

A New Interaction between Farmers and Consumers in the Live Streaming of Agricultural Product Sales on Short Video Platforms, Taking TikTok as an Example

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Abstract: The impact of short video platforms on the sale of agricultural products provides a basis for a scientific study on the relationship between farmers and consumers. Through content analysis and a questionnaire survey, the study analyses the new interactive relationship between agricultural products sold directly by farmers and e-commerce consumers, focusing on the TikTok platform. It considers the development of live streaming and its intrinsic value in the promotion of agricultural products and poverty alleviation in the short video era. Through analysis, it finds that the relationship between producers and consumers is closer and farmers' participation in the live broadcast industry largely increases the sales of agricultural products. These further narrow the gap between urban and rural areas and contribute to the realization of common prosperity in China.

Keywords: live streaming, rural revitalization, TikTok, sales of agricultural products.

1. Introduction

The national economy has been growing in recent years, with the short-form video economy making rapid progress and becoming the first shopping option for people today. The marketing model of "publisher + short video platform" is constantly being updated, and TikTok is a typical example of this trend. The visual impact of TikTok is much greater than that of texts and images. In addition, TikTok is a quick way to access information, which makes it a popular app today [1]. Taking a long-term perspective to make an analysis, TikTok would probably be more favored by people in the future. Erving Goffman argues that the use of TikTok anchors as a communication medium produces a strategy for managing self-impressions in everyday contexts through interpersonal interaction and mimetic performance. When the theory of performance as self-impression management is put aside and observed in the current context of live online shopping, it can be seen that its relevant theoretical elements have concrete manifestations corresponding to it

[2]. Through different perspectives, the forms of live streaming can be divided into User-generated content (UGC), Occupationally-generated Content (OGC), and Professionally-generated content (PGC), and the different performance frameworks of live streaming can create corresponding dramatic changes, thus attracting different audiences and increasing product sales [3].

Live streaming also plays a significant role in the economic development of rural agriculture. Agriculture is the primary industry of China's economy and an important foundation for the social, political, and economic stability of the nation. Due to the impact of the epidemic on the rural economy, some agricultural products are not sold, and the live streaming form has gradually emerged to provide construction support and protection for rural areas, strengthen the exposure and marketing of agricultural products, and build a new sales model of live streaming.

This study reviews the literature on the economic impact of live streaming on agriculture in China and foreign countries. It further collects first-hand data on live streaming on the TikTok platform through questionnaires and uses content analysis. It aims to uncover the importance of the new form of live streaming in the context of rural revitalization. Specifically, it deals with the new interactions between farmers and consumers following the emergence of live agricultural sales on short-form video platforms and its impact on sales volumes.

2. Literature Review

Under the influence of the Coronavirus, most agricultural products are not sold, and live e-commerce has entered a booming stage with the advantage of information technology [4]. Compared to traditional agricultural markets, which can only be marketed at a fixed time or location, new media platforms are favored by farmers for their lower publicity threshold, flexible and simple sales methods, and diversified ways of interacting with consumers [5]. Moreover, the model "live streaming + short video + poverty alleviation sales" has injected new energy into the model of "open source" and "low cost" farming for contemporary society [6]. Compared with other communication platforms, farmers show a stronger need for independent expression and a desire to share in agricultural live-streaming platforms [7]. They have broken away from the original state of being "narrated" and begun to actively narrate their own stories with a strong sense of subjectivity [8].

The economic value of rural short videos is increasing under the boom of rural revitalization and online poverty alleviation [9]. As this new mode of live streaming continues to develop, the image of farmers has been "de-stigmatized" and "de-labeled". The technological accessibility of the platforms has allowed farmers to widely understand and participate in live-streaming practices, assuming the dual roles of information disseminators and receivers [10]. The wave of farmer self-expression is rapidly expanding on short live video platforms, generating more interaction between consumers and farmers [11].

In summary, it is found that the current research on the live broadcast of agricultural products on short video platforms is mainly about the relationship between the platforms, farmers, and sales. Little research pays attention to the interactive behavior between farmers and consumers and the content of communication. Based on the existing literature on the image of farmers, this paper analyses the consumers' behavior in live streaming and studies the relationship between interaction and consumption, the main interactive content, and trending topics. Content analysis is used to investigate several representative accounts on TikTok in terms of interactive content, interaction length, language style, communication tendency, and sales. This paper also studies the ways to improve the attractiveness and economic effect of the model "short video + agricultural products + live broadcast" and narrow the gap between urban and rural areas to achieve common prosperity.

