

РАЗДЕЛ 4. СОЦИАЛЬНЫЕ КОММУНИКАЦИИ В ТРАНСФОРМИРУЮЩЕМся ОБЩЕСТВЕ

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ANALYSIS OF INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING VEGAN AND VEGETERIAN FOOD COMPANIES ON THE INTERNATIONAL MARKET

Abstract

With the improvement of living standards, the demand for healthy food is snowballing in contemporary society. It often sees celebrities and influencers promoting food categorized as “gluten-free”, “vegan” or “plant-based”. Therefore, it is undeniable that our society has some sort of endorsements towards food with special labels that could be linked to a healthy lifestyle. All the credits belong to the innovative strategies of vegan and vegetarian food companies. Choosing the right target audience has been one of the successful strategies by far; in order to impact consumer eating habits, it had to reach the majority: hardcore meat-eaters and flexitarians – not vegans, who make up an estimated 1 percent of the U.S. population. Besides that, putting plant-based meat products in the meat section and making partnerships with fast-food chain companies are the representative innovational strategies for vegan and vegetarian companies. This study focuses on analyzing the type of innovative promotional strategies vegan and vegetarian food companies use and the impacts and effectiveness in attracting non-regular consumers. Furthermore, it also mentioned how the promotional strategy performs in the international market and the challenges those vegan and vegetarian companies could face.

Keywords: vegan, vegetarian, promotional strategies, international market, China.

Nowadays, we are all aware that vegan and vegetarian food products have been an essential part of our daily life. Even though it might not be something that animal-meat eaters would typically purchase, due to the growth of the vegan community’s plant-based food demands, it is unavoidable to see vegan or vegetarian food products placed near animal meat sections these days.

According to the study conducted by Ipsos Retail Performance, veganism in the US has grown from obscurity to become a mainstream part of the American diet [7]. Since 2004, the number of Americans turning plant-based has reached 9.7 million people, growing from around 290,000 over 15 years. Shockingly, this is merely a 300 percent increase and nearly 3 percent of the population in the United States. Therefore, vegan diets are gradually becoming mainstream. Plant-based food companies are grabbing this opportunity and making ways to put a large variety of plant-based food products onto the shelves.

The rising of veganism or flexitarianism does not just appear out of nowhere. There are external and internal reasons why people would choose to be vegan or flexitarian. The top reason is primarily because of health awareness which would motivate people to consume less meat or not consume meat products at all. The second reason is external factors, such as animal welfare and environmental concerns. Last but not least, the transformation of promotional strategies has successfully changed the perspectives of the public about how vegan or vegetarian food products should be identified.

For the longest time, the target audience of vegan or vegetarian companies has always been just vegan or vegetarian people, which is an outdated concept in the traditional marketing strategy. Even the packaging of the designs and labels plays a significant role in influencing customers’ decisions. Food labeled “vegan” is considered the least appealing to customers [4]. The most common vegan associations typically are healthy, hippie, fewer food choices, lacking protein, animal rights activists, thin, weak, lacking nutrients, organic, and strict [3]. No wonder nobody wants to be associated with such a fixed term, which directly affects customers’ decision-making, especially for the non-vegan group who do not want to be categorized as “vegan”. Thus, it is crucial to have another alternative word to represent vegan food. Since the term “vegan” was more than twice as likely to be used in negative contexts as “plant-based” [8]. The reason probably is that “plant based” sounds

extremely healthy but does not associate with the concept of “never eating meat” or “never eating animal products”. To sum up, now it can explain why vegan and vegetarian companies widely use the term “plant-based,” and it even converts flexitarians and meat-eaters to become its consumers.

Another critical factor that directly influences the sales of a plant-based food product is the section where it is displayed. For example, there would be a standard menu in some certain restaurants but also includes a section specified for vegans or vegetarians. People who do not have a vegan or vegetarian diet would most likely ignore that section since they do not think themselves identified as vegan or vegetarian. Hence, having a vegetarian menu section may negatively associate people with vegetarian food. Not only because of that, but some people may even think it is less tasty or nutritious. Male consumers would mostly avoid ordering from the vegetarian section since it might associate with the opposite of masculinity.

