

Chinese marriage websites: Research on the word-of-mouth marketing strategies of Singles Village

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Abstract. Internet Word of Mouth (IWOM) is a positive or negative review of a particular product, service, or company posted and disseminated online by consumers using the Internet. Compared to traditional word-of-mouth, IWOM is characterised by its speed of dissemination, its wide reach and its negative impact on companies. Word-of-mouth marketing based on IWOM is a profound change in marketing history and represents a future trend in marketing development. Research on IWOM is still in its infancy, and relevant results are scarce. This paper starts with an analysis of the characteristics of IWOM and its communication features in the online environment, discusses in depth the application of IWOM objects and communication channels in the dating website Single Valley, and points out the differences between its traditional word-of-mouth communication. For IWOM channels, the paper delves into their classification, implementation forms, influencing factors and key points; for IWOM objects, the paper defines their connotations and principles of acquisition and processing. The business model of word-of-mouth marketing in the online environment and its impact on consumers is also categorised and analysed. Finally, the case of Single Valley is analysed about the reasons for the success of IWOM in this case. Based on this, the strengths and weaknesses of IWOM are presented, and the trends of IWOM are predicted. The above research will help companies gain a clearer and more comprehensive understanding of the importance, characteristics, and trends of word-of-mouth marketing in the online environment and help marketing organisations develop effective IWOM strategies based on specific consumer groups.

Keywords: Chinese, Marriage websites, Singles Village, Word-of-mouth, marketing strategies.

1. Introduction

1.1 Research background

There are two main channels for ordinary consumers to obtain product information. One is the various mass media advertisements made by production or marketing enterprises. However, faced with the daily barrage of advertising, consumers' perception is gradually numb. In addition, a lot of false advertising information causes more harm to the consumer's trust in advertising, further reducing the status of advertising in the eyes of consumers. Word-of-mouth communication is different from advertising and signifies those consumers have a high level of satisfaction with a good product or service from a company [1]. Companies with good word-of-mouth are often recognised and supported by the public. When a company has earned good word of mouth, its popularity and reputation will gradually increase, and its corporate image will be enhanced [2]. The general approach to word-of-mouth marketing is to select mass opinion leaders or those consumer groups who like new things and are happy to talk about their new discoveries so that they get the benefits of the company's products first, like them, and volunteer to promote them.

A dating site is usually a professional website that provides users with the service of finding marriage partners with the help of a network communication platform. It has developed along with the popularisation of the information revolution, the continuous progress of network communication technology, security technology and payment mean, and the continuous development and expansion of internet users.

1.2 Literature review

The theory of weak links is derived from six degrees of separation. Relationships between close friends are strong links, on the understanding that strong links are relationships that occur regularly,

are lasting, and are full of affection [3]. Weak links are distant relationships that occur occasionally. Weak links play a key role in socialising and getting more new information, and it is important to make the most of them and work on building a large number of them. Ties of events and topics increase the interaction of weak links, such as thematic topics, to maintain links and expand new nodes.

The development of dating sites in Europe and the United States has progressed in three stages: the beginning of the concept and the formation. The concept of a dating site is different from the previous online presence, with a serious view of dating with the goal of marriage independent of ordinary online dating and the attention of those who need marriage. But for the majority of people, it is still a new and not very daring thing to try [4]. The second stage in the process of slow acceptance of the concept is that the site's dating products and services begin to take shape. After the dating site into the public eye, the service and operating models are becoming increasingly mature, and the operating model is also becoming more mature. The third stage is when the dating site comes into maturity, and the site's services expand and become more profitable and stable. As people become accepting, the advantages of online services come to the fore, and companies begin to shape their brands and rely on them to enter the entire marriage derivatives market.

1.3 Research gap

The development of China's marriage market website is still very immature. The industry lacks enough government regulation and the supervision of industry self-regulatory associations, resulting in the uneven quality of various new and small dating platforms. In terms of marketing strategy, many marriage platforms, including some influential platforms, still adopt the way of SMS bombing and advertising [5]. This kind of marketing strategy cannot only make potential consumers realise the platform's advantages but also annoy them. On the contrary, it reduces the impression of the marriage website in the minds of ordinary consumers [6]. There is a lack of relevant research on using appropriate marketing means to enhance the marriage network, standing on the actual way to get customers and enhance their social image [4]. This is also the focus of this research institute. The concept of reputation marketing is developed in developing the Chinese marriage platform, thus exploring a method of effectively enhancing the marketing effect of the marriage and love website.

