UPPSALA UNIVERSITET

Department of Informatics and Media

Master's Programme in Social Sciences,
Digital Media and Society specialization

Two-year Master's Thesis

Study on The Communication Impact of Live Streaming E-Commerce Mode in China

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Date June 2020

Ⅰ. Abstract

As a unique new vertical field in the live streaming industry in mainland China, live streaming E-Commerce has attracted much attention due to its high *conversion rate*[1]. This paper is based on the discussion of consumers of live streaming E-Commerce, namely fans, starting from the most representative "Taobao live streaming" E-Commerce platform. This research studies the characteristics of live streaming E-Commerce in terms of participatory culture, as well as the shopping preference of live streaming E-Commerce for fans and the their self-aware behavioral changes based on the theoretical frameworks of Henry Jenkins's participatory culture and social impact theory. Qualitative methods including online observation and in-depth interview were mainly used to collect empirical data. The research results show that the participation practice of fans of live streaming E-Commerce is based on purchase, and the fan community has a clear hierarchy. Meanwhile, fans' shopping preferences are guided by social media influence, entertainment and fans' emotional attachment to *streamers*[2]. In addition, fans have obvious conformity behavior in the process of pursuing social identity. These findings provide a new perspective for the study of the communication impact of live streaming E-Commerce, which is helpful to expand relevant theories.

Keywords：live streaming E-Commerce, fan community，participatory culture，shopping preference，conformity

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[1] The conversion rate is the number of conversions divided by the total number of visitors. For example, if an ecommerce site receives 200 visitors in a month and has 50 sales, the conversion rate would be 50 divided by 200, or 25%. -- Optimizely. Conversion Rate. Retrieved 21 May 2020, from https://www.optimizely.com/optimization-glossary/conversion-rate/

[2] A streamer, also known as a live streamer, internet streamer, or streamer, is a person who broadcasts themselves online through a live stream or pre-recorded video. The scope of online streamers has grown to include different genres ranging from playing video games, tutorials, or even solo chats. -- Streamer. (2020). Retrieved 21 May 2020, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Online_streamer

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1. Introduction

TV shopping originated in the United States in the 1980s and was introduced into China in 1992 (Fan, 2019). Consumers sit at home and not go anywhere, and they get to know the product information by watching TV and buy the product by making a phone call (Baike, 2020). From the peak of more than 2,000 shopping programs in China to the present time, there are only 34 licensed units left, which leads to the possibility that TV shopping have been overwhelmed by live streaming E-Commerce (Fan, 2019). The underlying logic of live streaming E-Commerce and TV shopping is that brands contact users through channels, but the results seem to be different at present. With the development of new media, TV shopping has gradually evolved into Internet live-streaming shopping. Statistics from Joyus, an American video E-Commerce company, showed that the conversion rate of products promoted by high-quality videos was 5.15 times higher than that of traditional graphic display, meanwhile, the consumers who had watched the videos bought 4.9 times as many products as non-video consumers (Mike,2016).

Consumers and users are the ones who have the most say in the participation of any type of shopping markets or new media technology. In order to study the communication impact of live streaming E-Commerce, this paper discusses the characteristics of live streaming E-Commerce and its impact on user's shopping preference and behavioral changes from the perspective of participation.

1.1 What is Live Streaming E-Commerce?

Live streaming is the real-time form of online communication and transmission mode of "collecting, releasing, and watching video information at the same time" on the Internet; Live streaming E-Commerce is the form which combines live streaming and E-Commerce to sell products in the streaming (Wang, 2017), it temporarily gathers consumers together. It constructs a scene of a high-frequency and strong interaction

between sellers and buyers. "Group effect" communication makes live streaming stimulate consumers to buy more than the traditional way (Mike, 2016).

Figure 01 Screenshot of a live streaming on an E-Commerce app

As shown in Figure 01, this picture was taken in the live streaming room on E-Commerce. During the streaming, the streamer was showing viewers different colors of a lipstick. The slide in the lower left corner of the screen is the audience's comment on the product. In the comments, the audience praised the color of the product and asked the streamer the color code of the lipstick. After the product was introduced, a floating box appeared on the screen and viewers could click to make a purchase.

Figure 02 Screenshot of a live streaming on an E-Commerce app

Figure 02 is a live streaming picture of another session on the same day, the streamer broadcasted shoe brands. After the streamer had introduced the details of the product, a floating box of shoes with price appeared below the comment section, and viewers could click to link to the product details page. So, we could see the main difference between live streaming E-Commerce and TV shopping is that the audience are capable to interact with the streamers online in real-time and comments on live streaming were working at the same time. Video E-Commerce, as an improvement of

traditional E-Commerce, displays static pictures and text through short videos on web pages, while live streaming on E-Commerce is watched when streamers are online.

In the "fragmentization" era of social communication, the width and depth of information conveyed by text and pictures is relatively limited, which fails to meet the increasing social communication needs of users. The characteristics of live streaming, such as synchronicity, interactivity, flexibility and equality, fully meet users' in-depth interaction needs and become an effective way for social media to improve platform activity, attraction, and retain users (Wang, 2017). In addition, live streaming creates a social connection between consumers and streamers，consumers have become fans. Referring to the understanding of Fiske (1992), a fandom is a subculture composed of fans characterized by a feeling of empathy and camaraderie with others who share a common interest, fan is distinguished from the simple "fan", "cultists", and the "enthusiast".

1.2 Aims and Research Questions

Based on the theoretical framework of participatory culture and social influence theory, this study takes Jiaqi Li and Weiya's fan group as the research object to explore the participatory practice characteristics of live streaming E-Commerce as well as the impact of live streaming E-Commerce on fans' shopping preferences and behaviors. In the process of tracing the participation of fan groups, the hierarchy of fans on the live-streaming E-Commerce platform and the conformity influence generated by this craze on fans are highlighted, so as to reveal the status quo, future and limitations of this new entertainment shopping mode. In China, the live streaming industry has made a huge economic contribution, and the rapid rise of live streaming E-Commerce is worth discussing and studying. Therefore, this study mainly focuses on users' participation degree and their reactions after live streaming E-Commerce. With the emergence of participatory culture (Jenkins, 2013), users of live streaming E-Commerce platforms have formed a streamer-centered fan circle, and users have

become fans. Fandoms' participatory shopping behavior is a new research significance and the society. Different from the traditional division between "good" fan producers and "bad" fans consumers (Hills, 2002), the interesting new role of "production consumers" integrates fan participation and consumption (Wang, 2019). The investigation of the practice process of live streaming E-Commerce fans helps us to study the participation characteristics of this shopping mode and its influence on the behavior of fans.

The questions that I would like to raise are: What are the characteristics of live streaming E-Commerce? How do fans purchase through live streaming? What are their specific motivations for participation? How engaged are fans? Has this new way of shopping influenced fans' shopping preferences and behaviors? Based on these questions, I propose three research questions in this study:

RQ1: What characteristics does live streaming E-Commerce have from the perspective of participatory culture?
RQ2: In which way does live streaming E-Commerce affect the fans' shopping preference?
RQ3: How do the fans reflect upon their behavior changes affected by live streaming E-Commerce?

I would like to describe the characteristics of live-streaming E-Commerce from the perspective of fan participation practice through the first research question. The answer to this research question can prove that if users have other forms of participation in live-streaming E-Commerce besides purchasing behaviors. The second and third research questions are based on the behavioral preferences and influences of live-streaming E-Commerce on users, aiming to explain the impact of this new shopping mode, which is only popular in mainland China, and the reflection based on the social influence theory.

1.3 Motivations and Contributions

This study explores a new way of entertainment shopping from the integration of digital media and E-Commerce. As the "excessive pursuit" of live-streaming E-Commerce by Chinese social media and users, the author's reflection has been triggered. It is bringing life to both live streaming and E-Commerce sectors. However, there are bound to be some negative effects in such a well-received way of Internet shopping, and Chinese Internet users should be alarmed. In order to promote the sales volume, many sellers blindly follow the "trend" and spend a lot of money to invite streamers. Moreover, some streamers sell fake and shoddy commodities regardless of Internet supervision (Rusheng, 2020). In addition, the group effect leads consumers to impulse consumption for unnecessary products, resulting in a high rate of return (Qingyu, 2020). The author's research motivation comes from Henry Jenkins' studies on participatory culture, social impact theory and conformity act. Although there are many researches on fans' participation, the fans' participation and the influence of live streaming E-Commerce has rarely been discussed before. The author hopes to make some contributions to this new field in the following aspects.

First of all, different from most previous studies on popular content, this study focuses on a popular new media phenomenon in mainland China, as well as its characteristics from the perspective of user participation and its impact on the audience. Hence, emerging visions and original achievements can enrich the latest empirical studies of digital media and fandom studies, and may inspire scholars and engineers of new media technology. Secondly, as the "group" style of shopping is different from the past, its popularity indicates that consumers may be guided by group behavior. The users of this article are both fans and consumers. Therefore, in addition to the existing results in the field of TV shopping, I hope this study can provide new insights from the perspective of fans.

1.4 Thesis Outline

This first chapter starts with introductory information about the paper. Aims and research questions, motivations and contributions, and thesis outline are included.

The second chapter of this thesis is the background information. The first part of this chapter, the general and present situation of live streaming E-Commerce including mobile E-Commerce and social E-Commerce that are elaborated; The second part is the definition of streamer; The third part is the explanation of fandom in live streaming E-Commerce.

The third chapter is the state of literature review in the field to clarify relevant researches and studies, including fan and fandom, fan and identification, consumer conformity and the relevance of TV shopping.

The fourth chapter is the theoretical frameworks part. In this chapter, Henry Jenkins's participatory and social impact theory are elaborated. Furthermore, the application of participatory culture and fan practices as well as how intentions of consumers affected by conformity are discussed.

The fifth chapter introduces the research methods of this paper: online observation and in-depth interviews. The observation notes taken is elaborated in the analysis and data from in-depth interview is coded manually. Also, reflection on the methodology is discussed in the end.

Chapter six indicates the analysis and discussion out of the data, the findings are interpreted in this chapter.

Chapter seven concludes the thesis and remarks. This chapter gives objective results and talks about future research possibilities.

2. Background

This chapter highlights the main background needed for an understanding of the research. It gives an overview of live streaming E-commerce, the definition of the streamer and fandom in the context of live streaming E-commerce.

2.1 Live Streaming E-Commerce in General

2.1.1 The Present Situation of Live Streaming E-Commerce

Live streaming is the communication form that users watch the live streaming uploaded to websites in real-time (Wang,2017). Currently, there are two main forms of live streaming in China (ibid): One is with the help of television signals collecting the TV signal, then it completes the digital signal transformation to upload to the network. It is the original form of live streaming and still in use today, such as live streaming of large-scale literary and artistic activities as well as sports events. The second is an independent signal set up. A signal acquisition device at the site of the action is to collect video content autonomously and transmit it to the pilot after forming an independent signal so that videos can be reached on websites, which is the form of live streaming analyzed in this paper. According to the data report of QuestMobile in December 2019, the number of live streaming users in the Chinese mainland had exceeded 433 million, and it covered entertainment, shopping, education, travel and social interaction.

Number of live streaming users in China mainland

Unit: million
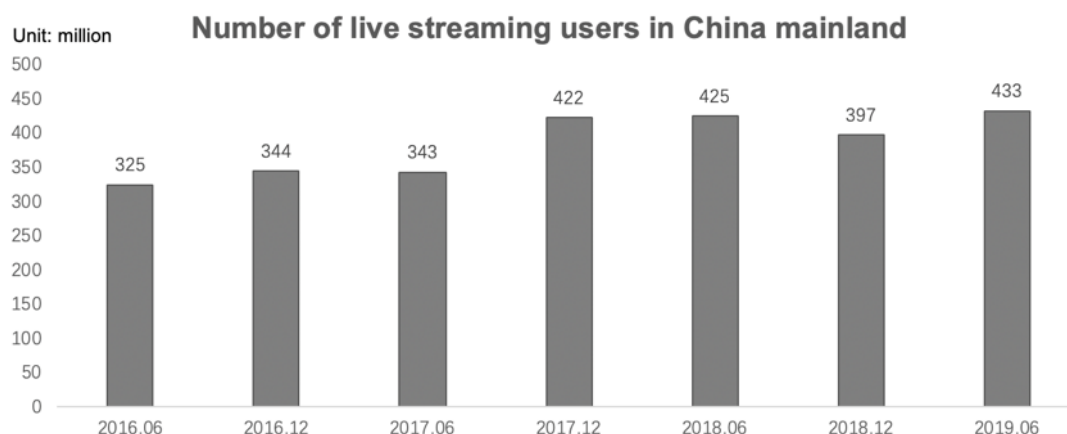
The live streaming users on this figure refer to the actual Chinese residents who have watched the live streaming on the Internet during the corresponding period, live sports, live reality shows, live games and live concerts are included. Source：QuestMobile Aug. 2019

Figure 03 Number of live streaming users in China mainland

With the increasingly fierce competition among live streaming platforms, streamers have become an essential resource for each platform (Tonghuashun Finance, 2019). Traditional live streaming websites usually provide users with games, shows, outdoor adventures and other content, such as membership, rewards, gifts and different ways to attract users and to recharge to obtain revenue. However, with the layout of social giants such as Facebook and Tencent, the social gene of live streaming has become increasingly powerful (Wang, 2017). On the one hand, the social network of live video is far more attractive to users than the social network of texts and pictures. Therefore, both the social media giants Facebook and Twitter, as well as the Chinese mainstream social applications such as QQ and Momo, have all launched the function of live video to meet the deeper social interaction needs of users. As a result, the development of live streaming platforms also relies heavily on the traffic entrance and propagation effect of social platforms, most successful live-streaming platforms in China cannot survive without the strong support of social media (ibid). In the context of the substantial increase in copyright costs, user-generated content has been widely adopted by social media, which has dramatically enhanced users 'enthusiasm for content production and consumption (Jiedian Finance, 2019).

In 2011, the fragmentation of Internet information became increasingly mature, leading to the emergence of active Internet marketing mode and the rise of individual Commerce (Baike,2019). E-commerce has got rid of the traditional sales model and moved to the Internet and conducted in-depth communication with users from multiple perspectives such as initiative, interaction and user care. Live streaming has stimulated unprecedented new consumption power and reshaped the E-Commerce communication mode to some extent (China News, 2019). Only one hour and three minutes after the start of the 2019 Chinese Double 11 Shopping Festival, the transaction volume of *Taobao*[3] live streaming guide exceeded the full-day sales of the Double 11 Event in 2018; The final full-day sales in 2019 was 268.4 billion *yuan*[4], while the turnover on that day was 213.55 billion yuan in 2018 and 168.2 billion yuan in 2017 (Sina Finance and Economics, 2019).

2.1.2 Mobile E-Commerce

According to the interview data of this research, every one of the interviewees watched E-Commerce live streaming on their smartphones. The combination of live streaming and E-Commerce has promoted the development of mobile E-Commerce, enabling viewers to watch live streaming anytime and anywhere to produce activities. Therefore, it is necessary to introduce the definition of mobile E-Commerce.

Mobile E-Commerce refers to the combination of the Internet and mobile communication devices, such as laptops, mobile phones and personal digital assistants (Qin,2009). Mobile traffic has become as common as desktop traffic in 2015 (Smith,2020). From the retailers' perspectives, mobile commerce has enormous potential because consumers are allowed to be reached at any time (99firms, 2019). In

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[3] Taobao is a Chinese online shopping website, headquartered in Hangzhou, and owned by Alibaba. It is the world's biggest e-commerce website and the eighth most visited website according to Alexa.-- taobao.com Site Overview". Alexa Internet..

[4] Yuan is the Chinese base unit of currency. For the modern currency used in the People's Republic of China.

China, the number of mobile E-Commerce users reached 608 million in 2018, a year-on-year growth of 28.5%. In 2019, the number of mobile e-commerce users was expected to reach 713 million (iiMedia Research,2019). In terms of sales volume, the Chinese mobile consumption environment is becoming more and more mature. According to the data from QuestMobile, the number of mobile payment users in China increased from 578 million in 2016 to 726 million (2018). China has become the largest mobile phone country in the world (Qin, 2009).

2.1.3 Social E-Commerce

In addition to mobility, the social nature of live-streaming E-Commerce is also one of the important reasons for its popularity. Social E-Commerce is a new derivative mode of E-Commerce，it assists communication through social interaction, user-generated content and other means by social media and network (Baike, 2019). Over time, more content and behavior are generated and dominated by users. It can be divided into two categories. One is mainly through social applications to share personal experience and recommend in social circles. The other is to directly intervene in the sales process of commodities through the social live streaming platform, which allows the users to be involved in interactions (ibid).

