

Cultural Understanding of Live Streaming E-commerce in Asian markets

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ABSTRACT

Why has live streaming e-commerce become so popular in Asian countries? The advancement of telecommunication technology is insufficient to explain such a regional phenomenon. In this qualitative research, we analyze live streaming videos to discover cultural indicators to give answers to the question. To do so, we identified the features of live streaming e-commerce, such as identification, parasocialization, and community, from a literature review and reinterpreted them to articulate cultural indicators by applying anthropologists' cultural dimensions. We verified this conceptual methodology through a video analysis method (n=10) based on interpretivism for case study research. We discovered the hidden cultural features such as belongingness, affective engagement, group trust, co-ownership, and so on. The features are consistent with anthropologists' dimensions of Eastern culture, which indicates that the popularity of live streaming e-commerce is highly related to cultural backgrounds. Marketers can consider the features in developing marketing strategies to be more consumer-culture friendly and systematic.

Keywords: Live streaming; culture; social marketing; e-commerce; Eastern culture; cultural dimensions

1. INTRODUCTION

Celebrities and influencers gain a spotlight for collaboration with companies to market their products because of the emerging popularity of social media marketing [48]. Companies sponsor content creators who have followers from 5000 or more on social media to promote their product on social networking sites [30]. Specifically, as Novita [35] argued, younger generations are more accustomed to social networking services and trends and have participated in creating new career opportunities through digital engagement, including blogging, vlogging, and digital marketing. Such social technologies enhance professional interactions, including scheduling posts, AI-powered chatbot, strategic

content production (e.g., imagery, fun videos, and podcasts), cross-channel campaigns, hashtag networking, and live streaming [2, 34]. With digital marketing becoming more popular and accessible through multiple platforms, extensions to live streaming e-commerce are a combination of live streaming and influencer marketing that becomes the most popular social media marketing form as of 2020 [16]. The main difference between traditional e-commerce and live streaming e-commerce is the level of human interaction involved — audience engagement. Traditional e-commerce platforms, with the aid of technology, involve virtual interactions like chatbots, written text and product descriptions, comments and reactions, and product ratings. Yet, the presence of live sales streamers increases audience engagement through ‘live’ interactions. Indeed, live audience engagement is formed through virtual interactions between humans rather than with robots in traditional e-commerce, and audience engagement is measured, not through views or clicks, but through how the ‘evoked emotions’ make the audience part of the community [29].

Yu [56] systematically described such audience engagement in her empirical study on live streaming e-commerce through online observations and interviews with twelve streamers. She characterized three features: “participatory culture,” “shopping preference ... for fans,” and “self-awareness behavioral changes ... for building a “social identity” [56, p. 2]. For her, first, participatory culture is related to communities and connections on social media where audiences not only consume but also create content. Audiences’ new identity as media participants develops a participatory culture that facilitates the desire to make contributions and social connection with others. Second, due to such increased and realizable desire, an interactive shopping mode is considered for the fan’s production and consumption practices. The fandom of live streaming e-commerce is a remarkable phenomenon that people enjoy shopping in a group and like interacting with streamers. This phenomenon generates memes and reproduces a participatory culture [27]. Third, audiences have conformity behavior pursuing a social identity by integrating individuals’ self-identity into their social identity. Diverse fans’ consumption needs can form a fanatic circle and enhance their consumption community which sustains their social identity as fans. While these features distinguish live streaming e-commerce from traditional e-commerce, they seem insufficient to explain why live streaming e-commerce is more prevalent in Asia.

According to Tech Collective [45], live streaming e-commerce sales have significantly increased in Southeast Asian countries during the COVID-19 pandemic. Regardless of the pandemic, live streaming e-commerce is far more prevalent in East and Southeast Asian countries than any other countries (without explaining the reason) [47] (*see also* [10]). In this context, we investigate cultural features embedded in live streaming e-commerce by assuming that the popularity of live streaming e-commerce is highly associated with cultural features. To do so, first, we conceptualized live streaming features from relevant studies to set a structure for organizing research design and implementation as per

conceptualization methodology. Our two methodological goals are (a) to set reference points from live streaming e-commerce within prior studies [43] and (b) to identify coherence between a conceptualized framework (literature review) and empirical observations (video analysis) [25]. Second, we applied anthropologists' cultural dimensions of Eastern cultures to justify the conceptualized features of live streaming e-commerce. Then, we conducted video case analysis (n=10) based on interpretivism methodology for case study research to identify the coherence. For a semantic and systematic approach, the video case analysis relies on Ramey et al.'s [36] three themes of video analysis: transcription tensions, defining the unit of analysis, and representing context to ensure that the observed features are culturally re-interpretable and re-justifiable, which verifies the coherence.

