



Original Article

The Marketing Strategies for Increasing Sales Performance of Chinese Tea: Case Study on Ankang Tea in Shaanxi Province in China

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Abstract: This study explores the development of marketing strategies aimed at enhancing the sales performance of Chinese tea, with a specific focus on Ankang Tea from the Shaanxi Province in China. The research delves into a multifaceted approach to increase the market presence and profitability of this unique product. Key aspects of the study include understanding the target audience, establishing a strong online presence, leveraging social media, and utilizing popular e-commerce platforms. Diversification of product offerings, emphasis on quality and authenticity, exceptional customer service, and the implementation of a loyalty program are integral components of the proposed strategies. Furthermore, collaboration with influencers and tea experts, localization of marketing efforts, and continuous monitoring and adaptation of strategies are highlighted. Regulatory compliance, packaging, and shipping considerations, along with the importance of customer feedback and offline promotion, round out the comprehensive approach outlined in this study. The findings offer valuable insights into effectively navigating the e-commerce landscape for Chinese tea products, ensuring sustainable growth and market success.

Keywords: Marketing strategies; Ankang tea; Sales performance



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1. Introduction

Ankang Tea, originating from the Shaanxi Province in China, is a renowned and culturally significant tea variety deeply rooted in the rich heritage of this region. In 2023, the total area of Ankang tea plantations reached 1.12 million with a tea yield of 49,500 tons. Shaanxi, known for its diverse landscapes and favorable climate, provides an ideal environment for tea cultivation. Ankang Tea, in particular, stands out for its distinctive characteristics and flavor profiles, making it a prized commodity both domestically and internationally (Fang et al., 2003). E-commerce strategies for enhancing sales performance has become a trend and enhance sales performance (Moghareh Abed & Haghghi, 2009), which it can denote a set of meticulously planned and executed digital commerce methodologies designed to optimize revenue generation and market effectiveness within the digital realm. The cost-effectiveness of digital marketing is a widely recognized attribute in modern marketing strategies (Jackson & Ahuja, 2016). These strategies encompass a spectrum of multifaceted approaches, encompassing aspects such as website optimization, online

marketing, customer engagement, data analytics, and supply chain management (Kontogiorgou et al., 2023), all orchestrated with precision to achieve quantifiable improvements in online sales metrics. E-commerce, as a pivotal component of contemporary business practices, seeks to harness the expansive potential of digital platforms and technologies to maximize sales, foster customer loyalty, and adapt to evolving consumer behaviors (Iliadi, 2023), thereby shaping a strategic landscape indispensable for organizations striving for competitive advantage and sustainable growth in the modern marketplace. Combining the trends in e-commerce strategies for increasing the sales performance of Chinese tea (Zhang, 2021) with a specific focus on Ankang Tea in Shaanxi Province, this study delves deeper into the sales trends and existing challenges faced by this unique tea variety. Furthermore, it explores innovative e-commerce strategies as a means to address these issues, fostering growth and sustainability in the tea industry.

The adoption of e-commerce strategies to enhance the sales performance of Chinese tea has emerged as a conspicuous and pervasive trend within the tea industry. This phenomenon is characterized by a paradigm shift towards digitalization, as tea producers increasingly recognize the imperative of leveraging online platforms to augment their market reach and profitability. Notably, prominent e-commerce platforms, such as Alibaba's T mall and JD.com, have become instrumental conduits for the sale of Chinese tea, affording producers access to expansive virtual marketplaces. The trend is further propelled by escalating consumer demand for authentic and specialized tea varieties, aligning with the industry's efforts to harness the convenience, accessibility, and direct-to-consumer opportunities offered by e-commerce. Moreover, digital marketing strategies, coupled with data analytics, empower tea companies to craft tailored product offerings and promotional campaigns, while cross-border e-commerce channels extend the global reach of Chinese tea, propelling it into the international sphere. This multifaceted embrace of e-commerce, rooted in mobile commerce and synergized with traditional retail integration, epitomizes a transformative shift that underscores the industry's recognition of the pivotal role technology plays in shaping consumer behavior and market dynamics.

