

Ritual Carnivals: A Study on the Population Effect of Live Streaming Marketing during the Double 11 Shopping Carnival Exemplified by the live streaming of Li Jiaqi

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Abstract. As a product of the combination of traditional sales and the Internet economy, live streaming is in a period of rapid development, but large-scale consumption alienation easily occur in live streaming. By comprehensively doing the literature research and integrating theory with practice, this thesis takes the consumers in the live streaming during the Double 11 shopping carnival as the research object, and explores the catalysis of carnival ceremony on population emotion and the action mechanism of group psychology in live streaming, in the combination of the psychological law of mental unity of crowds put forward by Le Bon. From the perspectives of consumers, anchors, and platforms, this thesis comes up with some prevention and control measures for group consumption alienation induced by live streaming.

Keywords: Group Psychology, Rituals, Live Streaming Marketing.

1. Research Questions

1.1 Background

Live streaming marketing, the mix of traditional and online sales, is produced by traditional consumption mindsets and a promising Internet economy. It's characterized by easy availability, low cost, and easy operation. In 2020 hard hit by the COVID-19 epidemic, the environment of domestic marketing and consumption changed. Meanwhile, offline sales turned to online live streaming marketing so as to seize the dividend of user traffic, thus the scale of live streaming marketing witnessed explosive growth. According to the 2021 Industry Research Report of Live Streaming E-commerce in China, the market scale of China's live streaming e-commerce will exceed 1.2 trillion yuan in 2020, with an annual growth rate of 197.0%. It is also estimated that the scale of live e-commerce will surpass 4.9 trillion yuan in 2023. With the participation of stars and mainstream media from all walks of life, entrepreneurs and government officials have also jumped on the bandwagon of the live streaming marketing on the Internet. Therefore, it has become a hot trend in the e-commerce economy.

As a model of ritual marketing of e-commerce, Double 11 has continuously created consumption miracles and media legends under the joint efforts of live streaming. However, the Online Survey Report on Consumer Satisfaction of Live E-commerce Shopping released by the China Consumers Association in 2020 shows that consumers in live consumption tend to be impulsive when shopping and have relatively weak risk awareness. In such a consumption atmosphere where the decision-making process is shortened, promotion speech is inductive, anchors are prestigious but goods are irrelevant, and consumers are prone to consume out of herd effects, which largely simplifies the price comparison and decision-making process, but in exchange for remorse after the impulsive consumption and sales return.

1.2 Literature Research

Both the commercial and academic fields are eager for live streaming marketing, which has the dual advantages of live streaming characterized by entertainment and e-commerce shopping experience. As for the phenomenon of live streaming, related research at present is mainly subsumed into three aspects: First, the current status and legal issues of live streaming; Secondly, the analysis

of the interaction relationship between live streaming and consumers; Thirdly, the study on the impact of live streaming on sub-sectors, such as agricultural products.

Wen Qian summed up the characteristics of live streaming marketing development in recent years, which features diversified platforms, abundant commodities types, and amassing target audiences. However, it also faces opportunities and challenges.^[1] Zhang Nailun pointed out that live streaming may be subject to various legal constraints, such as the anchor deliberately selling fake goods or being pursued criminal responsibility, the platform bearing joint liability, and fabricating false information may constitute improper competition.^[2] Bian Wenzhi affirmed the rationality of live streaming and emphasized its hidden dangers, which should be attached to great importance so as to not break the law.^[3] Xiao Hongbo, from the perspective of interactive rituals, thinks that live streaming can fully show the interactive rituals model with a causal relationship between the anchor and the consumers as well as feedback a loop.^[4] Xiao Jun and Guo Sunan used algorithmic emotion to summarize and reflect on the phenomenon of emotional communication in live streaming, which was divided into pleasant emotions, emotional trust, emotional contagion and sharing, moral emotions, and emotional performance.^[5] Li Haijiao discussed the game between live streaming mode and consumer psychology. Meanwhile, she put forward how to further improve the conversion rate of live streaming.^[6] Xu Zengzhan, based on the perspective of interactive ritual chains, believed that the results of live interactive ritual marketing stimulate group identity, and enable participants to gain emotional energy which was condensed into collective symbols and moral experiences.^[7]

Apart from recognizing the rapid development and promising prospects of live streaming marketing, many scholars question and worry about its problems. They believe platforms, businesses, and relevant departments should perform their duties and take timely actions to ensure their sound development. Most scholars' research mainly focuses on the description of its development status, while few scholars pay attention to the problem of large-scale consumption alienation of groups in live streaming marketing. For example, why is there large-scale impulsive consumption in the live streaming during the Double 11 shopping carnival? Why is it difficult for the audience in the live streaming to resist the purchase induction of the anchor? Why are consumers keen to watch live streaming marketing instead of shopping themselves? Why do consumers continue to buy more after shopping in the room of live streaming marketing? Based on the psychological law of mental unity of crowds put forward by Le Bon, this paper will analyze the above questions in combination with the characteristics of ritual carnivals.

