

Research on the Impact of Xiaohongshu's Grass Marketing Model on Consumer Decision-making

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Abstract. Driven by the digital economy, social e-commerce has become the core direction of the transformation of the e-commerce industry. Xiaohongshu has become a benchmark in the field of social e-commerce with the unique "planting grass" marketing model with the content community and e-commerce realization as the core. Consumer decision-making logic has been reshaped, profoundly changing consumers' purchasing decision-making pathways. This article combines case analysis and literature review to study how the marketing model of Xiaohongshu has an impact mechanism and plays a role in the whole process of consumer decision-making. The study finds that grass marketing plays the role of information support, emotional resonance and guidance from the cognition, emotion and behavior of consumer decision-making through trust mechanism, social presence construction and differentiated adaptation of content form. However, at the same time, grass marketing also faces problems such as the crisis of trust and the tendency to alienation of consumption caused by business generalization. For this reason, this article proposes to optimize the grass-planting ecology from the three dimensions of authenticity restoration, differentiation strategies and platform governance, promoting its sustainable development.

Keywords: Xiaohongshu, grass marketing, purchasing decision-making, new media

1. Introduction

Against the backdrop of e-commerce model transformation, Xiaohongshu features authentic experience sharing, forming a unique grass-planting marketing ecosystem and emerging as an important platform influencing contemporary consumer decision-making. Unlike traditional marketing that relies on one-way brand output, the producer of grass content is both a consumer and a disseminator. First of all, grass marketing has authenticity and a sense of immersion. Grass content is often presented from a first-person perspective, emphasizing "effectiveness of personal testing" and "no wide sharing", and closer to the psychological distance with users through detailed scene descriptions. Secondly, grass marketing can visualize and sceneize the recommended products. The content form of Xiaohongshu is mainly graphic and short videos. Exquisite pictures and sinking scene display can quickly stimulate users' sensory resonance. Users are persuaded by delicate images or videos, which demonstrates that visual elements play an irreplaceable role in triggering initial interest. In addition, grass marketing can enable enterprises to achieve accurate marketing

through consumer labels and algorithm recommendation mechanisms on Xiaohongshu. Meanwhile, it can help consumers quickly obtain information they are interested in, which greatly reduces time costs [1]. Finally, consumers can have social interaction through the way of planting grass marketing. The theory of interactive ritual proposed by Goffman believes that the basis of people's most basic activities and sociological research is interactive rituals. On his basis, Collins put forward the theory of interactive ritual chain, believing that the basic structure of society is the chain relationship formed between people's local opportunities, which can be called the interactive ritual chain [2]. Grass-planting is not merely information transmission, but also a form of social interaction. Users' comments, questions, saves and other interactions under posts form nodes of secondary dissemination, further enhancing the credibility and influence of content. In addition, such interaction expands users' social circles and enriches their social experience. For users hesitant to make decisions, viewing feedback from other users encourages them to finalize consumption decisions, a factor that often plays a critical role.

This article takes the grass marketing model of Xiaohongshu as the research object, systematically analyzes the content characteristics, operation mechanism and communication logic of grass marketing, and explores its role path in the whole process of consumer cognition, attitude formation, purchase head selection and post-purchase behavior. Besides, this article puts forward optimization strategies from the perspective of platform governance, brand operation, content standardization and consumer protection, providing theoretical reference and practical inspiration for the healthy development of social e-commerce, and promoting its sustainable development.

2. The impact mechanism of grass marketing on consumer decision-making

2.1. Trust transmission mechanism

The first mechanism through which grass-planting marketing influences consumer decision-making is trust transfer, from interpersonal trust to product trust. Consumers first identify with creators similar to themselves, then trust the content they share, and finally extend this trust to the products featured in the content.

