

Research on the Application of Brand Personality in Internet-Branding of Agriculture Products in China

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Abstract: China is a fast-developing nation, especially in traditional concepts of emphasis on agricultural production, with millions of highly educated college students as new generations of workers enter the workforce, while promoting the booming agriculture industry in China. Concerning these new generations of ambitious college students, it is a pretty attractive career to leverage their knowledge to spread their local special rural agricultural products (agri-products) to well-known places around the nation, even the world. Meanwhile, the Chinese government also supports rural products branding via internet marketing as well as the exploitation of online technologies. Su *et al.* pointed out that governments in China are expected to take more effective measures to enhance adoption rates of online purchases and sales technology, in particular for entrepreneurial farmers^[1]. Currently, the most existing phenomenon in China is that quantities of regional rural products with excellent quality but without national popularity. Thereby, it is significant to enhance the popularity of various brands in regional agricultural products using internet marketing, and also contribute to the nation's strategy of rural revitalization. To appeal to the nations' strategy, we are supposed to make use of brand personality (BP) traits, which probably contribute to robust internet branding of regional agricultural products. Our research will focus on the influences of differential dimensions of brand personality (BP) in terms of common rural products, additionally, we also attempt to design a BP model for internet branding of agricultural products in China. Furthermore, from the two perspectives of characteristics in rural areas (agricultural producers and agricultural consumers), measures to assist agricultural producers in building their brands through the application of internet tools and marketing should be recognized. On the other side, methods to enhance agricultural consumers' brand loyalty also need to be captured.

Keywords: Agricultural products; Internet marketing; Internet branding; Brand personality (BP); Consumers' brand loyalty

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1. Introduction

1.1. Research background

China is a conventional and enormous agricultural nation, with a wide variety of agricultural products scattered in diverse areas across the whole country. Likely, ResearchInChina reported that merely in the aquaculture industry

has shown steady growth in per-capita consumption ^[2]. In 2014, the gross output value of China's fishing industry amounted to RMB 2.0859 trillion, and the added value was up to RMB 971.8 billion. Nevertheless, it is curious that most traditional agricultural products with superb quality yet only well-known in local areas.

DCCI predicted that internet fundamental resources development and enrichment constantly accelerate, the rate of mobile internet access flow will accelerate, and to increase persistently ^[3]. At the end of December 2024, the total number of domain names will have reached 33.02 million. Apart from that, novel information and communication fundamental facilities development coordinately, the number of internet of things terminal consumers boomed to 2.6 billion households, which occupied 59.6% of the number of mobile network terminal connections. This revenue trend could increase over the years. This presents vast Internet marketing opportunities in China ^[4], comply with flourishing internet marketing opportunities in China, rural agricultural producers need to branding their local products via internet tools, over the years, the number of rural Internet users doubled between 2008 and 2012, it reveals steady trend of growth (11.6% to 23.7%) ^[4]. According to CNNIC ^[3], the number of rural internet users has reached approximately 300 million, which accounts for around 28.2% of the total number of internet users.

In addition to some supplementary industries such as financial industry also probably support the internet branding in agricultural industry, digital financial products and services such as WeChat, Alipay, and Bestpay might be related to transactions on e-commerce platforms, it is increasingly crucial of digital payment services as popularity online transaction and consumption tools among rural residents, Moreover, likewise Yu'e Bao, and apps about insurance, securities, and funds are effective digital wealth management tools that contribute to farmers handle their own capital reservation, liquidity management, and property appreciation ^[1].

1.2. Literature review

This study draws upon two perspectives of the literature. Some findings from several relevant research streams were reviewed by us, and subsequently, deficiencies were also recognized in our analysis. The first section focuses on the role of internet marketing related to agricultural products or marketing strategy for an agricultural product brand. Heang and Khan demonstrated that Chinese customers are very much attracted to online product information to compare and research which posted by companies ^[4]. Otherwise, Chinese consumers have become vital role of viewing online comments as important inputs to their purchasing decisions through the internet. They also found that Internet marketing is indeed helpful in agricultural businesses and worth investigating the development of Internet marketing in rural areas despite lower penetration rates. Su *et al.*, take perspective of digital financial market impact to rural China ^[1], emphasized Weibo and friend circle sales need to be adopted to maximize the sale of agricultural products, besides, several potential impacts embraced farmers' education level, skills training experience, engaging in new agricultural operation entities (e.g., family farms, professional cooperatives), and agricultural entrepreneurship navigate they adopt e-commerce. Jie *et al.*, implies that consumers in China are more likely trend to green ^[5], organic and healthful food such as include more whole grains and vegetables in their diets, Chinese Internet usage be treated as an effective and delightful way to have more abundant product related information and become the foremost source of information to gain food protection knowledge, due to focusing on expanded consultation and customization and content marketing to attract an audience, internet use has become the standard for almost everyone by assistant with image of the brand, subsequently, they supposed that visiting a website that has high-quality images, detailed information about organic ingredients and farming more likely attract consumers to make purchases.

