

Innovative Approaches and Value of Live Streaming for Agricultural Assistance—A Case Study of Douyin Platform

Jingwen Cao

Guangzhou Xinhua University, Guangzhou, China
459009021@qq.com

Abstract: *The marketing model of e-commerce live streaming has become relatively mature; however, live streaming for agricultural assistance, as an important branch, is still in its nascent stage. It currently lacks mature market supervision and management mechanisms, remaining largely unregulated. The legal framework is underdeveloped, leading to a market filled with inconsistencies. Following the industry's initial boom, challenges such as false advertising, unstable product quality control, and inadequate after-sales service have emerged as significant barriers to the growth of both agricultural assistance live streaming and the broader e-commerce live streaming sector. This paper examines the Douyin live streaming platform as a case study, focusing on the three essential components of e-commerce: people, products, and venues. It analyzes Douyin's model for agricultural assistance live streaming, its marketing strategies, and the challenges it faces. The paper also offers methods and suggestions for optimizing these marketing strategies, providing valuable insights for the innovative development of Douyin's agricultural assistance live streaming.*

Keywords: *Live streaming for agricultural assistance; Rural e-commerce ecosystem; E-commerce live streaming*

1. Introduction

Live streaming e-commerce has transformed online retail, with agricultural assistance live streaming emerging as a vital but still developing segment. Unlike the mature e-commerce live streaming sector, agricultural assistance live streaming lacks robust market supervision and regulation, leading to various challenges such as false advertising, inconsistent product quality, and inadequate after-sales service.

This paper focuses on the Douyin live streaming platform to explore these issues. By examining the three core elements of e-commerce—people, products,^[1] and venues—we analyze Douyin's agricultural assistance live streaming model, its marketing strategies, and the challenges it faces. We propose methods to optimize these strategies, aiming to foster innovative development in this sector.

Our study provides insights to support more effective practices in agricultural assistance live streaming, contributing to the growth of rural economies and the overall e-commerce live streaming industry.

2. Issues and Causes in the Current Agricultural Assistance Live Streaming Model

2.1. "People": Low Entry Barriers for Streamers, Inconsistent PGC Content

The psychology of altruism is a key factor driving audience participation in charitable live streaming, tapping into the collective desire to do good. In agricultural assistance live streaming, streamers play a crucial role and can significantly impact the sessions. When they effectively leverage the audience's altruistic psychology, they create a positive marketing atmosphere that stimulates consumption. However, this same psychology can be exploited by unscrupulous merchants, leading to a vicious cycle in live streaming marketing. Therefore, ethical standards and professional skills of streamers are vital. Despite the rapid growth of the industry, comprehensive regulations are still lacking, with a few top streamers exerting significant influence while over 90% are mid to low-tier. As platforms evolve, streamers are increasingly grassroots and younger, often focusing more on profits

rather than the intrinsic value of agricultural assistance or audience needs. This profit-driven approach can undermine altruistic motivations and damage the sector's credibility.

To prevent consumer harm, it's essential to strengthen industry supervision and regulation. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, prominent streamers like Li Jiaqi and CCTV host Zhu Guangquan organized the first charitable live stream, "Thank You for Your Order for Hubei," successfully opening sales channels for Hubei's agricultural products. Consumers participated out of a sense of charitable support, maintaining high engagement and a positive atmosphere. However, this success led to "pseudo" charitable live streams^[2], exploiting viewers' altruistic sentiments with deceptive marketing ploys. These low-quality streams created controversy and negative emotions, damaging the reputation of agricultural assistance live streaming and consumer trust.

Addressing these issues requires a multi-faceted approach. Industry-wide standards and regulations must be established and enforced, including ethical guidelines for streamers, transparency in marketing, and stringent quality controls for products. Platforms should provide training and certification programs to enhance streamers' professional skills and ethics. Creating a supportive ecosystem for grassroots streamers involves providing resources to understand the value of agricultural assistance and audience needs, fostering deeper connections and enhancing authenticity. Government and regulatory bodies must monitor and regulate the industry to address unethical practices. Promoting successful case studies and best practices sets benchmarks for others, inspiring ethical and effective initiatives across the sector. Encouraging active consumer participation and feedback helps identify and address issues promptly, protecting consumer interests and restoring trust in the industry.

