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**Live Streaming Shopping as a new retail format:
insights from a qualitative study of consumers and retailers**

Karine PICOT-COUPÉY

Univ Rennes, CNRS, CREM UMR 6211, Rennes, F-35000, France

Younes BOURAGBAfili

Université de Lille, Chaire Trend(s), France

Isabelle COLLIN-LACHAUD

Université de Lille, Chaire Trend(s), France

Martina GALLARZA

Universitat de Valencia, Spain

Yacine OUAZZANI

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Abstract

Purpose: Considering the emergence of Live Streaming Shopping (LSS) in Europe and the scant academic coverage it has attracted in terms of characterization, this study's aim is twofold: (1) explore how both consumers and retailers assess the distinctive attributes of LSS in order to identify its characteristics as a new form of commerce, or even retail format, and (2) analyze the motivations of both consumers and retailers for choosing it.

Design/methodology/approach: A hybrid literature review – bibliometric and structured – summarizes the body of research available on LSS. Considering the research gap and our two research questions, a qualitative methodology was adopted. This incorporates three primary data sets, collected in France from LSS experts, retail managers and consumers over 18 months.

Findings: LSS is a new online retail format, to be added to the range of existing options as it exhibits a typical retailing mix that is substantially different from other formats. From the retailer's perspective, three main motivations are identified while for the consumer, a total of seven motivations to participate in LSS sessions emerged. This new online format appears to be part of the continuum reflecting omnichannel integration.

Originality/value: This paper (1) structures the emerging literature on LSS by developing the first hybrid literature review on the topic; (2) substantiates what characterizes LSS as a retail format from the consumer and retailer perspectives and a retail touchpoint in the consumer's omnichannel journey; and (3) proposes a definition of LSS and a research agenda.

Research limitations/implications: Once the LSS literature has been further developed, the bibliometric review could be repeated to better map the field within contemporary research.

Practical implications: Today's retailers cannot ignore LSS: it is a multifaceted hybrid format and touchpoint that is part of an omnichannel strategy and through which both quantitative and qualitative objectives can be achieved.

Keywords: Live Streaming Shopping (LSS), Format, Motivations, Omnichannel journey

1. Introduction

Digitalization has pushed regular online shopping towards new experiences (Verhoef *et al.*, 2015). The continuous sophistication of digital technologies has led to fast-changing and disruptive environments (Neslin, 2022), thus forcing both researchers and retailers to continuously assess the emergence of new or more sophisticated ways to shop (Babin *et al.*, 2021).

What is one of the newest ways to shop today? Live Streaming Shopping (LSS), a form of e-commerce coupled with live streaming, has surfaced in recent years (Chong *et al.*, 2023). This showcasing of shoppable content through live videos has seen huge take-up and enjoyed great success in China since 2016 (Zhu and Liu, 2021). It has experienced very strong growth since 2018, a trend accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic (Bharadwaj *et al.*, 2022). In 2022 it accounted for more than 17% of e-commerce sales in China while, in the US, LSS sales reached 17 billion dollars in 2022, which is still modest compared to its success in China (Zhang and Tang, 2023). In Europe, and especially in France, LSS has been emerging over the last two years but remains in its infancy, with retailers more tentative than conclusive with regard to this format (Muret, 2022). Overall, major retailers are now offering LSS, such as Walmart, Carrefour or Leroy Merlin.¹

Whereas LSS is presented by its proponents as the new way to shop, others are more dubitative (Goldberg, 2023). Is LSS a fad or a new “must” for retailers? What is LSS precisely? Retail textbooks provide very few answers to these questions. The only reference to it is by Zentes *et al.* (2017; p. 76), who describe it as an offshoot of price formats in online retailing featuring “*a very limited assortment, usually only a couple of products, that is available on the live shopping platform for a very low price, often the best online price of the day, but only for a very limited time, usually 24 hours*”. It started attracting attention in marketing research in the late 2020s, with work primarily consisting of empirical studies conducted in Asia while the characterization itself of this new form of shopping received little coverage. Yet the retail literature widely acknowledges the importance of investigating the advent of each new retail format – defined as a combination of different levels of retail services such as assortment, information, accessibility, ambience, and location (Levy *et al.*, 2018) –, both to identify its specific attributes and to pinpoint its effects on other formats, in particular how these may remodel in response to the new format (Gauri *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, considering the emergence of LSS in Europe and the limited academic coverage it has attracted in terms of

