

From Viewers to Buyers: Drivers of Customer Engagement in E-Commerce Livestreaming

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the drivers of customer engagement in e-commerce livestreaming, examining the roles of livestreamer attributes and of community support. With data from 532 Chinese livestreaming customers, we examine the effects of livestreamer credibility and attractiveness, together with informational and emotional support from the community, on customer engagement. Findings reveal that livestreamer credibility is the only positive driver of customer engagement. Emotional support from the community reduces engagement. Livestreamer attractiveness and credibility enhance emotional and informational support within the community, respectively, but neither type of support positively influences customer engagement. These results challenge assumptions about the uniformly beneficial nature of community interactions and underscore the pivotal role of livestreamer credibility in driving engagement. The study contributes to theoretical frameworks on customer engagement and on source credibility models offering actionable insights for e-commerce livestreaming platforms.

KEYWORDS

Livestreaming, E-Commerce, Customer Engagement, Source Model, Online Community, PLS-SEM

INTRODUCTION

China leads the world in livestreaming, according to Goldman Sachs, an investment bank (Liu, 2017, p. 4). China already has the highest share of online sales over total retail sales across the globe, and livestreaming e-commerce accounts for 12% of all online sales. In this article, we examine e-commerce livestreaming, which is experiencing explosive growth rates, with total sales in excess of USD \$400 billion in 2022, up from USD \$3 billion in 2017, implying that the market has been approximately tripling in size each year during this time (Arora et al., 2021). Approximately 30% of Chinese internet users, some 265 million customers, buy products sold via e-commerce livestreaming. The Chinese government has supported the rapid growth of e-commerce livestreaming, calling the industry the “new engine” (Toh & Wang, 2020, p. 1) of e-commerce growth and encouraging livestreaming as a possible solution to stubbornly high unemployment rates in parts of the country.

The impact of live-streaming e-commerce, however, is not restricted to China: In the United States, social commerce sales were expected to surpass \$87 billion in 2024, accounting for approximately 7% of all e-commerce sales with an annual growth rate exceeding 24% (Sheridan et al., 2022).

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E-commerce livestreaming is a novel digital platform that combines online shopping with social interaction, allowing users to engage with both other viewers and livestream hosts in real time (Cai et al., 2018; Cui et al., 2022; Li et al., 2024; Sun et al., 2019; Zhao et al., 2023). In e-commerce livestreaming, customer engagement (CEM) is a critical success factor because engagement is directly linked to customer purchases (Busalim et al., 2023; Hu & Chaudhry, 2020; Li, Li, & Cai, 2021; Luo et al., 2024; Sun et al., 2019; Wongkitrungrueng & Assarut, 2020; Zheng et al., 2022).

Researchers have made substantial progress in examining important antecedents to CEM in this context. Despite significant progress, our understanding of how interactions between livestreamers and the online community influence CEM remains limited: Livestreaming e-commerce can be seen as a dynamic system with its own evolving structure, centered on two key elements: (a) the livestreamers and (b) the online community. The question “How do livestreamers and their community affect CEM?” warrants further exploration.

The research gap that this study addresses focuses on our limited understanding of how livestreamer characteristics and community interactions shape CEM in e-commerce livestreaming.

The article is structured as follows. First, we examine the context of social e-commerce and livestreaming e-commerce. Next, we outline the source model relevant to livestreamers and the concept of social support within the livestream e-commerce community. We then present our research model and test our hypotheses in a study with 532 Chinese consumers.

The findings reveal that livestreamer credibility (LC) is the only positive driver of CEM. Emotional support (ES) from the community reduces engagement. Livestreamer attractiveness (LA) and credibility (LC) enhance ES and informational support (IS) within the community, respectively, but neither type of support positively influences CEM. These results challenge assumptions about the uniformly beneficial nature of community interactions and underscore the pivotal role of LC in driving engagement. We then relate our model to key themes in livestream e-commerce research, propose areas for further research, and conclude with a summary of the article’s contributions.

Literature Review and Theoretical Background

Social Commerce and Livestreaming E-Commerce

Social commerce, a subset of e-commerce, is experiencing explosive growth. Several definitions of *social commerce* exist (Dennison et al., 2009; Leong et al., 2024; Stephen & Toubia, 2010), but key distinctive features are community-level participation and instant purchasing (Busalim et al., 2023; Leong et al., 2024; Liang et al., 2011).

The literature distinguishes between two types of social commerce (Wongkitrungrueng & Assarut, 2020): (a) e-commerce livestreaming, where online retailers, such as Taobao or Amazon, integrate social features on their platforms to drive sales (this is the focus of this article), and (2) social networking e-commerce, where users on social networks, such as Facebook, sell products or services directly to one another.

In both cases, livestreamers simultaneously broadcast and communicate through a scrolling text screen (Chen & Lin, 2018), offering customers a more immersive, informative shopping experience than that offered by physical stores. Even though livestream e-commerce is a type of social commerce, it has its own specific characteristics (Cai et al., 2018; Sun et al., 2019; Wongkitrungrueng & Assarut, 2020).

First, e-commerce livestreamers are typically professionals, unlike individuals selling products or services on social networking sites. Second, livestreamers not only show their faces, reveal their identities, and express their emotions, but also provide services or products and demonstrate products in real time (Guo et al., 2022; Liao et al., 2023; Wongkitrungrueng & Assarut, 2020; Xi et al., 2024; Xu et al., 2021). They help customers better assess products and make more informed purchasing decisions by presenting qualified product information and persuasive messages (Kim & Park, 2013; Todd & Melancon, 2018). Product endorsements by livestreamers have positive effects on customer

attitudes (Guo et al., 2022; Park & Lin, 2020) and foster customer loyalty (Hu & Chaudhry, 2020; Wohn et al., 2018; Wongkitrungrueng & Assarut, 2020).

Some studies have investigated the impact of livestreamer attributes (e.g., attractiveness [ATT], expertise [EX], trustworthiness [TR], beauty) on consumer purchase intention and perceived persuasiveness (Chen & Lin, 2018; Gao et al., 2021; Guo et al., 2022; Liao et al., 2023) as well as the relationship between these attributes and social capital formation (Heo et al., 2020). In this article, we build on previous work by applying the source model to examine how endorsements by livestreamers affect CEM. One goal of this study was thus to understand how livestreamer characteristics—credibility and attractiveness—influence CEM.

Second, the interaction between livestreamers and viewers fosters an open community that encourages the participation of a large number of viewers on the platform, helping to monetize traffic (Cai et al., 2018; Guo et al., 2021). Furthermore, as numerous studies have shown, digital platforms in various social media play an important role in enabling and sustaining online communities (De Reuver et al., 2018; Eastin & LaRose, 2005; Huysman & Wulf, 2006; Spagnoletti et al., 2015). Livestreamers provide information and engage in supportive behaviors, which can influence the community's climate (Chen & Lin, 2018; Hu et al., 2016; Park & Lin, 2020; Wohn et al., 2018). Viewers obtain information by interacting not only with co-viewers but also with livestreamers (Li et al., 2024). They can use co-viewers' bullet-screen comments as their shopping references (Sun et al., 2019; Yu et al., 2018). Moreover, online shoppers are more likely to make additional purchases on the basis of recommendations from their communities (Liang et al., 2011). We posit that these communities exercise an influence on CEM that should be investigated.

