

The Research on the Third-Party Effect of False Advertising in Live-Streaming E-Commerce and Consumers' Willingness to Protect Their Rights

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Abstract. Live-streaming e-commerce has become a mainstream consumption channel, but false advertising by livestreamers is rampant, and consumers' willingness to protect their rights is low. Existing research on the third-person effect focuses on public communication scenarios, but lacks exploration of the mechanism by which third-person perception influences rights protection behavior in the commercial scenario of false advertising in livestreaming. To clarify the intrinsic logic of the role of consumers' third-person perception, platform trust and willingness to protect their rights in false advertising in livestreaming, this paper constructs an empirical model based on the third-person effect theory. The research surveyed consumers who had livestreaming shopping experiences and 262 questionnaires were distributed online. After a screening process, 220 valid samples were retained. The processing and analysis of this data was completed with the tool SPSS 26.0, covering reliability, validity, correlation and multiple regression analyses. The results of the analysis showed that in the scenario of false advertising in livestreaming, there is indeed a significant third-person effect. Specifically, people tend to believe that others are more influenced than they are. The only factor that genuinely drove people to seek rights protection was their level of trust in the platform. The moderating role of platform trust, however, was not confirmed. This study extends the application of third-person effect theory into the commercial domain. It also provides some experience references and basis for platforms to strengthen supervision and build a consumer rights protection system.

Keywords: third-party effect, live-streaming e-commerce, false advertising, platform trust, rights

1. Introduction

The continuous upgrading of new media technologies has driven the rapid growth of the live-streaming e-commerce industry. Consumers can directly see the actual appearance of products and interact with hosts in real time, which accelerates their purchasing decisions. Some streamers, in order to increase sales and gain traffic, frequently engage in illegal activities such as false advertising, false reviews, and quality fraud, seriously disrupting the order of the live-streaming e-commerce market and infringing upon the legitimate rights and interests of a large number of

consumers. Although major live-streaming platforms are continuously promoting content review and industry governance, and constantly improving regulatory mechanisms, the governance effect still has limitations, and illegal activities are difficult to eradicate [1, 2]. Compared to the frequent consumer rights infringement issues, the rate of consumers actively protecting their rights remains low. Most consumers, after encountering false advertising and infringement of their rights, often choose to remain silent and rarely actively protect their rights through platform reports or complaints against merchants. From the perspective of cognitive bias in communication studies, when audiences are exposed to negative commercial information such as false advertising in live streaming, they experience a typical third-person effect: consumers generally believe that false advertising and illegal marketing in live streaming are more misleading and harmful to other ordinary consumers, subjectively judging themselves to have a stronger ability to discern information and not be easily misled by false content, thus developing a bystander mentality and weakening their willingness to protect their rights and supervise.

Foreign scholars have long focused on third-person perception bias under negative information in commercial advertising and persuasive commercial information can also induce differentiated perceptions among audiences [3], third-person perception in consumption scenarios reduces users' tendency to actively monitor behavior, providing a theoretical reference for this study [4]. A review of existing academic research shows that research on the third-person effect theory is relatively mature both domestically and internationally. However, existing results mostly focus on public information scenarios such as online rumors, violent media, and negative public opinion. In the field of live-streaming e-commerce research, scholars mostly explore the impact of factors such as the personal image of the streamer, the atmosphere of the live-streaming room, and price advantages on consumer' purchasing intentions.

On a theoretical level, this paper extends the third-person effect theory to the commercial consumption scenario of false advertising in live streaming, making up for the shortcomings of previous studies that mostly focused on public opinion and lacked empirical evidence on commercial communication. Simultaneously, it empirically clarifies the real relationship between third-person perception, platform trust, and the willingness to protect rights, revising previous theoretical assumptions and providing differentiated empirical references for subsequent related research.

