

Developing a model of switching intention in live streaming commerce platforms: A PPM perspective

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Abstract

Purpose: This research aims to investigate push, pull and mooring factors impact consumer switching intention in terms of live streaming commerce (LSC) platforms in China.

Design/methodology/approach: Existing literature on consumer switching intention, especially in the online context were reviewed. From the review of literature, a conceptual framework explaining consumer switching intention in terms of live streaming commerce platforms in China was developed.

Findings: Push factors (perceived relative price and dissatisfaction), pull factors (alternative attractiveness and peer influence) and mooring factors (switching cost and swift guanxi) influence consumers' switching intention toward LSC platforms.

Research limitations/implications: The conceptual framework enriches the understanding of consumers switching intention in terms of live streaming commerce and explored the relationship between swift guanxi and switching intention. It is recommended that an empirical study in this area should be conducted.

Practical implications: The switching intention of LSC platforms are proposed to be influenced by push, pill and mooring factors. Therefore, platform managers can strategize ways to retain their current consumers and attract new consumers based on the conceptual framework.

Originality/value: This paper provides a conceptual framework for understanding consumer switching intention in terms of LSC platform. Previous literature of LSC were mainly focused on e-commerce platforms whereas this paper addresses a research gap by emphasizing social network sites with LSC functions. Moreover, this research posits that swift guanxi can be a mooring factor influencing consumer switching intentions, an aspect rarely explored by previous researchers.

Keywords: Live streaming, switching intention, PPM, push-pull-mooring, swift guanxi

Introduction

According to Huang and Benyoucef (2013), the consumer engagement of E-commerce has experienced significant growth since various innovative technologies have been incorporated and adopted by e-commerce service providers. Live streaming commerce (LSC) stands for the delivery of e-commerce activities through live streaming technology. In contrast to traditional e-commerce methods, LSC offers real-time interaction, allowing streamers to showcase

products and provide guided shopping experiences (Wongkitrungrueng et al., 2020). Consumers can enjoy better shopping experience through LSC since it fostering better authenticity, visualization and interactivity (Chen et al., 2020a).

Based on the Statistical Report on Internet Development in China (2021), there are 638 million live streaming users in Chinese market by 2021, with 388 million active users participating in LSC. Among these users, approximately 60.8 percent have made purchases on the platform. These statistics underscore the potential of LSC as an emerging e-commerce method, warranting further exploration from both academic and practical perspectives (Sun et al., 2019a).

Similar to other social network services, consumer switching has become a critical issue for LSC platforms, Johnson and Woodcock (2019) found out that many LSC users often conduct switching behavior among different LSC platforms and channels. While, with the development of this industry, the competition among LSC platforms is fiercer and fiercer, therefore, understanding the switching behavior is important and understanding the factors that impact consumers switching is a critical issue to be explored.

Problem statement

LSC has been a trendy commerce method during the past few years and has attracted millions of consumers, especially after the outbreak of Covid-19. LSC has created impressive economic value, according to Statista (2022), the number of online streaming users in China has increased from 344.31 million (2016) to 727.89 million (2022) and the gross merchandise volume of LSC in China accounted for 10.2% in 2020 of total online shopping gross merchandise volume.

The LSC Industry has attracted a large Influx of capital and Investors (Chen et al., 2020b). Similar to other IS platforms, LSC platforms encounter challenges in retaining their user base. Given that live streaming involves cutting-edge technology, these platforms must allocate substantial resources for the maintenance and enhancement of their functionalities. Consequently, a stable consumer base is essential for LSC platforms, as it helps safeguard their competitive edge and financial sustainability.

The research about consumer switching intention in terms of LSC platforms is limited and previous researches about LSC are mainly focus on exploring purchase intention and impulsive purchase and ignoring the post-adoption stage of consumers (Ye et al., 2022). Meanwhile, previous research mainly focus on e-commerce platforms, such as Taobao, JD and Pinduoduo, ignoring the importance of other types of LSC platforms, such as social networks sites (SNS) with LSC functions, such as Tiktok, Kuaishou and Xiaohongshu.