2.2 The Definition of Streamer

In general, streamer is a person who live streams themselves either playing video games or their real life by hobby or profession (China Economy Site, 2020). The "streamer" of this paper, which needs to be understood in the Chinese context, is a popular online word in China in recent years. It means a person or public figure who is famous on the Internet and have impact on promoting products and sales (Xiaodaoma, 2019). Celebrities or Internet celebrities provide close-up commodity display, consultation and reply, and shopping guide through live streaming. Celebrities' use and favor of a product often attracts consumers 'attention and

increase the popularity of the product. The rise of the Internet has brought infinite possibilities for innovation and entrepreneurship. It is still important to govern the Internet and regulate new forms of business in accordance with the law.

There are still some things that need to be standardized for live streaming. In particular, some *online celebrity*5 streamers exaggerate propaganda, falsify data and recommend without own experience in the process of streaming (Legal Daily, 2019); Some live streaming platforms lack strict access examination and unified management of the products sold. Apparently, there are so many well-known issues with live streaming E-Commerce, still, it is bringing dramatic sales data to the Chinese society, which needs to be explored in this research.

2.3 Fandom in Live Streaming E-Commerce

The role between consumers and fans of live streaming E-Commerce needs to be clarified. "Fan" means "one who has a strong interest or admiration for someone or something" (Oxford dictionary | English, 2020).

On the Internet, fans are defined as individuals " with a relatively deep positive emotional conviction about someone or something famous "(Duffet，2013, p.18) making use of digital tools and communication technologies to create, share, discuss, or respond to public performances or images including, for example, music and musicians, literature, sports and athletes, and films and actors. In general, fans of a particular object or individual constitute their fan base or fandom (Wang, 2019). Fans have emotional attachment to consumption objects, and emotional connection is used

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5 An online celebrity (also known as a social media influencer) is a celebrity who has acquired or developed their fame and notability through the Internet. Online celebrities may be recruited by companies for influencer marketing to advertise products to their fans and followers on their platforms. -- Schouten, Alexander P.; Janssen, Loes; Verspaget, Maegan (2020). "Celebrity vs. Influencer endorsements in advertising: the role of identification, credibility, and Product-Endorser fit". International Journal of Advertising. 0(2): 258–281. doi:10.1080/02650487.2019.1634898. ISSN 0265-0487.

to distinguish fans from ordinary consumers (Samra & Wos, 2014). Jenkins (1992) argues that the difference between watching TV and being a fan of it is the intensity of the emotional or intellectual engagement of the fan. Grossberg (1995) observes that fans are more closely associated with a particular form of intensity or influence than the average customer. According to Oliver 's classification of the loyalty stage, fanaticism cannot be achieved unless the goal is to bind the consumer's self-identity and part of his or her social identity (1999). From the interview data in the methodology part, the interviewees affirmed their identity as fans.

Most self-proclaimed fans point to their repeated consumption patterns (Sandvoss, 2005). According to Li (2017), as production consumers, fans' consumption demands and behaviors can form a relatively independent fan consumption circle or community, and the consumption objects and behaviors give and maintain the identity of fans in the consumption community within the circle. The consumption identity maintained by fans' consumption behavior has two main bodies, namely, fans as consumers and consumers as fans (ibid). Therefore, although the two are different in the characteristics of consumption behavior, they share a common identity. They are both consumers and fans.

Products attributes such as price and applicability are not the main targets of this kind of consumption. More and more audiences become users of live streaming E-Commerce platforms and then consumers because of the celebrity they follow. For example, on April 1 of 2020, a celebrity called Yonghao Luo made use of his popularity and influence to pay a total transaction amount of more than 110 million yuan in the 3-hour live streaming, which attracted more than 48 million viewers and set a new record for *Tiktok*[6] live streaming E-Commerce.

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6 TikTok is a Chinese video-sharing social networking service owned by ByteDance, a Beijing-based internet technology company founded in 2012 by Zhang Yiming. It is used to create short dance, lip-sync, comedy and talent videos.

3 Literature Review

This section contains a literature review of previous studies. The expansion and participation of the fan group has attracted the attention of the academic community. This paper takes the fans of live streaming E-Commerce as the research object to investigate. Fan studies have developed steadily under various research perspectives and theoretical frameworks (Bury, 2017). In view of the emergence of live streaming E-Commerce and the particularity of its popularity only in mainland China, the fan group to be studied in this paper needs to be closely combined with the platforms for analysis. However, there is very little research literature on live streaming E-Commerce. Therefore, the first part of this chapter elaborates the research on fans and fan culture on the basis of previous relevant studies. Then, the second part starts from TV shopping, the "predecessor" of live streaming E-Commerce, and discusses the intuitiveness and entertainment of live streaming E-Commerce, as well as its influence on consumers' shopping intention. Finally, based on the group shopping behaviors of fans, some conformity studies on consumers' shopping intentions are elaborated.

3.1 Fan and Fandom

Fan is defined by Merriam-Webster, the Oxford Dictionary and other sources, as an abbreviation of "fanatic", which comes from "modern Latin fanatic", meaning "marked by excessive enthusiasm and often intense uncritical devotion" (Duffett, 2013, p. 28). In the mid-19th century, Americans used it to refer to avid sports enthusiasts (BBC News,2015), but it soon expanded to a loyal "devotee" of any sport or commercial entertainment (Jenkins, 2013, p. 12). A fan, or fanatic, is sometimes referred to as an aficionado or enthusiast, a person who shows strong interest and admiration in something or person, such as a celebrity or band, sports or sports team, a genre, a politician, a book, film or entertainer (Emmanouloudis, 2015). According to Bruns (2013), fans of specific objects or individuals collectively constitute their fan groups or fan communities. They can show their enthusiasm in various ways, such as

by promoting the object of their interest, becoming a member of a fan club, holding or attending a fan convention, or writing fan mails. They may also engage in creative activities such as creating fan fiction, writing fan fiction, making memes or painting fan art. From the perspective of the stereotype of "fan", the word "fan" is endowed with more negative meanings, "referring to religious and political fanatics, false beliefs, orgies, possessions and craziness" (Jenkins, 2013, p. 12). In the book Fans and Fan Cultures, Linden and Linden believe that there exists a traditional concept that regards fans as "others", which is undoubtedly a view of alienation (Linden & Linden, 2017).

However, with the further development of research in the fan community, the opinions of fans have changed a lot. John Fiske (1989, p.173) believing that fans' behaviors are generally positive, fanatical, and participatory. Fans actively pay attention to and receive media content in a participatory way and give it meaning to participate in media activities, thus generating media texts (Fiske, 1992). Henry Jenkins emphasizes and rejects such negative fan stereotypes, arguing that this portrayal of fans should be criticized and that fans should be viewed more positively as producing their own culture through the media and selectively "poaching" meaning and interpretation from preferred media texts (1992). Jenkins's seminal book, Textual Poachers (1992), makes fandom a viable academic study. Fandom – the state of being a fan – is usually linked to popular culture rather than high culture. People who appreciate high culture, often being as passionate partisan as pop culture's ''fans,'' are described as ''connoisseurs'' or ''aficionados'' rather than as fans (Jensen，1992). Fans accumulate a wide range of knowledge and expertise about their shows or sports teams and typically feel that their hosts have high expectations for their fanatics. They also "tend to seek intimate relationships with people they care about - personality, program, genre, team" (Kelly,2004, p.173). This "intimacy" may include meeting a celebrity, getting an autograph from a female athlete, watching an actor speak on stage at a conference, chatting with him or her in a bar afterwards, or even visiting the actual location where the film was made(Hills，2002). Therefore, fans try

to break down the barriers between their subjects and fans, and their fan identity becomes an important aspect of culture and self-identity(ibid). Tulloch and Jenkins (1995) distinguish between "fans", who claim cultural identity based on the identity of fans.

However, fans and fan culture are not the same thing (Abercrombi,1998). By using the word "fan," we can refer to individuals who have specific preferences or interests in a series of pop culture texts, celebrities, sports (teams), or artefacts. These people - who often show an emotional relationship with their fan object - may still not participate in the social group's fan events. By contrast, going to a meeting or a group event like a fan club says a lot about what "fan culture" means. Nicholas Abercrombie and Brian Longhurst (1998) compare "fans" with what they call "cultists": the former are fanatics who exhibit themselves privately or individually rather than stay in the community, while the latter are participants in public fan culture and events. However, when referring to members of a fan culture, many writers simply use the word "fan" (Hills, 2002). Fans are socialized within affective communities of fandom and engage in subculture characteristic of fans practice, such as the characters in the movies and television programs (1992).

In essence, the display of fan membership allows these identities to be quickly transmitted to other fans to feel a sense of belonging and acceptance, even if their physical intimacy with the larger fan base is limited (Wann & Branscombe, 1990). Previous research on consumers' choice of brand names suggests that participants' choice is mediated by a desire to identify themselves and a need to be associated with the group they represent (Chan, Berger & Van Boven,2012). The display of social symbols conveys information about one's tastes to others and is also a motivator of social interaction (social identification) and avoidance (differentiation) (Banister & Hogg, 2004).

3.2 Fan and Identification

The literature studies these communities primarily from the perspective of social identity (Reysen & Branscombe, 2010) and the motivational factors involved in their interests and communities (Wann, 1995). In this section, we examine the three functions of fan membership (purpose, avoidance, and social relationship), which mediate the relationship between fan interest identification and fan symbol display.

Individuals seek and participate in fan interests for a variety of reasons, such as entertainment, escaping the pressures of daily life or satisfying the need for belonging, reaping a range of positive benefits (Chadborn & Edwards & Reysen, 2017). In fan studies, items should show as something opposed to a cultural capital (Bourdieu,1984) by popular culture capital (Fiske, 1992) and subculture capital (Thornton, 1995) adapt to the fans. The researchers try to explain how to display which is the fans group identity and status through souvenirs and collectibles, including clothing and other display items(Jenkins,1992).Although the display of fan's identity is related to cultural capital, it is an expression to some extent, as related to personal identity and a connection with fans' group (Jones, 2014). Presentation of fan identity provides benefits associated with proneness (Haggard & Williams, 1992) and distinctiveness (Chan, Berger, & Van Boven 2012). In the fan community, the use of fan displays can provide a sense of belonging and uniqueness.

Most researches on fan behavior have focused on identification with sports teams (Wann & Branscombe，1990). According to Reysen and Branscombe (2010), the concept of fan identity can best reflect the team's identity -- the degree of psychological connection with fans' interests -- which distinguish it from fan identity (the degree of psychological connection with other fans). For sports fans, a stronger sense of team identity is associated with a greater willingness to buy tickets and participating in competitions (Murrel & Dietz, 1992) even if the team performs poorly (Wann & Branscombe, 1990), they buy licensed team merchandise (Lee & Ferreira, 2011), do charity(Platow, Durante, Williams, Garrett, Walshe, Cincotta, and Barutchu

1999), and have group behaviors (Wann et al, 2013). Fan identification also correlates with psychological interests, including positive happiness, self-esteem and life satisfaction (Mock, Plante, Reysen & Gerbasi,2013). Earlier studies investigate the motivation of sports fans, they use entertainment and avoidance for stress reduction as predictors of being the strongest factor for a sports fan (Wann, 1995).

Still others see participation as a way to cope with stress and maintain positive mental health (Redden, Edwards, Griffin, Langley & Chadborn, 2015). Furthermore, research on furry fans (people interested in anthropomorphic art and cartoons) suggests that fan community is a place for self-acceptance and belonging and can reduce pressure on their social identity through interpersonal interaction (Mock et al., 2013). In addition, participating in fans' interests can also provide fans with a way to escape the pressure of daily life (Chadborn & Edwards & Reysen, 2017). When a team wins, experiencing positive emotions and excitement provide fans with an opportunity to vent and stimulate their interests, and in the process, it also enhances individual self-esteem related to the social group (Wann, 2006).

Finally, participation can increase the social engagement of fans (Chadborn & Edwards & Reysen, 2017). For both sports fans and non-sports fans, the need for friendship and a sense of community is a powerful motivation for fan identity and membership, as well as a result of the ability to maintain or develop social relationships and friendships (Wann, 1995). Laurence Grossberg (1992) argues that these displays of identity demonstrate an emotional commitment to fans' interests that exist not only as an expression but also as a physical connection to one's identity and past experience, as they do to the community as a whole.

3.3 Consumer Conformity

Interpersonal influence is a key explanatory variable in many marketing applications (Lascu & Zinkhan, 1999). This paper takes fans of live streaming E-Commerce as the research object, and pays attention to the self-aware changes and preferences of fans'

buying behaviors. Although individuals are often influenced by others in choosing and buying product and may follow these directions to gain group recognition, understanding of the conformity pressure in the market is relatively limited(ibid). Some of the previous researched on consumer conformity are elaborated in the followings. The purpose of this section is to explore conformity by examining the many factors that make individuals prone to conform to the influence of others. Lascu and Zinkhan propose (1999) a theoretical model of conformity (See Figure 01), and put forward the application of conformity theory in marketing practice.

Conformity is a manifestation of social influence and is the result of other members of groups opposing one's own opinions (Allen, 1965).Burnkrant and Cousineau (1975) define conformity as: a) tendency of opinions to establish a group norm (i.e., a set of group expectations on how members should behave), and b) the tendency of individuals to comply with the group norm. Adapting this definition to a consumption setting, Lascu and Zinkhan (1999) modify this definition into the product evaluation, the purchase intention or the purchase behavior of the consumer, which is due to the contact with other people's evaluation, intention or purchase behavior of the referred object. We examine different factors -- individual, group, brand, and task/situational characteristics -- that predispose individuals to conform to the influence of others(ibid).
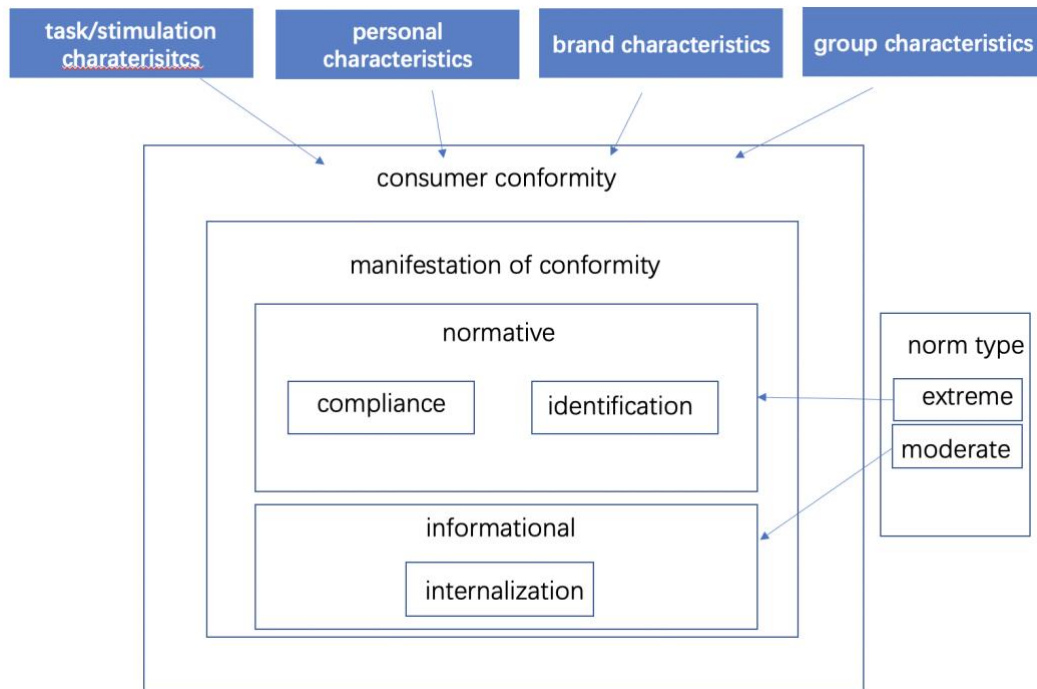
Figure 04 The theoretical model of conformity proposed by Lascu and Zinkhan (1999)

Lascu and Zinkhan (1999) classify task/stimulation, personal, brand and group characteristics into the following table (see Table 01).

