How broadcasters enhance rapport with viewers in live streaming commerce
A genre-based discourse analysis

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Despite the increasing research interest, the existing literature on live streaming commerce as a new e-commerce mode is still in its infancy. Based on 100 live streaming commerce videos from the top two broadcasters on Taobao Live in China, this study conducted a genre-based discourse analysis to investigate the move pattern in this new genre. The study draws on rapport management theory to scrutinize the linguistic functions of the moves, to explore how the broadcasters managed to enhance broadcaster-viewer relationship. Our findings may further our understanding of live streaming commerce as a new form of digital genre, and shed light on how successful broadcasters may strategically manage their relationship with viewers through well-organized discourse forms. Theoretically, the present research may contribute to the literature of employing rapport management theory in the discourse domain by extending it into a new digital genre analysis. Practically, our findings may provide implications for relevant practitioners.

Keywords: rapport management, live streaming commerce, successful broadcasters, broadcaster-viewer relationship, move analysis, Taobao Live

1. Introduction

Live streaming commerce, as a newly emergent e-commerce mode has been exerting enormous socio-economic impacts. Among all the live streaming platforms, Taobao Live in China is an example in point. Since its availability in 2016, Taobao Live has witnessed unprecedented development and entered into an era of national streaming, where everything can be streamed. According to Alibaba Group (home to Taobao Live) news, the Gross Merchandise Volume in Taobao Live has been rising by 150% in three consecutive years, reaching 400 billion RMB.
by December 31, 2020 and the number of broadcasters has been increasing year by year with the annual growth rate in 2020 as 661%. Considering its huge influence, live streaming commerce broadcasters have been officially recognized as a new digital profession called ‘live streaming salespersons’ in China since July 2020.

Unsurprisingly, the prosperity of live streaming commerce has attracted attention from not only the public but also academia. Researchers are intrigued to explore the features and advantages of live streaming commerce (e.g., Chen and Lin 2018; Skjuve and Brandtzaeg 2019; Sun et al. 2019). Nonetheless, existing literature on live streaming commerce is still in its infancy (Ma 2021) and mainly comes from marketing and information management fields. Notably, some researches (e.g., Hu and Chaudhry 2021; Kang et al., 2021) have already explored the role of relationship building in live streaming commerce and highlighted the significance of broadcaster-viewer relationship from the perspectives of relationship marketing and IT affordances. However, how the relationship is managed is largely unknown from a linguistic perspective.

In order to enrich the current research on live streaming commerce from a linguistic perspective, this study was designed to conduct a genre-based discourse analysis to explore the moves of live streaming commerce as a new genre. Moreover, given the dominant role of broadcasters and the criticality of broadcaster-viewer relationship in live streaming commerce, the current study also intended to investigate how those successful broadcasters manage the broadcaster-viewer relationship through the moves present in the new genre. To interpret the relationship construction through the moves, Spencer-Oatey’s (2000, 2005, 2008) rapport management theory was adopted as the analytical framework. Through exploring the generic features of 100 live streaming commerce videos hosted by the top two broadcasters on Taobao Live in China, this study attempts to answer the following research questions:

Q1: What are the moves employed by the top two broadcasters in their live streaming commerce?
Q2: How do the broadcasters manage the broadcaster-viewer relationship through the moves?

2. Literature review

2.1 Research on live streaming commerce

As a subset of e-commerce embedded in real-time social interaction (Wongkitrungrueng et al. 2020), the typical characteristics of live streaming commerce lie in the affordances of authenticity, visualization and interactivity (e.g.,
Wongkitrungrueng and Assarut 2020; Zhang et al. 2022). Typically, broadcasters in live streaming commerce are enabled to upload real-time videos to vividly demonstrate products from all-round angles, including try-on exhibitions to show the effect of the products’ immediate use, so that viewers can have an experience more akin to in-store shopping. In addition, broadcasters can offer prompt and customer-tailored response to viewers’ queries, creating the effect of a parasocial and immersive shopping experience (Liao et al. 2022). Moreover, to encourage viewers to make a purchase, broadcasters may initiate various professional promotional incentives, such as giving away coupons and offering attractive discounts.

The popularity of live streaming commerce has attracted enormous research interest. The existing literature has two major strands. Firstly, there is a lot of research from the perspective of consumers, which primarily explores the impacts of the characteristics of live streaming on consumer behaviors, particularly the impact of IT affordances such as the visibility affordance, metavoicing affordance, and guidance shopping affordance (Sun et al. 2019). It has been found that the real-time multimedia interactivity of live streaming commerce caters to consumers’ needs for information, involvement and interaction, thus reducing consumers’ sense of uncertainty and risk in online shopping (Ma 2021) and consequently enhancing consumers’ engagement and purchase intention.

The other strand of research is from the perspective of broadcasters, basically focusing on the dominant role of broadcasters and the significance of relationship marketing in live streaming commerce (e.g., Wongkitrungrueng and Assarut 2020; Wongkitrungrueng et al. 2020; Chen et al. 2022). Broadcasters in live streaming commerce play a decisive role as information source and content contributor (Kang et al. 2021). Meanwhile, as online shopping evolves from being primarily transactional to relational (Kozlenkova et al. 2017) and consumers can easily switch between platforms and broadcasters (Singh and Rosengren 2020), relationship marketing is critical in live streaming commerce. Research has confirmed there is a direct link between relational bond and consumer engagement and purchase intention in online shopping (Hu and Chaudhry 2021). In addition, empirical studies have found that experienced broadcasters are able to enhance consumer engagement and purchase intention amounting to larger success through relationship building by displaying their social capitals (Xu et al. 2022), expertise (Hu and Chaudhry 2021), communication styles (Liao et al. 2022), and interaction skills (Guo et al. 2022).