2.2. "Products": High Difficulty in Quality Control and Incomplete After-Sales Service

The sale and supply of agricultural products through live streaming is a complex process influenced by various interconnected factors such as production, packaging, preservation, transportation, and after-sales service. Most agricultural assistance live streaming is conducted by small-scale family workshops in rural areas, lacking the standardization and mature supply chains necessary for large-scale operations. This leads to issues like supply shortages, delayed shipments, platform penalties, and unresolved after-sales problems, ultimately affecting consumer satisfaction and future sales. Poor road transport and inadequate rural e-commerce infrastructure, along with the absence of cold chain technology, further exacerbate these challenges by increasing costs and deteriorating product quality during delivery.

Effective management of agricultural products requires attention to strict logistics, advanced preservation techniques, and high-quality packaging. However, small-scale producers often lack the resources to invest in these areas, resulting in hastily packed products and reliance on traditional preservation methods that may not suffice for modern e-commerce demands.^[3] Transportation logistics are particularly problematic due to inadequate infrastructure, poor road conditions, and long distances, which can cause delays and increased costs, especially for perishable goods. A robust after-sales service is also essential but often lacking, leading to negative reviews and decreased consumer trust.

Addressing these challenges necessitates coordinated efforts among logistics providers, e-commerce companies, producers, and government support. E-commerce platforms can offer training, resources, and access to advanced technologies to help small-scale producers scale operations and meet market demands. Centralized logistics hubs and improved rural infrastructure can streamline transportation and reduce costs.^[4] Government initiatives promoting infrastructure development, funding for advanced technologies, and supportive policies for small-scale producers are crucial. Educating consumers about the importance of supporting small-scale producers can also foster greater understanding and mitigate dissatisfaction, contributing to a more robust and resilient supply chain that benefits all stakeholders.

2.3. "Venues": Weak Platform Supervision and Lack of Innovation

Agricultural assistance live streaming involves two main components: new media platforms and live streaming rooms. New media platforms serve as the primary channels for information dissemination and sales, while live streaming rooms are the actual venues where promotions and sales take place.

At the macro level, the real-time and dynamic nature of live streaming necessitates the use of advanced network technology. The industry structure becomes complicated due to the dual attributes of "live streaming" and "e-commerce," making supervision difficult across several areas, including

platform access, product sales, after-sales service, and consumer rights protection. Government supervision of platforms and merchants is particularly challenging. Despite regulations that mandate merchants to provide qualifications, real information, service agreements, and legal compliance, there are still many loopholes. Some merchants and MCN (Multi-Channel Network) companies exploit these gaps, using deceptive practices to attract viewers, which compromises both product quality and content integrity. These practices include falsifying data, exaggerating claims, and selling substandard products. Moreover, pre-audit mechanisms are hard to implement effectively, allowing negative impacts to be easily concealed by sellers, thereby leaving consumers vulnerable to fraud and substandard service.

At the micro level, while the e-commerce live streaming industry has made strides in diversifying its venue designs, agricultural assistance live streaming still suffers from a lack of innovation in this area. Many live streaming rooms for agricultural products remain monotonous, failing to captivate and engage the audience effectively^[5]. This lack of creative venue design makes it difficult to differentiate one stream from another, potentially leading to viewer fatigue and decreased engagement over time. For agricultural assistance live streaming to thrive, there is a pressing need to experiment with and adopt more diverse and engaging venue designs that can better showcase the products and the stories behind them.

In summary, to enhance the effectiveness and integrity of agricultural assistance live streaming, there needs to be a concerted effort to improve both macro-level supervision and micro-level innovation in venue design. Strengthening regulatory frameworks and enforcement mechanisms, alongside fostering creativity in how agricultural products are presented, will be crucial steps toward building a more robust and trustworthy agricultural e-commerce ecosystem.

