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МЕХАНИЗМ ЭМОЦИОНАЛЬНОЙ АДАПТАЦИИ КУЛЬТУРНЫХ СИМВОЛОВ В ЖИВОЙ КОММЕРЦИИ: ПЕРЕКРЕСТНОЕ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ ТАИЛАНДА, КИТАЯ И ЮЖНОЙ КОРЕИ

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Аннотация. В этом исследовании изучаются механизмы эмоциональной адаптации культурных символов в живой коммерции в Таиланде, Китае и Южной Корее. С помощью смешанного метода перекрестного анализа, интегрирующего теорию культурного измерения и структуры потребительского поведения, он определяет три различные стратегии – духовное внедрение, историческую ностальгию и поп-культурное стремление – и их дифференциальные роли в содействии вовлечению аудитории. Исследование подчеркивает взаимодействие между культурным контекстом, символическим взаимодействием и эмоциональным резонансом, предлагая Матрицу адаптации культурных символов (CSAM) для руководства разработкой трансграничной стратегии. Этические соображения относительно культурной аутентичности и технологических инноваций подчеркиваются как критически важные для устойчивой практики.

Ключевые слова: живая коммерция, культурные символы, эмоциональная нейронаука, кросс-культурная стратегия, Юго-Восточная Азия.

Introduction

Live commerce is transforming retail in Asia, especially in Thailand, China and South Korea. «We've seen Thai brands a lot like Mistine using Buddhism to create trust, Chinese companies like Hua Xizi leveraging Guochao (national trend) to bring heritage pride, and Korean companies like the Face Shop collaborating with K-pop idols to create aspiration». As of 2025, the size of the Asian live commerce market was \$1.8 trillion, yet almost half of cross-border campaigns bomb due to cultural misunderstandings. This underscores the pressing importance of understanding constructed values in terms of emotional engagement and purchasing behaviours.

One of the things research does now is to examine a single country or only one kind of influence at a time or popular culture in Korea or religious influence in Thailand or nationalism in China, but there is no kind of a model that pulls it together that says, this is how all these different kinds of influences work, cross-culturally, to explain consumer responses. To fill this gap, our study aims to achieve three main objectives.

We will (1) examine how cultural symbols are related to Hofstede's cultural dimensions (e.g., power distance, long-term orientation) and emotions, and how culture shapes the effectiveness of symbolic appeals. Second, we seek to quantify how different categories of cultural symbols impact both brain activity and consumer behavior by investigating neuro-marketing insights, including activations in areas of the brain related to trust, nostalgia, aspiration, purchase intent, and decision speed. Third, we suggest that a Cultural Symbol Adaptation Matrix (CSAM) should be developed as a strategic instrument to guide a brand's ethical and strategic adaptation of cultural symbols in international live commerce in terms of the compromise between originality and commercial objectives. This study intends to provide insight for more culturally sensitive cross-border marketing.

Theoretical Foundations and Literature Review

The exploration of cultural symbol adaptation in live commerce across Thailand, China, and South Korea is underpinned by a confluence of theoretical perspectives and existing research, which collectively shape our understanding of how cultural context, symbolic interaction, and consumer emotions intersect.

Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory offers insights into cross-cultural differences. In Thailand, with a high power distance index (PDI = 64), religious symbols like monks are highly trusted. Chotiprasert (2023) indicates that 78% of Thai consumers associate monks with product authenticity. Brands like Mistine capitalize on this by featuring clergy in 65% of their live streams. In China, a high long-term orientation (LTO = 87) means historical symbols are prevalent in marketing. Gong et al. (2022) find that «Guochao» campaigns utilizing Tang Dynasty aesthetics

achieve a 38% higher recall rate compared to modern designs. In South Korea, a high uncertainty avoidance index (UAI = 85) makes K - pop idols effective in reducing purchase risk. Kim & Lee (2024) report that 89% of Korean viewers trust celebrity endorsements, which drives the prevalence of idol - fronted live commerce.

Symbolic interactionism, proposed by Mead (1934), explains how symbols mediate social interaction in live commerce. TikTok Thailand (2024) observes that hosts using the Isan dialect increase engagement by 34%, creating micro - cultural bonds. In China, AI - generated «digital ancestors» like virtual Confucius are used in makeup tutorials, achieving a 5.6 - fold industry - average conversion rate (Alibaba Research, 2023). This shows how symbols, whether linguistic or technological, facilitate interaction and emotional connection. In South Korea, ASMR techniques employed by hosts, as studied by Park et al. (2024), trigger dopamine release, shortening consumer decision - making time by 41%. Here, symbols extend beyond visual and cultural cues to include sensory experiences.

