

Marketing's Insights in Virtual Wardrobe Service under the Epidemic

Chun Miao

School of King's College London, London, WC2R 2LS, UK

Abstract

A new type of APP called "Light Wardrobe" has appeared in China. It is committed to establishing a good personal clothes management mechanism for users, helping people in contemporary society learn to match their own clothes. In recent years, this type of APP has suffered some major development difficulties. Above all, Light Wardrobe currently holds a relatively small and comparatively less profitable customer base. Meanwhile, Light Wardrobe rarely leverages social media as virtual marketing tools in the marketing strategies, which became an obstacle in market expansion. Furthermore, the positioning of the brand can be seen as not clear enough currently and its strength in personal styling seems not obvious. Based on the analysis on the competitors, it seems that it needs further improvement in functions, content marketing, social media engagement. Therefore, a series of digital marketing strategies has been tailor made for Light Wardrobe. Eventually, in short-term, it is expected that Light Wardrobe can expand and refresh its customer base to improve the profitability. In long-term, by conducting the recommended virtual marketing strategies, light Wardrobe can cultivate its younger customers to be its future buyers when they have stronger consumption power.

Keywords

Virtual Wardrobe service; Light Wardrobe; Marketing Strategies.

1. Introduction

Nowadays, with the growing affluence of living conditions, people have a lot of clothes in their wardrobe, and people are paying more and more attention to the daily matching and dressing, especially female users spend a lot of time on matching clothes. Therefore, APP called "Light Wardrobe" has appeared which is committed to establishing a good personal clothes management mechanism for users, helping people in contemporary society learn to match their own clothes. The clothing displayed in the application is automatically synthesized from real photos taken by the user. Users can not only choose clothes from their existing clothes for matching and preview the matching effect, but also publish their favorite combinations for all users to view and comment. In addition, the system will also recommend suitable collocations for users according to different occasions and the weather of the day.

2. General Consumer Profile

Light Wardrobe allows consumers to build a virtual wardrobe, plan outfits and join a styling community. Light Wardrobe's target consumers are creative, informed, and empowered users who keep up with the latest fashion trends and want to find personal fashion styles. These users often gain self-esteem through premium fashion products. Research has shown that self-esteem can be satisfied by purchasing luxury goods, which is a self-reward behaviour (Yann & Rod, 2011). In general, even though they are busy with work, Light Wardrobe target users can discover their unique personal styles and pursue high self-esteem.

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a substantial economic impact on people all over the world, and women in particular have experienced severe job and income losses (OECD, 2020). Research by UNCTAD (2020) also shows that although online purchases have increased during the pandemic, average spending dropped dramatically. Thus, Light Wardrobe's target consumers are suffering from socio-economic impacts caused by the pandemic. Outside of the pandemic, the time-consuming purchasing process in physical stores and the availability of too many options complicate buying decisions about clothes.

The Light Wardrobe app offers access to the latest fashion trends and fast outfit planning through a virtual wardrobe. The customized service and consultations give users personal recommendations to ensure they develop unique and trendy styles. The fashion communities enable different groups of people to gain social identification of their styling.

3. Persona Profile

A persona is a fictional and super-typical characterisation of a consumer who can represent the consumer group. By creating a persona, the company can learn to more effectively communicate with the target group and identify key goals to optimise the performance and meet consumer needs (Lerouge et al., 2013).

The main target of Light Wardrobe has been settled as millennials, for their comparatively higher disposable income. While Gen Z has also been set as a subordinate target for future customer cultivation. The typical customer could be represented by a 25-year-old woman who is well-educated and has worked for a large multinational firm for 2 years. She currently lives in a large city with a fast-paced lifestyle and rising prices. Like other target consumers, She is interested in fashion but has not discovered her own style yet. As a heavy social media user, She often uses XiaoHongShu and Weiboto gain information or contact others. She is used to scanning messages about fashion and popular outfits on her mobile phone after work. Therefore, in her virtual journey, she might discover Light Wardrobe app and become an active user.

The pain points of the user are mainly time constraints and a limited shopping budget. Suffering from income decline because of the Covid-19 pandemic, the girl cannot spend too much time or money on purchasing luxury fashion brands. In addition, the lack of humanistic service and untimely responses in physical stores cannot satisfy her needs. To save time, she wants to avoid unnecessary information and unsuitable items. So that she would choose Light Wardrobe because of its convenience and the community atmosphere. This app offers high-speed outfit creation. Different from the competitors, Light Wardrobe offers a social platform for the girl to discuss outfits, gain likes and followers, and thus become an influencer herself. Based on this persona profile, the company can evaluate new features, prioritise user needs, and make informed decisions.

4. Light Wardrobe Value Proposition Assessment

4.1. Competitor Benchmarking & Strategic Canvas

Customer analysis is an essential part for navigating the brand's virtual marketing strategies. However, it is also significant to do a detailed analysis on the competitors to clarify the brand's position in the industry and learn from the others. Therefore, a competitor benchmarking is essential to compare Light Wardrobe's virtual capabilities throughout marketing stages.

