

The Impact of Immersive Experiences on Consumer Purchase Intentions in E-Commerce Live Streaming: An Examination of Hedonic, Utilitarian, and Social Values

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Abstract

E-commerce live streaming can create immersive experiences for consumers, yet the impact of such experiences on consumer purchase behavior in this context remains underexplored. Utilizing SOR theory, this study investigates how immersive experiences affect consumers' purchase intentions through perceived hedonic, utilitarian, and social values. Data were collected through an online survey using convenience sampling in China, yielding 405 valid responses. Structural equation modeling was employed for data analysis. The results indicate that immersive experiences positively influence all three dimensions of perceived value, with the greatest impact on social value. Additionally, hedonic, utilitarian, and social values all positively affect purchase intentions, with hedonic value having the strongest influence. These findings offer valuable theoretical and practical insights for researchers and marketers.

Keywords: Immersive Experience; Consumer Purchase Intentions; E-Commerce Live Streaming; Social values

Introduction

In recent years, the rapid development of live-stream shopping has been fueled by the emergence of 5G technology and the integration of media. Compared to traditional online shopping, live-stream shopping offers an engaging and immersive visual experience through video streaming, thereby enhancing consumers' sense of personal involvement (Zhang, 2023). Driven by e-commerce and mobile internet technologies, live-stream shopping has emerged as a modern shopping approach, overcoming the limitations of traditional online shopping. By facilitating real-time interaction and communication within live-stream rooms, it addresses the issue of consumers' inability to fully understand and experience products. Consequently, it significantly enhances the consumer shopping experience (Yang et al., 2021). This innovative shopping model has transformed the online shopping environment, shifting the focus from a product-oriented space to a virtual shopping space that prioritizes social interaction, entertainment, and customer satisfaction (Wongkitrungrueng et al., 2020). By reducing the search costs associated with acquiring relevant information and improving shopping efficiency, live-stream shopping has become one of the most popular online shopping models in recent times (Wongkitrungrueng et al., 2020). As a result, the in-depth collaboration between live-streaming and various industries has sparked interest in exploring the factors and pathways that influence viewers' willingness to engage in consumption behaviors on live-stream platforms. This research direction has garnered significant attention in both academic and business circles (Huang et al., 2023).

With the advancement of live-streaming technology and the evolution of online sales platforms, live-stream marketing has emerged as a novel online sales model. This approach involves hosts disseminating product information to users via live-stream platforms. By presenting products in a more interactive and immersive manner, hosts are able to effectively encourage user purchases (Xie et al., 2019). As the live-stream commercial marketing model establishes itself as a new traffic channel, the "live-stream +" strategy—facilitating collaborative development across various industries—has become a central focus in the strategic planning of leading e-commerce platforms, garnering significant attention from both industry practitioners and academic researchers (Hu, 2017; Lu, 2018; Gong et al., 2021). In this context, the present study seeks to address the following research questions: (1) How does immersive experience impact consumers' purchase intention? (2) Will immersive experience influence perceived value, which in turn, influence consumers' purchase intentions?

The research objectives were developed from the information which was analyzed from reviewing the literature of book, text, and journal articles and are presented below:

1. To study immersive experience affect consumers' purchase intention in a live streaming context.
2. To study immersive experience and Purchase intention by hedonic value, utilitarian value and social value.

