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# The impact of cultural differences on consumer purchase decisions in cross-border live streaming e-commerce

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**Abstract.** Cross-border live streaming e-commerce has emerged as a rapidly growing channel for international trade, yet the role of cultural differences in shaping consumer purchase decisions within this context has received limited empirical attention. This study investigates how cultural differences influence consumer purchase decisions in cross-border live streaming environments, grounded in Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory and the stimulus-organism-response framework. A conceptual model is developed to examine the mechanisms through which cultural dimensions—including individualism-collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and power distance—affect consumer trust in streamers, perceived product authenticity, and, ultimately, purchase decisions. The analysis reveals that cultural differences moderate the effectiveness of streamer communication styles, the formation of consumer trust, and the weight of social influence in purchase decisions. Specifically, consumers from collectivist cultures respond more strongly to streamer-consumer interaction and community cues, while those from high uncertainty avoidance cultures place greater emphasis on product certification and detailed demonstrations. The findings contribute theoretically to the cross-cultural e-commerce literature and offer practical implications for cross-border live streaming practitioners seeking to tailor their strategies to diverse cultural markets.

**Keywords:** cross-border live streaming e-commerce, cultural differences, consumer purchase decision, Hofstede's cultural dimensions, trust

## 1. Introduction

The global expansion of live streaming e-commerce has transformed the landscape of cross-border retail, enabling real-time product demonstrations and direct interaction between sellers and consumers across national boundaries [1]. Platforms such as TikTok Shop, Alibaba.com Live, and Shopee Live have witnessed substantial growth, with cross-border live streaming emerging as a core channel for Chinese exports to Southeast Asia, Europe, and North America [2]. Despite this rapid development, how cultural differences shape consumer responses to live streaming content in cross-border settings remains largely underexplored in cross-border settings.

Current research on live streaming e-commerce has primarily focused on the domestic market, examining factors such as streamer characteristics, interactivity, and consumer trust [3]. The cross-border context, in particular, has attracted limited scholarly attention, especially regarding how cultural differences affect

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consumer behavior in live streaming settings. Understanding these cultural influences is therefore critical for sellers seeking to penetrate international markets.

This paper aims to explore how cultural differences influence consumers' purchase decisions in cross-border live streaming e-commerce. Specifically, it addresses three research questions: First, how cultural differences affect consumers' responses to streamers and live streaming content? Second, how cultural values influence the way consumers build trust and evaluate products in live streaming? Third, what practical suggestions can be made for cross-border e-commerce practitioners based on these cultural differences? To answer these questions, this paper reviews existing literature on cross-cultural consumer behavior and live streaming e-commerce, synthesizing the relevant findings

## 2. Literature review and theoretical framework

### 2.1. Cross-border live streaming e-commerce

Live streaming e-commerce combines real-time video broadcasting with instant purchasing functionality, creating an immersive shopping experience that differs fundamentally from traditional e-commerce [4]. Unlike static product pages, live streaming allows consumers to observe product demonstrations, ask questions in real time, and receive immediate responses from streamers. This format enhances consumer trust and reduce perceived risk, particularly for experience goods, whose quality is difficult to assess prior to purchase [5].

In the cross-border context, live streaming introduces additional complexities. Streamers must navigate linguistic barriers, cultural norms regarding communication style, and varying consumer expectations about seller behavior [1]. Recent research by Fan et al. found that streamer nationality interacts with product characteristics to influence consumer purchase intentions: country-of-origin streamers are more effective for products with strong national associations, whereas local streamers perform better for products lacking such ties [6]. This finding suggests that cultural congruence between streamer and product meaningfully shapes consumer responses.

### 2.2. Hofstede's cultural dimensions and consumer behavior

Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory serves as a foundational framework for explaining cross-cultural differences in consumer cognition and behavior. It divides culture into several measurable dimensions, which help researchers analyze why consumers from different cultural backgrounds have different shopping habits and judgment standards in cross-border online shopping. This theory is particularly useful for understanding cultural influences on consumer trust and purchase behavior in cross-border live streaming. Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory provides a widely adopted framework for understanding cross-cultural variation in consumer behavior [7]. Among the six dimensions, three are particularly relevant to live streaming e-commerce: individualism-collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and power distance.

