

# Opportunities and Challenges for the Future Development of New Retail in Fresh Fruits and Vegetables—Take “Hema Fresh” as an Example

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**Abstract:** In recent years, the rapid development of new retail has greatly replaced the trend of traditional retail, but with the advent of the epidemic and the post-epidemic era, as well as its own internal problems, the development of new retail has been frequently hindered. In this paper, based on the active discussion and field research of the group members, we adopt a multi-angle simulation method to study the future of new retail, and discuss the feasibility of “metaverse + new retail”, the necessity of “Internet + new retail”, and the practicality of “urban and rural structure service supply focus”.

## 1. Introduction

In the epidemic era and post-epidemic era, the traditional fresh fruit and vegetable retail model has gradually become difficult to meet the needs of the fast-paced life of the vast number of people, and its drawbacks have become increasingly prominent. In order to solve the embarrassment of consumers' procurement time and meet the new requirements of consumers for procurement services, new retail came into being. Among them, the new retail enterprises represented by Hema Xiansheng have developed rapidly in the past few years, based on high convenience, high comfort and low cost, and have a great trend of replacing the traditional retail model. However, the new retail industry began to grow slowly after a brief outbreak, and its development stagnated after the arrival of the epidemic, and most of the new retail companies that sprang up at the beginning are still struggling to live in the “muddle”. This paper briefly discusses the new retail industry after conducting field research on the development scale, service form and operation mode of “Hema Xiansheng” in Nanjing, and after surveying consumers' impressions about new retail and “Hema Xiansheng” in various places, focusing on the opportunities and challenges of new retail enterprises in the future post-epidemic era. It aims to explore how to make new retail create glory in the future development trend[1-3].

## 2. Research Background and Its Significance

In the post-epidemic era, traditional retail can no longer meet the needs of people's daily life, and new retail has come to a key node of take-off and development, and Hema Xiansheng, as the vanguard and explorer of fresh e-commerce, integrates O2O services online and offline, which has an impact on the traditional retail industry from both delivery speed and in-store product quality. Studying Freshippo's model can provide reference for other operators in the same industry, and has certain reference significance: new retail makes shopping more diversified and fragmented, and the O2O model allows users to experience consumption scenarios. New retail has also promoted further integration of online and offline, bringing a better experience to customers. How to make new retail develop its strengths and avoid its weaknesses and develop healthily in the new era has become an urgent need in the current retail industry. Therefore, it is necessary to discuss the future opportunities and challenges of new retail to ensure the long-term development of innovation and development of new retail enterprises[4-6].

### 3. Domestic and International Literature Review and Main Results

#### 3.1 Overview of Foreign Research

Zhou Yuqian (2023), inspired by the case of Hema Xiansheng's new retail, notes that an effective recommendation system is a common way to attract consumer buying behavior and thus expand the profits of platforms and retailers. With the goal of improving the interests of all parties on the platform, the evaluation system that measures the interests of consumers, retailers and platforms while improving the effectiveness of the recommendation platform is studied[7].

Chao Gao (2022) In order to further explore the role of rural ecological environment in promoting new retail formats, Chao Gao (2022) proposed a study on the mechanism of improving rural ecological environment to promote the bilateral economic interests of agricultural enterprises and farmers under new retail formats[8].

Wang Lei (2022) proposed that Tai'an City has achieved certain results in exploring the development path of "new retail", but there is also insufficient momentum for the transformation of traditional offline retail enterprises. The slow growth of residents' disposable income restricts the development of the consumer market, and the comprehensive competitiveness of large supermarkets needs to be improved[9].

Zhang Simin (2022) built a supply chain newsboy model consisting of 1 wholesaler and N retailers. Analyze how factors such as channel conversion rate, negotiation power of supply chain members, and number of retailers affect the balance between supply chain members when offline demand, online demand and cross-channel demand exist at the same time. Conclusion: The smart new retail model has quickly become a hot shopping model, and it is urgent for merchants to set up a reasonable supply chain network if they want to flourish in the new retail environment[10].

#### 3.2 Overview of Domestic Research

Xue Jing (2020) pointed out in the future of new retail of fresh agricultural products led by technology: new technologies will affect shoppers' choice of channels, products and services, and final purchases, and the trend of new retail is the integration of online and offline worlds. The innovative path under the new retail model can help customers make correct purchase decisions, reduce the time cost of comparison and selection, and improve customers' confidence in purchase and satisfaction with decisions[11].

