

A Study on the Optimization of International Brand Hotels' Marketing Through WeChat Public Account:

The Case of Pullman Hotels

Chang Ge^{1, a}

¹School of Management, Shanghai University, Shanghai, China.

^aEmail: 15736874019@163.com

Abstract

With the widely using of WeChat APP in the public, it has gradually become a medium of marketing. Hotels also have their own WeChat public account to conduct marketing activities. Through the analysis of WeChat marketing of Pullman Hotels in China, the author reveals some problems in Pullman Hotels' WeChat marketing, such as usually ignoring the compiling standard of brand, making little use of the function of custom menu, using more than one WeChat public account and pushing a series of content with a single form and similar issues. In the meanwhile, for helping the Pullman Hotels to make full use of the WeChat APP, the author puts forward five strategies of WeChat marketing: the first is to write in accordance with the standard copy writing; the second is to make full use of the function of custom menu; the third is that the hotel has the only public WeChat public account; the fourth is an innovation of the promotion's content and form; the last is to stabilize the market orientation and characteristics of the hotel.

Keywords

WeChat Public Account, WeChat marketing, Pullman, optimization strategy.

1. Introduction

Nowadays, mobile phones combine the advantages of high-speed Internet, and their intelligence and convenience have reached an unprecedented level, and their functions are no longer limited to communication, but more as a tool for obtaining information and resources. At the same time, various related applications, software, etc. have also been spread and used, gradually enriching people's daily lives. According to the relevant performance report released by Tencent every year, the monthly active accounts of WeChat in each quarter after 2014 will be counted (Figure 1.1). According to the statistics, the monthly active accounts of WeChat have been continuously growing in recent years, which indicates that the recognition of WeChat in the public has gradually increased and is very popular among everyone. As of March 31, 2019, the monthly active accounts of WeChat reached 1,111.7 million, a year-on-year increase of 6.9%.[1] In view of the high growth rate of such users, the usage rate of this software will inevitably remain at a high level in the next few years. Therefore, for hotel companies, the use of WeChat public platform for marketing is indeed an extremely important marketing channel for the new media era.

Exploring the marketing through WeChat will have a good inspiration for brand hotel marketing strategy development and hotel operation management. At present, domestic research on the use of WeChat public platform for marketing of group brand hotels is slightly vacant. Based on statistical data and enterprise research, this paper analyzes the current situation of WeChat marketing in Pullman International Brand Hotel operated in China, and tries to find out the Pullman brand hotel in combination with the theoretical knowledge of

marketing and psychology. The shortcomings in the process of marketing on the WeChat public platform, and then propose corresponding optimization strategies.

