

SOFTWARE AND TECHNOLOGY

Livestreaming is the new frontier for fashion, retail

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As social shopping continues to accelerate, livestreaming events are becoming an integral part of this transactional channel. Image credit: Alibaba

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The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the growth of livestreaming around the globe, after it first gained popularity among China's highly digitalized society in 2016.

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Since then, livestreaming has permeated the digital space on a global scale, especially within the fashion and beauty sectors, ultimately transforming ecommerce platforms along with the shift toward an influencer culture. According to new insights from [Fashionbi](#), the entertainment and commerce channel will not only survive the pandemic, but become a leading strategy to reach younger, digitally savvy consumers.

Dynamic shopping

In 2020, China reported more than \$162 billion in livestreaming ecommerce sales. By the end of December 2020, 617 million people watched livestreaming shopping events, and more than 388 million participated by making purchases and interacting within platforms.

In March 2016, Alibaba's Taobao launched the trial of its livestreaming platform, and by January 2019, launched its own app, Taobao Live. Since then, it has become the top performing livestreaming app in the industry.

By 2018, the category became more competitive when short-form video platforms Douyin and Kuaishou entered the market. Along with Taobao Live, these three platforms make up almost the entire Chinese live ecommerce market.

According to [Zhigua.cn](#), apparel makes up 47 percent of consumer preferences on Taobao Live, with womenswear as the most in-demand subcategory of this sector.



Shiseido's pre-618 strategy focused largely on hosting livestreams and offering steep discounts. Image credit: Shiseido

Key opinion leaders (KOLs) have occupied a crucial space in China's market, and during the 2021 618 shopping festival, Taobao Live generated \$1 billion in gross merchandise value (GMV) due to livestreaming. The combined sales of its top two influencers, Viya and Austin Li, made up half of this value share.

Viya is the top livestreamer on Taobao Live with 83 million followers, and 18 million average livestream views. During the 618 festival, a single livestream reached over 112 million views.

As the top live streamer on Taobao Live, Viya has already streamed for Furla with 26 million views, La Mer with 19 million views and Yves Saint Laurent perfume with 26 million views.

U.S. beauty label Estee Lauder saw great success through its livestream collaboration with Austin Li during the 618 festival, and its partnership with Douyin to create a video filter effect called "Bokiboki Cherry Face," eliciting the attention and participation of many Douyin drama, comedy and beauty influencers.

Similarly, French beauty brand Lancme achieved records on both 618 pre-sales and the first day of the 618 festival. In addition to livestreaming, the brand's official WeChat account was a significant area for exposure and community discussion of Lancme's exclusive 618 product releases.

Micro- and mid-tier influencers generated 65 percent of placements for Lancme's 618 campaign, most of whom posted on Xiaohongshu ([see story](#)).

Western streaming

Currently, the Western livestreaming market is still dominated by gaming. Leading platforms include Twitch and YouTube, as well as Meta's Facebook and Instagram.

In comparing the user interface between platforms in China and Western markets, Taobao Live, for instance, provides users with three times the information that Instagram does.



Taobao Live offers a multitude of options within a livestream. Image credit: Fashionbi

In one livestream, Taobao offers links to extra credit, price comparisons, links to coupons, live in small window play, links to products and product lists. Conversely, Instagram only shows links to shops.

While livestreaming in gaming is quickly gaining momentum, Western live shopping is still lagging behind China.

Fashionbi suggests this is due to skepticism among consumers regarding a new kind of "teleshopping" and concerns among brands for using the channel as a marketing tool.

However, social platforms are adapting to the new wave of digital commerce, so perhaps brands will more confidently follow suit.

ByteDance's TikTok, the Western version of Douyin, recently expanded social shopping features with a focus on livestreaming.

TikTok believes livestreaming will help businesses on its platform intimately connect with viewers and capture their attention, ultimately driving conversions. The platform's live shopping feature allows brands to integrate products from their TikTok Shopping experience into a live session, which will create connections in real time.

During live sessions, brands can help facilitate purchases and direct users to checkout while providing information about themselves and their products ([see story](#)).

Fashionbi notes that some brands want to emulate the Chinese livestreaming shopping model despite a current lack of audience in the Western market and have even started to develop their own streaming strategies.