Neuro - marketing research adds a biological perspective. Peng (2025) finds that Thai religious symbols increase oxytocin levels (related to trust) by 12% in viewers. In China, historical symbols stimulate the hippocampus, leading to a 19% increase in emotional attachment (Gong et al., 2022). In South Korea, K - pop idols trigger a 27% dopamine release, driving aspirational desire (Kim & Lee, 2024).

While existing research from these theoretical perspectives has shed light on various aspects of cultural symbol adaptation in live commerce across the three countries, there is still a need for more in - depth exploration. Previous studies have mainly focused on isolated cultural dimensions, symbolic interactions, or neuro - marketing effects within each country. However, a comprehensive analysis that integrates these elements to examine how they collectively influence consumer emotions and conversion behaviors across different cultural contexts is lacking. This study aims to contribute to this knowledge gap by conducting a cross - cultural comparative analysis, providing a more nuanced understanding of cultural symbol adaptation in live commerce.

Research Methodology

Case Selection is guided by cultural relevance and market impact. In Thailand, the focus is on Mistines live streams incorporating Buddhist monks, a strategy rooted in the countrys high power distance culture (PDI=64) to build authority. China's cases center on Hua Xizis «Guochao» campaigns, leveraging historical symbols to align with long-term orientation (LTO=87) and foster collective nostalgia. South Korea's cases examine The Face Shop's collaborations with K-pop idols, capitalizing on high uncertainty avoidance (UAI=85) to mitigate purchase risk through familiar

celebrity endorsements. These cases span diverse symbol types – spiritual, historical, and pop-cultural – to capture cross-market adaptation strategies.

Data Analysis Methods integrate quantitative and qualitative approaches. For quantitative insights, 15 million public comments from TikTok (Thailand), Douyin (China), and YouTube (South Korea) are analyzed using VADER sentiment analysis to measure emotional responses. This reveals, for example, that Thai religious symbols generate 74% positive sentiment, while Chinese historical motifs reduce decision time by 41%. Qualitatively, semi-structured interviews with 26 influencers and industry experts explore how symbols are contextualized—such as Thai hosts using Isan dialects to enhance local relevance or Korean hosts employing ASMR to trigger dopamine-driven aspiration.

Findings from case selection and data analysis are synthesized into a Cultural Symbol Adaptation Matrix (CSAM), which maps Hofstede’s dimensions to emotional-neurological outcomes (e.g., oxytocin release for Thai trust symbols). This framework ensures a systematic understanding of how cultural context shapes symbol effectiveness, providing actionable insights for cross-border live commerce strategies.

Case analysis and key findings—successful Cultural Symbol Adaptation in Live Commerce

Thai beauty brand Mistine leveraged Thailand’s high power distance culture (PDI=64) by integrating Buddhist monks into live streams, where they blessed products and framed ingredient purity through spiritual narratives. This strategy generated 74% positive sentiment in TikTok comments (VADER analysis, 2024) and a 35.7% YoY sales increase (2020-2024, Statista), with regional dialects (e.g., Isan) and ASMR elements further boosting engagement to 130,000 likes on YouTube. Monks were positioned as cultural authorities rather than salespeople, explaining Buddhist concepts of «purity» in alignment with product efficacy – a nuance that resonated with older Thai consumers (35+), who reported 45% higher trust in such narratives (Chotiprasert, 2023). However, 15% of comments criticized religious commercialization (Yang, 2022), highlighting the need to limit spiritual figures to educational segments to preserve cultural authenticity.

Chinese brand Hua Xizi capitalized on China’s high long-term orientation (LTO=87) through «Guochao» campaigns featuring Tang Dynasty aesthetics and AI-generated «digital ancestors» demonstrating imperial makeup rituals on Douyin. These efforts achieved a 43% conversion rate – 5.6 times the industry average – with 68% of viewers associating the brand with cultural pride (Gong et al., 2022). The integration of AR technology, allowing viewers to «try on» historical makeup looks via smartphone cameras, drove 2.3x longer watch times and 38% higher engagement among 25-45-year-olds (Alibaba Research, 2023). Eye-tracking studies linked historical symbols to 19% increased hippocampus activation (Peng, 2025), though 22% of Gen Z viewers expressed fatigue with repetitive

motifs by 2024 (Zhang, 2023), prompting the brand to experiment with «retro-futuristic» hybrids merging 1980s pop culture with AI-generated historical landscapes.

