

A Study on the Impact of Brand Live Streaming Experience on Brand Happiness: a Chain Mediation Model

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Abstract

Current research on live streaming marketing mostly focuses on the direct monetization effect of products, with insufficient attention paid to brand communication and long-term construction effects. This study is based on the empathy evaluation system theory, self-determination theory, and empathy communication theory, and constructs a chain mediation model of brand live streaming experience acting on brand happiness through empathy and brand trust. Collect 410 valid samples through questionnaire survey method for empirical testing. The results indicate that: (1) brand live streaming experience has a significant positive impact on brand happiness; (2) Empathy and brand trust partially mediate the relationship between brand live streaming experience and brand happiness; (3) Empathy and brand trust have a chain mediated effect between brand live streaming experience and brand happiness. This study provides theoretical support and management insights for brand live streaming marketing practices, while pointing out research limitations and future prospects.

Keywords

Brand Live Streaming Experience; Brand Happiness; Empathy; Brand Trust; Chain Mediation Model

1. Introduction

The concept of brand communication carriers holds that all kinds of things that present brand information are brand carriers (Shu Yongping, Xiao Yajuan, 2018). In the context of a media driven society, brand exclusive live streaming has become an important carrier of brand communication and a core channel for enterprises to convey information and establish consumer brand relationships (Xiao Junyi et al., 2021; Zang Wei et al., 2022). However, most existing research on live streaming marketing focuses on the direct monetization effect of products (Chen Kai, Chang Haoyuan, 2023), and there is little research on the improvement of brand commu-

nication effect and long-term brand building effect (Zang Wei et al., 2022).

The report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China clearly stated that "improving people's livelihood and well-being is the fundamental purpose of development", and the "Brand Power Project" of the Central Radio and Television Station also called for "using brands to carry happiness". In practice, marketing activities such as Coca Cola's "Open Happiness" and Tmall's "Wishing You a Happy Double 11" have all confirmed the deep binding between brands and happiness. Brand happiness is essentially a positive consumer brand relationship (Bettingen and Luedicke, 2009), but the underlying mechanism of how brand experience affects brand happiness in the context of brand live streaming is not yet clear. Existing research only indicates a correlation between brand experience and brand happiness (Schmitt et al., 2015), but lacks empirical support and the pathway of action has not been clarified.

In the post truth era, emotional resonance is more effective in spreading than factual evidence (Song Sigen, 2022), and empathy strategies are widely used in live streaming marketing (Ma Long, Li Hong, 2022). This study is based on the theory of empathy evaluation system (Vignemont and Singer, 2006) and self-determination theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000), and uses empathy communication theory (Zhao Jianguo, 2021) as the logical framework to construct a chain mediation model of "brand live streaming experience empathy brand trust brand happiness". Through empirical testing, the mechanism of action between each variable is revealed, providing scientific basis for brand live streaming marketing practice.

2. Theoretical Basis and Research Hypotheses

2.1. Theoretical Basis

Empathy Evaluation System Theory (Vignemont and Singer, 2006): This theory suggests that situational evaluation triggers empathy responses, and empathy has both epistemological and social functions. Epistemological effects help individuals predict the behavior and motivations of others, while social effects promote social communication and harmony, providing theoretical support for analyzing the impact of brand live streaming experience on empathy and the subsequent effects of empathy.

Self Determination Theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000): This theory suggests that the satisfaction of individual autonomy, relationship, and competence needs is the core driving force behind the generation of happiness. Brand live streaming experience satisfies consumers' basic psychological needs by providing diverse benefits, laying the foundation for the analysis of the formation mechanism of brand happiness. The theory of empathy communication (Zhao Jianguo, 2021) emphasizes that empathy triggered by emotional triggers can drive a chain of cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioral changes, providing an overall logical framework for constructing a chain mediated pathway of "experience empathy trust happiness".

2.2. Research Hypotheses

Brand live streaming experience includes information experience, entertainment experience, and interactive experience (Dong Zhengkuan, 2018), which can provide consumers with functions, experiences, and symbolic benefits, meet their needs for autonomy, competence, and relationships (Ryan and Deci, 2000), and promote the formation of brand happiness (life pleasure, self realization, social contribution). Based on this, it is proposed:

H1: Brand live streaming experience has a positive impact on brand happiness

Brand live streaming experience triggers emotional empathy (sharing emotions) and cognitive empathy (understanding the causes of emotions) through situational evaluation (Vignemont and Singer, 2006). The epistemological role of empathy assists consumers in decision-making and self realization, while its social role satisfies their social contact needs, thereby promoting brand happiness. Based on this, it is proposed that:

H2: Brand live streaming experience has a positive impact on empathy

H3: Empathy has a positive impact on brand happiness

H4: The positive impact of empathy intermediary brand live streaming experience on brand happiness