Research on the livestreaming community is, however, very limited. Some studies have focused on the process of trust transfer within the community (Guo et al., 2021; Wongkitrungrueng & Assarut, 2020). Others have explored the impact of interactions between customers and other community members (Cai et al., 2018; Hu et al., 2016). Thus, in this study we proposed a relationship perspective of livestream e-commerce. This is critical because relationships are the foundation of livestream e-commerce (Sun et al., 2019). We applied the concept of social support, one of the main social factors investigated in social commerce (Chen & Shen, 2015; Liang et al., 2011), to the domain of livestreaming e-commerce.

Thus, the second goal of this study was to examine how social support influences CEM and how livestreamer attributes affect the level of social support.

Livestreamer-Endorsement Effectiveness and Source Models

Research has shown that the endorsement of products by livestreamers significantly influences sales (Gao et al., 2021; Park & Lin, 2020). By endorsing products, livestreamers strengthen their existing ties with customers, provide information, and interact with customers, thereby driving CEM (Hu & Chaudhry, 2020; Kang et al., 2021; Luo et al., 2024; Park & Lin, 2020).

Previous studies have applied source models, namely, the source credibility model (Hovland et al., 1953; Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Ohanian, 1990) and the source attractiveness model (McGuire, 1985), to assess celebrity endorsement effectiveness. These models were originally developed for the study of communication. Both models, which focus on the qualities of the endorser, suggest that an endorser's credibility and attractiveness have a positive effect on customer attitudes, purchase intention, and persuasion (Chaiken, 1979; Erdogan, 1999; Martin & Hewstone, 2008).

Given the expansion of social media, recent studies have noted that social media influencers also have a significant endorsement effect on brand, advertising, product, and purchase intention (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Schouten et al., 2021; Weismueller et al., 2020). Compared with traditional celebrities, social media influencers are deemed more trustworthy and familiar, and contribute to higher level of TR and EX (Schouten et al., 2021; Shan et al., 2020). Most livestreamers function as influencers and resemble ordinary individuals, making it easier for customers to relate to them (Schouten et al., 2021). With the popularity of various social media platforms (Alaimo et al., 2020), the role of

livestream e-commerce has become an important platform for facilitating livestreamer-endorsement effectiveness.

The extant research indicates no differences in attitudes toward advertising, brand, and intentions to purchase endorsed brands between celebrity and noncelebrity endorsers (Mehta, 1994). Noncelebrity livestreamers can be highly influential. Therefore, this study focused on the credibility and attractiveness of the source rather than the celebrity status of the source. On the basis of this premise, we propose that the source model is a suitable framework for evaluating the effectiveness of livestreamer endorsements in the livestream e-commerce domain.

Source Credibility. *Source credibility* refers to the positive characteristics of an endorser that can affect customers' acceptance of the truthfulness of their messages (Chaiken, 1979; Ohanian, 1990). It can be understood as the extent to which an information source is perceived as credible, competent, and trustworthy by information recipients (Petty et al., 1981); thus, source credibility describes whether an individual regards a claim as fair, trustworthy, and honest. The concept of source credibility has been frequently applied in endorsement research (Osei-Frimpong et al., 2019; Schouten et al., 2021; Yuan et al., 2016). A considerable body of research has shown that information from a credible source influences customer attitudes and purchase behavior (Hovland et al., 1953; Ladhari et al., 2020; Ohanian, 1991; Dholakia & Sternthal, 1977). Endorser effectiveness in influencing customers' behavior can be explained through the source credibility model (Ohanian, 1991; Dholakia & Sternthal, 1977). According to this theoretical model, source credibility is commonly assessed on the basis of customers' perceptions of the endorser's EX, TR, and ATT (Amos et al., 2008; Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Ohanian, 1991). *Expertise* refers to the extent to which an endorser is recognized as a source of valid assumptions (Hovland et al., 1953; McCracken, 1989); *trustworthiness* refers to an endorser's integrity, honesty, and believability (Erdogan, 1999); and *attractiveness* refers to the impact that consistently liking an endorser has on message effectiveness (McGuire, 1985).

The source credibility model represents an established theory of source credibility that can be used to explain or predict message efficacy. The persuasiveness of a message depends heavily on the credibility of the message sender, and the power of a celebrity endorsement is based on the endorser's perceived level of TR and EX (Erdogan, 1999). A message that comes from a source with a high level of EX is perceived as credible and will have a significant impact in shaping beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors (Ladhari et al., 2020; Ohanian, 1991). Thus, source credibility, measurable via a multidimensional construct composed of EX, TR, and ATT, is a potentially important antecedent of CEM.

Source Attractiveness. Attractiveness includes any number of virtuous characteristics that consumers might perceive in an endorser, such as intellectual skills, personality properties, lifestyles, or athletic prowess (Erdogan, 1999).

McGuire (1985) developed the source attractiveness model, according to which an endorser's effectiveness is influenced by similarity (SI), familiarity (FA), and likability (LI). *Similarity* refers to a supposed resemblance between the source and the receiver of a message (Erdogan, 1999), *familiarity* refers to knowledge of the source gained through exposure, and *likability* refers to affection for the source that is based on the source's physical appearance and behavior (McCracken, 1989). Attributes in this model have been shown to improve customers' perceptions of advertisements and generate purchase intentions (Baker & Churchill, 1977; Petroschius & Crocker, 1989; Petty et al., 1981).

Research in the field of marketing indicates that source attractiveness is an important indicator of advertising effectiveness and that the appearance of an attractive endorser is positively correlated with the evaluation of the endorsed product (Amos et al., 2008; Yilmaz et al., 2011). Other researchers have noted the significance of source attractiveness in determining liking for the endorser, resulting in increased endorsement effectiveness (Friedman & Friedman, 1979).

Social Support in the Livestream E-Commerce Community

A distinctive feature of our research is the explicit consideration of the role of the community, in addition to livestreamer characteristics, on CEM. We note this by analyzing the role of social support received from the community.

Social support a highly important concept in psychology, refers to an individual’s experiences of being cared for, responded to, and helped by people in their social group (Cobb, 1976; Liu et al., 2023). Its two dimensions are IS and ES (Liu et al., 2023; Schaefer et al., 1981). *Informational support* refers to recommendations or knowledge that may help in problem solving; *emotional support* refers to messages involving emotional concerns, such as caring, understanding, or empathy (Liang et al., 2011).