1.4 Research framework

The framework of this research will first introduce the concept of word-of-mouth marketing and then select a start-up as the focus of the research. Then this research will select other platforms in the Chinese marriage industry, exploring the use of word-of-mouth marketing to demonstrate further the application of word-of-mouth marketing in improving the marketing efficiency of Chinese marriage websites.

2. Method

The main research object of this Institute is Singles Village, which is a start-up new star dating platform. This research will adopt a combination of literature research, case research, comparative research, and interdisciplinary methods. It will collate and analyse a large amount of literature related to the object. The research was conducted by sorting out and summarising the connotations of the research object, defining the concepts related to dating websites, and sorting out the relevant theories simultaneously. In addition, four influential and industry-representative websites are selected for research using a case research approach to enrich the research and provide an effective basis for the research.

This research uses a combination of the following research methods. First, the literature research method collects, composes, and reviews relevant works and literature references and summarises them. In particular, the research focuses on the operation of social networking sites and the advanced experiences and research results of foreign dating sites. We have drawn on relevant ideas and problem-solving concepts through the research and analysis of literature and data to find a strong

foothold, a starting point, and a breakthrough for the thesis. Secondly, the case research method is used to analyse and research four representative websites in the industry from multiple perspectives. This research identifies and summarises the rules, the communication methods and characteristics of dating websites, and the existing operation models from theoretical and practical levels.

In order to make a targeted comparison of the application of word-of-mouth marketing in the marriage market, this study will also select some representative websites in the Chinese marriage market as reference objects. Only websites that have influence and representativeness in the industry can be the subject of research, and only then will their research be valuable and meaningful. Concerning the industry ranking and various data, the author chose four representative websites from the industry, namely CenturyJiaYuan.com, ZhenAi.com, MarryMe.com, and Baihe.com, as the research subjects for the overall competitiveness and influence.

3. Result

3.1 Current analysis

Singles Village was originally designed to help highly educated older singles. So at first, Singles Village's market was mainly focused on campuses, especially among people with a master's degree, and the success rate of matching highly educated singles was also very high. The Singles Village has captured that young people with higher education spend most of their time studying and have less time socialising and a narrow dating circle. Still, they have different ideological perceptions, which has greatly increased the success rate of matching between them.

3.2 Problem analysis

However, as the number of Singles Village members registered on the website grows and the variety of members grows, Singles Village's market niche is becoming increasingly blurred. For example, when members register with Singles Village and fill in their basic information, they are automatically matched with members of the opposite sex. Still, they are not selected based on the selection criteria. Although Singles Village offers a wide selection of opposite sexes on the system, this takes much time and reduces the success rate of matches. Today, Singles Village has many registered members but does not have a precise user profile and does not provide a better service by segmenting members according to their profiles.

The dating site is a new service industry, its fees are not strictly regulated, but Singles Village is considered one of the more regular sites. Singles Village's online fees are mainly the monthly fee for sending and receiving messages and some exclusive online VIP service fees. These fees are still relatively expensive for the average member, mainly because the monthly message fee is likely to be used a few times after the monthly service. It is not certain that the other party will also handle the monthly service and receive the message after sending it out. In the long run, members will be reluctant to continue with such a monthly service. The offline fees are mainly exclusive one-on-one service, through communication with the member, to define the difficulty of the member's conditions and requirements to choose a spouse to set the price. Offline VIP fees are even more chaotic, with no standard pricing. The offline VIP service is only a selection of eligible matches for members to choose from, and the number of matches offered varies according to the price charged. Still, it is only a recommendation, and there is no guarantee of a successful match.

