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Customer Retention in Live Streaming Commerce: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

Live streaming commerce (LSC) has emerged as a mainstream retail channel; however, high product return rates and low repurchase rates have made customer retention a significant managerial challenge. Although research on customer retention in LSC has expanded rapidly, the existing literature remains fragmented across theoretical perspectives, operational definitions, and occasionally conflicting findings. Furthermore, previous reviews have primarily emphasized initial purchase behavior rather than post-purchase retention. This systematic literature review aimed to synthesize empirical evidence on the determinants of customer retention in LSC, encompassing repurchase intention, customer loyalty, continuance intention, and customer stickiness. Following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) 2020 guidelines, a systematic search of Scopus identified 207 records. Following the screening of 144 records and full-text assessment of 52 articles, 49 empirical studies published between 2021 and 2026 were included in the descriptive and thematic synthesis. The evidence was predominantly concentrated in China (32 studies), with most investigations employing cross-sectional survey designs analyzed using structural equation modeling and frequently adopting the stimulus–organism–response (S–O–R) framework. The identified determinants of customer retention were classified into five categories: streamer characteristics (human and artificial intelligence-based), interaction and social environment, platform affordances and live streaming session design, perceived value and product offerings, and service quality and recovery. Their associations with retention outcomes were primarily mediated by trust, including trust transfer from streamers to products and platforms, as well as customer satisfaction, perceived value, and relational bonds. Generational characteristics, product involvement, relational bonds, and streamer type emerged as potential moderators, whereas findings regarding product quality and pricing remained inconsistent. This review proposed an integrative framework for understanding customer retention in LSC and developed a research agenda based on the Theory–Context–Characteristics–Methodology (TCCM) framework. Future research should prioritize behavioral and longitudinal data, broader geographical representation beyond China, and

further theoretical development concerning artificial intelligence-based streamers and customer retention following service failures.

INTRODUCTION

Live streaming commerce (LSC) integrates real-time video broadcasting, interactive communication between streamers and viewers, and purchasing functionalities within a single digital environment (Wongkitrungrueng & Assarut, 2020). Initially regarded as an emerging retail innovation, LSC has evolved into a mainstream channel within the global digital commerce ecosystem. In China, live streaming e-commerce transactions reached RMB 5.33 trillion in 2024 (Zhongshang Industry Research Institute, as cited in Dong et al., 2026), while the global live commerce market was estimated to be worth US$128.42 billion in the same year (Grand View Research, as cited in Trinh et al., 2026). Major platforms, including Taobao Live, Douyin, TikTok, Shopee Live, and Facebook Live, have facilitated the participation of diverse sellers, ranging from multinational corporations to small businesses and rural cooperatives. These developments highlight the increasing economic significance of LSC and its potential to transform consumer engagement and digital retail practices.

Despite its rapid expansion, the growth of LSC has not consistently translated into sustainable customer relationships (Dominidiato et al., 2024; Feng et al., 2022). Previous studies have identified high product return rates and relatively low repurchase rates as persistent challenges within the LSC environment (Dong et al., 2026; Yi et al., 2024). Furthermore, the continuous availability of competing live streaming sessions has intensified competition for consumer attention, making it increasingly difficult for retailers to maintain long-term engagement. Customer acquisition strategies involving promotional incentives, influencer endorsements, and celebrity streamers may require substantial marketing expenditures, emphasizing the importance of retaining existing customers. Consequently, encouraging repeat purchases, maintaining viewer engagement, and converting occasional buyers into loyal customers have become critical managerial priorities for businesses operating through LSC platforms (Chen et al., 2026; Zhang et al., 2022).

Academic research on LSC has expanded considerably, particularly in relation to consumer purchasing decisions and impulse buying behavior (Xin et al., 2024). However, increasing attention has recently been directed toward customer retention outcomes, including repurchase intention, customer loyalty, continuance intention, and customer stickiness. Despite this growing interest, the available evidence remains fragmented across theoretical perspectives, methodological approaches, and operational definitions. Moreover, previous investigations have reported inconsistent findings regarding the effects of certain determinants, particularly product quality and pricing, on consumer trust and retention-related outcomes (Dong et al., 2026; Tohari et al., 2025). These inconsistencies complicate the identification of reliable predictors of customer retention and limit understanding of the psychological and relational mechanisms underlying sustained consumer engagement. A comprehensive synthesis is therefore necessary to clarify the principal determinants of customer retention, explain their underlying mechanisms, and identify the contextual conditions under which their relationships with retention outcomes may vary.