However, live streaming commerce research is still in its nascent stage (Kang et al. 2021) and most literature comes from the fields of marketing and information management, as reviewed above. As a new form of mediated communication, live streaming commerce has hitherto received little research attention from lin-
guistics, and discourse analysis of broadcaster-viewer interaction is insufficient. The only exception is Recktenwald’s (2017) study, which provided a transcription scheme as an entry point for future micro-level linguistic research on the video-mediated cross-modal communication of live streaming.

In view of the inadequacy of linguistic-based research on the broadcasters’ language performance and the consequent relationship building in live streaming commerce, our study intends to investigate the generic characteristics of live streaming commerce through move analysis; and will explore how successful broadcasters construct favorable relationships with viewers by employing appropriate rapport management strategies in the moves.

2.2 Genre and move analysis

Various definitions of genre have been proposed based on different approaches to the study of discourse forms. Genre was defined in terms of typification of rhetorical action grounded on classic Greek rhetorical tradition, of regularities of staged, goal-oriented social action according to systemic functional linguistics, and of consistency of communicative purpose realized by moves and steps in the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) approach (Bhatia 2004). While these definitions may have seemingly different orientations, there is a lot of common ground shared. Among these agreed-upon attributes, there are four items found to be most relevant to the present research and are thus listed below (Bhatia 2004, 22–23):

1. Genres are recognizable communicative events, characterized by a set of communicative purposes identified and mutually understood by members of the professional or academic community in which they regularly occur.
2. Genres are highly structured and conventionalized constructs, with constraints on allowable contributions not only in terms of the intentions one would like to give expression to and the shape they often take, but also in terms of the lexico-grammatical resources one can employ to give discoursal values to such formal features.
3. Established members of a particular professional community will have a much greater knowledge and understanding of the use and exploitation of genres than those who are apprentices, new members or outsiders.
4. Although genres are viewed as conventionalized constructs, expert members of the disciplinary and professional communities often exploit generic resources to express not only ‘private’ but also organizational intentions within the constructs of ‘socially recognized communicative purposes’.
Item 1 is relevant to this study because live streaming commerce is a communicative event concerning professionals and practitioners (such as broadcasters and viewers) in the new mode of e-commerce community with the overriding communicative purpose of business transactions. Item 2 is relevant because live streaming commerce unfolds following specific procedures and employing generic and linguistic resources available in the specific contexts of live streaming to achieve its communicative purpose. Items 3 and 4 are relevant because experienced broadcasters may make better use of the resources available in live streaming commerce for bigger success depending on their greater knowledge and flexible individual innovation within the established conventions. This may, to a certain extent, account for the salient Matthew effect in the broadcaster ecology of live streaming commerce when a few top broadcasters occupy a large portion of the resources available (Guo et al. 2022). Given the points of relevance presented, following Recktenwald (2017), we consider live streaming commerce in the present analysis as a new media genre typified by a video-mediated cross-modal communication.

Genre is generally analyzed through move analysis, which was first developed by Swales (1981) as a text analytical approach to uncover the generic structure of genres in terms of moves and the linguistic features characterizing the various moves (Moreno and Swales 2018). Moves are defined as “discoursal or rhetorical units performing coherent communicative functions in a written or spoken text” (Swales 2004, 228–229) and moves are flexible in linguistic realization. In practice, move analysis is operationalized as a top-down approach where the specific text is divided into a sequence of moves with varying length serving particular communicative functions (Biber et al. 2007).

Move analysis has been a well-established approach for genre-based discourse analysis. Due to its applicability in genre study, move analysis has been widely adopted to analyze various genres, including academic conference discussions (e.g., Xu 2022), business emails (e.g., Park et al. 2021), mixed genres such as adver- torials (Deng et al. 2021), and newly emergent digital genres such as internet group buying deals (e.g., Lam 2013) and the review response genre (e.g., Zhang and Vásquez 2014). Notably, previous genre research through move analysis has demonstrated that professionals may exploit generic characteristics to achieve their communicative goals, such as rapport management and service recovery in hospitality (e.g., Ho 2017a, 2017b). In the present research, following the top-down move analysis approach (Biber et al. 2007), we would first explore the moves in live streaming commerce as a new digital genre and then interpret the relationship building realized through the moves by drawing on rapport management theory (Spencer-Oatey 2000, 2005, 2008).
2.3 Rapport management theory

Rapport management theory was proposed by Spencer-Oatey (2000, 2005, 2008) as a comprehensive framework to explore “the use of language to promote, maintain or threaten harmonious social relations” (Spencer-Oatey 2000, 3). Rapport refers to “the relative harmony and smoothness of relations between people, and rapport management refers to the management (or mismanagement) of relations between people” (Spencer-Oatey 2005, 96). There are three fundamental and interconnected components of rapport: face sensitivities, sociality rights and obligation, and interactional goals. For effective rapport management, one needs to attend to all of them.

Face in rapport management refers to “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken in particular contact” (Spencer-Oatey 2008, 13). Face has two different levels: quality face at the individual level and identity face at the interpersonal level. At either level, face is concerned with positive attributes and how people have a fundamental desire for others’ acknowledgment of these positive qualities, which is considered a “universal need for face” (Spencer-Oatey 2000, 12). Hence, effectively managing rapport entails attending to people’s face wants both in the individual level and in the interpersonal level.

Sociality rights and obligation refers to social entitlement embedded in two principles: equity and association. The equity principle states that we all have a fundamental belief that we should be treated fairly in interpersonal interactions, retaining our autonomy without imposition and maintaining benefit without unfair cost. The association principle means that people are entitled to be associated with others concerning both interactive and affective involvement. Thus, effectively managing rapport calls for close attention to people’s desire for equity and association rights.