2. The Catalysis of Ritual Carnivals on Group Emotion

2.1 The Fit of Ritual Carnivals and Live Streaming Marketing

Carnival is a short-term rebellion against the hierarchical order and discipline of real life. The carnival theory put forward by Soviet thinker Bakhtin holds that "the carnival culture of the festival square is always subverting the hierarchical order and eliminating the opposition between superiority and inferiority, which also destroys serious unity, disintegrates the boundary between the official and the folk, marginalizing everything."^[8] What he said is perfectly consistent with the situation of the Double 11 live streaming marketing which is built on the virtual network. No matter what occupation or role each consumer is engaged in, he is hidden on the Internet, that is, the "mask" in Bakhtin's mind, thus realizing the anonymity and personality reconstruction of the consumers. Everyone who is equal and free with full rights to express themselves in the live streaming resists authority through consumption and carnival, releasing or temporarily forgetting the pressure of real life.

2.2 Unconscious Enlargement of Group Emotion in Ritual Carnivals

Sociologist Émile Durkheim once said in his *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* that "Rituals are behaviors produced in collective groups, which must stimulate, maintain, or reshape certain psychological states in groups." In this sense, rituals can only play a role through groups and will affect the psychology of groups. The consumption carnival of Double 11 is a ritual carnival with

the considerable influence which the whole people participate in. The collective consumption ritual it constructed makes the public gain a sense of collective belief in an unconscious state and lose themselves in the common field of Double 11^[9]. Intemperate consumption on November 11 is no longer out of needs nor the unity of material and spiritual consumption, but the consumption alienation out of self-loss.

3. Mechanism of Group Mind in Rooms of Live Streaming Marketing: Formation of Group in Psychological Sense

3.1 Group Gathering: Gathering of Network Rooms

Rooms of live streaming marketing not only virtually form the group presence, but also narrow the distance between the anchor and the consumers. Compared with the traditional offline purchase mode, online live streaming which is not limited in time and space can gather a large number of consumers in a short time. Moreover, it transforms the communication mode in purchase from traditional "one-to-one" to "one-to-many". In addition to evaluating the decoration and effects of a live streaming room, consumers can also assess the personal image and external performance of the anchor, which enhances consumers' participation through timely interaction and decisions. The anchor can communicate with the audience, and attract them by finding hot topics and showing their talents. They can also get group feedback through thumbs-ups, bullet screens, and virtual gifts. Although a large number of gathering individuals are not enough to form a group, "it builds a brand-new carnival square where many can participate relying on its unique visuality, sociality, and interactivity"^[10]. On October 20, 2021, the first day of warm-up for the Double 11 shopping festival, many users gathered in Li Jiaqi's room of live streaming marketing, with the number of viewers exceeding 200 million.

The room of live streaming marketing creates paves the way for the group consensus. Each anchor has a unique virtual room of live streaming marketing, which forms a barrier effectively isolating external information and temporarily blocking the audience's other access to information. Therefore, the audience are placed in a group with anchors and highly homogeneous consumption behavior. There will also be a subtle connection between the audience in this room, and the audience will be interested in words with the same or contrary ideas as themselves on the bullet screens. Over time, with different opinions weakened or even dispelled, the groups in the room will establish a strong consensus among groups, thus forming the information cocoon in live streaming rooms.

3.2 Group Formation: Desire, Suggestion, Contagion

As for the group formation in the psychological sense, with instinctive desire as its condition, contagion, and suggestion as means, the de-personalization is undergone.

3.2.1 Instinctive Desire

Unrealized desire, that is, the failure to satisfy individual instinctive desire, constitutes the initial condition of the psychological group formation. The anonymity of the Internet and groups combined with the ritual carnival make individuals hiding in the community vent their instinctive desires. Users can get satisfaction and happiness by watching live streaming marketing, which adjusts the depression and stress brought by their life and work. The audience entering the live streaming room has the perceptual consumption demand and prefers the bargain. Meanwhile, the continuous commodity and transaction information, discounts, and reminders of group buying in virtual rooms all stimulate the individuals in the group to release their instinctive desires.

