



Effect of public-interest live-streaming anchor's official identity on green product purchase intention

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Alongside the rapid development of live-streaming commerce in China, some government officials have leveraged their professional identities to sell local green products through public-interest live streaming by acting as anchors. In this study we explored the relationship between an anchor's official identity and consumers' green product purchase intention, as well as the mediating roles of perceived product quality and perceived authenticity. We surveyed 134 participants with live-stream shopping experience and analyzed the data using hierarchical linear regression. The results showed that an anchor's official identity was significantly and positively associated with perceived product quality, perceived authenticity, and green product purchase intention. Furthermore, perceived product quality and perceived authenticity mediated the relationship between an anchor's official identity and green product purchase intention. Our findings provide practical guidance for government officials participating in public-interest live-streaming practices.

Keywords

public-interest live streaming, anchor identity, perceived product quality, perceived authenticity, green product purchase intention

Article Highlights

- In the setting of public-interest live streaming, an anchor's official identity was found to positively predict consumers' green product purchase intention.
- An anchor's official identity significantly and positively predicted perceived product quality and perceived authenticity.
- Perceived product quality and perceived authenticity played a mediating role in the relationship between an anchor's official identity and green product purchase intention.

In China, live streaming has become a major shopping channel for many consumers (Wang & Lee, 2023). Within this area, green products are primarily sold through public-interest live streaming, which claims to help farmers (Yu & Zhang, 2022). Among streamers, it has become common for anchors with official government status to promote green products. For example, Jiaolong He is an internet-famous local government official who launched a network sales channel for Yili's agricultural products by using live streaming, and this channel helped farmers' sales reach CNY 140 million in 2021 (Cui, 2021).

There is consensus in the marketing literature that live-streaming sales can effectively enhance consumers' purchase intention (Wongkitrungrueng et al., 2020; L. Zhang & Liu, 2023). Researchers have shown how live-streaming sales can promote impulse purchases (Ming et al., 2021) and influence consumers' continued willingness to buy (Guo et al.,



2022). In this area, scholars have mainly focused on live broadcasting personalities, techniques, approaches, products, and other related issues (Sun et al., 2021). In addition, they have investigated how different types of anchors (e.g., internet celebrity anchors and virtual anchors) influence consumers' purchase intention, finding that interpersonal interaction (Sun et al., 2021), consumer value perception (Zhou & Huang, 2023), and customer engagement (Y. Zhang et al., 2023) all play important mediating and moderating roles. Various aspects of consumer psychology affect consumers' purchase intention (Qalati et al., 2021), including anchor interaction orientation (Kang et al., 2021), anchor communication style (Zhu et al., 2021), anchor social presence (Busalim & Ghabban, 2021), and perceptions of parasocial interaction (Liu & Liu, 2023). Scholars have also analyzed how different products (e.g., agricultural products, fresh products) are marketed in live-streaming sales (Guo et al., 2022; Ming et al., 2021). However, although previous studies on anchor types have examined experts, celebrities, and typical consumers (Yu & Zhang, 2022), few studies have explored the influence of government officials serving as anchors or focused on public-interest live streaming, although it has been found that the characteristics, image, and interaction strategy of official anchors enhance consumers' sense of admiration, positive disposition toward people, and emotional and functional value perception, thus further enhancing consumers' purchase intention (Guo & Sun, 2022). To date, research investigating officials' public-interest live streaming has focused on enhancing consumer views of product brand images and word-of-mouth triggered by an official anchor's identity (Ma & Lee, 2022). However, the effect of the official identity of the anchor on consumers' product-quality evaluation and the perception of the public welfare attributes of public-interest live streaming in light of the apparently trustworthy government endorsement remain poorly understood. To fill this gap in the literature, this study applied social influence theory to analyze the mechanism of influence of an anchor's official government identity on consumers' green product purchase intention.