¹ <https://www.walmartshoplive.com/>; <https://www.carrefour.fr/evenements/live-shopping/>; <https://leroymerlin.co.za/live-shopping>

conceptual delimitation and characterization, it seems particularly worthwhile to examine LSS as a new form of shopping in the European context.

Accordingly, the purpose of this research is twofold: (1) explore how both consumers and retailers assess the distinctive attributes of LSS in order to identify its characteristics as a new form of commerce, or even retail format, and (2) analyze the motivations of both consumers and retailers for choosing it.

To do this, we first draw from a hybrid literature review – bibliometric and structured – to summarize the body of research available on LSS. Considering the research gaps regarding the format-specific factors relating to LSS and the motivations for choosing it, a qualitative research design was developed. The methodology incorporates three primary data sets, collected in France from 3 LSS experts, 13 retail managers and 25 consumers over 18 months. These sources of information are compiled to (a) describe the characteristics of LSS as (perhaps) a new retail format and (b) identify the motivations for take-up by both consumers and retailers.

By tackling a very contemporary and new form of retailing, this paper contributes to the retail literature on the one hand by depicting what LSS is from a retail format perspective and, on the other, by highlighting the motivations for its adoption by both consumers and retailers. In addition, from a managerial point of view, our research findings could help retailers take better informed decisions regarding LSS adoption and operation. Finally, it encourages further research by providing a research agenda.

2. LSS literature review

A hybrid literature review "*integrating the principles of bibliometric and structured analyses*" is proposed (Paul and Rialp-Criado, 2020; p. 2): structured sequentially, the set of articles is first examined to decipher knowledge about LSS, then analyzed to describe how they are structured.

2.1 Bibliometric LSS literature review

To identify suitable research work within our LSS scope, we began with a systematic search on *Google Scholar* and continued for cross-validation on *Web of Science*. To improve search efforts, keywords and prefix searches were conducted, based on LSS keywords used by authors. The search narrowed to include the marketing journals ranked from 2 to 4* in the ABS charts, retailing journals including the *Journal of Business Research*, and the major e-commerce journals. This search ended on May 9, 2023 and produced 76 articles. Upon reviewing the

papers, and eliminating 24 articles not addressing LSS specifically, the final sample contained 52 articles. The set of papers is presented in Table I.

Insert Table I here

In terms of a descriptive overview of publications, the time range spanned from 2018 to 2023. Recency of publications reflects the newness of LSS, while the drastic increase in the number of publications in the last two years (24 in 2022 and 16 up to May 2023) highlights the academic interest in this topic. The 52 papers include a wide range of journals, 15 in total, as depicted in Table I. The *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services* represented by far the most popular outlet for LSS research with 16 articles, followed by *Electronic Commerce Research* (11), *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications* (8) and the *Journal of Business Research* (4). The remaining 13 articles are equally distributed across various other journals, including the *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*.

Next, the review explored the research design, samples and methodology of each study. In terms of research design, papers of a conceptual and theoretical nature are the exception (1 out of 52) while those of an empirical nature dominate. In the latter, single-method quantitative methodologies based on simulation, experiments and structural equation models largely dominate: only three papers use qualitative (Fletcher and Gbadamosi, 2022) or mixed methodologies (Wang *et al.*, 2023; Wongkitrungrueng *et al.*, 2020). The geographic scope is purely Asian (China: 29; Thailand: 2; Malaysia: 2; Taiwan: 1; Hong Kong: 1), meaning that seminal research on LSS is Asia-oriented while the effect of culture on retailing is very well documented in the literature (e.g. Zentes *et al.*, 2017). The product scope in the LSS sessions was varied, with papers focusing on a unique type of product – such as food (Lee and Wan, 2023), beauty (e.g. Wu *et al.*, 2023) or fashion (e.g. Park *et al.*, 2020), while others considered multiple products (e.g. Liu, 2022). It is interesting – even disconcerting – to note that the recent rich body of work carried out on LSS is less concerned by this emerging phenomenon as such – to delineate its nature – than by its effects on consumer behavior, retailer performance or market dynamics.

