Introduction to the Minitrack on Streaming Media in Entertainment

Kaja J. Fietkiewicz
Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf
kaja.fietkiewicz@hhu.de

Juho Hamari
Tampere University
juho.hamari@tuni.fi

Maria Törhönen
Tampere University
maria.torhonen@tuni.fi

Franziska Zimmer
Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf
franziska.zimmer@hhu.de

Streaming technology is a special delivery method of different media (usually audio or video) from a server to a client and, nowadays, increasingly applied in the entertainment industry (as an alternative to the conventional file download). We differentiate between on-demand streaming (e.g. Netflix, Spotify, YouTube), short-form video formats embedded in social media (e.g. TikTok, Snapchat or "Stories"-feature on Facebook or Instagram) and live streaming (e.g. Twitch, Taobao, YouNow, YouTube Live) [1;2]. On-demand streaming targets a more consumption-oriented audience (with focus on passive entertainment), whereas live streaming offers the possibility for user-generated content and participation between users (which can motivate more active social exchange) [3;4].

This information production and information consumption behavior on streaming media in entertainment has since become an important aspect for monetization, which is applied by brands, micro-celebrities, and streamers alike [2;5]. As the possibilities for viewer interaction on streaming media expand, a new phenomenon emerges: live stream shopping as a form of eCommerce. This special form of consumer-to-consumer streaming grants brands and live streamers the opportunity to engage with customers in real time to market and trade various products and services [6]. Motivations to watch eCommerce live streams range from gathering product information, convenience, as well as interactions with micro-celebrities who demonstrate the products [6]. With this the question arises, how can live streamers increase viewer engagement to possibly support product sales?

Liu, Sun and Lee [7] investigate this aspect in their study on viewer engagement in eCommerce streaming. The intimacy theory, used as a foundation for the study, suggests that attachment results from a process that is initiated when one person (i.e., the streamer) communicates authentic and personally relevant information to another person (i.e., the viewer). Survey results show that the streamers' authenticity, meaning the balance between commercial motivations and sincerity, the customer response capability, meaning the streamers' ability to respond to the viewers' requests timely and effectively, as well as, with a slightly milder impact, attitudinal similarity, are sufficient to enhance the intimacy perceived by the viewers. This in turn helps to substantially eliminate mistrust and leads to viewers' online engagement, which includes behavioral engagement (e.g. sharing information about the product), affective or emotional engagement, and cognitive engagement.

Hence, the study gives new insights into the supporting role of streaming media in entertainment for the eCommerce industry.

References

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