Explore the Reasons for the Success of the "Grass-planting" Marketing on Social Media Platform

—Take Xiaohongshu as an Example

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Abstract: In the era of new media, various social platforms continue to develop, and user demand has become the key point of platform development. "Grass-planting" marketing emerged as a new way of marketing, providing users with advice on all aspects and making them develop the desire to consume, which is finally transformed into consuming. Using the method of literature review, this paper briefly discusses the meaning of "Grass-planting" marketing and the characteristics of Xiaohongshu. Based on the perspective of uses and gratification theory, taking Xiaohongshu as an example, this paper analyzes the behavior and psychology of users in the "grass-planting" marketing of Xiaohongshu in recent years, and what different needs of users are met, so as to explore the reasons for the success of "Grass-planting" marketing. This paper finds that users choose to be "grassed" in order to meet their own cognitive needs, emotional needs, personal integration needs, social integration needs and pressure release needs.

Keywords: "Grass-planting"marketing, Xiaohongshu, Uses and Gratification Theory, user needs

1.   Introduction

As new things in internet marketing, "Grass-planting" has relatively few research results, and most of the research is done from the aspect of "Grass-planting" marketing's influence on consumer behavior and consumers. In particular, there are relatively few researches on the motivation of choosing "Grass-planting" marketing from the perspective of users. This paper uses the research method of literature review to collect research on the "Grass-planting" marketing of Xiaohongshu in recent years. Based on the Uses and Gratification theory and from the perspective of users, through the analysis of users' behavior and psychology to analyze their motivations for choosing to accept the "Grass-planting" of Xiaohongshu platform and to find it meets the needs of users in what aspects, which results in today's "Grass-planting" marketings popularity and success. After understanding the motivations of users to choose "Grass-planting", especially the types of needs that users want to meet themselves. And referring to the different needs of the Uses and Gratification theory, this paper provides useful suggestions for discovering the shortcomings of current "Grass-planting" marketing and further improving and perfecting the marketing model and mechanism of "Grass-planting" on

social media platforms, to provide users with better and more choices and experiences so as to meet the various needs of users.

2. Internet "Grass-planting" marketing

2.1. Xiaohongshus "community+e-commerce" model and UGC characteristic

With the characteristics of its own content ecosystem and the marketing strategy based on word-of-mouth, brand, innovative UGC and self-operated e-commerce, Xiaohongshu has formed a "Grass-planting" marketing model of "content+e-commerce" [1].

The platform is mainly divided into two sections: social sharing community and shopping mall[2].

UGC is "Users Generate Content", which means that users are not only the recipients of information on the Internet platform, but also the content creators, and form a communication relationship with each other. The UGC characteristic of Xiaohongshu sharing community determines the authenticity and uniqueness of the massive users consumption experience, and constantly stimulates the user's desire to buy.

The main users of Xiaohongshu are those who pursue beauty and an exquisite life and have a high interest in shopping. At the same time, they often have a strong social demand; they love to share and also expect to get attention and response. They also search and refer to a large number of user reviews before shopping. They are easily "grassed"[3].

2.2. The status of Xiaohongshus "Grass-planting" marketing

"Planting grass" is a process of effectively recommending products to consumers, occupying consumers minds, stimulating their inner needs and making them have a desire to buy[4]. The starting point of "Grass-marketing" is the user, and it is more based on the user's voluntary communication and recommendation, and then brings a wider range of marketing [5].

Xiaohongshu is a typical representative of "Grass-planting" marketing [5]. In the Xiaohongshu community, users share the positive energy and good life of young people in this era through the recording of words, pictures, videos and notes, and "plant grass" for people [6]. Users of Xiaohongshu position it as a service platform for shopping navigation. Its "Grass-planting" delivery mode is very sophisticated, and its content value shaping can trigger public needs and emotions [7]. Users can search for topics they are interested in, view the shared notes of many reliable KOLs, and interact with Xiaohongshu users through private messages, comments, likes, etc., to establish their own community interaction circle [4].

