The impact of social media live streaming on fashion brands' sales performance: A case study of TikTok

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Abstract: With the rapid development of mobile internet and social media, livestreaming sales have become a crucial channel for fashion brands to expand their markets and boost sales performance. Douyin and TikTok, with their vast user bases and sophisticated content distribution mechanisms, have become core platforms for livestreaming e-commerce. This paper, focusing on the impact of livestreaming sales on the sales performance of fashion brands, systematically analyzes the operational models, impact mechanisms, and pathways of livestreaming sales, drawing on case studies of fast fashion and luxury brands for comparative study. The study finds that livestreaming sales forms a complete conversion cycle through "traffic acquisition, trust building, and consumer stimulation," effectively driving brand exposure and sales. Furthermore, livestreaming strategies vary significantly across fashion brands: fast fashion brands prioritize traffic volume and price advantages, luxury brands emphasize brand storytelling and high-end experiences, and emerging brands rely on differentiation and emotional resonance to achieve breakthroughs. The paper also points out that while livestreaming sales presents significant opportunities, it also carries potential risks, such as reliance on low prices, brand image dilution, and operational pressure. Based on the research findings, this paper proposes management recommendations, including optimizing brand strategies, improving platform mechanisms, and forecasting future trends. Overall, live streaming sales on social media is not only a new e-commerce model, but also a strategic location for fashion brands in the process of digital transformation. It is of great significance to both short-term sales and long-term brand value.

Keywords: Social media; Livestreaming; Fashion management; TikTok; Sales performance

1 INTRODUCTION

In recent years, with the rapid development of mobile Internet technology and the popularity of social media, live streaming has rapidly emerged as an emerging e-commerce model and has become an important channel for brand marketing and sales conversion. Especially in the fashion industry, live streaming has significantly increased consumer participation and purchasing intention through real-time interaction, immersive experience and limited-time promotions. Douyin and TikTok, as the world's leading short video social platforms, have become the preferred platforms for fashion brands to deploy live streaming with their huge user base, precise algorithm recommendations and mature live streaming ecosystem [1]. However, although live streaming can bring significant sales growth in the short

term, its impact mechanism on the long-term sales performance of fashion brands has not been fully studied. Such as the differences in live streaming strategies between different brand types (Such as luxury goods and fast fashion), the impact of platform traffic allocation rules on sales conversion, and changes in consumer decision-making behavior in live streaming scenarios still need to be explored in depth. Therefore, this study aims to systematically analyze the impact of social media live streaming on the sales performance of fashion brands and take Douyin/TikTok as an example to reveal the operating logic and key success factors behind it [2].

The main purpose of this study is to explore how live streaming sales influences the sales performance of fashion brands through content presentation, interactive design and traffic mechanism, and to further analyze the differences in adaptability of different brands in live streaming strategies. From a theoretical perspective, this study will combine marketing communication theory, consumer behavior and social e-commerce research to construct an analytical framework for the impact of live streaming sales on sales performance and make up for the shortcomings of existing literature in the field of combining social media and fashion brands [3]. From a practical perspective, the research conclusions can provide a reference for fashion brands to optimize their live streaming strategies, helping brands to achieve a balance between short-term sales growth and long-term brand value accumulation in the fierce market competition. In addition, for the platform, this study can also provide data support and direction suggestions for optimizing its live streaming support policies and improving its commercialization tools.

In terms of research methods, this study mainly adopts a combination of case analysis and literature research. Through an in-depth analysis of multiple fashion brand live streaming cases on the Douyin/TikTok platform, combined with industry reports, platform data and brand public information, this study summarizes the core operating model of live streaming sales and its impact on sales performance. At the same time, this study will systematically sort out relevant literature on live streaming e-commerce, social media marketing and fashion brand management at home and abroad to ensure the solidity of the theoretical foundation and the rationality of the analytical framework. The paper is structured as follows: first, a literature review identifies the research question and theoretical basis, followed by an analysis of the operational characteristics of Douyin/TikTok livestreaming sales. Finally, using case studies to explore the actual performance of different brands, management recommendations are proposed, and future trends are anticipated. Through this progressive analysis, this study hopes to provide valuable insights for both academic and industry practitioners.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL BASIS