The exchange of information on the bullet screens and replies of the anchor also meet the desire of some consumers to seek attention and recognition to a great extent. These instinctive desires are restrained when individuals are alone. However, once they enter the group with affinity and recognition, such desires turn irresistible in the group formation, which strengthens the individual instinctive desire to participate in and integrate into the group again.

3.2.2 Contagion and Suggestion

Individuals are originally rational and thoughtful, but "the group blind obedience will mitigate such rationality. In the group, independent rationality of the individual will be drowned out by the group ignorance and madness", and the individual becomes impulsive and irritable to accept hints easily. When consumers gather in the same virtual room, their emotions will be unconsciously influenced by most of the contents of the bullet screen, which is contagious to other strangers at the same time.

In groups, every emotion and behavior is contagious. In the live streaming room, the non-stop communication with high excitement of the anchor stimulates consumers' shopping desire and worship in all aspects. Apart from saying "This is the lowest price in the whole network" and explaining to the masses the hard-won discount, anchors also show the popularity of the product and gave the first hint to consumers that this is a bargain. When the audience in the live streaming room continuously sees the purchased information on the screen, group suggestions are also sent to isolated individuals. Influenced by the key opinion leaders and group suggestions, those who were originally indifferent or hesitant are also stimulated by this emotional atmosphere. Thus, individuals are prone to take actions expected by groups because of irresistible impulses and a desire for recognition. The group emotions are also easily copied. One person's opposition will be submerged by the homogeneous opinions of tens of millions of people in live streaming rooms. When individuals are infected by angry group opinions, they tend to imitate each other and behave similarly. Finally, attacked by groups, the heterogeneous opinions disappear.

3.2.3 Depersonalization

Driven by instinctive desire and the interactive contagion and suggestion, consumers in the live streaming room experience the depersonalization, and then enter the consumer groups dominated by emotions. "In addition to the disappearance of conscious personality and the rise of unconscious personality, individuals in groups are also mainly characterized by the assimilated thoughts and emotions due to suggestion and contagion, and the tendency to turn suggested ideas into actions."^[11] After becoming a fan of the live broadcast room, every product information released by the room is particularly noticeable to consumers and fans. Individuals no longer spend time and energy comparing and screening their favorite products but succumb to the consistent opinions of the anchors and groups in the live streaming room. At this time, the goods purchased by individuals and the taste of consumers are almost consistent in the group. The live streaming room attracts independent individuals to the group through depersonalization, which leads to blind herd consumption.

3.3 Group Leaders: Assertion, Repetition, Influence

Anchor, an important part of live streaming shopping, is also the guide for consumers in this process. To a great extent, it affects consumers' preferences and purchasing intentions as the opinion leader among consumers. Le Bon believes that "because a group exaggerates its feelings, it will only be moved by extreme feelings. Speakers who want to move the group must speak rudely and assert themselves. They also have to be exaggerated, eloquent, repeated, and never prove anything by reasoning."^[12] In the live streaming, anchors introduce and recommend goods to consumers according to the information obtained during the product selection. Moreover, they adopt the methods of assertion, repetition, and influence mentioned by Le Bon to transform the voice of marketers into that of consumer groups. After introducing the products, Li Jiaqi will immediately make a concise and powerful assertion, that is, "OMG" and "buy it", which are rooted in consumers' minds by repeated emphasis. Therefore, the bullet screen and the anchor began to remind the consumers that many transaction orders have been reached. At this time, the rendering of anchors' marketing speech and the impact of group purchase volume formed the so-called popular opinion and "the powerful contagion"^[13]. Therefore, consumers in the live streaming room couldn't help purchasing.

In addition, the anchor will also use vivid language to promote and create selling points for goods in the live streaming. As Le Bon said, "What affects the imagination of the masses is not the facts

themselves, but the way they're attracted."^[14] They can grasp the most inner thoughts of consumers and say highly inductive words.^[15] When selling lipstick, Li Jiaqi told consumers exaggerated words such as "people around you will be attracted to you" and "you are a star when you wear it", which aroused consumers' attention and imagination. With their nature and desire for beauty stimulated and enlarged, consumers who have the impulse to consume change from potential consumers to actual buyers.