Brand live streaming experience promotes brand trust through experiential mechanisms, computational mechanisms, transfer mechanisms, and emotional mechanisms (Jin Yufang et al., 2006; Maduretno and Junaedi, 2022). Brand trust, as a social support and psychological resource, can reduce transaction costs, stimulate prosocial behavior, meet basic consumer needs, and promote brand happiness. Based on this, it is proposed that:

H5: Brand live streaming experience has a positive impact on brand trust

H6: Brand trust has a positive impact on brand happiness

H7: The positive impact of brand trust intermediary brand live streaming experience on brand happiness

Based on the empathy communication theory of "emotion cognition attitude behavior" logic, the empathy triggered by brand live streaming experience promotes brand trust (attitude variable) through computer mechanisms, thereby promoting the formation of brand happiness (behavior variable). Based on this, it is proposed that:

H8: Empathy and brand trust have a chain mediated effect between brand live streaming experience and brand happiness

3. Research Design

3.1. Variable Measurement

This study involves four core variables (brand live streaming experience, empathy, brand trust, brand happiness) and two control variables (gender, age). All scales are

based on mature research and adjusted according to the context. The Likert scale six is used for scoring (1=completely disagree, 6=completely agree).

Brand live streaming experience. Drawing on the research of Huang Minxue et al. (2015) and Dong Zhengkuan (2018), design questions from three dimensions: information experience, entertainment experience, and interactive experience. Representative questions such as "By watching brand live streaming, I can learn useful information and knowledge for myself" have a Cronbach's alpha of 0.920.

Empathy. Based on the research of Han Han Chao et al. (2013) and Wang Yang et al. (2017), questions were designed from the dimensions of emotional empathy and cognitive empathy. Representative questions such as "When the brand live streaming atmosphere is pleasant, I feel happy" had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.927.

Brand trust. Drawing on the research of Cui Jinhuan and Fu Guoqun (2002), representative items such as "I believe the brand is safe" have a Cronbach's alpha of 0.897.

Brand Happiness. Drawing on the research of Schnebelen and Bruhn (2018), Ryff (1989), and others, design questions from three dimensions: life pleasure, self actualization, and social contribution. Representative questions such as "Owning the brand makes me feel more satisfied with my life" have a Cronbach's alpha of 0.954.

3.2. Survey Methods and Sample Composition

This study adopted a questionnaire survey method and conducted a preliminary survey (50 samples) in February 2025. After optimizing the wording of the questions, the survey was officially conducted through the Wenjuanxing platform in May 2025. A total of 488 questionnaires were collected, and after excluding invalid questionnaires, 410 valid questionnaires were obtained, with an effective rate of 84.0%. The sample structure is as follows: in terms of gender, females account for 61.95% and males account for 38.05%; In terms of age, the age range of 19-35 accounts for 81.22%; In terms of education level, undergraduate degree accounts for 75.61% and associate degree accounts for 15.12%, which is basically consistent with the characteristics of Chinese e-commerce live streaming users (Li Qi et al., 2021).

3.3. Research Methodology

This study used SPSS21.0 for reliability and validity analysis, descriptive statistics, and correlation analysis; Using Harman single factor test to test for common method bias; Using Amos 21.0, PROCESS, and Mplus 8.3, the mediating effect was examined through structural equation modeling (SEM) and Bootstrap method (repeated sampling 5000 times), and the chain mediating effect was validated using differential analysis.

4. Research Findings

4.1. Reliability and Validity Analysis

The Cronbach's alpha of each core variable is greater than 0.8, the combination reliability (CR) is greater than 0.8, the average extracted variance (AVE) is greater than 0.5, and the square roots of AVE are greater than the direct correlation coefficients between variables (see Tables 1 and 2), indicating that the scale has good reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity.

Table 1. Results of Reliability and Validity Analysis

Latent Variable	CR	AVE	Cronbach's α
Brand live streaming experience	0.942	0.643	0.920
Empathy	0.947	0.697	0.927
Brand trust	0.963	0.866	0.897
Brand Happiness	0.966	0.687	0.954

4.2. Common method deviation test

The Harman single factor test results showed that the variance explained by the first common factor was 24.413% and the total variance explained was 62.743% without rotation. The variance explained by the first common factor did not exceed 50% and did not account for half of the total variance explained, indicating the existence of common method bias but not severe.

