International Online Marketing to China:

How Live Streaming is influencing buying behaviour

**Abstract**: In the modern world dominated by information technology, communication channels like television, radio, newspapers and magazines are becoming outdated and outrun in popularity by the internet media. The closed ecosystem of the online channels in China with the most foreign apps blocked and replaced with the Chinese analogs provides for a completely different, independent from the outside world environment for online marketing. Social media is an extremely powerful tool for introducing new products and building customer trust. However, foreign businesses aiming to enter the market in China need a blueprint on how to properly utilize this potent instrument, what is the right strategy and which target consumer is it the most suitable for.

This article provides general guidelines on digital marketing to China, summarizes information about online marketing in general, introduces the trend of live streaming and measures its influence on buying behavior among different consumer age groups to be properly put into use by international business owners aiming to enter the Chinese market.

**Keywords**: International marketing; live streaming; buying behavior;

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# 1 Introduction

## Research background and significance

### 1.1.1 Research background

Since the year 1998, when the Internet in China has become open not merely as a national infrastructure for communication and scientific research but as a tool for the ordinary citizens, the number of the Internet users and related technological advancements have been growing rapidly. In the present time the all-encompassing Internet technology surrounds us everywhere we go in our normal day to day life. It has become the main medium for communication, entertainment, shopping, and its range of functionality is constantly expanding. Between the years of 2009-2014 several major online media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google services, etc. have been blocked in China due to the censorship, which allowed local channels to be used instead. That led to a certain ecosystem being created within the Chinese digital space and had set an alternative way of development. Furthermore, such operations as shopping, ordering food delivery and payment have been highly digitized, which made China one of the most advanced e-commerce industries in the world. Hence the deep integration of digital technology into the lives of Chinese citizens, online marketing has become one of the most effective ways of advertisement and is widely used by businesses and corporations in China. While the online media has already been highly popular among the Chinese users, the recent COVID-19 lockdown has propelled it even further. Now, besides the ordinary content marketing performed via long and short videos on social media platforms, the new trend of live streaming has become a rapidly growing industry and is estimated to be $60 billion annually. With the most significant market share of 80%, Alibaba’s Taobao Live remains the leader among the other large live streaming platforms, such as Baidu, JD.com, Douyin, Tiktok, Kuaishou, MOGU and others. With the recent significant gain in popularity and its promising estimated growth, live streaming presents an innovative opportunity for international businesses to enter the Chinese market.

### 1.1.2 Research significance

On the basis of understanding the current condition of the online marketing field and analyzing the trends, this article will draw the knowledge from the latest international and online marketing theories, as well as the real world cases of international businesses’ marketing to China, to deeply study the potential benefits and applicable tactics. Furthermore, an online survey will be conducted among the Chinese social media users of different age groups in order to supplement and support the information suggested in the article. It is not only a question of promoting a single foreign business to the Chinese consumers, but rather a question of the globalization and the mutual benefit between countries, that the modern technology is able to offer. Exporting and importing goods does not only help large scale businesses to succeed, it also helps national economies to grow and expand. Consumers and businesses can benefit from buying the products that are not produced locally, but are available for purchase online from a business abroad. If more international business owners know how to properly present their products on the Internet, it means increasing profits and the sales potential for the international businesses, as well possible reduced costs and new products availability and, as a result, higher economic efficiency for the importing country. It is hoped that at the end of the investigation there will be a clear indication of the potential of Chinese social media channels, and live streaming platforms in particular, in assisting foreign businesses aiming to penetrate the Chinese market, as well as statistical identification of what kind of target audience this marketing campaign would be the most suitable for and what kind of marketing techniques would be the most effective. The insights received in the process pf this investigation can be used to support further academic research in the field of international online marketing.