2. LIVE STREAMING AND ITS FEATURES

We used a scholarly database, ABI/INFORM collection (via ProQuest), for business, economics, and information systems to find full-text and peer-reviewed articles on 'live streaming e-commerce' published from 2016 to 2020. The search results showed 165 articles. The studies provided diverse perspectives of live streaming e-commerce in the following four categories: (a) marketing strategies in Hu and Chaudhry's [22] building relationships and creating consumer loyalty, and Li et al.'s [60] platform trust and celebrity trust in the live streaming context; (b) regulation studies in Mok's [33] e-commerce operator obligations for live streaming marketing, Cunningham et al.'s [10] live streaming platforms, politics, and precarity, and Mitra's [32] e-commerce policy; and (c) psychological understandings of e-commerce activities in Gong et al.'s [15] relationships between live platforms and consumer impulse buying, Zhang et al.'s [57] impact of live streaming on purchase intention, Liu et al.'s [26] individual shoppers' perceived enjoyment, and Zhao et al.'s [58] self-determination on performance expectancy and perceived website attractiveness; (d) technological understandings of live streaming in Sun et al.'s [42] IT affordance and shopping engagement. Other than these four categories with the nine typical articles, we found four studies that *systematically* addressed audience engagement, as presented in Table 1. We summarized the key features and conceptualized relevant socio-cultural values of audience engagement in live streaming.

Table 1. Live streaming features and conceptualization

Reference	Feature	Conceptualization
Why do audiences choose to keep watching on live video streaming platforms? [59]	(a) social identification: group-based identification and individual-based identification, (b) broadcaster identification: parasocial interaction, and self-congruity, and (c) group identification: cognitive communion and resonant contagion	Identification, conformity, and community
What motivates audience comments on live streaming platforms? [49]	Interaction Ritual Chains: (a) collective unity, (b) spiritual power, (c) representative signs of the bunch, and (d) a sense of morality	Collectivism and community
Communication impact of live streaming e-commerce [56]	(a) participatory culture: fandom and identification, (b) conformity: social identity and group norms, and (c) collective intelligence: collective decision-making practices	Identification, social identity, and collectivism
Drivers of shopping behavior in live streaming e-commerce [53]	(a) utilitarian benefits — social sharing: actively engage in the shared experience and information with peers, and (b) consumer-brand relationship: trust and affection building through parasocial interactions	Community and parasocialization

From the literature review, we articulated the three overarching features that keep audiences engaged in live streaming e-commerce: ‘identification,’ ‘parasocialization,’ and ‘community.’ We also observed other features such as collectivism, social identity, participatory culture, and conformity as outcomes or drivers of the three features. For example, identification is formed through parasocial interactions, which can form a community, and the community facilitates and diversifies parasocial interactions by reproducing social identification.

First, ‘identification.’ Audiences tend to identify themselves as part of a community or group, as they participate in a stream together, belongingness and collective action can increase their social identification with streamers and other viewers, leading to more prolonged and more dynamic viewing behaviors [59, 14]. Indeed, the participants find their social identity as to whether it is consistent with the group’s identity [56]. Social identification is sustained by social symbols and norms available in ‘their’ e-commerce

sites, which also continues to remind participants of their social identity, which is supposed to be different from other groups [59]. In this way, social identification is interchangeably used as *group membership* and *a sense of community belonging*, and individual participants find the consistency between social identification and their desire [31]. The participants are willing to build their self-engagement in the identification and maintain the membership to “satisfy[ing] self-defining relationship to another person or group,” which is reproduced by parasocial interactions within a like-minded community [56, p.40].

Second, parasocialization. It is a term created in 1956 by Horton and Wohl [21]. It is defined as an intellectual relationship with media personas as formed by viewers based on how they feel engaged with the personas regardless of the bounded reciprocity in their relationship [21]. Parasocialization before live streaming was a one-sided relationship formed by audiences with the media personas. Yet, live streaming has enhanced parasocial interactions from a one-sided relationship to a reciprocal relationship between media personas and viewers [53]. Such two-way interactions lead people to form a *friendship-like relationship* with influencers and fellow viewers and keep them engaged in the live interactions. Hu et al. also stated that ‘interaction’ and ‘experience of parasocial interaction’ are conclusively related to ‘identification,’ thereby increasing audience engagement [59, pp. 595-596]. Parasocial interaction processes in live streaming e-commerce “increase personal attachment, relationship investment, and loyalty” toward the streamers by “naturally digest[ing] promotional information, adjust[ing] their prior beliefs and attitudes” [53, p. 151]. In this way, parasocialization in social contexts enhances collectivistic engagement through two-sided virtual social interactions. For example, live comments and reactions result in co-experience of higher concentration with the formation of identity, social presence, and community [6, 17].