The second section delves into how BP impacts consumer behavior, or classifies different types of BP

traits to separate brands. A strong brand personality may increase consumers' willingness to follow various brand activities as well as approve of them positively ^[6]. Bairrada *et al.* continued to reveal passion, sincerity, and excitement highly close to the relationship between BP and brand love ^[6]. Online brand communities were mentioned probably being available to integrate isolated customers, linked by a brand. Nevertheless, concentrating on attractiveness and passion should be considered by companies while creating a closer proximity between their brands and consumers. Batra *et al.*, confirmed that consumers not only prefer those brands that could satisfy their functional needs and wants ^[7], but also symbolize those personality aspects that they find most congruent with their own actual or desired ("aspired to") personality associations. They also make clear that brand category context can significantly impact the meaning of brand personality descriptors; moreover, engaging in potential modification of archetypical brand personality via advertising this quite critically important to improve the personality positioning for these brands. For the same respect, Donvito *et al.* claimed that if a perceived brand personality highly coherent with consumers' personalities ^[8], that brand more likely could be selected by them, Donvito *et al.* also highlight since it is difficult for customers to resolute competitive brands' physical attributes ^[8], BP has therefore become a key strategic component of a company's marketing program. Sensory, affective, and intellectual brand experiences have positive influences on responsible brand personality ^[9]. They also found that they prefer cultivating sensory and intellectual experiences rather than affective experiences, as well as building stronger brand personalities could be assisted by intellectual experiences. Luffarelli *et al.* from the perspective of the interaction between Logo design and BP on brand equity ^[10], found merely for the brand personality of excitement and the visual property of asymmetry, the interaction between Logo design and BP could be work, Luffarelli *et al.* subsequently propose that an exciting personality probably more congruent with brands due to asymmetrical logos tend to be perceived ^[10], they can positively influence consumers' evaluations of those brands.

However, previous studies research mainly focus on various internet marketing strategies involving current agricultural economic environment, to broaden the sales of agricultural products, whereas omitted the details in brand building which involved in agricultural marketing, apart from that, the rest of studies analyzed different various traits in BP, and even clarified the relationship between BP traits and consumers' behaviors as well as mentioned measures to handle with these personalities in band design via specific aspect such as Logo design or excavating symbolic meaning of brands related to consumers' personalities, even though, they took notion of some traits of BP in brand building, while they also have been limited research the ways, on which apply to agricultural products marketing, special for inter-marketing area. This paper concentrates on the agricultural environment in China and tries to provide a more detailed examination by analyzing and defining related BP traits for marketing of branded agri-products. First step is to recognize which agri-products are more suitable for internet branding, the second is to discover proper BP traits could be choose for internet branding of agri-products in China from the perspective of agricultural producers, the third is attempt to discriminate what kind of BP traits probably more congruent with agricultural consumers' brand loyalty improving, which contribute to internet branding of agricultural products. We propose a model to integrate certain BP traits, then link with agricultural producers' behaviors and agricultural consumers' loyalty for branded agri-products from two dimensions of agricultural producers and consumers.

2. Appropriate agri-products for internet branding

To promote agri-products through internet branding, we suppose that two basic skills need to be facilitated

with Chinese rural agricultural producers. The one is an expert in applying digital financial products. Su *et al.* pointed out that it is obvious that the transaction and capital flow of online sales counterpart online purchases ^[1], digital wealth management (e.g., Yu'e Bao, and apps) and digital payments (e.g. WeChat, Alipay) makes rural farmers highly rely on them when it comes to online sales. The other one is that education level or skills training experiences are necessary to match with rural agricultural producers. Operating farming activities is exactly like running a business entity. Su *et al.* explained that highly educated and richly trained experienced agricultural products operators can enhance their business management level and react to possible existing risks promptly ^[1]. In terms of this aspect, systematic training of farmers' financial knowledge should be strengthened by the external environment, like government departments, financial institutions, schools, and social education resources in China.