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3. Integration and Optimization Strategies for Agricultural Assistance Live Streaming

3.1. Enhancing Professional Skills of Streamers and Incubating Farmer Streamer Communities

3.1.1. Leveraging Local Human Resources to Incubate Farmer Streamer Communities

In recent years, major short video platforms have seen the rise of excellent farmer streamers like Xiangxi Brother, Li Ziqi, and "Background Brother" Alimu. These farmer streamers take advantage of their unique environments and creative strengths by bringing their live streams to rural areas, showcasing rural labor and life, and presenting the simplicity and beauty of pastoral landscapes. These farmer streamers, born and raised in these environments, have deep emotional connections and understanding of local agricultural culture and product characteristics. When they engage in live streaming, urban consumers feel a natural trust and closeness, finding satisfaction in purchasing agricultural products directly from the countryside. This sense of authenticity and immediacy is hard for urban-based professional streamers to replicate. Incubating farmer streamers is a bold attempt at rural organizational innovation, and from a regional poverty alleviation and long-term development perspective, teaching people to fish is more sustainable than giving them fish. By nurturing new farmers locally, ongoing employment and development can be promoted, ensuring a sustainable and systematic reserve force for the future development of agricultural assistance live streaming.

3.1.2. Improving Talent Training Mechanisms and Providing Learning Platforms and Opportunities

Agricultural assistance live streaming relies on new media platforms to sell agricultural products to the public. The main participants, rural farmers, often lack proficiency in platform operations, e-commerce marketing techniques, and basic skills due to inexperience and lack of team support.^[6] Some merchants or streamers are also unfamiliar with effective marketing strategies, which can lead to consumer fatigue during sales. Once the novelty of the product or region wears off, it becomes challenging to gain live stream traffic and sales. This issue is fundamentally linked to inadequate local e-commerce talent training mechanisms.

To address this, colleges and universities offering relevant courses can provide targeted assistance. Through initiatives like holiday rural programs and MOOCs, platform technology courses, tutorials, and lectures can be offered, helping farmers learn live streaming sales. This form of intellectual assistance can cultivate talent within the farming community, fostering local motivation. In addition to external live streaming courses, local governments, universities, and other official bodies can introduce

professional talent, establish e-commerce programs or related rural e-commerce courses in agricultural schools and vocational institutes, and encourage farmers to return to school. This approach can further improve local vocational education and talent training mechanisms, ensure talent retention, and create a positive ecosystem for agricultural assistance live streaming.

3.2. Enhancing Platform Admission Mechanisms and Optimizing the Agricultural Assistance Live Streaming Ecosystem

3.2.1. Standardizing Product Management and Improving Platform Admission Mechanisms

The innovative model of agricultural assistance commerce focuses on promoting local agricultural themes by incorporating farmers into a unified product management system. This system encourages farmers to continuously improve the quality of their agricultural products, thereby increasing the value of these products. To create a better e-commerce environment for agricultural assistance and improve service quality,^[7] platforms need to raise the entry thresholds for agricultural assistance live streaming. This involves optimizing service elements in the product traceability segment, strictly enforcing product inspection processes, and regulating the marketing environment of agricultural assistance live streams. Non-compliant agricultural products and stores should be eliminated, and a green management system should be integrated into all aspects of agricultural product quality control to protect basic consumer rights and enhance consumer trust. Simultaneously, platforms should actively introduce and promote high-quality agricultural product brands, advancing the development of premium agricultural brands and improving supply chain quality. This aligns with the broader goals of rural revitalization and targeted poverty alleviation, aiding in the promotion of new agricultural assistance models.

3.2.2. Strengthening Regulation by Functional Departments to Optimize the Agricultural Assistance Live Streaming Ecosystem

Achieving excellent marketing results in rural development often depends on a good political environment. While improving platform admission mechanisms and standardizing agricultural product management, relevant functional departments need to enhance quality assurance and regulatory efficiency. This includes regulating online shopping and transaction behaviors, cracking down on disruptive practices such as shipping empty packages and non-compliant product standards. For teams with poor foundations but promising development prospects, government departments should analyze specific issues and optimize administrative procedures. They should implement targeted support policies that suit the local business environment, reduce loan thresholds and tax rates for small merchants, and strive to uncover more efficient live streaming features within the basic framework of agricultural assistance live streaming.^[8] Establishing clearer management boundaries for agricultural assistance streamers within the admission system and strengthening coordination among all parties can help create an efficiently functioning commercial live streaming ecosystem for agricultural assistance.