Third, community. Social identification supported by parasocial interactions amongst audiences themselves via either giving text comments or any other available forms such as mobile phone conversations, Super Chat, and Super Sticker during live streaming, leads to a psychological interpretation of a “collective group identity” [59, p. 595]. An individual’s perceptions of similar characteristics with other individuals create a collectivist environment of perceiving others as part of their community, which is people’s ‘do’ culture [1]. In the case of live streaming, if an audience finds any similar ideas of agreement/disagreement/likes and dislikes with the streamer or other audiences, he/she unconsciously feels part of that particular group of people or a sense of community belonging [59]. Its formation due to collective interests, in turn, creates a collectivist community [59]. Moreover, due to group identification, audiences feel responsible to participate in group activities, which leads them to comment, watch, like, share, and react to the posts related to the streamer. Indeed, shared experiences based on two-way interactions and consciousness generate a group’s collective unity and ritual energy [49] and further enhance (fan) communities that constitute specific participatory cultural activities in live streaming e-commerce [56].

3. CULTURAL INTERPRETATIONS

Two anthropologists, Hofstede [20] and Hall [19] discovered cultural dimensions: Hofstede's high power distance, collectivism, femininity, long-term orientation, high uncertainty avoidance, and restraint, and Hall's high cultural context, polychronic time, and low territoriality. We used the dimensions to figure out the answer to the question, what Eastern cultural characteristics keep live streaming participants engaged with identification, parasocialization, and community. In Table 2, we redefined the cultural dimensions of Eastern cultures as per the indicated factors of identification, parasocialization, and community in the context of live streaming.

Table 2. Cultural indicators of live streaming participant engagement

Cultural Dimension	Indicated Factor
<p>High power distance: A leader has a high control/power over a group of people. People accept such a hierarchical distance as a norm. In turn, people implement norms alongside conformity — how others influence individuals among the same community.</p>	<p><i>Identification:</i> People prioritize group identification over personal identification, and thus, the streamer has strong leadership in facilitating shopping activities.</p> <p><i>Parasocialization:</i> Audiences expect co-participatory activities that the streamer organized, which results in relationship building.</p> <p><i>Community:</i> Leadership is stressed to maintain shared common interests, identities, and norms.</p>
<p>Collectivism: Belongingness in a group is what makes a collectivistic culture that values and prioritizes group engagement and togetherness. People cherish interconnectedness over individual gains.</p>	<p><i>Identification:</i> Shared or collective identity ('We') within individuals ('I') as a group is the key to forming a collectivist environment, where group involvement and engagement are stressed.</p> <p><i>Parasocialization:</i> Reciprocal interactions between participants are to form a human relationship-driven environment along with the social presence of individuals in a group.</p> <p><i>Community:</i> Belongingness of individuals sustains a community where the members subconsciously accept that they are on the same team.</p>
<p>Femininity: Empathizing with others and interpersonal relationships are highly valued. Participants share the feeling of trust and common attributes, and they contribute to decision-making and sharing of responsibility.</p>	<p><i>Identification:</i> Having similar intents on watching live streaming to purchase a product or for a fanatic purpose toward a streamer.</p> <p><i>Parasocialization:</i> Interactions with a streamer and other participants create a certain level of trust along with a virtual relationship.</p> <p><i>Community:</i> Empathizing with a streamer and other participants upon a particular topic occurs based on their shared beliefs, needs, and belongingness.</p>

Table 2. Cultural indicators of live streaming participant engagement

Cultural Dimension	Indicated Factor
<p>High uncertainty avoidance: Individuals are reluctant to take risks and challenges if the community and leader do support. They seek security and safety through interdependency and group trust.</p>	<p><i>Identification:</i> Individuals try to fulfill their trust needs to lessen the risks of purchasing a low-quality product through collective engagement.</p> <p><i>Parasocialization:</i> Parasocializing with a streamer and other participants is to strengthen relationships, which, in turn, decreases potential and/or foreseeable risks.</p> <p><i>Community:</i> A group of individuals with similar likeness (e.g., fandom and product purchase) forms a sense of community where collective actions are considered safer than individual actions.</p>
<p>Long-term orientation: People prioritize future-oriented and collective goals. They view time in a holistic way and value the past and the future at the same time.</p>	<p><i>Identification:</i> Relationships with streamers/peers are prioritized, or they are equal to shopping activities.</p> <p><i>Parasocialization:</i> Interactions enhance relationships through virtues such as persistence, perseverance, and caring for others.</p> <p><i>Community:</i> Fostering such virtues makes live streaming sustainable.</p>
<p>Restraint: Gratification is significantly affected by other's comments and suggestions that reflect community expectations. Participants and leaders promote shared values over individuals' specific needs.</p>	<p><i>Identification:</i> People practice identification based on shared values, and streamer leadership is more important than individuals' desires.</p> <p><i>Parasocialization:</i> Individuals' desires are reshaped or highly influenced by community expectations and streamer leadership.</p> <p><i>Community:</i> People favor homogeneity over one's specific needs, which maintains group identity and belongingness.</p>
<p>High cultural context: People prefer to make implicit communication and rely on contextual engagement, which values interpersonal relationships and encourages members to form stable and close relationships.</p>	<p><i>Identification:</i> Building relationships and maintaining activities are added to or integrated into product description and promotion.</p> <p><i>Parasocialization:</i> Both personal and professional contexts are mixed or equally valued for collaborative engagement.</p> <p><i>Community:</i> Participants and streamer leaders promote and prioritize close connections for a long period.</p>
<p>Polychronic time: Changes in schedules are allowed if relationships and community are kept healthy. The occurrence of many different activities at the same time is tolerable.</p>	<p><i>Identification:</i> Flexibility is prioritized over a fixed schedule of content if it is necessary for relationships.</p> <p><i>Parasocialization:</i> People subconsciously gain Identifications through ongoing practice of membership.</p> <p><i>Community:</i> Relationship or membership maintenance is focused rather than content perfection.</p>