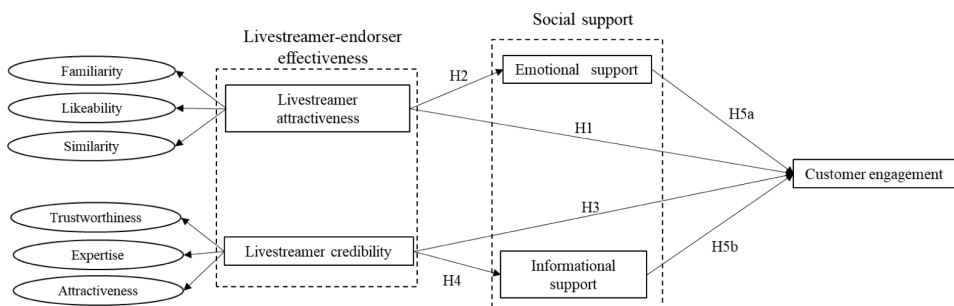
The concept of social support has received much attention in the field of social commerce, with studies noting a significant impact on purchase intention and CEM (Hajli, 2014; Liang et al., 2011; Modgil et al., 2022; Molinillo et al., 2020). However, social support has yet to be examined in the context of e-commerce livestreaming—where transactions are hosted by large, profit-driven firms (e.g., Taobao, Amazon) and where the importance of social support could be different.

In the context of social commerce, the opinions, advice, and knowledge primarily provided by peers or online friends are regarded as a vital source of information when making a decision (Chen & Lemmer, 2024; Fan et al., 2019; Hajli, 2014); however, they may not be the only source of support in the livestream e-commerce domain. During livestream shopping, customers can interact more closely not only with co-viewers (peers) but also with livestreamers. In fact, livestreaming technology allows livestreamers to build an online community (Cai & Wohn, 2019). Social support could thus facilitate CEM (Kang et al., 2021; Yu et al., 2018). On the other hand, social support, especially ES, could be perceived as insincere (Gray et al., 2020) in livestreaming e-commerce, an environment that does not have social bonding between participants as a primary objective. Thus, whether IS and ES indeed increase CEM in e-commerce livestreaming is an open question.

Hypotheses Development

In this section, we present the arguments to support the hypothetical assumption sets that are devised among selected latent variables, namely social support (IS and ES), livestreamer-endorsement effectiveness (LA and LC), and (CEM). The research model is depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Research model



Note. *H* = hypothesis.

LA

Attractiveness is an individual trait. According to McGuire (1985), it has three dimensions: (a) SI, (b) LI, and (c) FA. Studies have consistently shown that ATT exerts a strong halo effect across cultures: People tend to attribute socially desirable attributes to attractive individuals (e.g., Berscheid & Walster, 1972). So, in advertising, the ATT of the source has a positive impact on customer attitude, product

perception, and product persuasiveness (Joseph, 1982; Ohanian, 1990). In livestreaming, LA increases customer trust (Johnson & Grayson, 2005; Ziegler & Golbeck, 2007), and trust increases CEM (Wongkitrungrueng & Assarut, 2020). Thus, we formulated our first hypothesis (H):

H1: LA is positively related to CEM.

LA can have a significant impact on emotional dynamics in e-commerce livestreaming. Research indicates that ATT affects emotions and perceptions (Yilmaz et al., 2011) and that the facets of ATT—FA, LI, and SI—shape individual emotional responses (Baker & Churchill, 1977; Hass, 2014; Moreland & Zajonc, 1982). Individuals tend to be drawn to people who are likable, familiar, or similar to themselves because this reinforces their own values, attitudes, and beliefs (Byrne et al., 1971). When these factors are present, they foster a sense of connection and trust, which is critical for cultivating a supportive and positive emotional environment.

In e-commerce livestreaming, the livestreamer's perceived ATT could act as a factor that facilitates interactions that are more empathic and emotionally resonant. As participants view and engage with an attractive livestreamer, their positive emotional state may enhance their willingness to extend ES to others within the same context. The livestreamer's (LA) could thus function as a catalyst, creating a shared emotional experience among viewers that amplifies mutual support. Accordingly, we posited the following hypothesis:

H2: LA is positively related to ES.

LC

Source credibility refers to the extent to which an information source is perceived as credible, competent, and trustworthy (Goldberg & Hartwick, 1990; Peetz, 2012; Sussman & Siegal, 2003); several studies have indicated that source credibility influences customer behaviors and purchase intentions (Gong & Li, 2017; Homer & Kahle, 1990; Men et al., 2024; Zhao et al., 2020).

Livestreamers act as information sources, delivering information through customer interactions (Kang et al., 2021). Many of the products endorsed by livestreamers typically are completely unknown to the majority of potential customers. Livestreamers must actively work to establish and maintain their credibility because this plays a crucial role in encouraging customers to engage with and participate on the livestream platform. The extent to which customers trust online sellers directly affects CEM (Wongkitrungrueng & Assarut, 2020).

H3: Livestreamer credibility is positively related to CEM.

The credibility of a source influences how information is received, evaluated, and acted upon (Erdogan, 1999; Priester & Petty, 2003; Sussman & Siegal, 2003). In the context of livestreaming, a credible livestreamer serves as a trusted authority who has the power to influence customer choice (Guo et al., 2022).

Moreover, credible livestreamers create an environment where participants feel more confident discussing and sharing information because they perceive the livestreamer's EX as a foundation for meaningful interactions. Research on social influence suggests that credible sources not only inform but also motivate individuals to engage in cooperative behaviors, such as the exchange of additional relevant information (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). In this context, LC could act, again, as a catalyst for participants to emulate these behaviors, leading to an increase in IS extended to one another.

H4: Livestreamer credibility is positively related to IS.

Social Support and Customer Engagement

As discussed, social support is a multidimensional construct (Liang et al., 2011) that refers to IS and ES provided to participants—here, livestream e-commerce customers. ES is an important concept in the broader social support literature (Adams et al., 1996) and “involves providing warmth and nurturance to another individual and reassuring a person that he or she is a valuable person for whom others care” (Taylor, 2011, p. xxx). Previous research indicates that ES reduces stress (Duhachek, 2005) and increases well-being (Hill, 1991). These positive effects are referred to as *buffering*: ES is a cushion that reduces the negative effects of stressors (Mathieu et al., 2019). However, the literature documents that ES can have harmful effects: *Reverse buffering* occurs when ES is unwanted or when it is perceived as insincere (Kickul & Posig, 2001). The results about the negative effects of ES are widespread: One meta-analysis of the effects of ES indicated significant buffering effects in 48% of studies and significant reverse buffering effects in 40% of studies (Mathieu et al., 2019), suggesting that positive effects are only slightly more common than negative effects.

The ES that the online community offers to participants occurs in a context—business—where self-interests dominate (Smith, 1776/1976). This contextual influence is even more relevant in livestreaming e-commerce, where, as outlined, the primary focus is commerce, not social bonding. In this context, the negative effects of ES are very likely dominant, leading participants to perceive the ES offered by the community as insincere or inauthentic, reducing engagement on the site. Thus, we proposed the following hypothesis:

H5a: ES is negatively related to CEM.

