

Exploring the Structural Relationship among Beauty Influencers' Attractiveness and Homophily, Emotional Attachment, and Live Commerce Stickiness

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Abstract

This study aims to understand how an influencer's social and physical attractiveness, background and value homophily influences consumer's emotional attachment, which in turn causes user stickiness with regards the influencer's live commerce. We tested all proposed hypotheses among users of the online shopping platform "TaoBao". Ultimately, 297 questionnaires were collected by means of an online survey. The results revealed that social and physical attractiveness positively influence emotional attachment. Meanwhile only value homophily significantly affected emotional attachment, whereas background homophily did not significantly affect emotional attachment. Additionally, emotional attachment was found to significantly influence live commerce stickiness. We also investigated the moderation effect of perceived beauty trends of products sold on live commerce, where the results indicated that high beauty tends to have a higher effect on live commerce stickiness behavior. Lastly, theoretical and managerial implications have been offered.

Keywords: Beauty Influencer Attractiveness, Homophily, Emotional Attachment, Live Commerce Stickiness

1. Introduction

Without question the last decade has borne witness to the rise of new types of 'online' celebrity groups, such as bloggers, vloggers, and 'instafamous' personalities, all of which can be categorized as influencers [1]. These influencers cultivated mass audiences by virtue of their visual attractiveness [2]. Indeed, the year 2019 saw exponential growth in the e-commerce live streaming industry [3]. Since *TaoBao* live commenced trial operations in 2016, e-commerce live streaming has been booming as a consequence of webcast technologies growing by leaps and bounds and venture capitalists increasingly betting on the industry's continued growth [3]. *TaoBao* live streaming, in particular, has presented beauty brands with many new opportunities to connect with users. Given this, it needs to develop a better understanding of the drivers of influencer marketing success [4].

Influencer marketing related literature has evolved to explore the importance of influencer-generated content

values as a means of predicting user behavior [5]. Recently, research interest has turned to explore how influencers' characteristic can affect users' attitude and behavior [6]. Previous studies have illustrated that influencers' credibility can boost users' purchase behavior [7]. Previous studies have also argued that influencers' attractiveness could influence their perceived credibility from the perspective of their users [2]. On the other hand, homophily is also considered to be a critical factor with regards a users' positive attitude and behavior. However, while previous studies have largely chosen to focus on content value, few studies have investigated the effect of influencer characteristic's on users' behavior [8]. Additionally, research into the outcomes of the influencer effect have focused on purchase intention or attitude [9]. Previous studies have also found that emotional attachment can also be a relevant factor in cultivating positive behavior among users' [10]. And while user's live commerce stickiness is perceived to be one aspect of loyalty behavior, the existing literature still lacks an effective theoretical framework to understand user's live commerce stickiness in the context of live shopping platforms [11].

Trends in beauty product change quickly. Therefore, users in attempt to stay abreast of new trends, always wish to obtain the newest information about trending beauty product. From this perspective, the beauty trends of product sold on live commerce will more fully engage their users' attachment and their positive behavior. Previous study found that beauty trends of products sold on live commerce differently influences users' attitude and behavior. However, few studies have detailed the beauty trends of products sold on live commerce stickiness [12].

This current study will address the existing gaps in literature. The conceptual model is developed based on attachment theory. Our study extends the attachment theory by considering both influencer's attractiveness and homophily to understand user's live commerce stickiness behavior. The specific research aims were as followed. First, to determine the effect influencers' physical attractiveness and social attractiveness on building users' emotional attachment. Second, the illustrate the effect influencers' background homophily and value homophily on users' emotional attachment. Third, to demonstrate the influence of emotional attachment on their live commerce stickiness. Additionally, the moderation effect of perceived beauty trends of products sold on live commerce will be investigated. The results of this present study could offer up some theoretical implications for future study as well as some managerial implications arising out of a better understanding with regards to influencer marketing success.