Although several literature reviews have examined LSC, their primary emphasis has generally extended beyond customer retention. Luo et al. (2025) systematically mapped the theoretical perspectives, research contexts, characteristics, and methodological approaches employed in the broader LSC literature. Similarly, bibliometric investigations have explored the intellectual structure and thematic development of LSC research (Fauzi et al., 2026; Mai et al., 2023), while Kawaf and Girotto (2024) specifically examined the application of affordance theory. Other systematic reviews have primarily investigated the determinants of consumer purchasing behavior and purchase intention in LSC environments (Cui et al., 2024; Li & Ab Hamid, 2025). Although customer loyalty, repurchase intention, and platform stickiness have occasionally been discussed within these reviews, they have generally been treated as secondary themes rather than central analytical outcomes. Consequently, the existing reviews have not provided a sufficiently focused synthesis of the antecedents, mediating mechanisms, and moderating conditions associated with post-purchase customer retention. Furthermore, the increasing number of empirical studies published since 2024 has created an opportunity to consolidate more recent evidence that was not comprehensively represented in earlier reviews.

To address these limitations, the present study conducted a systematic literature review (SLR) of 49 empirical studies examining customer retention in LSC, following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) 2020 reporting guidelines (Page et al., 2021). The review was guided by five research questions concerning the development, determinants, mechanisms, and contextual characteristics of customer retention research in LSC. Specifically, the study examined how the literature had evolved in terms of publication trends, journal outlets, geographic distribution, digital platforms, and retention outcomes (RQ1); identified the theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches employed in previous investigations (RQ2); synthesized the principal antecedents of customer retention and the mechanisms through which they operated (RQ3); investigated the moderating factors and boundary conditions influencing these relationships (RQ4); and identified remaining knowledge gaps and priorities for future research (RQ5). Collectively, these questions provided a structured foundation for evaluating the current state of empirical knowledge and developing a more integrated understanding of customer retention in LSC.

The novelty of this review lies in its specific emphasis on post-purchase customer retention as the central analytical outcome, distinguishing it from previous reviews that primarily addressed initial purchase behavior, impulse buying, or the broader development of LSC research. The study made three principal contributions to the literature. First, it systematically mapped the characteristics of existing research, identifying publication patterns, geographic concentrations, theoretical preferences, and methodological limitations that shaped the current evidence base. Second, it synthesized fragmented empirical findings into an integrative conceptual framework connecting five categories of retention antecedents with four underlying mechanisms and four groups of moderating conditions. This framework provided a structured explanation of how streamer characteristics, social interactions, platform features, product-related factors, and service experiences were associated with sustained customer relationships. Third, the review developed a

future research agenda based on the Theory–Context–Characteristics–Methodology (TCCM) framework proposed by Paul and Rosado-Serrano (2019), highlighting opportunities for theoretical refinement, broader contextual representation, improved methodological rigor, and further investigation of emerging technological developments, particularly artificial intelligence-based streamers.

Beyond its theoretical contributions, the review offered practical implications for LSC platforms, retailers, streamers, and digital marketing professionals. By identifying the factors associated with repurchase intention, loyalty, continuance intention, and customer stickiness, the synthesis provided an evidence-based foundation for developing customer retention strategies that extend beyond short-term promotional activities. Understanding the roles of trust, satisfaction, perceived value, and relational bonds may help businesses strengthen customer relationships and improve the sustainability of their digital commerce operations. Furthermore, the identification of contextual and methodological limitations may assist researchers in designing more rigorous investigations, particularly those employing longitudinal approaches, behavioral data, and cross-cultural comparisons. The subsequent sections present the review methodology, descriptive findings, thematic synthesis, integrative conceptual framework, future research agenda, practical implications, and study limitations.

METHOD

The review was conducted in accordance with the PRISMA 2020 reporting guidelines (Page et al., 2021) and established systematic review procedures in management research (Tranfield et al., 2003). All records were documented in a screening log, with a single exclusion reason assigned to each excluded record to ensure transparency and traceability throughout the study selection process. The review protocol was not registered.

Search strategy

Scopus was chosen as the single source because it is the largest curated abstract and citation database for the social sciences and covers more business and management journals than Web of Science (Mongeon & Paul-Hus, 2016). It also indexes the main marketing, information systems and e-commerce journals in which LSC research appears, and its consistent metadata allows the search to be fully reproduced. The search covered titles, abstracts and keywords (TITLE-ABS-KEY) and combined terms for live streaming commerce with terms for retention. The search was run on 4 October 2026, and the full search string is shown below. The search returned 207 records. Before screening, 63 records were removed by the database filters: 58 were not journal articles and 5 were not in English. No records fell outside the 2020–2026 window and no duplicates were found.

```
TITLE-ABS-KEY(
  ("live stream*" OR livestream* OR "live commerce" OR "live shopping" OR "live
selling")
  AND (commerce OR "e-commerce" OR shopping OR selling OR retail* OR purchas*)
  AND (loyalty OR repurchase OR "re-purchase" OR "repeat purchase" OR
"continuance" OR "continuous purchase" OR stickiness OR retention)
```

The first block captures the live streaming format, the second restricts it to commercial settings, and the third targets retention outcomes.