2.2 Structured LSS literature review

Our assessment shifted to a systematic horizontal and vertical analysis, highlighting three key topics to be considered, namely (1) terminology and focus, (2) definitions and characteristics, and (3) main topics and results.

2.2.1 Terminology and focus. The existing research includes a very wide variety of terminology to refer to LSS: live streaming (e.g. Chen H. *et al.*, 2022); livestreaming commerce (e.g. Lo *et al.*, 2022) or e-commerce (e.g. Dang-Van *et al.* 2023); livestream retail (e.g. Bharadwaj *et al.*, 2022); e-tail store live streaming (e.g. Zheng *et al.*, 2022); live streaming social commerce (e.g. Yang *et al.*, 2023), as well as live streaming shopping (e.g. Li *et al.*, 2021).

Such variety – even heterogeneity – is a direct reflection of the wide variety of focuses in the existing research, as well as the diversity in the analogies used to name and delineate LSS. Authors have associated it either with shopping, sales or selling (e.g. Wang *et al.*, 2023); broadcast (e.g. Dang-Van *et al.*, 2023); and video (e.g. Muret, 2022). Furthermore, this variety is also evident in the status given to LSS, ranging from strategic – new e-commerce (e.g. Yang *et al.*, 2022), new form of social commerce (e.g. Sun *et al.*, 2019); business model in e-commerce (e.g. Lyu *et al.*, 2022) – to operative – a marketing method (e.g. He *et al.*, 2022b); a technology (e.g. Zhu and Liu, 2021). Finally, the literature oscillates between considering it as a unique and new form of online retailing (Yin *et al.*, 2023) or a subset of an existing one (He and Jin, 2022).

As such, the different terminologies reflect different retailing realities. Yet, in addition to making a systematic search more difficult, this plethora of expressions does not add clarity when it comes to conceptualizing it. The term LSS has the advantage of including its two key elements, i.e. regular “live streaming” with added features to allow consumers to do “shopping” and as such is the one we favor.

2.2.2 Definitions and characteristics. The literature review identified 19 different definitions of LSS, which are presented in Table II.

Insert Table II here

No single one is currently the standard definition. A thorough analysis of all 19 identified nine characteristics specific to LSS, as illustrated in Table II. It refers to shopping in its overall sense, is in real-time and synchronous, requires a specific presentation or showcasing of products, is highly informative, is screen-mediated, relies on hosts and streamers, leads to direct interaction and communication, and is immersive so that it creates a sense of human presence. Definitions are neither consistent nor exhaustive as none of them includes all nine characteristics, demonstrating the need for a comprehensive definition and an in-depth investigation of the concept.

2.2.3 *Main topics and results.* The range of topics covered is very wide considering the short timeframe, depicting a rapidly expanding field. Table I shows that there are almost as many research aims as there are research projects, while specific topics vary from more general, such as the whole consumer decision-making process (e.g. Fletcher and Gbadamosi, 2022), to more specific, such as LSS failures (Chen *et al.*, 2023). Most existing studies explored LSS from the consumer's perspective, with some exceptions that adopted that of the retailer (e.g. Wongkitrungrueng *et al.*, 2020), simulating retail channel design decisions.