2. Literature review

Researchers found out that steps should be implemented according to the progress of the e-commerce poverty alleviation model in Ziyang's selenium-rich tea industry. This includes enhancing the development of rural network infrastructure and improving the logistics distribution system. Moreover, it is essential to consolidate and upgrade superior resources while enhancing industrial supporting facilities. Additionally, maximizing the impact of e-commerce talents and technology is crucial. Lastly, comprehensive publicity efforts and the establishment of renowned brands should be carried out to further promote the industry. These actions will contribute to the overall development and success of the e-commerce poverty alleviation model in Ziyang's selenium-rich tea industry (Sun & Lei, 2021). Developing farmers' e-commerce skills within the context of the Rural Revitalization Strategy is beneficial for addressing issues in agriculture, rural areas, and farmers' livelihoods. This endeavor is significant in promoting the growth of the rural economy and rural e-commerce, as well as expanding the economic advantages of agriculture. At the same time, while cultivating e-commerce skills in farmers, it is important to utilize the government's leadership, and the practical training provided by relevant institutions.

Moreover, there is a need to change the traditional mindset of local tea farmers. In summary, it is essential to promote the development of e-commerce skills in the tea industry from various perspectives. This will not only ensure the steady progress of e-commerce in the tea sector but also create a strong foundation for the growth of e-commerce in other agricultural products in Guangxi (Yilan, 2022). Some scholars found that Enhancing the level of factors such as age, affiliation with a particular culture, exposure to different cultures, ease of use, trustworthiness of information, recognition for excellence, knowledge of tea, variety of products, online reviews, and quality of customer service in online shopping can boost consumers' desire to make online purchases and mitigate situations where there is no inclination or action (Xie et al., 2023). This discovery is beneficial for the export of Chinese tea and can also provide valuable insights for international trade in other countries.

Therefore, a strategy for the internationalization of Chinese tea is suggested, encompassing company-level internationalization strategy, business-level differentiation strategy, cross-border e-commerce strategy, brand internationalization, and supply chain optimization strategy (Zhang, 2021). In order to achieve the intended outcome, translators are recommended to not only adhere to fidelity and coherence rules, but also consult native texts in a comparative way, familiarizing themselves with the historical, cultural, social, and lifestyle aspects of the target language audience. This will enable them to make suitable adjustments and modifications to their translations. Based on the results of this research, the use of corpus-based approach demonstrates its capability in making product descriptions more informative and captivating for the global market (Xu et al., 2023). In fact, the restructuring process was greatly influenced by rural elites, advancements in technology (e-commerce platform), availability of resources, and support from the government (Zhang et al., 2022).

Table 1. Summary of Literature Review related to Marketing Strategies

Marketing strategies for selling tea	Literature review
The document explores HEYTEA's approaches in marketing, including co-branding and various methods of sales and promotion, to distinguish its tea products from rivals and capture a greater portion of the market (Zhao, 2023).	Zhao, (2023). Analysis on the Marketing Strategy of New Tea Drinks in China: A Case Study of HEYTEA. <i>Advances in Economics, Management and Political Sciences</i> , doi: 10.54254/2754-1169/5/20220088
Marketing tactics for the promotion of Jeruju tea products involve advertising the products on diverse community association forums, creating new flavor variations, refreshing packaging, and establishing collaborations with partners to enhance marketing relationships (Adi et al., 2023).	Adi et al., (2023). Marketing Strategy Of Jeruju (<i>Acanthus llicifolius</i>) Tea Products In Harapan Mandiri, Kebumen, and Central Java. <i>Barakuda</i> 45, doi: 10.47685/barakuda45.v5i1.296
The document explores marketing approaches for enhanced value tea products, encompassing activities such as constructing brand identity, targeting specific market niches, differentiating the product, pursuing cost leadership, and prioritizing customer satisfaction (Herath & De Silva, 2011).	Herath & De Silva, (2011). Strategies for Competitive Advantage in Value Added Tea Marketing. <i>Tropical agricultural research</i> , doi: 10.4038/TAR.V22I3.3698
The document centers on the promotion of the tea-producing region through tourism centered around green tea, as opposed to the direct sale of tea products (Iwasaki & Khaokhrueamuang, 2022).	Iwasaki & Khaokhrueamuang, (2022). Marketing Green Tea Tourism Destinations. doi: 10.4324/9781003197041-27
The document explores the marketing tactics employed by Nayuki's tea brand, which involve broadening distribution channels, lowering product pricing, enhancing product innovation, and reinforcing the collaborative branding impact (Huang & Yao, 2023).	Huang & Yao, (2023). Research on the Existing Problems and Optimization Strategies of Nayuki Brand Marketing. <i>BCP business & management</i> , doi: 10.54691/bcpbm.v38i.4053
The document examines the significance of establishing a robust connection between consumers and tea brands via marketing approaches (Hugar & Patil, 2017).	Hugar & Patil, (2017). Customer Behavior Analysis towards Select Fast Moving Consumer Goods with Special Reference to Branded Tea Powder Products: Empirical Study from Mumbai City. <i>Imperial journal of interdisciplinary research</i> ,
The document outlines the marketing mix strategy for the sale of tea products, encompassing factors such as product diversity, pricing determined by costs and competitive analysis, promotion through both Above and Below The Line communication, and distribution via selective and direct channels (Oktaviyanti et al., 2016).	Oktaviyanti et al., (2016). Analysis of marketing mix and sales performance of "industry hillier tea walini" product. <i>Journal of Agricultural Education</i> , doi: 10.22146/AGROEKONOMI.17269

