms, and emotions, resulting in a one-sided perspective. They generally neglect the proactivity and agency of users in the process of receiving symbolic information, and only focus on the symbolic encoding process of the medium, with insufficient exploration of the paths through which consumers can escape symbolic induction, break free from encoding constraints, and achieve self-identity; On the other hand, most studies remain confined to describing the superficial phenomenon that 'live-streaming e-commerce triggers impulse buying', failing to delve into its underlying mechanisms; moreover, they tend to adopt a single-disciplinary perspective in their analysis, resulting in limitations in their theoretical scope. On this basis, this study has achieved innovation across multiple dimensions: in terms of research perspective, it has overcome the limitations of one-dimensional research by giving due consideration to users' agency, thereby filling a gap in research on the decoding of consumer symbols and the construction of self-identity; In terms of research methodology, this study moves beyond superficial descriptions of phenomena to delve deeper into the underlying logic of live-streaming e-commerce. It clarifies that this phenomenon does not merely stimulate the desire to purchase, but rather, through the attribution of meaning, transforms products into a gateway to one's ideal self. By reframing impulse buying from a purely behavioural issue into a process of identity construction and emotional compensation, it offers a more explanatory theoretical framework for interpreting symbolic consumption within the new media environment; In terms of theoretical integration, this study organically combines core theories from communication studies, sociology and social psychology, thereby transcending the limitations of single-discipline research and establishing a systematic and multi-dimensional theoretical framework for research into live-streaming e-commerce consumption. The findings of this study indicate that, during the sales process, live-streaming e-commerce achieves media symbol encoding through systematic symbol production, transforming products into cultural symbols that embody the ideal self and

satisfy self-identity; in this process, consumers engage in identity construction and the affirmation of their identity; On this basis, this study further proposes a closed-loop framework comprising ‘media symbolic encoding – consumer semantic decoding – self-identity reconstruction’, thereby re-examining the logical relationships underlying impulse buying. It clarifies that the formation of the consumption vortex does not stem solely from consumers’ individual acts of retaliatory spending or one-way media manipulation, but rather represents an inevitable pathway for consumers to pursue self-identity within the symbolic encoding system. This study offers valuable insights for future research in this field, primarily influencing research in areas such as consumer behaviour in live-streaming e-commerce, media symbols and consumer culture, and identity in the digital age. It provides a more explanatory theoretical framework for interpreting symbolic consumption in the new media environment, whilst also offering practical guidance for regulating the development of the live-streaming e-commerce industry and encouraging rational consumer behaviour. Future research should focus more on exploring the differences in symbolic encoding across different types of live-streaming content and user groups, individual variations in consumers’ symbolic decoding and intervention pathways, as well as the long-term dynamic evolution of symbolic encoding and self-identity.

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