	Positive (+) Effect	Negative (-) Effect
Task/Situation Characteristics	Difficulty	Objective Standards
	Complexity	Familiar Task
	Ambiguity	Private Situation
	Subjectivity	High Personal/Low Group Importance
	No Information	Different Payoff
	Limited Choice	Different Payoff Values
	Importance to Group or Individual	
	Prior Conformity	
	Group Pressure Situation	
	Crisis/Emergency	
Brand Characteristics	Visibility	Privately Consumed
	Publicly Consumed	Necessity
	Shopping Good	Convenience Good
	Luxury Good	
	Different from Competing Brands	
Group Characteristics	Larger Group Size	Other Dissenters Present
	Similarity of Group to Individual	
	Attractiveness	
	Interdependence of Group within the Group	
	Consensus	
	No Leader	
	Expertise	
	Credibility	
	Clarity of Group Goals	
	Likelihood of Future Interaction with Group	
	Past Success	
	Mutual Self-Esteem	
Personal Characteristics	Task Orientation	Self-Esteem, Self-Confidence
	Tendency to Conform	Adaptability, Innovativeness, Intelligence
	ATSCI	Concern with Being Right
	Self-Monitoring	Perceived Control
	Public Self-Consciousness	Social Independence
	Social Anxiety	Task Competence
	Need for Affiliation	Assertiveness
	Need to be Liked	
	Desire for Control	
	Fear of Negative Evaluation	
	Submissiveness, Docility, Compliance	
	Youth	
	Type B Personality	

Table 01 Factors that influence conformity

According to the research of Lascu and Zinkhan (1999), consumers who tend to conform are relatively unsafe, and they like to be welcomed. For individuals with low cognitive needs, these individuals are less willing to deal with the ambiguity

generated by information and are more likely to conform (Kelman, 1961). Bass (1961) finds that interactive-oriented individuals follow the norms of the group they refer to because they find group members attractive.

Moreover，two studies (Nakamura 1958；Toboski, Juliano & Kerr，1956) find that people who are less intelligent, creative, or adaptable are more likely to follow the advice of others. In addition, conformity may be an important variable to consider when selecting and hiring salespeople (Lascu & Zinkhan, 1999). However, there is no direct measure of consistency. Finally, those who shop with the company of at least one person tend to make at least one unplanned purchase, purchasing more items, and covering more store areas than those who shop alone (Granbois, 1968).

3.4 The Relevance of TV Shopping

Live streaming E-Commerce is more like TV shopping, which transfers its position from TV to the Internet (Guo,2019). The media richness of persuasive information becomes more relevant, adequate and accurate for TV shoppers (Keller, 1998). Secondly, TV shopping shows are similar to talk shows (Fritchie & Johnson,2003). The seller expresses the selling point of the product, which results in a more convincing form of promotion. Trust is considered to be the critical factor of customers' loyalty (Sun & Lin, 2010) and their relationship building (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Trust directly affects consumers' attitudes towards TV shopping (George,2002), creates a favorable belief in the outcome and leads to a positive attitude towards purchasing decisions (Yen, 2018). When consumers receive persuasive information that is relevant, adequate and accurate, they will trust the provider for high-quality information and integrity.

Furthermore, entertainment is an activity that keeps the audience's attention and interest. It makes the audience happy or interested, or relieve pressure by providing a chance to escape from reality temporarily (Chen & Lin,2018). Bosshart and Macconi

(1998) define the entertainment experience as pleasure, excitement, and relaxation.
Live streaming is primarily an audio and video medium to be entertaining (Chen &
Lin,2018). However，audiences hope to use media to entertain and relieve pressure
(McQuail, 2010). Entertainment has a positive impact on attitudes, which in turn
affects the willingness to recommend and the intention to use specific social platforms
(Curras-Perez et al., 2014), and affecting perceived value, which in turn affects users'
loyalty to specific websites (Kim & Niehm, 2009). The interest of the site affects the
traffic, which further affects customer satisfaction and purchase intention (Hsu et al.,
2012).

Personal recognition is emotional and therefore may occur in conscious or
unconscious mental states (Chen & Lin,2018). It is likely to produce stickiness once
audiences get used to the performance of a live streamer. Celebrity self-disclosure is
proved to affect fans' perception of social interaction (Kim and Song, 2016).
Parasocial interaction is a one-way influence of the performer on the audience, which
allows viewers to have the illusion or feeling of face-to-face contact with the
performer through the media, regarding the performer as their friend, and then try to
approach the performer in reality (Chen & Lin,2018). When discussing the
relationship of participatory culture in the network society, Henry Jenkins positions
users as having more control over producers and consumers of their media (2015).
Thus, the collective studies presented here contribute to this constructive position, as
well as deeply complicate how participatory cultures in live streaming.

4 Theoretical framework

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive overview of the relevant concepts of participatory culture and social impact theory for further analysis of practical data in the paper. First of all, this paper elaborates the participatory culture proposed by Henry Jenkins to describe the participatory practice of live streaming E-Commerce fans. In order to study the group shopping behavior and influence in fan groups, the second part of this chapter is explained from the perspective of social influence theory and conformity.

4.1 Participatory Culture

First, participatory culture proposed by Henry Jenkins is elaborated in this section to describe the practices of fans through their participation in live streaming E-Commerce. This section mainly introduces the concept and form of participatory culture as well as its application in streamers' fan group in live streaming E-Commerce.

4.1.1 What is Participatory Culture?

Participatory culture proposed by Henry Jenkins is used to describe the relationship between media cooperation and fan communities (2006a). It is the concept of network commitment to "nurture communities and connections" (Dijck, 2013)， audience members can be active or passive at the same time (Castells, 2009). Due to the development of digital technology, especially social media, audiences not only passively consume content, but also create content (Hills, 2013). Especially when it comes to fandom, consumption becomes production; Reading became writing; Audience culture becomes participatory culture (Jenkins, 2006a). A series of new media technologies reduce the barriers for ordinary citizens to participate in media content (Jenkins, 2006c). The meaning of fans has changed from simple audiences to more active roles. The mobility of smart phones shows that media is no longer bound

by time and space in any situation, also it enhances participatory culture by increasing interactivity (Vervoort & Kok & Lammeren &Veldkamp, 2010). Users watch and actively participate in decision-making, contributing their own content and choosing the links to follow; In addition, the popularity of computers and the Internet encourage us to see ourselves as active participants in the world of fiction (Jenkins, 2006c).It is a culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic participation, strong support for creating and sharing one's own creativity, and some form of informal instruction, in which what the most experienced knowledge is passed on to the novice. Participatory culture is also a culture in which members believe in a kind of contribution and feel a certain degree of social connection with each other (Jenkins, 2006b). Individuals or groups are not only consumers, but also contributors and producers (Fuchs, 2014). According to Henry Jenkins, one result of the emergence of participatory culture is an increase in the number of media resources available, leading to increased competition among media (2006a).

4.1.2 The Application of Participatory Culture and Fans Practices

The fans of the live streaming E-Commerce studied in this paper have a wide range of attributes, they may gather together because they like this new interactive shopping mode, or because they like a particular streamer, or for other reasons which are not obvious at present. Therefore, there is no clear definition to describe this kind of application. However, Jenkins (2009) emphasizes that participatory culture can be manifested as the forms of affiliation, expression, collaborative problem solving, and circulation. Affiliation includes formal and informal membership of online communities centred on various forms of social media. Expression refers to media types that can be created in the form of memes, fan video productions, fan fiction, or other forms of mash-ups. When individuals and teams work together on specific forms of media or media products, they participate in the process of collaborative problem-solving (Wang, 2019). Circulation refers to the means of spreading

information, which may include blogs, video blogs, podcasts, etc. (Jenkins, 2009). Based on these four forms of participation, this paper studies the fans' practice of live streaming E-commerce.

According to Vincent Miller, the boundary between producer and consumer has become blurred; Producers are the producers who create content and cultural objects, and consumers are the viewers or buyers of those objects (2011). Miller believes that the producer is the end result of a strategy that is increasingly used to encourage feedback between the producer and the consumer. In addition, the content development process of the community itself is no longer similar to those of organized industrial production (Bruns, 2013). In order to have a clear understanding of the fans' production and consumption practices in this research, regarding both consumers and producers, the followings discuss Fiske 's tripartite model.

4.2 Fiske's Tripartite Model as An Analytical Tool

A further discussion follows from the "interweaving" of productivity. In his book The Adoring Audience, John Fiske presents a model that can be used to study and analyze the productivity in fan culture, that is user-generated content. According to Fiske's model, productivity is separated into three categories: textual, semiotic and enunciative productivity (1992). The three parts of the model is used as my tool to examine my research community. All of these productive forces occur between the industrially-produced cultural goods (narrative, music, stars, etc.) and the daily lives of fans (Wang, 2019). Textual productivity refers to the ability of fans to construct original official texts and generate new ones (ibid). Semiotic productivity means that fans create their own meaning and fun from the products of the cultural industry, which are related to their social situation (Fisk, 1992). For example, when a person watches an episode of a TV series, all his/her thoughts on the received content are semiotics (Emmanouloudis, 2015). Enunciative productivity is an open form of manifesto that externalizes symbolic meaning into a specific context through

communication and sharing among fans (Fisk, 1992), and mainly occurs at the interpersonal level (Emmanouloudis, 2015).A viewer watches an episode or movie and discusses possible implications, theories, or consequences with others, leading to a temporary productivity (ibid). Thus, by an initiation, a movie or TV series can result in semiotic and enunciative productivity.

In order to understand the practice of live streaming E-Commerce fans studied in this paper more accurately, the author tries to compare and discuss Jenkins's four forms of participatory culture and the tripartite model after expounding them. The expression and circulation behaviors from Jenkins are consistent with the three productivity of Fiske's model, while the affiliation and collaborative problem solving are the "constraints" of the personnel structure above the productivity. Therefore, the author believes that the participants are the consumers.

According to Bruns (2013), some companies decided the name of the next taste of potato chips through voting or investigation by customers or through provided personalized service to customers by way of customization. This phenomenon first appeared in the 1970s. It is the combination of "producer" and "customers" concept, this creates a one-way relationship (Emmanouloudis, 2015). The criticism of Web 2.0 is that it just uses dominant content created by users as free labor (Bruns, 2013). However, public participation among users and community communication are supported by most of the network platform and companies, users are not just being "used" (Emmanouloudis, 2015). The combination of "producer" and "consumer", two terms which could not have been considered coexisting a few years ago, has been blurred by digital media into a relationship that was once clearly delineated (Uricchio, 2009). The emergence of web 2.0 has highlighted the need to rethink the "consumer" (Emmanouloudis, 2015). Bruns believes that participants (also consumers) should have access to the full overview instead of being "ordered" (2013). This brings us to the next revelation that communities like these are based on a kind of equipotentiality

where participants reject hierarchy, where equal participation in decision-making is the definition (Emmanouloudis, 2015).

4.3 Hierarchy and Fan Community

As Jenkins and Carpenter (2013) point out, some voices are easier to be heard than others, formal and informal voice hierarchies also appear in ostensibly equal projects, such as fan forums. The somewhat laissez-faire understanding of participatory culture weakens the word "participation" in the theory of participatory democracy. The reason why Carpentier (2011) discusses the concept of participation from the perspective of democracy is that the concept of democracy focuses on integrating people into the process of political decision-making. According to Bruns, content must be shared rather than exclusive to certain interested parties, and sharing is a crucial element of cooperation, because it allows equal participation and also brings solutions closer to any problems that may arise (2013).Clay Shirky aruges that everyone in the community is all a producer now; J.C. Herz speaks about a hive mind in the community works with information and shared knowledge(ibid). As Jenkins mentions, there exists a relationship between media convergence, participatory culture and collective intelligence. Consumption has become a collective process, which is collective intelligence (2006a).

Bruns takes Wikipedia as an example, but he stresses that the discussion below applies to numerous other content authoring projects (2013). First, production is based on open participation and public assessment. This means that anyone can participate in the community, although each person's contribution depends on the evaluation of other members of the community. The openness of Wikipedia is related to other people's evaluation, but this openness (anyone is welcome to participate) as well as the evaluation section should be emphasized (Emmanouloudis, 2015). The second point describes that production is a continuous process, creating content for people without restrictions (Bruns,2013).

The third point is about heterogeneous and special elitism. The "system" of online fans is not a fixed mandatory hierarchy, but an authority based on professional knowledge (Bruns,2013). This ongoing evaluation, reevaluation, and user repositioning is based on their latest contributions, and is a highly dynamic power relationship network. The fourth is related to public property. An article may raise copyright issues and property claims, whereas the Wikipedia article should be accessible to anyone (ibid).

Since the consumer and the participant are identified in this paper, Carpentier's discussion of participation also applies. Participants are defined as "a locus of decision and action where the action is in some sense a consequence of the actor's decisions" (Carpentier, 2016, p. 79). In analyzing whether the position of an actor is privileged in the field, it is important to emphasize that the concept of a position here refers to the actor's general social status, not to the actor's position in a particular participatory process. The rationale for investigating these positions is that participatory processes correct the more general imbalance of social power, in which participants with different positions of power in society enter a process of dealing with and balancing this imbalance of power (partially) (Carpentier, 2016). The complexity of analysis is caused by the diversity of different behaviors, which may include passive and silent acceptance of a decision, resistance to decisions made by others, and active and collective decision-making practices (Carpentier, 2016).

4.4 Social Impact Theory and Conformity

The research object of this paper is the fan group of live streaming E-Commerce. In addition to the internal structure of fans, it is necessary to discuss the specific behavior of fans on live streaming E-commerce platform -- purchase. From the perspective of group behavior, social impact theory is discussed in the theoretical framework of this paper in the followings.

4.4.1 What is Social Impact Theory?

Social impact theory, proposed by BibbLatane in 1981, is composed of four basic rules that consider how individuals can be "sources or targets of social influence" (Karau & Williams, 1995). Social impact is the result of social forces, including the intensity of influence sources, the immediacy of events and the number of influence sources (Michael & Scott, 2008). Therefore, in the live streaming E-Commerce fan groups studied in this paper, the corresponding can be: the importance of fan group influence on individuals; How close the group is to the individuals physically (and temporally) in trying to influence; Number of fans in the group. The more impact targets there are, the less impact each target has (Karau & Williams, 1995). According to BibbLatane(1981), social impact is defined as any influence on the feelings, thoughts, or behaviors of another person that is caused by their real, implied, or imagined presence or actions. Applications of social impact range from the spread of responsibility to social activities, stage fright or persuasive communication (Karau & Williams, 1995).

The dynamic social impact theory proposed by BibbLatane and his colleagues describes the influence of members between majority and minority groups (Forsyth, 2009). Due to the influence of social media, there has been a move towards E-Commerce. Subsequently, researchers studied the relationship between social media influence and an individual's internal visit and purchase intention.

4.4.2 Consumers in Social E-Commerce

The interactivity of live streaming E-Commerce is different from that of traditional E-Commerce. Therefore, interactivity is the most essential characteristic of social E-Commerce that distinguishes it from traditional E-Commerce, and it is also the core factor for studying the purchase intention of users in social E-Commerce (Yin, Wang & Gu, 2019). For example, users can interact frequently through product experience sharing, product recommendations, and community discussions. User interaction and word-of-mouth communication in social networks have influence on users' subsequent purchase intention (Liang & Turban, 2011). It should be noted that network communities show different forms and characteristics in different cultures, and cultural factors greatly affect the behaviors and attitudes of E-Commerce users (Hajli & Sims, 2015). Tsai and Men (2017) find that uncertainty avoidance in cultural theory would affect the risk perceived by users and ultimately affect the purchase intention. Doney et al. (1998) also support that culture influence the establishment of trust between users. Therefore, in the context of social E-Commerce, the influence of culture on social interaction is more obvious, and the research on consumers' purchase intention also needs to be considered with the antecedent effect of cultural dimension on social interaction. This may also be one of the reasons why live streaming E-Commerce is only popular in mainland China so far. Hofstede (1998) proposes a famous cultural dimension theory to measure cultural differences, among which "uncertainty avoidance " and "individualism/collectivism" are considered to have a significant impact on social interaction and influence in E-Commerce (Jarvenpaa &Tractinsky &Vitale, 1998). Close relationships between users help build trust and their positive influence on buying intentions varies across cultures. In addition, cultural dimension factors have been shown to have a significant impact on users' social interactions. Although a high degree of uncertainty avoidance brings perceived risk, it can promote subsequent trust building (Yin, Wang & Gu, 2019).

Liang, Ho, Li and Turban (2011) regard social E-Commerce as a situation in which social interaction and user-generated content are used to help consumers buy products or services. Social commerce has shifted to a new user-centered model that emphasizes user-centered word-of-mouth marketing and users' participation in the shopping process (Zhang & Benyoucef, 2016).

At present, more and more E-commerce platforms (such as Facebook and Instagram) are integrating online communities into their profit models (Yin, Wang & Gu, 2019). According to social impact theory, social influence is the driving force of behavior. Stephen and Toubia (2010) believe that, due to the aggregation effect of user characteristics and behaviors in the community, their purchasing behaviors are likely to be influenced by their friends around them. According to Yin, Wang and Gu (2019), in collectivism dominated culture, consumers tend to consider the opinions of others when making decisions and tend to pay more attention to social recognition and acceptance, while individualists pay more attention to the realization of personal goals and the independence of decision-making. Farivar, Turel and Yuan (2017) point out that users' trust in sellers or other users significantly affect their subsequent purchase intention. In different cultures, the positive effect of the close relationship between users on purchasing intention is different.