South Korean brand The Face Shop addressed high uncertainty avoidance (UAI=85) by collaborating with K-pop idols like BLACKPINK in YouTube live streams, where celebrity endorsements triggered 27% dopamine surges (EEG monitoring, Kim & Lee, 2024) and drove a 67% higher click-through rate with 41% shorter decision times (Lee & Park, 2023). The strategy capitalized on idols' ability to reduce perceived risk through familiarity, particularly among 15-25-year-olds, who reported 68% higher impulse purchase intent. However, the campaign faced -34% sentiment decline in China due to historical sensitivities (Kim, 2024), leading the brand to introduce «regional ambassador» roles featuring local influencers alongside K-pop stars, which reduced negative sentiment by 29% (Park et al., 2024).

Cross-Cultural Comparison of Symbol Efficacy

Table 1

Cultural Symbol Adaptation Outcomes in Live Commerce

Market	Symbol Type	Cultural Dimension	Emotional Core	Neurological Mechanism	Conversion Rate	Key Risk
Thailand	Religious/spiritual	High Power Distance	Trust (+37%)	Oxytocin↑12% (trust)	32%	Religious commercialization
China	Historical/nostalgic	High Long-Term Orientation	Nostalgia (+28%)	Hippocampus activation↑19%	43%	Generational disconnection
South Korea	Pop-cultural/K-pop	High Uncertainty Avoidance	Aspiration (+62%)	Dopamine↑27% (reward)	38%	Cross-border cultural insensitivity

Table 2

Neuro-Cultural Alignment Framework for Live Commerce Strategy

Cultural Dimension	Dominant Neural Response	Behavioral Outcome	Strategic Imperative	Risk Mitigation
Power Distance (TH)	↑12% Oxytocin (Trust)	45% ↑Trust in Older Demographics (35+)	Collaborate with temples for co-branded "spiritual wellness" lines	Limit monks to educational roles; avoid direct product endorsements
Long-Term Orientation (CN)	↑19% Hippocampus Activation (Nostalgia)	38% ↑Engagement in 25–45 Age Group	Hybridize heritage with AR/VR (e.g., virtual Tang Dynasty makeup try-ons)	Rotate historical motifs; fuse with modern tech (e.g., AI narrators)
Uncertainty Avoidance (KR)	↑27% Dopamine (Reward)	68% ↑Impulse Purchases Among Youth (15–25)	Diversify K-pop partnerships with regional micro-	Co-create localized content with local ambassadors to offset cultural friction

			influencers (e.g., ASEAN creators)	
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Table 2 further demonstrates how neuro-cultural alignment drives strategy optimization. In Thailand, power distance amplifies oxytocin-mediated trust, making institutional collaborations – such as co-designing monk-certified herbal serums – 28% more effective than celebrity endorsements for older demographics (Chotiprasert, 2023). Conversely, South Korea’s uncertainty avoidance prioritizes dopamine-driven rewards, necessitating constant novelty; regional micro-influencers reduced campaign engagement decay by 22% compared to sole K-pop reliance (Park et al., 2024). China’s long-term orientation leverages hippocampus-activated nostalgia but requires cyclical symbol innovation: AR-driven historical interactions, like the «Virtual Forbidden City Tour», boosted Gen Z retention by 34% by transforming passive viewing into interactive heritage exploration (Peng, 2025).

Theoretical Integration and Strategic Implications

The findings validate the Cultural Symbol Adaptation Matrix (CSAM), which merges Hofstede’s dimensions with neuro-marketing insights to guide strategy. In Thailand, the alignment of religious symbols with power distance values underscores the importance of authority-based narratives that balance cultural respect with commercial utility – for example, monks explaining the medicinal properties of Thai herbs in live streams, which increased product credibility without compromising religious integrity.

In China, the interplay between long-term orientation and hippocampus activation highlights the need for «heritage with a twist», such as Hua Xizi’s «Guochao 3.0» campaigns that pair Tang Dynasty motifs with modern skincare science, appealing to both tradition-valuing consumers and tech-savvy youth. This hybrid approach not only enhances emotional resonance but also mitigates the risk of generational disconnection by demonstrating the evolving relevance of historical symbols.

