

Research on the community marketing model of digital agricultural products in China under the global new crown epidemic (COVID-19)

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Abstract. With the rapid development of China's digital economy and a new generation of information technology, coupled with the steady promotion of China's Belt and Road and the dual strategy of rural revitalization, has brought new opportunities and development to China's agricultural and rural economy. Especially in recent years, the emergence of innovative digital e-commerce models has brought new challenges to today's agricultural e-commerce, and people are constantly exploring digital business models that meet the requirements of the times and market trends. Based on this, by elaborating the definition of community marketing, analyzing the development trend and advantages of the current digital community marketing model, and putting forward some suggestions to optimize the current digital agricultural products community marketing model outlook, aiming to promote the development of rural revitalization in the new era of China with certain socio-economic significance.

Keywords: epidemic; digitalization; agricultural products; community marketing

1. Introduction

In 2020, the sudden arrival of the new crown epidemic (COVID-19) has disrupted people's original daily lifestyles. Under such circumstances, the value and advantages of digital community marketing have begun to emerge. As people responded to the government's call to fight the epidemic by quarantining their homes, they were unable to go to brick-and-mortar stores to consume products and services, so a large number of residents used digital platforms such as cell phone apps to buy groceries and community group purchases of household goods online. From this, it is easy to see that the digital agricultural products community marketing model has facilitated and contributed to the fight against the epidemic during the epidemic. It also has some practical significance to accelerate the country's economic prosperity and recovery and promote the development of rural revitalization and even the fight against the epidemic.

2. Community marketing

The community marketing model is a new business model that has emerged from the development of China's digital economy in recent years. For the concept and definition of community marketing, different scholars have given different explanations. Community marketing is a business model that is generated by gathering people with the same or similar interests and hobbies through certain careers and meeting the needs of the gathered people with products and services (Huanhuan Hong et al., 2021)[1]. This definition is not specific enough and is rather abstract. It is not combined with the context of our current era for elaboration. Tiantian Bi and Shuhua Lin (2021) [2]consider community marketing as a business tool built on a mobile social platform to achieve online and offline interaction, enhance trust, and achieve marketing goals through person-to-person network communication. This definition combines the background of China's digital development, but it also only introduces the business activities conducted by the community marketing model using the mobile social platform. Nowadays, under the development of China's digital economy, the mobile social platform is only one kind of digital platform, many e-commerce platforms also have certain social functions, such as Jindo, Taobao, Jingdong, and

other digital platforms, and can be fully docked to the community marketing model. Therefore, we believe that community marketing is the digital social business platform to attract the same or similar interests of the crowd to gather, with low threshold, humane, easy to operate and the advantages of online and offline interaction to meet the diverse product needs and service needs of the gathered crowd, and can effectively realize the customer consumption repeated and fission of the emerging business model.

3. The development trend of China's digital agricultural products community marketing model

With the rapid development of 5G, AI, big data and blockchain, and other high-tech, traditional store marketing, and e-commerce marketing can no longer meet the increasingly diversified needs of consumers under the current digital development, the more popular live with goods, short video and other emerging marketing models are also emerging in recent years, but due to the acceleration of technological innovation, coupled with the rapid changes in people's consumer needs and ideas, these models also appear. There are many problems and drawbacks. However, the emergence of digital community marketing has gradually changed the current consumer consumption trends, and people are getting used to adapting to this new retail model of agricultural consumption path, and its advantages and roles are expanding. Especially since the outbreak of the new crown epidemic (COVID-19) in 2020, the new retail model of agricultural products has touched a group of people who were not aware of buying food online but had the strength to buy food online, and these people are also accelerating their adaptation to buying agricultural products online through digital platforms (Huoming Lou, 2020)[3]. As a result, many supermarket chains and excellent community marketing companies in China (Boxma Fresh, RT-Mart, Dingdong Buy, etc.) have been promoting an online + offline digital community marketing model for agricultural products.