To understand which factors influence consumer switching intentions regarding LSC platforms, the authors aim to investigate the impact of push, pull, and mooring factors on consumer behavior within the context of SNS featuring LSC functionalities.

Purpose of study

This study aims to investigate the push, pull, and mooring factors that affect consumer switching intentions within the context of LSC platforms in China. The LSC platforms will be explored in this research are social network sites with LSC function, since this types of LSC platforms is increasing rapidly but very few studies explored this type of LSC platforms.

Research questions

Based on the current research problems and the purpose of the study, this study aims to investigate following research questions:

Research question1:What are the push factors that lead to consumers' switching intention on LSC platforms in China?

Research question2:What are the pull factors that lead to consumers' switching intention on LSC platforms in China?

Research question3:What are the mooring factors that lead to consumers' switching intention on LSC platforms in China?

Literature Review

With the popularity of live streaming commerce among consumers, more and more online platforms develop their own LSC functions and try to enter the LSC industry (Sun et al., 2019b).

LSC has emerged as a significant driver of economic value for sellers, brands, and platforms in China. Major players in the local online commerce, such as Taobao and TikTok, have experienced substantial sales growth and an increase in their user base through the integration of LSC functionalities.

Different types of live streaming commerce platform

There are three types of LSC, first, e-commerce platforms with live streaming features (e.g. Taobao Live), second, live streaming platforms with commerce activities (e.g., Liveme) and third, SNS with live streaming features (Tiktok live) (Wongkitrungrueng & Assarut, 2020).

Unlike e-commerce platforms, SNS platforms, such as Xiaohongshu, Tiktok tend to better cultivate their sociality and interactivity between their customers and streamers (Wang et al., 2022). Gifting behaviour is more common in the SNS platforms compared with other two types of platforms, since the sense of virtual community and sense of belonging motivated users to give gifts to streamers (Wohn et al., 2018). Therefore, understanding factors impact consumer switching intention is especially important for SNS platforms, since once they lose a consumer, they will lose the both the benefits of gifting and product selling.

Consumer switching intention and behaviour

Gupta et al. (2020) emphasized the pivotal role of users' post-adoption behavior in determining a company's financial performance and the success of its products. Researchers normally categorized post-adoption behaviour into two categories: continue usage behaviour (such as consumer loyalty) and discontinue usage behaviour (such as consumer switching) (Jia et al., 2017).

Consumer switching behavior refers to consumers leaving their initial service provider in favor of an alternative, resulting in potential loss of future profits for the original provider (Keaveney et al., 2007). Switching behaviour is common especially for online commerce, since the online commerce platforms are often provide similar services and functions. As for the LSC platform, since the competition within the industry has intensified, it is critical for companies to understand why consumer would switch to other platforms.

Theoretical underpinning

Push-pull-mooring (PPM) theory offers a framework for analysing the factors impact consumer switching intention. PPM has been viewed as vital theory in terms of migration research, which means why individual would migrate from one place to another (Bansal et al., 2004). This theory was then adopted by researchers to study consumer switching behavior, recognizing that migration is not limited solely to physical locations but also extend to consumer choices as well. (Guo et al., 2021).

The core premise of the PPM theory posits that negative factors at the origin "push" individuals away, while positive factors at the destination "pull" them towards it (Bansal et al., 2004),

Meanwhile, mooring factors encompass personal, situational, and contextual constraints that can either facilitate or impede the decision to switch.