Table 2. Cultural indicators of live streaming participant engagement

Cultural Dimension	Indicated Factor
<p>Low territoriality: With prioritizing sharing, interacting, and building/fostering relationships, participants are willing to practice co-participation and co-ownership.</p>	<p><i>Identification:</i> Co-participatory activities build social identity. <i>Parasocialization:</i> Participants practice co-ownership by being engaged in collaborative decision-making and actions. <i>Community:</i> Sharing achievements with one another reproduce co-ownership</p>

4. VIDEO ANALYSIS

Human behavior (by streamers and followers) is based on social interactions that are dependent on individuals' personal understanding and experiences on a particular situation (i.e., live streaming e-commerce) [37, 5]. This interactionism relies on interpretivism methodology that we can discover truth and knowledge that participants believe and reproduce through interpretations of their experience and understanding in live streaming [37, 44]. The particularity is a culturally derived and historically situated reality that is 'a case.' In this sense, a case for interpretation is an empirical and representative instance (i.e., a live streaming event), and we can apply multiple cases to improve the reliability and validity of the data, which is to discover a reality [18, 44]. In the boundaries of interpretivist multiple case studies, we searched appropriate live streaming e-commerce video clips. First, we searched publicly available live streaming videos on YouTube and Facebook and listed them with at least five thousand 'views' and English subtitles available. Second, we considered the streamers' cultural background to avoid stereotypes on the cultural understanding of live streaming e-commerce. Third, we restricted the product categories to the live sale videos of cosmetics, clothes, jewelry, detergents, and shoes, excluding the live sales videos of cars, apartments, and other products which do not require as much interaction as the former. Fourth, as a result, we were able to select the top 10 popular live streaming e-commerce videos from four Asian countries including China (n=4), Japan (n=2), Myanmar (n=2), and Thailand (n=2) by considering the project timeline (2 months) and the research team's capacity.

We conducted a video (case) analysis using "recursive visual transcription," which is the act of exploring both verbal and nonverbal interactions, and it is suitable to analyze videos lacking details and structure [36, p. 1035]. In practice, we iteratively analyzed followers' comments, reactions, and participation and streamers' behavior, verbal, and nonverbal communication, which leads to interaction among the two parties. Specifically, we applied Ramey et al.'s [36] three themes of video analysis: transcription tensions, defining the unit of analysis, and representing context. First, *transcription tensions*. We focused on verbal and written communications between streamer(s) and followers during

live streaming and transcribed interactional phenomena. This way is considered a characterizing transcription process which is a recursive method of video transcription for an ongoing analytic and interpretive act. Second, *the unit of analysis*. We sorted the collected interactional phenomena as per the nine cultural dimensions and their factors (Table 2). In this stage, as Ramey et al. indicated, “the richness of video data often results in multiple rounds of analysis that include revisions to theoretical frameworks” [36, p. 1034]. We constantly revisited the nine cultural dimensions and rearranged the interactional phenomena that we observed. Furthermore, we foregrounded visual phenomena to ensure that the analytic and interpretive acts are causal. As a result, we achieved cultural features of live streaming that include both (re)defined meanings of cultural indicators and relevant features presented in Tables 3–11. Third, *representing context*. We culturally justified the cultural indicators and the observed features to incorporate the content into analysis and build arguments.

5. CULTURAL FEATURES OF LIVE STREAMING

Tables 3–11 present the (re)defined cultural dimensions and relevant live streaming features identified from the video analysis. The observable indicators are to reflect the refined concepts of the nine cultural dimensions from the video analysis. In contrast, the observed features are the findings from the video analysis as per the cultural dimensions. In other words, Tables 3–11 are the outcomes from the multiple rounds of analysis between 10 videos, the nine cultural dimensions and observed features.