Zhang Zhiping (2020) proposed in a report on new retail and logistics that the new retail model is flourishing with policy support, and the "new logistics" in the new retail model has become a strong support for the integration of online and offline. With consumer demand as the core and artificial intelligence technology as the technology, the new model of real-time logistics will surely become an important support for promoting the development and reform of online and offline enterprises in the future[12].

Liu Chang and Li Wenyan (2020) have learned from their research on fresh home delivery strategies: as the operators of fresh supermarkets, they must face the current situation, make changes in management, operation and logistics, and make efforts in order to exert a chain health response, reduce costs, reduce expenses, and further improve their core competitiveness[13].

Ding Lu and Xiang Hualing (2020) studied the standardization path of new retail in the post-epidemic era and concluded that the continuous development of new retail models should be standardized, healthy, orderly and good, which are inseparable from the support of standardization.

Xu Dan (2020) also pointed out after in-depth discussion of the new retail model of "online + offline + logistics": as a new business model, with the changes in the post-epidemic era, the sales model with online and offline warehousing and logistics as the core has developed rapidly, and people's shopping patterns have also changed[14].

#### 3.3 Key Results

(1) New retail innovation must consider the differences and characteristics of urban and rural areas, and take into account the needs and interests of all parties.

(2) Internet + new retail breaks the limitations of traditional offline retail, allowing people to

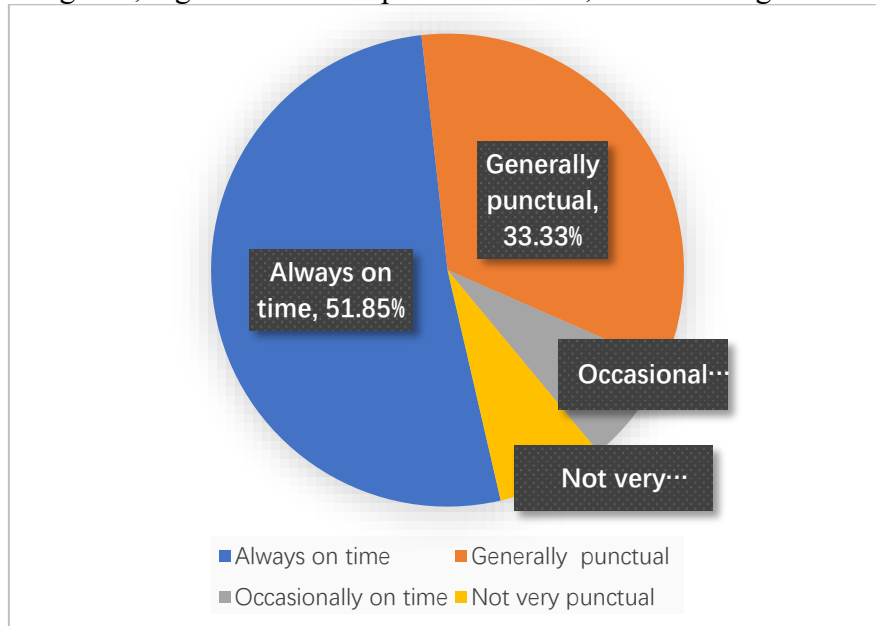
enjoy a more efficient, convenient and personalized shopping experience.

(3)Metaverse + new retail will promote the deep integration of online and offline consumption, making shopping more diversified and interesting.

#### 4. The Development and Dilemma of New Retail

##### 4.1 New Retail - the Beginning of the Rise of “Hema “Hema”

New retail is an emerging retail model in recent years, based on e-commerce technology, through the Internet, Internet of Things, big data and other technical means, the integration of online and offline sales channels, to achieve commodity information, supply chain, sales channels and other links of intelligence, digitalization and personalization ,as show in fig 1.