Interactional goals can be basically divided into two types: transactional and relational goals. “Very often, the two types of goals may be interconnected, because achieving a transactional goal may depend on successfully managing the relational goal” (Spencer-Oatey 2005, 107). People usually have pre-set goals for interaction with others and the extent of goal achievement may influence people’s perception of rapport. To manage rapport effectively, people need to take care of others’ interactional goals.

As a refined approach to linguistic politeness, rapport management theory has been widely used to explore how people strategically use language to build, maintain, and enhance a harmonious relationship in various interaction settings, including synchronous face-to-face interaction and asynchronous computer-mediated communication. Regarding rapport management in face-to-face com-
munication, there are studies on one-on-one sales transactions between salesperson and potential consumers in stores (Clark et al. 2003), student conversational interactions (Zhu 2014), and judges’ compliments and criticism for contestants in TV talent shows (Lin 2020). Regarding computer-mediated communication, researchers have examined rapport management in student-professor upward request emails (Zhu 2016), individuals’ impoliteness in YouTube discussions (Andersson 2021), functions of emoji in WhatsApp (Sampietro 2019), and hotels’ responses to negative online reviews (e.g., Morrow and Yamanouchi 2020).

Rapport could be managed through all aspects of language use, including but not limited to the performance of speech acts (Spencer-Oatey 2008). Nonetheless, despite the existing wide-ranging study of rapport management in various settings, a lot of work has been focused on the illocutionary domain mainly in light of speech acts, but comparative research on the other domains, such as the discourse domain, participation domain, stylistic domain, and non-verbal domain, is less systemic (Spencer-Oatey 2008). This study, therefore, intends to contribute to our understanding of rapport management in the discourse domain by exploring how rapport is managed through moves and discourse organization in live streaming commerce.

3. Methods

3.1 Data collection

As mentioned above, 100 live streaming commerce videos streamed by the top two broadcasters (based on their ranking in the platform) from Taobao Live in China were collected as the data from November 1st, 2020 to January 31st, 2021. We focused on analyzing the top two broadcasters’ live streaming commerce videos in order to explore whether there are generalizable generic characteristics employed by competent live streaming salespersons to achieve rapport management with potential consumers. Given that numerous kinds of products are streamed but beauty products account for a major portion of the products for both broadcasters, we selected fifty live streaming videos from the two broadcasters respectively which focused only on promoting one type of beauty product. These streamed videos were all watched through first and then downloaded for automatic transcription of all utterances with the assistance of voice-text tools. Then, the transcribed texts were manually checked to correct errors. Even though live streaming commerce is multi-modal in nature, the present study concentrated on analyzing the videos’ discourse organization at the textual level only. The other
semiotic resources, such as vocal and kinesic resources used, were beyond the research scope. The length of transcribed texts ranges from 580 to 3,973 Chinese characters per video. Ultimately, we created a corpus consisting of 100 separate transcribed texts with altogether 176,232 Chinese characters (see Table 1).

Table 1. Data profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Number of live streaming commerce videos</th>
<th>Size of transcribed texts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Broadcaster 1</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>88,956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadcaster 2</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>87,276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>176,232</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Size here refers to the number of Chinese characters in the transcribed texts.*

3.2 Data coding

Data coding was primarily conducted to identify the moves presented by broadcasters in live streaming commerce with the assistance of NVivo 11. Following the move analysis approach embedded in the ESP tradition, move identification basically means to segment the text into a sequence of functional units, which not only have their own specific purpose but also commonly contribute to the overall communicative purpose of the genre (Biber et al. 2007, 23).

Informed by previous literature on business and promotional genres, such as online advertisements of electronic products (Labrador et al. 2014), online group buying deals (Lam 2013), and advertorials (Zhou 2012), and given that live streaming commerce emerges as a subset of e-commerce (Wongkitrungrueng et al. 2020), we argue that the overriding communicative purpose in live streaming commerce for broadcasters is primarily to describe the product in the way that would convince viewers to purchase it. To achieve this overriding communicative purpose, several specific sub-purposes may be required, such as information giving, attention attracting, and relationship building.

Keeping the communicative purposes in mind, we conducted a four-step move identification in all 100 texts. First, two coders (the authors) read through ten of the texts, five by each of the two broadcasters, to get a general understanding of live streaming commerce discourse flow and conceive possible moves by segmenting the texts based on their specific communicative functions under the overriding communicative purpose. Second, the two coders tentatively coded the ten texts for moves and proposed a preliminary coding scheme, which was refined whenever necessary through the process. Third, the refined coding scheme was further used by the two coders to code another ten texts separately, resulting in an inter-coder reliability of 88%. All the unclear cases were thoroughly discussed.
until a consensus was reached and further revisions were made to the coding scheme. In the end, the eighty texts remained were coded by the second author and checked by the first author for consistency. Following previous studies, such as Ho (2017a, 2017b), moves in the present research were labeled in a way which would indicate the specific communicative functions they serve. The move structure adopted in this study is exemplified in the Appendix.

Following previous analytical procedures (e.g., Zhang and Vásquez 2014; Morrow and Yamanouchi 2020), we coded all 100 separate texts at the sentence level. However, the length of the coded sections varied. In some cases, a single sentence may be assigned as one move while in other cases several sentences together may perform the same communicative function as a result of their internal logical organization and therefore were assigned as a single move. In addition, not all moves in the coding scheme may occur in any single text and for some texts there may be repeated moves, which would be counted separately only when the move was separated by one or more different moves. For example, in a single text one whole functional unit, such as ‘introducing’, may be separated by one or more different functional units, such as the most frequently used ‘real-time Q&A’. In that case, ‘introducing’ would be counted repeatedly regarding its frequency.

