

Mechanisms Linking Live Streamer Characteristics to Consumer Purchase Behavior in Agricultural Product Live-Streaming Commerce

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Abstract: Understanding how streamers' traits affect consumers' buying behavior is crucial for improving the effectiveness of live e-commerce that supports farmers. This study, based on the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) theory, looks at three dimensions of streamer traits—professionalism, interactivity, and attractiveness—and proposes 13 hypotheses in a framework linking these traits to consumer trust and purchase behavior. Data from 203 valid questionnaires were analyzed using reliability and validity assessments, regression analysis, and bootstrap mediation tests. All three characteristics were significant positive predictors of consumer trust and purchase behavior, with trust acting as a partial mediator. Their estimated direct effects on purchase behavior were similar, whereas interactivity and expertise were more strongly associated with trust than attractiveness. Trust also accounted for a larger proportion of the total effect in the expertise and interactivity pathways than in the attractiveness pathway. These findings suggest four priorities for practice: developing streamer expertise, improving interaction, strengthening personal appeal, and maintaining consumer trust. Efforts to enhance attractiveness should extend beyond trust building to include other aspects of streamer presentation and communication.

1. Introduction

The rapid spread of digital technologies, including 5G and cloud computing, has sped up the development of live-streaming e-commerce for agricultural products. This sales model has become an important way to promote digital agriculture and rural revitalization. China's first central government document of 2024 explicitly supports the establishment of live-stream sales bases for agricultural products, showing the government's emphasis on digital agriculture. According to the 55th "Statistical Report on Internet Development in China" published by the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC), by the end of 2024, China had 833 million live-streaming users, accounting for 75.2% of all internet users^[1]. A big data report by the China Council for the

Promotion of International Trade, "Report on Regional E-Commerce Development in China," also pointed out that live-stream e-commerce is increasingly becoming an important channel for online consumption^[2]. The "2024 First Half Report on the Development of China's Online Agricultural Products" was released by the China Food and Agricultural Product Safety E-commerce Research Institute and the Business Economics Research Institute of Beijing Technology and Business University. The report pointed out that in 2023, China's online sales of agricultural products reached 587.03 billion yuan, a year-on-year increase of 21.7%^[3]. Through intuitive product displays and real-time interaction, live-streaming of agricultural products helps reduce information gaps between buyers and sellers, connects scattered small farmers with consumers, expands market channels, and supports farmers' income.

The rapid increase in the number of live streamers has also highlighted huge differences in professionalism, interactivity, and attractiveness, all of which can affect consumers' engagement and buying decisions. Some streamers lack understanding of the products, exaggerate their benefits, interact little, or have unstable live streams. These behaviors can affect consumer trust and reduce marketing effectiveness. So, it's necessary to systematically study how streamers' characteristics influence consumers' buying behavior in agricultural product e-commerce live streams.

A lot of studies have looked into the relationship between the traits of livestream hosts and how consumers behave when shopping on livestream e-commerce platforms. Using the SOR model, Gao and Wang (2024) found that the professionalism, attractiveness, interactivity, and credibility of streamers can trigger emotional resonance, thereby prompting impulse purchases^[4]. Cheng (2025) pointed out that professional skills, interaction techniques, and interesting content can boost online purchase intentions^[5]. Wang (2023) distinguished between professionalism and popularity, seeing them as relatively objective traits, while interaction and attractiveness depend more on consumers' subjective feelings^[6]. In live streams that support farmers, Liu and Wang (2023) found that the host's professional skills, interaction techniques, public influence, as well as authenticity and reliability, positively affect consumer trust and their decisions to buy agricultural products^[7]. Similar evidence can be found in international studies too. Liu (2024) and Dai et al. (2024) both noted that the host's professionalism is an important factor in building trust and promoting purchases^[8-9]. Zhai et al. (2024) also found that consumer confidence plays a mediating role between the professionalism and interactivity of live stream hosts and purchase intentions^[10].