For South Korea, the dopamine-driven aspiration triggered by K-pop symbols emphasizes the necessity of inclusive cross-border strategies. By integrating regional influencers into live streams, brands like The Face Shop create aspirational narratives that resonate locally – e.g., featuring a Chinese beauty blogger alongside a K-pop idol to contextualize products within Chinese cultural frameworks, thereby reducing perceptions of cultural insensitivity and improving sentiment by 51% (Park et al., 2024).

Collectively, these insights emphasize that effective live commerce requires dynamic alignment of symbols with cultural values, neural responses, and ethical boundaries. The CSAM

framework, bolstered by the neuro-cultural insights in Table 2, provides a robust, evidence-based tool for designing strategies that not only drive immediate engagement but also build sustainable, culturally intelligent connections across markets. By prioritizing context-specific adaptation and empirical validation, brands can transform cultural symbols into powerful levers for cross-border success in the digital age.

Strategic Recommendations for Enterprises

Drawing on the cultural-symbol-neurological insights from the case analysis and the Cultural Symbol Adaptation Matrix (CSAM), this section provides actionable strategies for enterprises to optimize cross-border live commerce through culturally intelligent symbol deployment.

Market-Specific Adaptation Strategies

For Thailand, enterprises should prioritize collaborative symbol co-creation with religious institutions, such as partnering with Buddhist temples to develop «spiritual wellness» product lines that blend cultural heritage with product utility. Mistine's collaboration with Wat Pho to create a «Thai Herbal Purity" series, for example, increased trust by 28% while reducing religious commercialization backlash. Regional micro-cultural elements like Isan dialects and Northeastern folk motifs should be integrated into live streams to foster local affinity, with hosts balancing spiritual narratives (e.g., Buddhist purity concepts) with practical product explanations. To mitigate risks, establish a cultural advisory board to ensure religious symbols are used educationally rather than exploitatively, limiting monk appearances to 20% of content.

In China, the focus should be on innovating historical symbols through heritage-tech hybrids, such as Hua Xizi's «Virtual Tang Dynasty Makeup Studio» that uses AR to enhance engagement by 34% among Gen Z. Rotating historical motifs (e.g., alternating between Song and Ming Dynasty aesthetics) and involving consumers in co-creation (e.g., «Guochao Redesign» contests) addresses generational fatigue. Enterprises should also tailor symbols to regional subcultures – for instance, combining Terracotta Army motifs with local Xi'an influencers to boost conversions by 18% in Northwestern China. This balances national nostalgia with regional relevance.

South Korean brands must diversify pop-cultural strategies by supplementing K-pop idols with regional micro-influencers. The Face Shop's «ASEAN Beauty Collective» campaign, featuring a mix of Korean idols and local creators, reduced negative sentiment in China by 29% while maintaining high impulse purchase rates. Positioning K-beauty as «K-tech» (emphasizing scientific ingredients) rather than purely cultural export can broaden appeal. Cross-cultural storytelling, such as featuring Korean idols engaging with local historical sites, helps address regional sensitivities.

Cross-Market Strategic Imperatives

Enterprises should implement dynamic cultural feedback loops using AI sentiment analysis (e.g., VADER for Thai, Baidu Wenxin for Chinese) to monitor real-time viewer reactions, enabling mid-stream adjustments to avoid cultural misalignment. Neuro-marketing tools like EEG and eye-tracking during pilot campaigns can validate symbol efficacy, reducing risks by 30%. Ethical boundaries must be defined through a Cultural Symbol Ethics Guide, setting thresholds for sensitive symbol usage (e.g., max 30% of content) and requiring institutional approvals for religious/historical references. Transparent communication of cultural intent – like Hua Xizi’s explicit heritage-honoring mission – can increase perceived authenticity by 25%.

The CSAM framework offers a scalable implementation roadmap: first, diagnose target markets using Hofstede’s dimensions; then curate symbols aligned with cultural emotions and neural mechanisms (e.g., historical symbols for long-term orientation); validate symbol efficacy through small-scale neuro-behavioral experiments; and iterate strategies using real-time feedback, such as replacing overused K-pop idols with regional influencers if sentiment declines.

Future Research and Practice Directions

Longitudinal studies tracking how cultural symbols impact brand equity – comparing trust-driven Thai strategies vs. aspiration-driven Korean approaches – can inform sustainable growth. Exploring intersections of cultural symbols with emerging trends like Web3 virtual influencers (e.g., AI-generated historical figures in metaverse live streams) presents opportunities for next-generation engagement. By embedding these strategies, brands can transform cultural symbols into dynamic drivers of emotional resonance, ensuring adaptability in diverse global markets.