3. Based on the theory to analyze why Xiaohongshus "Grass-planting" marketing succeeds

Uses and Gratification theory is an important theory in mass communication. It believes that users actively use various media based on specific motives and get satisfaction from them [8]. This paper adopts the theoretical framework of uses and gratification theory proposed by Gan Chunmei et al., based on Katz et al. From a practical point of view, their research highlights the impact of the gratification of different needs on the behavior of social network users, especially the gratification of emerging needs that have attracted increasing attention [9]. Therefore, the use of this theoretical framework can realize the in-depth analysis of the reasons for the user to choose Xiaohongshus "Grass-planting", so as to explore the reasons for the success of the "Grass-planting" marketing of Xiaohongshu as shown in figure 1.
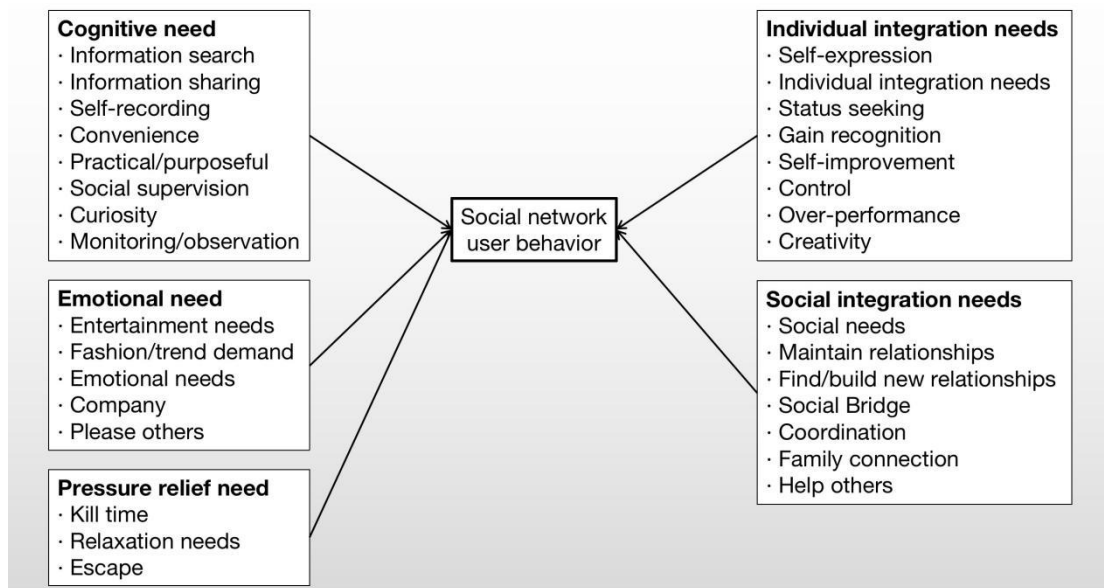
Figure 1: Framework of influencing factors of social network user behavior [10]

3.1. The motivation of users

3.1.1. Meet cognitive needs

Cognitive needs reflect the need of social media users to obtain and share useful information through social media in order to improve themselves and solve problems [8].

From word of mouth, information integration to acquisition, and then to vertical interaction and one-click purchase, the whole process can be completed from "Grass-planting", selection to purchase without exiting the application. Xiaohongshu not only conforms to the current accelerating pace of life, but also meets the needs of users in different fields for resource integration, reducing unnecessary waste, convenience and other personalized needs [11].

According to the study, Xiaohongshu is convenient for comparison and selection of the best products for consumption, and can buy products that are more suitable for themselves based on reasonable analysis of their own actual situation [12]. Another study found that Xiaohongshu users can easily find the type and situation corresponding to themselves according to keywords when browsing notes, which largely meets the fundamental needs of users to obtain the most useful information in the shortest time [11]. It can be found that by using the information of "Grass-planting" in Xiaohongshu, users can meet their needs for convenience and information search for cognitive needs. They can simply and conveniently use the platform and the information on the platform to obtain helpful and useful information for them.One study found that the three main characteristics of Xiaohongshu beauty cosmetics are that the content image is grounded next door, the tutorial is simple and practical [1]. It can be seen that users based on practical needs to obtain information and solve problems, so as to accept being "grassed".

Another study has found that every audience can also be the maker of information[1].Users use the shopping notes community to obtain or share valuable information based on the purpose of purchase[9]. As a result, users share interesting and useful market and commodity information with community users based on the need to meet information sharing, thus further realizing the spread of "Grass-planting" marketing.

3.1.2. Meet emotional needs

Emotional needs reflect users' desire to obtain emotional support, pleasant experiences and feelings through social media [8].

Xiaohongshu is an example of emotional marketing.

According to a survey, 55.86% and 48.65% of college students choose fashion and cosmetics for "Grass-planting" consumption, and 17.12% of college students choose luxury [12]. It can be seen that in order to meet the pursuit of fashion and trend, users have produced the behavior of "Grass-planting" consumption.

Another study found that the audience forms an emotional connection with the video creator. The distance between internet celebrities on social media platforms is reduced through the internet,which is different from the distant relationship between ordinary people and celebrities in the past. For example, the head beauty blogger 'Nana doesn't like durian allows fans to get closer to her life by sharing daily campus life vlogs and she has 103 million followers. [13] It can be seen that users can meet their emotional needs by establishing an emotional connection with the "grass growers".

3.1.3. Meet individual integration needs

Personal integration needs involve users' pursuit of self-image, which means that users hope to show a better self and gain respect and recognition through social media [8].