The essence of community marketing development is to use community information, emotion, and trust resources to meet and solve the needs of community customers for products and services. The path of community marketing in most companies in China is somewhat similar, as they all use the "Customer to Business" model to connect to the community, amplify the all-around value of products and services, and then generate value-added effects (Bin Dan et al., 2016)[4]. The supply chain operation of some supermarket chains and other chain enterprises for agricultural products is usually the upstream stage: production of agricultural products provided by farmers; the middle stage: the commercial flow of wholesalers and wholesalers to retail terminals; and the final stage: sales to consumers (Fig.1). However, as the public demand for consumption becomes more and more diversified and personalized, this traditional propulsive agricultural products supply chain model can hardly cope with the current rapidly changing market and consumers. The high-quality development of the digital economy has accelerated the integration of the community economy into the diverse needs of agricultural consumers, thus promoting the disruptive change of the agricultural supply chain from production-driven and demand-pulled to consumption-diversified supply and consumption-personalized design. Using online brand communities to increase customer loyalty and maximize business benefits is the direction of future development and research (Juan, 2017)[5].

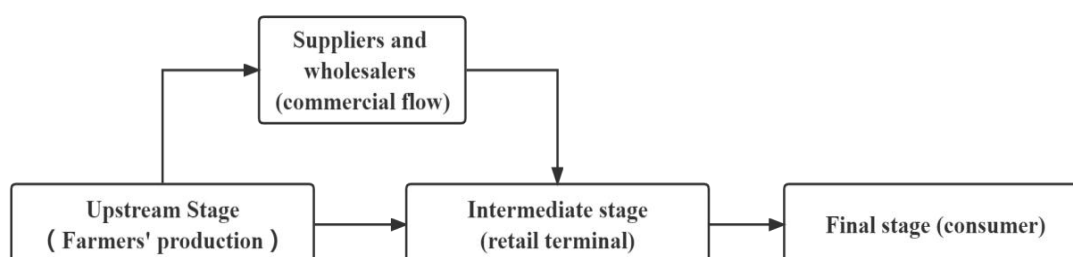


Fig.1 Agricultural supply chain community marketing process

4. Advantages of digital agricultural products community marketing model

4.1 Digital agricultural products community marketing helps to achieve rapid expansion and fission of the community

The expansion and fission of consumer groups is the primary issue to be considered for any marketing model. But how to form the expansion and fission of the group, which needs to be promoted by the business effect generated by different marketing models. First of all, the main factor affecting the expansion and fission of community is the spread and extension of customer experience value and social relationships. Only when consumers get a good experience of products and services in community marketing, they will magnify the experience value and pass it to their friends through social relationships, thus forming a social relationship network of interest chain and consumer chain extension, which can continuously increase the formation of more new consumer groups and new customer groups, thus expanding the consumption scale of the community. Second, in the form of community fission diversity. The creation of community marketing will also cause the emergence of different forms of community, such as corporate marketing agents. Social relationship extension of the community is often not necessarily all consumers and customers, but also trading partners. When a trading partner identifies such a business opportunity, they will spontaneously form an independent corporate marketing agency and will build a team and design a strategic marketing plan for it.

4.2 Digital agricultural products community marketing helps to promote emotional interaction and improve customer loyalty

The process of community marketing is formed based on the quality emotional interaction of community members, and such interactive behavior can effectively improve the sense of belonging of customers. Especially through digital technology as a carrier, it can better realize offline + online user experience and communication, which accelerates the intimacy between members. The cultivation of customer belonging and intimacy is beneficial to customer loyalty. Because they are keen to participate in various community activities, they are not only loyal consumers themselves, but also good promoters, and they will drive people around them to promote agricultural brands, which can greatly promote the sales of agricultural products (Man Hu et al., 2021)[6].