4.4.3 Conformity Act

After discussing the social impact theory and the influence of consumers' purchase intention in the social environment of live streaming E-Commerce, we need to further discuss fans' conformity behavior, so as to explore fans' shopping preference and behavior change in the following part.

Conformity is the act that matches attitudes, beliefs and behaviors with group norms, politics or like-minded (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). The change is a response to

group pressure that is real (involving the physical existence of others) or imagined (involving pressure of social norms/expectations) (McLeod, 2016). A norm is a set of specific, implicit rules shared by individuals that guide their interactions with others. According to Cialdini and Goldstein (2004), people choose to conform to society rather than pursue individual desires, because it is often easier to follow a path already taken by others than to create a new one. This tendency to conform occurs in small groups and/or society as a whole and may be due to subliminal influences (predisposed mindsets) or direct and public social pressures (McLeod, 2016). Conformity may occur in the presence of others or in the presence of one person alone. For example, when eating or watching TV alone, people still tend to follow social norms, a thinking pattern characterized by self-deception, forced consent, and adherence to group values and morals that ignore realistic evaluation of other courses of action (McLeod, 2016). Although peer pressure may have negative effects, compliance can be seen as either good or bad, but driving on the right path can be seen as beneficial integration (Aronson & Wilson & Akert, 2007).

According to Donelson Forsyth, after experiencing group stress, individuals may find themselves facing one of several responses to compliance (2019). In addition, Forsyth argues that non-conformity can also be categorized into one of two response categories. First, individuals who do not conform to the majority can demonstrate independence. Independence or dissent can be defined as an unwillingness to yield to group pressure. As a result, the person stays true to his or her own personal standards, rather than swinging toward group standards. Second, nonconformists may exhibit anti-conformity, which involves taking views that are contrary to what the group believes. This type of nonconformity may be due to a need to defy the status quo rather than to the accuracy of personal opinions.

Kelman (1958) distinguishes three different types of conformity. The first type is compliance (or group acceptance). "This occurs 'when an individual accepts influence because he hopes to achieve a favorable reaction from another person or group. He

adopts the induced behavior because.... he expects to gain specific rewards or approval and avoid specific punishment or disapproval by conformity'" (Kelman, 1958, p. 53). In other words, one conforms to the majority in publicly even if he doesn't really agree with them in private; When there is no group pressure to comply, compliance stops and is therefore a temporary change in behavior (McLeod, 2016).

The second type is internalization (genuine acceptance of group norms). "This occurs 'when an individual accepts influence because the content of the induced behavior - the ideas and actions of which it is composed - is intrinsically rewarding. He adopts the induced behavior because it is congruent with his value system (Kelman, 1958, p. 53). This is the deepest degree of conformity when the beliefs of a group become part of an individual's own belief system, meaning that behavior changes are permanent, and this is most likely to happen when the majority has more knowledge and minority members do not have the knowledge to challenge the status of the majority(McLeod, 2016).The third type is identification (or group membership). "This occurs 'when an individual accepts influence because he wants to establish or maintain a satisfying self-defining relationship to another person or group'" (Kelman, 1958, p. 53). Individuals meet the expectations of social roles, such as nurses and police officers; It is similar to compliance in which private opinions do not have to be changed (McLeod, 2016).

The main practices of the fans of live streaming E-Commerce studied in this paper mainly include watching live streaming, circulating memes and micro films, commenting and interacting, and purchasing. The conformity behavior of fans may include being "forced" to watch streaming, making homogeneous comments and making unnecessary purchases. Therefore, more discussion is needed in the analysis section.

5 Methodology

In this chapter, the main research methods are described, including online observation and in-depth interview. Secondly, the process of data collection is introduced. Finally, the importance of data analysis and related ethical issues are analyzed.

Generally speaking, the paradigm of communication research can be divided into qualitative research paradigm and quantitative research paradigm (Yuan, 2012). Quantitative methods are based on digital information and are closely related to statistical analysis (Ding, 2014). Different from quantitative methods, qualitative methods focus on meaning and interpretation (ibid) to study the meaning construction of media in daily life and its significance in guiding social behavior. Therefore, the qualitative method can highlight the essential difference of phenomena (Yuan, 2012). Qualitative methods have typical humanistic characteristics (Ding, 2014). The purpose of this paper is to study the characteristics of live streaming E-Commerce from the perspective of participatory culture and impact on the consumer behavior of live streaming E-Commerce fans. However, based on the reading of relevant literatures, a considerable amount of research starts from questionnaire survey or online questionnaire, which comes from quantitative methods. Therefore, the author wanted to focus on qualitative research for the investigation to see if there would be some differences or new perspectives among these researches.

First of all, I introduce the reason why I chose Taobao live E-commerce fans as the case study. Secondly, online observation and in-depth interview are explained and evaluated as the qualitative methods of data collection. The third part discusses how I selected samplings. The fourth part describes how I made a qualitative analysis of the data. Finally, I discuss the limitations and ethical issues of the study.

5.1 Case Selection

Based on Taobao's live streaming E-Commerce fans as the research object, this paper analyzes the fans' participation behavior and practice in this form of live streaming. According to these four characteristics of what Kozinets (2010) believes the selected online group should have :(1) relevant to the research and research questions; (2) active, fans have regular communication recently; (3) strong interaction, fans have a certain amount of communication; (4) it can provide more detailed or descriptive rich data (Kozinets, 2010). Therefore, I chose Taobao as the fan group of live streaming E-commerce as a case study. Taobao first started the "experiment" by launching Taobao live streaming, which achieved promoted "live streaming + E-Commerce "mode (Cheng, 2019). Live streaming has generated billions in sales to China on E-Commerce platforms (China Journals of Justice,2019), and it gradually becomes one of the main forces of E-Commerce in China. In addition, Taobao live streaming E-commerce has a large number of fans and transactions. Only one hour and three minutes after the start of the 2019 Chinese Double 11 Shopping Festival, the transaction volume of Taobao live streaming exceeded the full-day sales of the Double 11 Event in 2018(Sina Finance and Economics, 2019). Therefore, I needed a very mainstream E-Commerce platform to study. The fans of Taobao live streaming E-Commerce are comprehensively representative.

In addition, given the large number of streamers on Taobao, the author also needed to narrow the scope and choose one or two streamers for main observation. First of all, I asked my friends who were keen on live streaming E-Commerce shopping about the streamer selection with a large number of fans. After being recommended, the author got the suggestion of three streamers, namely Jiaqi Li, Weiya and Xiang Li. After searching for the three streamers on *Weibo*[7] hot topics, I found that Jiaqi Li had the

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[7] Weibo is a Chinese microblogging (weibo) website. Launched by Sina Corporation on 14 August 2009, it is one of the biggest social media platforms in China, with over 445 million monthly active users as of Q3 2018. The platform has been a huge financial success, with surging stocks, lucrative advertising sales and high revenue and total earnings per quarter. At the start of 2018, it surpassed the US$30 billion market valuation mark for the first time. -- Michelle & Uking (2 March 2011). "Special: Micro blog's macro impact". China Daily. Retrieved 26 October 2011.

highest exposure rate. He had around 15.43 million followers on Weibo, followed by Weiya, who had 8.43 million followers, and Xiang Li, who had 4.5 million followers. Therefore, I chose Jiaqi Li and Weiya in the initial stage, which were popular on social media. I hoped that I would be able to get more online viewers and observation data with their huge fan base. Meanwhile, through observation, Jiaqi Li and Weiya, among the three E-Commerce streamers, who did their streaming at a fixed time every day, were more conducive to the author's continuous observation.

Furthermore, the author investigated the sales background of Jiaqi Li and Weiya. According to the data on the search engine, the products sold by these two streamers in the live streaming were all from the brand cooperation. The promotion behavior of the streamers in the streaming was similar to the sales guide in the physical store, and more similar to the sales guide in the TV shopping. With the communication between the brand or company and the business team of the streamers, the sales list would be determined, and then the streamer would conduct live streaming sales. Instead of offering products, streamers offer "selling services". After understanding the above background, I finally chose the streaming and fan group of Jiaqi Li and Weiya for observation.

5.2 Method of Data Collection

The data collection process lasted for two months from march to April 2020, including 20 consecutive days of online observation and twelve in-depth interviews. Through online observation, I could describe this emerging way of E-Commerce shopping, so that readers could have a comprehensive understanding of this fact. Also, I tried to make some visible answers to the research questions with observation data. Then, through in-depth interviews, the author was able to find out the facts and evidence of users' shopping preference and their changes in behavior from the perspective of internal-participants.

5.2.1 Online Observation

Qualitative methods such as content analysis or discourse analysis may not be able to achieve the purpose of this paper, because I wanted to collect the results of ordinary people, rather than the words of TV programs or professionals in news interviews. Online observation is an established method of online interactive media and social research, including generating data on research-related topics from existing discussion forums, social networking sites, video blogs and blogs (Pink et al., 2016). Therefore, this method was applied to watch live streaming and generate data on topics relevant to the research for an understanding of the features of live streaming E-Commerce from participatory culture angle. Ethnographers must be modest extroverts who accept the role but are content to be a listener and never dominate the interaction or scene (Fine & Hallett,2013). Therefore, during the observation, the author, as stranger, entered the streaming room to observe, and also somehow interacted with other viewers as a participant. I mastered the limits of participation, and only collected data following the reaction of the audience majority, without much involvement.

Participant observation is, in some ways, the most natural and challenging of qualitative data collection methods, connecting researchers with the most basic human experience to discover how and why humans behave in specific environments through immersion and engagement (Guest, Namey & Mitchell, 2013). According to Guest et al., the researchers have to establish rapport with the participants because engaging in observation means engaging in the actions and context of the social environment. Therefore, the author hoped to observe and understand what people did in ordinary life. Beyond that, I needed to spend enough time interacting to get data. One of the reasons for using the participant observation was that some aspects of social environment could only be seen when the researcher was there. Besides, due to language and cultural restrictions, it is feasible for researchers from China to participate in the observation.

According to the case selection above, the author chose to watch the live streaming and observe the streamers' Weibo accounts. The participation and interactivity in live streaming were the most intuitive observation data, and Weibo data was used to assist. Since Weibo users posted their feelings and thoughts by sharing pictures, videos, comments, discussions and hyperlinks through status updates, it came an effective way to observe fans' attitudes and emotional activities. This paper observed the online study phase from March 2020 to April 2020. According to fans' tips, Li and Weiya streamed on the Taobao app from 8:15 PM to 11 PM Beijing time every day, which converted to 2:15 PM to 5 PM (daylight saving time) in Sweden.

Therefore, the author watched Li and Weiya's live streaming on Taobao app every day at this time, and checked their Weibo homepages every two days to observe. If the streaming had clear participatory features and involved the interaction and relationship between fans, it was considered as important data of the research. The observation records were saved in my mobile phone through the screenshots of the live streaming and the streamers' Weibo posts (because the live streaming E-Commerce could only be watched on the smartphone). When the observations reached saturation and nothing new happened, the author stopped observing. In particular, the basic situation of the observed data is as follows.

Materials (screenshots)	Number	How to construct
From streaming	38	Featured by interactivities
From Weibo	14	Featured by activities

Table 02 General Information about the observation materials

5.2.2 In-depth Interview

As a standard method and means to understand our social world, social researchers talk about "interviewing society" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009). According to Morris

(2015), an in-depth interview should be a flexible, free-flowing interaction in which the interviewer leaves a lot of leeway for the person being interviewed. In order to obtain more "deeper" data to answer the research questions, the author used in-depth interviews to collect the understandings from the angles' of the interviewees. I chose to conduct semi-structured in-depth interviews to flexibly expand and adjust the questions.

The interview process lasted for 1 months, including 12 participants. All of them had been watching live streaming E-Commerce for at least one month and had made purchases, and even claimed to be "loyal users" themselves. Based on previous literature and theories, I prepared an interview outline with 15 questions mainly as a hint. The interview questions were divided into several main themes: introduction, attachment to streamers, interaction, means of participation and feelings of the interviewee about personal behavioral change (see appendix to interview outline) in order to encourage respondents to provide detailed and comprehensive responses. All the communication with the interviewees was conducted through *WeChat*[8], and each interview lasted between 30 and 60 minutes.

During the interview, they were recorded separately after obtaining the consent of the respondents, and records were sorted into manuscripts as soon as possible. Some respondents gave very detailed answers that the interviewer didn't need to do much (ibid), and some were given slight guidance when the answers were short. It is important to note that since the study was during the COVID-19 period, all interviews were conducted via WeChat call or video. Interviewers expand the geographical range of potential interviewees, which is just as effective as face-to-face interviews (ibid).

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[8] WeChat is an instant messaging software that supports Android, iOS and other mobile operating systems launched by Chinese TenCent on January 21, 2011. It is aimed at smartphone users. Users can share with friends' texts, pictures and memes, and it supports group chat, voice and video intercom function, broadcast news (one-to-many), photo/video sharing, location sharing, message exchange links, WeChat pay, games and other services. -- WeChat 1.0 for iPhone(beta) new release. WeChat. [2016-12-17]

5.3 Sampling

We need to identify suitable samplings before starting research methods. The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in the selection of informative cases for in-depth study (Gentles, Charles, Ploeg & McKibbon, 2015). Patton (2015) further points out that, purposeful sampling is particularly suitable for qualitative research. According to Stake (2006), the benefits of multi-case studies will be limited, 15 or 30 cases provide a unique interactivity beyond the research team and readers can understand. Therefore, the author planned the number of interviewees at about 15. In qualitative research, the commonly recommended criterion for determining is when an adequate sample size reaches its saturation (Charmaz, 2003).

Since there was no private chat function among members on the app of Taobao live streaming, the interview invitations were sent to random members of the official WeChat fan group of the two streamers after the author joined it (how to join the official fan group is mentioned in the data analysis of observation). However, the user information in the fan community was hidden so that I couldn't learn more about them before we communicated. Only eight of the thirty-two invitations sent by the author responded. Therefore, in order to collect more respondents, I invited friends who were keen on watching live E-Commerce, as well as other live streaming E-Commerce fans around them. Therefore, the interviewees adopted the "snowball sampling" method through interpersonal communication, which is known as the practice of asking respondents to recommend other respondents. Snowball sampling can always increase the number of respondents until the information collected reaches saturation (Small, 2009).

There were 7 respondents in this part. As mentioned above, this paper needs to study the shopping preferences and behavioral changes of fans of live streaming E-Commerce. Therefore, all the samples must meet the requirement of having watched live streaming E-Commerce for at least one month, and be willing to talk about live streaming E-Commerce and streamers, rather than random buyers without any

purpose. Among these 15 people, the author abandoned those who had watched live streaming E-Commerce for less than a month, so the total number of respondents was finally determined to be 12. Thus, the author had no way to know their personal information before the interview began. Finally, the basic information of the 12 effective interviewees are as follows (the names of the respondents are anonymous according as they requested).

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Length of Time watching	Job
F1	Female	28	2 months	UX designer
F2	Female	22	6 months	administrative assistant
F3	Female	28	1 year	industrial designer
F4	Female	25	1 year	student
F5	Male	23	6 months	UX designer
F6	Female	23	5 months	art designer
F7	Female	27	10 months	teacher
F8	Female	26	2 months	HR assistant
F9	Female	26	1 month	cashier
F10	Female	19	1 year	accounting
F11	Female	19	1 year	writer
F12	Female	24	6 months	unemployed

Table 03 General information about interviewees

5.4 Method of Data Analysis

Thematically qualitative content analysis was used to analyze the collected online observation and in-depth interview data. Content analysis is a flexible method for analyzing text data (Cavanagh, 1997). It focuses on the characteristics of language as communication and content or contextual meaning of the text (Budd, Thorp, & Donohew, 1967). Textual data can be oral, printed, or electronic, and may be obtained from narrative responses, open-ended survey questions, interviews, focus groups, observations, or printed media (such as articles, books, or manuals) (Kondracki & Wellman, 2002). The goal is to classify a large amount of texts into valid categories representing similar meanings (Weber, 1990).

I used a general inductive approach to organize and reduce the data, which allowed topics to be derived from the interpretation of the original data (Thomas, 2006) and ensured that data-driven topics occurred. First, I read the interview data over and over again to get a sense of immersion and wholeness (Tesch, 1990). The data was then read word by word to get the code (Miles & Huberman, 1994), emphasizing the exact words from the text to capture key ideas or concepts. Next, I processed the text by recording the first impressions, thoughts, and preliminary analysis. As this process continued, the emergence of code tags reflected more than one key idea. These usually come directly from the text and then become the original encoding scheme (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). After that, I classified the codes according to the connections between the different codes. These emerging categories were used to organize code into meaningful clusters (Patton, 2002). In the process of categorization, I reduced category overlap and redundancy to create the most important topics (Thomas, 2006). The answers were re-read and the relevant data was grouped and assigned to one or more topics (Wang, 2019). Throughout the process,

new themes were identified and developed until no new themes emerged, indicating that all the main themes had been identified (Thomas, 2006).

