

Research on the Influence of Emotional Labor of Short Video Anchor on Fans' Purchase Behavior

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Abstract: *The transformation of production methods brought about by the development of digital media technology has given rise to new forms of labor, and online emotional labor is one of them. Moreover, short video platform anchor and fan consumption as a kind of video-based consumption relationship is also a new kind of emotional labor. On the one hand, Internet technology provides real-time updated anchor dynamics for fans and audiences; on the other hand, a wide variety of short video platforms also build a spatial field of emotional interaction, emotional consumption, and emotional labor for fans and audiences. Therefore, this study analyzes the influence mechanism of short video platform anchors' emotional labor on fans' purchasing behavior from the dimensions of attention capital in the digital economy era, the production of short video anchors' emotional experience, and fans' collective purchasing behavior.*

Keywords: *Short videos; Anchor; Emotional labor; Fan purchase*

1. Introduction

According to the 51st Statistical Reports on Internet Development in China released by China Internet Network Information Center, as of December 2022, China's short video users have exceeded one billion for the first time, with a user utilization rate reaching up to 94.8%.^[1]

In China, live streaming marketing based on short video platforms has been integrated into people's daily lives. It is prevalent in various fields, such as news communication, leisure and entertainment, daily consumption, advertising, mass education, and telemedicine. The socio-economic benefits brought by anchors of short video platforms are remarkable. According to the China Wanghong Economy Business Models and Trends Research Report in 2020 released by iResearch^[2], the industry scale associated with the fan economy is expected to exceed six trillion in 2023. The fan economy has become a magnet for media and capital. However, the fan economy has not renounced the world splendidly, and it is a media economic behavior mode derived from the mass media as the society gradually steps into the "consumer society" from the "production-oriented society". Moreover, how to utilize the unique communication mode of a network live streaming platform to create a brand new emotional experience has become an important issue in the process of attracting fan traffic and realizing cash for short-video anchors. On the one hand, it stimulates the fans' desire to watch through immersive communication and body-mediated. On the other hand, producing an emotional experience further promotes the fans' recognition, which in turn drives purchasing behavior.

2. Core concept definition

2.1 Short video platform anchors

Currently, there is no unified definition of a short video platform in academic circles. Through the analysis of the existing definition, Huang Yongjun in the Network Anchor: Initial Cognition of an Emerging Occupation can found that the network anchor has four characteristics: Firstly, its carrier is the network audio-visual communication platform (the platform can be video, voice, text and other ways of instant communication); secondly, its content is chatting, singing and dancing, games, etc.; thirdly, its form is live streaming with the audience; fourthly, its nature and power is to obtain the virtual gifts given by the audience through live interaction, and then to obtain the corresponding salary income after proportionally sharing with the network live streaming platform and live streaming guild^[3]. This study defines a short video platform anchor as a person who uses a live program as a medium to attract fans through his or her professionalism, thus gaining influence and achieving

commercial sales through live commerce. Table 1 shows the main types of short video platform anchors.

Table 1. Main types of short video platform anchors

Types	characterization	Fan source
Entertainment anchor	The representative anchor has attracted a group of interested fans with his singing, dancing, and talk shows	Gaining fans by facial attractiveness and talent
Knowledge anchor	Proficient in professional skills, such as finance, doctors, popular science, etc.	Attracting fans' acceptance by communicating expertise
Live commerce anchor	Through their own experience and professional analysis, show the selling points of goods, stimulate fans to consume	Attract fans through their own professional and trustworthy sales abilities

2.2 Emotional labor

Emotional labor was proposed by the American sociologist Hochschild in her book *The Managed Heart Commercialization of Human Feeling*.^[4] She believes that people engage in emotional labor in addition to physical labor, which requires coordination between consciousness and feelings, suppressing the worker's emotions and providing emotional value for others. Additionally, Hardt and Negri believe that the essence of emotional labor is immaterial labor^[5], as opposed to the material labor of traditional industrial production. It not only includes the expression and management of emotions in the process of interpersonal interactions in the category of labor but also includes the emotional fulfillment provided by the service, culture, entertainment industries and a series of unpaid emotional practices within the family.