This study is based on the third-person effect theory and employs a questionnaire survey method to conduct empirical research. The survey targets consumers who have participated in live-stream shopping within the past year. A total of 262 samples were collected after the questionnaires were distributed, and 220 valid questionnaires were obtained after data cleaning. The data processing tool used was SPSS 26.0, and the specific analyses included reliability testing, validity testing, correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis, aiming to verify whether third-person perception occurs in the live-streaming context, and further explore the potential deeper relationships among third-person perception, platform trust, and protective intention. The thesis is broadly divided into five chapters. Chapter One is the introduction, covering the research background, research significance, research methods, and the overall structure of the thesis. Chapter Two is the literature review and hypothesis proposal, which reviews the relevant research on key variables and deduces and proposes research hypotheses based on existing studies. Chapter Three is the research design, involving the construction of the research model, questionnaire design, the sample collection process, and the selection of data analysis methods. Chapter Four is the empirical analysis, presenting the results of each test and verifying the validity of each research hypothesis one by one. Chapter Five is the discussion section, which, on the basis of summarizing the main research

findings, puts forward practical suggestions for the industry, while also pointing out the limitations of this study and offering some thoughts on future research directions accordingly.

2. Literature review and research hypotheses

2.1. Theoretical basis of third-person effect

In 1983, Davison proposed the third-person effect theory, which is a classic framework for understanding media effects in communication studies. Its core viewpoint is that when audiences are exposed to negative or persuasive media messages, they typically exhibit a notable cognitive bias—most people believe that such information exerts a far greater influence on others' perceptions and behaviors than on their own.

Domestic academic research on the third-person effect has accumulated considerable findings, through an analysis of online information, whether this cognitive bias remains stable in the new media environment or undergoes certain changes [5]. Specialized research on persuasive commercial information such as live-streaming e-commerce is relatively scarce, and research on third-person perception in commercial live-streaming scenarios is insufficient. Related research also explored the evolution and boundary of the third-person effect under new media environments [6].

2.2. Consumer willingness to protect rights

Consumer willingness to protect their rights refers to the subjective tendency of consumers to take proactive actions such as filing complaints, reminding others, and boycotting consumption after encountering consumer rights infringements or false advertising. In research on live streaming e-commerce that consumer willingness to protect their rights is an important indicator for measuring the effectiveness of consumer market governance [7]. Existing research focuses on the positive impact of various factors on consumers' purchasing intentions, but ignores the formation mechanism of consumer rights protection behavior in infringement scenarios, especially lacking empirical research from the perspective of audience cognitive bias.

2.3. Platform trust

Platform trust, as an important control variable, refers to the comprehensive level of consumer reliance on the live streaming platform's content review, violation management, rights protection channels, and dispute resolution capabilities. Platform trust can significantly influence users' platform participation behavior and rights protection enthusiasm, and is an important factor in regulating consumer behavior decisions [8, 9].

2.4. Research hypothesis derivation

A review of existing literature reveals that the academic community has not systematically verified the relationship between third-person perception and consumer willingness to protect their rights in the context of false advertising in live streaming, nor has it clarified the influence of platform trust between the two, leaving a gap in research. Based on the third-person effect theory and existing research findings, three research hypotheses are proposed: H1: In the scenario of false advertising in live streaming sales, consumers have a third-party perception, with others' perception of influence being higher than their own perception of influence; H2: Consumers' third-party perception (self perception, others' perception) has a positive impact on their willingness to protect their rights; H3:

Platform trust plays a moderating role between third-party perception and consumer willingness to protect their rights.

3. Research design

3.1. Research model and variable definition

This paper uses a questionnaire survey as the research method, constructs a research model based on the third-person effect theory, uses third-person perception as the independent variable, including two dimensions: self-influence perception and other-influence perception; uses consumer rights protection willingness as the dependent variable; and uses platform trust as the core moderating variable. Simultaneously, gender, age, education level, and monthly live-stream shopping frequency are selected as demographic control variables to ensure the rigor and accuracy of the empirical conclusions.

3.2. Questionnaire scale design

The questionnaire items in this study are all adapted from mature and authoritative scales in Chinese core journals, closely matching the research scenario of false advertising in live-streaming e-commerce, ensuring the reliability, validity, and suitability of the scales. The third-person perception scale was adapted from the mature scale [5], consisting of 6 items, divided into 3 items on self-influence perception and 3 items on other people's influence perception; the consumer rights protection willingness scale was adapted from the research results [7], consisting of 4 items; and the platform trust scale was adapted from the e-commerce platform trust scale [8], consisting of 3 items. All scale items in the questionnaire uniformly adopted the Likert five-point scoring method, where 1 represents completely disagree, 2 represents somewhat disagree, 3 represents neutral, 4 represents somewhat agree, and 5 represents completely agree. The higher the score, the higher the degree of recognition of the corresponding dimension by the respondents.