Table 3. Leadership and community

Observable indicator	Observed feature
Leadership is explicit, and interactions are driven by the leader, while participant engagement as a community action supports leadership.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A streamer indicates the time and stock limit and stresses it is the last opportunity. - A streamer stresses a must-buy item, and the viewers respond (e.g., “Yes!! Must have a piece” without indicating their personal preferences). - Although viewers want to watch a recorded video (i.e., the designer’s studio) and initiate the sales, their streamer puts the video on hold and heightens their curiosity and excitement. - A streamer encourages viewers to like and share this live sales video and participate in the comment (e.g., a streamer states, “make sure you share to a lot of your groups and comment a lot”), and viewers respond to the streamer’s engagement for sharing in the comment (e.g., “I shared,” “Done sharing,” and “I shared it for you”) - Viewers encourage one another to like and share the live streaming, purchase the products, and support their streamer by commenting “Share this live sale if you love the streamer,” “Don’t forget to like and share,” and other viewers reply, “Shared!”. - Viewers support the streamer to perform sales in the best condition by advising about the streamer’s appearance and dress and confirming that the live streaming technical setting is ready to go.

In the videos, streamers, being the host, controlled the overall operational features of the live sale video, such as holding the sales, limiting the stock, and encouraging viewer engagement. As presented in Table 3, viewers could not purchase the products until the streamer initiates the process. The streamer applied a ‘holding up demands’ strategy to keep viewers excited and ready to buy right away, which is to create an engaging environment for viewers. Viewers responded to the streamer, uplifted the streamer through supportive comments, gave suggestions to streamers, and upheld leadership throughout the live streaming. Interestingly, since they are believed to be fans of streamers, anti-fans or hate comments are not allowed; if there were any, the community would protect the streamer/fellow group members (For instance, *see* Table 9 Contextual and collaborative engagement).

Moreover, it is a norm to respect others' voices and comments, as they voluntarily agree to be part of a community [57]. At this point, it is questionable whether that is the only reason why viewers follow a streamer's guidance. In their study about power distance in organizations, Wei et al. [50] explained that power inequalities are accepted without justification in a high-power distance society. Furthermore, as the resources are under the leader's control, viewers should treat their streamers as leaders to gain their desired resources [50]. Throughout the video analysis, we clearly observed community support, which is consistent with leadership in that a leader as one in charge of managing interactions affects viewers' behavior [12].

Table 4. Belongingness and togetherness

Observable indicator	Observed feature
Viewers promote a sense of belonging, and they implement collective engagement through togetherness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Viewers encourage other viewers to buy a product to support their streamer, and many viewers decide to buy it. - When a viewer initiates a purchase on a specific item by commenting on the live sales, other viewers rely on the comments and decide to buy the same things. - Viewers give their streamers a super chat or a super sticker to cheer up. - Viewers identify themselves as part of the group by assuming other viewers as supporters of their streamer using words like Our, Us, and We rather than My, I, and Me (e.g., "Our streamer is working so hard by selling whatever she can before New Year's"). - A streamer pays extra attention to loyal customers' detailed information (e.g., a streamer memorizes all her regular customers' foot sizes)

Belongingness makes individuals follow norms set to be in the community led by the leader (streamer) [12]. The observed behavior included viewers' encouragement of each other to support their streamer and to cheer the streamer up through words or virtual gifts. It seems that accepting others and oneself is much more robust in such a collectivistic culture because the acceptance is realized based on a feeling of togetherness in a collectivist culture [13]. The features were evident by streamers giving specific attention to viewers (e.g., calling out viewers' names while reading the comments) and viewers to streamers or other viewers through words. Interestingly, we observed that viewers' belongingness makes them feel partially responsible for the number of sales, which directly represents their streamer's reputation and success.

Furthermore, viewers used words like We, Us, and Our regardless of having an actual relationship or knowledge about other viewers. This behavior of identifying oneself as part

of a group, along with belongingness and togetherness, could reflect their collectivistic cultural background [13]. In this context, a streamer is supposed to be a highly reliable person who would not recommend anything bad to community members, as belongingness and togetherness are already anchored in the relationship. We also observed that a streamer created a sense of competition among viewers to keep them engaged as a group and increased the joy of the streaming by letting them make group decisions. Probably due to affective and emotional engagement, their belongingness and togetherness are stronger than non-live e-commerce due to their cultural background.