4.3 Digital agricultural products community marketing helps increase sales and expand cash flow income

With the development of digital technology and the popularity of smartphones, people are increasingly free from the constraints of time and space and can establish many new social and transactional relationships through the Internet. Therefore, many companies are exploring the business opportunities brought by such digitalization to respond to the changing consumer preferences and concepts of today's new generation of consumers. Traditional marketing of agricultural products is still limited to physical stores and fixed outlets. However, with the popularity of e-commerce and online shopping for agricultural products, the sales volume of agricultural products has increased to a certain extent, but the real demand for customer experience is missing. For example, issues such as the appearance and quality of agricultural products. This limits the reason why it is impossible to increase the sales volume of agricultural products in large quantities. Digital agricultural products community marketing, on the other hand, is a combination of two platforms, online + offline, to help community marketing through digital technology and completely open up the hub of two spaces, offline and online. Because digital tools can make the supply chain of agricultural products realize digital and networked data tracking and feedback in real-time, and at the same time, with the help of community marketing, it can run through the marketing channels of offline and online communities, truly achieve all-round marketing integration, accelerate the increase of sales growth, speed up the realization of agricultural products, improve

the profit of agricultural products sales and expand the cash inflow of enterprises.

5. The current development dilemma and problems of China's digital agricultural products community marketing

5.1 Agricultural products cold chain logistics, warehousing, distribution and other supporting facilities are relatively backward, and the logistics industry system is not sound

With the popularity of China's network consumption and network marketing, many network e-commerce enterprises have been rising, driving the high development of the logistics industry. For example, China Post EMS, Shunfeng Express, and other well-known logistics enterprises have got a large market share and corporate reputation in China. However, most of these logistics enterprises are limited to common commodity trading and transportation, and there is still a relative lack of cold chain logistics for agricultural products with a life cycle and product shelf life. As China's cold chain logistics industry is in the formative stage of the industry life cycle, its operation mode is still in the exploration stage, resulting in most of the agricultural products cold-chain logistics enterprises having a single business goal and generally adopting a low-cost business strategy, which cannot develop according to the situation of the logistics network, thus causing the deep processing flow of agricultural products and distribution cannot form an effective intensive development. In addition, due to the use of a low-cost business strategy, resulting in the existing cold chain logistics equipment being more backward, the technology upgrade is slow. Due to the long investment return cycle of agricultural products cold chain logistics and huge investment capital, resulting in many operators have little willingness to replace or purchase cold chain logistics equipment (Entao Jin, 2020)[7]. Therefore, the current cold chain logistics problem of agricultural products is the primary factor that restricts the development of digital agricultural marketing in China.

5.2 Lack of community marketing professional team, community management inefficiency

Community marketing is formed based on people's activities and information interaction. Therefore, the managers of the community can guarantee the smooth implementation of community marketing activities has a vital role. First of all, because China's digital agricultural products community marketing is in the initial development stage, the application of some management modes is not mature enough, and there is no experience in the use of professional management and governance model. Secondly, today much agricultural marketing personnel are recruited in the form of social recruitment, they are from different enterprises and have no professional experience in community marketing work. Finally, in the absence of a professional management team, many management problems have arisen. For example, there is a lack of management system and standards for community marketing, deceptive community activities, undisciplined community management team members, and a lack of serious attitude of community managers. Therefore, the establishment of an efficient and high-quality community marketing management team can improve the efficiency of community management and business performance.

5.3 Mismatch between online and offline platforms, brand propaganda out of authenticity

According to the customer repurchase rates of Fresh Fruit and Baiguoyuan from the first quarter of 2018 to the first quarter of 2020 covered in the Ariadne Consulting study. It can be found that the customer repurchase rate of both typical community's retail offline fruit franchise groups reached more than 70%, while the repurchase rate of Taobao fresh fruit based on the Taobao e-commerce platform for online marketing in the same period was less than 30% (Binbin Guo, 2020)[8]. From the above data, it can be concluded that China's current community consumption trend is still dominated by physical stores because customers can get more consumption experience from physical stores while purchasing agricultural products through online platforms, but often do not get

some real sense of experience, only through the form of video and pictures to understand the product, some community marketing enterprises to only seek profits and ignore consumer rights, online platforms Some community marketing enterprises, to seek profits but ignore the rights of consumers, exaggerate the authenticity of the products on the online platform, so that many consumers who have been cheated have distrusted the online marketing platform, resulting in the offline platform sales activities no longer have the desire to consume and willingness to buy.

