

Research on Impulsive Buying Behavior of Consumers in Short Video and Live Streaming Marketing

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Abstract:

With the rapid growth of short video and live streaming marketing, consumers' impulsive buying behavior draws increasing attention due to its high impulsiveness. Existing studies often explore triggering mechanisms from streamer characteristics or platform context separately, lacking an integrated comparison and cross-effect analysis. To explain the formation mechanism from two dimensions—streamer characteristics & emotional mechanism, and platform technology & contextual atmosphere—this study uses a literature review and proposes an analytical framework based on the S-O-R model. Practical suggestions are as follows: Firstly, brands and marketers should improve streamers' expression and interaction skills, and consumers should avoid over-stimulation. Secondly, platform regulators should ban false scarcity claims, establish early warning systems for impulsive consumption, and strengthen ethical supervision. Thirdly, consumers should enhance media literacy, use delayed-purchase tools, and stay vigilant about vulnerable emotional states. This study offers theoretical and practical guidance for impulsive buying research in digital consumption contexts.

Keywords: Short video marketing; Live streaming marketing; Impulsive buying behavior; S-O-R model.

1. Introduction

In recent years, with continuous iteration of mobile internet technology and gradual change of user content consumption habits, the explosive growth of short video and live streaming marketing is gradually realized. Referring to the data released by China Internet Network Center, as of December 2024, the number of online video users in China has exceeded 1000 million, and the proportion of short video users

exceeds 95%. In addition, the continuous increase in live streaming e-commerce transaction volume also proves that with the continuous development of content platform, real-time consumer purchase has gradually developed into a new venue. In addition to Douyin and Kuaishou, the emergence of new platforms has not only changed the production and distribution mechanism of content, but also changed the consumers' purchase decision-making process.

In the environment of short video and live streaming marketing, consumers' impulsive buying behavior is worth noting. Compared with traditional purchasing behavior of planned purchasing, impulsive buying is a kind of sudden and non-deliberative purchasing behavior triggered by certain environmental stimuli, and is more common in live streaming environment. Therefore, the formation mechanism of impulsive buying behavior in live streaming marketing environment is worthy of the attention. Not only does it have important theoretical value in explaining consumer behavior in digital consumption environment, but it also has important practical significance in protecting consumer rights, maintaining healthy industry development and implementing marketing strategies of brands and marketers.

In recent years, scholars have done a lot of researches on consumer behavior in short video and live streaming marketing [1, 2]. Further studies have also explored the triggering mechanism [3-5]. These studies have examined the influence of streamer characteristics on impulsive buying [6, 7]. Other studies have focused on the role of platform technology in shaping impulsive buying behavior [8, 9]. In addition, some research has explored how contextual atmosphere affects impulsive buying [10, 11]. However, most of the studies are still at the stage of factor identification and there is a lack of attention for comparative influence of different factors and triggering mechanism of cross-effect.

However, limitations of current research still exist. On the one hand, most of the current studies focus on one dimension of influencing factors, that is, stressing the "person" factor of streamer or "field" factor of platform, but lack the systematic integration of synergistic effects between two factors. On the other hand, different studies use scattered theoretical perspectives and fail to construct an integrated analytical framework which includes multiple factors. Therefore, this study raises the following research question: How do streamer characteristics and platform context synergistically trigger consumers' impulsive buying behavior in short video and live streaming marketing? How do they work through what psychological process? Can S-O-R model provide an effective integrated explanation for this phenomenon?

2. Introduction to Basic Concepts

2.1 Introduction to Short Video and Live Streaming Marketing

Short video marketing and live streaming marketing are products of deep development of mobile internet and platform economy. They are closely related but there are obvious differences in communication mechanism and user

interaction mode.