Source: Some questions about consumer awareness and satisfaction with Hema freshness

Fig.1 Nanjing People's Views on the Delivery Speed of Hema Fresh Food

Hema Fresh is the practice of new retail in the field of fresh e-commerce, Hema Fresh adopts the online and offline dual-channel model, opens Hema fresh supermarket offline, and creates Hema APP online. Relying on Alibaba's high-quality platform, it has built a one-stop online and offline new retail experience center of “supermarket + catering + APP + e-commerce + logistics” mainly driven by big data and advanced technology, and realized the landing of the new retail model. Featuring its “fresh and good things + sharing scenes”, Hema has gained high attention and recognition among consumers, and has risen rapidly in the fresh food e-commerce industry. Since the opening of the first store of Hema in January 2016, Hema has expanded to December 2021 With 300 stores, new stores will continue to open at an average rate of one store in two days by 2022, and Hema is regarded as a “new retail benchmark”.

##### 4.2 Consumers' Positive and Negative Views on New Retail - the Stagnation of “Hema”

The rise of new retail has subverted the traditional retail model and brought consumers a new consumption experience, and there are positive and negative views on consumers' evaluation of new retail

Positive views:

Convenience: The new retail model allows consumers to shop online anytime, anywhere, or in offline physical stores, and consumers can choose according to their own needs, which is convenient and fast.

Personalization: The new retail model can provide consumers with personalized product recommendations and services based on data such as consumers' purchase habits and historical

records to meet their personalized needs.

**Shopping experience:** The new retail model can provide a richer and more diversified shopping experience, such as virtual reality technology, intelligent shopping guide, etc., which can make consumers feel a better shopping experience.

**Negative view:**

**Personal privacy issues:** The new retail model requires consumers to provide a large amount of personal information, such as name, mobile phone number, address, bank card number, etc., and consumers' personal privacy is exposed and even causes property losses.

**Product quality issues:** Some consumers believe that the quality of goods in the new retail model has decreased compared with the traditional retail model, especially the goods on some emerging e-commerce platforms, and it is difficult for consumers to determine their true quality.

**Imperfect after-sales service:** In the new retail model, there are differences in the quality of online and offline after-sales service, especially when the goods purchased online need to be returned and exchanged, they may face problems such as cumbersome return process, long return cycle, and difficulty in refunding, which will bring many inconveniences to consumers.

Since its establishment, Hema has achieved good results, precisely because it has grasped the consumer demand of consumers who pay attention to the convenience, personalization and experience of shopping, adopted a new retail operation model, and provided consumers with more diversified and higher-quality product choices, attracting many consumers, and Hema quickly occupied the fresh e-commerce market. However, with the continuous expansion of the scale of Hema Xiansheng, Hema has also exposed many problems.

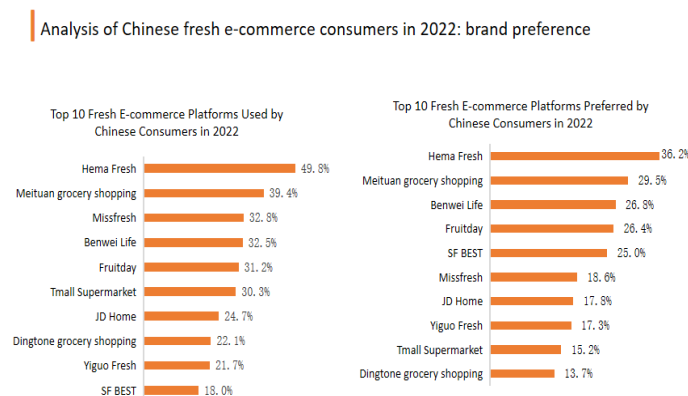
First, high operating costs. Hema needs to invest a lot of money in technology upgrading and operation management, and also needs to bear the cost of logistics, manpower, rent and other aspects, and the cost pressure is greater.

Second, service levels are uneven. Hema stores are expanding rapidly, but due to insufficient talent reserves, some stores lack professional service or management capabilities, cannot accurately identify consumers' consumption needs and preferences, and cannot meet consumers' personalized needs well, which greatly reduces consumers' sense of shopping experience.

Third, food safety problems are frequent. Since November 15, 2018, the Hema fresh label door incident occurred, and on December 6, it was again sold expired products, and then Hema was released. Food safety problems arise one after another, such as the sale of expired products, fresh fruits and vegetables, excessive heavy metals in products, excessive residues of veterinary drugs, and so on.

Fourth, the form of payment is single. Hema only accepts Alipay payments, which may cause inconvenience to older consumers, and also easily cause consumer dissatisfaction, resulting in customer loss.