Despite these advances, there are still some shortcomings. First, not many studies specifically focus on live-stream e-commerce for agricultural products. Second, most literature only looks at the direct relationship between host characteristics and buying behavior, with limited examination of trust as a mediating factor. Therefore, this study builds a framework based on SOR theory, linking host characteristics, consumer trust, and live-stream purchasing behavior of agricultural products. It tests the proposed relationships and mediation mechanisms through questionnaire data and empirical analysis, and gives suggestions on host selection, training, and measures to support farmers. This study extends existing research in two ways. It applies SOR theory to agricultural product live-streaming to elucidate the mediating role of consumer trust and identify practical methods to enhance the competence of streamers. It also compares the relative strength of the relationships among three streamer characteristics, trust, and purchase behavior, thereby allowing practical recommendations to be prioritized.

2. Theoretical Background and Research Hypotheses

2.1 Theoretical Background

The Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework was proposed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974). It suggests that external stimuli (S) influence an individual's internal psychological state (O),

which in turn determines behavioral responses (R)^[11]. This framework has been widely applied in consumer research. Donovan and Rossiter (1982) found that store layouts can affect people's emotions, which further influence their purchasing decisions^[12]. Eroglu et al. (2001) applied this concept to online shopping, considering the website as the triggering factor, consumers' feelings and thoughts as the mediators, and purchasing behavior as the outcome^[13]. Based on this idea, our study focuses on the characteristics of live-streaming hosts—such as professionalism, interactivity, and attractiveness—as external triggering factors (S), consumer trust as the internal psychological state (O), and purchasing behavior as the response (R). The research model is illustrated in Figure 1.

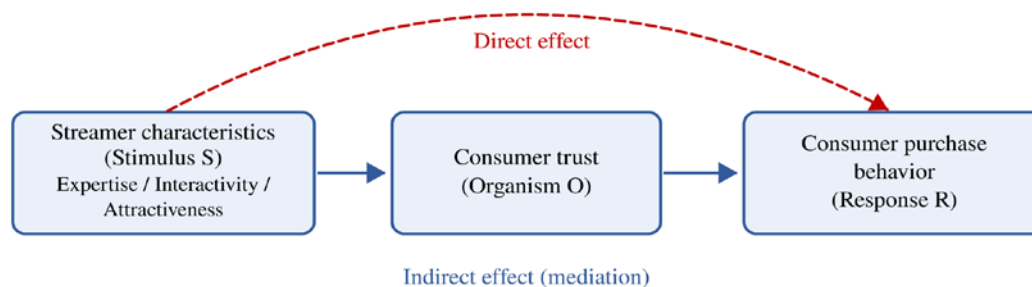


Figure 1 Model linking streamer characteristics to consumer purchase behavior

2.2 Research Hypotheses

(1) Streamer Characteristics and Consumer Trust. In agricultural product livestreams, consumers face information gaps and largely rely on the streamer's descriptions to evaluate products. Higher professional expertise makes the information more persuasive and credible, which helps build trust (Liu, 2024)^[8]. Respond promptly and explain patiently, and customizing product displays based on audience needs can boost engagement and a sense of belonging, which in turn builds trust (Xu et al., 2024)^[14]. Clear communication, simple appearance, and authoritative identity can also reduce perceived distance and strengthen trust (Zhao, 2023)^[15]. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: The characteristics of the livestream host have a significant positive impact on consumers' trust in agricultural product livestream transactions.

H1a: The expertise of the livestream host has a significant positive impact on consumers' trust.

H1b: Streamer interactivity has a significant positive effect on consumer trust.

H1c: Streamer attractiveness has a significant positive effect on consumer trust.