PPM theory has been widely used in terms of understanding consumer switching behavior on the online context. For example, Xu et al. (2014) and Hwang et al. (2019) used PPM as the main framework to examine the consumer switching intention in terms of social media. Singh and Rosengren (2020) use PPM explored consumer switching intention of online grocery platforms. PPM is a comprehensive framework, which enable research to analysis push, pull and mooring factors. While, it requires further research to fill up the gaps in the switching behavior literature (Nimako & Ntim, 2013). Therefore, this research aims to use PPM as the theoretical framework to study the consumer switching intention on the context of LSC platforms.

Push factors

i) Perceived relative price

Based on the research of Jacoby et al. (1971), perceived relative price can be defined as the price consumers internalize by comparing it to the costs associated with similar alternative products. Prior studies have underscored the importance of price perception, as it functions as a vital external factor and source of information guiding consumers in their purchasing decisions (VWangenheim & Bayón, 2007). According to previous research, consumers' perception of price impact consumers' behavior, such as purchase behavior and switching behavior (Mannan et al., 2019). When consumers perceive prices to be high, it can prompt them to consider switching to alternative service providers (Chang et al., 2017a).

ii) Dissatisfaction

Among the research about consumer post-adoption behavior research, satisfaction is one of the critical concepts. According to expectancy disconfirmation theory, when consumers' experience meets their expectations, they would have the feeling of satisfaction. As for dissatisfaction comes from the disconfirmation between expectation and post-adoption outcome (Lu et al., 2012). Previous research suggested that dissatisfaction has impact on consumers' post adoption behavior, dissatisfied consumers tend to terminate the service or switch to other service provider (Loveman, 1998).

Pull factors

i) Alternative attractiveness

Alternative attractiveness refers to the positive attributes of competing service providers that attract consumers to switch (Jones et al., 2007). If the alternatives are more attractive, which means they may offer more value or benefits, consumers are encouraged to conduct switching behaviour (Chuang, 2011).

Consumers may conduct switching behaviour because they are attracted by alternatives. In terms of LSC, consumers may switch to other platforms since alternative can provide more gifts or other platform have better reputation streamers. Baek & Kim (2022) stressed that alternative attractiveness will go up further if the current service provider have noticeable negative aspects.

ii) Peer influence

Peer influence is defined as the degree to which peers affect an individual's attitudes, thoughts, and behaviors (Makgosa & Mohube, 2007). As a component of subjective norms, peer influence plays a significant role as a social influencer shaping individual behavior. Within traditional IS contexts, peer influence has been examined as a critical determinant of

technology adoption, with previous research indicating its potential impact on consumer switching intentions (Xu et al., 2014).

Mooring factors

i) Switching cost

Switching costs stand for the costs that consumers change the services, products and providers (Chang et al., 2017). According to Jones et al.(2000), switching costs encompass both the financial and psychological costs that individuals associate with changing service providers. They argue that consumers tend to perceive switching as involving not only financial expenses but also psychological, physical, and emotional challenges. Consequently, these costs can be tangible expenses like losing loyal customer discounts or intangible costs such as the time and effort spent in searching for alternatives, acquiring new knowledge, or dealing with emotional aspects (Chang et al., 2017).

Previous research proved switching cost can impact user switching intention. Lee et al. (2011) proposed that switching costs have a detrimental effect on users switching from offline banking to online banking. In this research switching cost serves as mooring factor.

ii) Swift guanxi

Swift guanxi, an extension of the Chinese concept of guanxi, refers to consumers' perception of rapidly formed interpersonal relationships with merchants (Guo et al., 2021). It is commonly employed in e-commerce and encompasses three key dimensions: mutual understanding, reciprocal favors, and relationship harmony (Fan et al., 2019).

The interactivity and synchronicity inherent in Live Streaming Commerce (LSC) enable consumers to observe and actively participate, leading to the perception of interpersonal interactions with streamers and the development of buyer-seller relationships. Stronger swift guanxi fosters improved interactions between sellers and buyers, enhancing mutual understanding. Additionally, LSC streamers often offer consumers extra gifts, discounts, and emotional care, creating a sense of moral obligation for consumers to reciprocate (Shang & Bao, 2022). Therefore, once consumers built swift guanxi with streamers on the current platform, they are less likely to switch to other platforms (Guo et al., 2021b) proved swift guanxi in LSC can influence consumer purchase engagement, while there is limited study about the effect of swift guanxi on consumer switching intention.