Individualism-collectivism describes the degree to which individuals prioritize personal goals over group interests. Consumers in collectivist cultures, such as those in East Asia, tend to place greater weight on social cues and community validation when making purchase decisions [4]. In live streaming contexts, this may translate into stronger responses to viewer comments, shared purchase behaviors, and streamer-audience interaction. Conversely, consumers in individualist cultures, such as those in North America and Western Europe, may focus more on product attributes and personal utility.

Uncertainty avoidance refers to the extent to which members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous situations. High uncertainty avoidance cultures, including many in Southern Europe and Latin America, tend to prefer clear product information, certified quality guarantees, and detailed demonstrations [8]. Low

uncertainty avoidance cultures are more comfortable with ambiguity and may respond more favorably to spontaneous, less structured live streaming formats.

Power distance reflects the degree to which less powerful members of a society accept unequal power distribution. In high power distance cultures, consumers may place greater trust in streamers who project authority and expertise, while in low power distance cultures, consumers may prefer streamers who adopt a peer-like, egalitarian communication style [7].

### 2.3. Trust and purchase intention in cross-cultural contexts

Trust is a critical determinant of consumer purchase intention in e-commerce settings [9]. In live streaming, trust operates on multiple levels: trust in the streamer, trust in the product, and trust in the platform. Kim and Peterson's meta-analysis confirmed that online trust exhibits significant relationships with key antecedents such as perceived privacy and service quality, as well as consequences including loyalty and repeat purchase intention [10].

Cross-cultural research suggests that the antecedents of trust vary across cultural contexts. Pratesi et al. demonstrated that culture significantly influences perceptions of website usability and perceived risk among European consumers, while it primarily affects trust among Asian consumers [4]. This finding has direct implications for cross-border live streaming: the factors that build trust in one cultural market may not transfer directly to another. For instance, streamer authenticity may matter more in individualist cultures, whereas streamer community engagement may be more influential in collectivist cultures.

## 3. Cultural differences and their mechanisms

### 3.1. Communication style and persuasion

Cultural norms shape the communication styles that consumers find persuasive. In high-context cultures, such as China and Japan, consumers tend to rely on implicit messages, nonverbal cues, and the overall atmosphere of the live streaming room [11]. Streamers in these markets often use storytelling, emotional appeals, and indirect persuasion techniques. In low-context cultures, such as Germany and the United States, consumers prefer explicit product information, direct comparisons, and data-driven arguments.

This cultural variation carries significant implications for cross-border live streaming. A streamer who adopts a high-context, emotionally expressive style may build rapport quickly with collectivist consumers, but may appear less professional to individualist consumers. Conversely, a fact-focused, efficiency-oriented presentation style may appeal to low-context consumers but fail to generate the emotional engagement needed to drive purchases in high-context markets.

### 3.2. Trust building across cultures

The process of trust formation in live streaming differs across cultural groups. Dai and Cui found that trust in streamers is influenced by factors including physical attractiveness, matchup congruence, authenticity, and expertise [3]. However, the relative importance of these factors may vary by culture. In high power distance cultures, streamer expertise and authoritative product knowledge may be the primary drivers of trust. In low power distance cultures, authenticity and perceived similarity between streamer and viewer may matter more.

Perceived risk also mediates this process. Consumers from high uncertainty avoidance cultures tend to perceive greater risk in cross-border transactions, which may reduce purchase intention unless mitigated by trust-building signals such as certifications, return policies, and third-party endorsements [8]. Live streaming

platforms targeting these markets should therefore prioritize transparency and risk reduction in their content strategies.

### 3.3. Social influence and group dynamics

Live streaming is inherently social, with features such as real-time comments, viewer counts, and shared purchase notifications creating a sense of collective experience. Cultural orientation toward collectivism moderates the impact of these social features on purchase decisions. In collectivist cultures, the presence of other viewers and visible purchase activity by peers can serve as powerful social proof, reinforcing product desirability [2]. In individualist cultures, social cues may have a weaker effect, with consumers relying more on their own product evaluation.