4.3. Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis

According to Table 2, brand live streaming experience is significantly positively correlated with brand happiness ($r=0.562$, $p<0.01$), empathy ($r=0.643$, $p<0.01$), and brand trust ($r=0.505$, $p<0.01$); Empathy is significantly positively correlated with brand trust ($r=0.498$, $p<0.01$) and brand happiness ($r=0.672$, $p<0.01$); Brand trust is significantly positively correlated with brand happiness ($r=0.602$, $p<0.01$), and all hypotheses have been preliminarily validated.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistical Results and Correlation Coefficients

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation	Brand live streaming experience	Empathy	Brand trust	Brand Happiness
Brand live streaming experience	3.925	0.827	(0.802)			
Empathy	3.857	0.840	0.643**	(0.835)		
Brand trust	3.849	0.936	0.505**	0.498**	(0.931)	
Brand Happiness	3.581	0.956	0.562**	0.672**	0.602**	(0.829)

Note: ** indicates $p<0.01$; The square root of each variable AVE is enclosed in parentheses.

4.4. Hypothesis testing

After controlling for gender and age, the results of the structural equation model and Bootstrap test are shown in Table 3:

Direct effect: The path coefficient of brand live streaming experience on brand happiness is 0.183 ($p<0.001$), and H1 holds true. The mediating effect of empathy: The

path coefficient of brand live streaming experience on empathy is 0.554 ($p < 0.001$), and the path coefficient of empathy on brand happiness is 0.472 ($p < 0.001$). The mediating effect value is 0.261 (95% CI=[0.151,0.373], excluding 0), and H2, H3, and H4 are valid.

The mediating effect of brand trust: The path coefficient of brand live streaming experience on brand trust is 0.365 ($p < 0.001$), and the path coefficient of brand trust on brand happiness is 0.166 ($p < 0.001$). The mediating effect value is 0.061 (95% CI=[0.031,0.089], excluding 0), and H5, H6, and H7 are established.

Chain mediation effect: The path coefficient of empathy on brand trust is 0.449 ($p < 0.001$), and the chain mediation effect value is 0.041 (95% CI=[0.017,0.068], excluding 0), indicating H8.

Table 3. Mediating Effects Estimated by Bootstrap Method

Path	Indirect effect estimation (standardized)	95% confidence interval	
		Lower limit	Upper limit
Total indirect effects	0.363	0.189	0.541
Specific indirect effect decomposition			
Brand Live Experience-Empathy-Brand Happiness	0.261	0.151	0.373
Brand Live Experience-Brand Trust-Brand Happiness	0.061	0.031	0.089
Brand live streaming experience-Empathy-Brand trust-Brand happiness	0.041	0.017	0.068

5. Research Conclusion and Discussion

5.1. Research Conclusion

Brand live streaming experience has a significant positive impact on brand happiness. Information experience, entertainment experience, and interactive experience promote the formation of a sense of life pleasure, self actualization, and social contribution by meeting consumers' basic psychological needs.

Empathy and brand trust partially mediate the relationship between brand live streaming experience and brand happiness: brand live streaming experience triggers empathy through situational evaluation, and the dual role of empathy promotes brand happiness; Brand live streaming experience establishes brand trust through four mechanisms, and brand trust serves as a psychological resource and social support to promote brand happiness.

Empathy and brand trust have a chain mediated effect, and the empathy triggered by brand live streaming experience is transformed into brand trust through computer mechanisms, thereby promoting the formation of brand happiness and verifying the "emotion cognition attitude behavior" logic of empathy communication theory.

5.2. Theoretical significance

Revealing the mechanism of the relationship between brand live streaming experi-

ence and brand happiness from the perspective of consumer brand relationship enriches the theory of live streaming marketing and brand happiness, and fills the gap in existing research on the long-term effects of brand live streaming.

Integrating three major theories to construct a chain mediation model, analyzing individual mediation paths through empathy evaluation system theory and self-determination theory, and linking the overall logic with empathy communication theory to broaden the application scope of empathy communication theory in the field of brand marketing.

5.3. Practical insights

Optimize brand live streaming experience design: focus on conveying information value and showcase brand core interests through precise content; Innovate interactive forms to strengthen memory points through brand knowledge interaction; Enrich the entertainment experience by leveraging the charm of the host and brand stories to evoke emotional resonance.

Strengthening empathy communication strategy: selecting emotionally infectious hosts and amplifying emotional contagion through group interaction; By guiding emotional empathy towards cognitive empathy through theme planning, we aim to deepen the emotional connection between consumers and brands.

Building a solid foundation of brand trust: With product quality and brand philosophy as the core, accumulating trust capital through consistent live streaming performance; Reduce the threshold of trust through real trials and word-of-mouth communication, and transform trust into long-term consumer brand relationships.

5.4. Research limitations and future prospects

This study used cross-sectional data, which is difficult to reflect the dynamic effects between variables. In the future, longitudinal tracking methods can be used to further verify causal relationships.

Variable measurement relies on self-report from a single source, which may lead to common methodological biases. In the future, multiple tools and sources of measurement such as EEG equipment and experimental methods can be combined to improve data objectivity.

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