Conceptual framework

Push, pull and mooring factors will be investigated regarding the effect on consumer switching intention of LSC platforms. The push factors include perceived relative price and dissatisfaction; the pull factors include alternative attractiveness and peer influence and the mooring factors includes switching cost and swift guanxi

Price comparison is inevitable and consumers often compare the products with other alternative products, while perceived relative price is the perceived price relative to a frame of references (Swait & Sweeney, 2000). In terms of LSC, consumers can compare the current platform with other platforms, in terms of price (e.g. product price, discount and promotion). If the perception for the current platforms price is higher than other platforms, then consumer may generate switching intention.

P1: The perceived higher relative price of the current LSC platform positively impacts switching intention.

According to expectancy disconfirmation theory, when people experience dissatisfaction, they will express negative emotions, such as disappointment and displeasure (Zhang & von Dran, 2000). Previous research suggested that dissatisfied consumers are more likely to discontinue usage behavior and they tend to switch to other alternatives since they are looking for a better experience.

P2: Dissatisfaction with the current LSC platform positively affects switching intention.

Alternative attractiveness refer as the positive features of competing service providers that attract consumer to switch (Jones et al., 2007). Kim et al. (2006) stressed that consumers would not conduct switching behavior when alternative are less attractive, even if the consumers are not satisfied with their current one. While, once consumer think the alternatives are more attractive, they tend to switch to the alternative one, in order to pursue better experience.

P3: The attractiveness of alternative LSC platforms positively impacts consumer switching intention.

Peer influence is an important pull factors impact consumer switching intention. Wu et al.(2014) proved peer influence has effect on user switching decision to SNSs and this finding was supported by other research (Hwang et al., 2019b; Zeng et al., 2021). Peer influence is especially important on the online context, therefore this research proposed that peer influence would impact switching intention of LSC platforms.

P4: Peer influence positively impacts users' switching intention.

Switching costs is a critical variable in terms of understanding consumer switching, high switching cost hinders the movement of consumer to other service prodder or products (Guo et al., 2021). In terms of LSC, the switching cost not only refer to the financial and process cost, but it also includes relation cost, since once they switch to other platform, the relationship between them with streamers on the current platform will be end.

P5: Switching costs have a negative relationship with switching intention.

Live streaming communities in China are relationship-oriented online communities (Cheng et al., 2019). Consumer who have good interpersonal guanxi with sellers not only feel physical and mentally happy but also have a sense of belonging (Yang, 1998). Therefore, guanxi is often used to strengthen the ties between the sellers and buyers. Same logic with swift guanxi, if there is a swift guanxi exist between buyers and sellers, consumers may hesitate to switch, since they want to main the current relationship.

P6: Swift guanxi negatively influences switching intention.