As an emerging e-commerce model, live streaming sales on social media is essentially a combination of product display, sales promotion and instant interaction through live video broadcasting. This model originated from the attempts of Chinese e-commerce platforms in 2016, and then achieved explosive growth driven by social media such as Douyin and TikTok. Compared with traditional e-commerce, the biggest feature of live streaming sales is its immediacy and interactivity. The anchor can eliminate consumers' purchasing doubts through

real-time Q&A and on-site trials, while limited-time discounts and interactive lottery games further stimulate the impulse to buy [4]. In the fashion field, live streaming sales are particularly suitable for displaying products such as clothing and accessories that require visual presentation, which also explains why fashion brands have become one of the first industries to embrace this model.

When discussing the sales performance of fashion brands, it is necessary to break through the limitations of traditional sales as a single indicator and establish a multi-dimensional evaluation system. In addition to direct sales conversion, brand exposure, user quality, fan growth and repurchase rate are all important indicators for measuring the effectiveness of live streaming sales. Especially for luxury brands, the brand image building and consumer education value brought by live streaming may be more important than short-term sales. This multi-dimensional performance perspective helps us to more comprehensively understand the long-term impact of live streaming on fashion brands [5]. Fashion brands with different positioning have obvious differences in their pursuit of performance: fast fashion brands focus more on immediate conversion, while high-end brands value the transmission of brand value more.

The mechanism by which live streaming influences consumer decision-making is mainly reflected in three levels: cognition, emotion, and behavior. At the cognitive level, live streaming reduces consumers' information asymmetry through multi-sensory stimulation and real-time demonstration; at the emotional level, the host's personal charm and the atmosphere of the live streaming room can establish emotional connections and enhance trust; at the behavioral level, limited-time discounts and the herd effect directly promote action conversion [6]. The uniqueness of the Douyin/TikTok platform is that its interest-based recommendation algorithm can accurately match potential consumers, and the model of short video preheating and live streaming linkage forms a complete marketing closed loop [7]. This synergistic effect of "short video planting and live streaming pulling out" is a competitive advantage that other platforms are difficult to replicate. From a theoretical perspective, the 4C marketing theory provides a good analytical framework for understanding the success of live streaming.

Unlike the traditional 4P theory, which emphasizes product, price, channel, and promotion, the 4C theory focuses more on consumer demand, cost, convenience, and communication. Live streaming perfectly fits this shift: it focuses on meeting consumers' real-time interactive needs, optimizes the experience by reducing decision-making costs and improving purchasing convenience, and creates a communication channel for direct dialogue between brands and consumers [8]. In addition, the scenario-based consumption theory also explains why live streaming can be so effective in promoting purchases - by constructing specific usage scenarios and emotional atmospheres, live streaming places products in the consumer's life context, thereby stimulating stronger purchasing motivation. These theories provide a solid theoretical foundation for our in-depth analysis of the live streaming phenomenon.

3 ANALYSIS OF THE OPERATIONAL MODEL OF DOUYIN/TIKTOK LIVE STREAMING SALES

As the world's leading short video social platforms, Douyin and TikTok have formed a unique operating system for their live streaming business. The core of this system lies in the platform's sophisticated algorithm recommendation mechanism, which uses multi-

dimensional information such as user portraits, real-time interaction data and historical behavior to achieve accurate matching of live streaming content and traffic distribution. The "horse racing mechanism" adopted by the platform means that the initial traffic distribution of the live streaming room is not fixed but is dynamically adjusted based on key indicators such as interaction rate, dwell time and conversion effect in the first 30 minutes of the broadcast [9]. This mechanism not only ensures that high-quality content can get more exposure but also provides new anchors with a fair chance to compete. Douyin/TikTok's algorithm pays special attention to the matching degree between content and user interests, which means that fashion live streaming needs to accurately grasp the aesthetic preferences and behavioral characteristics of the target audience to obtain ideal traffic support.