4. Discussion

Marketing promotion taps into as many potential users as possible to learn about and visit the website. Users gain information about the product and the company to support the eventual formation of a purchasing decision. This kind of promotion can be divided into two main categories: one is an internal promotion, i.e. doing a good job of retaining customers through their own user experience. The other type of promotion is external, i.e. using diverse online and traditional media to tap into potential customers. Inward promotion for existing customers increases the user stickiness of the

promotion, which is mainly the construction of the marriage website itself. Potential customers can find a dating site through the Internet or print media. Still, it will take some promotion to attract these customers to become registered members of the site and log on and use it regularly. In terms of registration, all dating sites, without exception, state that registration is free, as the number of registrations is a very important metric for the site. The marginal cost of increasing the number of registered members is extremely low, so the more people sign up, the more revenue the site will gain. In addition, Single Valley may partner with other businesses to facilitate registration with other online products. For some users on the fence, this small convenience may be why choosing the site. The site's messaging is a way to keep users in the loop. The messaging on dating sites combines information that may interest users and general advertising messages. This attracts the user's attention on the one hand and achieves its desired promotional purpose. The user may happen to follow the advertising message and purchase a service or participate in an event.

Traditional media promote the traditional mass communication method through some mechanical device to regularly release information or provide educational and entertainment communication activities to the public, including television, newspapers, radio, and magazines. For example, dating websites holding large offline events are often a hot topic for newspaper and television news coverage. Matchmaking websites cooperate with matchmaking programmes on various TV stations, with the websites providing guest candidates for the matchmaking programmes and advertising on the programmes. The founder or CEO is a guest on the talk show, sharing their struggles or successes while promoting their corporate philosophy and objectively achieving the website's purpose. Compared to traditional media, online media has the advantage of high credibility and a wide audience. The main ways are search engine promotion, online advertising, mobile platforms, and the use of other social platforms.

Most users enter a dating site through the search engine on the dating site of a keyword search to get the search results of the link, rather than directly searching the site. And, therefore, how to get a higher ranking on the search engine to become a major dating site network promotion of the key links. So the major dating sites are search engine optimisation, the relevant keywords in the search engine to do a little optimisation so that the site ranked as high as possible, to bring the relevant conversion of enterprises [7]. Network advertising mainly refers to search bidding ads, pop-up ads and soft ads. Search bidding advertising refers to a company's information being given to search engines as a keyword. Potential users who need to search for that keyword can rank the company's information above the general search results alone. Pop-up advertising is where information about a website pops up in a window or page when a user clicks on another page. However, because the user's wishes do not dictate the pop-up, it has a negative effect and damages the website's image. Soft advertising refers to the site's promotion from the perspective of ordinary members, such as writing articles with good comments about the site or recommending the site to questioners on Q&A platforms. A mobile platform is a dating site where users can log on and participate in dating activities anytime and anywhere with the help of a mobile client.

Nowadays, the main force of marriage has gradually changed from the 80s to the 90s, and the traditional model of marriage introduction and dating websites can no longer fully attract this particular generation of 90s. The 90s have been in contact with the Internet since birth. Their daily life, study and work are closely related to the Internet, and they have a strong ability to accept new things and like to try new things, which is a huge opportunity for all the already existing. This is a huge opportunity for all the existing dating sites and those who want to join the ranks of dating sites, but it is also a challenge. With mobile terminals replacing PC terminals, a mobile phone can go everywhere. Mobile terminals have become the main source of traffic for most contemporary industries. The domestic dating site market has also seen another big increase in data, while competition between the same industry is getting fierce. Developing a mobile dating website APP requires very strong technical support, which requires wedding websites to invest money and introduce high-tech talents. Most dating websites have also launched mobile dating websites, APPs, [8]. Executive Officer said, "Mobile companies will move from the mobile era to the AI era." Our

society has entered the era of artificial intelligence, and in the era of artificial intelligence, big data and blockchain will become the new way of dating websites. The major dating sites have also introduced many innovations in their service models. For example, Single Valley has added financial services to improve the experience of its members on the Single Valley mobile APP. Recommendation of matches has become a way for major dating sites. Several major dating sites such as Single Valley and Lily.com have invested heavily in developing a recommendation algorithm that is most reliable and acceptable to members, allowing them to find the best matches. The dating sites are also adding games to create a relationship atmosphere for their online members through games. Most people have a positive and optimistic attitude towards using AI on dating sites, and there is much interest in dating sites that use AI [9]. Obviously, in the age of AI, the only way for a dating site to not be eliminated by the long river of history and win in the fierce competition is to continue innovating and keeping up with the times.