Eligibility criteria

Studies were included if they (a) were peer-reviewed journal articles in English published from 2020 to 2026; (b) examined live streaming commerce as the setting of consumer purchase; (c) used consumers as the unit of analysis; (d) measured at least one retention outcome (repurchase intention or behaviour, loyalty, continuance or continuous purchase intention, or stickiness) as a dependent variable; and (e) reported original empirical data. Table 1 lists the exclusion codes applied at each stage.

Table 1. Exclusion codes

Stage	Code	Definition
Title and abstract	K1	Not a live streaming commerce context (gaming, entertainment, unrelated topic)
Title and abstract	K2	Outcome is not consumer retention, or subjects are not consumers
Title and abstract	K3	Not an empirical study (review or conceptual paper)
Full text	E1	Not an original research article
Full text	E2	Live streaming is not the commerce setting studied, or only a backdrop
Full text	E3	Unit of analysis is not the consumer (seller, streamer, firm, platform or session)
Full text	E4	No retention variable
Full text	E5	Retention used only as antecedent, moderator or control
Full text	E6	Not an empirical study of consumer behaviour (analytical model, algorithm)
Full text	E7	Retention results not reported or method unclear
Full text	E8	Duplicate publication of data already included

Study selection

The 144 remaining records were screened on title and abstract. Sixty-five were excluded: 8 under K1, 54 under K2 and 3 under K3. Full texts were sought for the remaining 79 reports, of which 27 could not be obtained. The other 52 were assessed in full. Three were excluded: two because the unit of analysis was not the consumer (E3: Clement et al., 2021, analysed live sessions and follower counts; Zhang, 2025, surveyed marketing managers) and one because live streaming was modelled as a mediating variable inside cross-border e-commerce rather than as the setting (E2: Guan & Wareewanich, 2024). Forty-nine studies were included. Figure 1 summarises the flow. Screening and eligibility assessment were carried out by a single reviewer, the author. To limit inconsistency, each decision was recorded against the predefined codes in Table 1, and borderline cases were re-read in full before a final decision.

Data extraction and synthesis

For each included study, a structured form recorded bibliographic data, country, platform or setting, theoretical lens, research design, sample size, analytical technique, retention outcome and key findings, including non-significant paths and moderators. Methodological characteristics (design, sample size, analytical technique) were appraised descriptively; no study was excluded on quality grounds.

The synthesis proceeded in two steps. A descriptive analysis answered RQ1 and RQ2. A thematic synthesis then coded each reported relationship as an antecedent, a mediating mechanism or a boundary condition, grouped codes into themes and compared the direction and significance of effects across studies (RQ3 and RQ4). Gaps identified in this process were organised with the TCCM framework (RQ5).



Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 flow diagram

Most records left at title and abstract screening because their outcome was not consumer retention (K2); only 3 of 52 full texts failed eligibility.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Results

The field is young, fast-growing and narrow: 36 of the 49 studies appeared in 2024–2026, two-thirds study Chinese consumers and almost all rely on surveys analysed with structural equation modelling. Appendix A lists the characteristics of every included study.

Publication trend and outlets

The first included study appeared in 2021 (Li et al., 2021). Output then rose steadily, from 4 studies in 2022 to 15 in 2026, a year covered only up to the search date of 4 October 2026 (Figure 2). The 49 studies are spread across 34 journals. The most frequent outlets are the *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services* and the *Journal of Theoretical and Applied Electronic Commerce Research* (4 studies each), followed by *Cogent Business & Management*, *Frontiers in Psychology* and *Sustainability* (3 each). This dispersion across marketing, information systems, psychology and sector journals shows that retention in LSC has no single disciplinary home.