Table 5. Affective and emotional engagement

Observable indicator	Observed feature
Participants have an affective relationship with a streamer in communication, and they practice emotional engagement (e.g., fandom) in interactions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Viewers show their love, support, and respect towards their streamer(s) by commenting, “Love you,” “Such a cute person,” “You are so pretty,” “The way you talk is so attractive,” “We’ve been waiting for you!”). - A streamer encourages people to buy at least one lipstick from the live sales to prove their love for her. She would call out their names if they haven't purchased yet (e.g., “You must buy at least one lipstick today if you insist you love me. I’ll be calling out names if you haven’t purchased yet”). - Viewers support their streamer by commenting, “I can’t stay without watching your live stream although I’m running out of data,” “Hope you sell a lot today,” “Guys, please buy a lot to support her.” - Purchase decisions are made based on the viewers’ love and trust for the streamer rather than their needs for the product (e.g., “I can finally afford to buy something that she sells!”).

We observed that viewers and streamer(s) empathize affective and emotional interactions through parasocialization. The “social presence” of live streamers, their personal life including appearance, personality, home/workplaces, etc., build “the buyer-seller interpersonal interaction” and increases their relationship with consumers, trust from the consumers, and reduces Asian consumers’ uncertainty in online shopping [52, p. 543]. In the observations, viewers’ comments mainly indicated their positive attitude towards their streamers rather than their product necessity. This phenomenon is consistent because viewers rely on the relationship they have with their streamers or the streamer’s identity that is highly associated with both brand image and product reliability [56]. While the primary purpose of participating in live streaming e-commerce is to clarify product attributes such as price and applicability, affective and emotional engagement is reproduced through their interconnectedness, shaping their relationships as a community.

In their study about femininity cultural values and service quality, Sarhan et al. [39] argued that quality shopping experience is determined by quality relationships over materialistic engagement because relationships are highly important where a feminist culture is predominant.

Table 6. Interdependency and group trust

Observable indicator	Observed feature
Participants are interdependent in exploring information and deciding, and group trust is used to avoid potential or foreseeable risks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Viewers trust one another. They ask questions among one another to explore the information they missed during the live sales (e.g., “I missed the previous parts of the live sales, can anyone tell me the price of the lipstick she’s holding right now?”, and other viewers answered). - Viewers rely on their streamer’s recommendation over their individual needs/thoughts (e.g., “I’ll take any of the \$10 worth lipstick that you choose for me,” “Could you choose any 5 lipsticks for me to buy?”). - Viewers as a group directly ask their streamer to recommend a specific item per their preferences and request providing practical tips for the product use. - Streamers share their personal stories, family, and career history with viewers, and some viewers consult with streamers about their personal problems (e.g., coping with a broken relationship with a friend). - Viewers express their loyalty and support towards the streamer through comments (e.g., “Rest a bit, you might get exhausted at this rate”).

Through live chats, viewers request their streamer to explain a certain product and test it live in different ways possible, which increases their level of trust [28]. For example, if a streamer sells accessories, viewers could request the streamer to try jewelries on and estimate their quality. From the observation, viewer-to-viewer trust was evident in ways to support and encourage each other to share information and sustain their relationship as a community. Also, viewers as a group expect their streamers to perform for their interest. The streamer shares his/her personal life like her work, family, relationships, daily activities, etc., enabling them to have a strong connection [3]. Such activities like sharing personal information aids in enhancing trust with viewers. In this context, viewers ask about both products and beauty tips, and they also question about the streamer’s career and their personal life. The two parties build trust among each other by sharing knowledge, asking questions, and interacting in live conversations. Group trust and interdependency in live streaming enable viewers to perceive that it is safer to make purchase decisions along

with other members in the group [56]. This approach is highly cultural in that people in a high uncertainty avoidance culture tend to value their trust levels with products [4].

Table 7. Relational and long-term perspectives

Observable indicator	Observed feature
Participants promote relationships and community and adopt holistic and long-term perspectives in communication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A streamer is aware of individual customers' preferences and traits (e.g., when a regular customer insists that he/she would like to purchase a particular product, the streamer knows which size would suit him/her most). - Streamers constantly encourage their viewers to keep in touch with them and keep themselves updated by following the streaming page or the streamer's account. - Those viewers who cannot afford much encourage other regular customers to buy products when the sales outcomes are lower than expected. - Streamers identify regular customers and fans and recommend specific products for them by clearly stating their preferences and needs (e.g., "I know you like the color, and you might take it to the coming house party").