3. Materials and Methods

Semi-structured interviews are the favored data collection method when the researcher's aim is to gain insight into the participant's specific viewpoint rather than a broad understanding of a phenomenon (McGrath et al., 2019). While other data collection methods have their place in qualitative research, one key advantage of semi-structured interviews is that they allow for a targeted approach while also granting the researcher the freedom to explore relevant concepts that may arise during the interview. This flexibility can further enrich the researcher's comprehension of the pharmacy service being examined (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). This research adopts a semi-structured interview and literature review method to examine the strategies of online tea marketing. It involves interviewing personnel from tea companies who have successfully implemented marketing strategies. The aim is to analyze the strategies used in online tea marketing. In addition to the interview data, a comprehensive review of relevant literature will be conducted to provide a deeper understanding of the topic. The combination of semi-structured interviews and literature review will contribute to a comprehensive analysis of the strategies employed in online tea marketing. The findings of this research will provide valuable insights for the tea industry and contribute to the development of effective marketing strategies in the online domain.

4. Results

Table 2. Result of Interviews

Organisation(s)	Sales	Interview
Government Institution	49,500 tons	1. Build the brand influence of the Ankang tea industry. 2. Optimize better marketing and business environment for the development of the tea industry. 3. Enhance market supervision and improve the quality of tea leaves. 4. Highlighting technological innovation, refining the production, processing, and business systems of the tea industry, continually elevating the modernization level of the Ankang tea industry.
Company B	Sold out the entire annual production	1. Participate in product exhibition and sales activities to enhance the tea brand. 2. Promote sales through industry enterprises and government platforms. 3. Increase sales through online live streaming, e-commerce platforms, and other channels.
Company C	Sold out 95% of annual production	1. Implementing bulk sales through distributors. 2. Improve tea quality and establish brand effect. 3. Integrating research tourism with the tea industry to promote tea sales. 4. Provide Exceptional Customer Service including offering excellent customer support, including live chat, email, and phone assistance.
Company D	Sold out 97% of annual production	1. Collaborate with Influencers and Tea Experts, Partner with tea influencers and experts in China who can promote Ankang Tea through reviews and recommendations. 2. Given the popularity of mobile shopping in China, ensure that your website and e-commerce platforms are mobile-friendly. 3. Establishing close contacts with enterprises and institutions to increase tea sales.
Company E	Sold out the entire annual production	1. Pay attention to the packaging of Ankang Tea to ensure it arrives in optimal condition. 2. Offer reliable and fast shipping options to meet customer expectations. 3. Encourage customers to leave reviews and provide feedback, which can build credibility and help improve your offerings. 4. Participating in local events and trade shows to promote Ankang Tea offline and build brand awareness.

Ankang Tea encompasses a range of tea types, including green tea, black tea, and herbal teas. Each type reflects the unique terroir of Shaanxi and offers a distinct taste experience. "Ankang tea" typically refers to tea leaves rich in selenium, as Ankang City is located in the enriched selenium region of Shaanxi Province, China. Shaanxi Province is known for its abundant selenium resources. Selenium is a beneficial trace element for the human body and plays a crucial role in maintaining normal physiological functions. Tea is a natural plant, and the selenium content in tea leaves may be influenced by the growing environment.

