

INFORMATION TRANSPARENCY IN LIVE STREAMING MARKETING OF LOCAL SPECIALTY FOOD BRANDS: A PRELIMINARY REVIEW

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Abstract: *This preliminary review examines the role of information transparency in live streaming marketing of local specialty food brands. Unlike static e-commerce displays, live streaming marketing combines real-time product demonstration, streamer explanation, viewer comments, promotional pressure, and immediate transaction opportunities. These features may help local specialty food brands communicate product origin, ingredients, production processes, cultural meaning, price rules, and after-sales commitments. However, they may also intensify information asymmetry when disclosure is selective, exaggerated, difficult to verify, or embedded in strong persuasion. Methodologically, the study adopts a structured preliminary review of selected peer-reviewed empirical studies and seminal theoretical works identified through keyword-based academic searches and backward reference checking. Studies were selected for their direct relevance to live streaming commerce, information transparency, consumer trust, food traceability, ethical marketing, consumer protection, and local food authenticity, and were synthesised thematically. The review argues that information transparency should be treated as more than simple disclosure; it includes clarity, completeness, accessibility, verifiability, interpretability, and accountability in a persuasive digital environment. Guided by the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) perspective, the review explains how transparent product, price, source, transaction, and cultural information may function as marketing stimuli that shape consumer evaluation, reduce uncertainty, and strengthen consumer trust. The paper proposes an Information Transparency-Trust Response Framework to guide future empirical studies of local specialty food brands in China's live streaming commerce context. The review contributes by consolidating fragmented literature and repositioning information transparency as both a digital marketing issue and a consumer protection issue.*

Keywords: *information transparency; live streaming marketing; local specialty food brands; consumer trust; ethical marketing; consumer protection; SOR perspective*

Introduction

Live streaming marketing has altered the way consumers encounter products, sellers, and brands in digital marketplaces. In conventional online retail settings, consumers usually depend on static product photographs, textual descriptions, ratings, and post-purchase reviews. In live streaming marketing, products are demonstrated, interpreted, compared, and sold in real time, and recent evidence shows that this real-time flow of information is itself a primary driver of shopper response (Moharana & Pati, 2025; Yang et al., 2024). Streamers answer questions, display product usage, offer limited-time promotions, react to viewer comments, and encourage immediate purchase decisions. Early live streaming studies explain this channel through interactive affordances and social commerce trust (Sun et al., 2019; Wongkitrungrueng & Assarut, 2020), while more recent empirical work has increasingly emphasised uncertainty reduction, benefit-risk assessment, impulse response, and streamer credibility (Chen et al., 2024; Luo et al., 2024). This indicates that live streaming marketing is not merely a selling interface but a stimulus-rich communication environment in which information, persuasion, interaction, and ethical responsibility coexist.

Recent research also shows that live streaming should be interpreted through the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) perspective rather than a simple information channel (Liang et al., 2025). Interactivity and product presentation work as stimuli that shape engagement and purchase intention (Chen & Zhang, 2023). Social presence and promotional cues may trigger impulse buying (Tao et al., 2024; Luo et al., 2024), while benefit-risk perceptions and uncertainty reduction help explain why consumers accept or resist live streaming commerce (Lu & Chen, 2021). Studies on virtual streamers and online persuasion further indicate that credibility, expectation, and perceived message quality can influence consumer trust and discontinuance responses (Chen & Li, 2024; Li & See-To, 2024). These findings justify the present review's use of the SOR perspective to organise the role of information transparency in local specialty food live streaming.

The relevance of live streaming marketing is particularly strong for local specialty food brands. Unlike many standardised consumer goods, local specialty food products are often evaluated through region of origin, freshness, ingredients, taste expectation, traditional production method, local identity, and perceived authenticity, particularly among younger consumers who actively seek culturally meaningful food products (Jin et al., 2025). Earlier food marketing studies indicate that geographical origin, place image, quality labels, and authenticity cues may shape product evaluation, willingness to pay, and perceived value (Tarabashkina et al., 2024; Li et al., 2023; Cao et al., 2024). This means that local specialty food brands compete through a combination of material quality and symbolic meaning. Live streaming can therefore become a useful digital marketing channel because it allows sellers to show product appearance, explain production stories, present preparation or storage methods, and communicate cultural meaning in a more vivid manner than static pages.

However, the same environment also produces substantial information problems. Food products contain many experience and credence attributes, the quality of which cannot be fully ascertained even after repeated purchase (Nelson, 1970; Darby & Karni, 1973). Consumers cannot fully verify freshness, ingredient quality, hygiene condition, source authenticity, production process, or cultural legitimacy before purchase. This problem becomes more serious when live streaming sessions rely on countdowns, coupons, price urgency, platform traffic

competition, and emotionally charged persuasion. Classical economic work on information asymmetry has long shown that markets function poorly when buyers cannot adequately evaluate quality claims before purchase (Nelson, 1970; Darby & Karni, 1973). In online commerce, such uncertainty is further intensified because consumers evaluate products through mediated cues rather than direct inspection. Research in e-commerce and online exchange indicates that information quality, trust-assuring structures, and risk-reduction mechanisms are central to digital purchase decisions (McKnight et al., 2002; Aghakhani et al., 2023; Li & See-To, 2024).