IS refers to the provision of information or solutions by the community to individuals (Liang et al., 2011). During livestreaming activities, other viewers provide pertinent information to help other customers in the decision-making process (Chen & Shen, 2015; Liang et al., 2011). To be specific, livestreamers can interact with large numbers of customers and simultaneously deliver real-time information, which reduces uncertainty. IS thus enables customers to better understand whether the proposed products meet their very specific needs. Therefore, we proposed the following:

H5b: IS is positively related to CEM.

Mediating Role of Social Support

Given the structure of our model, analysis of mediation effects is warranted. Therefore, we formulated the following hypotheses:

H6: ES mediates the relationship between LA and CEM.

H7: IS mediates the relationship between LC and CEM.

METHODS

Research Setting

To empirically test the model, we conducted an online survey of Chinese customers with first-hand experience on Taobao Live. We selected Taobao Live as our research setting because of its prominence in e-commerce livestreaming. As one of China’s largest platforms, Taobao Live has significantly influenced the evolution of live commerce, boasting substantial gross merchandise value and a vast

user base. This extensive reach and impact make Taobao Live an ideal context for examining CEM dynamics within livestreaming e-commerce.

All of the items we applied in this study were initially designed in English; therefore, we use a forward-backward translation approach to ensure that the originality of the questions was retained. We translated the survey items from English to Chinese. Then, we asked eight individuals with more than 2 years of livestream buying experience on the Taobao Live platform whether the translated measurement items were easy to understand. Next, we sent the modified survey to other individuals for further checks. We followed this process three times. Finally, we asked bilingual researchers to compare the items. They confirmed that there were no significant differences between the two versions.

After this procedure, we conducted a pilot test ($n = 100$). The pilot test was the master's thesis of one of the coauthors, supervised by the other coauthor. Respondents in the pilot test were thus mostly university students recruited via convenience sampling. We analyzed the results of the pilot study and examined all survey items for any required adjustments. After completion of the pilot test, we conducted the main study.

We collected data for the main study in July 2022 through SoJump, a leading provider of online panel data in China. Scholars regularly use this company for data collection in China because of its high standards for ensuring data quality and participant integrity (Li, Mou, et al., 2021; Teng et al., 2021). We paid the online panel provider for each completed response and thus presumed that participants received compensation.

Respondents were randomly selected from SoJump's database. Before initiating the survey, we set a target sample size of approximately 500. Budget considerations and considerations of statistical power determined this choice. Over the course of 2 weeks, we obtained a total of 532 usable responses. We included a screening question to ensure participants had prior experience purchasing products on the Taobao platform. Those without such experience were excluded from the survey. Hence, respondents were qualified.

As a further step to ensure data quality, we included several attention-check questions in the online survey; specifically, we used items embedded in different survey blocks and asked respondents to give a particular response to indicate that they were paying attention. Before conducting data analysis, we excluded and replaced respondents who did not pass these attention checks.

Measurement

This study had four independent variables: IS, ES, LA, and LC. IS and ES were measured with items adapted from Liang et al.'s (2011) study. LA had three dimensions: FA, LI, and SI, measured using items adapted from Peetz's (2012) work. Livestreamer credibility had three components: EX, TR, and ATT, measured using items adapted from Peetz (2012). CEM was measured with items adapted from Hu and Chaudhry (2020). All items were from prior studies, were adapted to the livestream e-commerce setting, and were rated on 7-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

Sample Characteristics

Of the 532 respondents, the largest age group was 26–30 years (214 respondents, 40.2%). Most respondents were female (334, 63%) and had a bachelor's degree (456, 85.7%). With respect to experience with Taobao Live, the largest group (221, 41.5%) had been using the platform for 4–5 years. In terms of occupation, the majority worked in private companies (454, 85.3%). When asked about their monthly purchases, most respondents (291, 54.7%) reported buying two to five products. For daily time spent on Taobao Live, the largest group (253, 47.6%) reported spending 31–60 min on the platform. In brief, the respondents were, on average, female, young, highly educated working professionals with considerable experience using the platform and daily activity on the platform. They were thus very knowledgeable. Demographic statistics are provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic statistics (N = 532)

Characteristic	N	%
Age (years)		
<20	6	1.1
20–25	78	14.7
26–30	214	40.2
31–35	166	31.2
36–40	45	8.5
41–45	16	3.0
>46	7	1.3
Gender		
Male	198	37.2
Female	334	62.8
Education		
Secondary school or below	7	1.3
High school	22	4.1
Bachelor's degree	456	85.7
Master's degree	46	8.6
Doctoral degree	1	0.2
Occupation		
Student	31	5.8
Employee of private company	454	85.3
Employees of public company/public office	33	6.2
Self-employed	12	2.3
Other (please specify)	2	0.4
Income level (¥/month)		
<3,500	30	5.6
3,500–4,500	35	6.6
4,501–5,500	52	9.8
5,501–6,500	61	11.5
6,501–7,500	70	13.2
7,501–9,000	112	21.1
>9,000	172	32.3
Duration using Taobao (years)		
>1	13	2.4
1–2	52	9.8
2–3	142	26.7
3–4	104	19.5
4–5	221	41.5

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Table 1. Continued

Characteristic	<i>N</i>	%
No. of products purchased		
1	20	3.8
2–5	291	54.7
6–10	156	29.3
11–15	41	7.7
16–20	14	2.6
>21	10	1.9
Time spent on Taobao		
<30 min	65	12.2
31 min–60 min	253	47.6
1–2 hr	142	26.7
2–3 hr	56	10.5
3–4 hr	15	2.8
4–5 hr	1	0.2

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This research was exploratory: Our objective was not to test an extant theory but to build a new theory. Hence, partial least-squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) is an appropriate analytical technique: “In situations where theory is less developed, researchers should consider the use of PLS-SEM” (Sarstedt et al., 2021). In contexts where the focus is more on exploration than confirmation, PLS-SEM is preferable to covariance-based SEM (Hair et al., 2020). In contrast to covariance-based models, which minimize covariances between the sample and those predicted by the assumed true model, PLS-SEM is a variance-based model that maximizes R^2 values of the target, endogenous constructs.

We use SmartPLS (Version 4). Because our research model contained a second-order formative variable, we calculated first-order variables and tested second-order formative variables (Gefen et al., 2000). We estimated the parameters of LA and LC by using a repeated-indicator approach and a two-stage approach in PLS. LA, as a higher order latent variable, is formed by FA, LI, and SI; LC is formed by EX, TR, and ATT. For the two-stage approach, we used the repeated-indicator method to obtain the latent variable scores of LA and LC before taking these scores from the first stage as manifest variables in the measurement model.

Common-Method Bias

To assess potential common-method bias, we used a marker variable. We took price consciousness, assessed with a 5-item scale (Lichtenstein et al., 1993), as our marker. The analysis revealed that the relationships that were significant before the marker variable was introduced remained significant afterward, with only minimal changes in path coefficients and p values. Thus, we conclude that common-method bias is unlikely to have inflated the relationships in the model.