Regarding the theoretical background, game theory and the Stimulus – Organism – Response model are the most referred to, but once again variety dominates with a miscellaneous framework. The literature branches off in all sorts of directions, covering the different fields of retailing literature, and can be structured into three main “streams”². The first covers research devoted to testing or manipulating the effect of different elements of LSS itself, such as product type (search or experience), the personality and skills of the streamer (e.g. gender, status, physical attractiveness), the quality of information, platform type, technology, and its consumer benefits. The second stream encompasses research aiming at testing the effect of different variables, very common in retailing, in the context of LSS such as perceived value, e-quality, consumer engagement and satisfaction; as well as their outcomes such as purchase intention and word of mouth. The third encompasses research simulating different configurations in LSS channel design, especially in terms of incentives, commission rate and retail price.

Hence, this literature review shows that the body of research on LSS is rich with studies addressing a wide variety of topics and results based on quantitative research investigating very precise variables. Yet the research on LSS is diffuse and a well articulated overall understanding of this form of commerce, from the perspective of both retailers and consumers, is lacking. Therefore, the present study aims to address this gap by applying a qualitative research methodology to examine the following two research questions (RQs):

RQ1. What are the characteristics of LSS as a new form of commerce?

RQ2. What are the motivations, of both retailers and consumers, for choosing it?

3. Research methodology

Considering these two research questions, a qualitative methodology was adopted to explore the how (characteristics) and why (motivations for choosing) of LSS, issues for which this

² All references to these papers are presented in Table I.

methodology is said to be particularly relevant (Miles *et al.*, 2019). In view of the development of LSS in Europe, and the need to understand it in a non-Asian cultural context, the chosen research field is France, whose retail sector is particularly dynamic, with major global players such as Decathlon and Sephora³ already engaged in LSS.

3.1 Sample and data collection

In an effort to improve research quality, different collection techniques and data sources were used. The data set comprises three complementary sources collected over a period of 18 months via two different types of interviews, for a total of 41 respondents. Table III displays the three sample descriptions.

Insert Table III here

The first data set consists of in-depth one-hour semi-structured interviews with three LSS experts (E1 to E3) from large French retailers. The interviews focused on the objectives when organizing LSS sessions, the challenges involved, the expected and obtained benefits, the perceived key success factors and key indicators used, and respondents' opinions of LSS and its future. The second data set includes structured interviews with 13 retail managers (M1 to M13) involved with LSS in their respective companies. Following the rules for guided sample selection proposed by Miles *et al.* (2019), the sample was diversified based on factors observed in the literature impacting retail strategy and formats (Gauri *et al.*, 2021): retail managers interviewed ranged in position, company size and merchandise and services offered. The interviews addressed the reasons for deciding to engage in LSS, their LSS design, the actors involved (platforms, streamers), the results obtained, and LSS integration in their store and digital strategy. The third data set comprises 25 semi-structured interviews conducted with LSS consumers (C1 to C25). Respondents were recruited via a specialized agency, which offered a €25 voucher, using a purposive sampling strategy based on factors previously observed to impact the phenomena. Thus, our LSS consumer sample varied in terms of gender, age, occupation, number of LSS sessions viewed, product type and amount of monthly expenditure online. The interview guide focused on their most recent LSS experience, their motivations for taking part, their perception of the experience and its place in their shopping experiences.

Notes were taken during the three expert interviews, which could not be recorded for reasons of confidentiality. The remaining 38 interviews were fully recorded and transcribed, resulting in a total corpus of 325 pages.

³ https://www.decathlon.fr/landing/live-shopping-decathlon/_/R-a-live-shopping;
<https://www.sephora.fr/sephora-tv.html>

3.2 Data analysis

Following the procedure recommended by Miles *et al.* (2019), the data analysis consisted of a vertical analysis per interview, for initial labelling with “in vivo” terms, and a horizontal analysis per topic, to set codes across all interviews. We employed Atlas.ti 8.4.2, qualitative research software that facilitates data management and analysis (Saldaña, 2016). By performing these intra-textual and inter-textual analyses and looking for recurring semantic patterns, we came up with a list of 31 codes. In the following abstraction phase, axial coding grouped the first-order codes thematically into four categories: characteristics of LSS according to retailers and customers, retailers’ motivations to engage in LSS, customers’ motivations to take part in LSS, and the place and role of LSS in an omnichannel customer journey.