3. Analysis of anchor emotional labor and fans' buying behavior

According to Accenture's Chinese Consumer Insights 2022^[6], Chinese consumers are becoming more aware of the overall situation with China's economy moving a new normal. Their focus has shifted from immediate gratification to long-term value, and their thinking has become more diversified. The right to make decisions for the family has returned to the individual, and everyone can make choices on their own, with "self-awareness" becoming more and more important in consumption. Therefore, consumption has become a way for people to shape their personal style, and "I need" and "I like" have become more and more important. Furthermore, consumers in the process of consumption increasingly show the characteristics of "experience first", and the satisfaction of consumer experience comes both from the goods themselves and from the shopping process. It can be said that focusing on the user's emotional experience, creating the user's emotional identity, and seeking an emotional connection between consumers and goods and the sales process has become important features of today's consumer market (As show in figure 1).

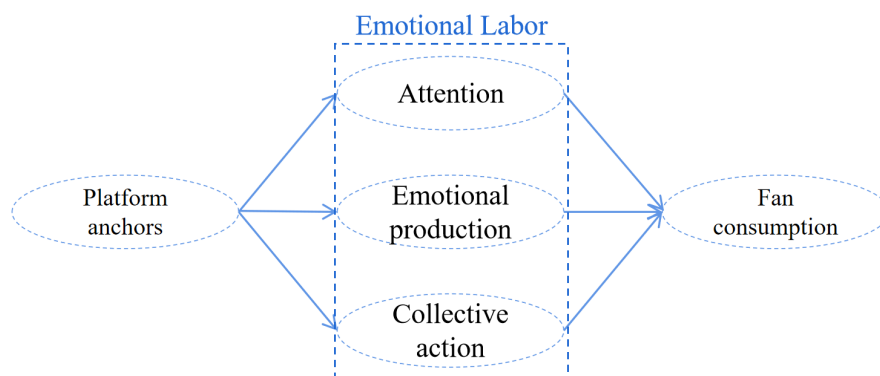


Figure 1. Emotional connection path between platform anchors and fan consumption

3.1 Attention as a capital

Humanity has entered the era of the attention economy, which is proposed by the scholar Goldhaber^[7]. Specifically, attention economy refers to the human activities of production, processing, distribution, exchange, and consumption of attention capital. In fact, economic development and the improvement of residents' income level, people's preferences, demand structure, aesthetics, values, and so on accelerate the evolution to the direction of personalization. The consumer psychology of seeking newness, novelty, and specialness strengthens people's personalization, diversification, and specialization of consumption demands.

In the fiercely competitive cyberspace, information overload and fragmentation have become significant characteristics, and the attention of social individuals has become a scarce resource in society. Based on this opportunity, the centralization of attention has become a new channel for economic development. Additionally, the attention economy has become a "precious property" in the Internet era, and the new economic method of live commerce has also started to operate with the development of the attention economy. Furthermore, due to the convenience of operation and trust in the anchor, a large number of fan groups are wrapped up in the live commerce by the anchor. The phenomenon of fan groups out of love for idols has also emerged. Specifically, fans show considerable trust, enthusiasm, and love for the items endorsed or sold by idols and urgently want to take possession of all the items related to idols. Therefore, short video anchors in the live usually ask some of the current online celebrities to live together, thus attracting a number of fans of the online celebrities into the direct broadcasting room. Simultaneously, it can add fun and diversity to the direct broadcasting room and retain the users by giving the consumers a different audio-visual experience.

In the era of the digital economy, the low-cost digitization of video, large-scale digital traffic, and the accelerated value of traffic, the possibility of economic subjects quickly accumulating a huge attention capital is greatly increased. At this time, the real winner is not the owner of material capital but the owner of attention capital. The expansion of attention capital predicts the flow of wealth and instantly changes the pattern of market competition.

3.2 Production of the anchor's emotional experience in short video platforms

3.2.1 Body-mediated and performance

"Body-mediated" refers to the network anchors' use of their own bodies as carriers of information communication, thus producing and reproducing the desire to consume. The body, as the first display of an individual, relies mainly on visual aesthetics. Moreover, the impression of a person is built based on the examination of his or her overall appearance and clothing, and the anchor places his or her body in the foreground of the crowd's examination. Therefore, the anchor's body has been circulated as a kind of commoditized symbol, and the audience satisfies their own desires for an idealized body by watching the anchor's body.