3.3 Data analysis

The coded moves were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitative analysis was conducted to discern the move pattern in live streaming commerce as a new genre. It concerned the examination of each move regarding its occurrence in texts and the overall frequency and percentage in all move types. The occurrence in texts analysis was to determine whether a specific move was obligatory or optional in live streaming commerce by counting the number of texts containing such a move. Following Lam (2013), we considered moves with 100% occurrence in all text as obligatory moves and moves with less than 100% occurrence as optional moves. The overall frequency and percentage analysis was meant to explore the varying distributions of each move in all the 100 transcribed texts.

The descriptive move pattern was then subject to a qualitative analysis, which was mainly done to interpret communication functions of each move by drawing on rapport management theory (Spencer-Oatey 2000, 2005, 2008). To be specific, based on the distinctive emphasis on the three components of rapport, each move was considered to primarily perform one of the three rapport management functions: face sensitivity, sociality rights and obligation, and interactional goals. For example, the move ‘sharing’ was used by broadcasters to mainly disclose personal emotions or to provide practical tips for viewers in a friend-like way, highlight-
ing the intention of involvement with viewers. Hence, ‘sharing’ was interpreted as serving the rapport management function of attending to viewers’ sociality rights.

It is notable that the interpretation of move functions was not always clear-cut when some moves may have one or more rapport management functions. As noted by Spencer-Oatey (2008), one same behavior may enhance or threaten two or all of the three pillars for rapport management. In such cases, we interpreted the moves’ rapport management functions from multiple dimensions. For example, the move ‘real-time Q&A’ could fulfill both the rapport management function of interactional goal for business transactions by providing a personalized reply for a purchase decision, and the function of being affectively associated with viewers by showing empathy for viewers’ concerns.

4. Findings

4.1 Moves in live streaming commerce

Informed by previous literature on move analysis (e.g., Lam 2013; Labrador et al. 2014), this study of the 100 live streaming commerce texts identified thirteen move types which tend to appear in a relatively stable sequence. Table 2 presents the move pattern.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Move</th>
<th>Occurrence (n = 100)</th>
<th>Frequency (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Greeting</td>
<td>100 (100%)</td>
<td>100 (7.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Introducing</td>
<td>100 (100%)</td>
<td>125 (9.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Promoting</td>
<td>100 (100%)</td>
<td>162 (12.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Sharing</td>
<td>81 (81%)</td>
<td>105 (7.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Presenting</td>
<td>72 (72%)</td>
<td>72 (5.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Recommending</td>
<td>100 (100%)</td>
<td>119 (8.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Stimulating</td>
<td>100 (100%)</td>
<td>108 (8.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Instructing</td>
<td>100 (100%)</td>
<td>102 (7.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Real-time Q&amp;A</td>
<td>100 (100%)</td>
<td>203 (15.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Self-promoting</td>
<td>32 (32%)</td>
<td>50 (3.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Appreciating</td>
<td>42 (42%)</td>
<td>95 (7.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Apologizing</td>
<td>16 (16%)</td>
<td>35 (2.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Soliciting attention</td>
<td>43 (43%)</td>
<td>63 (4.7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As shown in Table 2, seven moves in our data were classified as obligatory moves (100% occurrence in all of the texts): greeting, introducing, promoting, recommending, stimulating, instructing and real-time Q&A. As obligatory moves, they are requisite in live streaming commerce, constructing the substantial structure of live streaming commerce discourse. Apart from the obligatory moves, we also identified six optional moves (less than 100% occurrence): sharing, presenting, self-promoting, appreciating, apologizing and soliciting attention. Optional moves are used frequently, but to varying degrees, ranging from 16% to 81% occurrence in the texts.

Additionally, our analysis revealed that these thirteen moves were arranged in a relatively stable sequence, as shown in Table 2. Although these moves may not appear in their fixed position in all live streaming commerce, especially when such moves as ‘real-time Q&A’ may be repeatedly used from the beginning to the end of streaming, the general sequence still suggests that live streaming commerce follows a typical pattern of discourse flow. Therefore, similar to the emergent genre of internet group buying deals (Lam 2013), live streaming commerce as a new genre has developed certain typical generic characteristics revealed by its relatively stable internal components and sequence, despite its relatively short history.

4.2 Broadcaster-viewer relationship building in the moves

Apart from the above descriptive analysis, the following sections provide detailed qualitative analysis on how the broadcasters engage in broadcaster-viewer relationship building by employing the moves in the live streaming commerce. The analysis approached the moves sequentially as shown in Table 2, and Spencer-Oatey’s (2000, 2005, 2008) rapport management theory was relied upon as the analytical framework.

Greeting

‘Greeting’ is one of the obligatory moves and usually used by broadcasters to initiate live streaming commerce as an opening line. Through greetings, broadcasters would extend warm welcome to viewers in an intimate manner. From the perspective of rapport management, it may highlight the broadcasters’ endeavor to attend to the viewers’ face sensitivity by making them feel respected and valued.
In Example (1), the broadcaster opens the live streaming by extending warm greetings and revealing what would be provided in the sale in an exciting and decisive tone. Hence, viewers may feel that they are welcomed and valued by the broadcasters and their expectations for quality products are well attended and acknowledged. In this way, the broadcaster fulfills the viewers’ face sensitivity, which would set a positive mood for their subsequent participation and potential purchase transactions.

**Introducing**

‘Introducing’ is also employed as an obligatory move mainly to provide the product-related factual information, such as the components, the place of origin and the desired effect. As one of the obligatory moves, ‘introducing’ usually appears right after the opening lines in the beginning section and is used to inform viewers of the product for sale as the basis for further engagement. As Spencer-Oatey (2005) state, people usually have preset goals in their interaction with others and the achievement of goals may impact their perception of rapport with others. For viewers participating in live streaming as a new mode of e-commerce, making a purchase would be their primary goal. To fulfill the interactional goals, broadcasters are expected to provide the needed factual information about the products, which is mainly accomplished by employing such moves as ‘introducing’.