Short video marketing is the marketing way of showing products or services by broadcasting short video clips which usually last from tens of seconds to a few minutes on mobile internet platforms. Its core advantages lie in highly compressed information and compact visual rhythm. It can deliver key information in a relatively low cognitive cost when the information environment faces the shortage of attention. The core advantages of short video marketing include highly compressed information content, meeting the characteristics of users' fragmented consumption. And it also depends on the platform's algorithm recommendation to achieve the precise targeting of intended users. Briefly introducing to the basic concepts of short video marketing and live streaming marketing. Live streaming marketing is a new type of marketing model that shows products or services by broadcasting on live streaming platforms and interacts with audience in two-way way. The core advantages of live streaming marketing lie in a fusion of "real-time video stream + social interaction + e-commerce transaction", which is "real-time" and "interactivity". Only sustained real-time interaction can give users a sense of social presence and thus increase their trust and emotion to the streamer. And the time of live streaming marketing can be adjusted according to the needs from tens of minutes to several hours, which makes the product display and explanation more in-depth and comprehensive. Sustained real-time interaction can give users a sense of social presence and thus increase their trust and emotion to the streamer. From the technical point of view, live streaming platform designs more gamified elements, such as bullet comments, likes, gifts and leaderboards to enhance user's immersion.

It is important to clarify that short video marketing and live streaming marketing are not zero-sum games, but they do create a positive loop in regards to user acquisition and user lifecycle management. Short videos can be used as pre-live warm-up and live streaming marketing touchpoints to aggregate users through interesting content. Live streaming highlights can be edited into short videos for long-tail release, extending the lifecycle of content and creating a "content flywheel" that continuously increases the radius of influence and maximizes marketing ROI.

Based on the conceptual model of "person-product-field" short videos and live streaming marketing jointly reconstitute traditional retail logic: the streamer (person) ties together the product (product) through content (field), completing the "reverse" logic of "people finding products" from traditional retail and becoming "products finding people." Short videos focus on establishing consumption intention and user reach, while live streaming focuses on instant sales conversion and user relationship cultivation. Both synergies to create the new scene of modern consumption.

2.2 Consumer Impulsive Buying Behavior

From a theoretical point of view, study of impulsive buying behavior has changed from “irrational bias” to “situation-individual interaction”. Early studies on impulsive buying often regarded it as kind of “irrational” behavior. Modern researches hold that impulsive buying is the result of situation-individual interaction, that is, influence of situational stimuli on consumers is mediated by individuals, and individuals’ response to situations is mediated by individuals’ own characteristics. As classic S-O-R (Stimulus-Organism-Response) theory model proposed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) is widely used in consumer behavior research in retail and e-commerce studies: external environmental stimuli (S) influence people’s internal mental states (O), which in turn lead to approach or avoidance behavioral responses (R): impulsive buying is the result of situation-individual interaction, which is not simply “irrational” behavior.

3. Influence of Streamer Characteristics and Emotions on Impulsive Buying

In live streaming marketing context, streamer plays an important role of intermediary between product and consumer, and is responsible for explaining product and arousing consumers’ emotion. This chapter studies how streamer characteristics influence consumers’ impulsive buying behavior by triggering their emotion and sort out core characteristics of streamer systematically, including streamer professionalism, attractiveness and interactivity, and discuss the influence of emotional contamination on consumers’ impulsive buying behavior.

3.1 Core Streamer Characteristics and Their Stimulating Effects on Consumers

In the context of live streaming shopping, multiple dimensions of streamer characteristics constitute stimuli on consumers in total. Existing studies have found that streamer characteristics, including professionalism, attractiveness, interactivity and uniqueness, have significant impact on consumers’ psychological states and purchase behavior [6].

Professionalism. Professionalism is a basic characteristic that affects consumers’ purchase decision [6]. When streamers own profound product knowledge, can skillfully answer consumers’ questions and give consumers professional purchasing advice, consumers will establish cognitive trust on them [6]. This kind of trust will reduce consumers’ decision-making difficulty and perceived risk, and make them more likely to accept streamers’ recommendation [6]. From the view of information processing theory, effective explanation from professional streamers meet consumers’ psychological need as “cognitive mi-

sters” — by greatly reducing the cognitive cost of information search and horizontal comparison, explanation from streamers provide favorable psychological conditions for impulsive purchase decision to happen [6].