The goal of a marketer attempting to run a successful viral campaign is to first identify people with high social networking potential and then create a viral message that appeals to this segment of the population and has a high probability of being captured by competitors. Once the viral message reaches a susceptible user, the latter then accepts the idea contained in the message. The user then shares the message with others in their social circle, infecting them. As long as each infected user shares the message with at least one other susceptible user on average, the number of infected people will grow exponentially. Of course, the above analysis is only an ideal scenario. However, even if the rate of spread does not reach the speed of viral contagion, the campaign may still be successful on a large scale if other marketing techniques are used to keep it shared from user to user. In the absence of more information, headlines are the key to getting information in a community noticed by web users. When users choose to browse, they are more interested in the novelty of the headline or the information that fits their personal needs due to their curiosity and inertia. Positive word-of-mouth promotion means that the first step to successful marketing is to choose a word-of-mouth target that is unique and original in its presentation and that can attract the attention of consumers.

The most important feature of word-of-mouth communication in online communities is the flow from bottom to top, the so-called grassroots effect. The number of comments indicates the extent to which consumers are concerned about the product and the marketing campaign's success. User reviews often reveal the product's true selling points and possible flaws, as expressed by the market response [10]. Products with more intense reviews are more likely to gain the attention of consumer groups. Once the group's attention has been generated, it is the first step to successful marketing, regardless of the objective content of the reviews concerning the product, whether positive or negative.

For businesses, dealing with a negative word-of-mouth presence can be prevented beforehand, and crisis communication afterwards. In the traditional environment, prevention beforehand has always been a far superior approach to crisis communication. This fact has not changed in the online environment and has become even more apparent [11]. The Internet itself is a multiplying stimulus for marketing activities. Still, it is also a double-edged sword: it can dramatically increase the effectiveness of positive word-of-mouth communications while at the same time intensifying the damaging effects of negative word-of-mouth. In the online era, the gap between the effectiveness of precautionary and post-crisis communication methods in eliminating negative word-of-mouth has not been reduced or blurred, but rather the difference between the two has been further widened. In terms of prevention, the company's ethical self-discipline is always paramount. The anonymity of the participants in online marketing presents many temptations for companies' marketing organisations: spreading word-of-mouth information in the guise of consumers can lead to maximum marketing results at minimal cost; promoting a product highly above its actual quality can lead to direct financial benefits; using misleading publicity can directly control consumer trends, etc. [12]. No matter how good the risk prediction mechanism, no matter how good the crisis communication mechanism, etc., it will be of no use if the company does not build up its sense of social ethics and social responsibility. Maintaining an honest and responsible attitude towards business is the most effective mechanism to avoid and counteract negative word-of-mouth. It is the least costly way to control word-of-mouth risk.

In terms of post-crisis communications, companies should always maintain an honest attitude towards consumers, no matter how they handle them [13]. Whether it is a malicious attack by a competitor, a flaw in their operations, or even a bad decision, continuing to take a chance or deceive is only likely to lead to greater disaster. On the contrary, by being honest with the public, even if the company itself does not recover financially, it can help rebuild its credibility and reputation and win the possibility of continued growth.

5. Conclusion

This paper combines literature, participant observation and case study methods, and long-term observation and research through personal registration and use of the Single Valley.com dating site and communication with senior members, collecting and researching information. Over the course of nearly a year, I was able to gain a better understanding of the process and operations of Single Valley.com. By registering members on Single Valley by gender and identity, we could better understand how people of different genders, industries and education levels perceive Single Valley and why they use it. A series of comparative studies of the data collected can lead to the following four marketing strategies that need to be rectified: accurate targeting of users, improvement of the fee model, strengthening of the real name audit, and continuous exploration of innovative service models.

The above is the full content of this article. Although this study has had direct experience with Single Valley's website for some time, it also needs to be studied. However, as the author's age, experience, and ability are limited, so I cannot analyse the marketing strategy of the Single Valley dating website comprehensively and profoundly. There are very few monographs and professional literature to draw on, and there are many shortcomings in Single Valley's marketing strategy research and much room for improvement. However, it is hoped that this paper will provide some assistance in understanding the marketing strategies of Single Valley and other dating sites and making better use of them to choose a spouse.

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