4. Findings

The findings are presented for the four categories that emerged from the data analysis.

4.1 Characteristics of LSS according to retailers and customers

The LSS experts, retail managers and consumers interviewed highlighted six key characteristics – in terms of product offer and information delivered, role of the streamer, medium used to broadcast, temporal specificity, communication and promotion program and pricing – as distinctive of LSS, delineating a specific combination of different levels of retail services, i.e. its features as a retail format. Moreover, consumers and retailers also characterize LSS by comparing it to other retail formats. Representative data for each category is presented in Table IV.

Insert Table IV here

In terms of **product offer**, very different product assortments were displayed, the depth and width of which depended on the objective of the LSS operation, though all were fairly limited. They ranged from a given specific product only to a seasonal product range, a product category or an assortment of products, of one given brand or of various brands. A frequent feature was either the new or exclusive nature of the offer presented. The fact that LSS is particularly well suited to providing highly detailed information about the product on display makes it particularly appropriate for new products but also technical ones.

The second essential characteristic of LSS is the host, i.e. the **streamer**, who not only provides a demonstration of the product but also interacts in a personalized way with the audience in real

time. Some think of them as a personal shopper. The host of the LSS was observed to be a staff member of the retailer or a moderator recruited through specialized agencies, often among celebrities or influencers. It can be a single person or a duo of co-hosts, each with a specific role, one with more expertise in the products and the other more focused on building relationships with participants and enlivening the shopping experience. Retail experts and managers underline the importance of the “streamer – LSS consumer relationship”, which echoes what consumers told us about the trust and credibility they value in streamers.

The third distinctive characteristic is the **medium used to broadcast the LSS session**, which is typical of its location and accessibility. According to the experts and retail managers interviewed, it is chosen carefully as each medium carries specific advantages and drawbacks that must be considered along with the primary objective pursued during the LSS session. It can be held on the company’s own website or app, on a dedicated webpage, i.e. a platform fully controlled by the retailer, or on social media such as Facebook or Instagram. As for customers, they engage in LSS on their mobile phone or computer. In any case, the chat window or other technical options on these platforms to interact with customers appears to be a vital element since it gives this retail format a direct social interactivity dimension. Finally, this variety of technical solutions allows retailers of all sizes to run LSS sessions.

The fourth key feature concerns the **temporal specificity of LSS sessions**. Their duration is fixed and short, which means that even if replay is an option, the limited time lends these sessions the quality of a special event. The LSS sessions in which the customers interviewed took part lasted between half an hour and an hour, and were generally held in the late afternoon or early evening. Choosing an appropriate time to broadcast the LSS session based on the customers targeted is important.

The **LSS communication and promotion program** is another specific consideration. Promotion of the session is presented as essential to its success both in terms of date, time and subject but also in terms of what the concept of LSS is and its advantages (put questions to the streamer, buy live) regarding its newness. Companies mix different communication channels, namely email, posts and notifications on social media, and website sponsored ads on Google.

Finally, the **promotional pricing policy dimension** – although not at the heart of this format – also emerges from the respondents' discourse, with discounts, coupons or special offers expected by consumers and used as incentives by retailers.

Beyond that, the retailers and consumers interviewed also described LSS by **comparison to other retail formats**. Although they include it in the category of online shopping, they see it as expanding the range of possibilities and establishing links with store shopping. Both some

consumers and some retailers say it is comparable to another online format, to TV shopping, albeit done via another technology offering internet access. They differentiate it from store, website and mobile app experiences, with specific advantages and limitations. LSS combines characteristics from both store shopping (real time and personalized) and online shopping (anywhere, any device), making it more playful and enjoyable. Another proposed analogy for LSS is a store VIP event but experienced online.