3.3. Sample collection

The survey targeted young people aged 19 to 25 who had lived in first- and second-tier cities over the past year and had experience with both watching live streams and making purchases through them. The electronic questionnaire was created using WJX (Questionnaire Star) and was randomly distributed through online platforms to collect a broad range of sample data. A total of 262 questionnaires were distributed. After distribution, the quality of the questionnaires was rigorously screened, and invalid responses-those with too-short completion times, repeated answers, or contradictory replies-were removed. Ultimately, 220 valid questionnaires were retained.

3.4. Data analysis method

This paper uses Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 26.0 statistical software for data analysis. The specific analysis process includes reliability and validity testing, descriptive statistical analysis, Pearson correlation analysis, and multiple linear regression analysis to verify the research hypotheses step by step.

4. Empirical analysis

4.1. Reliability and validity test

4.1.1. Reliability test

To ensure the reliability and validity of the questionnaire data, this paper first conducts a reliability analysis, using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient as the core criterion. An alpha coefficient greater than 0.6 is considered to be reliable.

Data analysis results show that the reliability indicators of all variables in this study generally meet the standards (Table1). Specifically, the alpha coefficient of the self-perception scale is 0.767, the alpha coefficient of the other-perception scale is 0.661, the alpha coefficient of the consumer rights protection willingness scale is 0.812, and the alpha coefficient of the platform trust scale is 0.943. All the reliability coefficients of all variables are higher than the critical standard of 0.6, indicating that the scales in this study have good internal consistency, the questionnaire response data is reliable, and it can be used for subsequent empirical analysis.

Table 1. Cronbach's reliability analysis results

Variables	Number of items	Cronbach's α coefficient
Self-perception	3	0.767
Others' Perception	2	0.661
Willingness to Protect Rights	4	0.812
Platform Trust	3	0.943

4.1.2. Validity test

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test and Bartlett's test of sphericity were used to verify the scale's fit in terms of validity.

The test results show that the KMO value of this study is 0.669, which is greater than the critical criterion of 0.6. The approximate chi-square value of Bartlett's test of sphericity is 1315.350, $df = 66$, and the p value is less than 0.001, reaching a significant level (Table 2). This proves that the scale in this study has good structural validity, the items are well-suited to the research dimensions, and the data are suitable for factor analysis and regression analysis.

Table 2. KMO and Bartlett's tests

Indicators	Values
KMO value	0.669
Bartlett sphericity test approximate chi square	1315.350
df	66
p value	0.000

4.2. Descriptive statistical analysis

This paper conducts descriptive statistical analysis on four core variables: platform trust, willingness to protect rights, others' perception, and self-perception, using indicators such as mean, standard deviation, and extreme values to analyze the overall characteristics of the sample.

The data results show that the mean of each variable is above 4 points (Table 3). Among them, the mean of others' perception is 4.664, standard deviation is 0.331; the mean of self-perception is 4.130, standard deviation is 0.991; the mean of willingness to protect rights is 4.539, standard deviation is 0.487; and the mean of platform trust is 4.283, standard deviation is 0.642. Overall, the respondents' awareness of false advertising in live streaming, willingness to protect rights, and trust in the platform are generally high. The distribution of extreme values is reasonable, with no extreme outliers, and the sample data distribution is stable, meeting the basic conditions for subsequent regression analysis. At the same time, the mean of others' perception is significantly higher than that of self-perception, which directly confirms that the audience has a significant third-party perception bias in the context of false advertising in live streaming e-commerce. Therefore, hypothesis H1 of this paper is valid.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of variables

Name	Sample Size	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation	Median
Platform Trust Average	220	2.333	5.000	4.283	0.642	4.500
Rights Protection Intentions Average	220	3.000	5.000	4.539	0.487	4.750
Other People's Perception Average	220	3.667	5.000	4.664	0.331	4.667
Self Perception Average	220	1.000	5.000	4.130	0.991	4.667