The "planting grass" model is similar to a kind of advertising, but it is different from traditional advertising. It relies on the intentional or unintentional views and behavioral influence of others. In fact, it is an information interaction communication model based on a network platform. In essence, it is a "community + content + e-commerce" marketing method based on life sharing and information dissemination. Specifically, Xiaohongshu's "planting grass" generally realizes product marketing publicity through amateur evaluation, Internet celebrity linkage, star promotion and combined with short videos and graphic and text placement. This model helps users select suitable products and enables enterprises to enhance brand promotion [3].

By sharing personal life, expressing consumption tendencies and conveying value concepts, forming a progressive relationship with other users from shallow information communication to deep emotional resonance. Compared with the one-way information transmission of traditional advertising, content communication based on trust better aligns with the psychological mechanism of information acceptance in interpersonal communication, effectively reducing audience resistance and enhancing content identity and engagement [4].

The reason why this mechanism can play a role is because of the breakage of the traditional marketing trust chain. Important factors affecting word-of-mouth include product characteristics and audience characteristics. Word-of-mouth will change the audience's cognition and behavior through informational influence. In other words, who is talking and saying is often more likely to determine

the effect of planting grass than "what" is said. In the hard-selling era, consumers are aware that advertisers aim to sell and thus remain vigilant. In grass-planting scenarios, however, consumers encounter genuine sharing from real people, so their defensiveness is reduced.

2.2. Demand stimulation mechanism

The second mechanism of grass marketing is the creation and stimulation of demand. The traditional consumption decision-making model usually starts with demand identification and then search for information to meet needs. However, grass marketing often reverses this order. Consumers have no clear intention to buy, but they are planted with demand in the process of browsing content, and get a transformation from passive satisfaction to active desire.

Take most modern office workers as an example. They were originally accustomed to high-oil, high-salt takeout diets and had no intention of eating healthy meals. They only paid attention to it occasionally when losing weight. However, when users browsed on Xiaohongshu to the blogger and published thematic articles such as "Is the fat-reducing meal for workers in a week delicious or "the fat-reducing artifact in the office", they saw After the blogger's real experience of getting better skin after losing three jins in a week and eating a healthy diet, users who did not originally buy healthy ingredients were moved by the value points of beauty, thinning and health in the content, and had the intention to buy the products in the published content. Users shift from having no demand to generating active desire, achieving reverse demand stimulation.

2.3. Decision-making simplification mechanism

The third mechanism of grass marketing is to help consumers simplify decision-making in the era of information explosion. The information overload brought by the mobile Internet brings, and the more information, the more difficult it is for consumers to make decisions. The content of planting grass establishes a cognitive anchor point for consumers by providing verified options.

For example, the skincare and cosmetics market is highly diversified. Consumers face severe information overload when making purchases. There are many products with the same effect. If users buy according to the recommendation of bloggers who are similar to their skin quality needs, it will greatly reduce the decision-making cost and quickly complete the purchase decision. This mechanism not only reduces the screening cost, but also Enhance users' decision-making confidence. When consumers browse the grass content, they actually give the work of information screening to trusted creators, so that users have the idea that since people who are similar to me use it, I don't need to spend a lot of time comparing it with other products.

2.4. Scenario-based construction mechanism

Scenario characteristics are the key characteristics that distinguish "grass" content marketing from traditional marketing. Human consumption behavior is not isolated, but affected by the situation. Grass-planting content transforms products from cold commodities into scenario-based solutions by constructing real-life scenarios, such as workplace commuting outfits, home leisure products, travel essentials, etc. Consumers intuitively perceive the product use value and emotional value from the process of entering the scene. And stimulate the willingness to buy.

Traditional hard broad only emphasizes the effectiveness of the product, while Xiaohongshu Zhongcao embeds the product in the daily pain points of users through real-life scenes, so that consumers can instantly bring it into it. For example, the beauty blogger builds a specific scene of

commuting at eight o'clock, which naturally brings out the product in the scene, and emphasizes the advantages of the product that does not remove makeup and does not jam powder, so that consumers can perceive the value in the scene instead of passively accepting advertisements. This scene-style content star model can trigger the resonance of consumers' emotional association and demand, so that consumers can more intuitively recognize the practical value and emotional value of the product in a specific situation, thus reducing the psychological barriers when consumers make consumption decisions and improving their willingness to buy [5].