4.2 Motivations of retailers for choosing LSS

Three key motivations for engaging in and developing LSS emerged from the retailers' discourse. The representative data is presented in Table IV.

The first is **institutional isomorphism** in the sense of DiMaggio and Powell (1983). Observing competitors develop LSS, retail players follow suit and embark on the adventure with the aim of testing and learning, without having a precise understanding or embedding it in a clear strategic vision.

The second is to **generate sales**. Without stating a clear set of sales goals, retailers expressed the view that LSS broadens the range of online shopping formats and is appropriate to attract new consumers, whether they are younger customers who appreciate instantaneity in the short live format or new prospects reached thanks to the streamer or geographically distant targets. However, the profitability of such operations has not yet been determined.

The third relates to **communication**: LSS sessions are a new opportunity to convey a message to consumers. Cognitive, affective and conative objectives were all mentioned by our interviewees. In terms of cognitive objectives, LSS was said to be appropriate to develop a product's awareness, deliver rich and precise information about it, make products and brands more visible and credible. In this way, and because of the direct and personalized interactivity it allows, LSS is also presented as a way to reinforce proximity and trust in the brand and products and nurture brand loyalty. In terms of affective objectives, LSS is believed to have a positive impact not only on the image and notoriety of products, brands and/or retailers, but also on their proximity to consumers. In terms of conative objectives, LSS was observed to generate positive word and e-word of mouth, and result in community engagement. The role of the streamer is said to be essential in generating excellent communication results.

Yet these motivations are still under question, with retailers expressing their uncertainty about how to prioritize them and, as a consequence, how to implement LSS. However, even though retailers need more experience to draw conclusions, LSS has already proven to be positive in terms of satisfaction and word of mouth.

4.3 Motivations of consumers for choosing LSS

From the consumer perspective, the motivations for choosing this new retail format appear to relate to personal and social motivations to shop and to general aims of shopping activities.

In terms of **personal and social motivations to shop**, three elements emerged. First, engaging in LSS allows consumers to learn about products and brands. LSS is found to be a source of inspiration, a way to learn about products and trends the consumer is interested in, especially new products. Second, it is an opportunity for diversion, and offers a form of recreation. Third, a social motivation emerged, embodied in the person of the streamer. Interviewees explained that interacting with a streamer who is an expert, celebrity, influencer or someone they like was key in their decision to take part. The human nature of the exchange and the proximity created are described as central to this experience.

Standard motivations relating to the **general aims of shopping** also emerged. The first is utilitarian, namely obtaining what they wanted to during the shopping experience. However, some consumers pointed out that LSS pushes them to make instant and even impulsive purchases. Thus, utilitarian motivations to participate in an LSS session relate to obtaining a desired product, benefiting from discounts, getting the exact information they were looking for, but also the fact that it is a convenient way to shop from home. Second, hedonic motivations also appear to prompt consumers to watch LSS sessions: some said they do it to relax, others to pass time or because they enjoy it. The third kind of motivation is epistemic. This need for knowledge concerns both LSS itself as an unknown way to shop, and products, the background of their production process and the brand. The fourth and final motivation for consumers to watch LSS is self-esteem: LSS sessions are an opportunity to get a personalized service or advice and/or to feel privileged while shopping, thus reinforcing their status.

4.4 The place and role of LSS in an omnichannel consumer journey

A key category that emerged from the data includes the place and role of LSS in an omnichannel journey. Findings include both the consumer perspective in terms of the decision-making process and the retailer perspective in terms of store and online choices.

First, LSS was found to be a new option in the already wide range of options consumers have to do their shopping, used indifferently at each stage of the shopping journey, namely at the pre-purchase stage for information purposes, the decision-making stage to compare products or brands, and the purchase stage to buy the product during the session. Furthermore, while some consumers concluded their LSS session with a product purchase, thus considering it as a

channel in its own right, others explained how they combine it with other shopping formats within their journey. Attending an LSS session may only serve to obtain information, which then orients them to the store or website to have a look and/or buy the product. On the contrary, some attended sessions because they already knew the product but needed more information, a demonstration or an appropriate occasion – the LSS session – to buy it. As such, LSS also emerged as a new touchpoint in the sense of Verhoef *et al.* (2015), namely an episode of direct or indirect interaction with a product or brand. Finally, from the retailer perspective, LSS can be seen as a new option in the store and online channel decision-making process. It increases omnichannel complexity because retailers have to interweave LSS with their store and online options.