Driven by these digital shifts, information transparency becomes more than a communication preference. It is an ethical marketing mechanism through which consumers can judge whether a local specialty food product, its live presenter, and its selling arrangement deserve trust (Singh et al., 2024). Recent agricultural e-commerce research shows directly that the transparency of production and environmental information raises online consumers' purchase intention toward food products (Fu et al., 2023; Fu et al., 2025). Yet extant literature remains fragmented. Information transparency is often discussed indirectly through information quality, review helpfulness, source credibility, uncertainty reduction, seller disclosure, or traceability, while live streaming commerce literature has focused more heavily on interactivity, social presence, enjoyment, engagement, streamer influence, and purchase intention than on transparency as a core construct. In food research, transparency is more often connected to labels, traceability, quality certification, food fraud, and authenticity rather than to the real-time persuasive communication of live streaming (Garaus & Treiblmaier, 2021; Cao et al., 2024).

This review adopts the SOR perspective as its underpinning theoretical lens. The SOR perspective explains how external stimuli affect internal consumer states and subsequently shape behavioural responses (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). In this review, transparent product, price, source, transaction, and cultural information are treated as marketing stimuli. Consumer evaluation and consumer trust are treated as internal organismic responses. Purchase confidence, product evaluation, recommendation intention, and future brand-related responses are treated as possible response outcomes. The SOR perspective is suitable because live streaming marketing combines information cues, social cues, visual cues, and promotional cues in a single environment.

The purpose of this preliminary review is to identify, synthesise, and conceptually organise literature relevant to information transparency in live streaming marketing of local specialty food brands. As detailed in the Review Method section, the paper adopts a structured preliminary review and does not claim exhaustive systematic coverage. It focuses on selected empirical studies and seminal theoretical works that directly inform the focal concepts, theoretical perspective, and proposed framework. Specifically, the review defines information transparency and related concepts, explains why transparency is integral to consumer protection in live streaming, develops the notion of information transparency evaluation, clarifies how transparency may directly strengthen consumer trust, situates the discussion within China's live streaming commerce and local specialty food brand context, and proposes an Information Transparency-Trust Response Framework for future empirical research.

Review Method

This study employed a structured preliminary literature review rather than an exhaustive systematic review. Relevant literature was identified through keyword-based searches in Scopus and the Web of Science Core Collection, with Google Scholar used as a supplementary discovery source. The searches were supplemented by backward reference checking of closely related studies. The search terms included combinations of “live streaming commerce,” “live streaming marketing,” “information transparency,” “information quality,” “consumer trust,” “source credibility,” “persuasion knowledge,” “food traceability,” “local specialty food,” “food authenticity,” “ethical marketing,” and “consumer protection.”

The review prioritised peer-reviewed empirical studies and seminal theoretical sources that made a direct conceptual or empirical contribution to at least one of four areas: (1) information transparency and information quality in digital commerce; (2) trust, credibility, persuasion, and consumer response in live streaming or social commerce; (3) food traceability, product origin, and authenticity; and (4) ethical marketing and consumer protection. Duplicate records, studies with only peripheral relevance to the focal topic, and sources without a substantive conceptual or empirical contribution were excluded.

The selected literature was compared and synthesised thematically. Key concepts, research contexts, empirical findings, and their relevance to the present review were organised around five dimensions of information transparency: product and process transparency, price and promotion transparency, source and seller transparency, transaction and after-sales transparency, and cultural authenticity transparency. These themes were subsequently interpreted through the Stimulus-Organism-Response perspective to develop the proposed Information Transparency-Trust Response Framework.

As this study is preliminary and conceptual, it does not claim exhaustive coverage of all relevant publications. No formal systematic-review quality appraisal or meta-analytic synthesis was conducted. Instead, the review was designed to provide a transparent and conceptually coherent synthesis of literature directly relevant to information transparency in the live streaming marketing of local specialty food brands.

Information Transparency and Related Concepts

Information transparency is often used loosely in digital marketing research, yet the concept requires greater precision. Information transparency is related to, but not identical with, information disclosure and information quality. Information disclosure refers to the act of making information available. Information quality generally emphasises attributes such as accuracy, completeness, relevance, timeliness, and usefulness (Aghakhani et al., 2023; Fang et al., 2023; Moharana & Pati, 2025). Transparency goes further. It concerns not only whether information is present, but whether it is understandable, interpretable, accessible, responsibly presented, and open to evaluation by the consumer (Fu et al., 2025).

Several streams of literature support this broader understanding. In markets characterised by uncertainty, buyers need more than raw claims; they need signals that help them judge quality under incomplete information (Nelson, 1970). In credence and experience goods, disclosure alone does not eliminate asymmetry if consumers cannot evaluate what the seller means or whether the claim can be trusted (Nelson, 1970; Darby & Karni, 1973). In digital commerce,

the problem becomes even more acute because consumers depend on mediated text, visuals, seller narratives, and interface cues. Research on online trust has shown that information quality and trust-assuring structures influence risk beliefs and usage intentions because they provide interpretive grounds for judgement rather than mere exposure to information (McKnight et al., 2002; Aghakhani et al., 2023).

From a communication perspective, transparency also intersects with source credibility. Hovland and Weiss (1951) originally showed that the perceived credibility of a message source influences communication effectiveness. Ohanian (1990) later refined this idea through expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. In digital settings, message evaluation is affected not only by what is said, but also by who says it, how it is said, and whether supporting cues are consistent. In online environments, site credibility, source credibility, and the consumer's own verification behaviour shape perceived credibility of information (Aghakhani et al., 2023; Li & See-To, 2024; Segev & Fernandes, 2023). Thus, in a live streaming context, information transparency cannot be separated from interpretability, consistency, and credibility of the communicator.

In recent digital marketing research, transparency is increasingly discussed as an ethical condition of persuasion rather than as a neutral disclosure act. Studies on sponsorship disclosure and persuasion knowledge show that consumers respond differently when commercial intent is clear and when persuasive cues are recognisable (Friestad & Wright, 1994; Musiyiwa & Jacobson, 2023). Recent elaboration-likelihood research in social media and e-commerce further indicates that source credibility, message quality, and external cues shape how consumers process online commercial information (Fang et al., 2023; Li & See-To, 2024). For live streaming marketing, this means that information transparency should be understood as a consumer-facing ethical practice: claims must be understandable, useful, and accountable under real-time persuasive pressure.