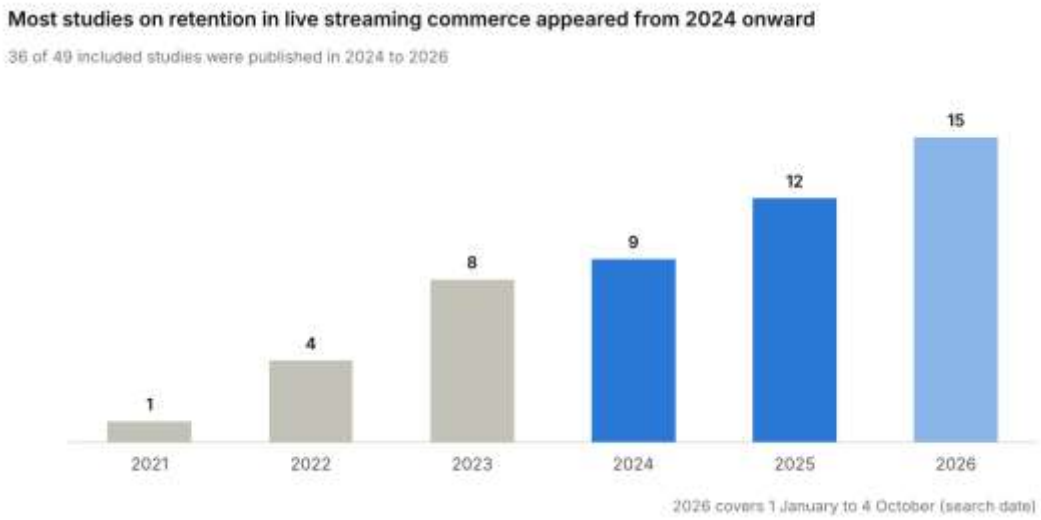


Figure 2. Included studies by publication year

Geographic context and platforms

China dominates the evidence with 32 studies (65.3%), reflecting the maturity of Taobao Live, Douyin and Kuaishou. Southeast Asia is the second cluster: Indonesia (5), Vietnam (3), Malaysia (2), Thailand (1) and the Philippines (1). Taiwan and Spain contribute one study each, one study used a multi-country online panel (Kim et al., 2022) and two did not state the country (Jong et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2025). Apart from that global panel, no study focused on consumers in Africa, South Asia, the Middle East, Latin America or North America (Figure 3).

Platforms mirror this geography. Chinese studies sampled users of Taobao Live, JD, Douyin/TikTok and Kuaishou, often without separating them. Southeast Asian studies examined Shopee Live, TikTok Shop, Lazada, Tokopedia Live and Facebook Live, the latter being central in Taiwan, Thailand, Malaysia and the Philippines (Chong et al., 2023; Ko & Ho, 2024; Kwangsawad et al., 2024; Peralta et al., 2025). A distinct strand studies sector-specific streams, notably agricultural products (Kwangsawad et al., 2024; Liu & Fan, 2025; Tang et al., 2025; Wang & Zhang, 2026), fashion (Hardiyanto et al., 2024; Hong & Lee, 2025; Patinah et al., 2026; Peralta et al., 2025) and sports brands (Li et al., 2024).

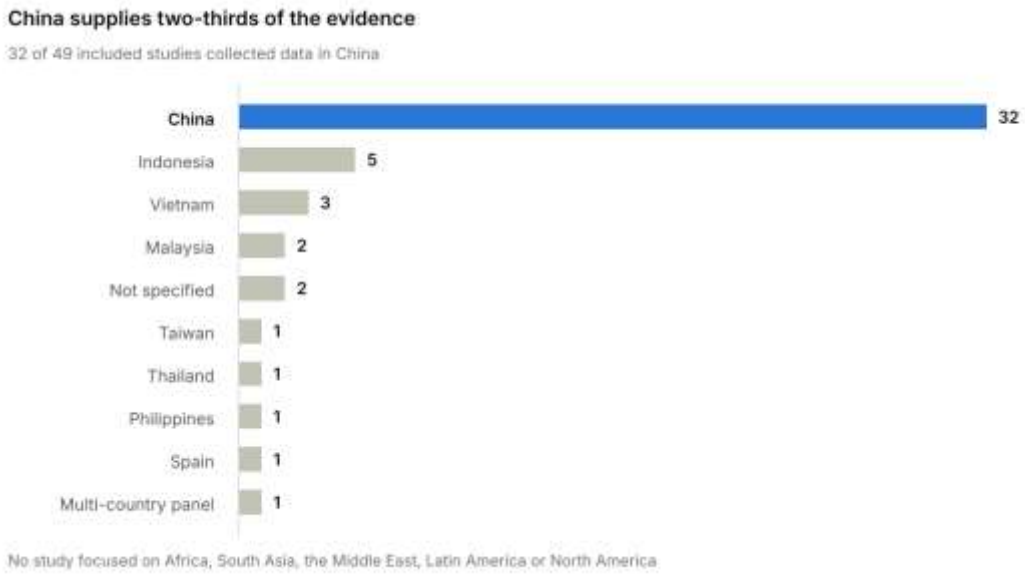


Figure 3. Included studies by country of data collection

Retention outcomes

Repurchase intention is the most common outcome (19 studies), followed by loyalty (10), continuance or continuous purchase intention (11) and stickiness (11); two studies measured two of these outcomes (Meng & Lin, 2023; Yun et al., 2023). Loyalty was framed variously as attitudinal and behavioural loyalty to a streamer (Liu et al., 2024), brand loyalty (Patinah et al., 2026; Zhu et al., 2025) and loyalty to the store or platform (Hong & Lee, 2025; Ye et al., 2023). Stickiness was defined as viewers' tendency to stay, return and spend time on a platform or with a streamer (Li et al., 2021; Ma, 2023). Only one study used a behavioural measure, a three-wave design that captured reported repurchase behaviour (Chen et al., 2026). All other outcomes were self-reported intentions or attitudes.