6. Suggestions and prospects for optimizing China's digital agricultural products community marketing

6.1 Strengthen the construction of cold chain logistics facilities in the agricultural products supply chain and improve the agricultural products community logistics system

Agricultural products have a product shelf life and market life cycle, so agricultural products need to constantly develop new products and maintain their vitality of agricultural products. However, due to the huge quantity of agricultural products, long transportation time, and relatively large space required, the standards in transportation, storage, and distribution are relatively strict. In addition, huge losses in these logistics links are also common problems, thus bringing consumers a bad consumption experience (Man Hu et al., 2021)[6]. At present, China's community marketing of agricultural products is still in the initial exploration stage, and some infrastructure construction for community marketing of agricultural products should be improved so that digital community marketing of agricultural products can be developed in a stable and high-quality business environment.

First of all, enterprises or organizations carrying out community marketing activities should comply with and implement the logistics norms and standards of the Agricultural Products Cold Chain Logistics Development Plan, and actively explore and build integrated cold chain logistics facilities for transportation, storage, and distribution of agricultural products, and gradually form a cold chain logistics system for agricultural products that is compatible with their actual situation (Jingjie Zhi, 2021)[9].

Secondly, maintain the standardization, convenience, and vitality of community marketing team management. With the help of digital tools, the management activities of agricultural products community marketing become more convenient and efficient. In particular, with the help of digital tools to monitor the cold chain logistics facilities and community communication throughout the process, timely adjustment, and handling of unexpected events and conflicts. In addition, it can effectively connect the upstream and downstream cold chain logistics links of the agricultural products supply chain to continuously guarantee and improve the quality and level of fresh agricultural products. For example, the storage status of agricultural products can be monitored and viewed in real-time through various forms of live streaming such as social media videos. It can also be tracked in real-time through digital platforms such as logistics tracking apps, allowing customers to understand and inquire about the location of logistics, warehousing, and distribution as well as the itinerary at any time, providing customers with quality and efficient products and services in all aspects. Therefore, the standardized management of the community marketing logistics team based on digital tools is an effective way to ensure the smoothness and stability of all links of the agricultural products supply chain, such as picking, transportation, distribution, and storage of agricultural products.

6.2 Cultivate a professional community marketing team and improve the level of business management capabilities

The lack of professional talent has always been a problem for marketing teams. As the new crown epidemic (COVID-19) began in 2020, the flow of talent in China has been restricted, but digital agricultural products community marketing has been highly developed. So the mismatch between

talent and community marketing development has been restricting the expansion and upgrade of current digital community marketing. Therefore, it is important to form a team organization that is familiar with digital platform operation and has good marketing and management skills. At the same time, this also requires operators to provide high-quality agricultural products while also having certain community marketing, management, and innovation capabilities. At present, most of the suppliers, sellers, and marketers of agricultural products community marketing have low education and cultural quality, which is difficult to support the digital product community marketing that is about to flourish. Therefore, cultivating a professional community marketing team and improving the level of management ability are issues that need to be given high priority in today's community marketing enterprises. Community marketing is mainly distributed in the pre-sales, sales, and after-sales stages, which require professional staff to complete research and consultation, marketing promotion, logistics, and customer service (Yang Wang, 2020)[10]. According to reality, companies can introduce and train two forms of high-quality and efficient marketing team innovation. First, is the introduction of professional talents, that is, through the form of recruitment for the enterprise to introduce professional talents with marketing experience and marketing quality. Some of the skills and experience in the enterprise marketing team can better play individual ability to help the development of enterprises. Second, through the form of training for the enterprise to create talent. Cultivation is a professional learning activity for enterprise employees through the form of education and training. In today's digital era, marketing staff should improve their requirements, not only focusing on the improvement of personal marketing professional skills but also focusing on the learning and operation of digital technology. At the same time, it is also necessary to improve the professional and ethical qualities of the company's employees. The marketing team must strengthen the training of cognitive thinking, cultural quality, and skills development of employees. The strengthening of cognitive thinking is mainly to enhance and train employees in the sense of subjective initiative and crisis awareness; skills development is to improve and strengthen the ability of employees to sell, negotiate, and business communication skills and other comprehensive applications. Cultural quality training is mainly to improve the values and moral training of employees. In addition, in the digital era, online marketing has become the main force of community marketing nowadays, and customer service personnel are the main group of people who communicate directly with customers. If customer service personnel have conflicts with customers when communicating with them, they will not be able to provide quality service, and customers' impression of the company will become very bad. Customer service personnel, as a bridge between customers and the company, should have good professional ethical qualities and dedication, and they need to do a good job of recommending products while providing services to customers and meeting their needs (Yongsheng Zhu, 2022)[11].