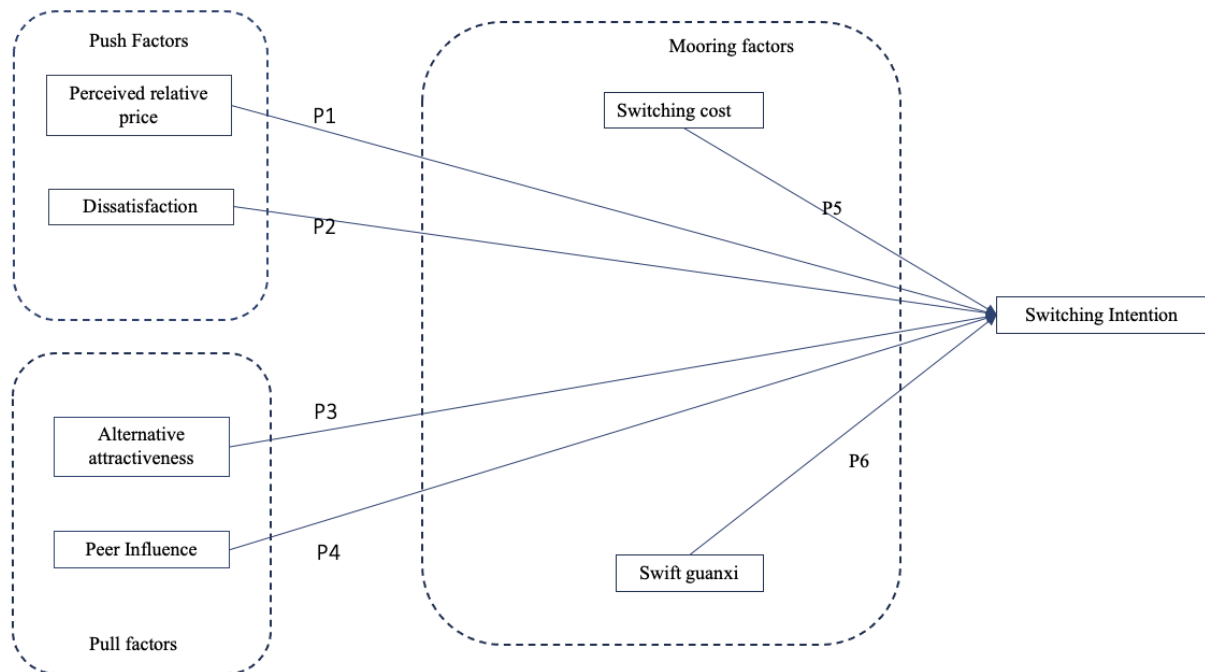


Figure 1: Research framework

Methodology

The target population of this research is adult Chinese consumers who have experienced at least two live streaming commerce platforms. The study can use online survey as the main data collection method, which can be more efficient and time-saving. Since this research is about live streaming commerce, the researcher can post questionnaires on the online forums about LSC to collect data and online survey platforms, such as Wenjuanxing can be used to collect data. Non-probability and purposive sampling will be used in this research since it is difficult to explicitly define the population of LSC users in China. This research will only collect adult Chinese LSC users who have experienced more than one LSC platforms, since the research is about switching intention. All the survey items will adopt items from the existing validated measurements and modification will be made to fit the LSC industry.

Findings and Implications

This study will provide a comprehensive theoretical understanding of user's post adoption intention, especially consumer switching toward the LSC platforms in China. This research posts push, pull and mooring factors that may impact consumer switching intention in terms of LSC platforms, which can be insightful for future academic research. Meanwhile, this research focus on the SNS platforms rather than e-commerce platforms, which fill the current research gap, since current research about LSC are mainly focus on e-commerce type of LSC platforms. This study has practical value for LSC marketers and managers, LSC platforms, especially SNS platforms such as Tiktok and Xiaohongshu can be guided to decrease consumer switching intention and improved consumer retention.

Conclusion and Limitations

This paper has built a theoretical framework which can be insightful for future research in LSC area. Meanwhile, this study contributes a new insight view on consumer post-adoption intention and behaviour in the online context. The understanding of consumer switching intention is important since it can assist LSC platforms to retain their consumers and attract

new consumers. Theoretically, perceived relative price, dissatisfaction, alternative attractiveness, peer influence, switching cost and swift guanxi serves as the main factors that may impact consumer switching intention but empirical data is required to prove these connections. The research highlights the problem statement that motivates the research and illustrated the research questions and reviews the literature relevant to the topic in marketing. The limitation of the study is that since it is a conceptual paper, there is no data collected to enable generalization. Therefore, future studies can follow the direction and conduct empirical study to investigate what kinds of factors impact consumer switching intention in terms of LSC platforms in China.

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