In terms of anchor ecology, Douyin/TikTok platform has formed a dual-track model of brand self-broadcasting and KOL sales. Brand-run livestreaming is usually operated by a professional team formed by the company. Its advantages lie in its in-depth understanding of the product and unified brand tone, which is suitable for long-term and stable user cultivation. KOL livestreaming, on the other hand, relies on the fan base and influence of influencers to achieve explosive sales growth in the short term. Fashion brands often adopt a mixed strategy in practice: the brand-run livestreaming maintains stable operations daily and cooperates with top KOLs to create explosive points at important marketing nodes [10]. In recent years, a group of vertical fashion anchors have emerged on the platform. With their professional dress suggestions and unique fashion insights, they have established a strong influence in specific consumer groups, providing small and medium-sized fashion brands with a new channel to accurately reach their target customer groups.

Innovation in marketing strategies is another significant feature of Douyin/TikTok livestreaming. Fashion brand livestreaming on the platform has developed a variety of marketing methods, from basic limited-time discounts and discounts for purchases above a certain amount, to more creative interactive forms such as virtual fittings and celebrity livestreaming. The core of these strategies lies in creating a sense of urgency and engagement: Flash sales create buying pressure through countdowns; interactive raffles encourage users to stay and comment; and scenario-based displays place the clothing in real-life situations, helping consumers imagine how it would look. Successful fashion livestreams often organically combine these elements to form a cohesive marketing rhythm. Such as a global fast fashion brand's livestream on TikTok employed a combination of "professional model catwalks + designer presentations and limited-time, exclusive discounts," generating millions of dollars in sales in a single session.

User engagement behavior exhibits distinct characteristics of social e-commerce, significantly different from shopping behavior on traditional e-commerce platforms. The real-time interaction within livestreams fosters a unique group consumer psychology. Individual consumers are more likely to follow the crowd when they see other users placing orders and giving positive reviews. Data shows that impulse purchases in fashion livestreams are significantly higher than in other categories, particularly for moderately priced items like apparel and accessories. Another interesting phenomenon is the "community effect"—many loyal fans of fashion brands regularly watch livestreams, not only to shop but also to get the latest trends and outfit inspiration. This social aspect significantly boosts user engagement and repurchase rates. Douyin/TikTok platforms have a high proportion of young users, who

demand more entertainment and interactivity from livestream content. This has prompted fashion brands to incorporate more creative elements and interactive entertainment into their livestreams to cater to users' unique preferences.

4 FASHION BRAND LIVESTREAMING CASE STUDY

4.1 Case selection criteria and data sources

To comprehensively analyze the actual impact of livestreaming on the sales performance of fashion brands, this chapter conducts a comparative study of representative fast fashion and luxury brands, as well as cases with poor livestreaming sales performance. The case selection criteria are based primarily on the following criteria: first, the brand's livestreaming activities on Douyin or TikTok demonstrate significant market influence or virality; second, a clear correlation between the brand's livestreaming activities and sales data, demonstrating the impact of livestreaming on brand performance; and third, the case data is relatively open and transparent, facilitating analysis of communication strategies and operational effectiveness. Data sources primarily include brand annual/quarterly financial reports, public media reports, analytical reports from third-party e-commerce and social media platform monitoring agencies, and livestream viewing and user interaction data from Douyin and TikTok. This cross-validation across multiple channels enhances the objectivity and persuasiveness of the case studies.

4.2 Success Case 1: Fast Fashion Brands

The success of fast fashion brand SHEIN on TikTok is no accident; it stems from a deep understanding of the platform's algorithms and user preferences. SHEIN excels at rapidly testing new product reactions through short videos, significantly shortening the "seeking" to ordering process. Furthermore, SHEIN actively collaborates with global TikTok influencers, launching interactive content like "challenges" and "unboxing reviews" to boost brand exposure through virality. UR (Urban Revivo) has a robust presence on the domestic Douyin platform, stimulating consumer desire through livestreams hosted by established hosts, scenario-based try-on demonstrations, and limited-time discounts. Both brands share a key focus: precise user profiling, a strategic approach that closely integrates content and sales, and effective utilization of the platform's traffic ecosystem. These practices have not only driven rapid growth in brand awareness but also significantly increased conversion rates and sales.