In the context of live streaming marketing, information transparency is also influenced by real-time interaction. Streamers communicate through spoken explanation, product demonstration, camera use, reply sequences, pinned comments, price cards, coupon notices, and platform-integrated order links. Earlier live streaming studies demonstrate that interactivity and social presence can make information feel richer and more persuasive than static listings (Tao et al., 2024; Luo et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2020; Kang et al., 2021; Lu & Chen, 2021). However, richer presentation does not automatically produce transparency. A highly interactive streamer may still omit costs, exaggerate origin claims, avoid discussing limitations, or blur the boundary between authentic demonstration and theatrical performance. Therefore, transparency must be judged in terms of whether consumers receive a fair basis for informed decision-making.

For local specialty food brands, information transparency can be analytically divided into at least five dimensions. The first is product and process transparency, which involves ingredients, taste characteristics, freshness, production method, shelf life, storage conditions, and quality control. The second is price and promotion transparency, which includes original price, discount rules, bundle conditions, shipping charges, coupon thresholds, and refund implications. The third is source and seller transparency, referring to producer identity, place of origin, supply-chain role, brand ownership, seller identity, and the relationship between the

streamer and the brand. The fourth is transaction and after-sales transparency, including delivery conditions, logistics protection, complaint channels, return arrangements, and responsibility when products arrive damaged or inconsistent with description. The fifth is cultural authenticity transparency, referring to responsible communication of local identity, heritage narrative, traditional method, and regional meaning without overstating or fabricating cultural claims.

Food studies provide strong support for the relevance of these dimensions. Consumers value traceability and production-related information when quality and safety are uncertain, and they are willing to pay more when such information is credibly provided (Menozzi et al., 2015; Garaus & Treiblmaier, 2021; Collart et al., 2025). Regional image and origin cues also shape food evaluation and willingness to pay (Tarabashkina et al., 2024; Cao et al., 2024). In addition, authenticity research suggests that brand authenticity and cultural legitimacy depend not only on symbolic storytelling but also on the credibility of supporting cues (Li et al., 2023; Han & Balabanis, 2024). This is especially relevant for local specialty food brands because cultural narratives are often central to differentiation.

For the purposes of this review, information transparency refers to the degree to which a live streaming marketer provides clear, complete, interpretable, accessible, responsible, and verifiable information about product attributes, production process, price and promotion rules, source identity, transaction conditions, and cultural meaning, such that consumers are given a fair basis for judgement under conditions of digital persuasion and product uncertainty. This definition retains conceptual links with information disclosure and information quality, but broadens the construct toward verifiability, accountability, and interpretive usability.

Recent evidence from influencer and social-media studies further supports this ethical concern. Meta-analytic and survey evidence indicates that influencer credibility and engagement are important predictors of purchase-related response (Ao et al., 2023; Han & Balabanis, 2024; Ilieva et al., 2024), while expectation-based social-media research shows that viewers judge digital messages partly through perceived source normativity and contextual appropriateness (Tong & DeAndrea, 2023). Influencers can also accelerate impulsive responses, which makes disclosure of their commercial role especially important (Shamim & Azam, 2024). These findings reinforce the need to clarify whether food claims made in live streaming sessions are produced by a credible human seller, a trained presenter, or a technologically assisted promotional agent.

Consumer Protection and Information Transparency in Live Streaming

Consumer protection is a central reason for studying information transparency in live streaming marketing. At the most basic level, consumers have a right to receive information that enables reasonable judgement before they purchase. In food markets, this right is especially important because product failure may involve not merely dissatisfaction but also waste, safety concerns, health concerns, deception about origin, or disappointment regarding authenticity claims. Food-label and traceability studies have repeatedly shown that information contributes to informed choice only when consumers can understand it and believe it to be trustworthy (Menozzi et al., 2015; Garaus & Treiblmaier, 2021; Yang et al., 2025).

Live streaming complicates consumer protection because it relocates product communication from relatively stable packaging and retail displays into a fast-moving persuasive environment.

Several features of live streaming are relevant here. First, temporal pressure is common. Streamers often use countdowns, limited stock cues, exclusive offers, and temporary price reduction claims to accelerate consumer response. Second, the communication is highly interpersonal. Streamers can create para-social familiarity and emotional closeness, which may increase compliance as much as comprehension. Third, the communication is publicly social. Viewer comments, order notifications, popularity cues, and visible audience reaction may form a social proof environment in which consumers look to others as a signal of confidence. Fourth, live streaming commerce frequently blends information with entertainment. These features help explain why live streaming is commercially powerful, but they also raise the risk that consumers make decisions before they adequately evaluate product claims.

In consumer-protection terms, information transparency serves at least three functions. The first is informational fairness. Consumers should understand what they are buying, under what price conditions, from whom, and with what recourse if the product fails to match expectations. The second is accountability. Transparent communication should make it easier to identify who is responsible when product claims prove inaccurate or misleading. The third is market discipline. When disclosure is clearer and claims are easier to evaluate, incentives for misleading communication should weaken over time because sellers face stronger reputational consequences.

These issues acquire particular salience in local specialty food live streaming. A consumer may see product appearance on camera, but not necessarily the actual ingredient source, real production environment, date of manufacture, cold-chain condition, or degree of cultural authenticity. A brand may present a persuasive place-based narrative, yet the consumer may not know whether the product is truly produced in the claimed region, merely packaged there, or only symbolically associated with a location. Likewise, a product may be described as “traditional” or “authentic” without sufficient transparency regarding actual production methods or the commercial adaptation of the product. Because local specialty foods combine material and cultural value, consumers need protection not only against price deception but also against symbolic overclaiming of origin and authenticity (Tarabashkina et al., 2024; Li et al., 2023).