2. Theoretical Background and Hypotheses Development

2.1 Beauty Influencer Attractiveness and Emotional Attachment

Physical attractiveness is associated with positive characteristics, such as likeability, confidence, humor, intelligence, and friendliness; and these effects are consistent and relevant among both males and females [13]. This is consistent with prior research which suggests that physical attractiveness may be the cause of establishing an emotional connection [2]. By contrast, social attractiveness refers to the likability of the speaker [14]. The attractiveness of a speaker can influence the attitude and behavior of their audience. A previous study has also determined that social attractiveness positively influences users' para-social interaction, when then resulted in attachment to the beauty influencer [7].

We therefore formulate the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1a: Beauty influencer physical attractive positively influences emotional attachment.

Hypothesis 1b: Beauty influencer social attractive positively influences emotional attachment.

2.2 Beauty Influencer Homophily and Emotional Attachment

Homophily is the degree to which people who interact with one another are similar in their beliefs, educational level, social status and the like [15]. Homophily has been recognized for its ability to increase communication effectiveness [16]. Previous studies posited that the similarity between the source and the receiver (i.e., the viewer in the case of e-commerce) has been recognized to facilitate interpersonal relationships, intensify affective bonds, strengthen ties, and enable connections and interactions [17, 18]. Recently, study have determined that homophily with regards background, values, appearance and attitude can

exert a positive effect on consumer emotional attachment [10].

We therefore formulate the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2a: Background homophily positively influences emotional attachment.

Hypothesis 2b: Value homophily positively influences emotional attachment.

2.3 Emotional Attachment and Live Commerce Stickiness

Live commerce stickiness refers to users will spend a long time or frequent to visit the live commerce. In the field of marketing research, previous studies have determined that emotional attachment positively affects live commerce stickiness [19]. Meanwhile, in the live streaming related research, it has been argued that stickiness is the result of psychological responses [20]. It was subsequently found, in the course of live streaming research, that emotional attachment to the streamers positively influences users' live commerce stickiness, given that emotional attachment is a psychological connection, which can positively affect users' behavior [11]. Following these previous studies, we could argue that emotional attachment to the beauty influencer may positively influence users' live commerce stickiness. Therefore, we formulated the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3: Emotional attachment positively influences live commerce stickiness.

2.4 Moderation Effect of Perceived Beauty Trends of Products Sold on Live Commerce

Trending related studies are increasingly being acknowledged as an important paradigm on social media [12]. Users do desire to talk to each other about new trends and styles through the live commerce. Within social communication, the role of fashion influencers is to diffuse fashion trends [21]. Fashion trends have been regarded as having an important marketing effect in relation to the diffusion of new trends, with influencers exerting great influence on their followers [22]. Therefore, in the course of these studies, it was found that perceived beauty trends of product sold on live commerce revealed their knowledge, indeed their expertise about beauty, which influences followers to greater degrees of live commerce stickiness.

We therefore formulate the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 4: Following the level of perceived beauty trends of products sold on live commerce, user's emotional attachment and live commerce stickiness will be different.

2.5 Proposed Conceptual Model

The main interest of this study was to elucidate the beauty influencer's physical attractiveness, social attractiveness, background homophily, value homophily with regard to how these generate users' emotional attachment, and then explore their influence on live commerce stickiness. Meanwhile, the moderation effect of perceived beauty trends of products sold on live commerce also intent to investigate. A total of four research hypotheses relating to the relationships among these variables were formulated (H1–H4).

3. Statistical Technique and Methodology

3.1 Statistical Technique

This study utilized SPSS 25 and AMOS 25 for data analysis. SPSS 25 is used for descriptive statistics and exploratory factor analysis. While confirmatory factor analysis, reliability, validity, path analysis and moderation are conducted through AMOS 25.