3. Research Methods

3.1. Content Analysis

This paper adopts semi-quantitative research by actively screening official accounts and personal accounts of rural product living streaming. The representative accounts generally have more than 50,000 followers, more than 200,000 likes, more than fifty videos, and more than 10,000 yuan in sales. Moreover, the interactive content, length of interaction, and language style of the live broadcast process are analyzed and studied, and high-frequency words and high-frequency topics that appear in the interaction in the live broadcast are filtered. The relationships between consumers and farmers, interaction and consumption are further analyzed through the official sales data of the TikTok platform.

3.2. The Unequal Time Distribution

This paper also uses a questionnaire on the Questionnaire Star platform. A link to the questionnaire was sent to social networking software. Questions cover consumers' preference for short video platforms, viewing time, and purchasing behavior to find how consumers spend time and money and interact with the farmers.

4. Result

4.1. Increased Communication and Sales

Live Streaming of agricultural products on short video platforms has built a bridge between local producers and consumers, allowing agricultural sales on the live-streaming platforms. Before the emergence of live streaming, there were many middlemen between consumers and farmers, such as supermarket buyers and dealers, which prevented consumers from knowing the original price and quality of the products and also prevented middlemen from adjusting the price and controlling the products. It led to increased prices and lower quality, especially for fresh products such as fruit, vegetable, and seafood. However, with the development of technology, people can communicate via live streaming, asking questions about the origin of the products, their quality, and other product information. These products can also be delivered quickly from their places of origin by couriers, so consumers can get them in the shortest time and the products will remain as fresh as possible. These farming live broadcasts help consumers to access special agricultural products from other regions. For example, many anchors in Xinjiang sell local grapes and Hami melons in their orchards. This sales situation not only broadens the distribution and sale channels of agricultural products but also improves consumers' trust in the quality of the products and promotes their purchase.

A questionnaire survey of 128 people showed that 70.31% of them had watched the living streaming videos about agricultural products 41.27% of them interacted with the anchors in the broadcast, which also proves that live broadcast has brought consumers and producers closer together. This connection rarely existed before. Especially for those bloggers who broadcast live in the places of production, they are much more popular than those who just sell their products live in a small room. The reason for this conclusion is that according to the survey, the number of interactions between the anchors in rural areas and consumers in the live studios accounts for 32%, which is much higher than those in the live studios. In addition, 97 out of 128 people (75.78%) wanted to interact with the anchors due to the quality of the product, while 78 people (60.94%) wanted to interact with the anchors by talking about the characteristics of the local areas. On this basis, 101 people thought that the form of interaction with the anchors would increase their desire to buy. This shows that there is a huge correlation between consumers' desire to buy and their

interaction with the anchors. Interaction promotes purchase, thus allowing for the innovation of new forms of propaganda to increase the sales of agricultural products and provide a new way to alleviate poverty in rural areas.

4.2. The Influences of Publicity and Prices on Consumption

By comparing the changes in sales of some specific TikTok accounts, it was concluded that the products promoted in live streaming had higher sales. Therefore, when anchors and their video content are more in line with potential consumers' interests, the number of potential consumers as well as sales can be increased. In other words, adding some popular languages on the Internet can make customers spend more in live streaming.

As already mentioned, audiences who have watched and interacted with the farming support broadcast are more likely to buy farming-support products. In particular, it strengthens the interaction between the younger generation and the anchors. Meanwhile, improving the quality of the content of the live broadcast and shortening the length of the broadcast can increase purchases. Furthermore, in the analysis of the consumer situation, the prices of the products impact sales. According to the survey results, products less than 100 yuan often sell better. In conclusion, with guaranteed quality, the sales of the products, which are limited in terms of time, space, and territory, can be improved to a great extent by promoting them in new and modern ways that are acceptable to younger audiences.

4.3. The Disadvantage and Advantage of Rural Characteristics

The analysis of the live content of TikTok accounts such as "Xiangwei Mama" and "Space Seeding" found that most netizens interacted with each other in pop-ups. The common ways of interaction on TikTok, such as connecting with fans and challenging other anchors, rarely appear in the live broadcasts of "Space Seeding". There are two reasons for the single interaction method. One is that since the content of the live broadcast serves to promote rural characteristics and sell products, the focus is more on commodities than on fans and other anchors. Furthermore, in the live broadcast of "Country Taste Mama," the anchor is an old lady with a lisp and an accent, and few foreign netizens can understand the anchor. Some specific commodity information needs to be introduced by the assistant, which also reduces interaction efficiency. In general, the interactivity in the live broadcast of agricultural products is limited to pop-ups and mostly relatively single-text communication.