3.4 Group Identity: A Sense of Identity and Solidarity

Gathering from independent individuals to groups, people construct group identity with a sense of unity among members through group communication and interaction.

anchors foster group identity through emotional transmission, that is, the emotional resonance produced by mutual interaction. When people entered the live streaming room at first, all parties were unfamiliar individuals due to their self-protection and personality. At this time, still as single onlookers, most consumers have not yet stimulated the group identity. With an open attitude, the anchor warmly welcomes the audience and sends out a signal to the audience that they're family, which greatly shortens the distance between the anchor and consumers, meeting the psychological demands of the audience eager to be recognized by others. Meanwhile, the anchor will inform the price, function, and target audience of the product. The audience in the live streaming rooms can also ask questions directly through the bullet screen or even bargain with the anchor. In addition to regular interactions such as product explanation, answering questions, and lottery, the anchor will actively share private stories with the audience, creating intimacy by chatting with friends. When the audience changes from indifferent bystanders to active group members, the group unity and identity will become stronger and stronger. According to the survey, subjective factors closely related to the anchor, such as "the anchors' description highlighting the value of goods" (35.1%), "the hot atmosphere in the live streaming room" (22.7%), "the interaction between anchors and the audience" (14.4%)^[16], are also the driving force for consumption.

Consumers produce emotional identity through collective participation, that is, the unity produced by the group interaction. Every individual in the live streaming room can talk intimately and even call each other "sisters" or "family", which narrows the distance. Then by participation, communication, bargains, team buying, and purchase, each individual feels a sense of unity among members through their consistent actions and targets. For example, in the first wave of pre-sale of the Double 11 shopping carnival, the final sales of live streaming marketing in Li Jiaqi's room reached 10.653 billion yuan. Consumers jokingly called themselves participants in the 10 billion project. This high goal is the achievement jointly made by consumer groups, which will also enhance the group identity and unity to a certain extent, triggering a more positive impression of individuals on groups.

4. Reflection and Countermeasures

To guide consumers to avoid herd consumption and reduce the large-scale group consumption alienation in live streaming, this paper puts forward prevention and control measures from the perspectives of consumers, anchors, and platforms.

4.1 Consumers: Enhance Self-Awareness and Media Literacy

With strong interactivity and timeliness, live streaming marketing captures consumers' demands of consumption and emotions. However, it is difficult for them in the live streaming room to be fully rational in meeting their demands. Instead, they are immersed in highly excited group emotions. Consumers should enhance their sense of autonomy, refuse temptation, and be sober in the Double 11 shopping carnival. At the same time, they're obliged to improve their awareness of rational consumption and avoid the unnecessary herd and impulsive consumption. For the consumption in the live streaming room is carried out through the network media, consumers should also pay attention

to the promotion of media literacy, prevent being biased by ulterior motives, and not trust the data in the live streaming room.

4.2 Platform: Strengthen Supervision and Standardize Operation

In the prosperous development of live streaming marketing, some platforms driven by interests neglect supervision and ignore anchors' misconduct. Even worse, some overlook the bullet screen which has the potential to stir up conflicts in the room, challenging people's moral bottom line. As a new platform for marketing, to realize sustainable and rapid development, it must not only assume the management responsibility and prevent the disorder in time but also raise the threshold of marketing anchors. Moreover, it should improve the relevant assessment mechanism, strengthen the supervision, and protect the legitimate rights and interests of consumers, so as to standardize the operation.

4.3 Anchor: Sincere Marketer Instead of Offender

As the guide and opinion leader of consumers' shopping behavior, anchors' words and deeds may have an impact on the audience. Some anchors' false propaganda, misleading price, and order induction violate consumers' right to know the truth and make decisions. Therefore, in addition to professional and excellent ability in marketing, the anchor should also be equipped with morality and legal awareness. They can't just focus on sales promotion but ignore the quality control of products and sincere communication. The anchors need to remind themselves to constantly improve their professional ability and strengthen the self-morality. Only when they internalize the professional and civic ethics and take them into actions can they become well-known instead of the culprit of group alienation consumption.

5. Conclusion

The combination of ritual carnival and live streaming marketing contributes to the sales miracle of the Double 11 shopping festival in the live streaming rooms and large-scale group consumption alienation. In this process, except for the catalysis of carnival to the original group desire and the virtual cyberspace gathering, the group suggestion and contagion, the exaggeration of group leaders, and the group recognition all make individuals in the group fall into irrationality and purchase. In order to avoid infringement of consumers' rights and interests under the influence of group psychology, consumers should keep awake, platforms should take responsibility, and anchors should strengthen self-cultivation. Only when the three make common progress and cooperate together can the consumption alienation and public doubts be reduced, so as to promote this new industry by leaps and bounds.

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