### 4.3 New Retail New Representatives - the Gradual End of “Hema “ and the Healthy Development of Other New Retail Enterprises



Source: iMedia Consulting

Fig.2 Analysis of China's Fresh e-Commerce Consumers in 2022

In fig 2. In recent years, in the process of building a brand image and expanding its business, negative news has frequently broken out, and there have been many incidents of food safety problems and employee misconduct in the course of Hema Xiansheng's operation, which has aroused widespread concern and questioning from the public, resulting in great damage to its brand image. Hema Xiansheng gradually fell into a brand image crisis, which affected the brand image and user trust. During the deep brand image crisis of Hema Xiansheng, some other new retail enterprises built their own advantages to achieve healthy development, such as:

**Meituan grocery shopping:**

The delivery service is efficient and fast, Meituan Grocery cooperates with Meituan Takeaway, and with the help of Meituan Takeaway's delivery team, it can achieve fast and efficient fresh delivery services; A wide range of commodities, including fruits, vegetables, meat, seafood, etc., can meet the diversified needs of consumers; Preferential price, Meituan grocery through self-built warehousing and logistics system, cooperation with suppliers and other ways to control costs and provide more preferential prices.

**Daily Fresh:**

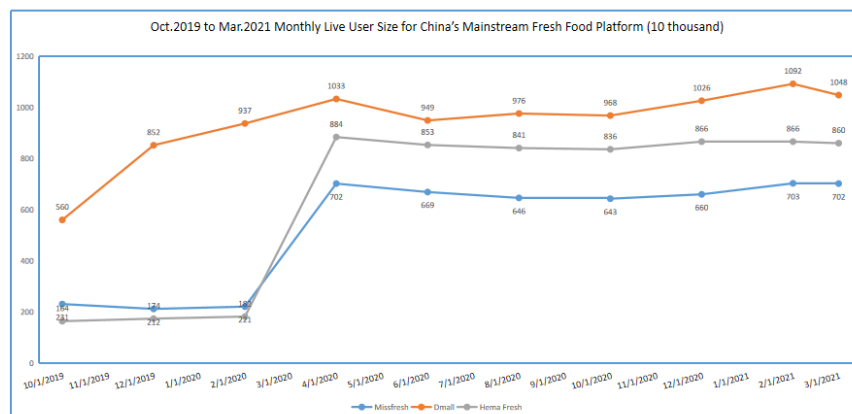
Self-built supply chain and logistics system, Daily Fresh has built its own supply chain and logistics system, which can efficiently purchase, store and distribute fresh food, so as to ensure the freshness and quality of products; High-quality products, daily fresh pay attention to the quality and freshness of products, adopt the principle of “quality first”, and strictly control the quality of products; Intelligent food selection method, through the intelligent vegetable selection system, Daily Fresh provides consumers with more convenient and efficient food selection methods, and at the same time can better grasp the needs of consumers and provide more intimate services.

**Dingtone grocery shopping:**

Supermarket + fresh model, Dingtone Grocery adopts the supermarket + fresh model, not only providing fresh food, but also providing other commodities such as daily necessities, which can meet the diversified needs of consumers; To build a localized supply chain, Dingtone Grocery cooperates with local farmers and wholesale markets to establish a localized supply chain to provide fresher and high-quality local ingredients; Fast delivery service, Dingtone Grocery cooperates with SF Express, and uses SF's express network to provide fast and efficient delivery services.

**JD Home:**

Advantages of big data analysis, JD Daojia uses its own big data analysis capabilities to analyze consumers' purchasing habits and needs, and provide consumers with more intimate services; High-quality supply chain and logistics system, JD Daojia has established a high-quality supply chain and logistics system, which can provide high-quality fresh food and efficient distribution services; Diversified services, JD Daojia provides diversified services, including online shopping, offline pickup, online payment, after-sales service, etc., to meet the different needs of consumers.



Source: iMedia Consulting

Fig.3 Monthly Life User Scale of China's Mainstream Fresh Food Platform from 2019 to 2021

In general, these new retail enterprises pay attention to product quality and service quality, establish a sound logistics and supply chain system, and use their respective advantages to meet the

needs of consumers and win the trust and support of consumers. In contrast, the brand image crisis of Hema Fresh caused it to lose the trust and support of consumers, and the era of Hema Fresh gradually came to an end as show in fig.3 .

