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Multidimensional synergy and single backlash: an analysis of the mechanism by which streamer persona characteristics influence Generation Z consumers' willingness to purchase beauty products

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Abstract. With the rapid development of the Internet, live-streaming e-commerce has become the core channel for beauty brands to reach the Generation Z consumer group. This paper mainly studies how the host persona, as the core carrier of personalized marketing, has a significant differential impact on consumers' purchase intentions. This paper takes the S-O-R theory as the core analytical framework, and uses the literature analysis method and case comparison method to analyze the differences in the mechanism of action of multi-dimensional innovative personas and single extreme personas on the purchase intentions of Generation Z beauty products. The research finds that a multi-persona structure with professionalism, authenticity, affinity, and value resonance can form a positive superimposition effect, effectively enhancing consumers' trust and purchase intention; while overly relying on a single traffic label and an unbalanced personality image of a flat persona is likely to cause psychological disparity and marketing resistance among the audience, thereby leading to the phenomenon of persona backlash and significantly suppressing the purchase intention for beauty products. The research conclusions can provide theoretical references and practical ideas for the construction of personas and risk prevention in the beauty live-streaming industry.

Keywords: live-streaming e-commerce, host persona, Generation Z, purchase intention for beauty products, S-O-R model

1. Introduction

With the iterative development of new media technologies, the live-streaming e-commerce model has gradually permeated the beauty consumption sector. Different from the traditional e-commerce graphic model and offline direct sales, live-streaming e-commerce relies on the personality presentation of the host to achieve an integrated closed loop of product display, content explanation, emotional interaction and consumption conversion. Growing up in the all-media era, the Generation Z, as the core group of beauty consumers, has rich information acquisition channels and high media literacy and information discrimination ability. Generation Z consumers are not only easily attracted by personalized content, but also highly sensitive to

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deliberate marketing and false personas. In the fierce beauty live-streaming market, the quality of the host's persona directly determines the stickiness of the live-streaming room fans, the trend of reputation and the conversion ability.

Currently, the beauty live-streaming industry shows a clear two-pole differentiation trend: some niche hosts build professional, sincere, multi-dimensional and balanced diversified personas, achieving long-term stable fan stickiness and repeat purchase conversion; while some hosts, by maximizing the single flow labels such as low price and outstanding appearance, enjoy short-term popularity, but are prone to reputation decline, fan loss and other negative consequences due to single content, false personas and inconsistent words and deeds. Existing research in the field of live-streaming marketing mostly focuses on the positive promotional effect of the host's positive traits on purchase intention, and rarely dialectically analyzes the negative effects brought by overly single personas, especially lacking systematic comparative analysis of "multi-dimensional synergy gain" and "single label counter-reaction", and there is still a gap in the dialectical research on Generation Z's beauty consumption scenarios.

Based on this, this paper uses the S-O-R theory as the core analytical framework, adopts the literature analysis method and case comparison method, to analyze the different effects of mostly innovative personas and single-label personas. It focuses on exploring the impact paths of different persona structures on the purchase intention of Generation Z's beauty products, and analyzes the logic of multi-dimensional synergy gain and the causes of the counter-reaction of single personas. Through literature review and case comparison, this study can improve the dialectical research system of the impact mechanism of live-streaming personas on consumption, and at the same time provide practical ideas for the planning of Makeup live-streamer persona, brand live-streaming cooperation and industry risk prevention.

2. Host persona and research on Generation Z beauty live streaming consumption foundation

2.1. Definition of core concepts and theoretical basis of S-O-R

The host persona refers to the comprehensive personality image that a self-media blogger creates during their engagement in online live streaming. Forming a stable and comprehensive personality image in front of the audience is the core element of live streaming personality marketing. The professional quality evaluation system for beauty bloggers mainly consists of four core dimensions. The first is the comprehensive dimension, which includes the blogger's understanding of cosmetic varieties, the ability to distinguish genuine and fake products, and the ability to match consumers' skin types with products; the second is the integrity dimension, which is manifested as the host objectively promoting products, not engaging in false promotion or exaggerating effects, and objectively evaluating the quality of products; the third is the affinity dimension, which refers to the host's expression style having affinity, being able to form a good interaction with consumers, and having empathy; the fourth is the value dimension, which refers to the skincare concepts, aesthetic expressions, and consumption ideas conveyed by the host to consumers.

This article classifies the host personas into two types: multi-dimensional collaborative personas, where multiple personas are all reflected on the same host, and the personas are unified, compatible, and mutually supportive, forming a real, three-dimensional, and diverse host image; single extreme personas, where the host overly highlights a certain characteristic, weakening other images and resulting in a relatively simple and flat host image lacking other personality dimensions.