Literature Review

E-commerce Live Streaming

Live streaming is regarded as an advancement in the field of e-commerce, representing a new form of online business that combines real-time social interaction with marketing (Cai et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2021; Gao, 2023). Some scholars classify it as a variant of e-commerce characterized by social commerce features (Sun et al., 2019; Li et al., 2021). Many researchers describe e-commerce live streaming as a process in which hosts showcase and promote marketing transactions through verbal descriptions, product demonstrations, and trial experiences within the live-stream domain (Feng et al., 2020). A key feature of live streaming is its two-way real-time interaction (Ma et al., 2023), which fosters richer interpersonal relationships and provides consumers with an "immersive" shopping experience, owing to the high frequency of these interactions (Wongkitrungrueng et al., 2020). As consumers' focus in the live-stream shopping process shifts from a product-oriented shopping environment to a virtual online space centered on social interaction, entertainment, and consumer needs, the role of the host becomes increasingly crucial (Xu et al., 2020). In the live streaming model, the channels through which consumers access information are diverse (Lin, 2021). On one hand, the live-streaming interface provides direct access to shopping details, such as exclusive discounts and best-seller rankings. On the other hand, hosts offer consumers a realistic sense of the products through real-time interactions and comprehensive presentations (Su, 2019). Additionally, with regard to the speed of information dissemination, users can acquire product details more quickly and recognize the value of discounts more readily while watching live streams (Gong et al., 2019).

Immersive Experience

As early as the late 1990s, Hoffman et al. (1996) pioneered the concept of immersive experience in online environments. Since then, many scholars have shifted their research focus to the online domain, covering areas such as online gaming, online education, and online shopping. Factors such as engagement (Pelet et al., 2017), concentration (Dai et al., 2015), virtual reality (Hoffman et al., 1996), user interactivity, and the balance between task ability and challenge (Wu et al., 2020) all influence the manifestation of immersive experiences. Interactivity not only enhances the sense of presence but also increases consumer engagement, effectively blurring the line between online and physical shopping. When consumers can easily find their target products during shopping and quickly complete activities or games to satisfy their needs, a balance between task skills and task challenges is achieved, which is a prerequisite for the emergence of an immersive experience (Wu et al., 2020). Additionally, the hedonic attributes of the shopping environment can further facilitate the occurrence of flow experiences (Dai et al., 2015). Interaction promotes the formation of social presence, and this sense of social presence—whether with the platform, the host, or other consumers—is sufficient to help consumers quickly enter an immersive experience state (Ma et al., 2023). The credibility and appeal of live-stream information can also more accurately retain customers and capture their attention, thereby triggering an immersive experience (Lin et al., 2021). Similarly, in the context of e-commerce live streaming, a significant association has been found between immersive experiences and consumers' purchase intentions (Feng et al., 2020).

Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) theory

The SOR theory (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) was originally developed to analyze and explain how human behavior is influenced by the surrounding environment. It has since been applied to other fields such as management and commerce (Chen et al., 2022), making it one of the most important theories for exploring how individual emotions and behaviors are affected by environmental factors (Wu, 2020). The theory was first introduced to the retail field by Rossiter and Donovan in 1982, focusing on how external situations, products, and subjective experiences influence consumers' purchase intentions and behaviors. In this context, SOR theory is used to explain consumer behavior, with marketing efforts and the external environment serving as stimuli, and consumers' decisions to purchase as specific responses. The SOR theory has validated that online atmospheres can induce feelings of pleasure in consumers and positively influence their shopping intentions (Chen et al., 2021). Drawing from this theory, factors such as authenticity, visibility, interactivity, and entertainment have been categorized as external stimuli in live streaming, revealing that different characteristics of live streams significantly influence both goal-oriented and impulsive purchasing behaviors to varying degrees (Liu et al., 2020). Researchers have widely utilized the SOR model to study the impact of environmental features on consumer purchasing behaviors and intentions. In this study, we conceptualize stimuli as the immersive experience, while organism is assessed through the dimensions of hedonic, utilitarian, and social value. The response is evaluated by measuring purchase intention.

The Impact of Immersive Experience on Perceived Value

As market competition intensifies, the role of consumers has become increasingly prominent. The impact of consumers' perceived value on businesses has grown significantly, attracting widespread attention from both academia and industry. Zeithaml (1988) was the first to clearly distinguish customer perceived value from other similar concepts, defining it

as the overall assessment of the utility of a product or service, based on the trade-off between perceived benefits and the costs of acquiring the product or service. Subsequent scholars have offered various definitions of customer perceived value, but they generally align with Zeithaml's core perspective. Based on this understanding, this study posits that perceived value reflects the consumer's overall assessment after using a product or service recommended or purchased through live streaming.