At the 'Reach' stage, Light Wardrobe has less organic traffic than direct competitors. Drawing on the experience of competitors, at this stage, Light Wardrobe should improve its social media integration and quality of organic keywords. The effectiveness of influencer marketing should also be taken into consideration.

At the 'Act' stage, Light Wardrobe performs well on speed, and accessibility, which enables customers to browse conveniently. However, it does not perform well on personalisation. The recommended outfits and items in the app are only classified in simplistic ways. Competitors will have more choices of clothing matching styles, and dedicated stylists will provide one-on-one clothing matching suggestions.

At the 'Convert' stage, Light Wardrobe's app asks for 12 RMB at the time of download. Light Wardrobe will attract fewer consumers to make a purchase than its free app competitors. What's more, some of the competitors offer the option of a paid subscription to gain access to more features in addition to the free App

At the 'Engage' stage, Light Wardrobe has the highest feedback score on the App Store. It focuses on WeiBo for communication with customers, but has less followers, likes, and comments than competitors. According to App Store reviews, the main weaknesses of Light Wardrobe are the lack of flexibility when editing outfits.

At present, the products in Light Wardrobe are not highly personalized. In the future, it is hoped that Light Wardrobe can improve its products and positioning to reach a high level in the industry.

4.2. Competitor ERRC Analysis

After leveraging the competitor benchmarking to evaluate the competitors' status, it is significant to do ERRC analysis for outlining the distinguished factors.

In terms of the 'eliminate' part of ERRC, two factors need to be addressed. First, it is important to avoid having too much text in the instructions and introductions. Second, it is important to prevent the official social media platforms from going stagnant in terms of content.

As for the 'reduce' part, above all, any existing or potential economical, technical, and functional impediments to using the app should be reduced to create the best possible user experience with Light Wardrobe. Because Light Wardrobe is a paid app and cost to download the APP is expensive compared to other APP, the similarity between the free and paid app versions needs to be reduced to make the premium nature of the paid version obvious.

The 'raise' part sheds light on possibilities for existing features' improvement. Regarding the app's functions, image searching, weather-based recommendations, and calendar planning can be promoted to build on the comprehensiveness and uniqueness of Light Wardrobe's features. From the perspective of 'create' factors, the competitors' observed strengths should inspire Light Wardrobe's further innovations. It seems Light Wardrobe can offer one-to-one clothing advice from stylists. It can also provide auxiliary functions such as scheduling appointments with designers, which may could improve the stylists' working efficiency and service quality directly and improve the user experience indirectly.

5. Light Wardrobe Virtual Marketing Strategy

The virtual marketing strategies proposed for Light Wardrobe have been based on the results of the above competitor analysis. The main purpose of the strategies is to distinguish Light Wardrobe in the industry by modifying its routine media content on its social media platforms, leveraging a particular campaign to increase brand awareness and expand the consumer-base, while maintaining the increased customer base by conducting loyalty programs. Accordingly, a series of the marketing strategies focus on helping people to find their personal styles.

5.1. Brand Tone of Voice

Light Wardrobe aims to adopt a warm, fresh, chic, and concise tone of voice in communicating with our target consumers. By warm, we mean that we aim to encourage frequent engagement with our social media content and online campaign, which is mainly on XiaoHongShu but also

on Weibo. By fresh and chic, Light Wardrobe refers to its efforts to keep up with the latest fashion trends to help users get inspired and be creative. Finally, in providing reliable information and recommendations about fashion, we aim to stay concise to make the information easier to understand and remember.

5.2. Routinely Marketing: Recommended Social Media Platforms

XiaoHongShu and Weibo are the major platforms for Light Wardrobe to reach its audience, which provides an attractive opportunity for brands to implement impressive virtual campaigns. Marketers stated that the usage of XiaoHongshu in virtual marketing is likely to continue increasing in the near future (Zhang, 2019), meaning the platform has significant potential. TikTok, in comparison, is particularly popular among young women between 18-24 (HypeAuditor, 2020). It has high user loyalty and could enable effective campaigns through hashtag challenges (WARC Best Practice, 2020).

Considering the recommended targets and marketing theme, Xiaohongshu will be the major focus initially while Weibo will be utilised for later campaigns. Xiaohongshu fits in with Light Wardrobe's expected targets as women make up over half of its users and millennials are the most present users on the platform (Anon, 2019). As a social media platform providing a personalised, inspiring, and aspirational virtual environment, Instagram creates a cultural atmosphere of self-expression and idea sharing for its highly engaged mobile-first young users, which coincides with Light Wardrobe's theme.

In short, the unique advantages of Xiaohongshu will enable Light Wardrobe to conduct successful marketing activities. Advertising on Xiaohongshu should focus on image quality and colour to create visual appeal, which is suitable for luxury fashion brands as they have put great effort into creative designing for visualisation.