Measurement Model Assessment

In assessing the measurement model, we evaluated factor loadings, reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2017). The first step involves examining factor

loadings. Loadings for all items exceeded 0.60. The next step is to scrutinize the internal consistency reliability of the constructs included in the model. There are two distinctive criteria for examining internal consistency reliability: (a) Cronbach’s alpha and (b) composite reliability; values for both should exceed .70. Cronbach’s alphas ranged from .604 to .907, and composite reliabilities ranged from .790 to .935, establishing the reliability of the constructs (Table 2).

Next, we assessed construct validity in terms of convergent and discriminant validity. Average variance extracted (AVE) is an appropriate criterion for assessing convergent validity and is calculated as the average of the squared indicator loadings of the related construct. An AVE above 0.50 indicates the construct’s ability to explain at least 50% of the variance in the associated indicators or items. AVE values for the latent variables in our model ranged from 0.454 to 0.794. AVEs for all constructs in the present study, except for CEM (0.454), exceeded 0.50. However, because the composite reliability for CEM exceeded 0.70 its convergent validity can be established (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The results are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Factor loadings, Cronbach’s alphas, composite reliability, and average variance extracted for lower order constructs

Main construct and lower order constructs	Loading	α	CR	AVE
Familiarity (FA)				
FA1	0.730	0.772	0.846	0.525
FA2	0.763			
FA3	0.720			
FA4	0.616			
FA5	0.782			
Likability (LI)				
LI1	0.744	0.764	0.841	0.513
LI2	0.716			
LI3	0.705			
LI4	0.690			
LI5	0.726			
Similarity (SI)				
SI1	0.793	0.879	0.912	0.675
SI2	0.829			
SI3	0.857			
SI4	0.814			
SI5	0.813			
Trustworthiness (TR)				
TR1	0.812	0.850	0.893	0.627
TR2	0.807			
TR3	0.704			
TR4	0.810			
TR5	0.820			
Expertise (EX)				

continued on following page

Table 2. Continued

Main construct and lower order constructs	Loading	α	CR	AVE
EX1	0.757	0.779	0.850	0.531
EX2	0.725			
EX3	0.716			
EX4	0.746			
EX5	0.698			
Attractiveness (ATT)				
ATT1	0.768	0.785	0.851	0.534
ATT2	0.774			
ATT3	0.686			
ATT4	0.769			
ATT5	0.649			
Emotional support (ES)				
ES1	0.861	0.907	0.935	0.781
ES2	0.870			
ES3	0.900			
ES4	0.903			
Informational support (IS)				
IS1	0.887	0.871	0.920	0.794
IS2	0.893			
IS3	0.893			
Xxx (OA)				
OA1	0.822	0.604	0.790	0.560
OA2	0.795			
OA3	0.610			
Customer engagement (CEM)				
CEM1	0.662	0.700	0.806	0.454
CEM2	0.674			
CEM3	0.649			
CEM4	0.701			
CEM5	0.682			

Note. CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted.

Discriminant validity was assessed using Fornell and Larcker’s (1981) criterion and the heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT) ratio. Fornell and Larcker’s criterion assesses discriminant validity by comparing the square root of AVE for a construct with the interconstruct correlation. In this study, the square root of AVE (in bold italics in Table 3) for a construct was found to be greater than its correlation with all the other constructs (Table 3) except for the correlations between EX and TR.

We also used the HTMT ratio to assess discriminant validity: The HTMT value of an effect should be <0.90 (Henseler et al., 2015). HTMT values were <0.90 except for the ratio between EX and TR (0.907). However, when cross-loading between the two constructs was assessed, all items loaded more highly on their intended construct than on any other. The difference in loadings was found to exceed 0.10 (Gefen & Straub, 2005). Only one item (CEM6) was removed from further analysis because of higher cross-loadings. Hence, discriminant validity was established (Table 3).

Table 3. Discriminant validity

Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. FA	.725	.768	.673	.770	.763	.772	.466	.487	.710	.755
2. LI	.594	.716	.698	.811	.873	.797	.486	.533	.830	.824
3. SI	.553	.578	.821	.727	.663	.714	.645	.551	.634	.527
4. TR	.626	.657	.630	.792	.907	.759	.464	.495	.719	.752
5. EX	.594	.675	.548	.738	.729	.752	.415	.473	.750	.898
6. ATT	.613	.643	.598	.641	.606	.731	.436	.465	.789	.774
7. ES	.384	.411	.579	.408	.351	.361	.884	.874	.393	.251
8. IS	.395	.439	.486	.426	.392	.389	.777	.891	.429	.338
9. OA	.490	.571	.467	.522	.515	.553	.290	.316	.748	.898
10. CEM	.563	.608	.422	.584	.666	.599	.204	.267	.593	.674

Note. Values below the diagonal are the correlation (shared variance); values on the diagonal are the square root of average variance extracted; values above the diagonal are heterotrait–monotrait ratios. FA = familiarity; LI = likability; SI = similarity; TR = trustworthiness; EX = expertise; ATT = attractiveness; ES = emotional support; IS = informational support; CEM = customer engagement.

Validating Reflective–Reflective Higher Order Constructs

LA (FA, LI, and SI) and LC (TR, EX, and ATT) were the higher order formative constructs in this study; each was based on three lower order constructs.

The first step was to assess the formative model for collinearity using variance inflation factor (VIF) values. VIF values ≥ 5 indicate collinearity problems (Hair et al., 2020). In the present study, collinearity did not pose a threat, because the VIF values for the formative higher order constructs (LA and LC) were <5 (Table 4). Next, we assessed the statistical significance and relevance of the outer weights, which were found to be significant. Furthermore, we assessed outer loadings and their significance; outer loadings exceeded 0.70 and were significant for each of the indicators of the higher order formative constructs (Sarstedt et al., 2019). Hence, the higher order constructs were validated.

Table 4. Higher order construct validity of livestreamer attractiveness and livestreamer credibility

Higher order construct and lower order constructs	VIF	Outer weight	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Outer loading
Livestreamer attractiveness					
FA	1.721	0.326	5.370	.000	0.816
LI	1.794	0.450	8.617	.000	0.877
SI	1.672	0.403	6.864	.000	0.843
Livestreamer credibility					

continued on following page

Table 4. Continued

Higher order construct and lower order constructs	VIF	Outer weight	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Outer loading
TR	2.526	0.231	3.514	.000	0.859
EX	2.349	0.512	7.391	.000	0.919
ATT	1.818	0.390	6.505	.000	0.848

Note. VIF = variance inflation factor; FA = familiarity; LI = likability; SI = similarity; TR = trustworthiness; EX = expertise; ATT = attractiveness.