3.2 Measurement Development

A self-administered questionnaire was developed to measure various factors, namely physical attractiveness (PA), social attractiveness (SA), background homophily (BH), value homophily (VH), emotional attachment (EA) and live commerce stickiness (ST). All the items were developed from previous studies, as shown in Table 1. A seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 to 7, from strongly disagree to strongly agree was then

utilized. PA, SA questionnaires were developed from 2, 23. BH, VH items were developed from 10, 16. EA and ST were measured by 24-27. To test the measurement validity and content disinfection of the questionnaires. The questionnaires were translated from English into Chinese and then the Chinese version was back-translated to English by English language experts so as to enhance the validity of the questionnaire. A total of 30 users were assembled for a pre-test. The pre-test indicated that there was no validity problem or disinfection problem.

Table 1. Measures and standardized loadings

Measures ((Strongly Disagree (1) – Strongly Agree (7))	Reference
PA	
The beauty influencer has an attractive appearance The beauty influencer face is well balanced The beauty influencer has a stylish image The beauty influencer is pretty The beauty influencer would generally be thought of as beautiful/handsome	[2, 23]
SA	
The beauty influencer seems to be getting along well with people around The beauty influencer is excellent at communicating The beauty influencer has a good sense of humor	[23]
BH	
The beauty influencer is from a social class similar to me The beauty influencer's economic situation is similar to me The beauty influencer's background is similar to me The beauty influencer's status is similar to me	[10, 16]
VH	
The beauty influencer shares my cultural value The beauty influencer shares my personal value The beauty influencer treats people like I do The beauty influencer moral is like mine	[10, 16]
EA	
I feel emotionally connected to the beauty influencers that I follow I feel a bond with the beauty influencer that I follow I am very attached to the beauty influencer that I follow The beauty influencer that I follow are special for me	[24, 25]
ST	
I would stay for a long time while browsing live streaming I intent to prolong my stays on live streaming I would stay a longer time on this live streaming than other live streaming	[26, 27]

Note: All standardized factor loadings were significant ($p < .01$).

3.3 Data Collection and Sample Characteristics

Our data was collected from *TaoBao* live streaming, which is the leading live streaming shopping platform in China. *TaoBao* live streaming provides content on various type of products, such as beauty products and food. As of 2019, the number of *TaoBao* live streaming users passed 400 million. The period of data collection in China was from July 2021 to September 2021 and was completed using the online survey platform, *WenJuanXing*. In total 349 questionnaires were received. Even so, in order to improve the validity of the survey results, we only included questionnaires from respondents who had watched top 10 beauty influencer live

streaming data. Additionally, questionnaires from respondents who did not finish the questionnaire or who mark all the questionnaire items with the same score were excluded from analysis. Ultimately, a total of 297 questionnaires were included in this study. The demographic profile of the participants are as follows: Gender rates were female (N=181) and male (N=116). Live streaming service usage less than 1 hour (N= 87), 1hour ~ 2 hours (N= 94), 2 hours ~ 3 hours (N=66), more than 2 hours (N=50).

4. Statistical Technique and Methodology

4.1 Measurement Model

For this study both an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) were conducted. The EFA results indicated that the measurements expected of the six factors did in fact emerge, explaining 70.794% of the total variance (KMO = 0.907; df = 253; p < 0.000). All the items factor loading values were higher than 0.6, and eigen value was higher than 1. Meanwhile, the Cronbach's Alpha value ranged from 0.788 to 0.899, which indicated the reliability of the scales.

As shown in Table 2, the CFA showed that the measurement model satisfactorily fit the data ($\chi^2 = 403.899$; df = 215; CFI = 0.947; GFI = 0.892; RMSEA = 0.054). Factor loadings for each item were higher than 0.5 (p < 0.05). Composite reliability (CR) was evaluated for testing intently consistent reliability. CR values ranged from 0.803 to 0.858. all the values being greater than the suggested cut-off value of 0.6 [28]. The average variance extracted (AVE) were calculated for verifying convergent validity and discriminant validity. The AVE value ranged from 0.506 to 0.615, which therefore passed the cut-off of 0.5. Thus, the convergent validity was evident [29]. To test the discriminant validity, square root of AVE has to greater than the correlation coefficient value between pairs of constructs. Following this the discriminant validity was evident [30].