## **5. Opportunities and Challenges for the Future Development of New Retail**

### **5.1 Opportunities for the Development of New Retail**

#### **5.1.1 Political Opportunities**

The 2023 Central Economic Work Conference made a decision to promote the key task of “focusing on expanding domestic demand”. The decision emphasizes six tasks as the main line of work, of which the recovery and expansion of consumption are placed at the core and in the first place. In January of the same year, the “14th Five-Year Plan” for the development of the digital economy issued by the State Council proposed for the first time that the national online retail sales will reach 17 trillion yuan by 2025. As the first national-level special plan in the field of digital economy in China, the Plan combines pioneering and epochal, and puts forward the requirements for guiding the digital transformation of traditional business formats, vigorously developing digital commerce, and cultivating new growth points such as new retail.

Combined with the overall market economy, on the one hand, with the gradual recovery of offline consumption, the consumer market has gradually ushered in spring. On the other hand, China has successively launched a number of stimulus policies from the central to the local level, from supervision to the financial field, striving to accelerate the recovery and growth of consumption on the basis of the economic recovery at the beginning of 2023. If new retail enterprises can formulate a strategy suitable for the development of their own enterprises, and at the same time take advantage of the recovery of consumption, they can gain market share.

#### **5.1.2 Cultural Opportunities**

The pursuit of personalization and diversification has become a new consumer trend. Under this new consumption habit, experiential consumption and personalized service adapt well to this trend change, and are welcomed by more and more consumers. Under the new trend, consumers' purchasing potential will be stimulated; The new retail industry, which is based on the advantages of the original development structure, will also more quickly and efficiently capture the market opportunities for comprehensive expansion and deepening development.

Based on the current service development of new retailers, the existing sales model will be reformed. At the transaction time level, network transactions can be carried out at any time node; At the e-marketing level, business partners are found globally based on experiential marketing campaigns. The development of commodity sales from the traditional model of relying on people or simple marketing in the past to today's global digital marketing directly reduces the operation process of each link of the new retail industry chain Costs. The use of the Internet for procurement makes communication between buyers and sellers more harmonious.

The new retail model is more in line with the development of modern society and will become the mainstream consumption mode of the consumer market.

#### **5.1.3 Regional Environmental Opportunities**

In the post-epidemic special environment and favorable policies, digital transformation has accelerated the transformation of the retail industry and ushered in a more efficient new retail era. The retail industry, which has been dormant for three years during the epidemic, has introduced a series of measures to seize the market at the beginning of the normalization of the epidemic with a keen sense of policy. Chen Lifan, a researcher at the Institute of Market Economy of the Development Research Center of the State Council, said: The potential of new consumption is great. It is mainly led by young consumer groups. Immersive, experiential consumption will burst out its vitality and potential, and some new retail enterprises will explore the potential and mode of new consumption through innovative scenarios to attract a wider range of consumers. This is both an

opportunity for the regional environment in which all new retail industries are located, and a challenge that the new retail industry will face.

#### **5.1.4 Economic Opportunities**

In recent years, the economic, policy, social and technological environment of China's retail industry has been favorable. In terms of economy, China's economic growth in 2021 will lead the world and its economic strength will be significantly enhanced. The annual GDP increased by 8.1% over the previous year, and the economic growth rate was among the highest among the world's major economies; The total economic volume reached 114.367 trillion yuan, exceeding 110 trillion yuan, ranking second in the world, accounting for more than 18% of the global economy; The per capita GDP is 80,976 yuan.

In 2022, China's online retail market will grow steadily overall. According to data from the National Bureau of Statistics, the national online retail sales will be 13.79 trillion yuan in 2022, a year-on-year increase of 4%. Among them, the online retail sales of physical goods were 11.96 trillion yuan, a year-on-year increase of 6.2%, accounting for 27.2% of the total retail sales of consumer goods. From January to November, the total retail sales of consumer goods 399554 billion yuan, an increase of 13.7% year-on-year, an increase over January to November 2019 8.2%. Among them, retail sales of consumer goods other than automobiles 360339 billion yuan, an increase of 14.0%. In the first half of the year, the retail sales of 100 key large-scale retail enterprises in China increased by 22.5%, and the scale of the global retail industry will reach 27 trillion US dollars by 2021. It is predicted that by 2035, artificial intelligence can bring 3 6% to the new retail industry, worth more than 2 trillion yuan Additional growth of the US dollar.