4.3. Pearson correlation analysis

To clarify the relationship between the variables and to rule out multicollinearity, this paper conducts Pearson correlation analysis (Table 4). The results show that there is a significant positive correlation between platform trust and consumer willingness to protect their rights ($r = 0.356$, $p < 0.01$), and the correlation between variables is significant. However, the correlation coefficient between perception of others and willingness to protect rights is -0.084 , and the correlation coefficient between self-perception and willingness to protect rights is -0.003 , both with p values greater than 0.05 , indicating no significant correlation. All the correlation coefficients of the variables are reasonable, and there is no serious multicollinearity problem, which meets the preconditions for multiple linear regression analysis.

Table 4. Pearson correlation analysis results

	Rights Protection Intentions Average
Platform Trust Average	0.356**
Other People's Perception Average	-0.084
Self Perception Average	-0.003

Note: **p<0.01

4.4. Multiple linear regression analysis

This paper uses self-perception and others' perception as independent variables, platform trust as the core control variable, and consumer willingness to protect rights as the dependent variable to conduct multiple linear regression analysis to test the predictive effect of each variable.

The regression results show that the initial model R^2 is 0.134, the adjusted R^2 is 0.122, and the overall F-value is 11.139 ($p < 0.001$)(Table 5). The regression model shows a good overall fit and is statistically significant. Multicollinearity analysis results show that the VIF values and tolerance values of all variables are close to 1, indicating no multicollinearity issues and a stable and reliable model.

The regression results of specific variables show that the influence coefficient of self-perception on the willingness to protect rights is $\beta = 0.003$, $p = 0.968 > 0.05$, indicating no significant predictive effect; the influence coefficient of others' perception on the willingness to protect rights is $\beta = -0.085$, $p = 0.182 > 0.05$, also indicating no significant predictive effect. Therefore, consumers' third-party perception cannot significantly positively influence their willingness to protect rights, and hypothesis H2 is not valid. The standardized regression coefficient of platform trust on the willingness to protect rights is $\beta = 0.356$, $p < 0.001$, indicating a significant positive predictive effect and being a core factor driving the increase in consumers' willingness to protect rights. However, this data did not verify the moderating effect of platform trust. Combined with the data, the audience's third-party perception does not have a significant predictive effect on consumers' willingness to protect rights, and the main effect between the independent and dependent variables is not significant, resulting in a lack of moderating pathways for platform trust. Therefore, the moderating effect cannot be verified, and hypothesis H3 is not valid.

Table 5. Results of linear regression analysis (n = 220)

	Non standardized coefficient B	Standard Error	Standardization coefficient Beta	t	p	VIF	Tolerance
Constant	3.956	0.502	-	7.884	0.000**	-	-
Self Perception Average	0.001	0.031	0.003	0.041	0.968	1.001	0.999

Table 5. (continued)

Other People's Perception Average	-0.125	0.093	-0.085	-1.338	0.182	1.000	1.000
Platform Trust Average	0.271	0.048	0.356	5.625	0.000**	1.000	1.000

$R^2 = 0.134$

Adjusted $R^2 = 0.122$

$F = F(3,216) = 11.139, p = 0.000$

DW value = 1.632

Note: Dependent variable = Rights Protection Intentions Average; ** $p < 0.01$

5. Discussion

5.1. Overview of hypothesis test results

The three hypothesis tests produced mixed results. H1 held up. H2 and H3 did not find support in the data. This section explains why, drawing on the sample characteristics, third-person effect theory, and the live e-commerce context. It works through the logic behind each result, layer by layer.

5.2. Reasons why hypothesis H2 is not supported

First, third-person perception creates a bystander mentality. Respondents tended to believe that other people fall for false advertising more easily than they do, while seeing themselves as sharper judges of the truth.

Second, the cost of protecting one's rights gets in the way. The respondents were young consumers, aged 19 to 25, in first- and second-tier cities. For a small purchase, that cost usually outweighed the benefit. This weakened the push toward supervision that third-person perception might otherwise create.

Third, young consumers tolerate marketing exaggeration fairly easily. Many respondents have shopped through livestreams for years. This lowers how seriously they view false advertising [3, 10].

