Study on the Marketing Strategy of “7 Days Inn” Based on the New Media Perspective

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Abstract. With the vigorous development of domestic economy and tourism industry & the increasing popularity of mobile Internet technology in hotel industry, the development speed of economical chain hotels is also greatly improved, and the market competition is becoming more and more fierce. As the representative of economical chain hotels, 7 Days Inn is facing severe challenges, but it is also full of unlimited development opportunities. Based on the investigation of the new media marketing of 7 Days Inn, this paper has analyzed the problems existing in the new media marketing of 7 Days Inn, and finally put forward the corresponding countermeasures.

Keywords: New Media, Economical Hotel, Marketing, Strategy

1. Introduction
With the rapid development of Internet technology, all kinds of utility software are flooded in our daily life. As consumers, we can easily use mobile phone APP, enterprise website, WeChat official account and other extremely convenient ways to book any services we need. In this era of “Internet+”, economy hotels should make full use of a variety of social software, self-media, official APP and other tools in order to fully improve their popularity, reputation and customer loyalty [1]. As an important representative of economical chain hotels, 7 Days Inn is facing severe challenges, but also full of unlimited opportunities. Although the Internet integrated marketing of 7 Days Inn isn’t perfect, but with the economic globalization and the continuous development and promotion of new media technology in the world, the marketing activities of 7 Days Inn can certainly adapt to the changes of this era. From the perspective of new media marketing, combined with the needs of the most important marketing activities of enterprises, this paper will combine the new media marketing with the marketing status of 7 Days Inn, and comprehensively apply various analytical methods to find the existing problems of 7 Days Inn under the background of “Internet +” in our country, and through the analysis of related problems, the feasible countermeasures will be obtained in order to enhance the brand competitiveness and influence of 7 Days Inn, thus improve its market share.

2. Necessity of Applying New Media marketing for “7 Days Inn”
The 7 Days Inn Group, founded in 2005, has more than two thousand stores in nearly three hundred cities throughout the country. According to a three-quarter report released by Shanghai Jinjiang
International Hotel, the total number of 7 Days Inn Group’s Chain hotels was 2229 in the first three quarters of 2019, 97 fewer than last year, and 2326 hotels in 2018, 142 fewer than 2017. In less than two years, 239 hotels of 7 Days Inn Group’s Chain hotels were closed [2] (Table 1). With the entry of foreign hotel brand OYO into the Chinese market, the market share of Home Hotel, Hanting Hotel and 7 Days Inn, which is located in the top three of China’s top 10 hotel brands, have also been greatly squeezed. In 2018, the market share of the above three major chain hotels were 7.43%, 6.88% and 6.59% respectively, while their market were respectively 5.62%, 5.32% and 4.85% in 2019. Compared to last year, declining 1.81%, 1.56% and 1.74% respectively (Table 2). These indicates a decline in the profitability of the 7 Days Inn. Till January 1, 2019, the number of OYO hotels is 5656, with 270785 rooms, far more than Home Hotel, Hanting Hotel and 7 Days Inn. With the rapid development of Internet economy in our country, “Internet +”, “WeChat, WeiBo, WeSee and Mobile client”, “big data” and so on are no longer new words, and the emergence of new media has also provided a new way for marketing. With the OYO hotels, which does not charge franchised fees, and various major online tourism platforms opening up the home stay field, the third-party online service agents represented by Ctrip and Ali Flying Pig dominating the online market, to now more popular WeiBo, WeChat H5 marketing, the market share of traditional hotels will be gradually squeezed, the brand competitive advantage of 7 Days Inn is also declining. In order to make the 7 Days Inn adapt to the changes of new era, its marketing activities should be more deeply integrated into the Internet thinking, and further enrich the relevant theories and means of hotel marketing. Through the investigation and analysis of the development characteristics of hotel industry at home and abroad in the new media age, it can be found that the new media marketing can play an active role on forming a two-way communication mode between the hotel and the consumer [3], maintaining the hotel’s image [4], reducing marketing cost [5], increasing internet thinking and improving marketing ability.

### Table 1. Financial data for the “7 Days Inn” from 2017 to 2019

| Time (year)       | Number of hotels | Increase or decrease(number) | Increase or decrease (%) |
|-------------------|------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 2017              | 2468             | /                            | /                        |
| 2018              | 2326             | -142                         | -5.8                     |
| 2019(End of Sep.) | 2229             | -97                          | -4.2                     |

(Source: Shanghai Jinjiang International Hotel Co., Ltd., 2017-2019 Quarterly Report, Annual report and China Hotel Chain Development and Investment Report)

### Table 2. Market share of the three major hotel chains in 2018

| Brand           | 2018 market share (%) | 2019 market share (%) | Increase or decrease (%) |
|-----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Home Inn        | 7.43                  | 5.62                  | -1.81                    |
| Hanting hotels  | 6.88                  | 5.32                  | -1.56                    |
| 7 Days Inn      | 6.59                  | 4.85                  | -1.74                    |