Table 2. Results of the reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity

	PA	SA	BH	VH	EA	ST
PA	1.00 (0.720) ¹					
SA	0.524	1.00 (0.712)				
BH	0.634	0.596	1.00 (0.723)			
VH	0.408	0.434	0.470	1.00 (0.711)		
EA	0.565	0.625	0.481	0.503	1.00 (0.777)	
ST	0.589	0.465	0.584	0.449	0.565	1.00 (0.784)
Mean	4.41	5.21	4.66	4.52	5.25	4.65
SD	1.26	1.24	1.21	1.27	1.20	1.32
Alpha	0.847	0.793	0.788	0.837	0.899	0.892
CR	0.843	0.754	0.813	0.803	0.858	0.827
AVE	0.519	0.507	0.523	0.506	0.603	0.615

Goodness-of-Fit Statistics for the measurement model: $\chi^2 = 403.899$; df = 215; CFI = 0.947; GFI: 0.892 RMSEA = 0.054

Note¹: square root of the AVE

4.2 Structural Equation Modeling

A structural equation modeling (SEM) with maximum likelihood estimation was conducted as presented in Table 3, with results showing a satisfactory model fit ($\chi^2 = 456.768$; df = 219; CFI = 0.934; GFI = 0.878; RMSEA = 0.061). Our proposed model accounts for the variance in explaining consumer emotional attachment ($R^2 = 55.6\%$) and consumer stickiness ($R^2 = 35.7\%$). The results of the hypotheses testing found that beauty influencer physical attractive ($\beta = 0.294$, P < 0.001), social attractive ($\beta = 0.431$, p < 0.001) significantly and positively affected emotional attachment, which supported 1a and 1b. When 2a and 2b were tested, results showed that background homophily ($\beta = 0.041$, p > 0.05) was not significantly related to emotional

attachment, while value homophily did reveal a significant influence on emotional attachment ($\beta = 0.230$, $p < 0.01$). Thus, only 2b was supported. And emotional attachment has been verified as significantly affecting live commerce stickiness ($\beta = 0.597$, $p < 0.001$), which means H3 was supported. Following on from this, the indirect impact of constructs was then examined. The results revealed that a beauty influencer's physical attractiveness indirectly influences live commerce stickiness through emotional attachment ($\beta_{PA-EA-ST} = 0.223$, $p < 0.01$), social attractiveness indirectly influences stickiness ($\beta_{SA-EA-ST} = 0.319$, $p < 0.01$), and that value homophily indirectly influences live commerce stickiness ($\beta_{VH-EA-ST} = 0.168$, $p < 0.01$).

Table 3. Results of the structural equation modeling

Hypothesis	Path	β	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values	Result
H1a	PA → EA	0.294***	0.088	3.883	0.000	Accept
H1b	SA → EA	0.431***	0.088	5.536	0.000	Accept
H2a	BH → EA	0.041	0.106	0.485	0.627	Rejected
H2b	VH → EA	0.230***	0.069	3.700	0.000	Accept
H3	EA → ST	0.597***	0.066	9.877	0.000	Accept
R ² (EA) = 55.6%		Indirect Effect				
R ² (ST) = 35.7%		$\beta_{PA-EA-ST} = 0.223^*$				
Goodness-of-Fit Statistics for the measurement model: $\chi^2 = 456.768$; df = 219; CFI = 0.934; GFI: 0.878; RMSEA = 0.061		$\beta_{SA-EA-ST} = 0.319^*$				
		$\beta_{BH-EA-ST} = 0.033$				
		$\beta_{VH-EA-ST} = 0.168^*$				

Note1: *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

4.3 Moderation Analysis

To test the moderating impact of level of perceived beauty trends of products sold on live commerce, we divide the ground into a high trending (N=151) and a low trending segment (N=146). Table 4 and Figure 1 revealed this baseline model to be an acceptable model fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 855.805$; df = 438; CFI = 0.867; IFI = 0.870; RMSEA = 0.057). And this model compared to the nested model. As shown in Table 5, only the path from emotional attachment to live commerce stickiness presented significant difference following the trending ($\Delta\chi^2 = 3.981$, $p < 0.05$).