The Generation Z refers to the young group born between 1995 and 2009. Wang Shui-xiong pointed out that as a new generation raised alongside the internet, Generation Z belongs to the digital natives, possessing stronger abilities in information retrieval and discerning the authenticity of information [1]. So, this group has a certain understanding of beauty brands and the vast majority of them can objectively analyze the advantages and disadvantages, authenticity, and truthfulness of products, and can make rational consumption decisions. They attach importance to the safety of product ingredients and the experiential effect. They oppose the routinization and excessive marketing methods of hosts. Their consumption decisions involve both rational discrimination and emotional needs for the host, and they pay attention to trust and personality identification. They have an extremely low tolerance for false host personas and product fraud, and therefore the Generation Z is highly sensitive to the "true and not acting" host personas.

The S-O-R stimulation—body—reaction theory can reflect consumers' thoughts and specific behaviors. This theory holds that external environmental stimuli will change the internal cognition and emotional state of the individual, ultimately driving the individual to generate corresponding behavioral responses. In the context of online live streaming, the authenticity of the host's words and behavior constitutes external stimuli and emotional perception (S) for consumers. The resulting enjoyment perception from browsing and the trust, approval, love, suspicion, and dislike behaviors generated by consumers towards the host and the final purchase intention and feedback on the product (R) are the internal body variables (O). This theory can fully explain the logic from the stimulation of host personas to consumption decisions and is the core theoretical support of this article [2].

2.2. Current research on the impact of host persona on purchase intention

2.2.1. Research on the correlation between a single persona dimension and consumer purchase intention

Existing studies have shown that a single but positive and honest host can stimulate consumers' purchase intention through excellent live-streaming presentation. Wang Shengyuan et al. decomposed the external stimulus mechanism in the live-streaming scenario based on the host attributes dimension. The research confirmed that the single positive personality trait of the host, such as being honest and pragmatic, can serve as an independent positive stimulus cue, without relying on a solid professional background and beautiful language skills. It only requires the excellent quality of integrity and honesty to touch consumers and awaken their sense of trust, thereby enhancing their purchase intention [3]. Not only because of the host's integrity and honesty, sometimes the host's appearance level, price benefits, and other factors can also enhance consumers' purchase intention. As the industry develops and research deepens, the drawbacks of a single dimension have gradually emerged. Zhang Dan et al. proposed a set of data: the popularity, personal image, professionalism, interactivity, and empathy ability of the host have coefficient values of 0.716 (t = 13.290), 0.64 (t = 10.815), 0.714 (t = 13.214), 0.624 (t = 10.361), and 0.779 (t = 16.127) respectively for the consumer cognitive path [4]. It can be seen that consumers' purchase intention is influenced by multiple dimensions, and once the single persona of the host collapses or negative events occur, consumers' purchase intention will quickly decline.

2.2.2. Research on the synergistic effect of multiple persona dimensions of hosts

In recent years, the academic community has begun to pay attention to the cumulative value of multiple dimensions of traits in live streaming, and recognizes the long-term effectiveness of a three-dimensional persona. Guo Yu proposed that high-quality personalized hosts usually possess professional skills, sincere attitude, friendly interaction, and positive value concepts. The multiple personality traits support each other and are logically unified. Professional ability addresses consumers' concerns about product cognition, sincere attitude resolves marketing barriers, friendly interaction shortens the emotional distance, and positive value achieves spiritual resonance. The multiple dimensions are superimposed to form a stable trust loop, converting

superficial favorability into deep and long-lasting user trust [5]. When the host possesses these traits, users have a stronger tolerance. At the same time, research also indicates that a large number of traffic hosts overly rely on superficial traffic labels such as appearance level, low price, and accessibility, deliberately emphasizing a single superficial trait. Such a persona structure is extremely fragile, lacks risk buffer space, and is prone to destroying user trust. Currently, there are few studies on the single- and multi-persona traits of beauty product hosts, and this is the key research direction of this article.

3. Analysis of the mechanism of the effect of host characteristic features on the purchase willingness of Generation Z in cosmetics

3.1. The positive pathway of the positive effect of multi-dimensional synergistic characteristic features on purchase willingness

Based on the S-O-R theory, multi-dimensional synergistic characteristic features provide positive stimulation to consumers. They conduct rational analysis of product performance, objectively state product value, and provide emotional and value recognition to continuously enhance customers' purchase willingness. Firstly, the professional dimension provides full support. The host helps consumers judge the compatibility of the products through real evaluations and solid professional capabilities. Secondly, the real dimension enhances consumers' trust in the products. The host introduces the real efficacy of the products, does not engage in false promotion, and sincerely advises users who are not suitable for this product. The behavior of not exaggerating and not falsifying is in line with the pragmatic and rational consumption concepts of Generation Z, significantly reducing consumers' marketing resistance.