6.3 Online and offline integration, comprehensive use of internal and external resources to improve customer product and service experience

The process of social marketing is the process of increasing the desire to consume through customer experience to reach a transaction. This process can be an online digital platform based on the Internet or an offline platform in a physical store. Therefore, the use of online and offline integration and the integrated use of internal and external resources are the perfect ways to improve the community service experience and achieve successful transactions.

First of all, companies should increase the use of online digital platforms, such as Xiaohongshu, Jieyin, Today's headlines, WeChat, QQ, and other digital social and business platforms similar to Facebook, so that consumers can understand products and services more conveniently, authentically and imaginatively, and fully maintain consumers' right to know. According to the 2019 China Social E-Commerce Annual Report, the current platforms with relatively large traffic and active users in China include WeChat, Weibo, Jieyin, Xiaohongshu, and other APPs, and these digital platforms have high visibility both at home and abroad, as well as APP programs used by the general public in society daily (Shujun Hao and Cunxia Chen, 2021)[12]. The most important point

is that these digital platforms are free to use, which can reduce certain operating costs.

Second, broaden the personalized and diversified customer experience activities in offline brick-and-mortar stores. The best way of marketing is face-to-face communication between people, which allows customers to experience a more realistic product feeling and service value. The current digital community marketing is still mainly based on online digital platform diversion and then combined with the real experience through offline physical stores. However, many digital agricultural products community marketing activities do not match with local people's consumption preferences and lack real life, resulting in poor marketing results and low sales for many enterprises in the process of promotion. Therefore, digital community marketing must be adapted to the local culture and consumption preferences of the people, strengthen the deep integration and two-way interaction between online and offline platforms, and realize planning and experience activities that are closer to life, which can not only bring consumers closer to intimate relations, but also make them feel the high quality of products and services, to improve the marketing reputation and reputation, and gradually form a business with certain advantages. Competitiveness, attract more members to join and play a positive role in community fission, expansion, and publicity.

7. Summary

The steady implementation of China's rural revitalization strategy has promoted the high development of the agricultural and rural economy and also given rise to the emergence of different forms of new agricultural business models. The development of China's new generation of information technology and the advancement of digital technology have promoted the continuous change and innovation of new agricultural business models and developed toward a diversified posture. However, with the impact of the new crown epidemic (COVID-19), the agricultural products community marketing model based on digital tools has been welcomed and recognized, but the supporting facilities of agricultural cold chain logistics, storage, and distribution are relatively backward, and the logistics industry system is not sound; the lack of professional teams for community marketing and the low efficiency of community management; the mismatch between online and offline platforms, and the brand propaganda out of authenticity are still These problems occur frequently and seriously affect the high-quality realization of rural revitalization strategy. In response to these problems, it is suggested that based on strengthening the construction of cold chain logistics facilities in the agricultural products supply chain and improving the agricultural products community logistics system, we should strengthen the training and cultivation of professional community marketing teams, improve the level of management ability, promote the integration of online and offline, and make comprehensive use of internal and external resources to improve customers' product and service experience.

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