The Current Study

An anchor's *official identity* refers to the disclosure of their government-official status (Guo & Sun, 2022). In public-interest live streaming, most of the products sold are green products from the anchor's location, such as organic vegetables (Guo et al., 2022). Social influence theory states that individuals are influenced by the behavior of others and conform to the behavioral norms of their social network (Venkatesh & Brown, 2001). In social networks, these influences can be either informational or normative (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). In live streaming, anchors with official identities influence consumers' green product purchase intentions (B. Kim et al., 2023) through identification as well as through professional product introductions and interactions (Lowe & Alpert, 2015). In consumers' minds, official identities are associated with public welfare and integrity, which enhances their recognition of the green products introduced in the live-streaming scenario and thereby increases their purchase intention. The power of these associations to affect consumers' purchase intention lies in the trust that individuals place in public officials, which translates into brand trust (Wang & Lee, 2023). In addition, when a product lacks brand support, an anchor's official identity endorses the product and increases consumers' purchase intention (Liu & Liu, 2023). Therefore, we proposed the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: An anchor's official identity will positively predict consumers' green product purchase intentions in public-interest live streaming.

The perception of *product quality* refers to the subjective evaluation of the overall quality of products or services by consumers (Narwal & Nayak, 2020). According to asymmetric information theory, information opacity exists between the two parties in a product transaction with respect to product quality (Izquierdo & Izquierdo, 2007). To reduce consumers' information asymmetry, companies release quality signals (e.g., brand, retailer reputation) to enhance consumers' subjective evaluation of products (Dawar & Parker, 1994). In public-interest live streaming, the official identity of anchors functions as a quality signal (Guo & Sun, 2022). Since consumers tend to believe that an anchor with official status would not damage their reputation by exaggerating the quality of green products, their overall quality evaluation of the endorsed products is higher. Therefore, we proposed the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: An anchor's official identity will positively predict perceived product quality in public-interest live streaming.

In public-interest live streaming, when consumers perceive the official identity of the anchor as credible, they believe that the information conveyed by the anchor is reliable, which increases their overall evaluation of *product quality* (Verdegem & De Marez, 2011). Furthermore, when consumers perceive high product quality, it enhances their purchase intention. Therefore, we proposed the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3: The perception of product quality will positively predict consumers' purchase intention.

Hypothesis 4: Perceived product quality will play a mediating role in the relationship between an anchor's official identity and consumers' green product purchase intention.

In public-interest live streaming, *perceived authenticity* refers to consumers' subjective evaluation of the validity of the public welfare information presented in the live stream (P. H. Kim et al., 2017; Vogl et al., 2020). As stated above, the credibility provided by an anchor's political authority and professional responsibility is crucial, as it enhances consumers' trust and subsequently their belief that the information presented is reliable (Verdegem & De Marez, 2011). According to signaling theory, this trust can enhance consumers' identification with the public welfare aspects of the live stream and further enhance the authenticity and credibility of the live stream and the promoted green products by association (Xue & Liu, 2023; M. Zhang et al., 2020). When consumers have a high perception of public welfare authenticity, they tend to exhibit reduced risk perception toward the live broadcast's marketing, which, in turn, increases their awareness of and purchase intention for the recommended green products (Zhu et al., 2021). Thus, an anchor's official identity can enhance consumers' admiration for the anchor, improve prosocial behavior, and increase purchase intention (Guo & Sun, 2022). Therefore, we proposed the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 5: An anchor's official identity will positively predict perceived product authenticity in public-interest live streaming.

Hypothesis 6: Perceived authenticity will positively predict consumers' purchase intention.

Hypothesis 7: Perceived authenticity will play a mediating role in the relationship between an anchor's official identity and consumers' green product purchase intention.

The conceptual framework of this paper is shown in Figure 1.