Table 4. Moderation effect of perceived beauty trends of product sold on live commerce

	Low Trending (N = 146)		High Trending (N = 151)		Baseline Model	Nested Model
	β	T-Value	β	T-Value		
PA → EA	0.243	0.747	0.406**	3.115	$\chi^2(438) = 855.804$	$\chi^2(439) = 855.824$
SA → EA	0.054	1.667	0.106*	2.304	$\chi^2(438) = 855.804$	$\chi^2(439) = 856.704$
BA → EA	0.319	1.063	0.080	0.640	$\chi^2(438) = 855.804$	$\chi^2(439) = 857.614$
EA → ST	0.179	1.074	0.280**	2.958	$\chi^2(438) = 855.804$	$\chi^2(439) = 855.834$
EA → ST	0.457***	4.875	0.595***	6.911	$\chi^2(438) = 855.804$	$\chi^2(439) = 859.785$

Chi-square difference test

Goodness-of-Fit Statistics for the baseline model: $\chi^2 = 855.805$; df = 438; CFI = 0.867; IFI = 0.870; RMSEA = 0.057

$\Delta\chi^2(1) = 0.200$, $p > 0.05$ (No-Supported)

$\Delta\chi^2(1) = 0.900$, $p > 0.05$ (No-Supported)

$\Delta\chi^2(1) = 1.809$, $p > 0.05$ (No-Supported)

$\Delta\chi^2(1) = 0.030$, $p > 0.05$ (No-Supported)

$\Delta\chi^2(1) = 3.981$, $p < 0.05$ (Supported)