Fourth, there is a gap between attitude and behavior in the sample. The questionnaire measured third-person perception as a subjective attitude. It measured willingness to protect rights as a future behavioral tendency. Many situational factors sit between these two things.

5.3. Negative industry impacts brought by the establishment of H1

H1 confirmed that this cognitive bias exists reliably in live-streaming false advertising. This bias creates three problems for market governance: First, it produces collective silence. When every consumer believes that others are the ones being deceived, nobody steps forward, forming widespread bystander bias in live shopping scenarios [3]. Second, overconfidence increases the risk of loss. Consumers trust their own judgment too much, so they relax their checks on product claims,

specifications, and after-sales promises. Third, it distorts the platform's feedback data. Many consumers skip reporting because of this third-person mentality.

5.4. Internal logic of unsupported moderating effect H3

This study confirms that platform trust has a direct effect on the willingness to protect rights. It does not confirm a moderating effect. The reason is as follows: third-person perception, the independent variable, has no significant effect on rights protection willingness, the dependent variable. Without that main effect, platform trust has no pathway left to moderate. No matter how much consumers trust the platform, third-person perception still cannot move their willingness to act, so platform trust cannot buffer or strengthen a relationship that is not there.

This does not make platform trust unimportant. It simply means the two variables do not interact. Platform trust still works on its own as a key driver of the willingness to protect rights.

5.5. Practical countermeasures based on research conclusions

Platform trust does not moderate the link between third-person perception and rights protection willingness, but it still correlates strongly and positively with that willingness on its own.

- Simplify the rights protection process and build platform trust – Platforms can add one-click reporting for livestreams, automatic screenshot evidence, and smart customer-service tools that gather evidence on their own. These features cut the time needed to resolve disputes.

- Educate consumers to counter third-person bias – Platforms can use livestream pop-ups, homepage banners, and community posts to spread awareness. The goal is to correct the belief that only other people get fooled. Sharing successful small-claim cases can also ease consumers' worries about the time cost of filing a complaint. This weakens the bystander mentality and encourages people to report violations themselves.

- Strengthen regulatory oversight of platforms – Regulators should require platforms to report complaint data on a regular basis. Regulators should unify the standards used to judge false advertising across platforms and establish cross-platform joint supervision channels [2].

5.6. Research limitations

This study also has some limitations.

First, the sample is narrow. It only includes young consumers aged 19 to 25 in first- and second-tier cities. It excludes middle-aged and older consumers, along with shoppers in lower-tier markets, so the conclusions apply mainly to young consumers.

Second, the data can capture cognition and willingness at a single point in time. It cannot track how third-person perception, platform trust, and rights protection willingness change after consumers actually encounter false advertising.

Third, the model's explanatory power is limited. The adjusted R^2 was only 0.122. This suggests other variables matter too, such as streamer reputation, the size of the loss, and past experience with rights protection.

6. Conclusion

This study drew on third-person effect theory. It surveyed 220 young consumers, aged 19 to 25, with shopping experience on live-streaming platforms in first- and second-tier cities.

The results confirmed a clear third-person perception in live-streaming false advertising. Respondents saw other people as more influenced by false ads than themselves. This supports H1. However, neither self-perception nor perception of others predicted the willingness to protect one's rights, so H2 does not hold. Platform trust showed a stable, positive effect on rights protection willingness on its own, but it did not moderate the link between third-person perception and that willingness, so H3 does not hold either. The main reasons include: Third-person perception pushes consumers to place responsibility on others. The cost of protecting one's rights adds another barrier. Young consumers' high tolerance for marketing exaggeration adds a third. These factors collectively hinder the path from consciousness to action. This study extends third-person effect theory into the live-streaming business context. Most existing research focuses on public communication, thus filling a gap. The findings can help platforms improve their rights-protection channels and design better consumer education. Future research could widen the survey group, separate different types of false advertising, incorporate streamer halo effect and audience group differences into the variable framework, and use longitudinal data to trace these mechanisms more closely over time. The research also offers actionable reference for regulators to standardize live broadcast marketing behaviors and eliminate consumers' bystander psychology, helping build a healthier and more transparent live-stream e-commerce ecological environment.

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