The ethical marketing dimension is therefore fundamental. Rather than treating live streaming only as a conversion tool, this review positions information transparency as a consumer-protection mechanism. Recent studies on live streaming commerce show that consumers evaluate both benefits and risks when making purchase decisions (Chen & Zhang, 2023), and studies of impulse buying and information overload suggest that engagement, promotion, and excessive information may accelerate response before careful evaluation occurs (Luo et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2023). Ethical marketing requires sellers to reduce this imbalance by making product, price, source, transaction, and cultural claims easier to examine. In this sense, transparency supports the consumer's right to information and helps prevent misleading communication, hidden conditions, and exaggerated authenticity claims.

Platform governance is also relevant. Trust in digital markets is partly institution-based: consumers may rely on platform rules, complaint systems, dispute resolution, verification mechanisms, and payment protection, not only on the seller's word (Pavlou & Gefen, 2004; Singh et al., 2024). In live streaming commerce, governance matters because product claims

unfold in real time and may be harder to monitor than ordinary listings. If platform rules for disclosure, seller identity, refund clarity, content moderation, and transaction accountability are weakly enforced, even otherwise credible communication may be undermined. Thus, consumer protection in live streaming should be analysed at both the seller level and the platform-governance level.

Research on sponsorship disclosure and persuasion knowledge further suggests that consumers benefit when commercial intentions and promotional arrangements are made more explicit (Friestad & Wright, 1994; Musiyiwa & Jacobson, 2023). Although not identical to product transparency, these studies illuminate a broader principle: transparency supports consumer protection when it helps consumers recognise both the content of the message and the interests behind it. In live streaming, this includes whether the streamer is the seller, an affiliate promoter, a paid host, a brand employee, or an independent recommender. Such role clarity is especially important because trust and stickiness can transfer from the streamer to the product or seller in live streaming commerce (Chang et al., 2024).

To this end, consumer protection through information transparency refers to the provision of intelligible, accessible, verifiable, and accountable information that enables consumers to exercise their right to informed choice and to evaluate product, price, source, transaction, and promotional claims fairly within a high-pressure live streaming environment. This framing positions information transparency not only as a marketing practice, but also as an ethical and governance-related condition of fair digital exchange.

Recent social media and AI-related studies also suggest that transparency evaluation has become more difficult in technology-mediated persuasion environments. Source credibility and review quality influence perceived usefulness (Aghakhani et al., 2023), opinion leaders can accelerate information diffusion (Sun & Lei, 2024), and consumers may struggle to distinguish human-authored from AI-generated texts (Chein, 2024). In live streaming commerce, virtual streamers may further complicate expectations and discontinuance responses when human-like cues do not match consumer expectations (Chen & Li, 2024), and the specific characteristics of virtual presenters have been shown to shape agricultural product purchase intention (Jiang & Li, 2025). Therefore, food live streaming needs ethical disclosure not only of product facts but also of technologically mediated persuasion cues.

Information Transparency Evaluation in Live Streaming Marketing

Information transparency does not influence consumer response automatically. Before it affects trust or purchase decisions, it must first be noticed, interpreted, and evaluated. For this reason, the present review uses the term information transparency evaluation to refer to consumers' cognitive and experiential assessment of whether information communicated in live streaming is sufficiently clear, useful, credible, and verifiable to support judgement.

The concept overlaps with information quality, but is not reducible to it. Information quality literature highlights accuracy, completeness, relevance, timeliness, and usefulness as important evaluative criteria (Aghakhani et al., 2023; Fang et al., 2023; Moharana & Pati, 2025). In adoption contexts, consumers are more likely to use information when it appears diagnostic and helpful for decision-making (Cheng et al., 2022; Li & See-To, 2024). These ideas remain central in live streaming. Yet live streaming introduces additional layers because information is performed rather than merely displayed. Consumers evaluate not only claims, but also

demonstrations, reaction speed, tone, confidence, camera evidence, and consistency across verbal, visual, and social cues.

Perceived usefulness is one of the first relevant components. Information becomes meaningful when consumers feel it helps them judge what they could not otherwise inspect directly. In a local specialty food session, useful information may include explanations of ingredients, taste profile, storage conditions, origin differences, production method, delivery arrangements, or why one product variant costs more than another. Perceived usefulness therefore concerns practical judgement value rather than message volume alone. A session may contain abundant talk, but low informational usefulness if it does not help consumers distinguish product quality or transaction implications.

Information diagnosticity is similarly important. Diagnosticity refers to the extent to which information helps consumers evaluate a product and differentiate alternatives. Research on online reviews and product-presentation videos shows that consumers rely more strongly on information they perceive as diagnostic for their own decisions (Cheng et al., 2022; Aghakhani et al., 2023; Li & See-To, 2024). In local specialty food live streaming, diagnosticity may be strengthened when the session clarifies origin, process, preparation, freshness indicators, or quality differences between options. It may weaken when communication is generic, repetitive, entertainment-heavy, or disconnected from decision-relevant attributes.

Source credibility constitutes a third major component of information transparency evaluation. Consumers attend not only to message content but also to the communicator's perceived trustworthiness and expertise (Li & See-To, 2024; Han & Balabanis, 2024). In live streaming, source credibility may involve the streamer's product knowledge, honesty about product limitations, ability to answer questions, consistency of prior claims, and relationship to the seller or brand. It may also include the credibility of on-screen guests, factory staff, farmers, or brand representatives when these actors appear as supporting sources. A related point is that source credibility does not substitute for transparency; rather, it interacts with it. Highly credible sources can make information easier to accept, but unsupported claims should not be confused with transparent communication.