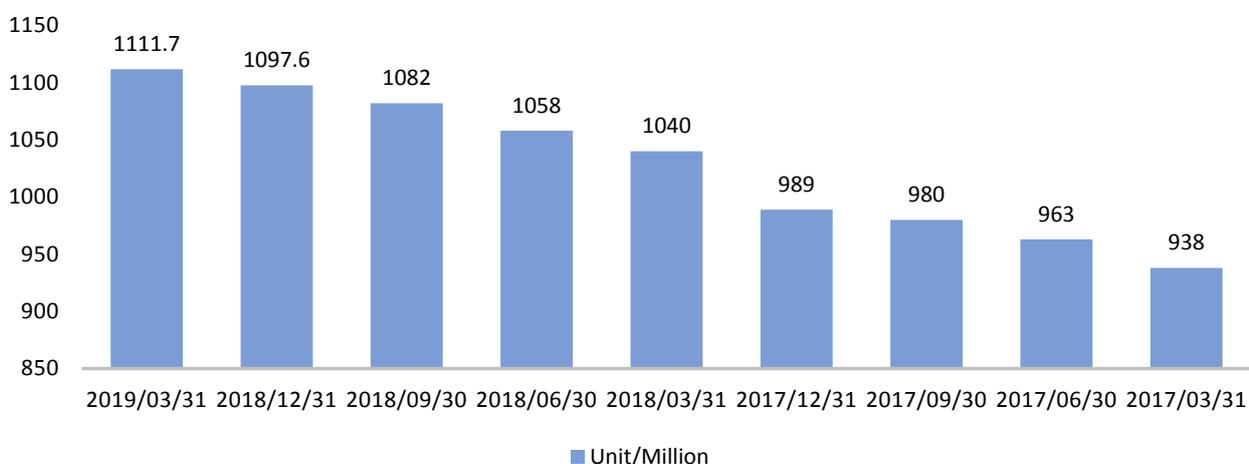


Figure 1. The monthly active accounts of WeChat

2. WeChat Marketing and Wechat Public Account Overview

WeChat is a free application that provides instant messaging service for smart terminals officially launched by Shenzhen Tencent Holdings Co., Ltd. on January 21, 2011. The app has a friend circle, public platform, message push and other functions, and is therefore widely loved by the public.

WeChat marketing has the characteristics of flexible form, wide spread effect and strong personalization. The tool for enterprises or individuals to use WeChat for marketing is the WeChat public platform. WeChat public platform has three major functions, namely information dissemination function, interactive function, and independent development function.[2] Through this platform, companies can launch one-to-many media activities to achieve the goal of establishing corporate image and promoting. Today, WeChat Marketing has become an efficient and convenient way to integrate online and offline WeChat interactive marketing. Users subscribe to the information they need, and merchants who register their WeChat public accounts, which is divided into Service Account, Subscription Account, and Enterprise Account, promote their products by providing the information they need.[3] Enterprise Account is the relevant mobile application portal provided by Tencent for enterprise customers, which is consistent with the internal management needs of enterprises, and is mostly used in internal communication management. The company generally uses Service Account or Subscription Account for external promotion. The difference between the two is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. The difference between Service Account and Subscription Account [4]

Features	Types	
	Service Account	Subscription Account
Message Frequency	4 messages can be sent every month	1 messages can be sent every day
Message display location	Friend conversation list	The Subscriptions folder
Message reminder	Instant reminder	No reminder

3. Analysis of the Current Situation of the Marketing of Wechat Marketing in Pullman Hotels

Through the collection and collation of the information about the Pullman brand under Accor, the author concluded that as of the end of May 1, 2019, there were 37 Pullman hotels across China. Enter the keyword "Pullman Hotel" in the WeChat "Search Public Account" item, and find the official accounts of 37 Pullman hotels operating in China, and analyze them as a sample of this paper.

3.1. More Hotels Use A Subscription Account

Of the 37 samples, 24 have a subscription number and 13 have a service number. The total number of subscriptions and service numbers in the total sample is 65% and 35%, respectively. By analyzing the push messages of 37 Pullman hotels in the second half of 2019, the content of the news published by the hotel can be divided into 5 categories of seasonal product promotion, discount information, hotel honors, changes in hotel management staff and the hotel staff recruitment information. The seasonal product promotion is mainly the introduction of the hotel for special festivals, such as the New Year's Eve during the Spring Festival, the gift basket, the Dragon Boat Festival's nephew and the Valentine's Day custom package. From time to time, the hotel will offer discounts on hotel products and write promotional messages to stimulate consumer demand. The hotel honors mainly include an introduction to the platform for awarding awards and an introduction to the hotel.

3.2. Some Hotels Have Multiple Accounts

17 of the 37 samples have a public account, and 20 hotels have two or more public accounts with different names. For example, the Pullman Yalong Bay Hotel and the Pullman Wenzhou Hotel also have the account of "Talent and Culture Department" by human resources department in addition to the official hotel WeChat public account. The Pullman Shishi Mingsheng Hotel and the Pullman Kaifeng Jianye Hotel also have two accounts with similar names, namely "Pullman Shishi Mingsheng Hotel" and "Pullman Mingsheng Hotel", "Pullman Kaifeng Jianye Hotel (PKJ)" and "Pullman Kaifeng Jianye Hotel". Both hotels now only use one of them, and at the same time publish a replacement message on another account. There are also five hotels with two similar accounts, such as "Pullman Weifang Wanda Hotel" and "Pullman Weifang Wanda Hotel (Pullman)", and push different information in both accounts.