STRUCTURAL MODEL EVALUATION

After assessing the measurement model, we sought to substantiate the hypothesized relationships. The first step was to examine the structural model for potential collinearity issues. The results revealed no collinearity issues, as VIF values were found to be less than the recommended value of 5 (Hair et al., 2020).

The model explains a good amount of variance: The R^2 value for ES was 0.295, for IS it was 0.203 and for CEM it was 0.578 (Table 5).

Table 5. Hypotheses results

Path	VIF	Path coefficient	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Supported?
H1: LA → CEM	4.318	0.100	0.073	1.367	0.086	No
H2: LA → ES	1.000	0.543	0.037	14.612	0.000	Yes
H3: LC → CEM	4.046	0.531	0.066	7.998	0.000	Yes
H4: LC → IS	1.000	0.451	0.040	11.237	0.000	Yes
H5a: ES → CEM	2.778	-0.153	0.050	3.068	0.001	Yes
H5b: IS → CEM	2.671	0.021	0.049	0.439	0.330	No

Note. ES: $R^2 = .295$, $Q^2 = .289$. IS: $R^2 = .203$, $Q^2 = .196$. CEM, $R^2 = .578$, $Q^2 = .538$. VIF = variance inflation factor; H = hypothesis; LA = livestreamer attractiveness; CEM = customer engagement; ES = emotional support; LC = livestreamer credibility; IS = informational support.

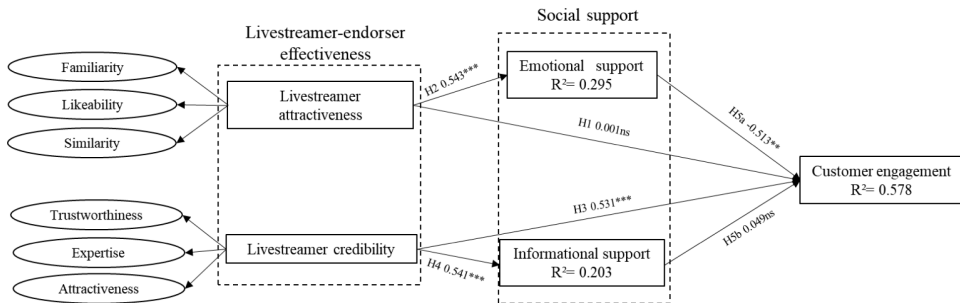
Predictive relevance was assessed using Q^2 values. The Q^2 values for ES (0.289), IS (0.196), and CEM (0.538) indicated that the exogenous constructs have predictive relevance (Geisser, 1974; Stone, 1974). Next, we examined the significance of path coefficients to substantiate the hypotheses, using a bootstrapping procedure (with 10,000 samples), with age, gender, education, occupation, income, experience with Taobao, product purchases per month, and time spent on Taobao Live as control variables. None of the demographic variables were found to have a significant impact.

H1 proposed that LA would have a significant and positive impact on CEM. The results revealed an insignificant but positive impact on CEM ($\beta = 0.100$, $t = 1.367$, $p = .086$). Hence, H1 was not supported. H2 proposed that LA would have a significant and positive impact on ES. The results revealed a significant and positive impact on ES ($\beta = 0.543$, $t = 14.612$, $p < .001$). Hence, H2 was supported.

H3 proposed that LC would have a significant and positive impact on CEM. The results revealed a significant and positive impact on CEM ($\beta = 0.531$, $t = 7.998$, $p < .001$). Hence, H3 was supported. H4 posited that LC would have a significant and positive impact on IS. The results revealed a significant and positive impact on IS ($\beta = 0.451$, $t = 11.237$, $p < .001$). Hence, H4 was supported.

H5a proposed that ES would have a significant and negative impact on CEM. The results revealed a significant negative impact on CEM ($\beta = -0.153, t = 3.068, p = .001$). Hence, H5a was supported. H5b proposed that IS would have a significant and positive impact on CEM. The results revealed an insignificant impact on CEM ($\beta = 0.021, t = 0.439, p = .330$). Hence, H5b was not supported. The results are presented in Table 5 and Figure 2.

Figure 2. Final structural model



Note. *H* = hypothesis.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

MEDIATION ANALYSIS

We performed mediation analysis to assess the mediating role of ES in the relationship between LA and CEM. H6 proposed that ES would mediate the relationship between the two. The results (Table 6) revealed a significant indirect effect of LA on CEM through ES (H6: $\beta = -0.083, t = 2.983, p = .001$). With the inclusion of the mediator, the direct effect of LA on CEM was insignificant ($\beta = 0.100, t = 1.367, p = .086$). This shows that ES fully mediates the relationship between LA and CEM. Hence, H6 was supported.

We also assessed the mediating role of IS on the relationship between LC and CEM. H7 proposed that IS would mediate the relationship between LC and CEM. The results (Table 6) revealed an insignificant indirect effect of LC on CEM through IS (H7: $\beta = 0.010, t = 0.433, p = .333$). Hence, H7 was not supported.

Table 6. Mediation analysis results

Total effects			Direct effects			Indirect effects				
Coefficient	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Coefficient	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Coefficient	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Percentile bootstrap 95% CI
LA → CEM			LA → CEM			H6: LA → ES → CEM				
0.016	0.241	0.405	0.100	1.367	0.086	-0.083	0.028	2.983	0.001	[-0.131, -0.040]

continued on following page

Table 6. Continued

Total effects			Direct effects			Indirect effects				
Coefficient	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Coefficient	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Coefficient	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Percentile bootstrap 95% CI
LC → CEM			LCR → CEM			H7: LCR → IS → CEM				
0.540	7.862	0.000	0.531	7.998	0.000	0.010	0.022	0.433	0.333	[-0.026, 0.046]

Note. CI = confidence interval; H = hypothesis; LA = livestreamer attractiveness; CEM = customer engagement; ES = emotional support; LC = livestreamer credibility.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of livestreamer-endorsement effectiveness (LA and LC) and social support (ES and IS) on CEM in livestreaming e-commerce platforms.

The results indicate that LC is positively associated with CEM. This is consistent with a series of studies emphasizing the importance of the livestreamer’s credibility (Gao et al., 2021; Guo et al., 2022; Hu & Chaudhry, 2020; Luo et al., 2024). The data also indicate that, unexpectedly, LA—FA, LI, and SI—has no direct effect on consumer engagement. Taken together, these findings suggest that, with respect to attributes of the source, CEM is driven by rational elements—credibility—and not by emotional elements—ATT of the livestreamer.

It is important to note that the data indicate that community ES is negatively associated with CEM. Friendship (ES) and money (purchases) do not seem to mix, as the common adage says. This is an important finding: In contrast to the workplace, where much of the research has been conducted and where the effects of ES are largely positive (Mathieu et al., 2019), in the transactional, fast-paced, and possibly competitive setting of livestreaming e-commerce, ES from fellow customers has a strong and negative association with CEM. The implication is this: When individuals face important tasks—such as launching a start-up (Cogan et al., 2022)—ES is positive; when individuals are engaged in spending time and money in participating in livestreaming e-commerce, ES from peers is detrimental to engagement.