In the initial coding stage, I read all the transcripts and picked out outside pressure, curiosity, entertainment, friends recommendation, recommendation to others, loyalty to the streamers, habit, boredom, topics with friends, visual audio experience, pleasure, psychological dependence, peer discussion, self-social needs, regret buying, same comments, etc. All category tags (code) were related to the research questions. Based on the theoretical framework, preset labels were proposed, including social media influence, emotional attachment, social identity, homogeneous comments, impulse purchase and visual entertainment. Through comparison, relevant data was analyzed. With the analysis, additional code was developed and the initial coding scheme was modified and completed (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Then, similar data was integrated into a topic by focusing on coding, looking for the most frequent or important initial code (Wang, 2019).

After manually coding the interview records, I used the same method to encode the online observation data. However, the data observed online was relatively shallow, and the data had a high repetition rate for the same topic. Thus, part of the characteristics of live-streaming E-Commerce in terms of participatory culture could be obtained through online observation data. Finally, I further related the observation data and interview data to the research topic through the connection with relevant theories, and discuss in the next chapter.

5.5 Limitations of The Study

Although online observation and in-depth interviews are considered sufficient for investigation and analysis, qualitative data may still have a certain subjective tendency (Wang, 2019).

Firstly, the author only selected two streamers for online observation, and the samples could not represent the features and participation practice of the whole Taobao live streaming E-Commerce. Secondly, although Taobao is the most mainstream E-Commerce platform in China with a huge user base, it still has limitations. In addition to Taobao, there are also other popular live streaming E-Commerce platforms such as Tiktok, Kaishou and so on. These platforms are more entertaining than Taobao, therefore, the case of Taobao does not cover all live streaming E-Commerce. Finally, some of the in-depth interview respondents are friends with each other, which may affect some objectivity.

5.6 Participation and Ethical Considerations

A good interview depends on the interviewer's ability asking questions, listening, and explaining (Mason, 1996). Evidently, a good interview lies on the sincerity of both the interviewer and the interviewee, and then trust is built up in between. During the interviews, some interviewees admitted that such a one-to-one conversation would create some invisible pressure on them, resulting in the "if you ask, I have to answer" situation. Therefore, the author selected some friends, to let them feel some familiarity during the interview to reduce the pressure.

Lynne Haney argues that qualitative research in fieldwork is physical touch, in which the interviewer continuously rebuild relationships through the contact with respondents (2002). Researchers can be seen as research tools, and research relationships can be seen as bridges to final results. However, successful research does not necessarily require full access, but require access to the correct research materials through ethical means with the permission of the participants (Chang, 2014). The critical question is how to establish a decent and honest research relationship with the subjects and get a chance to talk to them outside of the virtual world. I started with friends and then asked them to recommend friends with the same hobbies, with permission. The previous academic research on live streaming E-

Commerce seems to be less active, which may be due to the uniqueness of this phenomenon, which is only prevalent in mainland China. In some studies, fan groups are considered "irrational" (ibid). Hence, when the author wanted to participate in their communities as a scholar, I worried that they would instinctively express ambivalence. Therefore, to obtain objective and credible content, I did not identify myself as an academic researcher at the beginning. In the course of the interviews, , they did not resist my research after I gradually revealed my academic purpose. However, I feared that if I encouraged them to participate in my research, they would glorify or even promoted their "idol" streamers. Therefore, I always adopted an equal talking attitude and tried to approach them as friends.

6 Data Analysis and Interpretation of Results

In the previous methodology section, data collection and analysis procedure were elaborated in details. Through induction and coding, the observation data and interview data were categorized and summarized into the main relevant topics to solve the research questions. With the help of relevant theories, the author explains the participatory forms of live streaming E-Commerce fans in this section. Based on the research questions, the following analysis is divided into two parts. First of all, I describe the process of live streaming on E- Commerce based on the theoretical framework, including the content of live streaming, the forms of fans' participation, the productivity in fan culture, and the online practice of hierarchy in the fan community. This part of data was collected through online observation, aiming to elaborate the characteristics of the live streaming E-commerce from the perspective of participatory culture. Secondly, in-depth interviews were conducted to investigate and analyze the purchasing behaviors of fans. According to the summary of the interview data, the author sorted out different categories and discuss the corresponding data content through these categories.

6.1 A Basic Situation of the Streaming Room

This section aims to find out the characteristics of live streaming E-Commerce from the perspective of participatory culture, including live streaming content, relevant participatory forms and productivity of fans. At the same time, discussion and critics are described through the analysis of fans online practice in the community.

6.1.1 The Productivity of Fans

The author learned about the whole starting process of audiences' daily watching live streaming through communicating with the interviewees before the interviews were

conducted. First, fans needed to subscribe to Jiaqi Li's WeChat public account or

Weibo.

I first followed Li's WeChat public account and got the following screenshots:

Figure 05 The pop-up message after I followed Jiaqi Li's WeChat public account

As shown above, the translation is visible next to the Chinese version. The
information released by the official account is understandable, and users can find all
information about Li's streaming here. Never is the name of Li's pet bichon dog, and
he has even published micro film, series, and memes of Never created by his fans as
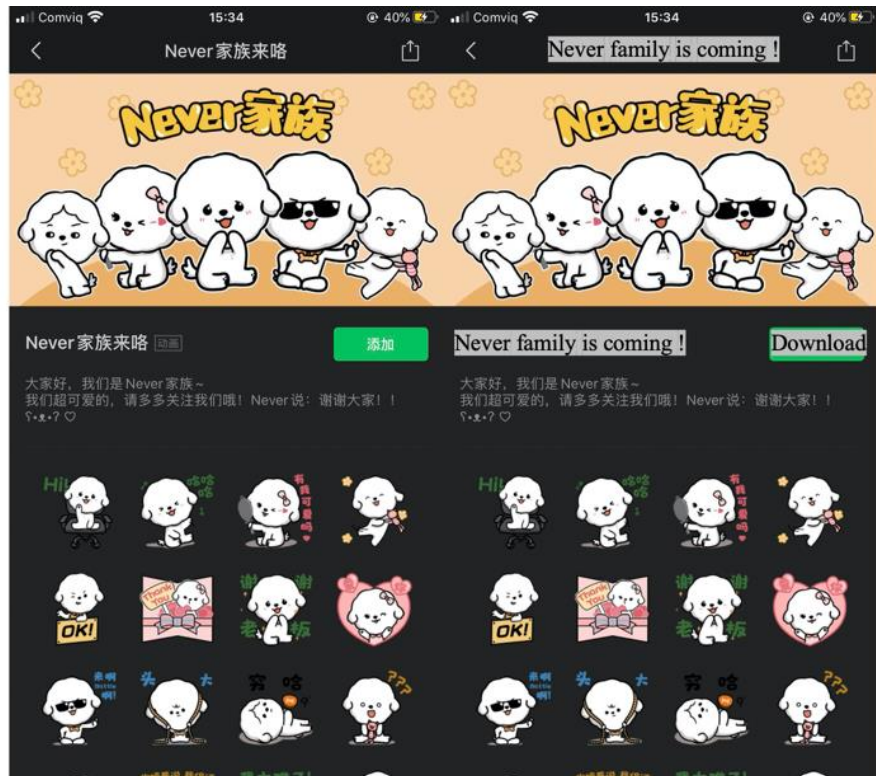she often shows up in Li's streaming room to win the audience's affection.

Figure 06 Never's memes for chatting on Wechat

In addition to Never's memes, Li also has his own memes created by fans.

Figure 07 Li's memes for chatting on Wechat

In addition to her regular appearances on Li's live streaming, she also had her own Weibo account and her films managed by Li's fans, called "Never family school diary." The film series was about how the puppies trained to be therapy dogs for autistic children.

Figure 08 Li and Never's Weibo account preview for the film series

Figure 09 Meme of Never and her family members created by fans

As a tool of self-expression, memes have become more and more active with the development of technology (Etiquette, 2020). The making and use of memes is one form of participatory culture —expression — that would reinforce the online community of fans who are creating based on what they already have, repairing media and creating a tighter online society. As Jenkins argues, if the right memes are deployed, it would succeed in attracting people and continue to attract more and more potential consumers (2015). For example, "Gangnam Style" was an Internet craze that generated millions of views and shared in online communities (Etiquette, 2020). Similarly, Never's memes, after being extended to micro films, were warmly welcomed by fans in the live streaming, and had received about 500,000 reposts on Weibo. The author of Memes in Digital Culture, Limor Shifman believes that, memes are actually an indicator of the operation of digital culture, this activity can be measured and utilized to further improve the quality and quantity of memes geared for specific viewers (2013).

In addition, there were two more functions on this Wechat account, which were "wish list" and "after-sales services." (see figure 10 and figure 11). From these two graphs, it can be seen that Li had considerate after services and communication channel with

his fans. He was not only selling products but also collecting "wishes" from his audiences.

Figure 10 Wish list that can be filled by fans

As what have been discussed in the theoretical frameworks, this seemingly "thoughtful" and "customized" behavior between the streamer and the fans actually leads to the exploitation of the fans' labor force. Catherine Driscoll, Melissa Gregg, Laurie Ouellette and Julie Wilson argue that users' willingness to submit to corporate interests has contributed to media convergence, and this is also due to the logic of convergence, which is largely known by the logic of capitalism, albeit in an online environment that perpetuates ongoing exploitation (2011).
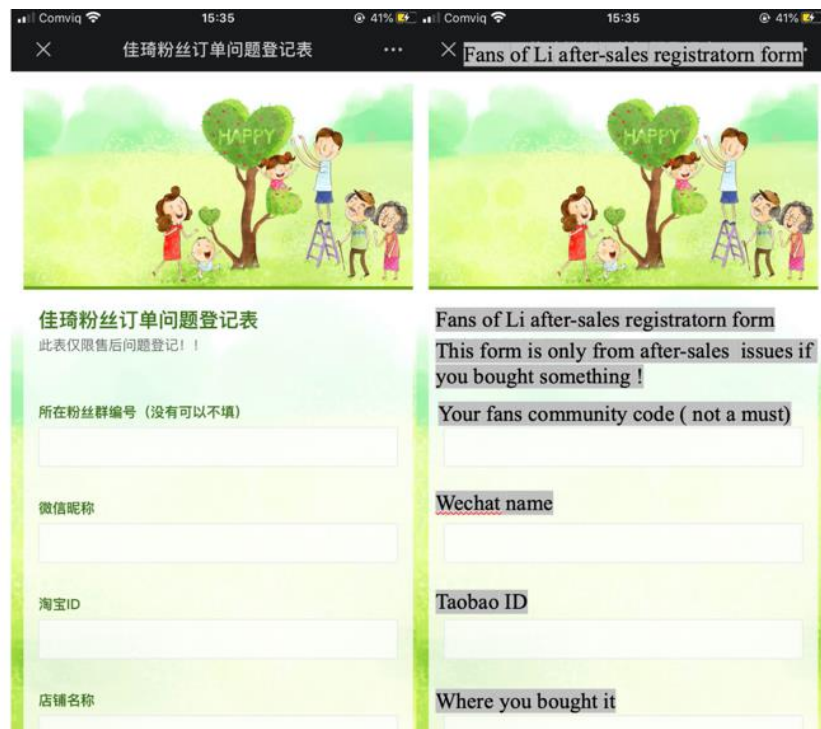
Figure 11 After-sales services if customers have problems with what they bought

It is evident that fans were required to write about their fan community code when filling these forms. We can notice Li had a clear hierarchy division gathering his fans together. Also, from the level of fans, which was New fans, Bronze fans, Gold fans, Diamond fans (the translation may be not correct enough), it is obvious that Li was managing his fans group accordingly due to their loyalty. Social interactions and activities in his streaming room are essential, which are explained further in the following texts describing the streaming environment.

From the observation above, fans' participation in live streaming E-Commerce includes expression and circulation, which are mainly reflected in the production and promotion of memes and micro films. Secondly, the productivity of fans in live streaming E-Commerce is reflected in creating product lists and usage feelings, and feeding them back to streamers or, more specifically, merchants.

6.1.2 "Democracy" in the Community

In the previous section, the observation on the hierarchy within the fan community is still superficial. The author needed to make observations on the joining process and internal environment of the fan community to obtain more data.

In the upper left corner of the figure 12, there is a display of intimacy, which is closely related to the level of fans in figure 10. According to figure 10, Li divided his fans into four categories: new fans, bronze fans, gold fans and diamond fans. On the first day when I watched Li's streaming, my fan level was just New Fans, and my intimacy with Li was 0. Through the observation and calculation, I could increase the length of watching the live streaming and make comments to improve my intimacy. 10 points would be increased by every one hour's stay and 1 point would be increased by posting one comment. Fans were also able to increase their intimacies with Li by making purchases, which was more efficient by spending a lot of time watching live streaming and commenting. Each purchase brought 100 points as what one of the interviewees told. It can be induced that the more time and money a fan spends watching or purchasing, the higher intimacy he would get. After 20 days of observation, my rating in the streaming room was New fans level 2, and the intimacy was 168, as shown in the following figure.

Figure 12 The latest intimacy with Li

As can be seen from the above fan comments, they were asking Li to display what they wanted to buy. And Li listened to the opinions of fans, promised that some popular products would be arranged in the future. According to figure 13, in the process of applying for joining, the staff required to show the degree of intimacy between the applicant and Li on the live streaming platform, and the degree of intimacy was the standard l of WeChat group into which the applicant would be assigned.
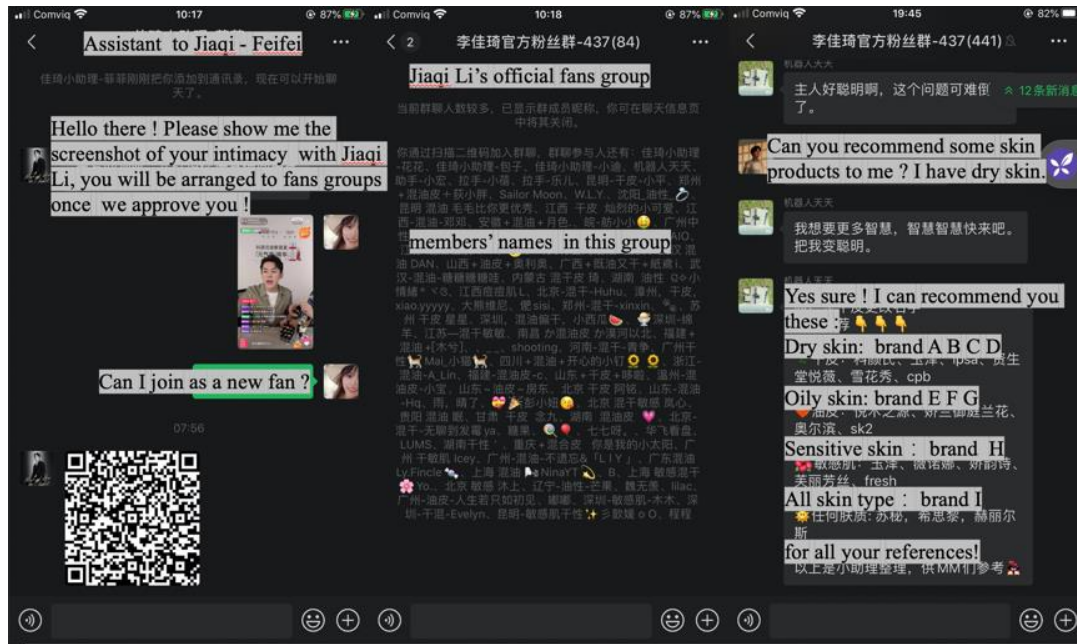
Figure 13 The process of being a member of Li's fans group

First, the staff asked me to show a screenshot of my intimacy watching Li's streaming. After I entered the fan group, I could see all the members and the real-time number of fans. As the group name showed, the number of this group was 437, but we couldn't infer the meaning of 437. In the case of WeChat groups, the upper limit of each group was 500 people. If I assumed that 437 means group 437, at least 218,000 followers had been recorded. When I entered on April 25, there were already 84 people in the group. As of May 3, there were 441 people in the group. Evidently, the online fan community was running under mature systematical management. Meanwhile, members in the fan community were ranked according to the closeness between the fans and the streamer. Due to the low intimacy between the author and Li, it was impossible to enter the fan base of other levels for observation, resulting in the limitation of data.