(1) 大家好啊！我们又见面啦！一会儿我要上的可是大家期待已久的哦！

**Dàjiā hǎo a! Women yòu jiànmian la! Yīhuìer wǒ yào shàng de kěshì dàjiā qīdài yǐjiǔ de ò!**

‘Hello, everyone! Lovely to meet you again! What I am going to present for you is really something you have been longing for.’

In Example (2), the broadcaster describes the unique ingredients and effects of using the product, providing viewers the necessary facts. Thus, ‘introducing’ functions to fulfill the viewers’ interactional goals of looking for and getting informed about the targeted products as the basis for their purchase decision. As Spencer-Oatey (2005) state, people usually have preset goals in their interaction with others and the achievement of goals may impact their perception of rapport with others. For viewers participating in live streaming as a new mode of e-commerce, making a purchase would be their primary goal. To fulfill the interactional goals, broadcasters are expected to provide the needed factual information about the products, which is mainly accomplished by employing such moves as ‘introducing’.

(2) 这款产品富含精油，有很好的滋养保湿效果。

**Zhèkuǎn chǎnpǐn fùhán jīngyóu, yǒu hěnhǎo de zīyǎng bǎoshī xiàoguǒ.**

‘This product is rich in oil ingredients and good at moisturizing and nourishing.’
The next move after ‘introducing’ is usually ‘promoting.’ After disclosing the factual information about the products, broadcasters usually speak highly of the products by presenting credibility and popularity as a way of promotion.

In Example (3), the broadcaster makes promises to viewers regarding the product quality and credibility in an exaggerated way for promotional effect. Having given the basic information about the product through the previous move of ‘introducing’, broadcasters bring viewers closer to making the purchase decision by highlighting the product’s merits through ‘promoting’. As concluded by Labrador et al. (2014), the two primary parts in promotional genres are describing the product to be sold and evaluating the product positively to persuade people to purchase it. Similarly, in live streaming commerce, a predominantly promotional genre, ‘introducing’ was employed for product description on the one hand and ‘promoting’ was used for persuasion on the other hand. Both of them served to fulfill the viewers’ interactional goal of making a purchase.

‘Sharing’ is employed by broadcasters mainly to disclose product-related background stories and their own personal life experiences or values. Thus, viewers would be treated as equal friends with whom broadcasters could establish affective association. Therefore, ‘sharing’ serves the rapport management function of fulfilling the viewers’ sociality rights of equity and association. Although it is not an obligatory move, ‘sharing’ is used in most live streaming texts (eighty-one out of 100 texts) with a frequency of 105, showing that the broadcasters attach high value to associating with the viewers.

‘Be rational, my friends. I am telling you from my own experience. Do not yield to temptation and get yourself something completely impractical.’
In Example (4), the broadcaster shares her own consumption experience and reminds viewers to keep a sober mind and not to fall into blindness by directly addressing the viewers as “friends”. As a result, viewers might feel close to the broadcaster and relate to their shopping experiences. Therefore, the viewers’ sociality rights of being treated fairly and making affective association are fulfilled.

**Presenting**

Compared with traditional text-/image-based e-commerce, ‘presenting’ products in all dimensions for vivid demonstration is one of the unique features of live streaming commerce, although it may not always appear. Building on the previous basis of giving factual information through ‘introducing’ and raising the product profile through ‘promoting’, broadcasters could create a sense of authenticity, add a sense of presence and simulate an in-store shopping experience for viewers (Skjuve and Brandtzaeg 2019) through ‘presenting’, which may work to consolidate viewers’ potential purchase intentions.

(5) 我们现在给大家演示一下。你们看啊，它是哑光的，带一点点细闪。

Wǒmen xiànzài gěi dàjiā yǎshì yīxià. Nǐmen kàn a, tā shì yǎguāng de, dài yìdiǎndiǎn xìshǎn.
‘Let me show you the effect. You see, it is warm in color and contains a little glitter.’

In Example (5), the broadcaster demonstrates the product through a real-time try-on, showing the immediate use effect and creating an immersive shopping experience for viewers, which will be helpful to reduce their sense of uncertainty and risk in online shopping (Ma 2021). As a result, the viewers’ interactional goal of making a practical purchase will be further facilitated and enhanced.

**Recommending**

Similar to ‘introducing’ and ‘promoting’, ‘recommending’ is also one of the obligatory moves (100% occurrence) and repeatedly occurs (119 cases in 100 texts) in some live streaming texts, mainly functioning to facilitate the achievement of interactional goals. After introducing the basic information, promoting the profile and presenting the effect, broadcasters would usually employ ‘recommending’ to give straightforward advice to help viewers make purchase decisions.
总共有四个颜色，如果日常用的话，我推荐买黑色和棕色，如果在比如过年的时候，那你就可以买这两个红色。

Four different colors are available at present. If you want to use it mainly at daily work, then I will recommend you to pick black and brown ones. If you are to wear them for festivals, you may need the red ones.

The broadcaster in Example (6) offers practical tips for viewers regarding how to make the most appropriate purchase arrangement based on specific contexts. For viewers who may consider broadcasters as online celebrity, they would anticipate and easily accept those suggestions from someone influential and professional. Thus, the broadcaster’s recommendation is expected by and actually helpful for viewers to make decisions. Therefore, by employing the move of ‘recommending’, broadcasters may help to fulfill the viewers’ interactional goal of making purchase, enhancing broadcaster-viewer rapport.

Stimulating

‘Stimulating’ is used mainly to offer various promotion campaigns, such as providing tempting discounts, gift giving and reminding shortage of stock, as shown in Example (7).

这支店里是125元一支，我们直播间一支89元，两支178元，买两支会送一个迷你腮红刷。这支口红我们现在只有3000支。

The price tag for this red lipstick in store is 125 yuan. But in my live streaming room, you will get one for 89 yuan and two for 178 yuan. In addition, if you get two together, we will give you a mini blush brush for free. Also, we only have 3,000 lipsticks on sale.