Circles such as KOLs, KOCs and communities are a major feature of Xiaohongshu platform, and they are also the projection of self-identity and emotional needs [14]. These opinion leaders try, compare or evaluate the products according to their own expertise, and give professional evaluations, so as to "plant grass" for the fan group. What they "plant grass" for the audience is not only the function of the product, but also the attitude of life that the product represents. They not only express their views, but also answer the users questions, thus establishing a personality in the users' mind. Once these opinion leaders public persona in line with their imagination, then consumers will be "planted grass" and will buy the products they recommend [15].

In the era of social media, users have shifted from idolizing stars to following internet celebrities which makes it more accessible to more users [16]. Data shows that 51.35% of college students are willing to support their favorite "grass master" through consumption, and a small number of students said that they would buy any products recommended by their favorite master [12]. KOL is trusted and admired by consumers, and is the object that consumers scramble to imitate, so consumers are more likely to buy products recommended by KOL [4]. It can be seen that users choose to accept the "Grass-planting" of KOL, to a large extent, it is to meet the needs of personal integration, to obtain the identity of self and others. At the same time, it also satisfies the needs of self-expression to achieve the purpose of shaping a personal image. Furthermore, it satisfies their need for self-improvement.

A study has found that, "planting grass" and "pulling grass" are also social processes. Those who are "grassed" in the process of consumption think that they are rational product discriminators, while the social process brings them a sense of identity[17]. By actively choosing the goods to be "grassed", users achieve their satisfaction of personal integration needs, and have a sense of identity with the group who also choose this product. Moreover, it can help establish a rational image, further meet the needs of status seeking, and achieve the purpose of promoting social status.

3.1.4. Meet social integration needs

Social integration needs reflect users' needs to carry out social activities through social media [8].

Xiaohongshu has strong interactivity: the interactions between fans and bloggers, fans and fans, and bloggers make up a huge social network. Users interact and communicate in the community around common interests, and realize social interaction while satisfying self-actualization [14].

Some studies have found that consumers have the consumer psychology of following the trend and following the crowd. They belong to a specific group because of the combination of interests. If a product is loved by one member of the group, it will affect the attitude of the whole group towards the product [4]. It can be seen that in order to meet the social identity and sense of belonging, users will carry out "Grass-planting" consumption in their own communities.

There's also research that says, when acquaintances "plant grass", the content of it becomes a kind of talk and a way for young people to get closer to each other[18]. It can be seen that in the process of "Grass-planting", users can meet social needs, communicate with others, establish or maintain relationships, and also meet the need to find and establish new relationships through similar preferences and interests.

3.1.5. Meet pressure release needs

The demand for stress release reflects users' desire to pass time, relax and escape through social media [8].

Xiaohongshu users have the habit of fragmented reading and the content layout of Xiaohongshu is designed to meet the habit[9].

There is no denying that people spend their fragmentation time searching and watching homogeneous and typed content is more about escaping from real life and completing their own imagination in the virtual mirror built by bloggers[1]. It can be seen that users browse the "Grass-planting" related content, at the same time, in order to meet the needs of killing time and relaxation. Through the interesting, useful and emotional information that can be quickly obtained in the content, it can achieve the purpose of relieving pressure and driving away boredom, and even realize the need to escape from the pressure and work of reality.

4. Conclusion

This paper first interprets the meaning of "Grass-planting" and "Grass-planting" marketing, and takes Xiaohongshu as an example to analyze its "Grass-planting" marketing status, and initially understand the success of its "planting grass" marketing status. Then, the "community + e-commerce" model of Xiaohongshu and the nature of UGC as well as the characteristics of its users are briefly analyzed. From the perspective of the platform, some characteristics of Xiaohongshu can be seen to meet the needs of users, thus laying the foundation for the analysis of users' motivation. Based on the theoretical framework of uses and gratification theory proposed by Gan Chunmei et al. and Katz et al., from the perspective of users, it is analyzed that the reasons why users choose Xiaohongshu's "Grass-planting" marketing is to meet their cognitive needs, emotional needs, personal integration needs, social integration needs and pressure release needs, thus resulting in the popularity and success of Xiaohongshu's "Grass-planting" marketing. Among them, the need for information search, ease of use, sense of identity and belonging, and social needs dominate. However, based on the analysis of the research on the marketing of Xiaohongshu's "Grass-planting" in recent years, this paper still lacks some relevant data support due to the small content in this research field and the relatively new concept. Therefore, future research can focus on the perspective of Xiaohongshu users to study what are the motivations and needs behind their tendency to be "planted grass" and their subsequent consumption behaviors, so as to provide more data and theoretical support for this field, so that social media platforms like Xiaohongshu can meet more and various needs for users and promote the further development of the platform.

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