Following that, we detect that the majority of agri-products are probably linked with these four features, suitable for internet branding. First of all, non-discount agri-products, from the traditional view, it is are beneficial to spread commodities with low prices, to make discounts regularly by merchants. Under the reality circumstances, commodities discounting decisions might reduce their brand value, whereas alienate the correlation between the brand and consumers, particularly in agricultural product merchandising, Ataman *et al.* reveals product, distribution, and advertising enhance brand performance, while discounts do little in the way of brand building, that brings unreliable feelings from consumers to products likely expired products ^[11]. In the short run, discounting plays a tactical role by generating strong market sensation, but it has adverse effects on brand building compared with competitors in the long term.

Secondly, agri-products which easily to distribute match internet branding, distribution, and product decisions play a major role in the (short- plus long-term) performance of brands ^[11]. Distribution acts as an indispensable part of e-commerce; likewise, sorts of ponderous agri-products, not only is it difficult to reposition, but also hard to transport, for instance, cotton, wheat as well as rice. In case of it unable to ship to consumers timely, that incredibly disadvantageous effect in internet branding, Ataman *et al.* also believed that broader distribution signals manufacturer commitment to the brand and, potentially, its success in the marketplace as well as may increase the chance of within brand price comparison across stores ^[11]. So that constructing favorable image of internet brand, dexterous and convenient agri-products such as special local wine, special local snacks (e.g. melon seeds), or special native fruits (e.g. navel orange) much better properly for internet branding, meanwhile, these types of agri-products brands could be well differentiated, even maintain higher regular prices and profits than otherwise competitive agricultural merchandise.

The third effect element related to agri-products internet branding might be ecology, health. At present, organic food is increasingly getting more and more attention from the public in China. Wang and Jiang has reported in 2019 ^[12], at the 17th China International Agricultural Products Fair, the "Catalogue of Chinese Agricultural Brands" was officially released, the number of brands reached 300, 99% of the 300 brands are public brands at the county and city level, implies current Chinese residents accelerating to focus on organic and healthy food, which was significantly crucial connect with agri-products, particularly in food industry. Jie *et al.* also convinced consumers in China are becoming more health-conscious and conscientious about their eating habits ^[5], such as including more whole grains and vegetables in their diets. Given that increasing numbers of food safety incidents occur frequently nowadays, Chinese consumers are more likely to choose high-quality, branded, ecological agricultural products. However, a large number of Chinese citizens barely acknowledge purely organic healthy agricultural food, even though the characteristics of their production methods are that they do less damage to the environment and are beneficial to health. Jie *et al.* demonstrated that although China has the

fastest expanding organic sector ^[5], customer views about organic food items via social commerce are less well understood, resulting in agricultural producers being unable to leverage online platforms properly to comprehend the aspects that impact customers' desire to acquire agricultural goods. From this point of view. In virtue of network expansion, agricultural food brands could extend the source of information to gain food protection knowledge, correspondingly, encouraging agricultural consumers to join social media forums to meet their unique requirements, which was established by agricultural brand merchants. The network marketing market of agricultural products continues to expand, and the individual demand for green, safe, characteristic brand products continues to increase ^[13]. Jie *et al.* illustrated that through these personal networks ^[5], which belong to consumers or branders, the benefits of organic food may be shown increasingly, and the consumption of organic food can be increased, as well as consumer loyalty increased. Liang complements state the opportunity for marketing agricultural products was benefited by the emergence of the model of "Internet + agriculture" ^[13]. In summary, there is an apparent tendency of internet branding for ecological and healthy agricultural food.