3. Potential problems of grass marketing

3.1. Business generalization and trust crisis

The core vitality of planting grass lies in the truth. However, with the accelerated commercialization of Xiaohongshu, extensive brand placements and influencer collaborations have made the commercial nature of grass-planting content increasingly prominent. Some bloggers have impressive interaction data, but the comment sections are filled with repetitive phrases. The lack of genuine user comments will make users start to question the authenticity of the notes, and this will lead consumers to wonder "Is this a genuine recommendation or just an advertisement paid for?" When users perceive the commercial motivation of the content, the trust mechanism will weaken the planting effect and greatly reduce it.

What's more serious is that some merchants, in an attempt to increase their traffic, adopt the strategy of false "recommendation seeding". They hire "spammers" to post fake reviews, forge the effects of the products, and exaggerate the efficacy of the products, which are common occurrences. When consumers find that the genuine sharing of the bloggers they trust has been manipulated by commercial interests, the "digital best friends" will turn into "digital salespeople". Once trust is exhausted, it is extremely difficult to restore.

These actions harm the rights and interests of consumers, and even undermine the foundation of the platform's content ecosystem. How to strike a balance between commercialization and authenticity is a long-term challenge faced by Xiaohongshu and all such content-sharing platforms.

3.2. Consumption alienation and blindly following the trend

The deep-seated problem of grass marketing may induce the phenomenon of consumption alienation. When users rely too much on grass planting, it will trigger crowd psychology. Consumers may lose their own judgment and have ideas that others have and I should have, followed by irrational consumption. This consumption alienation is especially reflected in the young user group. Driven by community pressure and crowd psychology, some users regard the purchase of specific goods as a human market coupon to integrate into the circle, rather than based on real needs. This tendency hinders the formation of rational consumption habits among individuals. Moreover, it may exacerbate social resource waste and unnecessary competition.

3.3. Content homogenization and user aesthetic fatigue

With the industrialization of grass marketing, the problem of content homogenization is increasingly prominent. Many creators use "regret not having earlier...", "Come on. Just do one thing!", "In Guangzhou! Top1 delicious." The homogeneous rhetoric leads to users browsing 10 notes with the same title, which will only make consumers feel that it is just a routine marketing rhetoric and make

consumers lose their sense of freshness. When grass-planting content becomes formulaic, its ability to resonate with users is bound to decline.

On the one hand, the emergence of homogeneous titles is rooted in the brand's pursuit of controllability and scale effect, and tends to provide standardized content templates; on the other hand, amateur creators lack content creativity and can only copy popular formats. However, this has resulted in the authentic and diverse grass-planting ecology originally pursued being gradually eroded by mass-produced homogeneous content.

Besides, the consumption trend actively created by the platform may exacerbate homogenization. When a product or style becomes a dominant platform trend, numerous merchants and creators flock to the same niche, and content naturally becomes homogeneous. This not only causes users to be tired, but also makes it more difficult for truly creative differentiated content to stand out.

3.4. Causing unfair competition

It is worth noting that with the prevalence of implicit advertising models, some black industrial chains have gradually emerged. For example, some professional teams and companies in the market specialize in producing and posting Xiaohongshu content. These institutions not only provide content creation services, but also include a series of value-added services such as likes and comments, forming the so-called "one-stop" and the service chain. This phenomenon not only disrupts the normal market competition order, but also causes serious pollution to the whole market environment. Therefore, high vigilance and effective supervision are required for implicit advertising and its derived black industrial chains, so as to ensure healthy market development and fair competition [6].