Being aware of customers' (viewers') preferences through building relationships is a way to keep customers (viewers) engaged with the brand (streamer) in a long-term subjective manner [46]. Furthermore, individual viewers are psychologically convinced by how both parties would like to maintain their long-term relationship, making products and services reliable and trustworthy [56]. For these reasons, streamers not only focus on selling products but also spend a significant portion of their live streaming period on communicating and building relationships with viewers. In the video analysis, we observed that streamers prioritized customer preferences (e.g., the streamer saw a regular customer's comment and recommended a specific product for him/her, mentioning the reasons for it). In a long-term relationship, there will be 'benevolence' which "goes beyond that of a regular business or professional relationship, and concerns for partners rather than one's own self-interest only" [38 p. 3]. Furthermore, social media enhances opportunities to build close relationships through casual and open interactions and respond to personalized customer experiences, and close relationships between buyers and sellers help increase buying power [40].

Table 8. Shared values and homogeneity

Observable indicator	Observed feature
Shared values over uniqueness (individuals' needs) are frequently stressed or predominated, which promotes homogeneity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Viewers share their feedback with other viewers and encourage them to have the same products (e.g., "I used that lipstick before, it was so good that my lips were still red even after I washed my face," and the rest of the viewers react to her comment and express their intent to buy the same). - Viewers get together and encourage their streamers to negotiate product prices with the shop owner. - By comparing their streamer with other streamers, viewers express how they are proud of themselves as a fan of the streamer and encourage other viewers to be a fan by joining their fan club website (e.g., "Our streamer has a better skill in price negotiation than that streamer"). - Viewers actively participate in a sales event such as a lucky draw, a giveaway, and a quiz for rewards, and they encourage each other to make the event successful.

The behavior of viewers to feel belonging to a particular group is to follow the group's direction or expectation even when it comes to purchasing a product, especially with recommendations by streamers or other viewers to fit the community's values [56, 52]. In other words, viewers' purchase decisions are highly affected by other viewers' perceptions of the product. How other users express their opinions on products, either good or bad, allows them to determine whether a certain product is likeable or deemed appropriate by the community. A sense of community belonging is realized through shared values including "social activity, attitudes, ideology, evaluation, moral judgment, and legalization" [12, p. 59]. Individual viewers expect to see such values in interactions with the leader (streamer) [9]. Based on group trust, belongingness, and connectedness within the community, viewers seek suggestions to know "socially accepted based on others' preferences" before making the purchase decision to keep belonging to the group [52, p. 546]. In the observed features of the video analysis, viewers sought recommendations from the streamer and the other viewers. This feature indicates that viewers identify themselves as part of the community by ensuring their choices to be common with that of the community. Such homogeneity relates to social identification, and individuals socially identify themselves based on the things they have in common with others in the community, for example, the same choice of products.

Table 9. Contextual and collaborative engagement

Observable indicator	Observed feature
Streamers organize participatory activities in collaboration with other streamers and participants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A streamer and viewers set their sales goals (e.g., helping a person or a shop by buying a certain quantity, supporting the shop owner or staff's incentives, and buying multiple products for other viewers who are financially unaffordable). They celebrate their success together (e.g., commenting "Yay," "Congratulations" or clapping emojis). - Viewers organize groups to buy products in an economical way (e.g., A streamer stating, "to purchase the product together to save more money"). - A team of streamers works together to manage a sales process. They share different roles in responding to viewers' diverse needs (e.g., a staff member assists the streamer with replying to the viewers' comments and concerns, and the member tries on and tests a product). - Viewers protect their streamer from anti-comments even if the streamer is not aware of it (e.g., when a viewer posted a hate comment, the viewers, especially the fans of the streamer, defend the streamer by replying to the viewer, "Mind your own business, haters" or "Leave her alone" and so on.).

In their study about high and low context culture impacts on international retailing, Yee and Yazdanifard argued that "customers would require a much friendlier approach, needing to be attended to all the time" [54, p. 5]. The real-time interaction of live streaming enables social presence in a virtual setting, which is enhanced through social identification [52]. In live commerce videos, unlike traditional e-commerce, streamers not only explain product details but also illustrate and test products live, and viewers are free to ask questions or request for specific demonstrations, which are answered live, with no specific script and thereby increasing authenticity. On the surface, the interaction is kept high by the streamer recommending products, responding to the viewers' comments, sharing personal information/experiences, giving feedback, and holding additional events (e.g., a lucky draw) consumer engaged. In essence, as Spelich described, Eastern customers are "comparatively demanding, wanting far more information about the products and vendors than shoppers elsewhere," which requires "more hand-holding and assurances during the shopping process," whereas Western customers are "more self-service, one-size-fits-all online shopping experience and who tend to contact merchants only when things go wrong" [41, para. 11-13]. Such cultural features make live streaming contextual and collaborative, where participation, communication, and relationships are prioritized [55].