Regarding the ideal marketing platform, an AI influencer is recommended as the best ambassador for Light Wardrobe's regular marketing on Xiaohongshu. The market size of Xiaohongshu influencers has been increasing over the past few years (Zhu, 2018), and micro-influencers with smaller but more authentic groups of followers tend to elicit the highest engagement (WARC Best Practice, 2020). In this way, an original AI influencer representing Light Wardrobe could be more effective than normal popular influencers. Light Wardrobe could display outfits on her body, take full control of the marketing content, and stimulate consumers' curiosity through the creative virtual technology.

5.3. Virtual Marketing Hot Spot: Campaign

The main part of this campaign is the storytelling related to the AI influencer, a young woman who has been tailor-made for Light Wardrobe. Light Wardrobe believes everyone is unique. In the story, Protagonist was an ordinary girl, who was just a normal one another face in the crowd. In her life, she had an ordinary job, salary, daily routine, and outlook. However, she also had a 'secret garden' in the virtual world! By putting on her VR glasses and entering virtual reality, she was empowered to be a chic wonder woman with her own unique personal style. She kept her uniqueness and bravely chooses not to be locked into her ordinary self anymore. When she returns to reality with her new style, she finally found her true self and got new opportunities. The magical VR glasses may not exist. But this self-transformation could happen for anyone who uses Light Wardrobe.

This is a story that we have constructed for our virtual influencer, and for any existing or potential customers of Light Wardrobe. By telling this story, we present Light Wardrobe as a magical key for people to find their own fashion style and gather a community in which people share similar interests in certain styles. This story indicates that Light Wardrobe, as a virtual tool, can empower its customers to pursue their own beauty and help themselves become

strong and connected. It is not just an App that allows users to organize their old clothes in their closet. It is a way for people to discover their true selves, beloved communities.

The storytelling will be presented via a short video distributed on Xiaohongshu and Weibo as part of the brand campaign aimed at increasing Light Wardrobe's brand exposure. Following the created storytelling hot spot, Light Wardrobe will start an online styling relay race for designing outfits for the protagonist. Each team of up to five members, organised on the Light Wardrobe platform, will be able to publish suggestions in video or picture format on Weibo, reaching Light Wardrobe with the hashtag. Light Wardrobe will invite well-known fashion stylists and members of the public to vote in this competition. Prizes will be awards redeemable on the Light Wardrobe fashion shopping platform. The gold-medal team and silver-medal team will win generous bonus. All participants will receive a blind box. The blind boxes may include customised small accessories by Light Wardrobe, which can warm up the customers for the following loyalty programs.

5.4. Follow-up Marketing Strategy: Loyalty Projects

In addition to establishing campaigns to increase brand awareness and attract new users, Light Wardrobe also plans to build customer loyalty projects to improve the retention and conversion of existing users. Light Wardrobe can use gamification to improve its loyalty program, for example, by implementing reward calendars. Customers can accumulate points by opening the app every day to sign in, and when they have enough points, they can unlock different types of blind box as gifts. Many small accessories could be put into the blind box to surprise consumers. At the same time, these earrings, necklaces, and other items could become part of their daily wear,

which may stimulate consumers' inspiration for matching. What's more, to better improve the customers' experience of using the Light Wardrobe app, a cheering sentence can be randomly generated for consumers after each daily check-in. These gamification elements would encourage consumers not only to keep using the app regularly but also to share what novel gifts they've unlocked on social media. This is a great opportunity to promote the Light Wardrobe app.

What's more, in order to better build customer retention and loyalty, Light Wardrobe needs to create a sense of community for customers. When community members identify themselves to other members and participate in activities together, they will share their experiences with the people around them. Light Wardrobe could recommend appropriate OK groups to customers based on the personal and style information filled in by new users when registering on the app. Members with similar styles will share their own outfits and style suggestions. By participating in these communities, customers will become more reluctant to leave the app to try other outfitting software.

6. Conclusion

In general, the recommended series of virtual marketing strategies aims to reach larger number of consumers, then transform them to be Light Wardrobe's customers, furthermore, build their commitment to the brand through long-term loyalty programs. As for the platforms, Xiaohongshu and Weibo are the most effective platforms for Light Wardrobe to leverage marketing campaigns and daily content marketing. Therefore, a strengthened community can be established with a 'quality value chain' of mutual trust and interdependence between customers. For campaign, the campaign, the relay race mode can attract the participants' friends or family members, and enticing these potential new users to join into the greatest extent, which could in turn lead to expansion on Light Wardrobe's overall customer base. To maintain the enlarged customer base, the loyalty programs are recommended to conduct.

Furthermore, under the theme 'Be Unique', these conjoint recommendations can assist Light Wardrobe to create strong brand positioning as a luxury fashion virtual wardrobe for unique personal styling. With a clearer brand positioning, the sense of community can be increased and attract more active members to join. Eventually, these strategies enable Light Wardrobe to arouse the existing and newly joined customers' enthusiasm, and expect a develop in positive eWOM, which would benefit Light Wardrobe in its further virtual marketing steps.

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