Attractiveness is an important feature that can arouse consumers’ emotional responses [6]. Streamer attractiveness can be divided into two aspects: attractiveness of external appearance and attractiveness of internal charm [6]. In the aspect of attractiveness of external appearance, audience may infer the streamer’s professional and credible image from the aspects of physical appearance, dress style and body language of the streamer, which may be influenced by halo effect [6]. In the aspect of attractiveness of internal charm, audience may infer the streamer’s professional and credible image from the aspects of language expression, humorous and approachable personality of the streamer [6]. Previous studies have found that streamer attractiveness can significantly increase consumers’ positive affect and make them more willing to accept purchase recommendation and finally increase impulsive buying intention [6].

Interactivity is the most prominent feature that makes live streaming marketing different from traditional e-commerce [6]. Interactivity in live streaming rooms includes multi-dimensional characteristics such as direct Q&A between streamer and consumers, online response of streamer to comment, interaction between streamer and audience through lucky draw or benefit activities and interaction between bullet comment of consumers [6]. High interactive live streaming can generate a social atmosphere of “virtual co-presence”, and change consumers from passive information receiver to active participant in live streaming [6]. This kind of participation makes consumers emotionally involved, and makes them more likely to be in an excited and involved psychological state [6]. When consumers are in this kind of involved state, they may enter a flow experience, a state in which people are totally immersed and time is distorted [1]. At this time, the rational monitoring function of consumers will weaken greatly, and the probability of impulsive buying will increase greatly [1]. A unique and distinctive persona allows the streamer to build a fan community with the same value; when consumers build parasocial relationship with the streamer, the receptive degree of them to recommend product will increase accordingly [6].

3.2 Emotional Contagion: from Streamer’s Emotion to Consumer’s Impulse.

The main reason why the characteristic of streamer can induce consumer’s impulsive buying is that there is a mediating effect of the psychological process of “emotional contagion” [6]. Emotional contagion is a phenomenon that in the process of interpersonal interaction, people will

unconsciously mimic the facial expression, voice, posture and other external manifestations of others, and then generate an internal experience that reaches the emotion of others [6]. In the process of live streaming shopping, emotional contagion is the key mediating process from streamer characteristic to consumer impulsive buying [6]. Emotional contagion has occurred in three levels as follows [6].

Firstly, the streamer as the stimulus source [6]. Professional and attractive streamers present various emotional expressions in the live streaming process—enthusiasm for products, love for fans, anxiety for time-limited sales, etc. [6]. Rich emotional expressions of streamers are communicated to viewers through multi-channel verbal tone, facial expression, and body movement [6].

Secondly, automatic mimicry and emotional infection of consumers [6]. Studies have found that people have the biological tendency to automatically mimic others' emotional expressions and that this process often happens at the unconscious level [6]. When viewers watch the facial expressions of excited streamers and hear their enthusiastic voice, they also subconsciously experience similar levels of physiological arousal and emotional feelings [6]. Thirdly, cognitive labeling of emotions and behavioral tendencies [6]. When consumers reach a high enough level of emotional arousal, they will interpret their state as “liking this product” or “wanting to own it”, and then further stimulate purchase impulses [6].

Emotional arousal is the state of emotional activation—the physiological and psychological arousal feelings of excitement, exhilaration, and pleasure, etc.—experienced by consumers in the process of watching live streams [6]. Perceived enjoyment is the hedonic pleasure and gratification obtained by consumers from the live streaming viewing experience [6]. Research has found that streamers' external characteristics can significantly increase consumers' impulsive purchase intention by increasing their pleasure emotions, and that pleasure has a substantial mediating effect in the influence pathway of streamers' external characteristics → consumers' pleasure emotions → consumers' impulsive purchase intention [6]. When consumers are in a state of high arousal and high enjoyment, their value judgments about products become more positive, price sensitivity diminishes, and decision-making impulsivity increases [6].