4.1. Sales Trends of Ankang Tea

Ankang Tea, hailing from the scenic landscapes of Shaanxi Province, holds a prominent place in the world of Chinese tea. In recent years, there has been a noticeable surge in its demand, driven by factors such as increasing awareness of its health benefits, its rich cultural significance, and a growing interest in authentic and locally sourced products. Consumers, both within China and internationally, are gravitating towards this tea for its diverse range of flavors, encompassing green, black, and herbal varieties. This heightened demand has created both opportunities and challenges for Ankang Tea producers. However, this growing popularity has also exposed some inherent challenges. The industry faces competition from other tea-producing regions, both domestically and abroad. Additionally, ensuring the authenticity and quality of Ankang Tea is imperative to maintain consumer trust and satisfaction. Moreover, distribution and market access, especially in the digital era, require careful consideration and strategic planning navigating the complexities of e-commerce, despite its potential benefits, can be daunting for traditional tea producers.

4.2. Descriptive Analysis

On the basis of literature review, several e-commerce marketing strategies for Chinese tea can be summarized. These strategies include collaborating with brands, employing various sales and promotion methods, in order to

differentiate from competitors and capture a larger market share. For the market promotion strategy of Jeruju tea products, it includes advertising the products on various community association forums, launching new flavors and variations, updating packaging, and establishing partnerships with partners to enhance marketing relationships. To enhance the marketing strategy of high-value tea products, it can include building brand image, targeting specific market segments, product differentiation, pursuing cost leadership, and prioritizing customer satisfaction. The literature focuses on exploring marketing strategies that promote tea-producing regions through green tea as the core, rather than selling tea products directly. In-depth research has been conducted on the marketing strategy of Nayuki tea brand, which includes expanding channel distribution, lowering product pricing, enhancing product innovation, and strengthening the influence of collaborating brands. The literature also discusses the importance of establishing a strong connection between consumers and tea brands through marketing means. The literature also outlines the marketing mix strategy for tea product sales.

From the interview results of marketing strategies, the overall goals for the Ankang tea industry include building brand influence, optimizing the marketing and business environment, enhancing market supervision, and highlighting technological innovation. To achieve these goals, the industry should participate in product exhibitions, promote sales through various platforms, implement bulk sales through distributors, and integrate research tourism with the tea industry. Additionally, exceptional customer service, collaboration with influencers and tea experts, mobile-friendly platforms, and attention to packaging are crucial to increasing tea sales and improving the overall success of the Ankang tea industry. What's more, it is important to invest in a visually appealing and user-friendly website, offer reliable and fast shipping options, encourage customers to leave reviews and provide feedback, and participate in local events and trade shows. These strategies can help establish credibility, improve customer satisfaction, and increase brand visibility both online and offline.

5. Discussion

In comparing the literature review above and the interview results of marketing strategies for Ankang tea, several key points can be identified. Firstly, the literature review provides a comprehensive overview of various e-commerce marketing strategies that can be applied to promote Chinese tea. It highlights the importance of online platforms, such as social media and e-commerce websites, in reaching a wider customer base. Additionally, the literature review emphasizes the significance of content marketing, customer reviews, and influencer collaborations to build trust and credibility among potential consumers. On the other hand, the interview results shed light on the practical implementation of these marketing strategies in the Chinese tea industry. The interviews reveal that many tea businesses are indeed utilizing online platforms, especially popular social media channels like We Chat and We Ibo, to engage with customers and promote their products. Content marketing is also widely employed, with tea companies sharing educational content about tea culture, health benefits, and brewing techniques. Furthermore, the interviews point out the effectiveness of collaborations with influencers and key opinion leaders in attracting new customers and enhancing brand visibility, building brand influence, optimizing the marketing and business environment, enhancing market supervision, and highlighting technological innovation, participate in product exhibitions, promote sales through various platforms, implement bulk sales through distributors, and integrate research tourism with the tea industry.