An analysis of mediation effects demonstrates that ES plays a central role in connecting LA with CEM. Given the relationships between LA, ES, and CEM, and in light of the significant indirect effect of LA on CEM, we conclude that ES entirely explains the indirect effect of LA on CEM. The negative path coefficient indicates that as viewers perceive more ES, their engagement decreases, even if they find the livestreamer attractive. Instead of enhancing the viewer experience, the added ES may cause discomfort, leading to lower engagement.

These findings shed light on the nuanced role of emotions in e-commerce livestreaming: We know that a happy livestreamer increases audience happiness (Lin et al., 2021) and that the emotional attachment of the audience to the livestreamer improves retention (Li, Li, & Cai, 2021). It might thus be a foregone conclusion that the ES of the community to customers is an important positive driver of CEM. It is not. CEM is related positively to LC and negatively to ES from the community.

This finding points to the significant difference between social commerce on networking sites and livestream e-commerce. The former is inherently social, bringing people together and allowing them to share common interests and hobbies (Leong et al., 2024; Shen et al., 2019), along with shopping; in contrast, livestreaming e-commerce is all about one activity: shopping. In this context, strong ES from the online community leads to reduced CEM.

LC also affects IS, but there is, in contrast to our hypothesis, no relationship between IS and CEM. We speculate that a possible explanation is that participants in e-commerce livestreaming may perceive the information provided by other community members as less credible or potentially biased, similar to the perception of ES as insincere. This skepticism may stem from the competitive and

transactional nature of the platform, where participants might view peer-provided information as driven by ulterior motives rather than genuine support. Thus, viewers prioritize information from the livestreamer over potentially dubious community inputs.

In sum, livestreamers have a very strong effect on community interactions, as the data clearly show: LA and LC increase ES and IS, respectively, that members extend to each other. However, none of these community support activities has positive effects on CEM—none. ES decreases engagement, whereas IS has no effect.

According to our data, LC is the only factor that positively influences CEM. CEM in e-commerce livestreaming thus depends on LC. LC and LA influence the informational and ES that members extend to each other, but this is irrelevant (IS) or damaging (ES) to CEM.

Theoretical Implications

Our study indicates that CEM in e-commerce livestreaming is driven by two opposing factors: LC and community ES. LC increases CEM, and community ES decreases engagement.

This study thus makes the following three important contributions to the growing literature on CEM in e-commerce livestreaming, a field that blends digital marketing, social commerce, and consumer psychology.

First, this study makes a significant theoretical contribution by extending and refining the source credibility (Hovland et al., 1953; Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Ohanian, 1990) and source attractiveness models (McGuire, 1985) within the emerging context of e-commerce livestreaming. Prior research has affirmed the general effectiveness of these attributes in influencing consumer attitudes and behaviors (Erdogan, 1999; Ohanian, 1990; Schouten et al., 2021). This study, however, demonstrates that LC is the sole positive driver of CEM in high-interaction, transactional settings. Conversely, LA, often deemed influential (Batres & Shiramizu, 2023), lacks direct impact, highlighting that rational elements like credibility outweigh emotional appeal in livestreaming e-commerce. By advancing the application of source credibility theory in dynamic and interactive environments, this research provides a nuanced understanding of its role compared to traditional, less interactive contexts.

Second, this study significantly advances social support theory by challenging the universal assumption of its positive effects, revealing that ES from the community can negatively affect CEM in e-commerce livestreaming. Unlike in traditional environments—the workplace—where ES typically fosters positive outcomes (Mathieu et al., 2019), this finding underscores the contextual nature of support and highlights e-commerce livestreaming as a transactional setting where perceived insincerity or excessive emotional intimacy may deter engagement. Moreover, our results indicate no significant relationship between IS and engagement, suggesting again that commerce-driven platforms may foster skepticism toward peer-contributed information. These insights broaden the understanding of social support theory by highlighting its constrained applicability in commerce-focused interactions, pointing to the need for deeper integration with theories of trust and community dynamics within digital commerce settings (Hajli, 2014; Liang et al., 2011).

Third, this research integrates livestreamer attributes and community interactions to refine existing engagement frameworks (Busalim et al., 2023; Hu & Chaudhry, 2020; Li, Li, & Cai, 2021; Luo et al., 2024; Sun et al., 2019; Wongkitrungrueng & Assarut, 2020; Zheng et al., 2022). It identifies two distinct drivers of engagement: (a) a positive driver—LC and (b) a negative driver—community ES. These findings challenge the traditional assumption that community interactions universally enhance engagement, instead suggesting that the exchange of emotions and information in the community both contain elements of insincerity and deception that both reduce engagement in e-commerce livestreaming. This study thus deepens our theoretical understanding of the complex, commerce-driven nature of e-commerce livestreaming platforms.

Managerial Implications

E-commerce livestreaming is an important sales channel with high growth rates that is substantially different from other traditional channels, both online and offline: It is highly immersive, highly entertaining, and highly interactive. The high growth rates point to a future in which livestream e-commerce will have profoundly changed online selling, not only in China but of course also in other markets across the world. This high practical relevance of e-commerce livestreaming is not yet fully reflected in current academic research and in studies documenting how livestreamers and the community affect engagement on livestreaming platforms.

This study provides important managerial implications for livestreamers and operators of digital platforms who want to engage more viewers and monetize traffic. Examining CEM in e-commerce livestreaming is important given that current engagement is an indicator of future purchase (Clement Addo et al., 2021; Men et al., 2024).

First, this research provides practical guidance on the personal characteristics of livestreamers that are associated with high CEM. Data in this study indicate that LC has a strong, direct effect and that LA has no benefits. In simple terms, livestreamers need to be credible, but they do not need to be attractive, to engage customers. On a completely anecdotal basis, the most famous livestreamer of all, Li Jiaqi, “King of Lipstick,” seems to corroborate these findings quite well: arguably unattractive, but credible. Li Jiaqi’s perceived trustworthiness and credibility declined after he made disparaging comments about customers’ ability to afford the high prices of some products he had on hand, leading to a sharp drop in CEM on the site and prompting him to issue an apology (Hanzhi & Yi, 2023). In addition, lack of ATT is not an obstacle to CEM, but a decline in TR and, thus credibility, reduces CEM. Thus, livestreaming platforms should consider vetting and training livestreamers to ensure they possess not only product knowledge but also effective communication skills that convey credibility. Livestreaming platforms can, according to the data at hand, safely ignore LA.

Second, our study suggests that ES negatively affects CEM. The purpose of livestream e-commerce is straightforward and clear: shopping. To reduce perceived ES among viewers and maintain high levels of engagement, livestreamers should adopt a task-oriented approach. This involves centering viewer interactions around product information and benefits rather than encouraging emotional bonding among viewers. Practical steps could include: keeping conversations focused on product details, using structured segments for FAQs, product demos, and comparisons; redirecting personal comments by responding appreciatively to viewers’ experiences and quickly transitioning back to product-related discussions; and using language that reinforces a professional tone and positions the session as a collective shopping experience. Statements like “Let’s find the best products for everyone here” could reinforce this shared purpose of facilitating shopping. By emphasizing product information and maintaining a professional tone, livestreamers can foster an environment that promotes engagement without inviting ES interactions among viewers.