(Data source: China Hotel Chain Development and Investment Report)

3. The Existing Problems and Causes of the New Media Marketing of “7 Days Inn”

3.1 Its Internet Marketing Channels Lack Characteristics

The 7 Days Inn’s booking mode includes focusing on applying WeChat service number “Plateno Meeting”, Plateno app, and the 7-day official website to reserve and pay through WeChat channel. However, in the new media era, online marketing channels emerge endlessly, Meituan, Ctrip, Yilong, Qunar and other online platforms are very competitive in hotel reservation market. In a questionnaire survey of 7 Days Inn’s customers (table3), it was found that the number of customers booked by its own Internet marketing platform was far less than the number booked through third-party platforms such as Meituan and Ctrip. When it uses the third-party platform to replace its own Internet marketing platform, this causes it to rely too much on the third-party platform. Although the third-party platforms can help it increase sales channels, these consumers recognize the operators of third-party platforms,
not itself, and it isn’t easy to convert these consumers into its own customers [6]. And because of cooperation agreement between the hotel and the third party platform, it not only has to provide room source for the operator at a lower price, but also a certain proportion of agency commission will be extracted by the operator for each room sold, which reduces the profit that it can make. In the process of its operation, the proportion of customers from third-party platforms is very large, which has a negative impact on the management and control of its customer sources and the release and promotion of its Internet marketing activities.

Table 3. Questionnaire result

| Platform            | Score |
|---------------------|-------|
| Meituan             | 2.6   |
| Ctrip               | 2.2   |
| Yilong              | 1.8   |
| 7days online platform| 1.4   |
| Qunar               | 1.2   |
| Other               | 0.8   |

(Source: questionnaire)

3.2 The Neglect of Details Affects Consumption Experience of Consumers
Firstly, the 7 Days Inn lacks marketing creativity and discussion highlights on how to use social media platform to publish its information, and is deficient in how to attract customers’ attention and how to improve the initiative of consumers to participate in marketing activities. Secondly, the feedback information of consumers isn’t paid enough attention to, and the feedback of consumers isn’t timely rectified effectively, so it is difficult to promote its management level and service quality. In a word, there are obvious deficiencies in the interaction between hotels and customers on social media and the maintenance of social media in the later stage, whether in terms of the speed of solving consumers’ problems or the attention paid to the feedback information of consumers.

3.3 Its Brand Competitive Advantage Is Weakened
With the gradual fading of the upsurge of economical hotels, a large number of domestic economical hotels have problems such as oversupply, weak profitability, lack of characteristics of products and services, and so on. The 7 Days Inn was also hit by a number of “sanitary doors” incidents, with continuing negative news (table 4) such as washing bed sheets with unqualified chemicals and wiping toilets with guest room’s towels [7] on the Internet. In November 2019, it is even entitled 3. “7 Days Inn closed more than 200 hotels in two years” on WeiBo hot search. Such frequent revelations of sanitation incidents will have a great impact on its brand image. In response to these negative news, it did not use the new media platform properly and timely to release relevant statements and announcements to consumers to clarify the facts, and didn’t give consumers a good reply, nor show its attitude on attaching importance to its sanitation management, which have greatly affected its image in consumers’ mind.

Table 4. Negative news about the 7 Days Inn

| Time    | Events                                                                 |
|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2018.12 | Inside story of washing bed sheets with unqualified chemicals            |
| 2019.02 | The phenomena of wiping toilets with guest room’s towels has been pointed out by consumers. |
| 2019.05 | It was down graded in the sanitation credit rating review.              |
| 2019.11 | The videos of suspected vomit on its bed sheet was spread on the Internet. |

3.4 Lacking Systematic New Media Integrated Marketing
Although it has involved in the marketing of the new media platform, but due to the uneven qualities of their own new media, the new media online channels have not been fully utilized by its hotels, the
overall online channel operation is still a relatively weak part of its hotel operation system [8]. The main manifestations are: Only part of the new media channels have been used, e.g. it has only opened WeChat official account without WeiBo official number, the marketing activities launched on its OTA platform have n’t been promoted timely on other platforms, There is no reasonable use of official account tweets to maintain its brand exposure, The most popular short videos such as Douyin, Kuaishou, Volcanic video, Watermelon video, Jinri Toutiao and so on haven’t been used to promote timely. On the new media platform, it hasn’t integrated all the new media channels available to form a communication force, the intensity of marketing communication is insufficient, and its influence hasn’t been more three-dimensional. At the same time, it lacks professional self-media team to maintain the operation of its Internet platform at all times, and handle negative news exposed on Internet timely and do a good job in corporate public relations.