Furthermore, the friendly interaction mode can shorten the distance between consumers and the host, turning the host's role on the screen into a "skin care partner" for the customers. Wang Xiyuan proposed: The degree of consumers' participation is negatively correlated with the psychological distance between them and the host. This shortening of the psychological distance helps stimulate their shopping desire. The interaction between the host and the customers will also drive the traffic and popularity of the live stream room [6]. Finally, the output of positive value concepts is in line with the rational skin care and pursuit of quality brands concepts of Generation Z, achieving identity recognition. The multi-dimensional characteristic features mutually empower and support each other, forming a significant synergistic gain effect, and ultimately converting into stable and long-term purchase willingness for cosmetics. Even if such hosts make minor mistakes during the live stream, the complete characteristic system can form a tolerance buffer, effectively avoiding the risk of reputation collapse.

3.2. The causes of the counterproductive effect resulting from the extremeization of a single dimension

A single extremeized host can gain high traffic and attention in the short term through a single personality tag. However, from a long-term perspective, such a personality tag is highly vulnerable and has a high risk of collapse. According to the S-O-R theory, the negative effect mechanism mainly consists of three aspects. Firstly, a single personality tag is prone to solidifying users' expectations, leading to a one-sided and idealized cognitive expectation of the blogger's brand. When the idealized cognitive preset is broken, a strong psychological gap will directly activate the negative emotions of the audience, easily causing the collapse of the blogger's personality brand. Secondly, the blogger's trust structure is fragile, lacking a risk buffering mechanism. When the host experiences negative events, there is no positive personality dimension to

neutralize public opinion, and the originally weak user trust will instantly collapse, with the negative risk erupting without buffering. Thirdly, utilitarian marketing will cause users to have a resistant mentality. Chen Xi argued that formulaic scripts in live streaming constitute commodified emotional labor; when audiences recognize the deliberate performance of constructed personas and the profit-driven intent behind traffic harvesting, they experience strong psychological resistance [7]. The Generation Z is highly sensitive to Routinized marketing approaches and deliberate personality packaging. A single personality tag repeatedly deepens consumers' impression of the brand, easily causing a sense of unreality, allowing the audience to clearly perceive the commercial purpose of traffic harvesting and induced consumption. Under this psychological drive, the audience will actively terminate consumption behavior and spread negative reputation through social platforms, forming a two-way counterattack between the personality brand and commercial value. In the beauty industry, there are too many low-price marketing and high-physical-appearance gimmicks, which easily cause the self-brand traffic to be counterattacked.

3.3. Comprehensive evaluation of the effect of host personality tag characteristics

By comparing the main characteristics, effect mechanisms, and risk prevention of the two types of personality tags, the core differences can be identified. From the driving logic perspective, multi-dimensional personality tags rely on trust, emotion, value, product, etc., and have higher and longer-lasting stickiness and persistence with the host and customer. A single personality tag only relies on superficial senses and low-price consumption stimulation, with random conversion and poor stability. From the perspective of the operation cycle, multi-dimensional personality tags can accumulate fans over the long term. Huang Yongjun and Shi Zhuo proposed: distinguish the life cycle of two types of online sensation IP; thin symbolized personality tags (passive explosion, single-label personality tag) have an extremely short life cycle, most of them only last for half a year, while the professional IP that is continuously operated and has a three-dimensional personality has long-term content accumulation to shape personal IP assets, maintaining long-term influence and commercial value [8].

4. Conclusion

Based on the S-O-R theory system, this paper mainly explores the purchasing intentions of Generation Z consumers for cosmetics in the context of multi-dimensional personas and single personalities of hosts. The research conclusions are as follows: First, hosts with logical consistency and complementary dimensions can establish a good connection with customers through emotional resonance and emotional value, effectively enhancing the purchasing intentions of Generation Z for cosmetics; Second, overly single-oriented hosts using flat labels for marketing are prone to cause audience expectations to fall short, inhibiting conversion; Third, considering the high media literacy, emphasis on authenticity, and emotional orientation of consumption characteristics of Generation Z, multi-dimensional and three-dimensional personas have stronger long-term development advantages, while single-track personas are difficult to achieve sustainable operation. This study still has certain limitations: it mainly relies on qualitative theoretical analysis and case studies, with insufficient quantitative research to verify the influence weights of each dimension, and insufficient data analysis support; the case coverage is limited, and the generalizability of the conclusions needs to be further expanded. Future research can conduct questionnaire surveys, empirical modeling, and quantitative analysis of the impact effects of each dimension; can deeply explore the trust restoration mechanism for host persona crises; can expand cross-platform and cross-product research to further improve the theoretical system of live streaming persona marketing.

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