

Research on the Marketing Model of Brick-and-Mortar Bookstores

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Abstract: These years, with the development of the internet, online bookshops have reached a growing audience. As online bookstores have gradually expanded their dominance, the size of the physical bookstore retail market has continued to shrink, making it increasingly difficult for physical bookstores to make a profit and leading to a wave of "closures". This paper focuses on the community-based marketing communication of physical bookstores as a mechanism and conducts research from the perspective of service marketing to inspire physical bookstores to better exploit the advantages of the service experience of physical channels and provide ideas for physical bookstores to tailor their service marketing models to create more economic value and thus achieve sustainable development. The study found that for physical bookstores to survive and thrive in a fiercely competitive market, they must build experiential platforms, realize scene operations, develop cultural activities, create a bookish atmosphere, establish emotional links, and realize commercial value. At the same time, brick-and-mortar bookstores should also adopt innovative marketing tools to expand their outreach and explore a unique path of quality development.

Keywords: brick-and-mortar bookstores, marketing models, community, empathy, services

1. Introduction

With many good independent bookstores closing down, the business model and future direction of brick-and-mortar bookstores have become an issue of profound relevance and urgency. The scholars who have researched physical bookstores have conducted in-depth discussions and studies on the real-life problems faced by physical bookstores, the dilemmas they face, the responses of some physical bookstores, and their business models, but there are fewer studies related to the marketing of physical bookstores. The theoretical significance of this selection is to address the community-based marketing communication of brick-and-mortar bookstores as a mechanism and to fill a research gap from the perspective of service marketing.

The practical significance of this selection is to inform the future practice of brick-and-mortar bookshops. Brick-and-mortar bookstores have encountered a post-epidemic era during the rebound, full of unknown challenges. Many physical bookstore operators are at their wits' end in the face of low footfall in their offline bookstore shops, suggesting that physical bookstores are in urgent need of a new transformation and upgrade. During the difficult recovery period, some bookstore brands began to show strong vitality, using community marketing ideas to save themselves and realize

some benefits. Some bookstore brands have added third-space marketing to their physical bookstores, profiting from third-space offerings or using unique third spaces to attract customers closer to the point of consumption, thus revitalizing the physical bookstore business. However, if brick-and-mortar bookstores lack knowledge of the connotations, methods, and strategies of community marketing, it is difficult to achieve the desired social marketing results. By studying consumer satisfaction with various aspects of bookstore consumption and the impact of community on consumer consumption, it is possible to provide systematic ideas and innovative practical approaches to community marketing models for brick-and-mortar bookstores and to find new solutions for individual brick-and-mortar bookstore brands to save themselves and overcome their difficulties.

2. Case Description

In recent years, with the growth of the internet, online bookshops have reached a growing audience. As the dominance of online bookstores gradually expands, the size of the physical bookstore retail market continues to shrink, making it increasingly difficult for physical bookstores to make a profit and leading to a wave of "closures". Book Retailing Market Annual Report 2022 shows that with the growing popularity of the online shopping market, the online share of book retail sales is increasing year on year, while physical bookstore sales are decreasing year on year, and Book retail market is down 11.77% year-on-year in 2022 compared to 2021 [1]. However, the reasons for the limited development of brick-and-mortar bookstores are manifold, not only from the impact of the external environment but also from internal operational problems. Against this backdrop, private brick-and-mortar bookstores need to leverage their strengths as a physical channel and develop service marketing strategies that meet the multifaceted needs of their customers if they are to remain in business and make a profit.

3. Analysis on the Problems

3.1. Brick-and-Mortar Bookstores Have the Need for Community Marketing

Originally referring to a collection of people based on social relationships, the meaning of "community" has evolved with the times and changes in media. In 1993, Rheingold introduced the concept of a Virtual Community, a network of interpersonal relationships, or virtual communities, that develop when people have enough discussions in a virtual, abstract online space and integrate their personal feelings into the collective discussion. These years, research related to community marketing in brick-and-mortar bookstores has begun to increase, focusing on discussions in the following areas: The need for community marketing in physical bookstores is the first area. It is generally explored in terms of the shift in reader consumption needs, which is attributed to the interactive features of social media. Based on the shift in consumer demand, it is possible that "through community-based communication, physical bookstores can build a culture-centric social circle based on readers' common interests and values, providing innovative and comprehensive cultural social experiences between readers and bookstores and readers, and cultural socialization based on community-based communication can increase the brand influence of bookstores" [2]; From the perspective of cultural rationality, it is pointed out that readers in bookstores should generate a social presence centered on books and a social network centered on sharing their reading experience, and engage in mutual communication and dialogue and express their own opinions, which is the meaning of the existence of bookstores at the social level and the business philosophy that bookstores with mainly spiritual attributes should hold [3].