Information overload complicates the evaluation process. In online environments, too much fast-moving information can exceed consumers' ability to process cues effectively, and empirical work using a heuristic-systematic lens shows that overload can depress purchase quality in live streaming (Zhang et al., 2023). When input volume, time pressure, pop-up comments, promotions, and message repetition become excessive, evaluation quality may decrease. The general logic of information overload suggests that overload weakens careful judgement because attention and cognitive resources are limited. In live streaming this problem can arise when product descriptions, promotional cards, audience reactions, and streamer talk compete simultaneously. Under such conditions, consumers may rely more on heuristics such as popularity, excitement, or streamer confidence rather than thoroughly evaluating whether disclosed information is complete and coherent.

Consumer persuasion knowledge matters for the same reason. Consumers differ in their ability to recognise persuasive tactics and to interpret the motives behind them (Friestad & Wright, 1994). A more experienced live streaming consumer may recognise that urgency cues, repeated

scarcity claims, emotional storytelling, or selective demonstrations are strategic selling devices, while a less experienced viewer may interpret the same tactics as indicators of product advantage. Therefore, information transparency evaluation is partly shaped by what consumers already know about digital selling environments.

Visual demonstration provides another important route of evaluation. One reason live streaming is powerful is that it can reduce abstraction. Product demonstrations, zoomed camera scenes, cutting views, preparation scenes, packaging displays, and logistics demonstrations may help consumers feel they are “seeing” relevant evidence. Visual presentation mechanisms in online product displays have been shown to shape consumer understanding, mental imagery, and perceived value, and to reduce uncertainty by enabling consumers to simulate product assessment more vividly (Cheng et al., 2022; Feng et al., 2023; Zhang, 2023). For local specialty food brands, visual demonstration may support transparency when it shows texture, portion size, packaging integrity, ingredient form, storage practices, or production environments. Yet visuality can also mislead if highly selective filming creates an illusion of typical quality without sufficient context.

Social proof and viewer-comment credibility also deserve attention. Viewer comments, purchase notifications, like counts, and high audience numbers may affect how transparent communication is interpreted, because consumers often use others' reactions and the social presence of the crowd as a heuristic of confidence or popularity (Tao et al., 2024). However, social proof is not itself transparency. It becomes a transparency-related cue only when social responses align with and reinforce substantive product information. This is where viewer-comment credibility matters. If verbal explanations, visual evidence, pinned product details, seller identity cues, and viewer discussions converge, the information environment becomes easier to trust. If they conflict, suspicion may rise. For example, a streamer may claim premium origin, while comments question freshness or delivery reliability. Such inconsistency weakens the overall evaluation of transparency.

In this review, information transparency evaluation is defined as consumers' assessment of whether the information communicated in live streaming is sufficiently clear, useful, diagnostic, credible, non-overloading, and socially credible to support an informed judgement about product, seller, transaction, and cultural claims. This definition is valuable because it expands information quality beyond textual accuracy and relocates evaluation within a dynamic live streaming environment where verbal, visual, social, and promotional cues are processed together.

Consumer Trust Based on Information Transparency

Trust is one of the most frequently studied outcomes in online and social commerce because digital transactions require consumers to act under uncertainty. Classical e-commerce trust research explains trust through competence, benevolence, and integrity (McKnight et al., 2002), and recent evidence confirms that trusting beliefs remain decisive for the use of e-commerce platforms (Singh et al., 2024), while live streaming studies show that trust can emerge from interactive product presentation, uncertainty reduction, and streamer-seller communication (Wongkitrungrueng & Assarut, 2020; Lu & Chen, 2021). More recent live streaming and online persuasion research suggests that source credibility, benefit-risk judgement, and consumer engagement remain important in explaining purchase confidence (Li & See-To, 2024; Luo et al., 2024). These studies suggest that consumer trust is not a simple

emotion; it is a judgement that the information provider is capable, honest, and willing to act responsibly.

In live streaming marketing, consumer trust may be directed toward several objects. Consumers may trust the product because it appears to match the description. They may trust the streamer because the explanation appears knowledgeable and sincere. They may trust the seller because transaction conditions and after-sales support are clear. They may trust the local specialty food brand because origin, production process, and cultural claims appear credible. Recent live streaming and influencer studies show that credibility, engagement and perceived expertise can shape consumers' trust-related responses (Chen & Zhang, 2023; Han & Balabanis, 2024). This distinction is useful for local specialty food research because a consumer may trust the streamer but still question product origin, or trust the product category but still doubt the seller's after-sales promise. In this review, these trust objects are mentioned only to clarify the possible targets of trust; the review does not propose a trust-transfer mechanism across them.

Information transparency may strengthen consumer trust through four direct mechanisms. First, it reduces uncertainty. When a seller clearly explains product details, origin, price rules, delivery conditions, and after-sales responsibilities, consumers have less need to guess about hidden quality or transaction risk. Chen and Zhang (2023) show that live streaming commerce can be understood through benefit-risk evaluation, supporting the relevance of uncertainty reduction in this context. Second, transparency signals competence. A seller who can explain ingredients, production process, storage conditions, and logistics requirements demonstrates knowledge about the product. Third, transparency signals integrity. A seller who openly states product limitations, price conditions, refund boundaries, and after-sales responsibilities appears less likely to mislead consumers. Fourth, transparency supports authenticity. For local specialty food brands, responsible communication of cultural and regional meaning can make the brand story more believable.

