

## Personal IP Construction from the Perspective of Emotional Economics: A Case Study of Kuaishou Streamer Xin Youzhi (Postprint)

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**Date:** 2023-03-24T00:00:00+00:00

### Abstract

In this traffic bonanza, live-streaming e-commerce hosts are endowed with an “idol aura.” Viewers gathered before screens, under emotional influence, develop continuously reinforced affective psychology that prompts them to spontaneously constitute a powerful fan base. This emotional transformation from audience to fan enables top-tier hosts to achieve breakout development. This paper takes Kuaishou host Xin Youzhi as a case study to analyze the current state and challenges of personal IP construction from the perspective of emotional economics.

### Full Text

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### Abstract

In this era of traffic abundance, e-commerce livestreamers have been endowed with an “idol halo.” Under the influence of emotion, viewers gathered before their screens develop increasingly intensified affective psychology, spontaneously forming a powerful fan base. This emotional transformation from “viewer to fan” enables top-tier streamers to break through niche circles and achieve mainstream development. This paper takes Kuaishou host Xin Youzhi (Simba) as a case study to analyze the current state and challenges of personal IP construction through the lens of emotional economics.

**Keywords:** Emotional Economics, Personal IP, Xin Youzhi, Kuaishou

According to the 49th Statistical Report on China's Internet Development by the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC), as of December 2021, China's e-commerce livestreaming user base reached 464 million, an increase of 75.79 million from December 2020, accounting for 44.9% of all internet users [1]. This massive user base continuously drives the vigorous development of e-commerce livestreaming, which in turn transforms the landscape of livestreaming participants. Henry Jenkins proposed in *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* that “emotional economics” would increasingly occupy a significant position in the media industry, arguing that emotion forms the basis of consumer decisions regarding viewership and purchases [2]. The term “emotional economics” refers to new branding and advertising models that posit economic value derives from consumers' passionate engagement with brands and entertainment products—a phenomenon that has already become reality in contemporary fan culture. E-commerce livestreamers have been granted an “idol aura” in this traffic feast. Viewers assembled before their screens, under emotional influence, develop increasingly reinforced affective psychology that spontaneously coalesces into a powerful fan base. This emotional shift from “viewer to fan” enables top streamers to break through their original circles and expand their reach [3]. This paper examines Kuaishou host Xin Youzhi as a case study to analyze the status quo and problems of personal IP construction from the perspective of emotional economics.

## I. Xin Youzhi's Personal IP Construction: Gifting and Persona

In Kuaishou's early years, streamers established collectives through a “family-style” structure: a top influencer served as the leader, creating a cohort of followers connected by familial, mentor-apprentice, or brotherly relationships that coalesced into a closed, mutually supportive community sharing honor and disgrace. The Simba Family represents such a large clan, with Xin Youzhi as its “patriarch.” Xin Youzhi, who frequently uses the stage name “Simba” online, is the founder of the brand “Xin Youzhi's Strict Selection (Xin Xuan).”

Gifting to rank on the leaderboard is a uniquely Kuaishou method for gaining visibility, attracting followers, and building personal momentum. Beginning in 2017, Xin Youzhi virtually dominated the livestreams of all major Kuaishou hosts, rapidly growing his fan base through generous tipping. Kuaishou users particularly favor this type of streamer, enabling Xin Youzhi to amass followers and achieve fame in a short period. By June 2022, he had become Kuaishou's top e-commerce streamer with over 98 million followers.

According to Baudrillard's theory of symbolic consumption, each consumption symbol has a specific consumer subject; thus, a streamer's “persona” as a consumption symbol must be established through its audience [4]. Xin Youzhi's self-introduction style reveals a certain sincerity and simplicity: “My name is Xin Youzhi. I started my own company at 19. I've never worked for anyone else; I've always run my own businesses. I'm a pure businessman.” He declares, “I

promise you, every penny I earn is with a clear conscience.” This approachable, down-to-earth persona further strengthens viewers’ impressions of the host and facilitates emotional connection.