### **5.2 The Challenges of New Retail Development**

#### **5.2.1 Corporate Finance**

**Quasi-financial financing:** The rapid development of new retail enterprises and the expansion of consumption channels mean that enterprises need more products to maintain online and offline operations, but enterprises often do not have sufficient funds to pay in time, so they need to be financed.

In the development of new retail enterprises, due to unreasonable financing methods, the imbalance of the debt structure will often be caused, thereby increasing the financing risk.

**Supply chain financing:** In recent years, in view of the current situation of fresh e-commerce financing difficulties, the method of fresh e-commerce supply chain financing has been proposed, although this financing model can help enterprises develop comprehensively in the short term, but its weak supply chain financing foundation and high financing risks will lead to the failure of enterprise development.

**Weak financing foundation:** fresh products lack relevant financial support and preferential policies, which can only come from tax exemptions and subsidies for some products, so it is difficult to enjoy policy preferences in the development process of enterprises.

**High credit risk:** Most of the supply chain nodes are small and medium-sized enterprises or even self-employed, and these enterprises are small in scale and low in management, resulting in incomplete information of the enterprises themselves. Moreover, individual enterprises will deliberately beautify their financial status, resulting in serious information asymmetry, resulting in high credit risk of supply chain financing.

#### **5.2.2 Legal Dilemmas**

The operating model of new retail enterprises requires a lot of capital investment, and if you want to seize market share and carry out large-scale marketing, the investment cost will be too high, resulting in profits being greatly compressed, and even a loss for a long time, but in order to obtain more financing, and shape a good image of enterprise prosperity, there will be enterprises to create false sales data to whitewash financial statements.

**Responsibility for commodity quality problems:** the positioning of new retail enterprises is

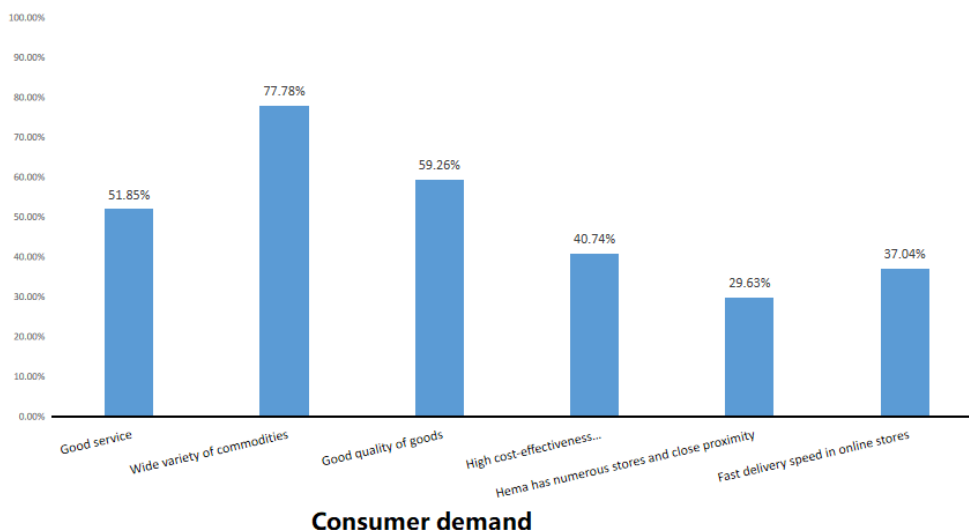
higher, and the high quality of goods is one of the reasons why consumers are willing to pay for their higher prices, and modern people generally pursue higher quality, in order to ensure the quality of goods, the responsibility for commodity quality problems is particularly important.

Risks of face recognition technology: In the early stage of the development of new retail, face recognition technology was mainly used in store monitoring and cross-regional management of employees; After that, new retail will deploy unmanned sales cabinets and self-service cash registers and other equipment in physical stores to achieve unmanned retail, and in this process, it is necessary to verify face information to achieve face payment.