3.3. Custom Menu Function Usage

The custom menu is displayed below the public account interface. The hotel can set the custom menu through the background management, and hyperlink each title to texts, pictures, graphics, videos and other material library. When the user clicks on the title, these text, images, graphics and videos will be automatically displayed in the account interface, which is convenient for users to obtain information. According to statistics, in the sample of this study, only 4 hotels did not set a custom menu. And in the other sample hotels with custom menus, hotel introduction, product reservations, special offers and micro-mall are the most important content.

3.4. The Display Forms of Information in Public Accounts

Only a few hotels in the sample hotel's WeChat push information add dynamic pictures and audio. Most other sample hotels only use the form of "static pictures + text". Generally, The display form of information of the sample in public accounts is relatively simple.

4. The Problems in the Marketing Through Wechat Public Account of International Brand Hotel

4.1. Neglecting the Standard for Writing Brand Copy

Table 3. Pullman Hotel Copywriting Requirements (Partial)

Item	Standard
Dash	Add a space before and after the short dash
Date	Format 10 May 2017, 1960s, the'30s
Currency	The currency symbol is followed by the amount, and no spaces are required between the two. Integers do not need to be represented as x.00
Telephone Number	Need to write "+" before the international area code
Title	Titles in English movies, TV shows, songs, newspapers, magazines, works of art, etc. are in italics, not single or double quotes.
Time	Use a 12-hour system with hours and minutes separated by periods. There is no space between the number and the time period, for example 6.15am-8.30pm. Omit the minutes on the whole point, for example: 8am

Each international hotel group will develop a series of group standards that are consistent with the market positioning of different brands under its group, including hard requirements for paper prints, electronic propaganda, and copywriting. The graphic information sent by the hotel through the WeChat public account will definitely contain the text part. Therefore, before considering how the content attracts the public's attention and how to promote the hotel products, the text content is in line with the brand positioning and conforms to the writing standards. The same is true of the Pullman hotel brand belonging to the Accor group. Through field research, the author understands that the style of the Pullman brand hotel has three principles: Firstly, the copywriting needs to convey the focus and confidence of the brand, so that the readers feel the uniqueness of the Pullman brand; secondly, the copywriting needs to be concise and refined. The wording is simple and not fancy, not to bluff; thirdly, the copy seeks to surprise the reader, highlighting the brand's open thinking and extraordinary creativity. Under the guidance of these principles, Pullman made a more detailed request for copywriting, as shown in Table 3.

However, after extensive browsing of the sample hotel's push messages through WeChat public accounts, it was found that almost all of the push messages in the 37 sample hotels did not write the content according to the group standard. For example, when using the dash, there is no space before and after; No "+" before booking a call; Time information is not used in 12-hour clock.

4.2. Insufficient Exploration of the Value of Custom Menus

4.2.1. The Title Setting of the Custom Menu Is Not Scientific

By analyzing the content of each sample custom menu, it is found that many sample hotel custom menu settings are not reasonable. The more prominent problem is that the first-level headings and the second-level headings are set in confusion. For example, the second-level heading "Banquet Meeting" and "Romantic Wedding Banquet" under the heading "Hotel Introduction" of the Pullman Panjin Oriental Hotel in Panjin are inclusive. The banquet meeting is a general concept including conferences and banquets, and the wedding banquet is also a kind of banquet; another example Pullman Xiamen Baolong Hotel. "Exploring Xiamen" and "About the Hotel" is the second class title under the title of "About Hotel" in the custom menu

of the hotel. There are other three contents in the second title "Room Reservation", "Dining Reservation" and "Lightning Invoicing". The secondary title is classified according to different service functions of the hotel. "Explore Xiamen" and "About the Hotel" do not have a parallel relationship with the other three, and the latter is identical to the first-level title.

4.2.2. The Content Is Not Updated in Time

As of February 20, 2019., through continuous attention and viewing of the custom menu in the sample hotel WeChat public account, it can be find that the content in the custom menu of most hotels is not updated in time. For example, the Pullman Shishi Mingsheng has the second title of "New Year Blessing" and "Valentine Day Activity" under the first-level title "Man-Special". The Spring Festival is February 5th to 19th and Valentine's Day is February 14th. Therefore, on February 20th, the two festivals have already ended, but the push message has not been cancelled in time. The second-level title of Pullman Wenzhou is "Auspicious Dragon Boat Festival", which is introduction of the Dragon Boat Festival 2016. In addition, the event in the title of "Limited Spike" of the Pullman Zhongxing hotel has long since ended, but this push is still left in the menu.