‘Stimulating’, as shown above, could be another effective move broadcasters employ to intensify viewers’ purchase intention. Having been made aware of the basic product information through ‘introducing’, its credibility and popularity through ‘promoting’, its immediate effect through ‘presenting’ and its suitability through ‘recommending’, viewers are led to approach the stage of making a final decision. When stimulated by these attractive and tangible benefits provided through ‘stimulating’, viewers’ potential purchase intentions may very well be
turned into actual transactions since the utilitarian value of making worthy business transactions (Wongkitrungrueng and Assarut 2020) would have been fulfilled. In that sense, ‘stimulating’ is used to enhance broadcaster-viewer rapport by promoting the viewers’ interactional goal.

**Instrcting**

‘Instrcting’ is also obligatory in live streaming commerce as broadcasters employ it to inform viewers on how to participate in the various promotion campaigns made available through the previous move, ‘stimulating’. It may be the final step for the transaction completion. Through ‘instructing’, viewers are informed about the specific procedures required to take part in the campaigns such as by getting coupons or making a reasonable arrangement in the online order.

(8) 大家一定要记得先领券，然后填2，否则就不能享受满减优惠。

（No. 12 text from Broadcaster 1）

Dàjiā yídìng yào jìde xiān lǐngquàn, ránhòu tián 2, fǒuzé jiù bùnéng xiǎngshòu mǎnjiǎn yōuhuì.

‘Remember to get the coupons first and then fill in the number 2 in your order, or otherwise you will not get the discount as you wish.’

In Example (8), the broadcaster gives clear instructions on how to get the discounts by reminding viewers to get coupons first and then fill in correct order information. Through providing considerate instructions, viewers may feel the broadcasters’ sincere desire to guide them through the e-commerce procedure to get a favorable price. The broadcasters’ demonstration of their readiness to help may further enhance broadcaster-viewer rapport, which in turn may intensify viewers’ purchase intention.

**Real-time Q&A**

Among all the obligatory moves, ‘real-time Q&A’ is used most frequently (ranked 1st in frequency), as it is employed repeatedly at any stage in every live streaming commerce text. Typically, ‘real-time Q&A’ is used to give replies spontaneously in response to the viewers’ questions and comments.

(9) 留言区有人在问这个产品皮肤敏感的人能不能用。我不推荐购买，安全起见，我还是建议你使用专门为敏感肌肤设计的产品。

（No. 36 text from Broadcaster 1）

Liúyánqū yǒurén zài wèn zhège chǎnpǐn pífū mǐngǎn de rén néngbù néng yòng. Wǒ bù tuījiàn gòumǎi, ānquán qǐjiàn, wǒ háishì jiànyì nǐ shǐyòng zhuānmén wei mǐngǎn jīfū shèji de chǎnpǐn.
‘Someone asked in the message board whether it is suitable for sensitive skins. I myself do not recommend that. I will advise you to buy those specially designed products for safety.’

In Example (9), the broadcaster responds to individuals’ inquiries by offering a negatory reply followed by a practical recommendation, fulfilling their sociality obligation of information giving as a professional salesperson and meeting viewers’ expectations for sociality rights of involvement as independent individuals, rather than as a member of the group. In addition, the response containing further recommendation may also function to help viewers achieve the interactional goal of purchasing more suitable products. Thus, ‘real-time Q&A’ may serve multiple rapport management functions.

Real-time and customized responses are one of the typical advantages for live streaming facilitated by IT affordances such as synchronous interactivity (e.g., Kang et al. 2021; Liao et al. 2022). The highest frequency of ‘real-time Q&A’ in the present study may, to certain extent, indicate that the top two broadcasters make deliberate efforts to interact with the viewers and respond to their concerns promptly.

Self-promoting
Among all the thirteen move types, ‘self-promoting’ is special because it is not viewer-oriented but broadcaster-oriented. Specifically, while other moves are employed to mainly fulfill the viewers’ face sensitivity, sociality rights or interactional goals, self-promoting is used by broadcasters to satisfy their individual face needs. Typically, broadcasters use ‘self-promoting’ to construct themselves as a reliable community member, a trustworthy friend, a competent professional or a hearty patriot.

(10) 你们也知道啊,我现在其实并不需要这么辛苦地直播。但是，我觉得把物美价廉的国货推荐给大家是一个责任。

(No. 45 text from Broadcaster 1)

Nǐmen yě zhīdào a, wǒ xiànzài qíshí bìng bù xūyào zhème xīnkǔ di zhíbō. Dànshì, wǒ juéde bǎ wùměijiàlián de guóhuò tuījiàn gěi dàjiā shì yīgè zérèn.
‘You know that I actually do not need to be so hardworking. But I feel a sense of responsibility to promote these domestic products with fine quality and low prices to as many people as possible.’

In Example (10), the broadcaster discloses that the real reason for his persistence in live streaming is not simply for money but for the sake of promoting products of national brands and for the benefit of viewers. This claim may help construct himself as a person with a strong sense of patriotism and social responsibility, which may have resonance and appeal to the viewers. As the information provider
and content creator, broadcasters in live streaming commerce play a dominant role and broadcasters’ personal attributes are among the major sources of attraction (Wongkitrungrueng et al. 2020; Guo et al. 2022). Therefore, through ‘self-promoting,’ broadcasters may fulfill either their own quality face at the individual level or their identity face at the group level, which may help to enhance their personal charisma and thereby attract more viewers.

**Appreciating**

‘Appreciating’ is usually employed by broadcasters to express gratitude for viewers’ attention and participation. Similar to ‘greeting,’ ‘appreciating’ is used to make viewers feel that they are valued and their participation is important, thus attending to viewers’ face sensitivity.