4. The Marketing Strategy of the 7 Days Inn by New Media

4.1 Focus on Constructing Its Own Internet Marketing Platform

The 7 Days Inn should focus on building its own Internet marketing platform and reduce the dependence on third-party platforms, convert consumers into its own customer groups and reduce its operating costs, enhance the management and control of guest source of its hotels, and strictly control the distribution and promotion of its Internet marketing activities. In the use of social media platform, firstly, the attention should be paid to provide a wealth of promotion content, whether it is “hard information” related to hotel introduction, promotion activities, or it is anecdotes, tourism strategies and other “soft information”, it should ensure that there is enough push information and combines with hot information, thus ensure the quality and flow of information, and enhance consumers' attention to its brand. Secondly, when the 7 Days Inn integrates hot information for marketing activities, it should pay attention to seize the best time to ensure the timeliness of the activities. Finally, the 7 Days Inn’s own Internet marketing platform should be established on the basis of convenience, rapidity and comprehensive service, and establish its good corporate image.

4.2 Improve User Experience of Its Internet Platform

When the 7 Days Inn applies the new media platform to market, how to let consumers feel its characteristic through the page design of electronic screen, the manuscript writing and other details, so as to make it stand out in different hotels? Firstly, the 7 Days Inn can subdivide the consumption group through investigation, integration and analysis on the basis of the design of the standardized page, and push out different page styles according to the requirements, hobbies, occupation, age and other factors of the consumption group. It can also design its unique urban theme for some cities, showing the distinctive features of these cities. Secondly, it can also set up the tourism mode and the local mode according to the purpose of use, the pages of the tourism model should include scenic spots, restaurants, shopping malls, the location of living facilities and a more detailed introduction to the city. Finally, on social media platforms such as Weibo and WeChat, it should not only attract customers’ attention in pushing the content of information, but also pay attention to the timeliness and accuracy of information reply when interacting with customers and receiving customer information feedback, adopt friendly and livable words, obtain customers’ information through communication and interaction with consumers, and facilitate more accurate promotion of marketing activities and positioning of customer groups, establish a more benign and friendly interactive relationship.

4.3 Strengthen Its Health Service Management and Enhance Its Brand Competitiveness

When carrying out the new media marketing, the 7 Days Inn needs to convey a good corporate image to consumers and strengthen the hygiene and service management of its hotels. For example, live broadcast the whole process of cleaning hotel rooms and the whole process of cleaning laundry through various new media on the Internet so that consumers can stay at ease, feel at ease and rest assured, so as to win the trust and public praise of consumers, turn these into the biggest competitive
advantage of its hotels on OTA platform. Sharing has become a new public praise marketing spread through the Internet in modern society, breaking the traditional mode of passing from mouth to mouth [9]. Consumers will share the well-experienced hotel products with relatives and friends through the Internet, facilitate consumers to move their fingers to share with the circle of friends, WeiBo, QQ Space and so on for their relatives and friends to browse through the new media platform, shared users can obtain detailed and real hotel product information through texts, pictures, videos and so on, thus greatly promoting the marketing efficiency of its hotel products. The public praise effect between users is more effective than any marketing done by it, which can maintain the reputation and good evaluation of its hotel products to the greatest extent, so as to improve its brand competitiveness [10].

4.4 Build Its Own Professional Team of New Media Marketing
In order to promote the further development of its hotel on the new media platform, it is necessary to build the 7 Days Inn’s own professional team of new media marketing to help its hotels to develop and operate its new media platform. First of all, it can introduce experienced operation professionals from the more mature fields of new media marketing, such as self-media, e-commerce and so on, and develop the operation team model of new media platforms suitable for economical hotels [11], build a creative, standard, efficient new media marketing team through professional and systematic personnel training, and ensure that in the competition with the new media platforms of other hotel brands to fully highlight their own advantages, attract the attention and love of consumers. Secondly, on its new media platform, by integrating Internet marketing with short video marketing, content marketing and WeiBo platform marketing, all the new media channels that can be used should be integrated to form a communication force, increase the intensity of marketing communication, promote the influence of its hotels more three-dimensional, and its products are more attractive, so as to achieve the purpose of building the 7 Days Inn’s new media marketing in an all-round way. Finally, it should actively promote and maintain a good image. When facing the negative news of its hotels, it should attach great importance to them and find out the problem through in-depth investigation and analysis. If these negative news is malicious rumor, it should clarify the facts in a timely manner and maintain its good image. If there is indeed a problem with the sanitation and service management itself, it is necessary to identify and solve the problem timely, and apologize to consumers and give a certain amount of financial compensation. After the crisis, a series of crisis public relations measures not only should be taken, but also lessons should be learned to avoid the recurrence of similar situation.

5. Conclusions
The emergence of new media has greatly changed the marketing mode of traditional economical hotels. With the continuous development of Internet information technology, the new media marketing of economical hotels has become an inevitable trend. The new media marketing of economical hotels is not simply moving the offline content directly to the online, but applying the new media Internet platform to propagate and popularize its hotel products, so that this way should become the focus of the 7 Days Inn’s marketing strategy. Combining its hotel marketing with its new media Internet platform closely, the 7 Days Inn will has a broader market, serve its consumers better, and go farther and farther on the road of sustainable development.

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