

# Analysis of AY Field Brand Planning Based on Raw Milk Traceability

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**Abstract:** Mengniu and Yili have virtually monopolized the traditional Chinese dairy market, while new media marketing and digital strategies have opened up substantial business opportunities for emerging brands. Leveraging a differentiation strategy, the Adopt A Cow brand has successfully carved out its niche in the market, serving as an exemplary example. However, AY Field, as a self-owned brand by a supplier, faces the challenge of low product awareness among end consumers. This paper primarily concentrates on brand planning for the AY Field milk brand, with a focus on positioning the product for mid-range consumers, including students and office workers. The strategy involves the development of a new logo and packaging design, the selection of sports stars as brand ambassadors, and the implementation of innovative online sales promotions to bolster brand awareness and competitiveness. Research indicates that incorporating raw milk traceability and digital technology to establish a product brand with transparent ranches can significantly enhance AY Field's competitive edge, facilitating the execution of a differentiated marketing strategy.

**Keywords:** Milk; Brand planning; Supplier brand; Digital marketing

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## 1. Introduction

Founded in 2009, AY Group stands among the top five operators of dairy cattle ranches in China, enjoying a well-known status and a competitive edge in the raw milk market. In 2014, AY Group took a significant step by introducing the AY Field brand, marking its entry into the final dairy market. While benefiting from high-quality and affordable milk sources as a brand developed by suppliers, AY Field has grappled with the challenge of low brand awareness among end consumers, hindering its ability to achieve consistent sales growth.

During this period, the Adopt A Cow brand, established just in 2016, swiftly gained popularity through differentiated marketing and its unique adoption mode. In less than 5 years, it ascended to become the third-largest online brand, following closely behind industry giants Mengniu and Yili. The rapid success of the Adopt A Cow brand underscores the significance of effective brand planning and serves as a compelling model for AY Field.

Juxiang Yang conducted a statistical analysis on the impact of college students' milk consumption

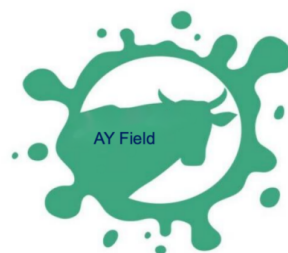
experiences on brand loyalty. The study revealed that perceived consumption experiences, behavioral consumption experiences, and investment return consumption experiences directly influence brand loyalty among college students <sup>[1]</sup>. Lili Gai and Liufang Cao attributed the success of the Adopt A Cow model to the adoption of a transparent ranches-based model <sup>[2,3]</sup>. Ning Li *et al.* empirically analyzed the main influencing factors of consumers' demand for traceable milk. The research found that variables such as food safety perception, understanding of traceable food, traceability importance, trust in certification, and concern about family and personal health significantly impact consumers' willingness to pay <sup>[4]</sup>. Liwei Wang introduced the term "cloud" to establish a factor model for consumers' evaluation of high-end milk, comparing brand awareness, usage scenarios, and value expectations for different brands of milk. He asserted that "nutrition, nature, and freshness" are the attributes that consumers associate with quality milk <sup>[5]</sup>.

## 2. Brand element design

Brand element design involves the deliberate creation of a visual brand image through the development of a cohesive system of design elements. The recognition of a brand's vision is the artistic expression of its positioning and personality, encompassing elements such as the brand name, internet domain name (URL), logo, image representative (or brand ambassadors), brand slogan, advertising music, and packaging.

### 2.1. Brand logo

The brand logo is crafted based on the company's brand slogan, "every drop of milk comes from love," and AY Field's brand values of treating each drop of milk as a piece of work, emphasizing attention to detail and striving for excellence. The goal is to create superior-quality, high-quality, reassuring, safe, fragrant, and healthy fresh milk. Illustrated in **Figure 1**, the logo features the shape of a milk drop as its background, with green symbolizing grass and cows embedded within, highlighting its raw material advantages. The adoption of irregular graphic design adds an appealing touch.