Theoretical lenses

The studies drew on more than twenty theories, often combining two or three. Table 2 lists those used by at least three studies. The S-O-R framework is the most frequent organising lens (14 studies), typically used to sort live-stream cues (stimulus), psychological states (organism) and retention (response). Trust-based theories, including trust transfer and commitment–trust theory, are the second most common (9). Three studies proposed models without a named theory (Liu & Fan, 2025; Peralta et al., 2025; Tohari et al., 2025).

Table 2. Theories used by three or more included studies

Theory	Studies (n)	Typical role in the model
Stimulus–organism–response (S-O-R)	14	Organises cues → internal states → retention
Trust, trust transfer and commitment–trust theory	9	Trust as the central mediator; transfer from streamer to product and platform

Theory	Studies (n)	Typical role in the model
Expectation–confirmation theory	5	Confirmation and satisfaction drive repurchase and stickiness
Parasocial relationship and social presence theory	5	Viewer–streamer pseudo-relationship drives loyalty
Perceived value theory	4	Utilitarian, hedonic and social value as mediators
IT affordance theory	4	Platform features enable shopping and social action
Uses and gratifications theory	4	Gratifications sustain continued use and purchase
Socio-technical systems theory	3	Social and technical enablers jointly build attachment and trust
Self-determination theory	3	Autonomy and relatedness needs explain repurchase
Source credibility theory	3	Streamer or AI host credibility builds trust
Dual-process models (ELM, HSM)	3	Central and peripheral cues follow different trust routes

Research designs and analysis

Thirty-eight studies used a single cross-sectional survey. Five used mixed methods that added interviews or text mining (Chen et al., 2026; Imanuddin & Handayani, 2025; Shen et al., 2022; Sun & Ke, 2026; Trinh et al., 2026), five used experiments (Barta et al., 2023; Gegen tana et al., 2024; Gong & Sun, 2026; Tian et al., 2026; Wang et al., 2025) and one used a two-wave survey (Phan et al., 2026). Covariance-based structural equation modelling was the main technique in 22 studies and PLS-SEM in 18; nine relied on regression, PROCESS or ANOVA. Eight studies added a configurational or non-linear technique: fsQCA in four and artificial neural networks in four. Sample sizes ranged from 95 to 1,360 participants (median 401), and only eight studies had fewer than 300 participants.

Thematic Synthesis

Across the 49 studies, retention rests on five groups of antecedents whose effects run mostly through trust and satisfaction rather than directly. The subsections below review the antecedents (the streamer theme in two parts, human and AI), then the mediating mechanisms and the boundary conditions. Table 3 summarises the evidence and flags where findings conflict.

Streamer attributes: human streamers

The streamer is the most studied lever. Attractiveness, expertise or professionalism, credibility and interactivity consistently build trust in the streamer, which then supports repurchase and loyalty (Dong et al., 2026; Li et al., 2024; Meng & Lin, 2023; To & Nguyen, 2026). Interactivity stands out in two studies: it was the main driver of online trust in Meng and Lin (2023) and outweighed attractiveness in shaping streaming perceptions in Patinah et al. (2026). Expertise is less consistent; it was the only broadcaster trait whose effect on loyalty was not carried by the parasocial relationship (Liu et al., 2024).

A second stream looks beyond traits to the relationship viewers form with the streamer. Parasocial and trans-parasocial relationships raise loyalty, stickiness and purchase intention (Hardiyanto et al., 2024; Kim et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2024), and customer–streamer interaction matters more than peer interaction for satisfaction and loyalty (Trinh et al., 2026). Studies have

also begun to unpack how streamers behave. Affiliative humour builds trust and repurchase, whereas aggressive humour erodes them sharply (Li & Xia, 2025). Customers who detect genuine "deep acting" in a streamer's emotional labour perceive stronger customer orientation and become more loyal (Pei et al., 2025). Streamers' social capital, in its structural, cognitive and relational forms, raises perceived value and flow, and through them stickiness (Tan et al., 2025).

One finding challenges the celebrity model. In Dong et al. (2026), streamer type (celebrity versus professional) did not moderate how perceived product quality, interactivity and attractiveness build trust, suggesting that fame alone does not reshape the retention mechanism.