Conclusion and Future Research

Key Conclusions. This study provides a nuanced understanding of how cultural symbols in live commerce drive emotional resonance across Thailand, China, and South Korea, anchored in three core findings. First, cultural symbol efficacy is deeply tied to Hofstede’s dimensions: Thai religious symbols leverage power distance to foster oxytocin-mediated trust, Chinese historical symbols tap long-term orientation to activate hippocampus-driven nostalgia, and Korean pop symbols address uncertainty avoidance through dopamine-fueled aspiration. These mechanisms create distinct engagement pathways – sustained trust in Thailand, nostalgic loyalty in China, and aspirational impulse in South Korea – each with unique risks and rewards. Second, the Cultural Symbol Adaptation Matrix (CSAM) offers a scalable framework for aligning symbols with cultural values, neural responses, and ethical boundaries, as demonstrated by market-specific strategies like

institutional co-creation in Thailand, heritage-tech hybrids in China, and inclusive influencer partnerships in South Korea. Third, successful adaptation requires dynamic balance: between cultural authenticity and commercial utility, static symbolism and innovative reinterpretation, and local relevance and cross-border scalability.

Limitations. While this research advances understanding of cultural symbol adaptation, several limitations merit acknowledgment. Geographically, the focus on three Asian markets limits generalizability to Western or other non-Asian contexts, where cultural dimensions like individualism (vs. collectivism) or indulgence (vs. restraint) may alter symbol effectiveness. Methodologically, while the triangulation of quantitative sentiment data, qualitative interviews, and neuro-experimental findings provides depth, the reliance on self-reported survey data for behavioral outcomes (e.g., purchase intent) introduces potential bias, and larger sample sizes in neurostudies could strengthen statistical power. Theoretically, the framework does not fully account for subcultural variations within markets (e.g., China's regional cultural diversity) or the evolving nature of symbols over time, such as the rapid transformation of K-pop's global image. Practically, emerging technologies like generative AI and the metaverse, which are increasingly shaping live commerce, are only briefly explored, leaving opportunities to study how digital innovation reshapes cultural symbol meaning and engagement dynamics.

Future Research Directions. These limitations highlight avenues for expansion. Future studies could compare cultural symbol use in individualistic societies (e.g., the U.S., Germany) to identify cross-cultural universals and divergences, or incorporate longitudinal designs to track symbol efficacy over extended periods. Methodologically, combining real-world sales data with neuroimaging could provide a more robust link between cultural resonance and commercial outcomes. Theoretically, integrating subcultural theories or postcolonial perspectives might deepen understanding of symbolic power dynamics in cross-border contexts. Practically, investigating how AI-generated avatars or virtual influencers mediate cultural symbol perception – for example, whether digital representations of historical figures enhance or dilute nostalgic resonance – could inform the design of next-generation live commerce experiences. By addressing these gaps, future research can further refine the CSAM framework, ensuring its relevance in an era of rapidly evolving cultural and technological landscapes.

In essence, this study underscores the critical role of cultural intelligence in live commerce, where symbols act as bridges between heritage, emotion, and consumer behavior. As global markets become more interconnected yet culturally nuanced, the ability to decode and adapt symbols with empirical rigor and ethical sensitivity will be essential for fostering authentic, enduring engagement.

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EMOTIONAL ADAPTATION MECHANISM OF CULTURAL SYMBOLS IN LIVE COMMERCE: A CROSS-CASE STUDY OF THAILAND, CHINA, AND SOUTH KOREA

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Abstract. This study explores the emotional adaptation mechanisms of cultural symbols in live commerce across Thailand, China, and South Korea. Through a mixed-methods cross-case analysis integrating cultural dimension theory and consumer behavior frameworks, it identifies three distinct strategies – spiritual embedding, historical nostalgia, and pop-cultural aspiration – and their differential roles in fostering audience engagement. The research highlights the interplay between cultural context, symbolic interaction, and emotional resonance, proposing a Cultural Symbol Adaptation Matrix (CSAM) to guide cross-border strategy design. Ethical considerations for cultural authenticity and technological innovation are emphasized as critical for sustainable practice.

Key words: live commerce, cultural symbols, emotional neuroscience, cross-cultural strategy, Southeast Asia.