4.3 Success Case 2: Luxury brands

Compared to fast fashion brands that rely on massive exposure and price advantages, luxury brands' core focus in livestreaming e-commerce is more focused on maintaining their brand image and converting high-value users. Gucci and Dior's livestreaming on Douyin demonstrate a strategic approach that integrates brand and performance: ensuring the brand's identity is not diluted while also engaging in appropriate commercial sales activities. Such as Dior invited celebrities to participate in the Douyin livestream launch of a limited-edition collection, creating a sense of exclusivity and ceremony. Livestreams were often set in visually

compelling spaces like couture shows and brand showrooms to reinforce the brand's story. Gucci, on the other hand, prioritizes the integration of cultural narratives and trendy language, collaborating with influencers (KOLs) to provide in-depth explanations of the product's design philosophy and utilizing limited-edition releases to stimulate purchase desire. These practices not only boost audience engagement but also achieve simultaneous growth in sales conversion and brand value, demonstrating that high-end brands can achieve sustainable monetization through livestreaming.

4.4 Failure Case: Analysis of the Reasons Why a Brand's Live Broadcasting Was Not Effective

A domestic mid-to-high-end women's clothing brand attempted to boost sales through Douyin livestreaming, but the results fell short of expectations. The main reasons for this failure can be attributed to three factors. First, the livestream content lacked appeal, and the host failed to establish a clear connection between their personal style and the brand, resulting in a lack of user engagement. Second, the brand's pricing strategy misaligned with the target user's consumption habits on the Douyin platform. The product's high price without sufficient value explanation led to low user conversion rates. Third, insufficient technical and operational support, such as chaotic livestream pacing, unclear product presentation, and weak interactive elements, resulted in a poor overall livestream experience and a failure to stimulate purchase desire. Despite significant investment in visual packaging and pre-launch promotion, the brand failed to truly understand the operational logic and user psychology of Douyin livestreaming, ultimately missing out on conversion opportunities. This case serves as a reminder that brands must conduct thorough market research and strategic alignment before launching livestreaming e-commerce initiatives, otherwise they risk experiencing a "high start, low end" scenario.

4.5 Case comparison and summary of key success factors

From the comparison of the above three cases, the success of fashion brands in live streaming sales does not rely on a single factor but is the result of systematic strategies and multi-dimensional coordination. Fast fashion brands are good at large-scale conversion based on content and traffic; luxury brands focus on driving consumers' emotional identification with brand stories and high-end experiences, thereby achieving high-value transactions. The common features of failed cases are the neglect of user experience, serious content homogeneity, and lack of platform mechanism adaptability. The key success factors are summarized as follows: first, the fit and professionalism between the anchor and the brand image; second, the creativity and resonance of content planning; third, the ability of technical support and data analysis; and fourth, the deep integration of live streaming and e-commerce operations. In the future, as the mechanism of live streaming sales on social media continues to evolve, if fashion brands can find a balance between content creativity and business logic, they will be more likely to stand out in fierce competition.

5 ANALYSES OF INFLUENCING MECHANISMS AND PATHS

5.1 The core path to improving sales performance through live streaming

The key reason why livestreaming can significantly boost sales performance for fashion brands lies in its closed-loop "traffic-trust-conversion" process. First, in terms of traffic acquisition, Douyin and TikTok generate massive exposure for brands through algorithmic recommendation mechanisms. The platforms' content distribution logic tends to incentivize livestream content with high engagement rates, enabling brands to quickly reach potential users. Furthermore, a growing number of brands are focusing on building private traffic. Leveraging corporate accounts to build followers, engage with community groups, and schedule livestreams, they are converting public traffic into loyal users, thereby increasing repurchase rates and customer lifetime value.

Second, in terms of trust building, the host's personal and professionalism are crucial influencing user purchase intent. Unlike traditional advertising, livestreaming emphasizes a face-to-face communication atmosphere. The host's language style, outfit presentation, and interactive performance directly influence user perceptions of trust. Furthermore, by providing real-time product details and user feedback, livestreaming effectively bridges the "invisible and intangible" trust gap in online consumption. Some brands are even inviting designers or founders to appear in person, strengthening the connection between professionalism and brand storytelling, further strengthening consumer emotional connection.