Streamer attributes: AI and virtual streamers

A fast-growing cluster, entirely from 2025–2026, examines AI-powered virtual streamers. Vividness, telepresence and playfulness of AI digital humans raise credibility, trust and familiarity, which drive repeat purchase (Wang et al., 2025). Perceived usefulness, enjoyment and novelty of AI virtual anchors improve brand image and, through it, brand loyalty (Zhu et al., 2025). Competence-based cues (expertise, competence) affect repurchase both directly and via trust, and are sufficient for high repurchase even when interactive experience is weak (Huang et al., 2026). The gap in stickiness between AI-backed and human-backed virtual streamers disappears when the AI uses social-oriented rather than task-oriented interaction, and disclosure of the AI changes which perception (experience or agency) carries the effect (Gong & Sun, 2026).

Interaction and social environment

Interaction with other viewers forms the second lever. Customer-to-customer interaction raises perceived value and repurchase (Li et al., 2024), and confirmation of co-viewers' positive word of mouth after purchase increases perceived value (Ko & Ho, 2024). Live interactivity, comprising active control, two-way communication and synchronicity, builds trust and continuance (Zhang et al., 2022) and, as an affordance, raises stickiness through social identification and gratification (Ma, 2023). Social presence and perceived crowdedness enhance perceived value and thus continuance (Chong et al., 2023), and social crowding as an atmospheric cue raises repurchase even in streams without verbal commentary (Wang & Zhang, 2026).

The type of interaction matters. Information-focused interaction produces more stickiness for high-involvement products, while relationship-focused interaction works better for low-involvement products (Tian et al., 2026). Word of mouth may also cut both ways: in Tohari et al. (2025) it built trust but had a negative direct effect on repurchase intention.

Platform affordances and session design

Technical features shape retention mainly by enabling social and shopping experiences. Instrumental affordances (guidance shopping, metavoicing, visibility) raise repurchase behaviour by satisfying autonomy, while hedonic affordances (visibility, novelty, co-presence) do so by satisfying relatedness (Chen et al., 2026). Visibility, substitutability, metavoicing, guidance shopping and gamification drive confirmation, satisfaction and trust in fashion streams (Hong & Lee, 2025). In socio-technical terms, synchronicity and vicarious expression build attachment that raises stickiness (Li et al., 2021), visibility and personalisation build trust (Zhang et al., 2022), and

interactivity, entertainment and visualisation build trust that transfers to products (Chang et al., 2024).

Session design is a newer theme. Live-streaming frequency raises perceived value and stickiness more than session duration does (Jiang, 2025). Telepresence lifts experiential but not instrumental value, as shown by comparing a metaverse show with an Instagram live (Barta et al., 2023). Product information, social crowding and scene design increase repurchase through pleasure and dominance (Wang & Zhang, 2026), and the visual appearance of product packaging is the strongest packaging predictor of repurchase in agricultural streams (Tang et al., 2025).

Value and offering

Perceived value is both an antecedent and a mediator. Utilitarian, hedonic and social value build trust in the streamer, and utilitarian and social value build trust in the product (Wu & Huang, 2023). Gratifications related to content, utility, social connection and hedonic enjoyment increase continuous purchase on TikTok (Wang & Oh, 2023).

Evidence on the offer itself is mixed. Product quality was significant in several studies (Dong et al., 2026; Hardiyanto et al., 2024; Liu & Fan, 2025) but not in others (Kwangsawad et al., 2024; Tohari et al., 2025). Price and discounts are similarly ambiguous: price built trust in Tohari et al. (2025), but discounts did not build trust in Dong et al. (2026) and influenced satisfaction only through confirmation in Yi et al. (2024).

Service quality and recovery

Service quality is more consistent. Streamer professionalism, interactive experience and after-sales support each raise trust and repurchase (He & Bernarte, 2026); product range, delivery speed and customer service raise Gen Z satisfaction and repurchase (Peralta et al., 2025); and information, product and logistics service quality raise satisfaction and trust (Liu & Fan, 2025). Three studies address what happens when things go wrong. Perceived justice in a streamer's service recovery restores repeat purchase through trust in the streamer's dual role as idol and seller (Qin et al., 2026). After a trust violation, apology sincerity determines whether cognitive or affective trust still drives continuous purchase (Phan et al., 2026). Consumer empowerment raises retention through relationship quality, but only when consumers see the retailer as ethical (Gegen tana et al., 2024).

Mediating mechanisms

Four mechanisms connect antecedents to retention.

Trust is the dominant mechanism: it mediates in 17 of the 49 models, more than any other construct, with satisfaction second (15). Its defining feature in LSC is transfer: trust in the streamer spills over to the product and the platform (Chang et al., 2024; To & Nguyen, 2026; Wu & Huang, 2023). Peripheral cues such as expertise, interactivity and hedonic experience build trust in sellers, while the central cue of utilitarian value builds trust in products (To & Nguyen, 2026). Cognitive trust precedes affective trust (Phan et al., 2026).

Satisfaction and confirmation, in the expectation–confirmation tradition, link post-purchase evaluation to repurchase and stickiness (Ko & Ho, 2024; Shen et al., 2022; Yi et al., 2024).