Note1: *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

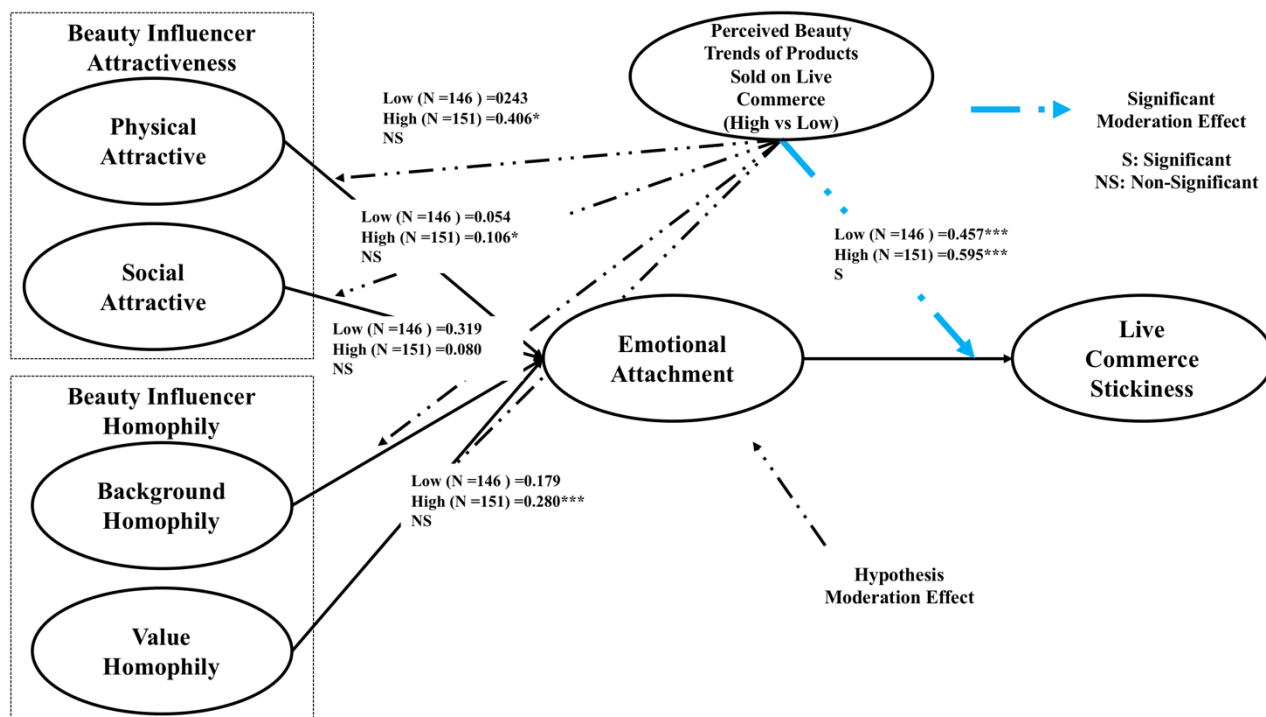


Figure 1. A path diagram of the structural model

5. Discussion

The promotion of beauty products via a beauty influencer has become a new shopping trend. Previous studies in this field have focused their attention mostly on the content value, such that there are not many studies that determine the effect of the influencer on users' emotional attachment formation or how emotional attachment affect user's live commerce stickiness behavior. Moreover, only a few studies have thrown light on the moderation effect of the perceived beauty trends of products sold on live commerce. This study was thus conducted to illustrate the effect of beauty influencer's attractiveness and homophily on emotional attachment, which then may affect live commerce stickiness. The results of this study have fueled the intention to provide strategy for *TaoBao* live streaming on formation users' loyalty behavior.

This study collected data from 20~40 who had watched *TaoBao* beauty influencer live streaming. The results determined that *TaoBao* beauty influencer social attractiveness and physical attractiveness positively influences emotional attachment, results consistent with previous studies [1, 3]. Meanwhile, only the value homophily was shown to positively affected emotional attachment, which had also been confirmed in previous studies [10]. However, background homophily did not significantly influence emotional attachment. This result indicates that live streaming influencer may not have revealed their background or that users did not trust their background, which then did not exert any influence their attachment. Emotional attachment positively influences live commerce stickiness behavior, which is consistent with previous studies [11]. In addition, this study also found that the perceived beauty trends of product sold on live commerce significantly different influence their live commerce stickiness behavior. The results of this study offers both theoretical and managerial implications for live streaming development.

6. Conclusion

This study was conducted in a live streaming service. The spread of COVID-19 impacted the speed of live streaming service. This study provides theoretical and managerial implications for live streaming service. This study focuses on *TaoBao* live streaming service to reveal the effect beauty influences users' live commerce stickiness behavior. Previous studies have applied the human attachment theory on live streaming research to

reveal the relation between influence characteristics, user's attitude and users' behavior. This study applies this theory on live streaming service and determined how influencer attractiveness and homophily influences users' emotional attachment and then influences their live commerce stickiness. Moreover, this study analyzed the perceived beauty trends of products sold on live commerce as moderator to investigate user's behavior. The results determined that the perceived beauty trends of product sold on live commerce were shown to have more of an effect on users' live commerce stickiness behavior. The managerial implications are as follows: first, attractiveness positively influence users' emotional attachment. Based on this result, marketer need to select visible influencer and nice speakers to conduct live streaming, which may attract more positive emotion toward the influencer. Second, value homophily is also a critical factor that influence their emotional attachment. According to this result, live streaming influence need to present a positive attitude and values consist with the public expectations, which then may attract more users. Lastly, this study conducted the moderation effect of perceived beauty trends of products sold on live commerce. The results illustrated that user wish to obtain the newest beauty trends via live streaming, thus influencers need to present the most trending product for users in order to affect their loyalty behavior.

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