In the field of consumer behavior, the concept of perceived value involves an individual's overall assessment of the usefulness of a product, taking into account both perceived benefits and perceived drawbacks. The perceived drawbacks include the sacrifices that individuals believe they must make in terms of cost, time, and effort (Liu et al., 2020). By developing a model to analyze the impact of live streaming on apparel consumers' purchase intention, Xu et al. (2020) found that the host, the live streaming format, and product information all significantly positively influence the intention. Perceived value acts as a mediator in the relationship between these factors and purchase intention. Other researchers concluded that increasing the host's professionalism, interactivity, and popularity can enhance consumers' perceptions of entertainment and utilitarian value, thereby influencing their purchase intentions (Gahlot et al., 2019). A more recent study examined the factors affecting consumers' purchase intention in e-commerce live streaming and found that utilizing promotional cues and building trust can enhance consumers' perceptions of usefulness and entertainment. This, in turn, significantly positively impacts their purchase intention (Hewei, 2022). Similarly, high-quality content, promotional offers, the presence of influential figures, and entertainment activities positively affect trust, functional value, and emotional value perceptions, ultimately leading to increased purchase intentions (Wang et al., 2021). Based on existing research findings, we propose the following hypotheses:

H1: Consumers' immersive experience positively influence their perceived hedonic value.

H2: Consumers' immersive experience positively influence their perceived utilitarian value.

H3: Consumers' immersive experience positively influence their perceived social value.

The Impact of Perceived Value on Purchase Intention

Perceived value is a subjective judgment made by consumers based on individual characteristics and perceptions, and it is a critical factor influencing purchase intentions (Qing & Jin, 2022). In the context of e-commerce live streaming, perceived value reflects consumers' evaluations or attitudes toward live-streamed products, serving as a key driver for making purchase decisions. Some scholars have analyzed the positive impact of perceived value on consumer behavior and purchase intentions from the perspectives of utilitarian and hedonic values (Pahnila & Warsta, 2010). Others have examined the influence of perceived value on social identity and consumer attitudes from the perspectives of social and emotional value (Petrick & Backman, 2002). A substantial body of research indicates that perceived value originates from consumers' perceptions of product or service quality, with higher perceived quality leading to stronger purchase intentions (Parasuraman, 1997; Xiao, 2021). Therefore, predicting consumer purchase intentions based on perceived value is feasible. Given these factors, the probability of consumers choosing to purchase a specific product is jointly determined by subjective attitudes and external environments (Jiang, 2020; Yan et al., 2021). Accordingly, we predict that:

- H4: Hedonic value positively influences consumers' purchase intention.*
- H5: Utilitarian value positively influences consumers' purchase intention.*
- H6: Social value positively influences consumers' purchase intention.*

Research Methodology

Sample, Sampling, and Data Collection

The study primarily targets Chinese adults aged above 20, who have frequently engaged in live-streaming shopping over the past three months. The study used a self-administered structured questionnaire, which received approval from STIU-HREC045/2024 in Thailand. A convenience sampling method was employed to gather data through an online survey. The survey was distributed via digital channels, including email and WeChat. The sample size was calculated using the Cochran formula, with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, yielding a required sample size of 385 (Cochran, 1977). However, 446 questionnaires were collected. After data cleaning, 405 valid samples were retained for the final analysis.

This study presents a conceptual framework, illustrated in Figure 1.