4. Suggestions

First, for platforms, it is a top priority to insist on authenticity to build a solid foundation of trust. The platform should strengthen the governance of false grass planting, data falsified and other behaviors, and encourage amateurs to share truthfully to protect the ecological health of content. Encourage bloggers to create and support original works, and encourage real originality to protect the community atmosphere. It provides a good original protection system, strictly cracks down on fake notes and false traffic, and shows the nature of the content source to improve the credit score. While improving the governance of the platform, we should also pay attention to guiding consumers to consume rationally. Platforms should fulfill social responsibility, balance commercial and authentic content in algorithm recommendations, and avoid excessively stimulating consumer desire. At the same time, we can advocate the concept of rational consumption through content guidance, community standardization and other means to help users maintain a clear judgment in the grass planting boom.

Second, the brand should also respect the user's right to know and clearly mark the content of commercial cooperation to avoid excessive erosion of user trust. In addition, we should take real experience as the core to refuse excessive packaging, do in-depth content instead of pouring water, and pay attention to user feedback to build long-term trust. Brands should give full play to their advantages, explore their brand potential, clarify their positioning, identify appropriate development paths, and deliver compelling brand stories. Based on the in-depth analysis of Xiaohongshu user data, the brand can formulate multi-dimensional accurate marketing strategies to achieve efficient communication and interaction with target users. In terms of content marketing, create content in

combination with user portraits and interests and preferences, with vivid pictures and interesting text descriptions to attract users' attention [7].

Third, creators should improve their creative ability and keep learning to make the marketing content more diverse and rich. Improve personal quality to be professional and authentic and make the work altruistic, and provide valuable content and solutions instead of simply bringing goods. When cooperating with commercial advertisements, creators should clearly label sponsored content to enhance transparency.

Fourth, improve consumers' own media literacy and rational decision-making, read more bad reviews and avoid pits to distinguish between advertising and real sharing, and consume on demand.

Fifth, the government should improve relevant laws and regulations. Network platform governance legislation is the prerequisite for ensuring that platform expansion and governance are carried out on the track of the rule of law [8]. The government should promote the healthy development of platforms, give full play to market guidance and regulatory roles, and collaborate with platforms, brands, and creators to build a better consumption environment for consumers.

5. Conclusion

The marketing model of Xiaohongshu has profoundly reshaped the decision-making path of contemporary consumers through the systematic influence of the three stages of consumer cognition, emotion and behavior. Its core mechanism lies in building a foundation of trust through authentic content, achieving emotional resonance through social situational engagement, and adapting to the decision-making needs of different product types through differentiated content forms. The cross-cutting effect of pictures, text and quotas shows that grass marketing requires refined operation, rather than one-size-fits-all content production.

The rise of the marketing model of Xiaohongshu reflects the profound change in the decision-making path of consumers in the digital age. From hard marketing to impressing consumers with authentic experiences, from shelf display to scenario resonance, the connection between brands and consumers is reshaped by grass-planting marketing. Grass marketing has a unique core value, building trust with real content, stimulating purchasing demand through scene pictures, and promoting consumers to make purchasing decisions with real sharing. Together, these mechanisms shape a softer but deeper business influence. The essence of grass marketing is to connect people's hearts with reality. Only by balancing commercial value and user trust can this model achieve genuine sustainable development.

However, the charm of grass-planting marketing is not without boundaries. If the problems of false propaganda, overdraft trust, content homogenization to dissipation of value, and algorithm cocoon erosion autonomy cannot be effectively dealt with, it may erode the foundation of grass ecology. The word sincerity is not only the password for the success of grass marketing, but also the driving force of its sustainable development.

Looking forward, the platform needs to improve the credit evaluation mechanism and use technology to identify counterfeiting. Brands need to adhere to product quality, abandon short-term thinking, and tell good brand stories. Creators need to maintain independent judgment and refuse homogeneous production. Consumers need to treat grass content rationally and refuse to blindly follow the trend. Only in this way can grass grow sustainably and healthily.

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