One thing connects to the other, not just in restaurants’ menus but also in supermarkets, and placement could significantly change plant-based meat products. According to a study conducted by the Plant-Based Foods Association and Kroger from 2019 to 2020, it has been proven that putting plant-based meat products in the animal meat section will achieve more sales. For instance, the data showed that plant-based meat (whiling placed in the meat aisle) sales increased 23 percent compared to control stores. Especially for the areas where more flexitarians are emerging, plant-based meat sales were up 32 percent during the test period [5]. The first brand that made its first attempt and received great results is one of the leading companies in the plant-based industry, Beyond Meat inc. In 2017, Beyond Burger gained its placement in the meat aisle in Chicago, Illinois. It sold over 20,000 Beyond Burgers across eight locations in five months [5]. No one could perceive that this strategy could have a tremendous effect. Other plant-based food companies tried to imitate their action. They put their products in the meat section as well. Non-dairy brands like Blue Diamond and Oatly also followed the example of Beyond Meat. They were placed in the milk category instead of being placed separately in the “vegan food” section.

As we mentioned before, now it is not something new when we can see plant-based food products being placed in the meat section. For Beyond Meat, the plant-based protein company, being sold alongside animal meat is crucial. Moreover, that is one of the most phenomenon promotional strategies by Beyond Meat. They aim to create plant-based food products whose texture and appearance would be comparable to real meat. Even though this company has existed in the market for more than ten years, it is now well known ever since it is often seen in the meat aisle. This strategy is so successful because this food company was only well-known in the vegan community, but now even non-vegan people have heard of it or even purchased it.

One of the essential keys to building a successful business is branding and how the company positions itself. Beyond Meat is a plant-based meat company. Instead of exclusively catering to the vegan community, it is actually designed to appeal to meat-eaters who want to diversify their diets or reduce their environmental footprints. Therefore, sometimes the best way for a company to get on the right track to reach a new level of success is by finding the right direction to build its own business. However, this is not the only innovative promotional strategy that Beyond Meat applies to run its business.

In the beginning, Beyond Meat was sold in the retail stores just like every other food product. Later on, Beyond Meat attempted to enter the restaurant market and steadily became the supplier of mainstream restaurants. It might not be so surprising that Beyond Meat could be a supplier for mainstream restaurants, but what makes it unique is that those restaurants would specifically mention on their menus that Beyond Meat supplies plant-based ingredients. Typically, no restaurant would even bother to mention the product name of their ingredients on their menu. However, the fact that they prefer to highlight it to show their customer that Beyond Meat supplied the ingredients. So that people would be reassured about the quality and taste since not all the plant-based meat products could taste almost identical to real animal meat, but Beyond Meat’s plant-based meat products have been known for their meat-like texture and taste.

However, Beyond Meat’s name popped up in the public’s eyes was partnering with fast-food chain companies such as KFC and McDonald’s [6]. In 2009, Beyond Fried Chicken made a debut

which KFC launched in Atlanta, and unexpectedly it got sold out in five hours. In 2022, KFC relaunched Beyond Fried Chicken nuggets in January and is now offered at all locations in the US. With the rapid growth of the vegan and vegetarian population in the US, launching plant-based food options could help fast-food chains bring back former consumers and attract people who are meat eaters or flexitarians. For those who never heard of Beyond Meat before, it has successfully created a buzz on social media. Whenever one searches “Beyond Fried Chicken” on the Internet, people cannot stop talking about it. No matter it is food critics or content creators, they all want to share their most honest and first-hand experience of trying Beyond Fried Chicken nuggets for the first time. Thus, it can be seen that a partnership can achieve a win-win situation between plant-based food companies and fast-food chains. Most importantly, it also created a chain effect that even Starbucks and PepsiCo are eager to partner with Beyond Meat since more and more companies want to enter the field and offer a greater variety of plant-based options on the menu.

