Live Streaming E-Commerce as a Business Start-up Option for Hong Kong Youngsters

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With the spread of Coronavirus disease 2019, many companies have begun to operate e-commerce (electronic commerce) as a way of selling and buying products or services and have formulated online digital strategies with live streaming. The rise of live streaming e-commerce has become an increasingly common practice of the B2C (business-to-customer) and C2C (customer-to-customer) business models in Hong Kong, although it has already been mature in China. The approach of live streaming e-commerce is similar to personal face-to-face selling. The difference is by employing online channels to perform such selling. Some features are embedded in live streaming platforms, such as instant messaging, virtual gifts, and coupons. The successful stories of live streamers in China attract Hong Kong people to follow. Specifically, an individual can start his/her e-commerce by live streaming. However, only limited studies have examined the ways to start with live streaming e-commerce.

This research aims at investigating whether live streaming e-commerce is a viable start-up option for Hong Kong youngsters. After conducting 26 in-depth personal interviews with the live streamers and senior management of online platforms engaging in live streaming operations, the major findings are as follows: (1) Live streaming set-up facilities are available, and the cost is affordable for the C2C business model; (2) The style of a live streamer is required to be a mixture of informational (familiar with the products), entertainable (make audiences enjoy watching), and relational (beyond seller–buyer relationship); (3) The trust/creditability of live streamers is developed by their professional knowledge of the products and sincere friendship with the audiences; (4) Teamwork is recommended, as many tasks must be performed in one live streaming session. If two live streamers work together, then attracting more viewers and running more than one-hour live streaming are easy; (5) The constraint of doing C2C live streaming e-commerce in Hong Kong is the high logistic cost, in terms of dollar value and time, resulting in profit making only when the value or the volume of the products is high; and (6) Watching live streaming e-commerce broadcasting is still not a popular habit of Hong Kong people. The C2C live streamers must maintain and develop their audiences by keeping interaction with them through designated social media groups. In sum, opportunities are available on B2C platforms in Hong Kong for young people to start their C2C live streaming e-commerce businesses.