Factors that reinforce emotional contagion include two aspects: streamers' performance skills and atmosphere in the live streaming room, and consumers' personal traits [6]. From the perspective of streamers, those who are skilled at expressing emotional expressiveness and who have strong interpersonal appeal are more likely to trigger emotional contagion in viewers [6]. From the perspective of consumers, those with high empathy and high emotional susceptibility are more likely to be influenced by the emo-

tions of streamers [12]. From the situational perspective, the density of interaction in the live room, the emotional atmosphere of bullet comments, and the intensity of stimulation from gamified components all affect the effectiveness of emotional contagion [6].

3.3 Why “Impulse” Instead of “Rationality”: Explanation from Emotional Mechanisms.

The underlying mechanism why streamer characteristics trigger impulsive rather than rational purchasing through emotional mechanisms can be explained from the following perspectives [6]

3.3.1 Cognitive resource occupation and rational monitoring declination

During the live streaming shopping process, consumers need to accept and process various types of information, such as the seller's verbal introduction, product images, real-time bullet comments, countdown timers for limited-time products [6]. A large amount of high-density, fast-paced information occupies consumers' cognitive resources, leaving no spare cognitive resources for consumers to think critically and reasonably about the information they receive [6]. At the same time, the emotional arousal caused by emotional contagion also makes the rational monitoring system decline when people are in a state of high emotional arousal, the neural system of rational control is inhibited, and impulsive behavior is more likely to occur [6].

3.3.2 Emotional value takes priority over utilitarian value

When impulsive buying happens, consumers' criteria for product evaluation will subconsciously shift: the utilitarian value of the product steps back into a secondary position and the emotional value—the happiness of possessing the product, the excitement of participating in flash sales, the happiness of interacting with the streamer...—rises to the forefront as the primary consideration [12]. Due to the shift of value criteria, consumers make purchase decisions based on “feeling” rather than “rational calculation” [12].

3.4 Summary of Streamer Marketing Strategies

Based on the above analysis, the common strategies used by streamers in live streaming marketing to stimulate consumers' impulsive purchases can be sorted out systematically [7].

4. Influence of Platform Technology and Contextual Atmosphere on Impulsive Buying

Corresponding to the “person” dimension of streamer

characteristics, platform technology and contextual atmosphere are external stimuli at the “field” level, the second dimension in the person-product-field defined earlier.

4.1 Features of Platform Technology: From Recommendation Algorithm to Interaction Design

The technological characteristics of short video and live streaming are multi-dimensional, and the recommendation algorithm and interaction design have particularly large impacts on consumers. The technological characteristics of short video and live streaming are multi-dimensional, and the recommendation algorithm and interaction design have particularly large impacts on consumers. The technological characteristics of short video and live streaming are multi-dimensional, and the recommendation algorithm and interaction design have particularly large impacts on consumers [9]. Recommendation algorithms distribute content accurately by referring to user profiles, interest tags and historical behavioral data [9]. When algorithms constantly push product contents matching users' preferences, users will gradually find themselves in a so-called “information cocoon”, that is, people are exposed to information over a long period of time in a situation where most of the information satisfies their preferences, and as a result, they are exposed to little information matching other types [9]. Research found that personalized intelligent recommendations can significantly enhance consumers' online impulsive purchase intention, and the mechanism of action is: personalized recommendation reduces users' information search cost, and increases the surprise of serendipity, and then enhances impulsiveness of purchase [9].

At the level of interaction design, bullet comments, likes, and comments enhance user engagement through immediate feedback [11]. The results showed that the influence of platform interaction features on users' impulsive buying behavior was realized through the mediating effect of perceived value, which indicates that the degree to which interactive design makes users feel that their value has been validated is the mechanism of influencing users' impulsive buying behavior [11].

