

# Real-time broadcasts create buzz

By 2020, the live-streaming industry in China is estimated to be worth 100 billion yuan (S\$19.8 billion) – driven largely by the many young Chinese making a living from showcasing their lives or products to others in real time.

And while the market in Singapore is not as big, the last few years have seen individuals and businesses starting to sell anything from seafood to clothing to electronic and beauty products via live video.

Communication and digital marketing experts say the appeal of live streaming lies in the thrill of interacting with the seller and snagging a bargain in front of hundreds of people who are watching.

“Being live increases engagement and a sense of urgency as one will miss it if one does not take action to view it now. This is a great way to create marketing buzz and excitement,” says Dr Jimmy Wong, senior lecturer of marketing at the Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS). He adds that cheaper mobile data plans have contributed to the trend.

Businesses benefit because they are able to reach a large group of people at the same time.

Experts say video or digital marketing works because it does not come across as an advertisement.

“It is like the next level of blogging but, instead of using words, you use videos,” says Dr Wong.

“Once your audience is willing to watch your video, it will not come across as though you are selling something. Instead, the audience will feel that you are making a sincere recommendation.”

Associate Professor Lynda Wee from the division of Marketing and International Business at Nanyang Technological University agrees that videos or live streaming work as the seller develops a relationship with customers first.

Prof Wee says: “Engage first, then endear, to make customers remember. Selling proposition comes last.”

The experts say authenticity is what sets such live videos apart from other marketing platforms, as they require genuine interaction with the audience.

Globally, many companies have tapped video marketing to enhance their brand and expand their reach. Examples include British Airways’ safety videos, to make a point on how passengers feel about them, and Tide’s video ads, which use humour and surprise to promote its washing detergent.

However, video marketing may not necessarily translate to boosting sales, says Dr Brian Lee, head of the communication programme at SUSS.

“It is easy to increase awareness with video marketing. However, it may not help positively the brand image, especially if the video is very much just for laughs.

“So new brands should be cautious when they want to use it to launch their products or services.”

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Janice Tai

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**DR JIMMY WONG**, senior lecturer of marketing at the Singapore University of Social Sciences