(2) Streamer characteristics and consumer purchase behavior. Streamer expertise can improve consumers' perceptions of product value and increase purchase intention. Interactivity can strengthen immersion and encourage impulse buying (Liu et al., 2022)^[16]. Attractiveness may also influence the viewing experience and the propensity to purchase. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H2: Streamer characteristics have a significant positive effect on consumer purchase behavior in agricultural product live-streaming commerce.

H2a: Streamer expertise has a significant positive effect on consumer purchase behavior.

H2b: Streamer interactivity has a significant positive effect on consumer purchase behavior.

H2c: Streamer attractiveness has a significant positive effect on consumer purchase behavior.

(3) Consumer trust and purchase behavior. Trust is a key factor in purchase decisions during live-streaming. Lin (2022) found that consumer trust promotes decisions to purchase geographical indication agricultural products in live-streaming settings^[17]. Jin (2022) likewise reported a significant positive relationship between perceived trust and purchase intention^[18]. Accordingly, the

following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Consumer trust has a significant positive effect on consumer purchase behavior.

(4) The mediating role of consumer trust. Within the SOR framework, streamer characteristics constitute external stimuli whose influence on behavioral responses is transmitted through consumers' internal psychological states, represented here by trust. Zhai et al. (2024) found that trust mediates the relationships of streamer expertise and interactivity with purchase intention^[10]. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H4: Consumer trust mediates the relationship between streamer characteristics and consumer purchase behavior in agricultural product live-streaming commerce.

H4a: Consumer trust plays a mediating role between the streamer's experience and consumer purchasing behavior.

H4b: Consumer trust plays a mediating role between the streamer's interactivity and consumer purchasing behavior.

H4c: Consumer trust plays a mediating role between the streamer's attractiveness and consumer purchasing behavior.

3. Research Design

3.1 Measures

Table 1 Measurement items and sources

Construct	Item	Measurement item	Sources
Streamer expertise	A1	I think the streamer is knowledgeable about the agricultural products they recommend.	Jian (2023)[19] Huang (2023)[20] Zhao (2023)[15] Li et al. (2021)[21] Han (2020)[22] Yu et al. (2025)[23]
	A2	I think the streamer can clearly explain and demonstrate the characteristics of agricultural products.	
	A3	I think the streamer describes the agricultural products they recommend objectively and accurately.	
Streamer interactivity	B1	I think the streamer responds promptly to viewers' on-screen messages or comments.	
	B2	I think the streamer's responses adequately address my questions.	
	B3	I think the streamer shows product details in response to viewers' requests.	
Streamer attractiveness	C1	I find the streamer's appearance visually appealing.	
	C2	I find the streamer's voice pleasant or reassuring.	
	C3	I find the streamer's identity or social role appealing.	
Consumer trust	D1	The streamer's professional explanations inspire my confidence.	
	D2	The services the streamer describes when interacting with me inspire my trust.	
	D3	I trust that the agricultural products I receive will match the streamer's descriptions.	
Consumer purchase behavior	E1	I am willing to buy the agricultural products recommended by this streamer during the live stream.	
	E2	I am willing to buy the agricultural products recommended by this streamer even if they cost slightly more.	
	E3	When buying similar agricultural products in the future, I will give priority to those recommended by this streamer.	

These measures are adapted from existing scales in Chinese and international studies, with a few small tweaks to fit the context of live-streaming agricultural products. The questionnaire has 15 items and measures five constructs: the host's professionalism, interactivity and attractiveness, consumer trust, and purchasing behavior. All items were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Table 1 presents the measurement items and their sources.

3.2 Data Collection

The questionnaire is divided into four parts: an introduction, demographic questions, a screening question (asking whether the respondents have watched live streams about agricultural products), and the main measurement questions. It was created using Questionnaire Star and distributed through platforms like WeChat, Xiaohongshu, and Douyin. Out of the 222 responses received, 19 were excluded because the participants hadn't watched the related live streams or didn't pass the validity check. The final sample included 203 valid responses, accounting for 91.4% of the submitted questionnaires. As shown in Table 2, 69.0% of respondents were female, 70.4% were aged 18 to 25, 80.3% had at least a university degree, 66.5% were students, and 88.7% had a monthly income below 6,000 RMB. So basically, this sample mostly consisted of young women with high education and low to medium income.