In addition, the design of gamified components is an important part of the platform technology characteristics [1]. Research on the impact of gamified components in influencer live streaming shopping found that when users are exposed to leaderboards, badges, mission challenges, etc., their competitive awareness and achievement motivation are stimulated, and the tendency of impulsive buying is enhanced [1]. Gamification design turns the purchasing process into a type of entertainment, reduces consumers' sensitivity to monetary expenditure, and makes purchase behavior more susceptible to affective influence [1].

4.2 Creation of Contextual Atmosphere: From Visual/Auditory Elements to Time Pressure

Previous studies have found that contextual cues such as color, music and expressions of streamers can affect consumers' impulsive consumption intention through the mediating effects of emotional arousal and perceived enjoyment [10].

Time pressure is also an important factor in creating contextual atmosphere: the longer the time consumers spend in the decision-making process before purchasing, the smaller the possibility of purchase occurrence; while the shorter the time consumers spend in the decision-making process before purchasing, the larger the possibility of purchase occurrence [5]. “Limited time”, “Limited quantity”, “Last 3 minutes”, “Last opportunity to buy”, “Missed out if not quick enough”, etc. In addition, visual effects such as countdown timers make consumers' decision-making time shorter [5]. This time pressure design makes consumers feel “pressure of time”: when consumers think that the quantity of the product is limited or the time for promotion is running out, they will feel a psychological pain of “loss”, and then make impulsive purchase [5]. The perceived scarcity plays an important mediating role in the relationship between time pressure and impulsive buying [5].

4.3 Mediating Mechanisms: Immersion, Social Presence and Perceived Scarcity

The reason why platform technology and contextual atmosphere will induce impulsive buying is that they trigger three kinds of psychological states in consumers: immersion, social presence and perceived scarcity [1, 5, 10].

Immersion (Flow) is a state in which a person is so totally involved in an activity that his or her attention is intensely focused on the task, the experience of time is distorted, and self-consciousness is diminished [1]. In the live streaming shopping, smooth interaction design (such as one-click purchase function), rich content presentation (such as multi-angle product display), instant feedback mechanism (such as real-time reply to bullet comment), etc. will encourage consumers to get into the state of immersion [1]. Consumers in the state of immersion will weaken the function of rational monitoring, they will be more willing to follow the recommendation of streamers and the guidance of the platform, and then show impulsive buying behavior [1].

Social Presence is the psychological sense of another's presence in a mediated environment [4]. The live streaming social presence scale including subscales of intimacy, cohesion, and instant interactivity provides an effective tool to measure social presence in the context of live streaming [4]. In the live streaming room, the rolling of bullet comments in real time, the rapid growth of likes,

the streamer talking to users with their usernames, etc. strengthen the user's feeling of "co-existing with others" [4]. When the social presence becomes stronger, the group exerts pressure on consumers. When consumers see that others have placed an order, they can't help themselves from buying impulsively [4]. This kind of mentality of being like others is the core mechanism of inducing impulsive buying by social presence [4].

Perceived Scarcity occurs when consumers feel that the amount or time is limited [5]. Regardless of whether there is scarcity in reality, the platform deliberately creates scarcity signals (as shown in Fig. 2) such as "only X left" or "X people are grabbing this" [5]. Perceived scarcity triggers consumers' competitive mentality and loss aversion mentality and makes them rush to make a purchase decision before any rational evaluation of alternatives [5]. Research has found that platform technology and contextual atmosphere characteristics of live streaming shopping significantly affect consumers' purchasing behavior and that perceived scarcity is the mediating variable [5].

In summary, the "field" factors of the platform at the platform level, through the threefold mechanism of immersion, social presence, and perceived scarcity, together with streamer characteristics, become the dual drivers of impulsive buying behavior [1,4,5].

5 Research Conclusions and Implications

5.1 Applications

Based on the above conclusions, this paper proposes the following practical recommendations for three types of stakeholders: brands and marketers, platform regulators, and consumers.