Satisfaction frequently mediates the effect of service and live-selling factors (Hardiyanto et al., 2024; Peralta et al., 2025).

Perceived value carries the effect of social and technical cues on continuance and stickiness (Chong et al., 2023; Jiang, 2025; Tan et al., 2025).

Relational and emotional bonds include parasocial relationships, attachment to streamers and platforms (Li et al., 2021), fanship (Kim et al., 2022), relationship quality (Gegen tana et al., 2024; Li & Xia, 2025), flow (Tan et al., 2025) and affective states (Li, 2026; Wang & Zhang, 2026).

These mechanisms are often chained. Typical sequences run from value to trust to retention (Wu & Huang, 2023), from engagement to co-created value to loyalty (Ye et al., 2023) or from trust and satisfaction to stickiness and then repurchase (Meng & Lin, 2023).

Boundary conditions

Relatively few studies test moderators, but those that do show that retention mechanisms are not universal.

Consumer characteristics. Older adults respond more to streamer professionalism and after-sales support, while Gen Z responds more to interactive experience (He & Bernarte, 2026). Paths to loyalty differ across Gen X, Y and Z female shoppers (Hong & Lee, 2025). Education level (Wang & Oh, 2023), gender (Yi et al., 2024), watching frequency (Gong & Sun, 2026), celebrity worship (Sun & Ke, 2026) and content involvement (Barta et al., 2023) also condition the effects.

Product characteristics. Parasocial relationships matter more for hedonic products and under high product–streamer match-up (Liu et al., 2024). Product involvement determines which interaction type works (Tian et al., 2026) and weakens the effect of service recovery (Qin et al., 2026).

Relational context. Financial, social and structural bonds amplify the effect of customer experience on repurchase (Zeng & Kim, 2026). Yet in Jong et al. (2022), financial bonds did not raise satisfaction, and affective commitment strengthened the satisfaction–continuance link. Swift guanxi weakens the path from autonomy to repurchase (Chen et al., 2026), and trust in broadcasters strengthens the link between value and continuance (Chong et al., 2023).

Streamer and situational factors. Disclosure of AI technology (Gong & Sun, 2026), live-streaming genre (Zhang et al., 2022), perceived ethicality (Gegen tana et al., 2024), apology sincerity (Phan et al., 2026) and responsibility attribution (Qin et al., 2026) change the strength of the main effects.

Table 3. Summary of evidence by theme

Theme	Main antecedents	Main mechanism	Consistency of evidence
Streamer attributes: human	Attractiveness, expertise, credibility, interactivity, humour, emotional labour, social capital	Trust in streamer; parasocial relationship	Consistent for interactivity and attractiveness; expertise mixed; celebrity status not decisive

Theme	Main antecedents	Main mechanism	Consistency of evidence
Streamer attributes: AI and virtual	Vividness, telepresence, competence, interaction style, AI disclosure	Credibility, trust, brand image	Consistent but based on few, recent studies
Interaction and social environment	Viewer–streamer and viewer–viewer interaction, social presence, crowdedness, word of mouth	Perceived value; identification; trust	Consistent; depends on interaction type and product involvement; word of mouth ambiguous
Platform affordances and session design	Visibility, metavoicing, guidance shopping, personalisation, telepresence, frequency, atmospherics, packaging visuals	Autonomy and relatedness; attachment; trust; value	Consistent; session design thinly studied
Value and offering	Utilitarian, hedonic and social value; product quality; price and discounts	Trust; satisfaction	Value consistent; product quality and price mixed
Service quality and recovery	Professionalism, after-sales support, delivery, logistics, service recovery justice, apology sincerity, ethicality	Trust; satisfaction; relationship quality	Consistent; recovery studied only since 2024

Integrative Framework and Future Research Agenda

An integrative framework of retention in live streaming commerce

Figure 4 integrates the synthesis. Five groups of antecedents shape four mechanisms (trust, satisfaction and confirmation, perceived value, and relational and emotional bonds), which in turn drive four retention outcomes. Boundary conditions at the consumer, product, relational and situational levels moderate the antecedent–mechanism and mechanism–outcome links. The framework makes three propositions explicit. First, retention in LSC is mostly indirect: antecedents rarely affect repurchase or loyalty without passing through trust or satisfaction. Second, trust is relational and transferable, moving from the streamer, who is a person or an AI agent, to the product and the platform. Third, retention mechanisms are segment-specific, so the same cue can retain one generation or product category and leave another unaffected.



Figure 4. Integrative framework of customer retention in live streaming commerce

Solid arrows show the dominant antecedent → mechanism → outcome path; dashed arrows show where boundary conditions moderate it. Trust and satisfaction are highlighted because they mediate in the largest number of studies.

Future research agenda

Table 4 organises the gaps identified in the review using the TCCM framework (Paul & Rosado-Serrano, 2019).