Table 2 Demographic characteristics of the sample (N = 203)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	63	31.0
	Female	140	69.0
Age	Under 18	5	2.5
	18–25	143	70.4
	26–35	40	19.7
	36–45	12	5.9
	Over 45	3	1.5
Education	Junior secondary or below	9	4.4
	Senior secondary or vocational secondary	15	7.4
	Junior college	16	7.9
	Bachelor's degree	150	73.9
	Master's degree or above	13	6.4
	Student	135	66.5
Occupation	Farmer	7	3.4
	Government or public institution employee	11	5.4
	Company employee	25	12.3
	Self-employed	22	10.8
	Other	3	1.5
Monthly income	Below RMB 2,000	87	42.9
	RMB 2,000–4,000	53	26.1
	RMB 4,000–6,000	40	19.7
	RMB 6,000–8,000	14	6.9
	Above RMB 8,000	9	4.4

A summary of viewing and purchasing patterns is shown in Table 3. Most respondents rarely watch live streams of agricultural products: 51.7% watch once or twice a month, and 42.4% watch once or twice a week. Only a few watch more frequently. As for purchasing, 45.8% said they buy

occasionally, while 32.5% buy rarely. About 35% of respondents buy very little or never, showing that turning viewers into buyers is still a challenge.

Table 3 Viewing and purchasing patterns in the sample

Characteristic	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Frequency of watching agricultural product live streams	1–2 times per month	105	51.7
	1–2 times per week	86	42.4
	≥3 times per week	12	5.9
	Never	3	1.5
Frequency of experiencing purchase intention during live streams	Rarely	39	19.2
	Occasionally	111	54.7
	Often	47	23.2
	Always	3	1.5
Frequency of purchasing agricultural products after watching live streams	Never	5	2.5
	Rarely	66	32.5
	Occasionally	93	45.8
	Often	36	17.7
	Always	3	1.5

4. Empirical Results and Analysis

4.1 Reliability and Validity

The reliability of this scale was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. As shown in Table 4, the overall Cronbach's alpha of the scale is 0.907, and the Cronbach's alpha values for each construct range from 0.845 to 0.891. All values are above the commonly used 0.70 threshold, indicating good internal consistency.

Table 4 Reliability analysis

Construct	Number of items	Cronbach's α
Streamer expertise	3	0.869
Streamer interactivity	3	0.857
Streamer attractiveness	3	0.848
Consumer trust	3	0.845
Consumer purchase behavior	3	0.891
Full scale	15	0.907

An exploratory factor analysis was conducted on 203 valid questionnaires to assess validity. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) value was 0.849, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2 \approx 1867.689$, $df=105$, $p<0.001$). Five factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 were extracted, explaining a total of 79.401% of the cumulative variance. The factor loadings for all items ranged from 0.721 to 0.896, all above 0.60. These results support the construct validity of the scale.

4.2 Correlation Analysis

As shown in Table 5, the host's professionalism, interactivity, and attractiveness are significantly positively correlated with consumer trust and purchase behavior ($p < 0.01$). The correlation coefficients range from 0.377 to 0.489, providing a preliminary basis for the subsequent regression analysis.