5. Discussion

Our research findings are discussed in respect of our two research questions and then extended along the omnichannel continuum.

5.1. RQ1. What are the characteristics of LSS as a new form of commerce?

Our findings show that LSS is a new online retail format, to be added to the range of existing options as it exhibits a typical retailing mix that is substantially different from other formats. First, its *product* assortment is fairly limited and often includes new or recent products as well as exclusivities. Second, its *distribution* is screen-mediated with a type of platform used to broadcast the LSS and a specific location (either in a store or a studio). Third, it requires dedicated and broad *communication* to attract the most consumers at a specific time. Although replays are possible, LSS is designed to be followed in short live sessions. This makes it an ephemeral communication event in its own right, like pop-up stores (Picot-Coupey, 2013), or even a “Happy few/VIP” event, which creates or fosters community. It is socially interactive with chat functionality. Fifth, there is a crucial role for the streamer, who ensures direct and personalized interactivity, sells the products and represents the retailer, as already observed in the literature (Zheng *et al.*, 2023).

While Zentes *et al.* (2017) present LSS as a *price* format, our findings reveal an experience format that provides consumers with detailed product specifications and live demonstrations which they can discuss in interactions with the streamer and other consumers through the chat function. This mirrors the role of the in-store salesperson and the social function so essential to the store format (Gauri *et al.*, 2021).

Our results highlight the importance of the human dimension brought by the streamer to digital in LSS, echoing Zheng *et al.* (2023), as well as of the relationships between the streamer and consumers during LSS following Wongkitrungrueng and Assarut (2020). In this way, LSS seems to offer the framework for a fusion of digital and physical experiences, particularly when run by sales staff and taking place in-store, giving it its unique character as an online format (Zhang and Tang, 2023) or almost even as a hybrid store/online format.

Considering all these elements, our findings lead us to propose a definition of LSS as “*online shopping combining e-commerce facilities, social media interactivity, live streaming functions and store/vendor reassurance, creating shopping value through real-time (and/or replay) viewership, synchronous interactions with the streamer and other consumers, rich product information, entertainment and immersion*”.

5.2 RQ2. What are the motivations, both of retailers and consumers, for choosing LSS?

From the retailer’s perspective, our findings highlighted three main motivations – institutional isomorphism, generate sales and communication – in line with previous studies for the latter two (e.g. Yang *et al.*, 2023). Our research is the first, to our knowledge, to identify institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983) as a motivation for adopting a new format, such as LSS. In the early days of LSS, the fear of missing out on an innovation seems to have motivated retailers to adopt it without a clear strategic vision. Now, after several months of testing and learning, they have a better idea of what works and what does not. However, the question of its monetization remains open (Chen *et al.*, 2023).

From the consumer’s perspective, our study identifies seven motivations in total to participate in LSS sessions. Three relate to personal and social motivations to shop – learning about products and brands, diversion and social motivation – which are standard motives already observed by Tauber (1972). Four relate to general aims of shopping, namely utilitarian, hedonic, epistemic and self-esteem. These results suggest that the LSS format, while highly technological, responds to traditional consumer expectations in terms of their shopping experience, and finds its place in the new retail landscape precisely by meeting habitual needs (Babin *et al.*, 2021).