Xin Youzhi’s personal IP development exhibits two distinct characteristics. First, the primary traffic entry point is the livestream room itself. He attracts fans through leaderboard gifting and directly converts them, rarely producing other content beyond livestreaming. Consequently, his Kuaishou and Weibo accounts contain only a few dozen posts, mostly edited clips of events. Second, trust in Xin Youzhi’s persona—and the resulting trust in product quality—constitutes the most direct reason fans enter his livestream room and complete purchases. Fans enjoy watching his price negotiations in the livestream and have developed high expectations and trust in the “Xin Xuan Recommender.”

The formation of Xin Youzhi’s personal IP results from the interplay of two factors. The first is active choice: in his early days, Xin Youzhi gifted generously in major influencers’ livestreams, interacting with hosts through duet sessions. His speech and demeanor left positive impressions on users. In videos posted on his personal account, he often opens with “Dear all users,” creating a strong sense of inclusion and intimacy. The second is environmental necessity: in the “laotie economy,” Kuaishou influencers influence audience behavior through both rational logic and group emotional factors that reinforce the impact. In such an environment, the establishment of Xin Youzhi’s personal IP is hardly surprising [5].

## II. The Practice of Emotional Economy: Performance and Rhetoric

Kuaishou livestream fans have dynamic interests, showing no loyalty to specific hosts or content, migrating according to their whims. To attract fan attention, streamers often employ “tactics,” addressing strangers in the non-physical world with intimate terms like family, friends, or lovers—relationships that appear more intimate and natural under the host’s guidance. For streamers, the closeness of their relationship with fans directly correlates with livestream revenue, motivating them to narrow the psychological distance with fans.

Xin Youzhi typically addresses his fan collective as “family.” By borrowing familial relationships, he symbolizes the bond between host and fans, making fans members of a large family. Whenever Xin Youzhi has a livestream to share or a “light up the red heart” task, he asks his family in the livestream room to share or click for him. When he engages in livestream PK battles, family members contribute small gifts through “fan crowdfunding” [6]. This creates a virtuous interaction cycle between host and fans.

“Stage actors take the discovery and expression of emotion as their primary professional task” [7]. Actors on stage or in theater inhabit what Goffman calls the “front stage,” knowing their performance is their work and that this work is distinct from their life and personal identity—hence the distinction between

front stage and back stage [8]. In this context, all streamers strive to make fans believe that the performing host and the person in real life are the same individual. Therefore, what matters for streamers is not performing or playing a role, but managing and shaping a “persona” under which they conduct their performance.

Xin Youzhi leveraged his early popularity built through leaderboard gifting and upright speech and behavior to achieve self-enhancement, increasing his appeal to users and creating an impression of wealth and earnestness on Kuaishou. After acquiring substantial traffic, he reciprocated users through benefits from that traffic, such as livestream lotteries and “one-yuan flash sales,” achieving dual effects of self-action and self-presentation. This projects a positive user impression on the front stage, building a favorable personal IP.

The formation of purchase decisions among Kuaishou fans is largely triggered by the trust and connection established between host and fans—a “person-to-person” relationship trigger. Purchasing is no longer merely a rational transaction centered on cost-performance ratio, but rather a “ritual” system concerning human sentiment, relationships, trust, identity seeking, and source tracing. This resembles traditional commercial behavior in wet markets, where Xin Youzhi is the “vegetable-selling big brother” and fans are the “strolling grandmas.” This subtle yet strong connection brings enormous commercial value.

### III. Fan Communities Tied by Emotion: Aggregation and Identification

Kuaishou streamers pursue personal IP development not merely to induce single purchase behaviors, but to establish long-term connections between users and hosts. The most valuable users are those industry insiders call “loyalists,” or simply fans. These loyalists are more inclined to watch livestreams faithfully, tip gifts, and purchase products. Ultimately, livestream commerce sells not products but the audience’s emotions toward the subject. Consumers’ identities undergo transformation and upgrading through the aggregation, fission, and identification of online fan communities formed around hosts [10].

