

A Review on Strategies and Development of the Live Broadcast for Agricultural Products under COVID-19

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Abstract. Due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic in 2019, a large number of agricultural products can not be sold. In this situation, live webcasting is used to help farmers sell agricultural products. Most consumers who cannot go out to buy agricultural products because of the epidemic can experience the same shopping pleasure as offline shopping through live broadcasting. Through the method of literature review, this paper summarizes four modes of live broadcast for agricultural products, including the live broadcast initiated by mainstream media, Internet celebrities, officials, and farmers themselves. At the same time, it summarizes the current existing problems, such as the lack of professional knowledge of live-streamers, high logistics prices, and a low rate of agricultural product purchase. On this basis, the future development prospects of live broadcasting in assisting agriculture are discussed.

1 Introduction

In recent years, with the development of the Internet industry, live broadcasting has gradually become a new way of shopping. By June 2020, the number of Internet users in China had reached 940 million, of which 285 million were in rural areas. Accounting for 30.4% of the total number of Internet users, the number of Internet users in rural areas achieves an increase of 36.25 million compared with March 2020 [1]. At the same time, the agricultural products in many poor areas of China are facing the dilemma of poor sales due to the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic in 2019. In this context, the agricultural products industry and the Internet cooperated to form a new form of selling for agricultural products, that is, live broadcasting for farmers. This measure not only caters to the poverty alleviation policy strongly supported by the Chinese government in recent years, but also innovates the sales mode of agricultural products. In view of this emerging phenomenon, the communication academia has launched a series of studies. It can be roughly divided into three research directions [2]. The first category is the study on the form of agricultural live broadcasting, that is, to explore the existing mode of agricultural live broadcasting from the perspective of tools. The second category is mainly about the research on effects, that is, what new impacts the agricultural live broadcasting will bring to the agricultural product selling industry. The third category mainly studies the problems existing in the agricultural live broadcasting from a critical perspective. This paper reviews the modes, existing problems, and development prospects of agricultural live broadcasting. These summaries will help future scholars to conduct more in-depth research and develop more

perspectives on this basis.

2 Current Modes of Agricultural Live Broadcasting

According to Lasswell's 5W communication mode, the type of webcast can be subdivided from different dimensions, such as the identity of the live-streamers, the purpose of selling, and the platform for delivering goods. This paper simply divides the forms of agricultural live broadcasting in terms of the identity of the live-streamers. Since the agricultural live broadcasting can be easily started anytime and anywhere with only a mobile phone and a bracket [3], it attracts a large number of live-streamers with different identity backgrounds to enter this field.

2.1 Live Broadcast for Agricultural Products Initiated by Mainstream Media

The advantage of the mainstream media in the form of agricultural live broadcasting is its strong professional ability and credibility. The combination of professional anchors and Internet celebrities is proved to be popular. For instance, the combination of Zhu Guangquan and Li Jiaqi became a trending topic and the top search on Weibo in real time on the day of their live broadcast [4]. Additionally, the mainstream media have a relatively mature live broadcasting team, which can quickly build a high-quality live broadcasting room. Professional live-streamers show excellent live broadcast skills in introducing products and interacting with audiences. By playing a full part in the live broadcasting platform, they

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can give consumers a strong sense of the scene [5]. At the same time, the strong credibility of the mainstream media can enhance consumers' trust in the agricultural products they buy. Consumers tend to believe that the agricultural products selected in the live broadcast room have relatively strong quality assurance, which also helps improve their purchase intention. However, it is undeniable that the mainstream media themselves do not know about the agricultural knowledge as much as farmers. The introduction of products will also stay firmly in the agricultural products themselves.