From the theoretical framework established above, it can be concluded that participatory culture is a more democratic form of communication, because it can stimulate the active participation of the fans and shape the flow of ideas across media forms (Benkler, 2006). From the democratic perspective of Carpentier, participation is defined as the equalization of power relations between privileged and non-privileged

actors in formal or informal decision-making (2000). The redistribution of power allows non-citizens currently excluded from the political and economic processes to be intentionally included in the future, and the poor to participate in deciding how to share information, set goals and policies, allocate tax resources, operate projects, and distribute benefits such as contracts and sponsorship (Arnstein,1969). However, the fan community hierarchy of live streaming E-Commerce has broken this decision and balance. Fans were judged by their level of consumption and time spent interacting during the streaming instead of cultural productivity, where standard does not fit with participatory culture. Moreover, fans who had entered WeChat group could not upgrade to other WeChat groups even if they greatly increase their intimacy with the streamers in the future. This entry-level fan community was the group member which would belong to in the long term, and the level would never change. Carrie Lynn D. Reinhard (2013) mentions some examples of fans looking down on other new members, with cracks in the fan group and different attitudes towards others. Clay Shirky believes that to overcome any challenge in the community, everyone should be able to join easily (Bruns, 2013). Fans, especially those called communities, think it is important to offer advice to other upcoming fans (Emmanouloudis, 2015).

6.1.2 The Relevance of The Entertainment Factors

High interactivity and entertainment are one of the important reasons for the popularity of live streaming E-Commerce. In this section, the author analyze and discuss the entertainment factors in live streaming E-Commerce in an attempt to find out the connection between it and fans' participation. In Li's streaming room, the interaction between the streamer and the audience can be divided into the following ways.

1. Coupon

When Li recommended products, there would be a pop-up coupon displaying for discounts on the screen, which would usually disappear after the countdown of 5 seconds. Consumers must keep their eyes on the phone screen and click on the "receive" button within 5 seconds.
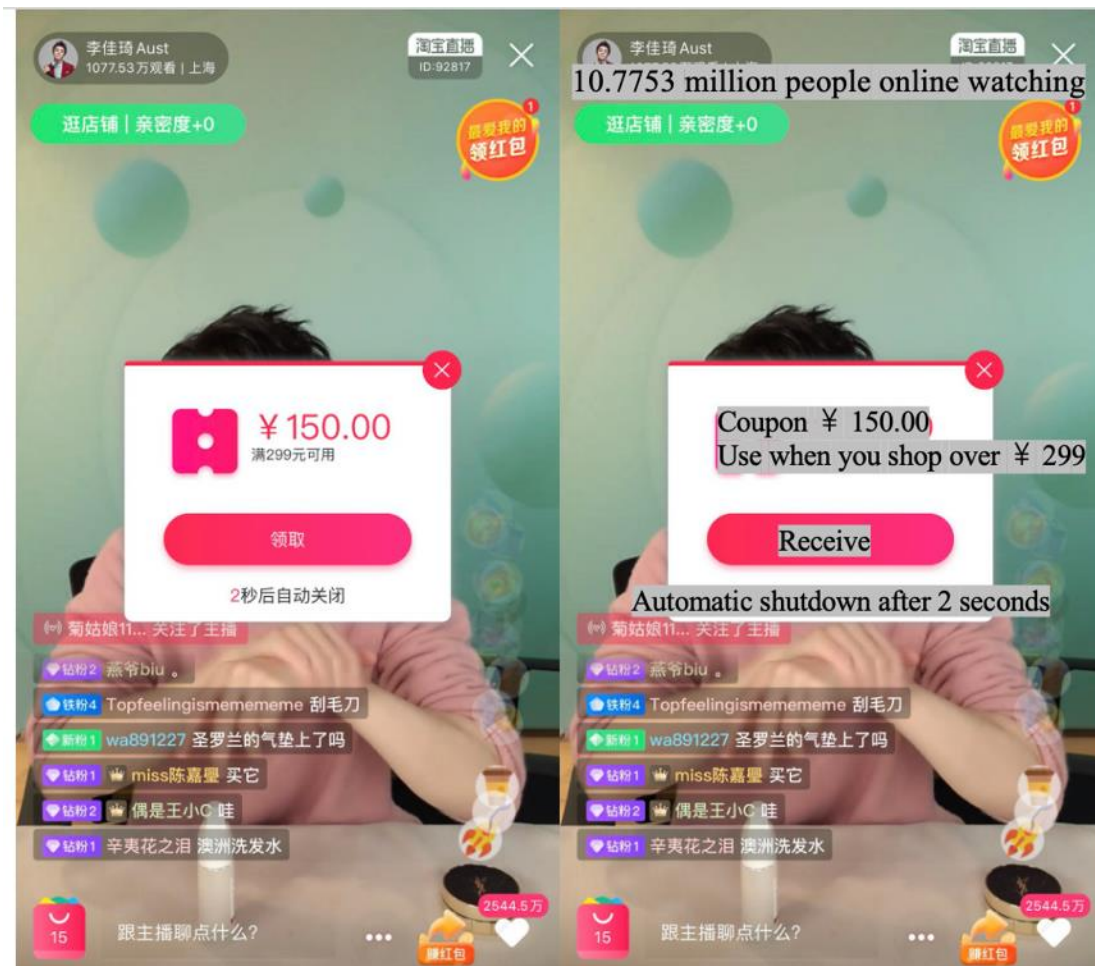
Figure 14 The random pop-up coupon in the streaming room

It can be seen that the discounts were relatively attractive, the low price was also one of the reasons to attract the audience, which is also mentioned by many interviewees in the later interview. Not all products had such coupons, consumers might feel the rarity and preciousness of coupons and the satisfaction when they got them.

2. Limited supply

In addition to coupons, limited supplies were also one of the ways that streamers captured the audience's attention. In Li and Weiya's streaming, all the items had a

fixed quantity. After Li introduced his products, he would speak to the audience, "We are going to set up the shopping link for you guys!" And a clickable purchase link appeared in the bottom left corner of the screen. Usually, after I clicked in, it showed that the product was sold out. Back in the streaming room, Li would announce, "10,000 portions have been sold out. Tell me if you still want it, I will replenish 10,000 more. But no more products after."
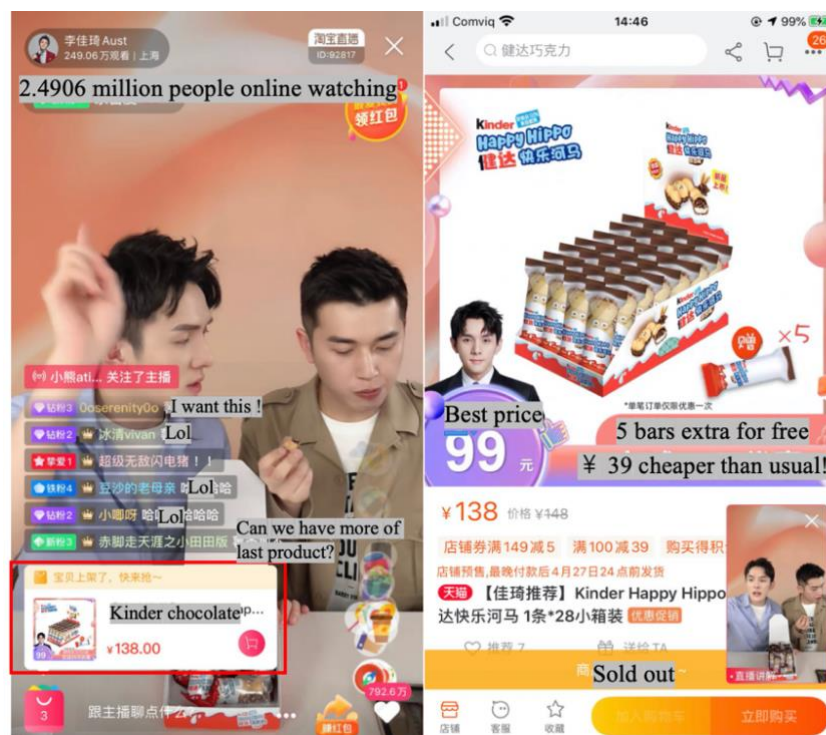
Figure 15 Limited supplies sold out in 1 second

3. Product trial

In addition to the detailed introduction of the product itself, the streamers had a more intuitive hands-on trial in the live streaming. For example, when it came to food, Li and his assistant tasted it directly in the streaming, described the taste of the food, and even issued onomatopoeic words praising the food. For beauty products, such as lipsticks, Li tried them on his arms and lip.

Figure 16 Product trial

4. Governmental cooperation

In addition to business cooperation, live streaming E-Commerce also drives the agricultural and sideline economy in deprived areas. In online observations of these days, the head of Zhashui county in Shaanxi province had been on the air with Li, as shown in the following figure.
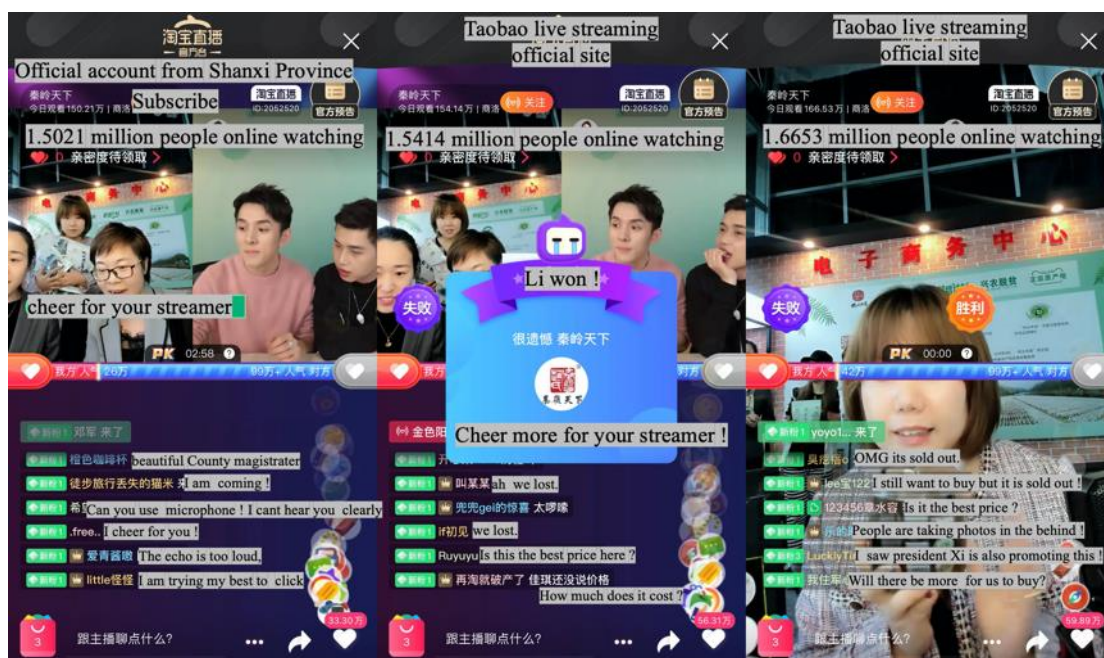
Figure 17 Li and the county magistrate in connection on the streaming

Zhashui fungus was a leading industry in Zhashui county. After the link, the fungus was quickly sold out, with the audience still calling for it to remain in the comments.

According to Hilvert-Bruce et al. (2018), user participation in live streaming can be divided into two types: "visible" online behaviors, such as comments and donations, and "invisible" psychological attachment. In the user practice participation of live streaming E-Commerce, the donation behavior was replaced by the purchase behavior. The above elements of entertainment, including coupons, limited offerings, product trials, and corporate partnerships, were all designed to "goad" fans into buying. The core competence of media is communication competence and agenda-setting competence (Fengjin, 2018). With the progress of information technology and the diversification of media forms, agenda-setting plays an important role not only in politics but also in mass media. According to Bernard Russell (1994), the medium is hard to work on how people "think," but it is very effective in guiding what people "think." Streamers increase the exposure rate and topics of products in a variety of ways, and fans may buy them for a variety of reasons: the need for commodities, the dependence and attachment on streamers, the reflection of conformity, the echo of other fans, etc.

6.1.4 Critical Thinking upon Observation

The online observations were made through smartphone of the author, which caused me to reflect that even though mobile E-Commerce has a good user base, there are still a large number of computer users. Therefore, I tried to watch the live streaming on the computer, but I couldn't find the entrance.
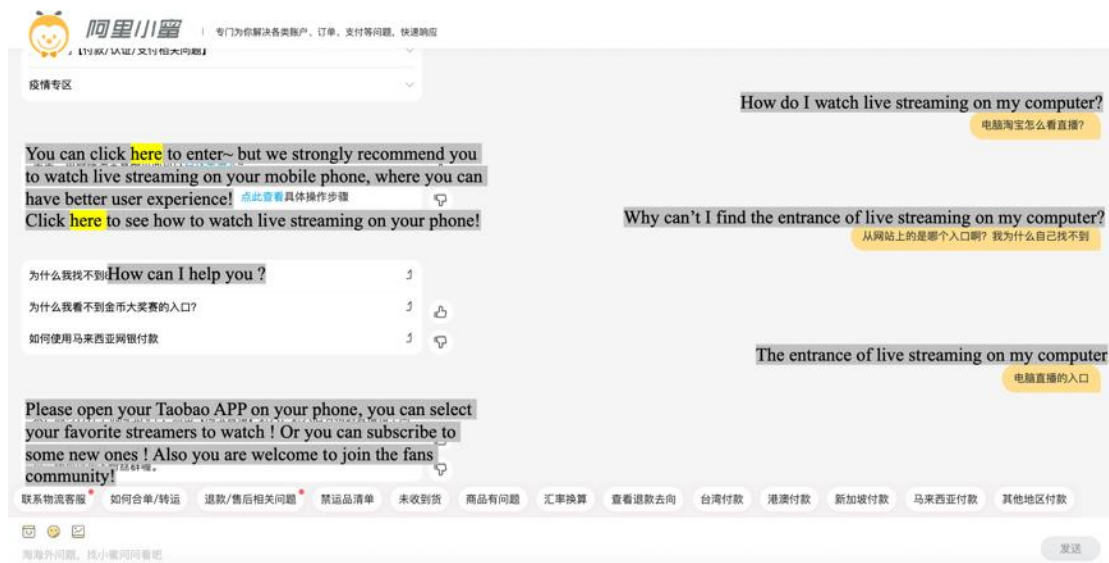
Figure 18 The conversation with the customer service on Taobao website asking for the entrance of watching live streaming on computer

It is evident that watching live streaming on the computer was not recommended by the customer service. Instead, the customer service guided me to my smartphone. It is shown in the following figure when I opened the live streaming portal provided by the customer service.
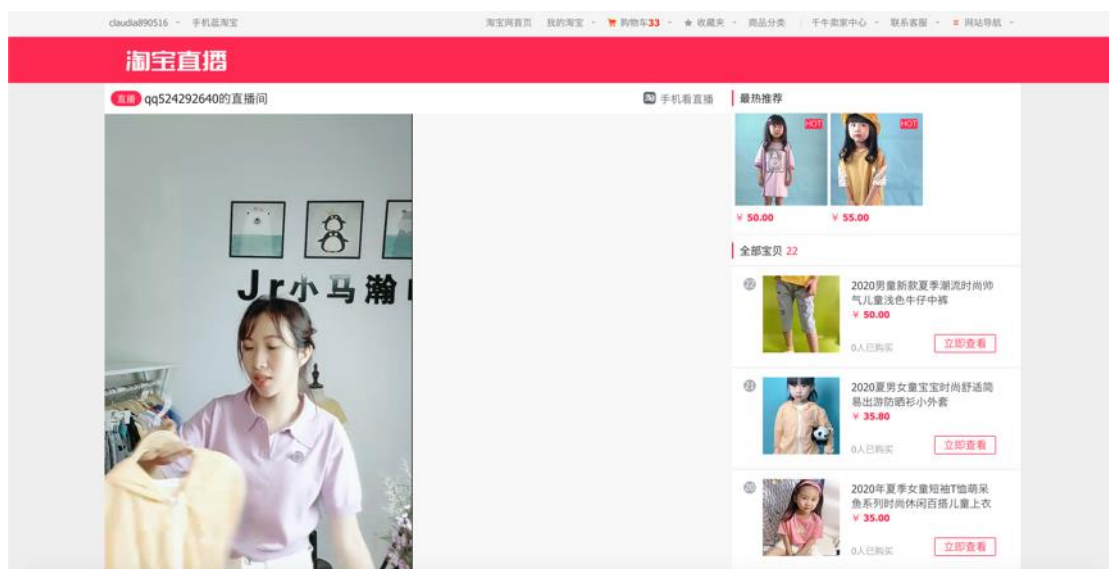
Figure 19 The entrance of watching live streaming on computer

There was no search box on the computer side, and the content was not selectable. What's more, the live streaming was directly held by random streamers, and the audience were not allowed to interact with the streamers or make comments. The interface design was very simple, which didn't provide considerate user experience. It can be inducted that Taobao was guiding the development of live streaming E-Commerce to mobile users instead of spending manpower and resources on computer development.