4.3. Some Hotels Have Multiple Wechat Public Accounts

In the sample hotel, an official public account and a number of accounts such as the Human Resources Department are generally set up. There are also sample hotels that set two official accounts at the same time, but only one is the main position platform, which makes it difficult for readers to distinguish which is the official WeChat account of the hotel. If the reader only pays attention to one of them, the audience receiving the push message will be one-sided, resulting in reduced marketing effectiveness. For example, the two public accounts of Pullman Weifang Wanda are "Pullman Weifang Wanda Hotel (Pullman)" and "Pullman Weifang Wanda Hotel". The former promotion content is entitled "Wanda Annual Report Report! Ten highlights", "Wang Jianlin who loves to sing, sang a play at Wanda Annual Meeting yesterday!" and "Christmas lights | Pullman ignites warmth and surprise, open your colorful Christmas season!". The readings are 106, 278 and 386 respectively. The latter's recent promotion content is titled "The food festival", "Refused to formalize, for Valentine's Day" and "It's called Valentine's Day". The readings are 890, 1750 and 788. As can be seen from the reading volume, most users only pay attention to the "Pullman Weifang Wanda Hotel", even do not know the fomer public account. The existence of the "Pullman Weifang Wanda Hotel (Pullman)" was not seen by users, which led to its inefficiency in WeChat marketing.

4.4. The Content Is Single

At present, hotel push messages can be divided into five categories according to content classification, including seasonal product promotion, discount information, hotel honors, changes in hotel management staff and the hotel staff recruitment information. The push content is relatively simple, and it is not very attractive to the user, which will not actively share the message in the circle of friends. Moreover, when users do not have demand for hotel products, if they frequently receive the same promotion information of hotel, they can only increase the user's dislike of the hotel and even cancel the attention.

4.5. The Form of Pushing Is Similar

As mentioned above, the push messages in the sample are mostly in the form of graphic and text, which are similar and insufficiency. In fact, the WeChat public platform supports audio and video. But few hotels use these in their daily push messages. By reviewing the sample hotel's long-term push news, it can find that the sample hotel's push messages has experienced the early text to the graphic and text. Although this is better than before, users still have a sense of boring. It is ultimately not conducive to the effective marketing and promotion of the hotel.

5. International Brand Hotel Wechat Marketing Optimization Strategy

5.1. The Content of the Copy Complies with the Group Standards

For international brand hotels with clear group standards in copywriting, while pursuing high user attention, the information published through the WeChat public account must first be ensured to meet the group standards. For example, the Pullman hotel's public relations staff and copywriters must have a high level of awareness of the Pullman brand and be familiar with the group's standards so that readers can realize the unity of the Pullman brand. It is forbidden for copywriters to deviate from the group's standards in accordance with their own writing style.

5.2. Giving Full Play to the Role of the Custom Menu Function

The custom menu provides the hotel with a platform to display information and products, as well as a convenient access channel for the customer community. The user can see the custom menu at a glance in the account interface. Usually only the first level title of the custom menu is displayed in the interface, and the hotel can set up to three first level title by background operation. Up to 5 secondary title can be set under each first level. In other words, the hotel account can set up to 15 custom menus in the public account interface. This feature is enough for the hotel to show its own characteristics. The hotel should analyze the user's demand for hotel information according to the characteristics of its own products, and classify it into three major themes, and then set specific content under each theme. The menu title should be as concise as possible and should prevent duplicate or even mismatched content in the first-level menu and the second-level sub-menu. At the same time, the relevant content should be updated in a timely manner, and the information on the completed promotion and holiday activities should be immediately replaced or revoked to ensure the timeliness and effectiveness of the information.

5.3. Implementing the Hotel Public Account Only

According to the promotion volume of the product and the analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of the subscription account and service account, the hotel can select an account type and open only a WeChat public account. Not only can it effectively avoid multiple accounts confusing the customer's vision, but also fully promote its own advantages and further expand the influence of the hotel itself. Some hotels may have to change the account body due to investor replacement or other reasons, resulting in having to change the account number, but the hotel should be replaced in the deprecated account. Don't use two accounts with similar user names, and publish different information on different accounts. If readers only pay attention to one, the audience who receives the push message will be one-sided, resulting in lower marketing results.