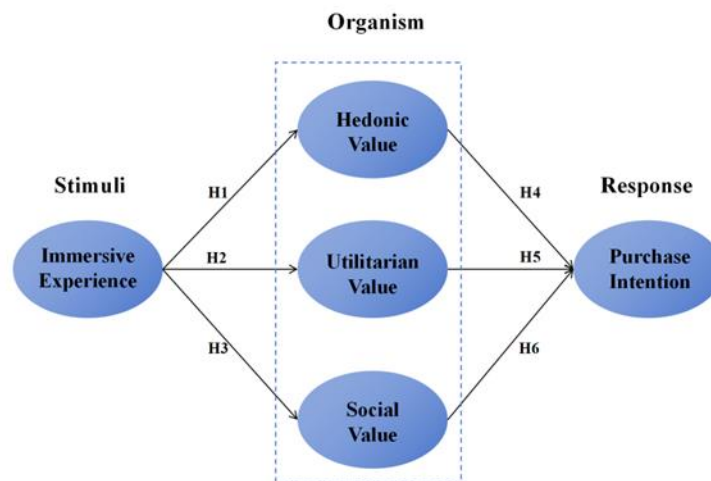


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Data Analysis Method

In this study, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed to analyze the data and test the proposed hypotheses. SEM integrates confirmatory factor analysis and path analysis into a unified framework. This multivariate statistical technique enables the simultaneous estimation of multiple interrelated dependent relationships (Hair et al., 2013; Sakdapat, 2023).

Results

Descriptive Analysis

Among the 405 valid questionnaires collected, 211 (52.10%) were completed by female respondents. Approximately half of the respondents were over 36 years old and held a bachelor's degree, indicating that a significant majority of the sample had higher education. The majority of respondents were employed in private companies, accounting for 53.55% of the sample. Additionally, nearly half (45.50%) of the respondents reported watching live streams for 1 to 3 hours per session.

Reliability and Validity Evaluation

All constructs have Cronbach's alpha values exceeding 0.7, indicating that the results of this study meet the necessary reliability threshold (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). This confirms that the reliability conditions are satisfied. On the other hand, validity ensures that the measurements accurately represent the research concepts, and structural validity is primarily assessed through convergent validity and discriminant validity. Convergent validity is evaluated using Composite Reliability (CR), factor loadings, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) (Hair et al., 2013; Hanafizadeh et al., 2014). Table 1 shows that the standardized factor loadings exceed 0.50, indicating significant relationships between each latent variable and its corresponding observed variables. Additionally, the AVE values for all constructs are greater than 0.5, and the CR values are above 0.7, demonstrating good convergent validity for the variables in this study. Discriminant validity is assessed by comparing the square root of AVE for each latent variable with the correlations between that variable and others. As shown in the table 2, the correlation coefficients between variables are less than the square root of the AVE for each latent variable, indicating good discriminant validity among the constructs.

Table 1 Convergent Validity Results

Variant	Items	Coef.	S.E.	C.R.	Std.E	AVE	CR
IE	IE1	1.000			0.754	0.618	0.829
	IE2	1.150	0.075	15.377	0.833		
	IE3	1.079	0.074	14.543	0.770		
HV	HV1	1.000			0.717	0.523	0.814
	HV2	0.969	0.078	12.255	0.708		
	HV3	0.987	0.078	12.647	0.728		
	HV4	1.072	0.084	12.802	0.740		
UV	UV1	1.000			0.772	0.615	0.889
	UV2	1.029	0.060	17.017	0.821		
	UV3	0.964	0.060	15.943	0.775		
	UV4	1.022	0.062	16.507	0.799		
	UV5	0.893	0.058	15.421	0.752		
SV	SV4	1.000			0.748	0.592	0.853
	SV3	1.055	0.071	14.898	0.789		
	SV2	1.101	0.074	14.831	0.785		
	SV1	1.039	0.073	14.317	0.756		
PI	PI1	1.000			0.743	0.590	0.812
	PI2	1.021	0.073	13.917	0.786		
	PI3	1.012	0.073	13.800	0.775		

IE=Immersive Experience; HV=Hedonic Value; UV=Utilitarian Value; SV=Social Value; PI=Purchase Intention