As a result, under such an "artificial" drainage, the user data on the mobile side will naturally increase, thus diverting the number of users on the computer side. However, due to the lack of literature and data in this regard, the author could not get the evidence whether Taobao simplified the live streaming on the computer side and put more resources on the mobile side in order to save the development cost. The easy operation of smartphones reduces the cost of live streaming equipment, directly lower the barriers of becoming an online celebrity or a streamer, so that everyone can create user generated content on the Internet to gain reputation.

What's more, the entertainment and shopping "company" provided by the streamers is worthy of recognition. However, this entertainment is featured by "fast food culture". "Fast food culture" refers to a phenomenon that only seeks for speed but not content (Baike, 2016). In order to earn the quick profits brought, netizens post attractive content just to earn traffic.

6.1.5 Summary

This section provides an incomplete descriptive explanation of the first research question by observing the online fan community and the streaming. This fan group carries out community activities by making "expression" and "circulation" of memes and micro films. They are both consumers and producers, with three types of productivity that fit into Fiske's tripartite model. Meanwhile, the online purchasing

behavior promoted by streamers through various entertainment and interactive means is also one of the online practices of fans. Through online observation, we can only find out the "visible" online behaviors of fans, and have no way to know whether fans have "invisible" psychological attachment to streamers. At least, the purchase behavior of fans can partly reflect the needs of some users (Hilvert-Bruce et al., 2018). However, more qualitative data, such as in-depth interviews, is needed to continue the research from the perspective of fans' purchase intentions and emotions.

In addition, this fan community was divided into a "lifetime" hierarchy, which was only judged by the purchase behavior and the time spent watching live streaming, regardless of the productivity and participation form of fan culture. Digital technology breaks down the hierarchical barriers of participation culture, while the fan rating system of live streaming E-Commerce has re-established the hierarchy, in which purchase becomes the most important indicator of loyalty. From this point alone, participatory culture does not fully apply to the fan community of live streaming E-Commerce.

Finally, Taobao, as the largest E-Commerce platform in China, "deliberately" channels fans of live streaming E-Commerce to mobile E-Commerce. Mobile live streaming has lowered the threshold of becoming a streamer, while mobile E-Commerce has lowered the threshold of users' purchase.

6.2 The Conformity Influence on Fans

According to social impact theory, the intensity, immediacy, and number of group members are the three variables affecting social influence. In other words, it will cause more social influence distributed among all targets, if there are more intensities, immediacies and targets in the social situation (Latane, 1981).

Based on the theoretical framework of this paper, we can understand the practice of fans of live streaming E-Commerce from the perspective of participatory culture and conformity. Judging from the data observed online, the most direct result of fans participating in live streaming E-Commerce is generated shopping behavior. Research on users' deep shopping preferences and fans' reflection on behavioral change should be examined with individual differences and social background. In order to summarize the interview data, I established an analytical framework upon the social impact theory (see figure 20). From the practical data collected, social media influence, visual entertainment and emotional attachment are included in the factors that affect the fans' shopping preference. Social identity, homogeneous comments and impulse purchase are the changes reflected by the fans which they have in personal behaviors.
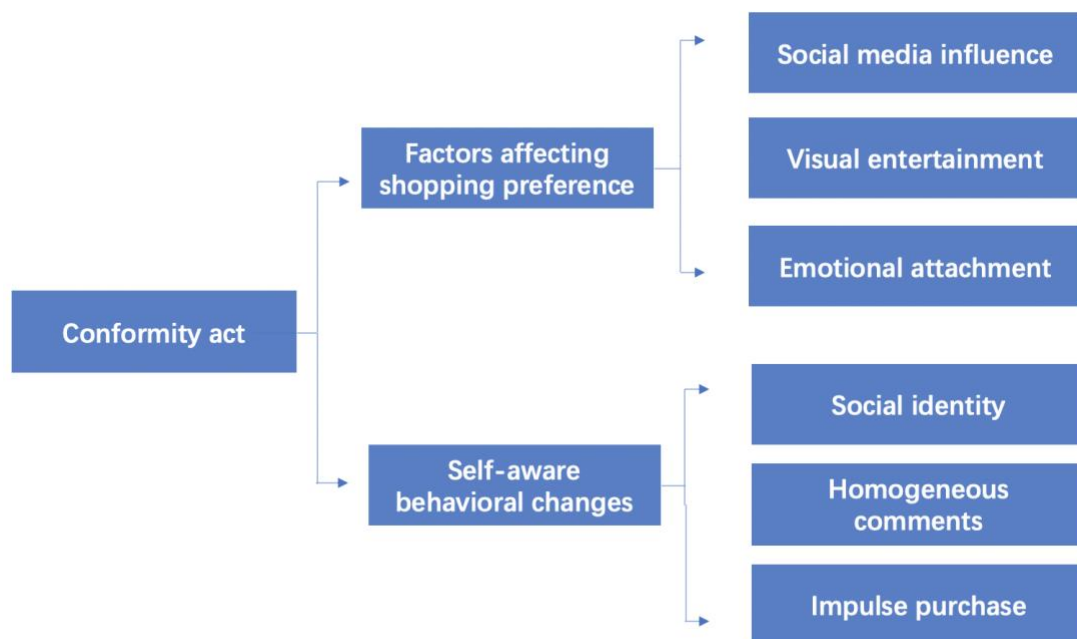

Figure 20 Conformity acts on fans' shopping preference and self-aware behavioral changes

6.2.1 General Reflections of the Interviewees

In the data coding of in-depth interviews, the most common answers given by interviewees were *"Everyone is watching it, so I also want to watch it"*, *"Colleagues and friends highly recommend it"*, and *"I gradually get into the habit of recommending it to others"*. F2: *"Jiaqi Li is really popular. Many of my friends are talking about the quality of the products he sells and his honesty."* From these repetitive answers, it is clear that the respondents were influenced by conformity. F8 said, *"At first I didn't understand why he was so popular, so I tried it a few times and found that he is really an interesting man with a unique personality."*

According to the interview, respondents generally thought the everyday time period of the live streaming was too long (around 2 hours), and it often took a long time waiting for what they wanted to buy, so they always started watching in the middle of the streaming, or left after finishing purchase.

In addition, F5 said, *"Anything Li sells must be authentic and I believe in his personality."* *"The prices he sells are very low, I can't buy because they are always limited supplied, but the quality is reliable."* from F10. Even though these interviewees claimed to be live-streaming E-Commerce or streaming "loyal fans" of Jiaqi Li, their ultimate goal was still shopping instead of the streamer or the live content. After introducing the general situation of interviewees, I continue to analyze the data from the angle of fans' shopping preference and their self-aware behavioral changes in the following sections.

6.2.2 Impact on Shopping Preference

According to the above analysis, we can see that the group-based shopping has a conformity influence on fans' behavior. Therefore, the author focuses on analyzing the impact of live streaming E-commerce on fans' shopping preference from the perspective of social impact theory and conformity. As mentioned above, the three

variables affecting social influence are the intensity of influence sources, the immediacy of events and the number of influence sources (Michael & Scott, 2008). The exposure and discussion on social media platform of the interaction of live streaming E-Commerce enhance the value of these three variables respectively.

Social media influence

Online celebrities or streamers who own a large number of followers quickly bring a lot of attention while creating public opinion topics and exposure. Jiaqi Li and Weiya, as mentioned above, have a high volume of voice and traffic on social media (Weibo). As one of the most mainstream social media in mainland China, any topic that can be on "hot topics" on Weibo will become the focus of Chinese netizens. Social media users are uncontrollable, but that doesn't mean they cannot be guided. Social media content created by users causes resonance and searches on other users. We cannot rule out whether a specific team is leading the conversations, but the active participation of Internet users is evident. Companies and businesses realize the importance of using social media to connect with customers and increase revenue, and they use social media to generate insights, stimulate demands, and create targeted products (Simplilearn, 2020).

*"Jiaqi Li and Weiya are very active on Weibo, and especially Li, he almost posts update every day. **But even if he doesn't post, he would be on the hot topics anyway. I feel like he is everywhere.**"-F2*

*"I don't watch live streaming every day, but I would definitely check Weibo every day and very frequently. **It seems he always has new topics there. Either himself, or his dogs, sometimes even his assistant.**"-F1*

*"If I miss the streaming which I wanted to watch, **I would go to Weibo and feel curious about what happens** today."-F12*

It can be seen that audience paid attention to streamer-related topics on social media. Even those who didn't watch Li's live streaming before would learn about Li's status for the sake of participating in hot topics.

"It was Weibo that aroused my interest of Jiaqi Li, I got to know him from that. ***Then gradually I started to feel curious who he was, why he had so much attention.*** *"-F1*

From respondent F1, we can see that the first variable intensity of social impact theory plays a vital role here. ***"My friends on Weibo sometimes forward his posts, which also catch my eyes."*** from F7. Motivations of participants for sharing information on social media includes a desire to reveal valuable entertainment to others, define themselves, as well as develop and nurture relationships to promote the brand and its reasons for liking or supporting it (Ibid). *"I like Li's dogs, so sometimes I will give likes and forward when I see those posts."* from F2. While receiving external recommendation and information, interviewees also acted as the sender of information and recommend it again to others. This seems to create a circulation of social circle, Jiaqi Li's popularity will continue to increase.

"When I feel the needs of shopping but haven't decided what to buy, I would go to Li's streaming first and check if there is anything I need."-F12
"I want to make purchases from the famous influencers instead of the normal online stores, because I trust his quality."-F3

Research conducted by Nielson in 2015 broke down trust in advertising formats across generations. The study found that celebrity endorsements resonated more strongly with audiences aged 15 to 34. People subconsciously believed that buying products promoted by celebrities or *influencers*[9] they admired enable them to imitate

[9] An influencer (also known as a an online celebrity) is a celebrity who has acquired or developed their fame and notability through the Internet. Online celebrities may be recruited by companies for influencer marketing to advertise products to their fans and followers on their platforms. -- Schouten, Alexander P.; Janssen, Loes; Verspaget, Maegan (2020). "Celebrity vs. Influencer endorsements in advertising: the role of identification,

the ideal characteristics of celebrities or attract similar people into their lives (Zoovu, 2016).

Visual entertainment

Consumers have experienced changes in several forms of advertising, ranging from print advertising (newspapers, magazines, etc.) to radio and television, and then to online media. And digital media also develops from the text, pictures to sound and video. This is a process that depends on bandwidth and constant updates on the device (Peng，2017). Most users of Taobao live streaming are female from 25-35 years old in second-tier cities, with the characteristics of long stay time, who regard watching live streaming as "cloud shopping" (Aine, 2019).

Of the twelve respondents, when asked what they thought about if there had been any unexpected findings when they watched live streaming on E-Commerce, eight respondents said that their windfalls were a new audio-visual and interactive experience. Still, respondents enjoyed discussing with their friends about what they would buy and what they had bought.

*"I enjoy this shopping mode because I don't have to be outside and get tired if I walk too much, **I chat with my friends online about my shopping experiences.** But I still have the same visual experience as if I am still feeling the stuff physically, which is way better than only texts and pictures!"-F6*

*"Because the description from streamers is lovely, lol. I am really interested in the way they make an introduction and sales talk. **Almost everyone around is watching him.**"-F6*

"I get to know some other stuff which I have never used by their sales talk. Mostly, __I would ask my family or boyfriend if they need it__."-F2

"*I started watching live streaming E-Commerce during the quarantine time of COVID-19 __recommended by friends around__; it was better than I imagined..*"-F1

The above respondents mentioned that they liked this new shopping mode because of entertainment and feelings of freshness, meanwhile, they felt it easy to share with friends.

"*The audience can just ask questions to interact with the streamer, not just a boring plane figure in image or picture. Especially for cosmetics like lipsticks, the streamer could just try them on their skin or lips, which are much better than the only introduction in the text.*"-F11

" *In real-time live streaming, you can directly see the feedback from other users in the comments.* "-F8

Most of the respondents had watched the live streaming for less than a year, they were thoughtful and often communicated with colleagues, but rarely took the position of opinion leaders. Carin Frijters describes this in her book Prikkel DE Koopknop that consumers often unconsciously make purchases, and sensory experience plays a crucial role (Straaten,2015).

Emotional attachment

On April 9, 2020, Li took the rare step of canceling his live streaming that day, causing heated debate among netizens. Li then posted that he had canceled the streaming because he was not feeling well. Fans also left messages saying they were distressed. Li gives people the impression of being earnest and punctual. This was the

first time Li had canceled his live streaming due to personal reasons, watching his live streaming had become one of the habits of many loyal fans.
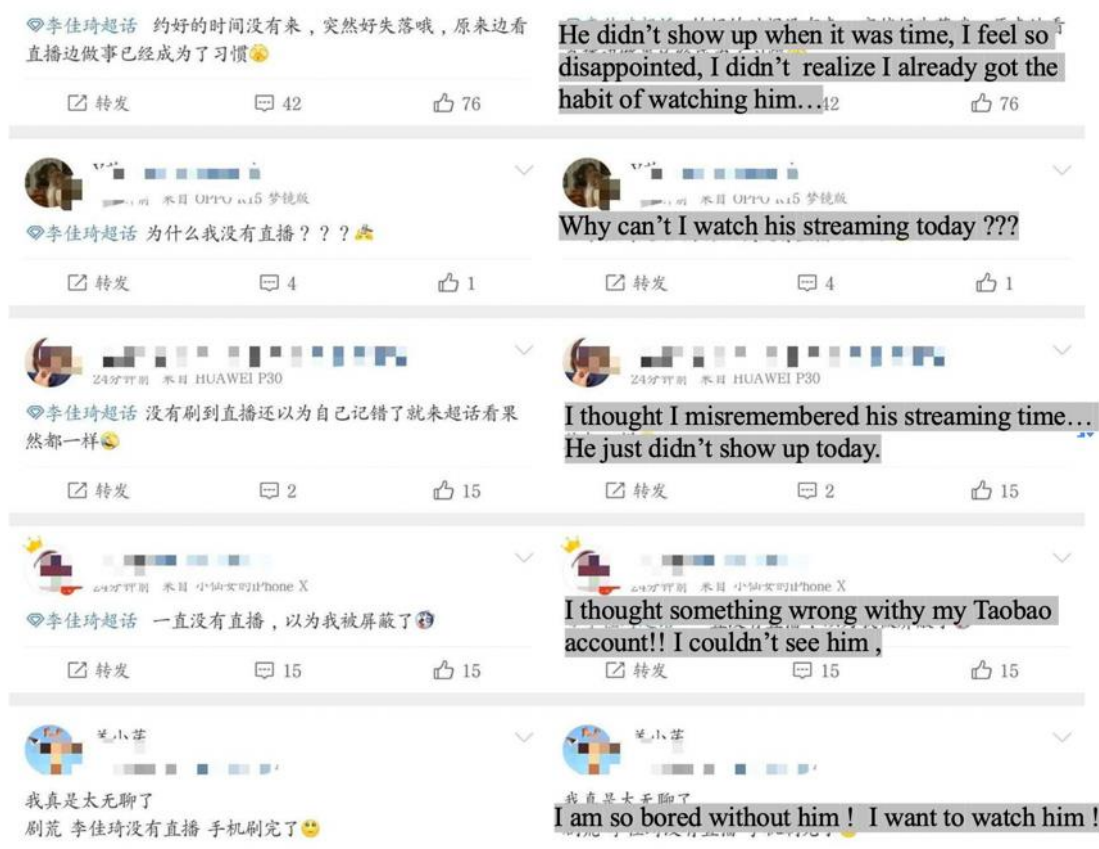
Figure 21 Fans' discussion on the day Li didn't show up on his streaming

When Li didn't show up, fans were upset and panicked. His influence might had been underestimated before this incident that he had already become so important in the minds of these girls. Until Li appeared on social media and declared, "I'm sorry to worry you, I'm just not feeling well." Fans were relieved and left messages wishing him recovery. One question in the interview asked, "Would you feel upset if your favorite streamer suddenly disappear?" A third of respondents said they would be more or less affected.

"I feel very uncomfortable and disappointed if Li does not do his live streaming like my boyfriend just disappears without telling me…"-F9

"I would feel a little bit disappointed, but I won't be influenced too much, life still goes on."-F2

"I think I will, especially during the COVID-19 quarantine period. I am used to seeing him every day and more or less buying something. But maybe after the quarantine when I go back to work, I would have less time watching and thinking about him."-F4

When interviewees were asked, "Are you interested in streamers' personal situation, like the look, voice, emotion, expression and so on?" three-quarters of the respondents replied they would follow the individual situation of the streamers. *"Yes, I am interested, I would like to buy things from good-looking streamers"-F5.* A study by the University of Arkansas in collaboration with the Manchester Business School in London found that consumers between the ages of 18 and 24 focused on celebrity status and appearance (Zoovu，2016), which was relatively in line with the age of the respondents.