Last but not least agri-product that could adapt to internet branding is the one with cultural connotations. A certain agri-products owns self-culture probably can be expanded easily, an agricultural brand with its own unique history story, or its cultural background, which is quite different from other competitors. Wang and Jiang hold the view that the growth environment ^[12], cultural background and packaging of agricultural products themselves also have different degrees of influence, agricultural producers need to constantly excavate own product cultural element, tell the emerging history of the brand or unforgotten story to consumers, make the image of own brand kept in customers' mind, except that, culture source can format the value of brand, that will helpful to promote market value of agricultural products, Liang maintained the use of the cultural value of the brand ^[13], such as food customs, taste of agricultural products, customs, human history resources, can enrich the marketing content of agricultural products brand. Brand communities based on social networks might be a style of internet branding that enables promoting the agri-product brand to spread, Sihvonen noted brand communities are important as social networks that reflect how brands are embedded in the day-to-day lives of consumers and how brands connect the consumer to brands ^[14], and consumer to consumer. Through daily communication with consumers online, a related brand can be connected with consumers closely, which reinforces internet branding. Another format to foster brand culture is gamification-based online engagement, Jie *et al.* pointed that the helpful tactics for merchants to increase consumer engagement and participation is gamification-based online engagement ^[5], which can help improve online education, online brand engagement, and information system engagement, gaming interaction refers as a interesting, relaxing and cheerful involvement probably coherent agri-products brand with correspondent consumers, at the atmosphere of online interacting game, it is unconsciously make the consumers recognized and adopted the culture of the related agri-product brand, naturally, they would accept concerted agri-product brand gradually.

3. Choose BP traits for internet branding of agri-products

Brand personality (BP) is defined as the set of human characteristics related to a brand, based on an approach that results from the anthropomorphizing of the brand ^[12]. Stimulating individual characteristics to mold a commodity's marketing traits, therefore, emerge unique brand image emerges, which sticks with the consumer's loyalty, and the construction of an emotional relationship between brand and consumers is conducive to extending the popularity of the brand. Typically, agri-products brands are usually associated with some well-known region's speciality with

high quality or unique flavor (e.g. food or snacks) by some certain groups of agricultural consumers, that mostly be presented as brand attachment like emotion of homeland, which spread the region agri-products cover the country by fellow-villagers (Lao Xiang). With the rapid internet economy, BP traits analysis plays a crucial role in internet branding of agri-products. Xu *et al.* expounded that brand personality scales are made up of 42 traits ^[15], and they can be grouped into five dimensions: Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication, and Ruggedness. Appropriate BP traits need to be identified for internet branding of agri-products.

According to Bairrada *et al.* stated, sincerity acts as the score higher dimension as well as is closest to human traits in our relationships with others ^[6], which play an important role in brand marketing, agri-products are correlated to consumer's daily life closely, the high quality ecological, and environment agri-products was much emphasized by agricultural consumers. Regards to internet branding, what kind of BP traits in this dimension truly react? From the points of ^[15], three types of BP traits embraced family-oriented, wholesome, original which might be clarified for Chinese agri-products, for instance, family-oriented trait is demonstrated as some rural native rice wine or unique fruit juice, which are simply aroused memory of family reunion at some certain moment like conventional festivals, this kind of agri-products are effectively well-known by online consumers; wholesome trait obviously related to healthy and safety daily food such as organic vegetables, or daily snacks (e.g. melon seeds, peanuts), or even dessert (e.g. rice cake, candy), it exists a large amount of demands in online markets, due to the vast frontier of China, the residents of differential areas are really attracted by other's snacks; sort of handcraft products what originated from minority sections contains local particular national culture or custom probably be connected to original trait, it's more likely to promote these exquisite works via networks, those exquisite handcrafts what are made up with original materials inherit long and traditional nation's customs, origin emotions also are contained in those artworks like extraordinary ceramics as well. It is extremely convenient to make the citizens of various areas recognized via internet branding.

Bairrada *et al.* added that passion and excitement are also perceived as a dimension of BP ^[6]. We identified a unique trait that not only can make a certain brand distinguished from others via the internet, obviously, but also contributes to enhancing the consumer's loyalty. Liang claimed as well ^[13], to avoid competition and maintain consumers' loyalty to the brand, the "uniqueness" of agricultural products applied in the differentiation marketing strategy can narrow the selection range of consumers and reduce their price sensitivity.

Competence as another dimension was described by Bairrada *et al.* ^[6], concerning this dimension, reliable trait as guarantee of high quality agri-products, it is significant to enhancement of customer loyalty, no matter group of food products what daily suppliers, typically on the e-commerce platform, consumers fairly catering the whole and transparency agricultural production or manufacturing, what if take into consideration of the process of agricultural production combine with internet marketing, agricultural brands could be acknowledged across the internet.