In the live broadcast, the anchors have more rural characteristics. For example, "Milk old Zhang" will wear a straw hat. It does highlight rustic features, which leads to more interactive content about rural characteristics.

In the live broadcast room of "Country Taste Mama," the first pop-up screen is often about the origin of the host. Due to the high mobility of live-streaming room users, the anchors need to answer these questions again after a new batch of users comes in. The interactive content revolves around rural areas. The interactive content is simple and uncomplicated, but this also leads to the lack of enthusiasm in most of the live broadcast rooms and makes it difficult to spread to a broader area.

5. Discussion

The results were analyzed in the following four aspects: interactivity, the viewing form, purchase intention, and consumption. First, interactivity analysis focuses on how TikTok viewers want to interact with each other and how they express their needs and desires. A better understanding of interactivity will help farmers achieve excellent market coverage and lower promotional costs. Furthermore, TikTok viewers' viewing time and purchase intention are unearthed. This study aims

to determine the relationship between viewing time and purchase intention of TikTok viewers and help anchors improve the time efficiency of product promotion. Finally, consumption analysis mainly studies the impact of the product price on consumption, which will help the pricing and promotion of live farming products in the future.

5.1. Unique Advantage: Rural Plot

In the questionnaire study, it was found that most of the netizens who watched the live broadcast of farming assistance could actively interact with the anchors, and those who participated in the interaction would have more desire to buy because of the interaction with the anchors. Netizens on the live broadcast platform have a greater desire to communicate about the quality of goods and the countryside. The desire to share their knowledge of the countryside and the quality of the products is also evident. For example, in the "Country Taste Mama" live stream, the majority of netizens discussed "Liu'an," the anchor's hometown, in pop-ups, which naturally created a variety of topics between the netizens from Anhui Province and the anchor. They want to discuss this with the anchor. This kind of simple hometown discussion can unknowingly bring the netizens closer to the anchor, which in turn increases the netizens' favorable opinion of the agricultural products sold by the anchor, thus increasing consumption. This kind of consumption for agricultural products does not stand out by a stable product supply chain as in the case of direct factory live streaming, nor does it win the trust and recognition of the audience like the live streaming of online celebrities anchored by their charisma. This is a mode of interaction that is different from other live-streaming studios, as netizens do not pay attention to the image of the anchors or the number of followers any more but want to know if the anchors' hometowns are close to them, how the situation in the villages is, and how many people there are. It can be argued that while netizens interact with the hosts, they also want to interact with the fields and escape from the hustle and bustle of the city.

5.2. A Vibrant Young Audience

Most consumers surveyed are not as middle-aged or elderly as people might expect, with more than half of the consumers coming from the under-30 age group. As the primary users of the mobile internet today, those under the 30s do have more screen time. It is clear that live farming has become an increasingly trusted channel for consuming agricultural products. It is generally assumed that middle-aged and older people would be more comfortable with the image and pace of the live broadcast of agricultural products. However, the under-30s were also able to participate in the interaction, as young people tend to pay more attention to the quality of products and after-sales service. The confidence of the anchors in the quality of products during the live broadcast of agricultural products can appeal to them. Under the slogan of helping to revitalize the countryside, the official platform of TikTok certified "Help Farmers" live broadcast and it has become a golden signboard that can attract young people's consumption. Under the mutual influence of the live broadcast, young people in the city have more opportunities to understand the countryside. In the future, more young people may be influenced by the green ecology of the countryside in this way and join the revitalization of the countryside.

6. Conclusion

In the living streaming of agricultural products, most of the interactions are conducted through pop-ups. Although the audience's feelings are difficult to be expressed in words, high sales and interactions can prove the efficiency of this way. Apart from that, netizens are more willing to discuss topics related to their hometown with the anchors. Therefore, the diversity of topics and ways of interaction still needs to be enriched. In addition, the anchors' image, live broadcast

environment, and language style will have an impact on sales. In the live broadcast, audiences prefer the popular language style, characters with a rural style, and high-frequency interaction.

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