For Beyond Meat, taking over the US market is not their ultimate goal. They not only do partnerships with KFC in the US, but they also attempt to collaborate with KFC China [1]. In 2021, KFC China introduced the first plant-based meat version of the Spicy Beef Wrap, one of their most iconic and popular menu offerings to the public. Spicy Beef Wrap has been removed from the menu and relaunched from time to time, making people even more excited when they heard that it was making a comeback. Even though most people tried it purely out of curiosity, it was sooner or later that vegan or vegetarian food products would become trendy in China.

There are so many reasons why choosing Asia as their priority international market has been one of the most foresighted moves. It has been well-known that plant-based meat has long existed in Chinese history, dating back as early as the Song Dynasty in the 10th century. In Han Dynasty, Buddhism was introduced to China because the core of practicing Buddhism is respect for all living creatures, and harming animals would be considered a sin. Therefore, vegetarianism is shared among its followers. Gradually, Chinese Buddhist vegetarian food production became extraordinarily sophisticated after Han Dynasty. So, it could be challenging for vegan and vegetarian food companies to expand their business in China. However, we believe a successful promotional strategy can make an international brand stand out in this plant-based food industry.

For every company, it is necessary to change with the times. Not all the promotional strategies can apply to all the companies or periods for one company. Therefore, the companies need to make changes from time to time, and an excellent promotional strategy can cause a significant change for the company. Beyond Meat was just an average plant-based meat company in Los Angeles. However, since its magnificent promotional strategy, it has become a real standout in the vegan or vegetarian community. It has expanded its international market to many countries, not just China. Even though there might still be some challenges due to different cultures or eating habits in different countries, some promotional strategies might not be effective. However, we cannot deny that those innovative promotional strategies have a revolutionary impact on fellow companies and even on society.

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АНАЛИЗ ИННОВАЦИОННЫХ СТРАТЕГИЙ ПРОДВИЖЕНИЯ ВЕГАНСКИХ И ВЕГЕТАРИАНСКИХ КОМПАНИЙ НА МЕЖДУНАРОДНОМ РЫНКЕ

Аннотация

С повышением уровня жизни спрос на здоровую пищу в современном обществе постоянно увеличивается. Многие знаменитости и влиятельные люди рекламируют продукты, классифицируемые как «безглютеновые», «веганские» или «растительные». Можно констатировать, что в обществе распространяется положительное восприятие продуктов питания, относящихся к здоровому образу жизни. Это происходит благодаря инновационным стратегиям продвижения веганских и вегетарианских пищевых компаний. Данное исследование сосредоточено на анализе этих стратегий и их применении на международном рынке. Залогом успешного продвижения считается выбор правильной целевой аудитории. Чтобы повлиять на пищевые привычки потребителей, необходимо охватить большинство из них – и заядлых мясоедов, и флекситарианцев, а не только веганов, составляющих, например, всего один процент населения США. В качестве примеров инновационных стратегий продвижения веганских и вегетарианских компаний в статье рассматриваются включение продуктов на растительной основе в мясные секции магазинов, а также установление партнерских отношений с компаниями сети быстрого питания.

Ключевые слова: веганский, вегетарианский, стратегии продвижения, международный рынок, Китай.

E. S. Nurlybaeva

MUSIC INDUSTRY: THE ROLE OF MEDIA CHANNELS IN THE PROMOTION OF YOUNG MUSIC GROUPS

Abstract.

The music industry is one of the fastest-growing and, because of the great demand for music consumption, one of the most profitable industries worldwide. Currently, the Russian music industry market is dependent on the development of the global music market. However, growth in consumers also means growth in the number of products, which makes the industry a very competitive place. It is impossible to stay afloat in tough competition without good promotion and marketing strategies. Even the most talented music group cannot make itself known without elementary promotion of its product. Artist promotion is one of the main, if not the primary, tools of recognition, reputation, and brand image formation. The advent of the digital era has provided new ways for music artists to promote themselves: the opportunity to share their work for free when previously there was virtually no such opportunity. In addition, young music groups can reach a larger audience and build a fanbase or find new fans using an existing and established fanbase by interacting with them online on a one-on-one basis. In this article, we will try to figure out which media channels on the Internet are the most effective for building a