**Figure 1.** Brand logo

### 2.2. Color

Color takes center stage in brand design, as it significantly influences the psychology of the brand's audience. Therefore, the effective use of color is a pivotal aspect of design during the brand creation process. Currently, the outer packaging of AY Field is relatively monochromatic, featuring images of grassland, dairy cows, blue sky, and white clouds, with predominant colors of blue, white, green, and black, which is a relatively basic design (**Figure 2**). In this context, inspiration can be drawn from the successful differentiating strategy of the Adopt A Cow brand, which employs more sophisticated colors such as light pink and baby blue to elevate the product's perceived quality and better capture the consumers' preference.



Figure 2. Brand packaging

### 2.3. External packing

Product packaging serves not only a fundamental role in safeguarding goods and facilitating transportation but also plays a crucial marketing function. High-quality packing not only streamlines the purchasing process for consumers but also generates performance wealth for market promoters. AY Field must prioritize the design of its product packaging. Incorporating interactive content into the packaging allows consumers to emotionally connect with the brand. Opting for a simple and elegant design enhances the product's sense of luxury. A design akin to Luckin Coffee's classic blue can be adopted, leveraging co-branding advantages and increasing brand awareness. The use of a phantom cover design, which is more hygienic and convenient, aligns with the tastes of young consumers and meets the brand's market positioning.

Embracing a traceable package involves adding dynamic QR codes on both the package and bottle caps, providing each product with unique identity information for traceability of milk sources. Customers can glimpse and inquire about the immediate situation of cows and milk processing through the QR code on the packaging, covering aspects such as milk sources, sterilization, canning, and self-inspection processes. This facilitates information and data sharing, allowing for the addition of more product information to stimulate consumer interaction and provide precise feedback on promotional interaction data. Clever use of digital marketing tools and creativity can heighten brand-consumer interaction and enhance product competitiveness.

The adoption of renewable packaging aligns with global consumer preferences, as 84% claim to choose eco-friendly packaging for milk. AY Field can employ FSC<sup>®</sup> Certified or controlled renewable cardboard to reduce its carbon footprint. Using renewable plastic derived from sugarcane for bottle caps and straws, as well as opting for plant-based packing materials to replace traditional plastic coatings, contributes to a more sustainable approach. Post-consumption, paper packaging can be fully recycled and reused, transformed into eco-friendly paper and chairs through environmentally friendly technologies such as hydraulic pulp crushing, aluminum plastic separation, or plastic wood. This cycle not only promotes environmentally friendly practices but also establishes consumer trust, encouraging them to choose brands that align with their values.

### 2.4. Image representative (brand ambassadors)

AY Field, targeting young office workers and students, is advised to select sports stars as brand ambassadors. For instance, inviting the young athlete Shuyu Yang, currently serving in the Chinese women's basketball team, as a brand ambassador for endorsements and product promotion. This strategy has multiple benefits. Firstly, it enhances the visibility of the AY Field brand, allowing it to instantly capture consumers' attention through the achievements of sports stars. Secondly, it cultivates consumer brand preferences, as audiences often extend their passion for specific sports stars to the brands they endorse. Lastly, it improves consumer brand loyalty, particularly among those who have already formed brand preferences. Featuring favorite sports stars as brand

ambassadors, especially those achieving remarkable results in their field, showcases quality appreciated by consumers and further strengthens their loyalty, converting more consumers into dedicated users of the brand.

## **2.5. Brand cultural image**

Brand cultural image encompasses the recognition and assessment of a brand's culture or the overall corporate culture as perceived by the public and customers. Corporate culture serves as a concentrated manifestation of a company's business philosophy, values, ethical norms, behavioral norms, and other corporate behaviors. It also reflects a company's spiritual style and subtly influences its consumer group and employees.

In the traditional and well-established dairy market, Adopt A Cow has effectively opened a niche and established the brand image of a "digital dairy enterprise" in the minds of consumers. Drawing inspiration from this success, AY Field can implement a similar adoption model and transparent ranches. By enhancing the promotion of the slogan "every drop of milk comes from love" and employing advertising campaigns, AY Field can provide consumers with insights into AY Group's ranch information. This emphasizes its original identity as a high-quality upstream supplier, effectively targeting high-quality life seekers and mid-range consumer groups.