However, transparency does not guarantee trust in every situation. Consumers may still doubt information if the streamer lacks credibility, if the platform has weak governance, if viewer comments reveal negative experiences, or if the brand's claims appear inconsistent with observable evidence. Earlier online trust studies indicate that trust is affected by multiple antecedents, including perceived reputation, website quality, social presence, and institutional mechanisms (McKnight et al., 2002; Aghakhani et al., 2023). In live streaming, these antecedents may interact with transparency. For example, complete product information may be more effective when the streamer is perceived as credible and when the platform provides reliable transaction protection.

The link between transparency and trust also has implications beyond immediate purchase intention. Local specialty food brands need repeat purchases, recommendation, and long-term brand recognition. Live streaming can generate attention quickly, but sustainable brand development depends on whether consumers feel that the actual product and service match the live presentation. Research on e-commerce and social commerce indicates that trust and satisfaction can influence purchase intention, engagement, continuance intention, and continuing relationship responses (Ma, 2021b; Gu & Duan, 2024; Han & Balabanis, 2024; Liang et al., 2025). Consumption-value and streamer-popularity studies similarly link these perceptions to purchase intention in live streaming commerce (Zhang et al., 2024; Shamim &

Azam, 2024). Therefore, information transparency should be examined not only as a short-term sales tactic but also as an ethical marketing and relationship-building practice.

In this review, consumer trust based on information transparency refers to consumers' willingness to rely on a local specialty food brand, seller, product, or streamer because the information communicated in live streaming is perceived as clear, credible, responsible, and verifiable. This definition connects transparency with the broader trust literature while keeping the focus on direct trust formation in live streaming food marketing.

China's Live Streaming Commerce and Local Specialty Food Brands

The Chinese context is highly relevant for understanding information transparency in live streaming because China has been one of the most influential environments for the development of live streaming commerce as an everyday digital retail format. Existing live streaming commerce studies have frequently used Chinese consumers, Chinese platforms, or China-based market settings to examine purchase intention, streamer influence, social presence, impulse buying, and trust (Sun et al., 2019; Xu et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2020; Lu & Chen, 2021; Ma, 2021a; Qing & Jin, 2022; Yang et al., 2024; Luo et al., 2024; Liang et al., 2025). This context matters not only because the market is large, but also because live streaming commerce has become integrated into wider platform ecosystems that blend entertainment, social interaction, and shopping.

For local specialty food brands in China, this digital environment creates a particular opportunity. Such brands often rely on regional distinctiveness, local agriculture, artisanal processing, sensory memory, and narratives of origin to differentiate themselves. Under conditions of digital transformation, live streaming offers a way to convert these place-based and authenticity-based resources into communicable market value. A live session can show product texture, unpacking, cooking steps, manufacturing scenes, local environment, or producer presence more effectively than static e-commerce listings. This gives local specialty food brands a means of explaining why a product should be understood as distinctive rather than generic. Such cultural framing is particularly salient for younger Chinese consumers, who increasingly seek traditional and health-oriented food products with clear provenance (Jin et al., 2025).

Yet this same environment sharpens the importance of information transparency. Place-based and culture-based claims are highly persuasive, but they also carry a greater risk of symbolic inflation, because place-of-origin and terroir constructs can be used to justify premium prices without corresponding substance (Tarabashkina et al., 2024; Li et al., 2023). When local identity, heritage, craftsmanship, or authenticity are presented mainly as emotional selling tools without adequate substantiation, consumers may find it difficult to distinguish genuinely rooted brands from ordinary commodities wrapped in local imagery. In this sense, local specialty food brands require stronger, not weaker, transparency standards than generic packaged goods. They need to show how product quality, source legitimacy, and cultural meaning are linked rather than simply asserted.

This point suggests that the digital marketing context of local specialty food brands should not be reduced to promotion alone. Digital marketing in this context involves the translation of origin, process, transaction reliability, and cultural authenticity into a communicable evidence structure that consumers can evaluate, much as blockchain-based traceability systems convert

provenance into verifiable signals that raise willingness to pay (Yang et al., 2025; Collart et al., 2025). Information transparency is therefore central to whether regional identity becomes a credible value proposition or merely a persuasive theme. More specifically, local specialty food live streaming should ideally clarify five issues. First, what is the product and how is it produced? Second, where does it come from and who is responsible for it? Third, what exactly is the consumer paying for? Fourth, what happens after purchase if the product does not match the description? Fifth, what grounds are there for the cultural or local claims being made?

This approach also helps avoid a common conceptual problem in digital food marketing research. Local specialty food brands are often discussed through positive symbolic language such as tradition, community, locality, and authenticity, but the transparency burden of these claims is sometimes underdeveloped. As a result, future empirical work should examine not only whether such claims increase engagement or purchase intention, but whether consumers believe these claims are understandable, specific, and verifiable. In the Chinese live streaming commerce context, where real-time persuasion can be intense, this distinction is analytically important.

Taken together, the present review positions China's live streaming commerce and local specialty food brands not as a narrow case illustration, but as a meaningful digital marketing context in which product uncertainty, regional signalling, cultural authenticity, and platform-mediated persuasion intersect. Emerging studies of agricultural live streaming in China reinforce this view, showing that consumer purchase intention in this setting is shaped by goal-directed motivation and by the characteristics of (increasingly virtual) presenters (X. Han, 2025; Jiang & Li, 2025). Within this context, information transparency becomes the bridge between marketing communication and consumer protection.

Information Transparency-Trust Response Framework

Based on the reviewed literature, this paper proposes an Information Transparency-Trust Response Framework for local specialty food live streaming. The framework is not a tested causal model. Rather, it is a preliminary organising structure that can guide future empirical research. The framework follows the SOR perspective. In this framework, information transparency dimensions represent live streaming marketing stimuli; information transparency evaluation and consumer trust represent internal consumer responses; and purchase confidence, product evaluation, recommendation intention, repurchase intention, and future brand response represent possible behavioural or relational responses.