5.3. LSS along the omnichannel continuum

While our results allow us to describe the LSS format in itself, they also show that this description is inseparable from omnichannel integration. This new online format appears to be part of the continuum reflecting the omnichannel integration (Neslin, 2022). Experts, retailers

and consumers all indicated that LSS sessions were organized and attended within an omnichannel journey. As such, the contours of LSS can only be drawn by combining a description of the format with a detailed comparison of it with other in-store and online formats. Consequently, the results are discussed in the same vein. This discussion is structured along the respective challenges and advantages of these formats (Picot-Coupey, 2013), detailed in Table V. On this basis, Table V presents a comparison, on a scale from 1 to 5, between LSS and (1) store formats – permanent and pop-up stores – and (2) online formats – websites and mobile applications.

Insert Table V here

6. Conclusion

This paper taps into a novel and contemporary subject, still incipient but rich and promising, both in its scholarly and managerial potential. It helps to (1) structure the emerging literature about LSS by developing the first bibliometric and structured literature review on the topic; (2) substantiate what characterizes LSS as a retail format from the consumer and retailer perspectives and as a retail touchpoint in the consumer omnichannel journey; and (3) propose a definition of LSS and a research agenda.

6.1 Theoretical implications and research agenda

From an academic perspective, LSS has been addressed from various and not always convergent perspectives, focusing on many-sided aspects, providing more of a kaleidoscopic view than a clear overall picture of a potential research stream and lacking a precise definition and conceptual delimitation from other retail formats. This research therefore represents the first step towards a comprehensive analysis of LSS, relying on the combined retailer and consumer perspectives. The present study has three key theoretical implications. First, by establishing that LSS is a format and specifying its characteristics, it enriches the literature on store formats as well as existing typologies. Second, it revives the discussion of "why do people shop?" (Tauber, 1972): while the format is said to be innovative in its technological and interactive characteristics, albeit remote, it responds to the same standard shopping motivations. This echoes the view that despite technology changes, the hub of retailing remains the same (Babin *et al.*, 2021). Third, LSS presents both a challenging retail decision and a multifaceted consumer experience. The imbalance of studies on consumers compared to retailers points to the need for more retail-oriented research on LSS, especially from an omnichannel perspective. These implications from both the hybrid literature review and qualitative research allow us to

propose a research agenda, presented in Table VI: a) to assess retailers' motivations and efficiency in strategically advancing LSS (why); b) to gain further knowledge about the nature, partners and characteristics of LSS (what, who and with whom); c) to address the place and role of LSS in an omnichannel customer journey (how).

Insert Table VI here

6.2 Managerial implications

This study raises three significant managerial implications for retailers. First, more strategic thinking on LSS is needed to make informed decisions regarding its adoption and operation. While LSS sessions can certainly have positive results, particularly in terms of communication and sales, the question of how to monetize them is still open. Therefore, managers need to carefully craft their own strategy, consistent with consumer motivations, based on a solid targeting strategy, with cost control, and avoid replicating the actions of other players. Secondly, LSS is both a communication medium and a driver of sales, thus a true touchpoint. It provides memorable experiences, with emotional and/or informational value, enabling the creation of social and commercial links with distant consumers who would otherwise be difficult to reach. For small retailers, it can be profitable because of its unique features. Third, LSS is a multifaceted format and touchpoint that is part of an omnichannel strategy and through which different objectives can be achieved, both quantitative – attraction rate (new consumers, new customers), conversion rate, online and store traffic, notoriety – and qualitative (image, community engagement). As such, today's retailers cannot afford to ignore LSS.

6.3 Limitations and further research

Several limitations should be acknowledged at the end of this work. First, the hybrid literature review was done in an emerging field. Once the LSS literature has further developed, the bibliometric review could be repeated to better map the field. Moreover, our search criteria did not consider non-marketing journals, focusing therefore on an intradisciplinary approach. Further avenues could include journals approaching LSS from multiple disciplines, adding to the understanding in a cross-disciplinary scope. Second, the transcripts of our qualitative data were in French and translated into English. Although we used back-translation, the verbatims cited are not in their original language. Third, this paper is limited to one country, and so further empirical cross-cultural studies are needed. We also encourage more collaborative research between scholars and practitioners for a better understanding of this new shopping format.

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