For brands and marketers: First, optimize streamers' emotional expression and interaction skills [6]. Streamers should receive systematic professional training, such as emotional expression training, interaction script design, and live streaming situational response training, to better trigger emotional contagion in consumers [6]. Second, design gamified interactive elements, but pay attention to the boundary between entertainment and consumption [1]. Gamification can trigger users' interest and increase their participation, but if it is overdesigned, for example, setting many consumption-triggering tasks or continuous reward mechanisms, users may become addicted or nauseated [1]. Therefore, there should be a balance between entertainment experience and rational consumption [1]. Third, create social presence [4]. Brands should make users feel more like members of a group through actions like bullet-comment interaction, real-time response, and addressing users by streamers to enhance users' sense of

social presence and improve conversion [4].

For platform regulators: First, regulate "limited time/quantity" marketing language [5]. Regulatory authorities should make regulations that require platforms to verify the authenticity of scarcity-related phrases and take measures to prevent false advertising [5]. Second, establish early warning mechanism of impulsive consumption [6]. When users watch live streams for a long time, platforms can prompt rational consumption reminders; when users order frequently, platforms can prompt rational consumption reminders [6]. Third, strengthen ethical supervision of streamer behavior [7]. Relevant authorities should punish behaviors such as inducing minors to consume excessively or using misleading phrases, so as to promote healthy and ethical industry development [7].

For consumers: First, improve media literacy and avoid emotional triggering methods [6]. Consumers should be aware of the mechanism of emotional contagion in live streaming marketing to avoid being unconsciously influenced [6]. Second, use "buy later" methods to avoid impulsive behavior [6]. Most shopping websites have shopping cart or save for later methods. Consumers can temporarily place items in their carts and decide whether to buy later when they have calmed down [6]. Third, avoid consumers' vulnerable states [7]. Consumers should be aware of when they are in a negative emotional state, are tired, or are in a financial crisis and consciously avoid shopping in live streaming platforms during these periods to avoid impulsive consumption [7].

5.2 Future Research Directions

Although previous research work has yielded rich findings, there are still many issues regarding the impulsive buying behavior in short video and live streaming marketing [2, 3]. Future research could explore in the following directions: Firstly, carry out longitudinal studies to investigate subsequent behaviors after impulsive buying, such as cognitive dissonance, return, and repurchase, to reveal the whole process of impulsive buying behavior [6].

Secondly, carry out cross-cultural comparisons to investigate cultural differences [2, 3]. Consumers from different cultures may react differently to the characteristics of streamers and platform context [2, 3]. For example, the impact of social presence may be more significant in a collectivist culture than in an individualistic culture [4]. Cross-cultural research could test the generalization of previous theories [2, 3].

Thirdly, introduce neuroscience methods to investigate the micro-process of impulsive buying behavior [2, 3]. Functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) and electroencephalography (EEG) methods could investigate consumers' brain responses in real-time while watching live streams and explore the neural basis of impulsive buying behavior and provide physiological evidence for

the theoretical model [2, 3].

6. Conclusion

Based on the impulsive buying behavior in short video and live streaming marketing

This study used a literature review method to sort out the key influencing factors in two dimensions: streamer characteristics and emotional mechanism, and platform technology and contextual atmosphere. The study concludes that impulsive buying behavior is the result of the synergistic effect of streamer characteristics (through emotional contagion pathway) and platform context (through the mediating mechanism of immersion, social presence, and perceived scarcity), and the whole process could be integratively explained by the S-O-R model. Individual consumer traits (such as vulnerability) play a moderating role in the above process.

Based on the above conclusions, this study proposed practical recommendations for marketers, regulators, and consumers respectively, and discussed future research directions including longitudinal tracking, cross-cultural comparisons, and neuroscience approaches.

Theoretical significance: Theoretical significance lies in the integration of scattered theoretical perspectives from existing research to build a comprehensive analytical framework of “person-field” dual factors, which offers an explicit theoretical guidance to explore impulsive behavior in digital consumption context.

Practical significance: Practical significance lies in offering practical suggestions to balance commercial gains and consumers’ benefits, which contributes to the healthy and sustainable development of the short video and live streaming marketing industry.

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