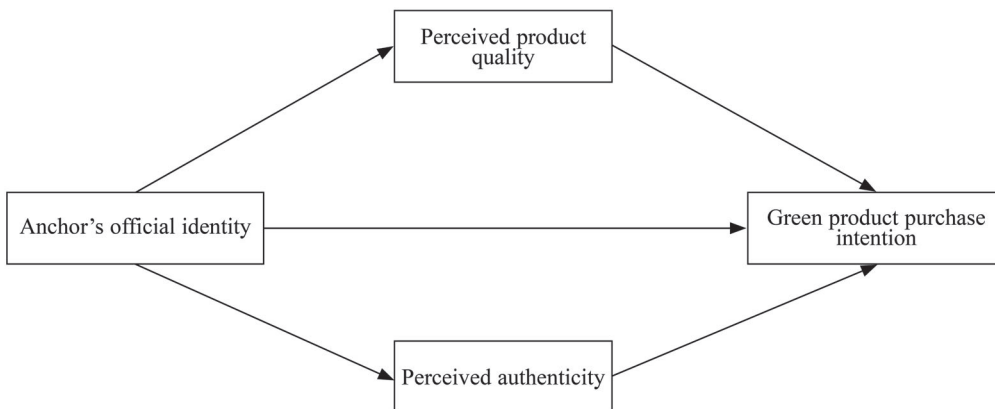


Figure 1. *Conceptual Model*

Method

Participants and Procedure

We distributed 191 online survey forms between October 9 and 23, 2023 using the Questionnaire Star platform (www.wjx.com), and received 134 valid responses. The inclusion criterion was experience in public-interest live shopping in the last 3 months; we screened out individuals who did not qualify through a preliminary question. Each participant received CNY 5 upon completion of the study. The sample comprised 51.5% women and 48.5% men

ranging in age between 18 and 60 years ($M = 33.76, SD = 11.52$). The demographic characteristics of the respondents are detailed in Table 1. We received approval for this study from the School of Management at Shanghai University of Engineering Science and obtained informed consent from all participants.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Demographics	Categories	%	<i>n</i>
Gender	Men	51.50	69
Age (years)	Women	48.50	65
	18–25	20.10	33
	26–30	24.60	33
	31–40	26.90	36
	41–50	13.40	18
	51–60	7.50	14
Level of education	High school or below	9.70	13
	College degree	23.90	32
	Bachelor’s degree	51.50	69
	Master’s degree or above	14.90	20
Monthly income (CNY)	< 2,000	11.90	16
	2,000–5,000	30.60	41
	5,000–10,000	35.80	48
	> 10,000	21.60	29

Measures

All items in this study were translated into Chinese and then back into English by experts from the field of consumer psychology research and adjusted to fit the context. This ensured high content validity of the measures.

Anchor’s Official Identity

We measured participants’ perception of an anchor’s official identity using the five-item scale of Guo and Sun (2022). A sample item is “I know this anchor has a background as a government official.” Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Cronbach’s alpha in this study was .86.

Perceived Product Quality

To measure perceived product quality, we modified two items from the scale used by Snoj et al. (2004) to fit this study: “The products recommended by this anchor are of high quality” and “The quality of the products recommended by this anchor is reliable.” Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Cronbach’s alpha in this study was .78.

Perceived Authenticity

To measure perceived authenticity, we modified three items from the scale used by Schallehn et al. (2014) to fit this study. A sample item is “This anchor knows exactly what they stand for and does not promise anything that contradicts their essence and character.” Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Cronbach’s alpha in this study was .77.

Green Product Purchase Intention

To measure green product purchase intention, we adopted the three-item scale of Park et al. (2007). A sample item is “How likely are you to buy a green product recommended by the anchor?” Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly unlikely*) to 5 (*strongly likely*). Cronbach’s alpha in this study was .80.

Data Analysis

We conducted descriptive statistical analysis, correlation analysis, and hierarchical linear regression using SPSS 23.0.

Results

Correlation Analysis

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients between the variables. In public-interest live streaming, consumers' intention to purchase green products demonstrated significant and positive correlations with an anchor's official identity, perceived product quality, and perceived authenticity. These results provided initial support for the hypotheses proposed in this study.