2.2 Live Broadcast for Agricultural Products Initiated by Internet Celebrities

The advantage of famous live-streamers lies in their huge fan base and strong interactivity. Agricultural products do not have strong product characteristics, and they have been faced with problems such as few sales channels, insufficient popularity, and insufficient publicity [6]. However, the distinctive live broadcasting style and exaggerated expression of live-streamers can quickly attract the audience's attention, thus improving the product's popularity. For example, Dong Yuhui, a popular anchor, becomes famous because of his distinctive teaching style during the live broadcast. When selling agricultural products, he will connect the products with various literary works, so that the audience can learn knowledge while purchasing agricultural products. What is more, a large number of professional anchors who help farmers do not charge extra fees, and this nature of commonweal can quickly gain the audience's favor and stimulate their desire to buy.

2.3 Live Broadcast for Agricultural Products Initiated by Government Officials

The live broadcast that helps farmers and initiated by government officials can quickly attract audiences thanks to a sense of contrast. On the one side, officials generally appear in formal occasions with a serious image. However, in the live broadcast, in order to make their image more suitable for a live-streamer, they use network language and actions to form a sense of contrast and gain more user recognition. On the other side, officials can use the credibility and authority of the government to promote products and win the trust of consumers [6]. This kind of equal interaction with the public can strengthen the emotional connection between consumers and the live broadcast, which is easier to produce purchase behavior. However, it is worth noting that whether this sense of contrast and excessive exposure will affect the authority of the government and whether officials will accept bribes through live broadcasting.

2.4 Live Broadcast for Agricultural Products Initiated by Farmers

In the traditional cultural power structure, the Chinese farmers have a low level of education and generally lack the right to speak in the media [7]. But the development of

new media and the Internet allows them to speak for themselves. Generally, farmers have a simple image, which brings a sense of intimacy to the audience. Most of their live broadcasts are done in the farmland. These farmers will introduce their own agricultural products in dialects, thereby shortening the distance with the audience and attracting the audience to buy their agricultural products. Some farmers will also sell agricultural products through the combination of short video and live broadcast. A typical example is Li Ziqi. These farmers will show the natural planting process of products in short videos. The visible planting process allows the audience to buy products with more confidence.

Different forms of live broadcasting for agriculture have their own advantages. To a certain extent, they have helped farmers in poor areas to obtain more income. However, this field is still in its infancy and there are still many imperfections.

3 Existing Problems in Agricultural Live Broadcast

3.1 A Lack of Professionalism for Live-streamers

Under the impact of the current epidemic situation, the agricultural live broadcast that helps farmers still needs to exist for a long time. However, the training from mainstream media can not support the professionalism of the entire industry, nor can it support the sustainable development of the entire industry. The current live broadcast that helps farmers is too dependent on the data traffic brought by the Internet celebrity. Most of the non-professional live-streamers introduce the products in a single and unattractive way, which is easy to cause audience aesthetic fatigue. It should also be added that some live-streamers exaggerate the advantages of the product in order to attract more attention. This behavior will not only affect the consumer experience, but also lose consumers' recognition on the nature of commonweal of agricultural live broadcasting. Another problem worth noting is that, without professional training and a solid fan base, farmers as live-streamers generally attract less attention. The content they make have a strong homogeneity, and the product quality cannot be guaranteed.

3.2 Expensive Transportation Expenses and Slow Delivery Speed

Most agricultural products are fresh products. The shelf life of these products determines that they are not suitable for long-term logistics transportation [8]. It is also not applicable to the seven-day no reason return for most current e-commerce products. However, the transportation prices of the efficient logistics express in China, such as SF and EMS, are relatively high. Most farmers cannot afford this logistics cost. At the same time, the logistics industry in rural areas is underdeveloped and there are only a few express stations. The quantity of agricultural

products is huge, but the transportation efficiency is low. This situation will prolong the logistics time and lead to the decay of agricultural products during transportation.