In his early period, Xin Youzhi attracted traffic through homepage recommendations and livestream announcements, gaining initial attention. Influenced by big data, fans in the livestream room gradually aggregated and grew based on their surroundings and consumption preferences, forming a relatively stable fan community in his livestream room. At this stage, almost no connections existed among fans themselves; they merely gathered due to shared consumption habits, without forming emotional bonds with Xin Youzhi.

When the fan community reached a certain scale, fans gradually demonstrated identification trends within the livestream room. Fans’ status and hierarchy became digitized and labeled. On the Kuaishou platform, fans can pay to join a host’s fan club, obtaining exclusive fan badges and increasing intimacy points

by watching livestreams, gifting, sharing livestream rooms, and purchasing products. Fans are ranked by intimacy level within the livestream room, and veteran fans with higher rankings undoubtedly establish more intimate connections with the host. The time investment by Xin Youzhi's loyal fans in the livestream room serves as intangible social capital that continues among new fans. In Xin Youzhi's livestream room, interactions between new and old fans are frequently seen in the comment section: "This laundry detergent works great," "I missed it last time but finally got it this time," "What skin type is this suitable for?" Loyal fans essentially assume some of the host's responsibilities.

In emotional economics, the capitalization of emotion is the crucial magic weapon for maintaining vitality in the livestream economy. Group identification refers to the high degree of cognitive and evaluative consensus among group members. The cohesion within the fan group and their identification with the group act upon the host, becoming bonds connecting subjects. Xin Youzhi often recounts his entrepreneurial experiences over the past decade in his livestream room, with fans affectionately calling him "farmer's son," "Brother Ba," and "Class Monitor." He consistently creates an interactive atmosphere that positions him on fans' side, seeking benefits for them. Through strict control over product supply chains, Xin Youzhi has gained maximum trust from fans in his livestreams, forging deeper emotional connections.

#### IV. Emotional Marketing Problems and Measures

Through "performance" and rhetoric, Xin Youzhi attracted a large fan base, established a reliable and trustworthy personal IP, and built relatively stable emotional bonds with fans. Everything seemed to be developing positively. However, Xin Youzhi, standing atop this high building, faces the risk of collapse.

##### 1. The Rise of Brand Self-Broadcasting Weakens Personal IP Influence

On May 20, 2021, Kuaishou E-commerce officially launched the "Brand Partner Program." This program specifically supports well-known brands, offering tens of millions in traffic and subsidies to facilitate brand self-broadcasting. According to Kuaishou's official statistics, the program attracted over 100 brands including Xiaomi, OPPO, and Midea. Taking Heilan Home as an example, since launching on Kuaishou, the brand's official account has amassed 1.16 million fans, with monthly self-broadcasting GMV exceeding ten million yuan and a single-session peak GMV of 1.15 million yuan [11]. Additionally, Kuaishou adopts a model of pairing brands with Kuaishou influencers—for instance, pairing influencer Gao Di with Peacebird and influencer Er Lü with Gree—creating powerful combinations of personal IP value and well-known brand equity. This has dealt another heavy blow to Xin Youzhi.

More critically, since the rise of brand self-broadcasting, the income structure of Kuaishou's top streamers has shifted from primarily slotting fees plus commis-

sions to mainly commission income. Previously, brands were willing to pay Xin Youzhi high slotting fees because of his scarce resources and brand promotion effects. Now, with brands broadcasting themselves, Xin Youzhi's personal IP value struggles to compete with brand promotional power, significantly diluting his personal IP's promotional role.

## **2. Offline Persona Filter Shatters, Emotional Bonds Become Unbalanced**

For stage performers, private life and professional work are almost entirely separate and unrelated. However, because the service-provider and service-recipient relationship involves direct contact, private life inevitably seeps slightly into public life despite the professional context [12]. The emotional bonds Xin Youzhi accumulated online cannot be maintained when his offline persona faces scandals.