(11) 感谢朋友们的关注，谢谢大家。 (No. 32 text from Broadcaster 2)

Gǎnxì péngyǒumen de guānzhù, xièxiè dàjiā.

‘Thanks for your attention, my friends. Thanks.’

**Apologizing**

‘Apologizing’ is only used in rare cases when there is a short supply of the desired product, which may be due to an unexpectedly high transaction volume. It occurs in a small number of texts (sixteen out of 100 texts) and accounts for the lowest percentage (2.6%, ranked the last). In addition, apologies are usually accompanied by promises to make up for the shortage in the future.

(12) 不好意思啊，没货了。真的是没了，我们会再跟商家谈，争取继续供货。 (No. 27 text from Broadcaster 1)

Bùhǎoyìsǐ a, méi huò le, zhēndì shì méile, women huì zài gèn shāngjiā tán, zhēngqǔ jìxù gōnghuò.

‘My apologies. We are really out of supply. We will talk with the supplier for further supplies.’

In Example (12), through ‘apologizing,’ the broadcaster expresses regret for not fulfilling the viewers’ expectations for the wanted products. Following the sincere apology, the broadcaster attempts to make up for the shortage by mentioning continued supply in future. As a result, although their interactional goal for purchasing is not achieved this time, viewers may still feel that they are valued and their demands are seriously considered, thus the broadcaster-viewer rapport is still maintained through taking care of the viewers’ face sensitivity.
Soliciting attention

‘Soliciting attention’ is mainly used by broadcasters to explicitly ask for more attention from viewers. It usually occurs by the end of the live streaming and is expressed in concise manners.

(13) 喜欢的朋友们，请多多关注我的直播间。 (No. 21 text from Broadcaster 2)

Xǐhuan de péngyǒumen, qǐng duōduō guānzhù wǒde zhíbōjiān.

‘If you like my live streaming, please keep on following our live stream studio.’

Through ‘soliciting attention’, broadcasters acknowledge the importance of viewers in live streaming commerce on the one hand, and invite their further involvement on the other hand, as shown in Example (13). Thus, ‘soliciting attention’ may possibly function to fulfill both the viewers’ face sensitivity as valued members and more importantly the sociality rights of association with others.

5. Discussion

The move pattern revealed by the top two broadcasters in their live streaming commerce texts seems to imply that those successful broadcasters are skilled in making use of the generic characteristics of this new digital genre for career success. As stated by Bhatia (2004), professionals can make a better use of genres to achieve communicative intentions. The top two broadcasters in the present study can be possibly considered as those professionals who possess more knowledge and capability about live streaming commerce genre and hence achieve more success and influence in the field. Indeed, elevated by the unique characteristics of live streaming, such as authenticity, visualization and interactivity (e.g., Sun et al. 2019; Wongkitrungrueng and Assarut 2020; Hu and Chaudhry 2021), experienced broadcasters could realize their overriding communicative purpose of business transaction through well-organized discourse containing indispensable components and progressing in reasonable procedures. Thus, our findings may provide practical implications for practitioners in live streaming commerce regarding how to take advantage of the generic features for professional achievement. For example, less experienced broadcasters may learn to include the obligatory moves in their live streaming commerce discourse to fulfill consumers’ expectations for a more visualized, personalized and interactive shopping experience. They can also organize their live streaming commerce following the move sequence unveiled in the present analysis for a smooth discourse flow. Both would help to enhance consumers’ engagement and purchase decisions and consequently to complete business transactions.
Apart from the move pattern, the relationship-building function embedded in those moves would also be practically meaningful considering the significance of relationship marketing in online shopping. It was found that the two successful broadcasters in the present analysis managed to attend to all three bases of rapport by employing various viewer-oriented moves, hence managing well long-term and harmonious relationships with viewers. Specifically, they fulfill viewers’ face sensitivity mainly by showing respect for their presence (‘greeting’), expressing gratitude for their participation and support (‘appreciating’) and apologizing for failing to meet viewers’ expectations (‘apologizing’). They attend to viewers’ sociality rights by sharing personal feelings and practical tips (‘sharing’), offering real-time personalized response to queries (‘real-time Q&A’) and inviting continued connection (‘soliciting attention’). In addition, the viewers’ interactional goal of participating in live streaming commerce as potential buyers is satisfied step by step, from giving professional product-related information (‘introducing’, ‘promoting’, and ‘presenting’), offering personal advice and instructions on purchase (‘recommending’ and ‘instructing’) to providing expected discounts (‘stimulating’) and offering ‘real-time Q&A’ for shopping assistance through the process. In a word, every move utilized is closely related to broadcaster-viewer relationship building, which is critical for online commerce (Kozlenkova et al. 2017) and necessary to attract and retain customers (Singh and Rosengren 2020). Hence, another implication for those practitioners is that they need to pay close attention to the relationship-building function of the moves by exploiting the generic characteristics.

Another noteworthy point is the particular move of ‘self-promoting’, which is distinct from the other move types, which can be categorized as viewer-oriented and are employed mainly to fulfill viewers’ face sensitivity, sociality rights and interactional goals (Spencer-Oatey 2000, 2005, 2008). By comparison, ‘self-promoting’ is used by the broadcasters primarily to fulfill their own face sensitivity by displaying attractive personal attributes to construct a favorable self-image, and therefore can be considered as broadcaster-oriented. In the increasingly competitive live streaming commerce filed, it is believed that broadcasters play a dominant role in broadcaster-viewer interaction (e.g., Liao et al. 2022) and their personal characteristics are critical in creating resonance and building trust with viewers in the virtual community (e.g., Guo et al. 2022; Xu et al. 2022). Through ‘self-promoting’, broadcasters may present their positive image as a competent salesperson, a trustworthy friend or a person with a strong sense of social responsibility and patriotism, making viewers perceive not only expertise but also similarity and likability (Chen et al. 2022). As a result, viewers would be more attracted, develop more trust and show more loyalty to the broadcasters, and the broadcaster-viewer relationship would be accordingly enhanced. Hence, another
practical implication for practitioners is that they may promote interpersonal relationship by highlighting favorable personal attributes and constructing positive identities to create personal charm, cultivate trust, and enhance rapport.