Structurally, the framework begins with five distinct dimensions of information transparency: product and process transparency, price and promotion transparency, source and seller transparency, transaction and after-sales transparency, and cultural authenticity transparency. These dimensions reflect the types of information that are particularly important when food products with local cultural meaning are sold through live streaming. They also connect directly with ethical marketing because the seller is expected to provide information that is not merely persuasive, but understandable, accountable, and verifiable.

Moving beyond mere disclosure, the next stage shifts attention to the cognitive side of the process, namely how consumers evaluate incoming transparency. Such evaluation may improve perceived usefulness, increase information diagnosticity, strengthen source credibility, reduce information overload, activate persuasion knowledge, support visual

demonstration, and improve viewer-comment credibility. This stage is important because disclosed information does not affect consumers unless it is processed as meaningful and decision-relevant. In a live streaming session, the consumer does not only read information; the consumer observes how information is performed, supported, and answered in real time. This evaluative processing subsequently becomes the psychological foundation for multi-object consumer trust. When transparent information is evaluated positively, consumers may develop stronger trust toward the product, streamer, seller, platform, or local specialty food brand. This paper treats these objects as possible targets of trust, but does not develop a separate trust-transfer model. The central logic remains direct: transparent information reduces uncertainty, signals competence, signals integrity, and supports authenticity. These mechanisms may increase consumers' confidence that the product presented in live streaming and the responsible seller are credible.

Ultimately, the framework culminates in a set of behavioural and relational responses. When transparency-supported trust is formed, consumers may show higher purchase confidence, more favourable product evaluation, recommendation intention, repurchase intention, and future brand-related responses. These responses are intentionally broad because the present review is preliminary. Future empirical studies may choose specific outcomes such as purchase intention, continuous purchase intention, satisfaction, recommendation intention, or post-purchase evaluation depending on the research objective.

The framework also highlights an important research gap. Existing live streaming studies have provided strong evidence on interaction, social presence, entertainment, and purchase intention, but they have not sufficiently separated information transparency from general information quality or streamer credibility. Existing food studies have examined labels, traceability, origin, and authenticity, but they have not fully considered the live streaming environment where information is performed and negotiated in real time. Although recent studies have begun to link information transparency to purchase intention for agricultural and green food products (Fu et al., 2025) and to model information quality and interactivity in live streaming commerce (Moharana & Pati, 2025), the specific construct of information transparency in local specialty food live streaming remains underdeveloped. Therefore, the intersection of information transparency, ethical marketing, live streaming marketing, and local specialty food brands offers a meaningful area for future empirical research.

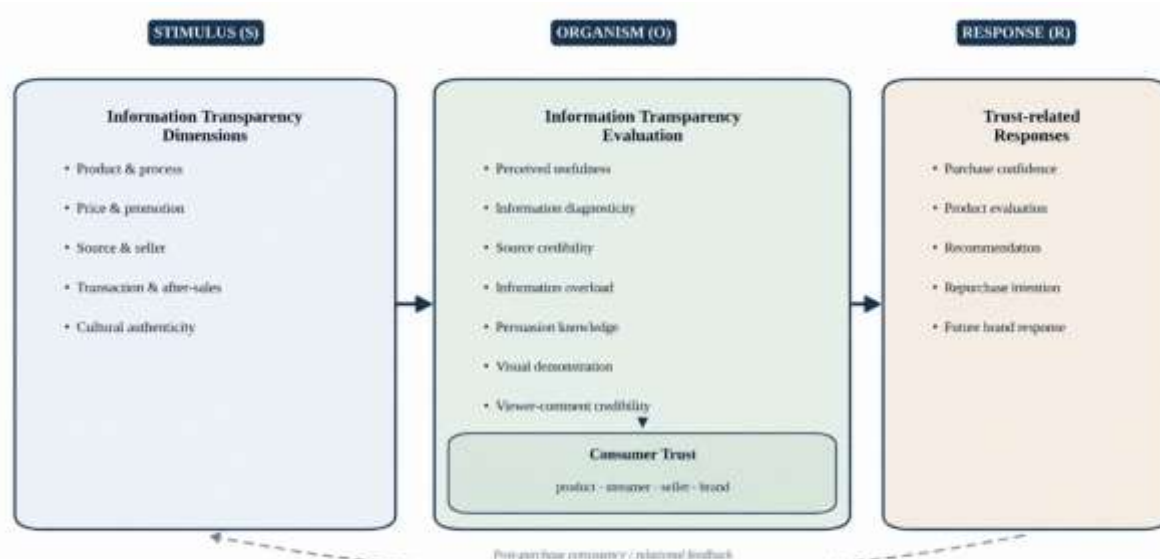


Figure 1: Information Transparency-Trust Response Framework in Live Streaming Marketing of Local Specialty Food Brands

Source: Authors' own compilation.