Table 2. *Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Coefficients for Study Variables*

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4
1. Anchor's official identity	4.03	0.80	1			
2. Perceived product quality	3.43	1.04	.44**	1		
3. Perceived authenticity	3.84	0.83	.46**	.27**	1	
4. Green product purchase intention	3.76	0.88	.42**	.47**	.47**	1

Note. ** $p < .01$.

Hypothesis Testing Analysis

We conducted a hierarchical regression analysis to test the hypotheses and adopted the test proposed by Baron and Kenny (Pardo & Román, 2013) to verify the mediating effect; the results are shown in Table 3. An anchor's official identity was found to significantly and positively predict consumers' green product purchase intention, supporting Hypothesis 1. In addition, an anchor's official identity significantly and positively predicted perceived product quality, supporting Hypothesis 2. Furthermore, the perception of product quality was found to significantly and positively predict consumers' green product purchase intention, supporting Hypothesis 3. After adding perception of product quality, an anchor's official identity was less influential on consumers' green product purchase intention, but it remained significant. This means that perceived product quality played a partial mediating role in the relationship between an anchor's official identity and consumers' purchase intention, supporting Hypothesis 4.

Table 3. Hierarchical Regression Analysis Between Variables

Variable	Perceived product quality		Perceived authenticity		Consumers' purchase intention					
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10
Control variable										
Gender	-.11	-.09	-.02	-.01	-.12	-.08	-.11	-.11	-.08	-.10
Age	.12	.10	-.01	-.03	.09	.04	.10	.07	.04	.08
Education level	-.08	.04	-.21	-.09	-.04	.00	.07	.08	.07	.11
Monthly disposable income	.04	-.02	.16*	.11	-.01	-.02	-.08	-.06	-.05	-.10
Independent variable										
Anchor's official identity		.44**		.44**				.44**	.29**	.27**
Mediating variable										
Perceived product quality						.46**			.34**	
Perceived authenticity							.49**			.37**
R^2	.00	.19	.02	.20	.03	.23	.22	.21	.26	.28
F	1.10	7.07	1.54	7.53	0.92	7.75	8.65	6.61	8.84	9.48

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

We found that an anchor's official identity significantly and positively predicted perceived authenticity, supporting Hypothesis 5. In addition, perceived authenticity significantly and positively predicted consumers' green product purchase intention, supporting Hypothesis 6. After adding perceived authenticity, an anchor's official identity had a smaller effect on consumers' purchase intention, but it remained significant. This indicates that perceived authenticity played a partial mediating role in the relationship between anchor's official identity and consumers' purchase intention, supporting Hypothesis 7. The results are shown in Figure 2.

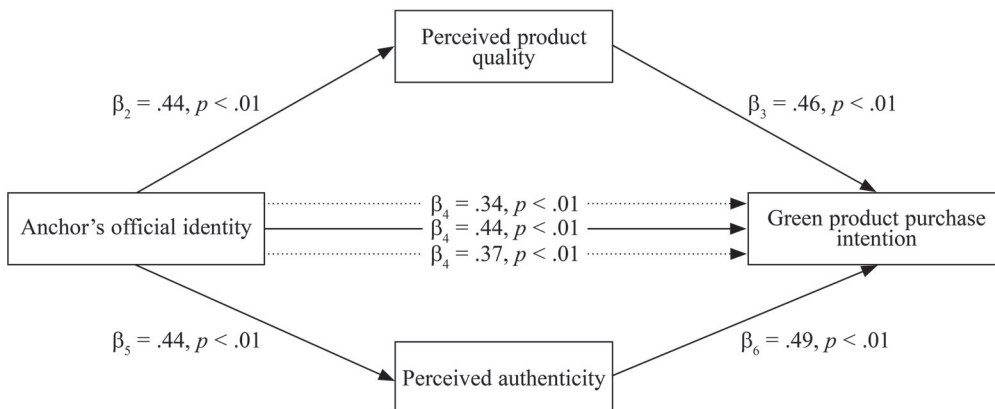


Figure 2. Dual Mediation Model of the Effect of Anchor's Official Identity on Green Product Purchase Intention

Note. β_1 = total effect of an anchor's official identity on green product purchase intention; β_4 = direct effect of an anchor's official identity on green product purchase intention after removing the indirect effect of perceived product quality; β_7 = direct effect of an anchor's official identity on green product purchase intention after removing the indirect effect of perceived authenticity.