Sustainability and environmental protection have been the mainstream topics when consumers choose their favored commodities, except for high-quality and original material merchandise; the goods, whether they possess sustainability or the function of environmental protection, are increasingly concentrated by the public. As Sander *et al.* mentioned ^[16], based on environment protection being a core dimension of sustainability and environmental sustainability advertising, it seems only logical that this dimension of brand personality should be impacted most, Sander *et al.* also believed ^[16], it probably proper to reflect increased relevance to consumers when it comes to add element of sustainability to brand personality. To shape the consumer's perception of a brand personality, online sustainability advertising generates trait inferences; it has a positive effect in the context of 'green propaganda', due to the large number of 'green' advertising messages, consumers are quite skeptical about their credibility.

Innovativeness in the field of agriculture is regarded as the last trait associated with internet branding. New agri-products are expected to activate brand switching, accelerate to shift of consumer demands, typically influenced by the internet. Wang *et al.* hold the view that brand innovativeness can influence consumer loyalty and switching behavior^[17]. Consumers who tend to innovative brands are used to regularly trying new offerings and are more likely to be faithful to them, furthermore, they are frequently exposed to new products. These brands also appeal especially to consumers who appreciate to surf on the internet, which can enrich their choices. The majority of brand innovativeness supporters undoubtedly as younger consumers, not only are they formed up domination percentage of online shopping, but also they fond of spreading their opinions on product evaluation though the communities what they approve, based on the view of Jie *et al.*^[5], when evaluating a product, a kind of social engagement created by younger consumers, they interact with others as members of a social group and solicit their opinions, which stimulated user interactions and user-generated information in several ways, such as product suggestions, customer reviews, and discussion forums. These actions enable online shoppers to make more accurate and precise agri-product brand choices, influencing their behavior toward a particular agri-product brand.

According to the results of the questionnaire survey, in the survey on the accuracy of distinguishing the different BP traits, it demonstrated that: 46.2% of consumers express general trust, 39.6% express trust, and 7.83% express complete trust, close to half of consumers trust the family-oriented trait benefit to internet branding of agri-products; similarity, 44.1% of consumers general trust wholesome trait indeed can improve customer's loyalty via internet branding, 33.1% express trust, and 5.56% express completely trust; based on **Table 1**, the rest of traits includes original, unique, reliable, sustainability and innovativeness are all revealed that the absolute strength on the proportion of consumer general trust, consumer trust and consumer completely trust respectively. Compared with the traits of family-oriented, wholesome, original, and sustainability associated with customers' loyalty improvement of online promotion about agri-products, the traits of reliability and innovativeness represent a higher occupation of consumers' trust in internet advertising on agri-products.

Table 1. Agri-product consumers' trust in BP traits towards internet branding

		Very distrustful	Distrust	General trust	Trust	Complete trust
Family-oriented	Number of people	7	10	124	106	21
	Proportion	2.61%	3.73%	46.2%	39.6%	7.83%
Wholesome	Number of people	3	8	98	97	16
	Proportion	1.35%	3.60%	44.1%	43.7%	7.21%
Original	Number of people	2	9	67	45	13
	Proportion	1.47%	6.62%	49.3%	33.1%	9.56%
Unique	Number of people	5	13	145	119	14
	Proportion	1.69%	4.39%	48.99%	40.20%	4.73%
Reliable	Number of people	4	12	167	129	13
	Proportion	1.23%	3.69%	51.38%	39.69%	4.00%
Sustainability	Number of people	2	8	129	98	25
	Proportion	0.76%	3.05%	49.24%	37.40%	9.54%
Innovativeness	Number of people	1	7	178	143	18
	Proportion	0.29%	2.02%	51.30%	41.21%	5.19%

4. A model for improving internet branding of agri-products

Based on the agricultural producers' inputs, the possible model (Figure 1) shows the above-described four agri-products that suit for internet marketing needs, matching the related BP traits respectively. Associated seven BP traits that are detect by us perhaps contribute to enhancing agricultural consumers' loyalty to certain brands, linking online shopping. Synthetically combine these two aspects, whereas achieving the final purpose, which could promote the process of internet branding of agri-products, ultimately, it attempts to make native agri-products famous across the whole nation.