When it comes to consumer stimulation, the immersive scenes and interactive atmosphere created by livestreaming are highly appealing. Livestreamers create a sense of urgency through limited-time discounts, flash sales, and gift giveaways, stimulating immediate purchases. Simultaneously, interactive comment chats and raffles provide users with social feedback and a sense of participation during the viewing process, enhancing the entertainment and fun of shopping. This is especially true for clothing products, as real-life try-ons and demonstrations of different styles create a greater sense of immersion for consumers, effectively boosting conversion rates.

5.2 Adaptation strategies for different fashion brand types

The livestreaming e-commerce model isn't a one-size-fits-all approach; different fashion brands need to tailor their approach to their specific needs. Fast fashion brands like SHEIN and ZARA are more suited to a livestreaming strategy that prioritizes high frequency, high exposure, and low barriers to entry. They can quickly trigger consumer decisions by rotating multiple products and offering competitive pricing. They can also leverage influencer recommendations and buzz management to continuously generate traffic and create a viral hit.

Luxury brands face a more complex challenge. Livestreaming can't simply replicate e-commerce promotional tactics; instead, it must design content centered around a sense of luxury and scarcity. Brands can leverage limited-edition releases, brand culture narratives, and collaborations with high-end livestreamers to maintain their brand identity while simultaneously promoting value. The successful experiences of brands like Dior and Gucci demonstrate that luxury brands should prioritize quality over quantity in livestreaming, using content to drive awareness and service to drive sales.

For emerging designer brands or niche independent brands, livestreaming offers a rare opportunity to break into niche markets at a low cost. They can attract specific audiences

through differentiated styles and creative content and strengthen their brand personality through frequent user interaction. Given limited resources, emerging brands should focus on niche verticals, creating small but compelling livestream content, and increasing fan engagement through authentic storytelling and emotional resonance.

5.3 Potential risks and challenges

While livestreaming has provided fashion brands with unprecedented sales and exposure opportunities, it also carries numerous hidden risks. First, there's over-reliance on low-price strategies. Some brands are constantly lowering prices to boost livestream sales, even resorting to price-cutting tactics to attract traffic. While this may yield impressive short-term sales figures, it can damage long-term brand value. For high-end brands, price wars are particularly destructive.

Second, the risk of brand image dilution is becoming increasingly prominent. In lifetime, poorly chosen hosts, poorly written content, or scenes designed to be seriously inconsistent with the brand's tone can easily lead to a distorted brand image and consumer misperceptions. Furthermore, some brands engage in excessive marketing or hype in pursuit of buzz. If this goes wrong, they face public criticism and reputational damage.

Furthermore, operational pressures are also a significant issue. The high intensity of livestreaming places higher demands on supply chains, customer service, logistics, and after-sales systems. Any inadvertent missteps could lead to negative word-of-mouth. Especially when faced with large orders or returns and exchanges, a brand's service capabilities directly impact consumer satisfaction and repurchase intentions. In summary, while livestreaming offers fashion brands a new window to reach consumers, it presents both an opportunity for traffic generation and a challenge for brand building. Only by striking a balance between strategic choices, brand positioning, and user experience can brands truly transform livestreaming into long-term competitiveness, rather than a temporary sales miracle.

6 MANAGEMENT INSPIRATION AND SUGGESTIONS

6.1 Strategic advice for fashion brands

When it comes to livestreaming e-commerce, fashion brands need to strike a balance between entertainment and professionalism in their content design. While simple promotions and shout-outs can generate sales in the short term, they can easily lead to content homogenization, further weakening brand value. When planning livestreams, brands can use scenario-based storytelling and styling tutorials to organically blend professional knowledge with interactive entertainment. This allows users to both enjoy the content and learn valuable insights, thereby increasing user engagement and conversion rates. The selection of livestreamers is also crucial. A brand's own livestreaming team can ensure consistency in tone and values, while KOLs have a natural advantage in traffic and influence. In the future, synergy between the two will become mainstream, with in-house livestreamers responsible for long-term brand development and fan base cultivation, while KOLs will drive buzz and sales at key moments, achieving both long-term and short-term goals. Furthermore, brands need to establish a data-driven decision-making mechanism for livestreaming. By analyzing user

viewing behavior, interactive feedback, and purchase paths, they can scientifically optimize livestream scheduling and product mix to maximize traffic utilization and enhance product selection.