The next is the relationship between the bookshop scene and the community. "Physical bookstores conform to the concept of 'third space'" [4], and bookstores are public places with core

values of accessibility, social interaction, information intensity, and functional diversity, in addition to the home and workplace. The shop scene is inextricably linked to the establishment of social relationships and community cohesion. The social scene is one of the types of bookstore scene with knowledge service attributes, and physical bookstores can be seen as a mobile spatial medium for interpersonal in- interactions and can either host cultural events in similar urban public spaces or can be based on physical bookstores to gather readers and create reading communities, thus creating a social scene in the form of online [5].

Finally, the bookshop community development model is explored. Research into the specific paths and strategies of the bookshop community model focuses on the establishment of membership systems, online and offline events, and related reader services. Research into the specific paths and strategies of the bookstore community model has focused on bookstore customization, organizing online and offline events, and re- late reader services. Based on the perspective of interactive ritual chains, the analysis of self-presentation strategies of physical bookstores under the viewpoint of social media suggests that physical bookstores can establish and consolidate their position and role in the ritual chain by introducing new technologies such as VR and holography, or through message responses on WeChat public websites [6].

3.2. Empathy Marketing is the Key to Enhancing the Market Competitiveness of Physical Bookstores

To adapt to the changes in consumption patterns in the new era, physical bookstores need to continuously transform and upgrade their marketing models. "Empathy" emerged around 1880 as a professional concept in early psychology and "originally meant that when people knew an object, they were able to put themselves in the shoes of the object they knew, and they internalized the objective object to produce a subjective emotional experience". Some research suggests that "the core of empathetic marketing is to focus on the customer's emotional consumer experience, but it does not mean bottomlessly catering to the consumer. For urban brick-and-mortar bookstores to achieve transformational development, it is important to stick to their main business, advocate the cultural value of bookstores, and the concept of consumption, and in turn, build a cultural brand that can symbiotically co-prosper with urban culture and build a book society." [7]. In addition to the homogeneous "bookstore+" marketing model, the key to enhancing the competitiveness of physical bookstores is to seek new and differentiated marketing models. To enhance the added value of bookstore products and services, improve the cultural vitality of bookstores and increase customer stickiness, physical bookstores can make use of the Internet, big data, scene experience technology, and new marketing methods to develop marketing strategies based on the "emotional" bond between bookstore operators and consumers, develop products and services that meet consumers' emotional experiences and form cultural empathy, and use empathy marketing models to tell bookstore stories, create empathy scenarios and explore con- sumer's unique emotional perceptions and empathy needs for bookstores and their re- related personnel.

3.3. Innovative Marketing Models are Conducive to Enhancing the Economic Benefits of Brick-and-Mortar Bookstores

Current research on bookstore marketing models has focused on the commonality and integration of diverse industrial formats in the commercial development of physical bookstores, exploring the potential relationship between business models and customer sedimentation, to contribute to the enhancement of economic value through cultural and aesthetic values.

Some scholars have used the "interactive ritual chain" theory to analyze the components and interactive effects of live marketing interactive rituals in physical bookstores, exploring the

optimization of live marketing interactive rituals in physical bookstores and providing new perspectives, ideas, and references for the practice of live broadcasting and business transformation in physical bookstores [8]; Some research pointed out that bookstores should increase consumers' experience through exterior decoration, in- interior decoration, display design, and packaging design to put consumers in an ideal state of spiritual enrichment as a way to increase the flow of bookstores and thus drive the long-term development of physical bookstores [9]; Some scholars have analyzed the macro and micro environments of brick-and-mortar bookstores, explored the problems in the transformation of domestic brick-and-mortar bookstores, and explored the marketing model of Sisyphian bookstores based on the SIVA theory, suggesting solutions for the survival and development of domestic brick-and-mortar bookstores that are feasible, proactive in information provision, and maximize value creation [10].

4. Suggestion

4.1. Promoting Community Building for Bookstore Development and a Bookish Atmosphere

When trust between buyers and sellers is becoming increasingly difficult to establish, and when the information available from third-party platforms is also becoming increasingly uncertain, consumers naturally choose to trust their acquaintances, so that groups of acquaintances gather to meet both the shopping needs of consumers and the marketing needs of merchants. Communities are a product of mobile social development, where people exchange their information and meet each other's needs. As communities become one of the most popular ways of realizing cash in the mobile in- Internet era, companies that fail to build communities around their products and services are bound to struggle in the future market competition. It is important that brick-and-mortar bookstores truly understand how to build a brand community, how to cultivate a community of stable customers, how to guide community customers to consume, support, and promote products and services, and ultimately establish a perfect community ecosystem.