Table 2 Discriminant Validity

	IE	HV	UV	SV	PI
IE	0.786				
HV	0.200	0.723			
UV	0.250	0.218	0.784		
SV	0.269	0.268	0.321	0.769	
PI	0.434	0.388	0.401	0.388	0.768

IE=Immersive Experience; HV=Hedonic Value; UV=Utilitarian Value; SV=Social Value; PI=Purchase Intention

Measurement and Structural Model Analysis

The structural model demonstrated a good fit with the data. As shown in Table 3, the χ^2/df value is 1.408, which is less than 3, and the RMSEA value is 0.032, which is below 0.08. Additionally, the GFI, AGFI, CFI, TLI, and IFI values all exceed 0.8, indicating that the model fits well. The fit indices listed in the table generally meet the established standards (Hu and Bentler, 1999; Norton et al., 2020).

Table 3 Fit Indices of structural models

Fit indices	χ^2/df	GFI	AGFI	CFI	TLI	IFI	RMSEA
Recommended	<3	>0.8	>0.8	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9	<0.08
Structural Model	1.408	0.888	0.865	0.960	0.957	0.961	0.032

Hypothesis Testing

As anticipated, the results from the structural model reveal that immersive experience significantly impacts hedonic value ($\beta = .335, p < .001$), utilitarian value ($\beta = .356, p < .001$), and social value ($\beta = .369, p < .001$), thereby confirming support for H1, H2, and H3. Furthermore, hedonic value ($\beta = .292, p < .001$), utilitarian value ($\beta = .289, p < .001$), and social value ($\beta = .256, p < .001$) all positively influence purchase intention, supporting H4, H5, and H6. Table 4 provides a summary of the analysis results.

Table 4 Results of Analysis

No.	Path	β	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Result
H1	IE→HV	0.335	0.336	0.062	5.407	***	Supported
H2	IE→UV	0.356	0.443	0.073	6.062	***	Supported
H3	IE→SV	0.369	0.407	0.067	6.105	***	Supported
H4	HV→PI	0.292	0.328	0.067	4.921	***	Supported
H5	UV→PI	0.289	0.262	0.051	5.132	***	Supported
H6	SV→PI	0.256	0.262	0.058	4.502	***	Supported

Conclusion and Discussion

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the influence of immersive experiences on Chinese consumers' purchase intentions within the context of e-commerce live streaming. The study draws several key conclusions. First, it reveals a significant positive relationship between immersive experiences in e-commerce live streaming and consumers' perceived hedonic, utilitarian, and social value. This outcome is consistent with previous research by Chen et al. (2022), Zhang et al. (2022), and Deng (2020). Notably, immersive experiences exert the strongest impact on perceived social value. Our findings demonstrate that when consumers engage in live streaming events that are highly immersive, they tend to perceive greater enjoyment (hedonic value), practical benefits (utilitarian value), and social connections or status (social value) from the experience. Consumers are not merely purchasing products; they are also participating in an enjoyable activity that captures their attention and interest. This aligns with the idea that shopping, especially in an interactive setting like live streaming, can be a source of pleasure and excitement. Immersive experiences often provide detailed product demonstrations, real-time interaction with hosts, and immediate responses to questions. This makes the shopping process more efficient and informative, allowing consumers to make more informed decisions, which they perceive as a valuable aspect of the shopping experience. In live streaming, there is often a communal aspect where viewers can interact with the host and other viewers, creating a sense of connection and shared experience. Consumers might feel part of a special group or gain social recognition by engaging with popular or trendy live streamers, which enhances their social value perception.