6.2 Suggestions for the platform

From the platform's perspective, the healthy development of the livestreaming e-commerce ecosystem requires greater support and innovation. First, platforms should further optimize their traffic support mechanisms, avoiding excessive favoritism towards top livestreamers and ensuring that small and medium-sized brands and emerging designers also have exposure through high-quality content. Second, platforms can increase the development of livestreaming tools, such as multi-dimensional data analysis platforms, personalized recommendation systems, and immersive interactive plug-ins, to help brands more effectively understand user preferences and optimize operational strategies. Furthermore, platforms should also play a role in oversight, establishing robust credit mechanisms and content review systems to prevent issues like false advertising and price gouging that undermine consumer trust and foster a more sustainable business environment for fashion brands.

6.3 Outlook for future trends

Looking ahead, livestreaming e-commerce on social media will exhibit a more diverse and intelligent development trend. The rise of virtual anchors is transcending the manpower constraints of traditional livestreaming. Using ACG characters or AI-powered virtual idols as brand ambassadors can attract the attention of young users while ensuring the stability and consistency of content output. Furthermore, the application of artificial intelligence technology in product recommendations, user profile analysis, and real-time interaction will become more widespread, making livestream operations more precise and efficient. Such as AI can dynamically adjust anchor recommendations or promotions based on real-time data feedback to maximize conversion rates. With the development of the metaverse concept, future fashion livestreaming may also extend into virtual spaces, allowing users to participate in immersive virtual shows or digital fittings, further blurring the boundaries between online and offline. Overall, driven by both technological empowerment and content innovation, livestreaming e-commerce will become a key pillar of fashion brands' digital transformation. Whether brands can proactively capitalize on these trends will directly determine their competitiveness in the new consumer era.

7 CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

7.1 Summary of research conclusions

Through the review and analysis of the live streaming sales practices of fashion brands on Douyin and TikTok platforms, this study found that social media live streaming has become an important engine driving the sales performance of fashion brands. Its core mechanisms are reflected in the three dimensions of traffic aggregation, trust building, and consumption stimulation: the platform recommendation algorithm and private domain precipitation help

brands quickly reach user groups, the anchor's personality and real-time interaction make up for the trust gap in online consumption, and scenario-based display and limited-time promotions effectively promote conversion rate increases. At the same time, different types of brands have different adaptation paths in the live streaming ecosystem. Fast fashion relies on large-scale exposure and explosive logic, luxury brands focus on the narrative of brand value and the creation of scarcity, and emerging brands use live streaming to achieve low-cost breakthroughs. Overall, live streaming sales is not only an innovation in sales channels, but also a new field for brand strategy and user relationship management.

7.2 Study limitations

While this article diligently demonstrates the impact of livestreaming on fashion brands' sales performance through multi-dimensional data and case studies, it still has certain limitations. First, some of the data relies on public reports and third-party monitoring, making it difficult to fully cover brands' internal operating indicators. Consequently, the measurement of sales growth is subject to certain errors. Second, the case studies are highly time-sensitive, and the traffic distribution mechanisms and user preferences of social media platforms change rapidly. This conclusion may become less applicable over time. Furthermore, this study primarily focuses on Douyin and TikTok, lacking a comprehensive comparison with other social media platforms, making it difficult to fully present the overall ecosystem of livestreaming e-commerce worldwide.

7.3 Future research directions

Future research can be further expanded from multiple perspectives. On the one hand, cross-cultural comparisons can be strengthened to explore the behavioral differences in live streaming consumption among users in different countries and regions, in order to reveal the impact of cultural background on the adaptability of brand strategies. On the other hand, long-term effect tracking research is also extremely necessary, especially the impact of live streaming on brand image, consumer loyalty, and long-term sales performance, which currently lacks systematic data support. In addition, as new technologies such as virtual anchors, AI algorithms, and metaverse scenarios are gradually integrated into live streaming practices, future research should focus on their far-reaching impact on the fashion industry and explore the new consumption logic under the combination of technology and brand narratives. Through the extension of these directions, academia and industry can more comprehensively understand the value boundaries and sustainable paths of live streaming on social media.

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