Additionally, exceptional customer service, collaboration with influencers and tea experts, mobile-friendly platforms, attention to packaging are crucial to increasing tea sales and improving the overall success of the Ankang tea industry, and invest in a visually appealing and user-friendly website, offer reliable and fast shipping options, encourage customers to leave reviews and provide feedback, and participate in local events and trade shows. While both the literature review and interview results highlight the significance of marketing strategies for Chinese tea, there are also some differences. The literature review provides a theoretical framework and general guidelines for implementing these strategies, while the interview results offer real-life examples and insights from practitioners in the industry. The interviews highlight the importance of adapting marketing strategies to suit the specific target audience and market conditions, demonstrating the need for flexibility and customization. Then, the literature review and interview results complement each other in understanding the e-commerce marketing strategies for Chinese tea. The literature review provides an academic foundation, while the interview results offer practical applications and industry-specific insights. By combining both sources of information, tea businesses can gain a comprehensive understanding of effective marketing strategies and tailor their approach to successfully promote Ankang tea in the e-commerce landscape.

6. Conclusions

In conclusion, the Ankang tea industry can benefit from a comprehensive marketing strategy that includes building brand influence, optimizing the marketing and business environment, enhancing market supervision, and highlighting technological innovation. This can be achieved through participation in product exhibitions, promotion through various platforms, bulk sales through distributors, and integrating research tourism with the tea industry. In addition, paying attention to exceptional customer service, collaboration with influencers and tea experts, mobile-friendly platforms, and

attention to packaging are important factors in increasing tea sales and improving overall success. Investing in a visually appealing and user-friendly website, reliable and fast shipping options, customer reviews and feedback, and participation in local events and trade shows can further establish credibility, improve customer satisfaction, and increase brand visibility both online and offline. These strategies can contribute to the growth and development of the Ankang tea industry.

6.1. Implications

Practical implications of the mentioned marketing strategies for the Ankang tea industry include increased brand influence, market competitiveness, and sales growth. By participating in product exhibitions, the tea industry can showcase its products to a wider audience and attract potential customers. Promotion through various platforms, such as social media, online advertisements, and influencer collaborations, can help increase brand visibility and attract new customers. Bulk sales through distributors can help expand the reach of Ankang tea to different regions and markets, increasing sales volume. Integrating research tourism with the tea industry can create a unique and immersive experience for consumers, attracting tea enthusiasts and tourists. Exceptional customer service is crucial in building customer loyalty and satisfaction. Collaborating with influencers and tea experts can enhance the credibility and reputation of the Ankang tea industry. Creating mobile-friendly platforms will cater to the increasing number of mobile users and improve user experience. Attention to packaging is vital as it can make the tea products more attractive and appealing to customers.

Theoretical implications of these strategies involve leveraging the principles of marketing, consumer behavior, and branding. By implementing these strategies, the Ankang tea industry can tap into consumer preferences, needs, and desires, leading to increased sales and market growth. Building brand influence and reputation aligns with the principles of brand management, where a strong brand can command higher prices and customer loyalty. Furthermore, highlighting technological innovation is aligned with the concept of continuous improvement and differentiation in marketing. By embracing innovation, the Ankang tea industry can stand out from competitors and attract tech-savvy customers. Overall, these marketing strategies have practical implications in terms of improving sales and market competitiveness, while also aligning with theoretical principles of marketing, branding, and consumer behavior. By implementing these strategies effectively, the Ankang tea industry can achieve growth and development.

6.2. Limitations and Future Research Direction

Limitations for this study include the use of case study methodology and the reliance solely on qualitative methods. The absence of quantitative analysis to examine the factors influencing An Kang tea sales is a major limitation of this research. By not employing quantitative methods such as factor analysis, the study may lack statistical rigor and the ability to generalize findings to a larger population. Additionally, the use of a single case study may limit the generalizability of the findings, as it may not fully represent the broader context or diversity of factors that influence An Kang tea sales. Future research could benefit from incorporating quantitative methods and conducting multiple case studies to enhance the robustness and generalizability of the findings. Future research directions could include conducting a quantitative analysis to complement the findings of this study. By incorporating quantitative methods, the factors affecting the sales of An Kang tea can be systematically analyzed and measured. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the sales of An Kang tea and help to identify the key drivers for its success. Additionally, a quantitative analysis could also allow for the comparison of different factors and their relative importance in influencing sales. This would enable researchers and businesses to prioritize their strategies and resources more effectively. Overall, by incorporating both qualitative and quantitative approaches, future research can provide a more robust and holistic understanding of the factors influencing the sales of An Kang tea.

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