Second, our findings indicate that consumers' hedonic, utilitarian, and social values all positively influence their purchase intentions, consistent with the results of Xiao (2021), Herrera et al. (2019), Zhang (2021), Shi et al. (2021), and Wang et al. (2018). Among these, hedonic value stands out as the most influential factor in shaping consumers' purchase intentions. This emphasizes that consumers are not merely driven by the functional or practical benefits of a product (utilitarian value) or by the social implications of their purchases (social value), but they are strongly motivated by the pleasure, enjoyment, and emotional satisfaction they derive from the shopping experience itself. In e-commerce live

streaming, where the environment is highly interactive and engaging, consumers are likely to be drawn in by the entertainment and the immersive experiences that make shopping feel more enjoyable and less transactional. This emotional engagement can create a stronger connection between the consumer and the product or brand, leading to a higher likelihood of purchase.

Theoretical Contributions

Theoretically, this study enhances the understanding of consumer perceived value in immersive live shopping experiences by categorizing it into hedonic, utilitarian, and social values. The research validates the positive influence of immersive experiences on these three value types and demonstrates their subsequent impact on consumer purchase intentions. This work not only enriches the existing literature on live streaming but also extends the application of the SOR theory. By providing empirical evidence on consumer behavior in live streaming contexts, it establishes a foundation for future research and offers additional empirical support for previous studies (Gong et al., 2019; Xie et al., 2019; Jiang, 2020; Novak et al., 2000; Wu et al., 2020; Huang et al., 2023).

Practical Implications

Creating immersive live streaming experiences allows businesses to enhance the hedonic value, making shopping more enjoyable and emotionally engaging, which in turn boosts customer satisfaction and viewer engagement. The utilitarian value of these experiences helps consumers make well-informed decisions, increasing their confidence and leading to higher sales and conversion rates. Furthermore, the social value fosters a sense of community, strengthening brand loyalty, encouraging repeat purchases, and driving word-of-mouth promotion. Our findings highlight the importance for businesses to focus on crafting enjoyable and engaging live streaming experiences that resonate emotionally with consumers. By enhancing the hedonic aspects of their live streams, businesses can deepen consumer engagement, increase immediate purchase intentions, and cultivate long-term loyalty and brand attachment.

Recommendations

First of all, paying attention to consumer needs and making personalized recommendations is an important direction of live marketing. Through live marketing, it can promote personalized product recommendations to better meet the actual needs of customers. In the process of live broadcasting, the anchor can quickly understand the audience's needs by utilizing the real-time interactive features and flexibly adjust the live broadcast content according to the audience's feedback, thus effectively improving the consumer's sense of participation. In addition, the webcast platform should be committed to optimizing the scene settings and user interface design to enhance the visibility of the product. During the live broadcast, the anchor needs to fully display the products, enhance the authenticity and sense of scene of the products, and endeavor to create an experience similar to offline shopping for customers. At the same time, the anchor can also establish a closer connection with the audience through a way that is closer to the life of consumers, and provide timely answers to questions raised by consumers in the comment section in order to further enhance interactivity.

Second, strengthen the anchor's professional skills to enhance consumer trust. In an environment flooded with information, consumers are eager to obtain expert advice, so the professionalism of the anchor becomes an important foundation for consumers to build trust. Given the obvious Matthew effect in the live e-commerce industry, anchors should utilize their influence to secure more discounts and select high-quality goods. When the anchor masters a series of professional knowledge and gradually becomes an opinion leader in a certain field, consumer trust will be further enhanced. In addition, anchors need to continuously improve their professional capabilities and gain an in-depth understanding of the performance and composition of commodities in order to enhance consumers' perceived trust and perceived value.

Finally, it is crucial to add entertaining segments to enhance consumers' mindstream experience. One of the reasons consumers choose to watch live streams is to kill time and reduce stress. Therefore, entertaining segments designed around this need can effectively attract and retain potential consumers. Adding incentives to live streaming can significantly boost consumers' impulse buying behavior. Therefore, e-commerce platforms should consider adding more creative and entertaining segments to maximize consumers' emotions. Through these entertaining segments, consumers can not only participate in the interaction with the anchors, but also establish an emotional connection with the anchors, which will resonate with them psychologically, and then increase their willingness to purchase the products recommended by the anchors.

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