Analogously, platform operators can introduce features that prioritize product-focused discussions and subtly reduce the emphasis on ES exchanges. Key strategies could include creating a “Community Insights” section where viewers can find product advice from other customers, minimizing the need for real-time ES, or providing automated, task-oriented message prompts for livestreamers to guide viewers toward product resources and decision-making support rather than personal interactions.

In sum, given the importance of the livestreamer’s influence on community dynamics, platforms should empower livestreamers to cultivate a task-oriented community atmosphere. Platforms could implement guidelines and tools that encourage livestreamers to foster informational rather than purely emotional interactions. This creates an environment where viewers feel supported in their purchasing decisions reducing the need for emotional exchanges with other viewers.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study has limitations. First, we investigated livestreaming e-commerce in China, with all data collected from Taobao Live customers. E-commerce livestreaming has global relevance. Future

studies should therefore examine the model for e-commerce livestreaming in Europe and the United States. Future studies should also examine our model in the context of social networking e-commerce with its own, distinct community (Hu & Chaudhry, 2020).

Second, we used established models (source credibility, source attractiveness) to test key relationships. Future studies could fruitfully examine the effect of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence-based recommendation systems, virtual influencers, or the integration of short videos, on CEM on livestreaming platforms.¹

In this study, we use an established ES scale adapted from other contexts. Item phrasing, in particular the emphasis on “facing difficulties,” may have influenced responses in ways unrelated to community-provided ES. For example, respondents with minimal difficulties using the platform could, at least in principle, have reported lower perceived ES, potentially affecting the observed negative relationship with CEM.² Future research should consider developing an ES scale specific to the livestreaming context to verify the robustness of our findings.

Finally, in terms of research methods, quantitative research develops or confirms theory; quantitative research, however, cannot provide a “thick description” of phenomena (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 125). Future research could thus fruitfully use a mixed-methods approach (e.g., interviews with customers, content analysis of viewer comments) to develop a deeper understanding of CEM in livestreaming platform³ and thus to potentially generate radically new theoretical models.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors of this publication declare there are no competing interests.

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ENDNOTES

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- ³ We thank an anonymous reviewer for this suggestion for future research.

APPENDIX

Table 7.

Measure	Pilot study	Main study	Source(s)
Emotional support	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When faced with difficulties, some people on Taobao Live are on my side with me. 2. When faced with difficulties, some people on Taobao Live comforted and encouraged me. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When faced with difficulties, some people on Taobao Live are on my side with me. 2. When faced with difficulties, some people on Taobao Live comforted and encouraged me. 3. When faced with difficulties, some people on Taobao Live listened to me talk about my private feelings. 4. When faced with difficulties, some people on Taobao Live expressed interest and concern in my well-being. 	Liang et al. (2011)
Informational support	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. On Taobao Live, some people would offer suggestions when I needed help. 2. When I encountered a problem, some people on Taobao Live would give me information to help me overcome the problem. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. On Taobao Live, some people would offer suggestions when I needed help. 2. When I encountered a problem, some people on Taobao Live would give me information to help me overcome the problem. 3. When faced with difficulties, some people on Taobao Live would help me discover the cause and provide me with suggestions. 	Liang et al. (2011)
In response to the prompt “When I watch livestreaming on Taobao Live . . . “			
Likability			
Livestreamer attractiveness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I enjoyed the livestreamer’s overall personality. 2. I found livestreamer to be overall pleasant. 3. I viewed the livestreamer as an overall likable person. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I found the livestreamer to be likable. 2. I liked the livestreamer’s personality. 3. I enjoyed the livestreamer’s overall personality. 4. I found livestreamer to be overall pleasant. 5. I viewed the livestreamer as an overall likable person. 	Peetz (2012)
	Similarity		
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I viewed the livestreamer as similar to me. 2. I felt I had a lot in common with the livestreamer. 3. I felt like a livestreamer and I shared similar viewpoints. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I identified with the livestreamer. 2. I viewed the livestreamer as similar to me. 3. I felt I had a lot in common with the livestreamer. 4. I felt like a livestreamer and I shared similar viewpoints. 5. I believed my opinions and the livestreamer’s were similar. 	
	Familiarity		
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I recognized the endorser. 2. I was familiar with the endorser. 3. I considered the endorser to be well known. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I recognized the endorser. 2. I was familiar with the endorser. 3. I considered the endorser to be well known. 4. I had seen the endorser before. 5. I was able to identify who they were. 	
Expertise			

continued on following page

Table 7. Continued

Measure	Pilot study	Main study	Source(s)
Livestreamer credibility	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I believed the livestreamer was an expert. 2. I felt the livestreamer was knowledgeable. 3. I felt the livestreamer was qualified. 4. I believed livestreamer had experience with the product. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I believed the livestreamer was an expert. 2. I felt the livestreamer was knowledgeable. 3. I felt the livestreamer was qualified. 4. I believed the livestreamer had experience with the product. 5. I thought the livestreamer had a good understanding of the product. 	Ohanian (1990), Peetz (2012)
	Trustworthiness		
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I found the livestreamer to be believable. 2. I felt the livestreamer was trustworthy. 3. I believed the livestreamer's opinion was reliable. 4. I view livestreamer's opinion as dependable. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I felt the livestreamer was trustworthy. 2. I found the livestreamer to be believable. 3. I saw the livestreamer as sincere. 4. I believed the livestreamer's opinion was reliable. 5. I view the livestreamer's opinion as dependable. 	
	Attractiveness		
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I saw the livestreamer as attractive. 2. I found the livestreamer to be charismatic. 3. I considered the livestreamer to be good-looking. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I saw the livestreamer as attractive. 2. I perceived the livestreamer to be charismatic. 3. I considered the livestreamer to be good-looking. 4. I found the livestreamer to be charismatic. 5. I admired the livestreamer's handsomeness/beauty. 	
Customer engagement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I would like to choose the Taobao Live platform to buy products. 2. I consider a livestreamer that uses Taobao Live to be my first choice when buying this type of product. 3. I am likely to recommend Taobao Live to my friends and family. 4. I am likely to revisit the livestreamer's page to watch their new live videos in the near future. 5. I would interact with the livestreamer and other viewers. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I would continue to watch Taobao Live. 2. I would like to choose the Taobao Live platform to buy products. 3. I consider a livestreamer that uses Taobao Live to be my first choice when buying this type of product. 4. I am likely to recommend Taobao Live to my friends and family. 5. I am likely to revisit the livestreamer's page to watch their new live videos in the near future. 6. I would interact with the livestreamer and other viewers. 	Hu and Chaudhry (2020)

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