## **2.6. Brand reputation**

Brand reputation denotes the acknowledgment and evaluation of a brand's trustworthiness by consumers and the general public, with its essence rooted in the product's reputation. Brand reputation acts as a crucial tool for maintaining customer brand loyalty and is an integral component in preserving a brand's allure.

In response to widespread concerns regarding product quality and safety among dairy consumers, Adopt A Cow has strategically positioned itself as "not a company selling milk, but a company that raises cows for users." This approach, which differentiates itself from conventional milk-selling companies, includes initiatives such as allowing users to watch live streams of the ranch 24/7 and inviting families to engage in activities such as adopting cows and parent-child tours. The aim is to achieve transparency in the ranch. AY Field leverages digital technology to create a product brand with innovative transparent ranches, achieving visualization and transparency throughout the entire industrial chain from raw material procurement and dairy farming to milk collection and processing. This not only addresses concerns about product quality but also fosters a strong sense of trust and transparency among consumers.

## **3. Brand promotion and communication**

### **3.1. Online promotion**

Emulating the success of Adopt A Cow, digital energy was harnessed continuously to revolutionize adoption methods and introduce the "cloud adoption" model. In this innovative approach, consumers can adopt cows through gaming experiences, akin to nurturing games, providing a delightful taste of cloud cow farming in the 5G era. This not only enhances user engagement but also fosters loyalty to the brand.

Diversified interactive marketing initiatives around "food, sports, and entertainment" are implemented to continuously fortify the brand image. AY Group can engage in diverse interactive marketing centered on these three themes, intertwining the brand image with concepts of health and generosity. Active outreach to young consumer groups can be achieved through sports marketing by signing athletes as brand ambassadors or collaborating with major sports brands and platforms. In terms of entertainment marketing, AY Group can adapt to the surge in Internet media and cinema development by increasing variety show marketing and initiating movie implantations, closely monitoring shifts in consumer behavior. AY Field can further expand its audience, capitalizing on young users' preference for online shopping. By developing online sales channels on platforms



such as Tmall, JD, Pinduoduo, and WeChat, and leveraging We Media's vertical advertising, live broadcasts, and content seeding platforms, AY Field can circumvent direct competition with traditional dairy product brands and attract over 10 million young consumers.

### **3.2. Offline promotion**

Currently facing challenges with low distribution rates and fluctuating quality, AY Field needs to optimize its industrial chain and enhance product quality stability. Recruiting qualified talents to form a research and development team can significantly reduce the probability of product deterioration within the shelf life. Simultaneously, AY Field should venture into the offline market. Initially, this involves establishing specialty stores in major first-tier cities and independent counters in supermarkets. Subsequently, counters can be established in supermarkets in second-tier and third-tier cities. After securing a significant market share and achieving competitiveness, AY Field can consider joint sales with other milk product brands.

## **4. Conclusion**

In a mature market dominated by Mengniu, Yili, and others, emerging brands can still find opportunities. The success of the Adopt A Cow brand, achieved through a differentiation strategy, serves as a compelling example. AY Field should seize these opportunities, bravely confront challenges, and create a product brand with innovative transparent ranches. Utilizing digital technology, users can witness the unique advantages of AY Field's ranch conditions, fostering confidence in their purchase decisions. Targeting mid-range consumers, such as students and young office workers, with the slogan "every drop of milk comes from love," AY Field aims to carve its niche. Through a redesigned logo, packaging, and the endorsement of sports stars, online sales promotion models are innovatively utilized. AY Field can further enhance brand popularity through cross-border cooperation and collaborative initiatives with complementary dairy product brands, fostering mutual benefit. Collaborations with relevant brands possessing physical stores can also lead to the creation of innovative check-in stores, attracting more consumer interaction and bolstering user engagement.

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The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## **Author contributions**

L.Z. conceived the idea of the study. X.L. and Q.F. performed the investigations. H.D. and P.Y. analyzed the data and wrote the paper.

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