When asked what their favorite streamers were, all 12 respondents chose Jiaqi Li.

*"I only watch Jiaqi li, because he has a perfect word of mouth and he has a fun personality. **Almost everyone around me likes him**. He has funny jokes and a big family of cute dogs."-F1*

*"**In the beginning, I didn't understand why he was so popular by most girls , but I changed my mind after I had been watching it more.** The atmosphere there is delightful, his conversations are never repetitive, and he is always responsible for what he says and does."-F7*

*"I have only watched Jiaqi Li, haven't watched anyone else yet. **I was inquisitive why he was the most popular online influencer nowadays**. But after several times watching, I am also getting used to him."-F9*

*"Only Jiaqi Li, **he is popular, visible everywhere, all my friends are watching him and also recommend him. It is so hard to get rid of him**. Besides, the stuff he sells is all in good quality and decent. He also has a professional team for after-sales. I never worry about quality."-F5*

In their responses, respondents F1 and F7 described their emotional attachment to the streamer while they also mentioned that friends around them were watching his streaming. F7 mentioned that in the beginning he did not understand why girls liked to see Li until he began to watch it, and then formed a habit and emotional attachment. Most of the respondents were recommended to watch by the people around them, and then conformed to the crowd.

6.2.3 Self-aware Behavior Change

"Self-aware" is defined by Merriam-Webster as an awareness of one's own personality or individuality. Self-awareness is the recognition of a person's environment, body, and lifestyle, the way an individual consciously understands his or her personality, feelings, motivations, and desires(Jabr, 2012).The nature of self-awareness is counterintuitive because the conventional wisdom holds that attitudes determine behavior (ibid), there is an internal motivation to obtain accurate self-assessment. According to Thorton and Arrowood (1966), self-evaluation is one of the functions of social comparison, which is the basis for individuals to participate in social comparison. The "extreme" popularity of live streaming E-Commerce has also caused some introspection among fans themselves. The following are some self-reported behavior changes mentioned by respondents in the interviews.

Social identity

Most respondents mentioned in the answers that they thought the biggest change for their behavior after watching live streaming E-Commerce was " *one more topic to chat with friends"*, or *"I will also recommend Li to people"*, the respondents' conformity expanded social influence and the third variable of social impact theory, the number of group members.

"***Keep looking to follow the trend***; *colleagues say the products are cheap and in good quality.*" *-F6*

"*It is a bit hard to talk to streamers because there are so many people participating together at the same time, but **I will talk to my colleagues about the things about streamers and things happen there.**" -F8*

"*The only change I have had after I started watching live streaming E-Commerce is that **now I have one more topic when I talk to my friends. Because almost everyone is watching it**." -F1*

"*I would **recommend it to friends** or buy something and share it with friends.*" *-F2*

"***Everyone I have recommended says good****!"-F3*

"***I will recommend it to people around me*** *and I have already succeeded in recommending to a lot of friends !*" *-F4*

"*I recommended it to a few of my colleagues , and **they couldn't stop shopping**.*" *-F5*

"*Because of the large number of people watching, it is difficult to have direct interaction with the streamer. **I usually chat with my colleagues, who also watch live streaming**."-F11*

"Now ***I have one more topic to talk about with my friends*** who are also watching."-F12

According to the data, the respondents were either seeking their own social identity or making more people to be identified, thus increase the number of group members. Social identity is based on one's group membership (Mcleod, 2019). Tajfel (1979) proposes that the group which people belong to(e.g. social class, family, rugby team, etc.) is an important source of pride and self-esteem. Groups give us a sense of social identity: a sense of belonging to the social world. Through the process of social categorization, we divide the world into "them" and "us" (that is, we divide people into social groups). Henri Tajfel (1979) suggests that stereotypes (that is, dividing people into groups and categories) are based on a normal cognitive process: the tendency to group things together. The first is classification. We classify objects to understand them and to recognize them. We categorize people (including ourselves) in very similar ways to understand the social environment. In the second stage, social identity, we adopt the identity of belonging to a group. Individuals in a group are often unwilling to violate group standards and be regarded as deviants by other members. They are afraid of being different and becoming "an outlier" and being isolated, so they adopt the opinion of the majority (Hogg & Vaughan,2009).

Homogeneous comments

The respondents had been more or less aware of their behavior of seeking social approval, and their purpose was almost always to recommend their friends, to accept others' recommendation, or even just to have a chat with their friends. Moreover, they continued to follow the group - making homogeneous comments in the comment area. The definition of homogenous is of the same or a similar kind or nature; of uniform structure or composition throughout (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). The respondents claimed that they would post similar or same comments with other viewers' comments when they watched live streaming E-Commerce.

Six respondents said they often tried to interact with streamers, even though streamers might have too many comments to see. *"When I saw the streamer trying out the lipstick, I couldn't help but join others in praising the color, even though most of the comments were similar." from F12.* It doesn't seem to matter whether the streamer was able to see it or not, what matters is that the participant could do the same thing with other fans. *"Every time the products are sold out, there will be a lot of comments asking for more stock, and I will follow suit." from F4.* Respondents expressed that they hoped the steamer could feel the warm atmosphere and feel a sense of participation and interaction themselves.

*"I make comments while watching the streaming because **I feel that sometimes other viewers will follow me and make similar comments.** That way, streamers might be able to see what we're asking for. But most of the time, **I just want to get involved for no particular reason**." - F5*

According to the data analysis, we can see that conformity plays a great role in the environment of live streaming E-Commerce. Moreover, fans' conformity acts are voluntary, and all participation is internalized. However, apart from the real friends around the respondents, the authenticity of the data of the online number of people in the streaming room and the comment section remains to be further explored.

Impulse purchase

The influence mechanism of conformity can be divided into two types: one is from information pressure and the other is from normative pressure (Hogg & Vaughan,2009). Experience leads people to believe that most people are more likely to be right, and the more ambiguous the situation and the less frame of reference there is, the more they believe in the majority and follow the crowd. Therefore, in such a unique environment of the "Jiaqi Li phenomenon", some people will be influenced by

the outside world, resulting in conformity among the audience and beyond the audience. The majority of respondents said that they often had the behavior of "impulse purchase", and when they regretted it later, they probably would have the behavior of returning.

*"Streamers constantly emphasize that the remaining inventory 'There are only the last xx items left,' is creating a kind of illusion of 'This is of high quality and low price right now, you shouldn't miss it.' In addition, **other users in the streaming room keep discussing**, urging streamers for replenishment, and I will pay unconsciously."-F1*

*"The streamers keep praising the products, which may not be available in the limited time, and impulse consumption will occur. **I feel like everyone is waiting.**" - F6*

*"**I feel nervous**, afraid of failing to buy." -F8*

Impulse purchase is an accidental decision to buy a product or service, made just before the purchase (Business Dictionary, n.d.). Emotion and feeling play a decisive role in the purchase, referring to the feeling of strongly urging consumers to buy something at the moment, which often leads to consumers' cognitive dissonance. This shifts the focus of the definition from products to consumers (Rook, 1987). However, at present, most of the literature on impulse purchase is related to the marketing, and there are not many researches related to conformity. There is still a larger research space in the future.

6.2.4 Criticisms about Professionality

The Chinese Internet is filled with news about the bright current situation and development prospects of live streaming E-Commerce due to the rapid rise of it. However, there are still disadvantages of live streaming E-Commerce. In the

interview data, one third of the respondents thought that they did feel more or less negative effects when using live streaming E-Commerce.

"Nowadays they are just lacking Internet regulations, I have heard from my friends that they have bought fake counterfeit products from other streamers and the sellers don's t provide good after-sales services. But I haven's t heard any negative news about Jiaqi Li, maybe this is why he is one of the most popular streamers. "-F8

"The barriers to the entry of being an online celebrity are very low, as long as you have a smartphone and Internet. I feel like there has become a bad social atmosphere, many young people in second and third-tier cities want to take a shortcut and post some vulgar content on the Internet in order to attract attention and get famous."-F1

China consumers association analyzed the online big data of public opinions on the relevant consumer rights protection situations during April 30 to May 5 (Beijing Youth Daily, 2020), a large number of online shopping false delivery, product quality problems, after-sales service problems were reflected. In addition, the craze for young people to seek fame and fortune in a quick way would backfire to a certain extent.

Nevertheless, once the buzz and exposure have peaked, the phenomenon is likely to start declining like a parabola.

"Personally, even if I am still watching Li, I sometimes feel like he is just everywhere and I start feeling bored and have aesthetic fatigue. If some celebrities own too much attention, I would somehow lose interest on him."-F3

Chinese *netizens*10 quickly forget about the popularity of new things (Cangying, 2019), and the time period for hot topics discussed by netizens is always limited.

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10 The term netizen is a portmanteau of the words Internet and citizen, as in a "citizen of the net" or "net citizen."--Seese, Michael. Scrappy Information Security. p. 130. ISBN 978-1600051326. Retrieved June 5, 2015.

When the entertainment fades away, Li is likely to be forgotten by netizens in the long run, and the capital operation from Taobao may continue, which requires further research and discussion in the future. Also, the advent of the *5G*11 era is an opportunity to generate new stimulating points for users.

6.2.5 Summary

Respondents' shopping preferences for live streaming E-Commerce were deeply influenced by social media, and most of them were motivated by conformity to stimulate their interest, thus generating their shopping behavior. It can be seen that the audience had a compliance attitude towards the outside world and the surrounding social environment. In this case, even if they didn't become new fans, they would be attracted out of curiosity. In addition, the emerging intuitive and interactive shopping mode of live streaming E-Commerce was also one of the important factors to catch the audience. Respondents kept mentioning that they were willing to share and discuss with their friends about their live shopping experience. The emotional attachment and trust of fans to streamers deepened the guidance of shopping preferences.

Secondly, respondents had self-perception of their own behavior changes. They unconsciously changed their behaviors while seeking social identity. Most of them mentioned that they did it in order to have a discussion with the people around them, and they chose to do it to avoid being "isolated" and prove that they belonged to the group. But while "deliberately" blending into the surrounding environment, homogeneous comments and impulsive consumption took place.

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11 In telecommunications, 5G is the fifth-generation technology standard for cellular networks, which cellular phone companies began deploying worldwide in 2019, the planned successor to the 4G networks which provide connectivity to most current cellphones. -- de Looper, Christian (March 27, 2020). "What is 5G? The next-generation network explained". Digital Trends. Retrieved April 25, 2020.

In short, these samplings have a clear tendency, which may be related to the snowball sample selection. Through recommendation from friend to friend, they have already belonged to a small group. Therefore, this method should be reconsidered in future studies. Finally, as mentioned above, conformity is affected by the culture of collectivism. China is a socialist society, and collectivist education has played an evident role.

7. Conclusion

7.1 Discussion of the Findings

The study found that in the current media environment, the practice behavior of fans of live streaming E-Commerce was influenced by conformity. The development of fandom is closely related to the development of new media technology (Jenkins, 2006c), the role of fans has changed greatly compared with the past. According to Jenkins (2006b), fans are active. In participatory culture, fans are both consumers and producers (Jenkins, 2006c). Through online observation and in-depth interview, this paper summarized the characteristics of live-streaming E-Commerce from the perspective of participatory culture (**RQ1**). First, the fan group proceeded community activities through memes, "expression" and "circulation" of micro films. There were three types of productivity that fit Fiske's tripartite model. Second, all kinds of entertainment and interactive promotion means from streamers were also one of the characteristics of live streaming E-Commerce.

Third, the fan community was divided into a "lifetime" hierarchy, that was based on purchasing behavior and the time spent on watching the streaming, which had nothing to do with the productivity and forms of participation of the fan culture. Digital technology has broken the hierarchical barriers of fan participation, while the fan hierarchy system of live streaming E-Commerce had re-established the hierarchy, and purchase had become the most important indicator of loyalty. From this point of view, participatory culture was not fully applicable to the fan community of live streaming E-Commerce. The "effective" productivity of this fan group was very simple, and participation was reduced.

So, we turn to **RQ2** to discuss the impact of live streaming E-Commerce on their shopping preferences from the perspective of fans. First, the respondents' shopping

preferences for live streaming E-Commerce were deeply influenced by social media, and most of them were motivated by conformity to generate shopping behavior. It can be seen that the audience had a submissive attitude towards the outside world and the surrounding social environment. In this case, even if they didn't become new fans, they would be attracted because of curiosity. Second, the intuitive and interactive shopping mode in live streaming E-Commerce was also one of the important factors to attract the audience, which was consistent with the superficial data obtained from online observation. Respondents were strongly willing to share and discuss their on-site shopping experience with friends. Third, fans' emotional attachment and trust to streamers triggered more shopping behaviors.

Finally, we turn to **RQ3** to discuss the reflection of fans upon live streaming E-Commerce on their behaviors. First, respondents had self-aware changes in their behavior. In their quest for social acceptance, they esteemed their peers. So, the reason for watching live streaming was to discuss with the people around in order to avoid being "isolated". To "deliberately" blend into the surrounding, homogeneous comments and impulse purchase in live streaming occurred. As mentioned above, the influence of conformity has a great impact on collectivism culture, which is probably related to the social system of China, and it is necessary to further explore the psychological factors for fans in future studies.

However, on account of the weak supervision of Internet, a large amount of false information and data are still filled with live streaming E-Commerce. Because of its real-time particularity, live content can be released without being censored. At the same time, the big number of online celebrity streamers on social media and the "low cost" of entry have also affected young people's career planning and values, making the streamer industry a flooded "bubble". It may also cause people in regions with backward economic or educational background in China to excessively worship or blindly consume.

7.2 Limitations of the Research

However, this study also had some limitations. Due to the particular purpose, the researchers only selected moderate or long-time users of live streaming to conduct interviews, however, those who probably had participated in live steaming E-Commerce and given up halfway were ignored. As a consequence, the randomness might have affected fairness of the research data and making the research results bias to some extent. Another limitation of this study was that the investigation was conducted during the outbreak of COVID-19, the author could not reach more respondents, so the number of samplings was only 12. There was no way to conduct face-to-face interviews except the video chat.

Thirdly, since the research on live streaming E-Commerce was carried out in mainland China, there might have been some differences in language and culture, which probably led to mistakes on research.

Finally, the scope of research methods can be expanded to include other types of research methods, such as quantitative methods, for exploring other factors that whether or not watching live streaming E-Commerce will influence more audience to engage.

7.3 Suggestions for Future Research

Based on the above limitations, some suggestions can be put forward for future research in this field.

First, researchers should try to increase the number of respondents, including some foreigners who are familiar with the live streaming E-Commerce mode in China, to

explore how cultural differences affect the audience's views and use of live streaming E-Commerce. In this case, more findings about the future of live streaming E-Commerce in western world will be easier to explored.

Secondly, researchers should also read and think more about the literature on TV shopping, look for some commonalities to discuss, and find out whether live streaming E-Commerce can produce the same or similar changes in mass consumption in different countries or social environments.

Finally, the research methods should be combined to ensure the accuracy of the data collected.

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Appendix

Interview Guide

Question list

1. Personal Background
   Age, education, career

Interview questions

1. Do you often use E-Commerce website？ How often?

2. Do you know about live streaming E-Commerce？Have you ever participated in this shopping mode? How long have you been watching live streaming on E-Commerce website/app? How often? Do you usually watch this live streaming on computer or smartphone?

3. How did you feel the first time when you watched live streaming on E-Commerce? Why do you keep watching?

4. Has the original intention of your watching live streaming on E-Commerce changed ？Has there been any unexpected findings?

5. What is the difference do you think between the traditional E-Commerce and live streaming E-Commerce? From the aspect of communication effect? Why?

6. How do you choose which streamer to watch? What is the reason that keeps you watching him/her ？

7. Would you feel upset or disappointed if your favorite streamers suddenly disappear?

8. Do you interact with streamers when you watch live streaming? What do you do? How often? Do you interactive with other viewers on the screen? How? What do

you communicate with them?

9. Please name one or two your favorite streamers and why?

10. Will you purchase only because you like the streamer when you watch his/her live streaming? Will you purchase products that you don't really need?

11. What do you think about the live streaming E-Commerce mode? Will you recommend to others?

12. Are you interested in streamers' personal situation, like look, voice, emotion, expression and so on?

13. Do you have interest in any other types of live streaming except E-Commerce? What are they?

14. Do you think your online social behavior has changed after you have watched live streaming on E-Commerce? In which way? (For example, you can comment and interactive with the streamers that you like, or with other audience)

15. Do you think there is any negative sides of live streaming E-Commerce ?