Table 1: Key Themes, Representative Studies and Future Research Directions

Theme	Representative studies	Method context or	Key findings empirical	Relevance to this review	Future research direction
Live streaming through the SOR perspective	Chen & Zhang (2023); Liang et al. (2025)	Live streaming commerce, benefit-risk and impulse buying contexts	Live streaming provides informational, social and promotional stimuli that shape evaluation, trust and response	Supports the SOR perspective as the underpinning theoretical lens	Examine how transparent information cues function as ethical marketing stimuli
Product and process transparency	Fu et al. (2023); Garaus & Treiblmaier (2021); Collart et al. (2025)	Food traceability, quality and fraud-related contexts	Consumers value origin, process and traceability information when quality and safety are uncertain	Supports process evidence in local specialty food live streaming	Test how visualised process disclosure affects trust in product and brand
Price and promotion transparency	Luo et al. (2024); Zhang et al. (2023)	E-commerce risk, uncertainty reduction and promotion contexts	Unclear price and promotion rules increase perceived risk and may accelerate impulse response	Positions price-rule clarity as an ethical marketing issue	Examine how transparent coupon and discount rules moderate urgency effects
Source and seller transparency	Li & See-To (2024); Han & Balabanis (2024); Musiyiwa & Jacobson (2023)	Source credibility, social commerce and live streaming trust contexts	Expertise and trustworthiness strengthen acceptance of commercial information	Supports role of disclosure and streamer/seller credibility	Distinguish effects of producer disclosure, seller identity and streamer credibility
Consumer protection and ethical marketing	Friestad & Wright (1994); Musiyiwa & Jacobson (2023); Chein (2024)	Persuasion knowledge, sponsorship disclosure and live-shopping benefit-risk contexts	Consumers benefit when commercial intent and transaction conditions are easier to identify	Frames transparency as ethical marketing and consumer protection	Study transparent live streaming disclosure as a responsible marketing practice
Information	Aghakhani et al.	Information	Useful, diagnostic and	Provides the	Develop a scale for

Theme	Representative studies	Method or context	Key empirical findings	Relevance to this review	Future research direction
transparency evaluation	(2023); Cheng et al. (2022); Moharana & Pati (2025)	quality, review usefulness and external cues contexts	credible information improves consumer judgement	evaluation bridge between disclosure and trust	information transparency evaluation in live streaming
Visual demonstration and online persuasion	Feng et al. (2023); Zhang (2023); Segev & Fernandes (2023)	Online product presentation, social media persuasion and video content contexts	Visual and rhetorical cues influence information processing and response	Explains why live product demonstration can support or distort transparency	Examine when visual evidence strengthens perceived transparency
Cultural authenticity transparency	Tarabashkina et al. (2024); Li et al. (2023); Jin et al. (2025)	Local specialty food, authenticity and place-based value contexts	Origin and authenticity cues influence product evaluation but require credible support	Explains why local and traditional claims must be treated as transparency issues	Investigate how specific cultural claims affect authenticity judgement
Consumer trust	McKnight et al. (2002); Singh et al. (2024)	E-commerce trust, social commerce and live streaming contexts	Trust is built when consumers perceive competence, integrity and uncertainty reduction	Supports a direct transparency-to-trust logic without trust-transfer theorising	Empirically test transparency effects on trust in product, streamer, seller and brand
Trust-related responses	Liang et al. (2025); Gu & Duan (2024); Zhang et al. (2024)	Social commerce, customer engagement and impulse buying contexts	Trust and engagement influence purchase confidence, product evaluation and continuing response	Explains why transparency matters beyond one-time selling	Test whether transparency-supported trust predicts repurchase and recommendation

Source: Authors' own compilation based on reviewed empirical studies.

Conclusion

This preliminary review has argued that information transparency is an important but still underdeveloped construct in the live streaming marketing of local specialty food brands. While existing live streaming commerce research has generated valuable insights on interactivity, social presence, engagement, and purchase intention, it has not fully clarified how consumers evaluate transparent information under conditions of real-time persuasion. Likewise, food and authenticity research has provided important knowledge about traceability, origin, quality labels, and local identity, but has not adequately connected these themes to the live streaming environment in which information is performed, negotiated, and consumed at speed.

The review shows that information transparency should not be reduced to mere information disclosure. Transparent communication in this context involves clarity, completeness, usefulness, accessibility, accountability, and verifiability. It also involves whether consumers can interpret claims under persuasive pressure rather than simply whether claims are stated. This is why the review proposed the related concept of information transparency evaluation and argued that perceived usefulness, information diagnosticity, source credibility, information overload, persuasion knowledge, visual demonstration, social proof, and viewer-comment credibility are central to how transparency is judged.

The review further argues that consumer trust in live streaming should be treated as differentiated rather than singular. Consumers may trust the platform, streamer, seller, product, and brand in different ways, and transparent information may influence these trust objects unevenly. Direct trust formation may connect these objects, but such formation depends on coherent supporting cues and post-purchase consistency. For local specialty food brands, this

distinction is particularly important because such brands depend not only on transaction conversion but also on long-term credibility of origin, quality, and cultural legitimacy.

By situating the discussion within China's live streaming commerce and the digital marketing context of local specialty food brands, this paper also highlighted that place-based and cultural claims require serious transparency treatment rather than romanticised description. Local identity can be a valuable market resource, but only when consumers are given enough evidence to understand how local meaning is linked to product reality.

This preliminary review has several limitations. The literature selection was conceptually guided rather than exhaustive, and the proposed framework has not yet been empirically tested. The conclusions should therefore be interpreted as a conceptual foundation for future research rather than as definitive causal evidence. Future studies should validate the five transparency dimensions and the proposed framework across different live streaming platforms, local specialty food categories, and consumer groups.

The proposed Information Transparency-Trust Response Framework offers a conceptual starting point for future empirical work. Subsequent studies may develop item scales for the five transparency dimensions, test the antecedents and consequences of information transparency evaluation, distinguish trust objects empirically, and examine how platform governance and consumer knowledge moderate the effect of transparency on trust-related responses. Such work would contribute both to digital marketing theory and to consumer protection research. In practical terms, the review suggests that responsible live streaming marketing for local specialty food brands should not aim only to be more vivid or more persuasive. It should aim to be more understandable, more accountable, and more trustworthy.

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