4.1.1. Build User Experience Platforms Online and Offline to Achieve Scenario Operation

Firstly, in today's information landscape, bookshops should identify the reasons why users join communities, build a portrait of the target user, attract users by identifying with their interests, position them with their identity and emotions, enhance their material value with the best services, connect them with pain points, interact promptly, dialogue as equals, seek advice, create a sense of participation, increase exposure, maintain a sense of mystery, plan creative lives, create a sense of freshness, divide the community, allow fans to establish "cliques", community lending, and swap identities. Secondly, when building, do not piece together, should know the trade-offs, to the degree of accuracy, from their positioning, to find a suitable mode of operation for their development, to provide users with the real value of the goods, to achieve a bundle of interests with the user, such as Zhaoxi bookstore to shop around the precise positioning of users, from their actual situation, to build a community platform with a positive user experience. Finally, the online realization of the content diversion allows users to engage and the offline realization of the occupation of the entity allows users to experience it.

4.1.2. Precise and Systematic Adherence to Operational Management and Alternative Approaches to Cultural Activities.

Only by adhering to professional, team-based, personalized, and fine-tuned operations can a community gather fans and achieve long-term development. In the early stages of operation and management, a diversified and decentralized community management structure and membership

division should be made, and the tasks of each "role" should be determined, so that they can influence each other, such as employing a group leader with personal charisma, choosing someone who can grasp the direction of the community's topics as the main manager, and considering a "secretary" who is capable of publishing information and arranging activities within the group. In the middle of the operation and management, focus on increasing the appeal of the group owner, the group owner is the manager, and the manager should have considerable infectious power, and the users into a piece, to ensure the management and operation of the community. In the later stages of operation and management, it is clear that internal interaction is the lifeblood of the community, and a decentralized management approach is adopted. At the same time, a virtuous circle of interaction is formed and a pyramid structure community system is built to achieve "free" operation.

4.2. The Details of True Love Form an Emotional Connection, and Quality Service Realizes Commercial Value

The bookstore community is emotion-centric, and it is vital to grasp the emotional development of the users. Realizing the emotions and engaging them to actively participate in the "I need to buy" rather than the traditional sales pitch of "I buy what I need" is the real eternal opportunity for bookstores. It is important to create a sense of honor and a sense of belonging so that users can experience a sense of 'home'. The sense of honor comes from the results of the brand's operations, such as the market share and brand reputation that the brand has achieved, all of which are ways to enhance the sense of honor. Incorporating positive energy and other details of genuine emotion to enhance the way. Secondly, focus on pain point thinking, from the traditional product thinking of research and development before finding the market to pain point thinking to determine the demand in research and development, to meet the most urgent needs of consumers as the leading, so that consumers can enjoy in the community, the pain has a solution.

4.3. Innovate Marketing Models to Expand the Scope of Publicity

The bookshop and it is crucial for bookshops to do a good job of publicity to enhance their competitiveness. The promotion of the bookshop should have clear positioning and promotional objectives, combined with the media and linked to the reader, to promote the bookshop more comprehensively. Bookshops can work with specialist media such as radio, television, newspapers, and online media to systematically and comprehensively follow up on bookshop activities, etc., to dig up and collate the overall story of the bookshop and to promote it in depth. In addition, bookshops need to link closely to their readers in their promotional efforts to improve the relevance and interactivity of their publicity. At present, many bookshops are still limited to offering fixed services to regular readers only, without a detailed division of readers. Such publicity is only passively acceptable to readers, without active experience and participation in the interactive process. On one hand, when bookstores conduct publicity, they need to widen the communication channels for readers and motivate staff to take the initiative to provide a more targeted service. On the other hand, bookshops should actively innovate their service models to guide consumers to actively participate in promotional activities and take the initiative to understand the resource structure and layout of bookshops. More importantly, bookstores should be adept at grasping the communication rules of various media, actively cooperating with popular online platform media such as Weibo, WeChat, and websites, making full use of the publicity and advantages of different media, planning carefully around the center of publicity, and regulating management. When conducting publicity, it is important to use a mix of online and offline methods and to develop a variety of styles of social campaigns to enable more consumers to reacquaint themselves with bookshops and choose them.

5. Conclusion

In the era of "new retail" on the Internet, the survival and development of physical bookstores, as a cultural symbol of unique value and meaning, has received much attention but also faces many serious challenges. To survive and thrive in a fiercely competitive market, physical bookstores must adapt to the trends of the times, change their mindset and base themselves on consumer demand, giving full play to the advantages of offline bookstores while incorporating the features of online marketing. Based on community and empathy marketing theories, physical bookstores are required to build experiential platforms, realize scenario operations, develop cultural activities, create a bookish atmosphere, establish emotional links, and realize commercial value. At the same time, physical bookstores must actively integrate new thinking, new media, and new technologies to change and innovate their marketing models, expand the scope of publicity and give full play to their advantages. Only by establishing a new marketing model that helps physical bookstores to develop can they get out of their development dilemma, improve their market competitiveness and explore a unique path of quality development.

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