Discussion

In this study we investigated the relationship between an anchor's official identity and consumers' green product purchase intention, as well as the mediating roles of perceived product quality and perceived authenticity. Our findings revealed that the official identity of an anchor positively influenced consumers' perceived product quality, perceived authenticity, and green product purchase intention in public-interest live streaming. Furthermore, perceived product quality and perceived authenticity played mediating roles in the relationship between an anchor's official identity and consumers' green product purchase intention.

Theoretical Contributions

This study has made three important contributions to the literature. First, we found that an anchor's official identity significantly and positively predicted consumers' green product purchase intention in the context of public-interest live streaming. According to signaling theory, the official identity of a live streamer sends a social responsibility signal to the consumer, which subsequently enhances their perception of the social welfare attributes of the live stream (M. Zhang et al., 2020) and the authenticity of the public welfare aspects of the live stream; this further enhances their willingness to purchase promotional green products. However, while prior studies have focused on anchors with a variety of personalities (Yu & Zhang, 2022), this study added a new research perspective to the body of live-streaming marketing research by examining the influence of government officials when they operate as anchors.

Second, we found that perceived product quality mediated the relationship between an anchor's official identity and consumers' green product purchase intention. In previous studies, the personal characteristics of Chinese government officials were shown to enhance the brand image of local green agricultural products, which, in turn, increased consumers' word-of-mouth intention (Ma & Lee, 2022). Taking a somewhat different approach than previous studies, we explored how an anchor's official identity influences green product purchase behavior from the psychological perspective of the consumer. Applying signaling theory (Connelly et al., 2011), we found that an anchor's official identity can further increase consumers' green product purchase intention by enhancing their perception of product quality.

Third, we demonstrated that perceived authenticity also played a mediating role in the relationship between an anchor's official identity and consumers' green product purchase intention. Previous research has analyzed the influence of consumer perceptions of endorsement on attitudes and purchase intentions in a public-interest live-streaming setting (Yu & Zhang, 2022). Consumers with high public welfare authenticity perceptions have a higher degree of identification with live streaming that provides agricultural assistance, and recognize the social and public welfare attributes of the green products being sold (Xue & Liu, 2023). We have deepened that line of research and found that consumers' perceived authenticity of an endorsement can enhance their purchase intentions as well.

Practical Contributions

The findings of this study offer practical guidance for government officials participating in public-interest live-streaming practices. This guidance is particularly relevant in China, where the government actively encourages the chief officers of local governments to utilize their official identity to enhance consumers' intention to purchase green products in live-streaming commerce (Guo et al., 2022). In this area, we recommend that anchors signal their official identity to enhance consumers' perception of product quality, which can enhance their purchase intention toward green products. In addition, we recommend that anchors with an official identity focus on the socially beneficial attributes of live streaming to enhance consumers' perception of authenticity and promote their purchase intention.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study has some limitations. First, our method of data collection consisted primarily of surveys and empirical analysis, and did not include in-depth interviews or case studies. Future research could use a variety of methods to explore the effect of government officials' participation in live streaming on consumers' purchase intention. Second,



this study focused only on groups in specific regions in China, so the generalizability of the results may be affected to some extent by geographical differences. Future research could expand on the scope of the study by recruiting participants from a variety of settings, which would enable more comprehensive and in-depth analysis. Last, we collected survey data at a single time point and did not take into account the effect of time changes or the influence of season on consumers' purchase intention. Future researchers could incorporate such temporal characteristics and conduct longitudinal studies to more objectively understand the impact of government officials' participation in public-interest live streaming and its mechanisms.

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The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

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