Risk of data interaction with third parties: Data interaction between new retail enterprises can be divided into two scenarios: interaction between internal and external third parties. Data interaction within the group is also prevalent in traditional retail enterprises, than Easier to control. Data interaction with third-party partners accounts for a large proportion of new retail enterprises. New retail needs to connect different smart devices, and most of the relevant technologies come from third-party service providers. Some new retail enterprises have a large demand for customer data, and their own information channels are not enough to fly, so they must obtain some personal information through cooperation with third-party platforms with rich customer data.

### 5.2.3 Consumer Market

In fig.4, Consumer demand: Consumers rarely get personalized recommendations and suggestions in the offline shopping experience, but with the potential changes in consumers' expectations of products, single products and services cannot fully meet consumers' recognition of self-worth. Therefore, in the new retail period, consumers will pay more attention to personalized experience, if new retail enterprises cannot provide targeted recommendations and omni-channel personalized services that meet consumer expectations, they will not be able to make consumers truly recognize the brand, nor can they resonate with the emotions of target consumer groups.



Source: Some questions about consumer awareness and satisfaction with Hema freshness

Fig.4 Consumers' Satisfaction with Hema Fresh Service is Biased

Mismatch between business types and mass consumer groups: Existing business types have only attracted a very small number of consumer groups, and most of the consumer groups have not changed their consumption behavior. The phenomenon of Chinese consumer stratification is obvious, China's distribution channels are very complex, different consumer groups have established purchase channels that are accustomed, and new retail cannot iterate traditional retail in the short term.

Especially for new retail enterprises such as Hema Fresh for the high-end market, and also need a special APP for payment, only those who have a high pursuit of quality of life and can adapt well



to modern technology can accept this new retail model, and the consumer group is only a small part of the public.

## **6. Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **6.1 Conclusion**

Innovation is the key to the success of new retail, and only continuous innovation can keep up with consumer needs and market changes.

Innovative new retail requires cross-border cooperation, technological innovation and multi-party collaboration, and continuously improves consumer satisfaction and experience through continuous trial and improvement.

In order to continue to develop in order for new retail, it needs to focus on the novel design of stores, effective innovation of supply chain, social marketing methods and personalized professional recommendations. Grasp the details while waiting for opportunities, and overcome difficulties and challenges before moving to new heights of the future.

### **6.2 Recommendations**

(1) The city focuses on “comfort”, the countryside focuses on “affordability”, and the new retail is “new” in the experience and way

People in cities pay attention to the quality and comfort of life, so the retail industry in cities must also ensure the quality of products and services. The retail industry in the city generally adopts high-end design and decoration, providing more brands and choices to meet the requirements of urban people for consumer experience.

Country people pay more attention to practicality and value for money, and price and quality are the main considerations for their purchases. In rural areas, retail often features simple and functional design and finishes, offering more affordable prices and more local options.

The innovative sales model of new retail, which integrates online and offline sales channels, combines data and technology to provide a more intelligent, personalized and efficient service experience, which can meet the diversified needs and personalized needs of modern consumers for shopping.

(2) “Internet + new zero sale”, make full use of fragmented time, and act when you move

A new business model that integrates Internet technology and offline physical stores. Under the model of Internet + new retail, consumers can purchase, place orders, pay and other operations through various digital channels (such as online shopping malls, mobile applications, social media, etc.), while offline physical stores are given more experience and service functions, such as product display, brand promotion, after-sales service, etc. The emergence of this business model breaks the limitations of traditional offline retail and allows people to enjoy a more efficient, convenient and personalized shopping experience.

Internet + new retail is the main trend and development direction of the current new retail industry, which means combining Internet technology with physical retail, opening up online and offline channels, and providing a more comprehensive, convenient and intelligent consumer experience.

“Metaverse + New Retail”, ingenious “new” retail

Metaverse + New Retail is a business model that combines metaverse technology with a new retail model. The metaverse is a virtual, global, three-dimensional digital space where people can interact, communicate, and do business. Under the metaverse + new retail model, consumers can purchase and place orders through the metaverse virtual mall, while offline physical stores serve as product display and experience centers to provide more personalized services and extended experiences. The emergence of this business model will promote the deep integration of online and offline consumption, making shopping more diversified and interesting.

The combination of the metaverse and new retail could revolutionize the retail industry. With the changing needs of consumers and the continuous development of technology, metaverse products

and services have gradually become popular, and the interaction and coexistence have gradually been enhanced, which provides a better foundation for the combination of metaverse and new retail.

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