Table 4. Future research agenda (TCCM)

Dimension	Gap in current evidence	Suggested research directions
Theory	S-O-R is used mainly as an organising scheme; few studies test competing theories or explain why trust transfers	Compare S-O-R, expectation–confirmation and relationship marketing explanations in one model; theorise trust transfer and its limits; apply attribution, image repair and justice theories to post-failure retention
Theory	AI streamers are studied with credibility and perceived value lenses only	Use mind perception, anthropomorphism and algorithm aversion theories to explain long-term relationships with AI hosts

Dimension	Gap in current evidence	Suggested research directions
Context	32 of 49 studies are from China; no study focuses on Africa, South Asia, the Middle East, Latin America or North America	Replicate core models across countries and compare cultural values (for example guanxi or collectivism) as moderators
Context	Platforms are pooled; sector studies cover few categories	Compare marketplace (Shopee, Taobao) with social (TikTok, Facebook) platforms; study services, B2B and high-involvement categories
Characteristics	Retention is measured almost only as intention	Use transaction logs, repeat-visit data and platform analytics; separate attitudinal from behavioural loyalty
Characteristics	Session design, service recovery, ethics and AI disclosure are each covered by one to three studies	Test session frequency, length and format; study recovery after defects, misinformation and returns; examine disclosure rules for AI streamers
Characteristics	Moderators are tested piecemeal	Examine generation, product involvement and relational bonds systematically, including Gen Z versus older shoppers outside China
Methodology	38 cross-sectional surveys; one two-wave survey and one three-wave survey; common-method risk	Longitudinal and panel designs; field experiments with real streams; multi-source data linking streamer behaviour to customer outcomes
Methodology	Few configurational or computational methods	Extend fsQCA and machine learning; analyse live chat and video content with text mining and computer vision; run meta-analyses as effect sizes accumulate

Theoretical Implications

The review shifts the explanation of LSC success from the purchase moment to the relationship that follows it. It shows that retention is built through a small set of mechanisms, chiefly transferable trust and post-purchase confirmation, rather than through the excitement that drives impulse buying. It also positions the streamer as a relational anchor whose attributes, emotional labour and recovery behaviour matter for whether customers come back, and it extends that role to AI agents. Finally, the many non-significant and conflicting results, notably for product quality, price and financial bonds, suggest that context-free models of retention are unlikely to hold and that boundary conditions deserve the same attention as main effects.

Managerial Implications

The evidence points to five practical priorities for sellers, streamers and platforms.

(1) **Invest in streamer interactivity and authenticity over fame.** Interactivity was a consistent trust driver, genuine emotional expression and affiliative humour built loyalty, and celebrity status did not change the trust mechanism.

(2) **Design for trust transfer.** Because trust in the streamer spills over to products and platforms, accurate product information, visible demonstrations and honest claims protect the whole chain.

(3) **Use frequency and social features to build habits.** Regular sessions, visible co-viewer activity and well-designed scenes raised perceived value, stickiness and repurchase, and one study found session frequency mattered more than session length (Jiang, 2025).

(4) **Treat after-sales service and recovery as retention tools.** After-sales support, logistics quality, fair recovery and sincere apologies restored or sustained repurchase.

(5) **Segment the audience.** Older shoppers value professionalism and after-sales support, Gen Z values interaction, and high-involvement products call for informational rather than relational interaction. AI streamers should be given social interaction styles and competence cues.

Limitations

This review has limitations. It searched one database, Scopus, and only English-language journal articles, so relevant work in other databases, in Chinese-language journals and in conference proceedings may be missing. Screening was performed by a single reviewer, which increases the risk of selection error compared with independent double screening. Full texts of 27 reports could not be obtained. Methodological quality was appraised descriptively rather than with a formal scoring tool, and the heterogeneity of constructs and models precluded meta-analysis. Finally, the evidence base itself is dominated by self-reported intentions from Chinese consumers, which limits the generalisability of the synthesised findings.

CONCLUSION

Customer retention in live streaming commerce (LSC) has emerged as an increasingly important research area over the past five years. The synthesis of 49 empirical studies indicated that customer retention was primarily associated with streamer credibility and trust, interactive engagement, platform features, perceived value, relational attachment, and post-purchase service quality. However, findings regarding the roles of product quality and pricing remained inconsistent, while evidence concerning consumers outside China, actual repurchase behavior, and long-term relationships with artificial intelligence (AI)-based streamers was limited. The proposed integrative framework and Theory–Context–Characteristics–Methodology (TCCM) research agenda contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms and contextual conditions underlying customer retention in LSC. Future research should prioritize longitudinal and behavioral investigations, broader geographic representation, and the evolving role of AI-based streamers to clarify how customer relationships develop and persist over time.

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