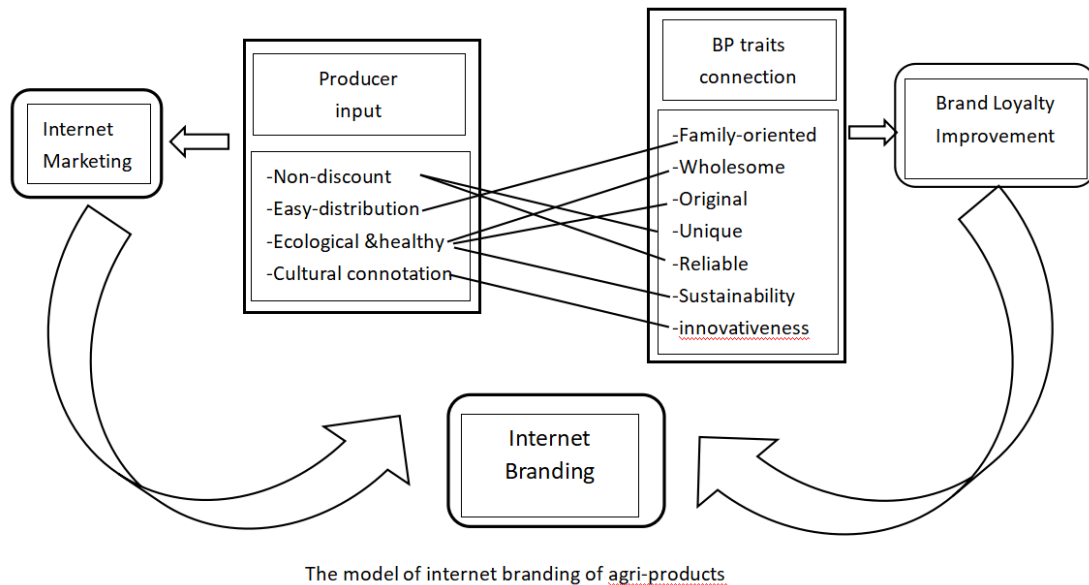


Figure 1. The model of internet branding of agri-products

Specifically, the products of Non-discounting might associated with the BP traits of uniqueness as well as reliable, non-discounting agri-products with specials of high quality or high standard, it is difficult to replace when it comes to other brands, reliability trait implies the high quality which trust by consumers, uniqueness symbolize commodities' special functions or connotation attach to consumers' trusts; Expect that, the agri-products that convenient to distribute much possible respect to the BP trait of family-oriented, at the important moment of family festivals, it is quite vital to goods shipping timely, providing celebrated goods; furthermore, well-known and general concerned agri-products by consumers of ecological and healthy merchandises, they are typically coherent with BP traits of wholesome, origin and sustainability as well, these typical BP traits demonstrate the symbolizes of healthy emphasizing, the guarantee of raw materials as well as environmental production respectively, which much simply can promote associated brand spreading; the last but not least, the BP trait innovativeness appropriate to enrich cultural connotation of agri-products, culture creativity involved in agri-products, more likely attracted young consumers' focus, additionally, the cultural connotation filled with innovativeness probably makes consumers convinced the related brand owned typical traditional history that can broader brand's effectiveness via internet.

5. Conclusion

The Chinese rural market has shown accelerated development in recent years, thanks to the general accessibility of

internet marketing, increasing numbers of agri-producers in rural areas have accepted the consciousness of internet promotion, as well as adopted various online tools. It has an extremely advantageous feature of building brand access to the internet. It is clear not that every brand of agri-products to promote via online properly, rely on our study, four kind of agricultural products have been found which suit for internet branding; in the meantime, sort of BP traits are available to enhance agricultural consumers' brand loyalty, from the two perspectives of internet marketing and consumers' brand loyalty improvement, nevertheless, It has been shown that, some concrete BP traits has close relationship to corresponding agri-products, therefore, we construct a model that congruent related agri-products with corresponding BP traits, it probably can reach the goal of internet promotion of brand for agri-products in China. However, some limitations indeed exist in our recent study, for instance, what's the degree of association between one BP trait and the corresponding agri-product? Can it achieve the expected outcome of internet branding? Whether it can show the predicted effects of the market or not, apart from that, whether this kind of model is appropriate all around the country, or merely limited to specific geographic areas. It needs further research to prove this kind of model, as well as adopting more reliable data to support further evidence.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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