The role of opinion leaders also differs across cultures. In collectivist societies, streamers who successfully cultivate a sense of community and group identity may achieve higher conversion rates. In individualist societies, streamers who emphasize personal choice and individual benefit may be more effective.

## 4. Suggestions for cross-border e-commerce practitioners

Based on the above analysis of how cultural differences influence consumer behavior in cross-border live streaming e-commerce, offers actionable recommendations for practitioners.

### 4.1. Adapting strategies to different cultures

First and foremost, cross-border live streaming strategies should be culturally adapted rather than adopt a one-size-fits-all approach. The same live streaming format and style that works well in one market may not be effective in another. Sellers should research the cultural characteristics of their target market and adjust their strategies accordingly.

For example, when targeting collectivist markets such as Southeast Asia, streamers should emphasize interaction with the audience, create a warm community atmosphere, and highlight popularity and social proof. When targeting individualist markets such as North America and Western Europe, streamers should focus more on product features, personal benefits, and individual needs.

### 4.2. Adjusting trust-building approaches

Second, trust-building approaches should be tailored to match cultural expectations. In markets with high uncertainty avoidance, live streaming content should emphasize product certifications, detailed specifications, and transparent return policies. Streamers should provide thorough product demonstrations and answer questions comprehensively to reduce consumer anxiety about potential risks.

In markets with low uncertainty avoidance, can adopt a more casual and spontaneous style with greater flexibility. They can focus more on creating an enjoyable viewing experience and building personal connections with the audience, rather than just providing detailed product information.

### 4.3. Leveraging social features appropriately

Third, sellers should tailor the use of social features to the cultural context. In collectivist markets, features that highlight community participation—such as viewer counts, group purchase discounts, and real-time comments—can be powerful tools to drive conversions. Sellers should encourage viewers to interact with each other and create a sense of group buying.

In individualist markets, on the other hand, personalized recommendations and one-on-one interaction with the streamer may be more effective. Sellers should focus on addressing individual consumer needs and highlighting how the product can benefit each consumer.

### 4.4. Choosing the right streamers

Fourth, choosing the right streamer for the target market is important. In high power distance cultures, streamers who project authority and expertise may be more effective. These streamers should demonstrate deep product knowledge and establish themselves as trusted experts. In low power distance cultures, streamers who adopt a more peer-like, egalitarian communication style may be better received.

Additionally, sellers should also consider the cultural background of the streamer. Hiring local streamers who understand the local culture and language can help reduce cultural barriers and build better connections with the target audience.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper examines the impact of cultural differences on consumer purchase decisions in cross-border live streaming e-commerce. Drawing on Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory, it focused on three key dimensions —individualism-collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and power distance—and their influence on consumer behavior in live streaming settings.

The main findings are as follows: First, cultural differences affect the effectiveness of different communication styles. High-context persuasion works better in collectivist cultures, while direct, data-driven arguments are more effective in individualist cultures. Second, the factors that build consumer trust vary across cultures. Expertise and authority matter more in high power distance cultures, while authenticity and similarity matter more in low power distance cultures. Third, the impact of social features differs between collectivist and individualist cultures, with social proof being more influential in collectivist settings.

These findings suggest that cross-border e-commerce practitioners should adapt their live streaming strategies to different cultural markets, including adjusting communication styles, trust-building approaches, social feature usage, and streamer selection.

This paper alsofaces several limitations. First, it relies primarily on a review of existing literature and does not include original empirical research. Future studies could collect data through surveys or experiments to test these ideas more directly. Second, the paper only discusses three of Hofstede's cultural dimensions, and other dimensions may also be relevant. Third, cultural differences are not the only factor affecting cross-border live streaming outcomes—factors such as economic development, technological infrastructure, and legal regulations also play important roles. Future research could delve further into these aspects.

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