In 2020, Xin Youzhi's apprentice "Shi Dapiaoliang" sold Bird's Nest Bird's Nest (Mingzhi Bird's Nest) in a livestream. This product, which actually contained no bird's nest ingredients and was essentially sugar water, began receiving consumer complaints in early November. On November 17, professional counterfeiter Wang Hai publicly questioned its ingredients, making the "sugar water bird's nest" incident a high-profile societal issue and severely damaging Xin Youzhi's reputation. On December 23, the Guangzhou Market Supervision Administration announced investigation results and penalties, and Kuaishou E-commerce issued a disposal announcement temporarily banning the company's streamers [13]. Just a few months later, in March 2021, Xin Youzhi's comeback livestream deployed security guards to "block roads," significantly affecting public passage. People's Daily commented, "How arrogant must one be to display such grandiose airs?" This created new waves before the bird's nest incident had settled. Additionally, problems with product quality and poor after-sales service have been frequently exposed. The inconsistency between front-stage and back-stage behavior has greatly diminished Xin Youzhi's personal IP, making emotional bonds difficult to maintain.

Facing this personal IP crisis and rupture of emotional bonds, Xin Youzhi finds himself at risk. The author believes he can reverse the situation through two approaches.

### **1. "Building His Own Mountain," Creating a Proprietary Platform**

Despite several livestream scandals and persona collapses, Xin Youzhi's long-term accumulated fan base demonstrates strong stickiness. Even if he switched to another livestreaming platform, he would retain a large supporter base. Therefore, establishing a proprietary "Xin Xuan" platform becomes the preferred strategy. Beyond his personal IP value, Xin Youzhi possesses a matrix of hundreds of streamers and a "Xin Xuan Team" of thousands. Relying on the team's proprietary industrial chain center, thousand-person investment at-

traction center, beauty department, user experience center, operation center, quality control center, pricing center, and warehousing logistics center, Xin Youzhi and his team have sufficient strength and capital accumulation from years of e-commerce livestreaming experience to establish and operate their own e-commerce platform.

## 2. Strengthening Self-Regulation to Rebuild Emotional Bonds

The bird's nest incident revealed problems with Xin Youzhi's lax review processes and chaotic management. No matter how strong one's personal IP attributes may be, they are useless without effective oversight. A three-stage quality control process should be implemented: pre-selection investigation of brand backgrounds, third-party testing agency review of products; random sampling before sales to control product quality; and post-sales follow-up and service to protect consumer rights. As the saying goes, "Rome wasn't built in a day." Only by exchanging sincerity for sincerity can user trust be regained and trust bonds be rebuilt.

## V. Summary and Reflection

In the era of emotional economics, Xin Youzhi attracted a large fan base through "performance" and rhetoric, established a reliable and trustworthy personal IP, and built relatively stable emotional bonds with fans, achieving a certain degree of fame and fortune.

Fan emotion has profoundly and permanently transformed the livestreaming economy by endowing it with cultural significance. In today's context of technological empowerment and attention economy, the emotional bonds between streamers and fans have become key to fan growth and stability. However, with the implementation of livestreaming e-commerce regulations and increasingly strict oversight, the era of using personality IP to attract fans and drive purchases while wildly spending money to buy traffic and expand fan groups has passed. The cost of acquiring fans has increased, and e-commerce livestreaming has entered an awkward period. These conditions are unlikely to change in the short term, and the overall environment for the livestreaming economy is difficult to describe—the winter of the e-commerce industry may have already arrived.

Fan consumption psychology has been influenced by the livestreaming economy in an intangible, gradual, and fatal manner. The seemingly tight emotional bonds between streamers and fans simultaneously constitute a form of false consumption guidance. Impulsive "hand-chopping" purchases have become a source of anxiety and regret for many fans, though these emotions often remain hidden behind the carnival facade of consumer society. Useless and false consumption desires are difficult to satisfy, and fans cannot bridge the gap between rationality and idealism in their hearts. While material desires are fulfilled, spiritual voids grow ever larger. When reasonable needs are obscured by unscientific

consumption concepts, it becomes an unspeakable sorrow for the mental health and cultural literacy of society as a whole.

Entrepreneurs are crossing the river by feeling the stones. This represents both a research proposition left by the rapidly developing internet world for business observers and a difficult choice facing Xin Youzhi himself. For livestreaming industry practitioners, how to balance ethical standards with fans' genuine needs may be a question worth contemplating.

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