3.3 The Low Repurchase Rate of Agricultural Products

There are two reasons for the low repurchase rate of agricultural products. The first is the lack of branding. Most farmers who sell agricultural products online do not have brand awareness. There are a large number of similar agricultural products in the market. Therefore, it is easy to lose consumers and users' viscosity is low. The second reason is the poor after-sales service. Most of the agricultural products will be damaged during transportation, so the merchants need to resend new agricultural products. However, the existing dilemma is that most of the farmers who need help cannot support the high after-sales costs. As a result, the consumer experience is poor and the repurchase rate is not high.

4 Sustainable Development for Agricultural Live Broadcast

Wang Xinbing and Liu Xianghai mentioned in their paper that the characteristics of the live-streamers, the display of product characteristics, the content quality of agricultural live broadcasts, and the interactive communication in the live broadcast directly affect consumers' willingness to buy agricultural products [9]. Therefore, in order to keep the commercial attribute of agricultural live broadcast as well as taking the public welfare into account, there is a need to optimize the agricultural live broadcast from the following two aspects.

4.1 Encouraging Young People to Start Businesses in Rural Areas

Emerging industries need young people to join. They will bring fresh blood and promote the innovative development of the industry. Most farmers lack professional live broadcasting knowledge and sales knowledge. But young people are more likely to accept new knowledge, understand their hometown culture, and lead villagers to become rich. For example, in order to actively attract young talents to participate, China Youth Daily has formulated a detailed support plan according to the actual situation [10], hoping to bring vitality to the countryside through young people. At the same time, the combination of short video and live broadcast should be paid attention to, and agricultural products should be combined with local culture. For example, Li Ziqi uses a short video to show the local beauty and food in Chengdu, giving the audience a sense of freshness and also stimulating their desire to buy.

4.2 Reducing Logistics Prices and Improving After-sales Service Quality

The reduction of logistics price needs the help of the

government to carry out some special plans. The government could lower the transportation cost of the rural products through cooperating with the logistics company. Money subsidies can also be given to farmers to reduce the pressure on their transportation costs. In terms of after-sales service, the government needs to supervise the agricultural live broadcasting, close the live broadcasting rooms that exaggerate the advantages of agricultural products and have poor after-sales service.

The sustainable development of agricultural live broadcasting is a topic worthy of continuous discussion. With the development of the epidemic situation and the rapid changes in the Internet industry, the existing discussion is still at a relatively shallow level. However, the live broadcast that helps farmers has received high attention. From January to February 2020, the online retail sales of physical goods nationwide increased by 3.0% year on year, realizing a contrarian growth [11]. From this point of view, the sales of agriculture were mainly done through off line sales. Therefore, live broadcasting that helps farmers needs to adapt to the changing new situation and continue to develop the online market after solving the existing problems.

5 Conclusion

This paper summarizes and reviews the research results of new agricultural sales modes in the context of epidemic situation. First, from the perspective of the identity of live-streamers, four modes of live broadcast for agriculture are described, namely the live broadcast initiated by mainstream media, Internet celebrities, officials, and farmers themselves. Then from a more macro perspective, this paper discusses the common problems of the agricultural live broadcast and puts forward solutions. Existing problems include the lack of professional knowledge of live-streamers, high logistics prices, and a low rate of agricultural product purchase. Finally, in terms of the future development for agricultural live broadcast, young people can be encouraged to start businesses in rural areas, and the government can help reduce logistics costs and improve the after-sales service through platform supervision.

Agricultural development is fundamental to a country. The new form of agricultural live broadcast combines traditional industries with new media, which not only brings new economic forms, but also makes outstanding contributions to poverty eradication and rural revitalization. In addition to exploring new modes, more live broadcast styles can also be developed in the future. At the same time, the agricultural live broadcasting may also face more industrial problems, such as the industrialization of online sales and offline sales. Besides, the academic research in the field of live broadcast for agriculture products will also be combined with more disciplines and continue to be expanded and deepened. Meanwhile, there are a lot of fields involved in the agricultural live broadcasting, and it is difficult to fully explain all the existing research results in one paper. Therefore, the author hopes that the new development of live broadcasting can be expounded from a more micro

perspective in the follow-up research.

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