5.4. Expanding Content

One of the key to realizing WeChat marketing is to make the target group actively participate in the marketing activities through the combination of marketing elements and target groups' interests and hobbies, and promote the formation of active secondary communication.[5] Therefore, the content of the WeChat public account can not be limited to the promotion of hotel products, but also to explore the unique features of the hotel, and to match the interests of consumers, to obtain the user's continued attention. It can be optimized through two aspects. On the one hand, focusing on the combination with local culture and humanities. The Pullman Hotel, which operates in China, incorporates local cultural and cultural features in architectural design and interior decoration, such as the Pullman Kaifeng Jianye Hotel. The Hotel combines the architectural style of the Northern Song Dynasty and is decorated with enamel porcelain such as plum bottles and lotus cups, and works of art such as Long Ting Hall and Song Huizong's

poems. The hotel can send a series of publicity related to traditional culture, heritage and other topics around these artworks to consumers. On the other hand, it is necessary to increase the social identity of the content pushed through WeChat public account. WeChat public platform is a promotion platform for hotels, but when editing text information, the hotel publicists should not focus too much on the product, but to arouse the user's resonance. For example, when promoting the "New Year's Eve" product, they can highlight the words "family", "reunion", "family taste" and other words to attract attention and increase social recognition. When promoting "Valentine's Day" products, put the focus on describing the emotions that the product represents or symbolizes, not the price.

5.5. Innovative the Display Forms of Information in Public Accounts

The information published by the WeChat public account is popular among the public for its timeliness, richness and variety. Therefore, if the hotel transforms the boring graphic information into H5, VR technology, or the video of the four seasons, it will arouse the reader's interest. At the same time, these novel forms can present hotel products more intuitively. The main products of the hotel are guest rooms, catering and entertainment projects. Instead of introducing these products in a large part, it is better to condense the characteristics of the products, and use the corresponding pictures or videos to carry out online marketing promotion to further enhance the popularity.

5.6. Clear Market Positioning

Pullman is a high-end international hotel brand under the Accor Group, focusing on travelers who have an international perspective and who like to combine work and leisure.[6] This market positioning determines that Pullman brand hotels should convey the concept of high-end, leisure vacation to the market when marketing, rather than excessive price promotions. Price promotion has a significant negative effect on perceived cost. If the price promotion is too frequent, it will negatively affect the customer's perception of the brand.[7] Specifically, the marketing of high-end products is not only the quality of the products themselves, but also the concept of branding seems to be more popular among mid- to high-end consumers. Pullman brand hotels must clarify their own market positioning, avoiding the emphasis on low-cost promotional hotel products in WeChat, in order to maximize the value of WeChat public number marketing.

References

- [1] Source: Tencent's third quarter results report released in October 2016. https://www.tencent.com/zh-cn/dynamic_timeline.html.
- [2] Zhang Yanping. Research on the operation mode of WeChat public account of sci-tech periodicals] based on quantitative analysis of four core sci-tech periodicals [J]. Chinese Journal of Scientific and Technical Periodicals, 2015, (05): 524-531.
- [3] Liao Bo, Lu Yan, Liao Yuming. Research on the communication mechanism of WeChat in WeChat marketing [J]. Chinese and foreign entrepreneurs, 2013, (14): 21-22.
- [4] Source: Tencent.com WeChat public platform. <https://kf.qq.com/faq/120911VrYVrA130805byM32u.html>
- [5] Xie Zhongxiang. Research on Enterprise Micro-Marketing Strategy under the Trend of New Media [D].Qingdao: Ocean University of China, 2015.10-11.
- [6] Source: <http://www.accorhotels.com/zh/brands/hotels-pullman.shtml>, 2017-02-27.
- [7] Zheng Wenqing, Li Wei. The Driving Research of Marketing Strategy on Customer Perceived Value[J]. Contemporary Finance and Economics, 2012, (11): 80-89.