Table 5 Correlation matrix (N = 203)

Construct	Expertise	Interactivity	Attractiveness	Trust	Purchase behavior
Expertise	1				
Interactivity	0.467**	1			
Attractiveness	0.396**	0.453**	1		
Trust	0.454**	0.489**	0.377**	1	
Purchase behavior	0.433**	0.456**	0.429**	0.473**	1

Note: ** indicates a significant correlation at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

4.3 Regression Analysis

In Model 1, with consumer trust as the dependent variable (Table 6), streamer expertise ($\beta = 0.257$, $p < 0.001$), interactivity ($\beta = 0.308$, $p < 0.001$), and attractiveness ($\beta = 0.136$, $p < 0.05$) were significant positive predictors. The model explained 31.9% of the variance, supporting H1a, H1b, and H1c. In Model 2, with purchase behavior as the dependent variable, expertise ($\beta = 0.167$, $p < 0.05$), interactivity ($\beta = 0.172$, $p < 0.05$), attractiveness ($\beta = 0.194$, $p < 0.01$), and trust ($\beta = 0.240$, $p < 0.001$) were all significant positive predictors. This model explains 34.8% of the variance and supports H2a, H2b, H2c, and H3. The estimated effects of the three features vary. The biggest direct impact on purchase behavior comes from attractiveness ($\beta = 0.194$), followed by interactivity ($\beta = 0.172$) and professionalism ($\beta = 0.167$), although the differences aren't that big. For trust, interactivity had the largest coefficient ($\beta = 0.308$), followed by expertise ($\beta = 0.257$) and attractiveness ($\beta = 0.136$). So, experience and interaction seem to influence shopping more through trust, while appeal seems to work more through immediate emotional reactions.

Table 6 Regression results

Dependent variable	Predictor	β	t	p	VIF	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F
Trust	Expertise	0.257	3.773	<0.001	1.353	0.319	—	31.003***
	Interactivity	0.308	4.388	<0.001	1.436			
	Attractiveness	0.136	2.012	0.046	1.331			
Purchase behavior	Expertise	0.167	2.414	0.017	1.450	0.348	0.335	26.389***
	Interactivity	0.172	2.390	0.018	1.575			
	Attractiveness	0.194	2.906	0.004	1.359			
	Trust	0.240	3.452	<0.001	1.467			

Note: ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 0.001, 0.01, and 0.05 levels, respectively.

4.4 Mediation Analysis

The mediating role of trust was tested using the bootstrap approach described by Hayes, implemented in Model 4 of the PROCESS macro^[24]. The indirect effect through trust was 0.192 for expertise (95% confidence interval [CI]: [0.099, 0.308]), 0.193 for interactivity (95% CI: [0.099, 0.318]), and 0.173 for attractiveness (95% CI: [0.088, 0.291]). None of the confidence intervals included zero. The indirect effects accounted for 36.43%, 35.35%, and 31.86% of the respective total effects. The direct effects of streamer characteristics on purchase behavior remained significant after trust was included, indicating partial mediation and supporting H4a, H4b, and H4c.

The proportion mediated by trust varies among the three paths. The proportions for professionalism and interactivity are similar, at 36.43% and 35.35% respectively, both higher than attractiveness at 31.86%. This pattern indicates that trust accounts for a smaller proportion in the relationship between attraction and purchase behavior, and correspondingly, the direct effect accounts for a larger proportion.

Table 7 Bootstrap tests of the mediating role of consumer trust

Pathway	Indirect effect	Standard error	95% confidence interval	Share of total effect
Expertise → Trust → Purchase behavior	0.192	0.053	[0.099, 0.308]	36.43%
Interactivity → Trust → Purchase behavior	0.193	0.056	[0.099, 0.318]	35.35%
Attractiveness → Trust → Purchase behavior	0.173	0.052	[0.088, 0.291]	31.86%

4.5 Hypothesis Testing Results

All 13 hypotheses proposed in this study were supported. Table 8 summarizes the research results.