Table 10. Flexibility and simultaneity

Observable indicator	Observed feature
Negotiations involve multiple proposals in flexible and simultaneous manners by highlighting community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Streamers respond accordingly to their viewers' comments by assuming that the viewers have the right to request/claim specific product demonstration or entertaining activities (e.g., Viewers ask, "Please show us the lipsticks instead" or "Please show us suitable couple-wear shoes"). - On behalf of viewers, a streamer arranges a special offer in negotiation with shop owners (e.g., A streamer says, "I made a special request to the shop owner for a lower price for you all"). - In cases where there is a massive audience with assistants (e.g., 11K watching a live sale video), viewers help the streamer be aware of important comments such as expressing a purchase intent and reply to the comments when the streamer is busy with other matters. - Viewers work as a fashion coordinator by giving recommendations and instructions to the streamer while trying it on (e.g., what accessories should be applied).

Marketing and selling products are not the only activities in live commerce. Rather, there are multiple activities like dancing, singing, sharing personal stories, recommendations, chatting with the commenters and viewers, and many other activities are prominent [51]. In such a participatory culture, viewers become co-creators of values [23]. With viewers being the co-creators, live streaming e-commerce consists of "simultaneity," which refers to "an unedited and somewhat unpredictable view into one's life that gives users a feeling of authenticity" [23, p. 2]. In his article on time management tips by comparing monochronic and polychronic cultural differences, Kristof [24] described that a polychronic society provides a high context environment where changes are flexibly accepted, and networks are essential to achieving the best result. Exceeding the time limit of a meeting in a polychronic environment can often be perceived as a good meeting because they believe "capturing the moment and making the most of the opportunity" is far more crucial than punctual [11, para. 8]. Overall, unscripted contents, especially negotiations, viewer responses, and unseen co-creation activities by viewers make live e-commerce flexible and simultaneous in a polychronic environment.

Table 11. Co-participation and co-ownership

Observable indicator	Observed feature
Viewers and streamers implement co-participatory activities, and they celebrate co-ownership of shopping outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Both viewers and a streamer celebrate their successful group purchase (e.g., “clapping together every time after five lipsticks sold”). - Viewers answer other viewers’ questions through comments rather than wait for the streamer’s reply (e.g., Viewer 1: “Are the shoe sizes of these two brands the same?”, and Viewer 2: “There’s about a 0.5 difference in sizes.”). - Both viewers and a streamer review a store together and discuss which items they will explore further and clarify whether they are interested in shopping in the store. - Viewers look for recommendations from other viewers and their streamer, and they actively participate in supporting each other. - Viewers support their streamer to achieve sales goals by actively participating in events such as a lucky draw, a give way, an interview, and entertainment by a guest singer to maximize their (collective) shopping enjoyment.

We can identify the level of territoriality by analyzing viewer interactions, especially as part of building their relationships through sharing and receiving ideas, recommendations, and personal points of view on a particular topic like a product or a service. Viewers have the power to make it more widespread through sharing and inviting friends; such co-participation leads to co-ownership, forming a low territorial environment [7], which encourages the viewers to participate, interact, and share their opinions, and be content creators themselves. The ownership of live streaming, although dominated by streamers, is transferred with viewers (co-owned). For example, both viewers and streamers celebrated together after a successful deal during the live sale, followed by more co-sharing activities observed in the video analysis. In a high-context culture, a low territoriality is familiar in that people are normalized to share their spaces, activities, ownership of a particular outcome, overall based on their participation, collaboration, and belongingness in the community [8]. As mentioned, live streaming features are flexible, high-context, collaborative, and participatory so that it is safe to conclude that they are consistent with low territoriality.

6. CONCLUSION

The re-interpretations of the cultural dimensions and the video analysis, focusing on the interaction between streamers and viewers, and the viewers themselves, resulted in the redefinitions of nine cultural dimensions as follows: high power distance (leadership and community), collectivism (belongingness and togetherness), femininity (affective and emotional engagement), long-term orientation (relational and long-term perspectives), high uncertainty avoidance (interdependency and group trust), restraint (shared values and homogeneity), high cultural context (contextual and collaborative engagement), polychronic time (flexibility and simultaneity), and low territoriality (co-participation and co-ownership). We conclude that live streaming e-commerce is highly related to cultural phenomena, which also justifies why it is more influential and popular in Asian countries. In other words, the cultural interpretations of live streaming e-commerce indicate that e-commerce and ways of using social media are culturally bound to a greater extent. Therefore, the cultural features can be considered developing more effective marketing strategies in e-commerce. For example, marketers can organize a group or joint purchase as a co-participatory activity; marketers can systematize collective decision-making to increase participants' belongingness and group trust; marketers can develop a training program for (future) streamers to build their capacity to identify and respond to cultural needs; we can organize an audience group for moral filtering of live streaming e-commerce activities which prevents unfair trade practices; and marketers can promote local products in the global market through international collaboration between streamers. In such ways, marketers can systematically develop marketing strategies for live streaming e-commerce by articulating cultural features.

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