3.3. Platforms Developing Their Own Agricultural Products and Showcasing the Best of Chinese Manufacturing

3.3.1. Telling Product Stories and Strengthening Cultural Output

Unlike traditional sales channels that are limited by time and space and offer limited display opportunities, agricultural assistance live streaming relies on new media platforms, providing ample time, scenarios, and channels to tell the cultural stories behind agricultural products. From a philanthropic perspective, if the story told by the streamer is realistic and vivid enough to evoke emotional connections and resonance with consumers, they are more likely to support the product. However, it is essential to differentiate this approach from mere pity-selling or showmanship.^[9] While a well-crafted product story may include some literary embellishment, it should not involve fabrications or sensationalism that violate natural ecological principles, such as the absurd claim that "strawberries grow on trees." Storytelling should adhere to natural principles and respect the authenticity of local culture.

3.3.2. Strengthening Brand Awareness and Promoting Two-Way Communication

Communication is a two-way process. In the full process of cultural output for agricultural products, it is not enough to simply tell a good product story. It is crucial to ensure that consumers truly accept the story and are willing to share it within their private networks, thereby enhancing the cultural value of the product. Currently, the agricultural assistance live streaming community is highly polarized. The majority, consisting of small merchants, tends to focus on the quality, practicality, and discounts of

agricultural products, neglecting the potential cultural value behind these products. This approach often results in one-off transactions, with products lacking differentiation and shops missing core competitiveness. It becomes difficult to maintain consumer loyalty and build long-term marketing relationships, which reduces repeat purchases.^[10]

Therefore, platform merchants and streamers should fully consider the social needs and consumer psychology of their audience, particularly urban consumers, when conveying the cultural attributes and connotations behind agricultural products. Promoting product stories that align with current consumer preferences and meet the cultural needs of the public can aid in spreading agricultural product brands. These cultural attributes can be derived from local history, legends, or notable events, consciously creating a core value concept to empower the brand. This can stimulate a value connection between consumers and the brand, create value resonance, and expand the product's premium potential.

4. Conclusions

Rural e-commerce has long been a focal point of national support due to its multifaceted benefits. It not only promotes agricultural products from rural areas, thereby driving poverty alleviation efforts, but also significantly advances rural revitalization. This dual impact makes it a critical component of national economic and social development strategies.

In the current landscape, live streaming has emerged as a revolutionary method, surpassing traditional agricultural product marketing approaches. By leveraging the power of real-time interaction and visual engagement, live streaming directly connects producers with consumers, effectively reducing logistics costs. This innovative approach benefits both farmers and e-commerce platforms, leading to increased incomes and contributing to industrial revitalization. Farmers can now reach a broader audience without the constraints of traditional supply chains, while e-commerce platforms can offer fresh, locally-sourced products that appeal to conscientious consumers.

However, as the e-commerce live streaming sector continues to grow rapidly, it faces several significant challenges. The influx of new participants has led to inconsistent quality among live streamers, with many lacking the necessary skills and ethical standards. Product quality control remains a major issue, as many agricultural products do not meet the required standards for freshness and safety. Additionally, the after-sales service chain is often incomplete, leading to disputes and dissatisfaction among consumers. These issues collectively tarnish the reputation of the industry and hinder its potential for growth.

To enhance the competitiveness of agricultural assistance live streaming, it is essential to innovate the live streaming model from within. The proverb "teaching people to fish rather than giving them fish" is particularly relevant in this context. By nurturing a continuous stream of new farmers rooted in local areas, sustainable employment and development can be achieved. This approach addresses the need for a systematic and sustained reserve force for the future growth of agricultural assistance live streaming.

Creating a robust ecosystem for agricultural assistance live streaming requires the collaboration of multiple stakeholders. Streamers, government bodies, platforms, and suppliers must adopt a collaborative and win-win approach, each fulfilling their roles to promote the optimized development of the agricultural assistance live streaming ecosystem. Streamers should focus on ethical practices and continuous skill improvement, ensuring high-quality and engaging content. Government bodies must enhance regulatory frameworks and provide support for training and development programs. Platforms need to implement stringent quality control measures and facilitate better after-sales service mechanisms. Suppliers should ensure the consistency and quality of the products they provide.

By working together, these stakeholders can create a more reliable, efficient, and sustainable agricultural assistance live streaming sector. This collaborative effort will not only improve the industry's reputation but also contribute significantly to the broader goals of rural revitalization and poverty alleviation.

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