For example, Coconut Palm Group tested live commerce on the Tik Tok platform with male anchors. It began to recruit male anchors on the platform with a strong body and outstanding appearance. On March 2023, Coconut Palm started the trial of male model anchors, and the muscular men attracted the attention of netizens by jumping aerobics in the direct broadcasting room.^[8] The alternative element of the Coconut Palm live marketing event quickly attracted a large number of netizens as collective spectators. This design is a kind of catering to the instinctive needs of human beings, creating a "hormone" economy in the network era, which in turn generates a kind of seductive force. Furthermore, under the strong visual impact, people's sensory awareness and visual pleasure are thoroughly released, and the visual aesthetics constantly change in the interaction. It further stimulates the generation and communication of the symbols of the body image, and the body is capitalized into an important medium to stimulate consumer desire.

3.2.2 Scene transformation and emotional identification

The scene has an essential role in advertising, and the purpose of scene construction is to "integrate consumers with stores, products, services, brands, and other environments organically, and put the consumption needs of target message users and aesthetic interests and other sensual standards in an ideal scenario". Specifically, only by placing the product in a specific scene can the product generate multiple, mobile, rich symbolic value and emotional experiences, and in this way, enhance the emotional resonance between the consumer and the product. Moreover, compared with traditional advertisements, the biggest advantage of live commerce is to build different and changeable scenes at

the same time through mobile communication and virtual symbols and to achieve real-time interactive communication.

In order to create a "trust" persona shaping, the persona is an important labor content of the short video anchor, and only when the audience accepts the anchor's "persona", will they pay for it. The anchor increases consumer trust in the product by personally trying out or trying on the product or by directly demonstrating the effect of the product. Furthermore, before the live streaming, the anchor and his team will select products and choose good quality products to avoid users' distrust due to the promotion of counterfeit and shoddy products.

In addition, the anchor will also output the correct values to obtain the user's trust, such as part of the anchor in the process of live streaming will suggest everyone to consume reasonably, exhort the minors not to consume too much in the direct broadcasting room, and tell the pregnant women not to use too much cosmetic products. This "trusted" persona, coupled with the anchor in the direct broadcasting room speech performance and atmosphere rendering, will make people "want to chop". In traditional emotional labor, workers only need to shape their professional identity according to the requirements. However, anchors often need to create a personalized, recognizable persona in the network's emotional labor. The process of creating a persona in line with the personality of the anchor needs to be constantly adjusted and designed, and only the audience accepts the anchor's persona may be able to promote the product orders.

3.3 Rational anomie and collective action

Gustave Le Bon has viewed social groups as "psycho-groups" and group emotions as irrational collective emotions that reveal themselves to be unrestrained when individuals are drawn into the group.^[9] Under this understanding perspective, fans' excessive consumption is regarded as irrational behavior caused by emotions. Furthermore, when the scope of rational anomie spreads significantly, most fan community members will be infected with irrationality. They will express their emotions towards their idols, form similar concepts and ideas about the commodities they consume, and put them into practice to guard their idols and demonstrate their own authority. In this process, the self-rationality of fans gradually disappears, and they are reduced to a group of "rabble". Therefore, at this stage, the consumption behavior of fans on the live streaming platform has become an unconscious group behavior.

4. Conclusion

Marshall McLuhan believes that any new technology introduces a new scale in our lives.^[10] The short video live streaming marketing is a kind of video-based consumer relationship and a new kind of emotional labor. On the one hand, Internet technology provides real-time updates of anchor dynamics for fans and audiences; on the other hand, a wide variety of social media platforms also build spatial fields of emotional interaction, emotional consumption, and emotional labor for fans and audiences. The fans' emotions are extended to the public through media technology, shaping the social, intimate relationship between fans and anchors based on the Internet. Superficially, fan consumption is the audience consuming the pleasure brought by the media platform. However, in essence, the media expands the social source of emotional satisfaction, and it is the largest supplier of emotional consumption. From the anchor's perspective, short video live streaming marketing is the process of body-mediated anchor. The body is an important production and consumption resource and the medium itself. It has become the material carrier of information communication, creating the visual experience of the live streaming era. Moreover, from the consumer's perspective, short video anchors utilize the marketing scene transformation and fans' emotional identity to inject a sense of competition, intimacy, visual pleasure, and viewing desire that traditional advertisements cannot form into the emotional structure of online consumers, which in turn drives the consumption behavior.

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