6. Conclusion

Based on a detailed genre analysis on 100 live streaming commerce videos hosted by the top two broadcasters on Taobao Live in China, the present research explored the moves in this new media genre. Moreover, each move was further interpreted by drawing on Spencer-Oatey’s (2000, 2005, 2008) rapport management theory to explore its specific functions in broadcaster-viewer relationship building. Our analysis unveiled a move pattern which consisted of relatively stable internal components organized in a relatively stable sequence. The results also suggested that the top broadcasters were adept at rapport management by attending to all three bases of rapport through the moves.

Our genre-based discourse analysis would further the understanding of live streaming commerce as a new genre regarding its generic characteristics, thus contributing to the existing literature on live streaming commerce from the linguistic field. Moreover, rapport management theory was adopted to interpret the relationship building achieved by the broadcasters through the moves, hence extending the application of the theory into the newly emergent new media genre. In addition, rapport management functions served by the moves may shed light on how successful broadcasters strategically manage their relationship with viewers by making use of linguistic resources, thus providing certain practical implications for practitioners about how to build broadcaster-viewer relationship through well-organized discourse.

Despite its merits, the present research still has limitations which may suggest directions for future studies. Firstly, the data in the present analysis was confined to the top two broadcasters on Taobao Live in China. Therefore, future research may draw more generalizable conclusions regarding the generic characteristics of the live streaming commerce genre based on larger and richer data resources. Moreover, even though the study tentatively interpreted the rapport management effects achieved by the top broadcasters through the moves, the extent to which their success can be attributed to rapport management can hardly be pinpointed. Future research may conduct a comparative analysis by including less experienced broadcasters to further examine the possible contribution of rapport management in the new digital genre. Thirdly, live streaming commerce is video-mediated cross-modal communication (Recktenwald 2017) by nature, and therefore future investigations may take into account other semiotic resources other
than the verbal resource for a more comprehensive exploration of the broadcaster-viewer interaction. Fourthly, as the present research was focused on the overall move pattern of live streaming commerce, linguistic realization at the lexical-grammar level of moves was largely neglected. Future research could investigate linguistic realization at the microlevel from a corpus-based move analysis approach (Upton and Cohen 2009). Besides, although we followed a well-established procedure (e.g., Biber et al. 2007) and referred to a similar genre analysis framework (e.g., Lam 2013; Ho 2017a, 2017b), the move identification and the association between the moves and rapport management can still be further tested through more triangulate perspectives and approaches.

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References


Appendix

One transcribed text of live streaming commerce demonstrating the moves.

朋友们，大家好啊！我们来啦！DUO卸妆膏来啦！
Hello, my friends! Here we are! Here comes DUO cleanser cream!
他们家卸妆膏是有毛孔清洁胶囊的专利技术的……不添加香精和酒精，比较温和。

DUO cleanser cream is endowed with a patented technology... without any flavoring or alcohol additives, DUO cleanser cream is relatively mild.

你知道整个我们直播间的同事可以说是把彩妆都用了个遍了……最后大家一致跟我说这款一定要再播。

You know, colleagues in my live streaming room have tried on all kinds of makeups... In the end, everyone told me this product must be streamed again.

来，我们接下来直接卸妆给大家看……抹到脸上感觉特别舒服，非常温和。

Now we’ll use it to take off makeup and show you... you will feel particularly comfortable and gentle.

所以啊，如果你的肌肤特别敏感，那我推荐你就用这款产品……性价比也高。

So, if your skin is particularly sensitive, I recommend you to use this product... it’s highly cost-effective.

姐妹们，买它！天猫店铺价339一瓶，在我直播间领优惠券立减110元，到手229元一瓶。

Sisters, buy it! The price on Tmall is 339 yuan one bottle. In my live streaming room, you will get one bottle with 229 yuan after you grab the coupon worth 110 yuan.

有什么区别呢？不要比，如果你买得起，说句心里话，你买植春秀。

What’s the difference? Just don’t compare. To be honest, buy Shu Uemura if you can afford it.

真的蛮缺货的，我们这边也只有9000个。

It’s really out of stock. We’ve only got 9,000 pieces.

谢谢大家的支持啊！谢谢大大家！谢谢！

Thanks for your support! Thank you! Thanks!

下单前大家一定要记得领券啊，领券直接减钱，付款时直接抵扣。

Before you make the order, just remember to grab the coupon for direct reduction in payment.

不好意思，有需要的姐妹，等下次有机会这款产品我会再上。

My apology. If you did not get it this time, wait for the next time when it is available in my live streaming room again.

医美术后能用吗？你医美后还用什么卸妆？……你化什么妆啊！

Can it be used after the medical cosmetology? Why else do you need to remove makeup after your cosmetology? ... Just do not wear makeup!

另外，我要跟大家说啊……做的效果特别好，再给你推荐啊，所以以后再说，现在不敢说。

By the way, I want to tell you... I will recommend to you only after I see the effect on myself. So I will talk about it later, not now.

你们知道我的生活现在已经差不多很好了，我现在还在做直播，主要就是为了给大家推荐一些好的产品，也想让我的能力可以去帮助到一些国货，让一些国货变得非常的好。

You know my life has been pretty good now. The reason why I am still working as a broadcaster is mainly to recommend some good products to everyone and also to help some domestic products.

喜欢我的朋友们，请多多关注我的直播间！

My friends, if you like me, please follow me on my live broadcast room!
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