Table 8 Summary of hypothesis testing results

ID	Statement	Result
H1	Streamer characteristics have a significant positive effect on consumer trust.	✓
H1a	Streamer expertise has a significant positive effect on consumer trust.	✓
H1b	Streamer interactivity has a significant positive effect on consumer trust.	✓
H1c	Streamer attractiveness has a significant positive effect on consumer trust.	✓
H2	Streamer characteristics have a significant positive effect on consumer purchase behavior.	✓
H2a	Streamer expertise has a significant positive effect on consumer purchase behavior.	✓
H2b	Streamer interactivity has a significant positive effect on consumer purchase behavior.	✓
H2c	Streamer attractiveness has a significant positive effect on consumer purchase behavior.	✓
H3	Consumer trust has a significant positive effect on consumer purchase behavior.	✓
H4	Consumer trust mediates the relationship between streamer characteristics and consumer purchase behavior.	✓
H4a	Consumer trust mediates the relationship between streamer expertise and consumer purchase behavior.	✓
H4b	Consumer trust mediates the relationship between streamer interactivity and consumer purchase behavior.	✓
H4c	Consumer trust mediates the relationship between streamer attractiveness and consumer purchase behavior.	✓

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

Drawing on SOR theory and 203 valid questionnaire responses, this study examined the mechanisms linking streamer characteristics to consumer purchase behavior in agricultural product live-streaming commerce. Four findings emerge. First, expertise, interactivity, and attractiveness were all significant positive predictors of consumer trust and purchase behavior. Secondly, trust is positively correlated with purchasing behavior and partly mediates its relationship with the streamer's traits, which shows that there is not only a direct relationship but also an indirect relationship through trust. Thirdly, the direct impact on purchasing behavior is similar across the three traits (attractiveness: $\beta=0.194$; interactivity: $\beta=0.172$; expertise: $\beta=0.167$), while their coefficients for trust differ more (interactivity: $\beta=0.308$; expertise: $\beta=0.257$; attractiveness: $\beta=0.136$). Fourth, the proportion of trust as a mediator is similar in terms of experience and interactivity (36.43% and 35.35%, respectively), and higher than attractiveness (31.86%). Therefore, trust plays a smaller role in the path of attractiveness, while its direct effect is greater. Overall, these findings suggest that trust is an important mechanism that links a host's characteristics with consumer purchasing behavior.

5.2 Practical Recommendations

First, boost the expertise of the hosts. Platforms and agricultural product sellers should regularly provide training on agricultural product knowledge, inviting industry experts and experienced practitioners to get involved. At the same time, they should maintain an info library with product photos, videos, and test reports. If possible, they could also introduce professional certifications for the hosts to increase consumer trust and recognition.

Secondly, boost the host's interactivity. The host should pay attention to the audience info and comments on the screen, respond promptly, and start related discussions. Inviting viewers to like the content, join giveaways, and enjoy live-stream-only discounts can encourage interaction and help build consumer trust.

Third, build a unique attractiveness. Streamers can match their outfits with the agricultural products they're promoting, use friendly expressions like local dialects, and leverage authoritative identities, such as government officials or agricultural experts, to boost credibility. Research shows that attractiveness has a direct and strong link to buying behavior, while the indirect effect through trust is smaller. So, efforts to boost attractiveness shouldn't just focus on building trust but also include showcasing personal image, communication style, and the design of the live-streaming environment.

Fourth, build and maintain consumer trust. Hosts should describe products accurately and objectively, avoid exaggeration or omissions, and patiently answer questions. Platforms and merchants should ensure they have reliable supply sources and consistent product quality, and improve their reputation and review systems to boost consumers' confidence in buying.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations. First, the sample is mainly made up of young women and students, which causes an uneven distribution by gender and occupation. Therefore, the applicability of the study results to men and other professional groups still needs to be explored further. Second, this study is mainly based on questionnaire data, which could be affected by subjective perceptions and common methodological biases. Third, the analysis focused on the characteristics of the presenters, without considering product attributes, pricing strategies, or brand effects. Future research should recruit a larger and more balanced sample, combine in-depth interviews with experimental methods, and consider product, price, and brand factors to more fully explain the factors influencing the effectiveness of live e-commerce for agricultural products.

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