The Inbound Marketing of B2C E-commerce Platforms -- Take Zappos as an Example

Chen Xue

(Chen Xue Master Student School of Management of Shanghai University 200444)
Corresponding Author: Chen Xue

ABSTRACT: *For the e-commerce platform, the innovation and development of the marketing model is increasingly important, and inbound marketing is a new and effective marketing model. This paper aims to explore a new marketing model in B2C e-commerce platform, and analyse the inbound marketing of foreign B2C footwear e-commerce. Through analysis, it is found that: effective customer conversion, high-quality service concept, comprehensive and optimized search engines and social media is the key of inbound marketing. At the same time, it also gives substantive suggestions on how to further optimize the marketing of B2C e-commerce.*

KEY WORD: *B2C e-commerce, inbound marketing, Zappos*

I.   INTRODUCTION

With the popularization and application of the Internet, e-commerce has gradually entered the public view and presented a trend of rapid development. However, the rapid development of e-commerce is accompanied by many problems such as logistics and services. In China, two-thirds of B2C e-commerce contractor for pure electric company, and there is a big disconnectwith offline store business. Besides, imperfect service system, logistics system, prompt consumers shopping experience, traditional marketing way cannot meet the increasing demand of consumer, under this circumstance, a new set of marketing model arises, inbound marketing make full use of the key role of social media and search engine which pull customers rather than focus on promoting the product, among this, the B2C footwear e-commerce Zappos's inbound marketing is famous among public. Through the analysis of Zappos, we can understand the application method and effect of inbound marketing, and propose some improvement suggestions of B2C e-commerce inbound marketing.

II.   WHAT IS INBOUND MARKETING?

Inbound marketing is a complete set of all-channel digital marketing method system, which aims to actively contact brands and attract users by means of search engines, social media, official websites and other channels. Different from traditional push-based marketing strategies, inbound marketing is a pull type marketing strategy, which can achieve 1+1=3 effects.

Inbound marketing was firstly proposed by HubSpot and gradually promoted. Founded in 2006, HubSpot is well known as a leader in the field of marketing automation services in SaaS (software service) start-ups. HubSpot consists of three parts, namely marketing software, CRM software and sales software. Marketing software provides users with SEO, social media, web content production optimization and other tools, which is also the core product of HubSpot. Focusing on user experience and delivering quality content is the core content of HubSpot. This mode of attracting customers strengthens the work efficiency and output of user sales representatives, and also realizes the optimization of sales and marketing process, forming a sustained word-of-mouth marketing effect.

Inbound marketing is not a kind of marketing strategy that waiting for success, but through a variety of different channels to achieve niche and precise network marketing. Using media paid or input human time to strengthen information communication and get more free chance to spread the optimization of digital assets as well as the key lock, actually achieve each advertisement and the revealing of information, also can do the import to the target to reach the site, at the same time optimize SEO (search engine optimization), SMO (search media optimization), UEO (user experience optimization) website.

III.   MARKETING MODEL OF B2C E-COMMERCE

B2C online retailing enterprises via the Internet or other electronic channel to sale productsto the end customer,including two type of proprietary and platform, critical business include shopping website design, operation and maintenance, to attract customers and maintain relationship, supplier management, after-sales

service and so on. Attracting and maintaining customer relationship is the most core business of B2C enterprise. B2C e-commerce platforms generally have the characteristics of accidental consumption. Although the number of consumers is large, the transaction amount and quantity are relatively small. Ordinary consumers choose products to meet specific and personalized demands. In order to obtain continuous benefits, e-commerce enterprises have to continuously provide specific products or services and improve the original page design to meet consumers' individual needs. Therefore, B2C e-commerce enterprises should consider improving the existing marketing model to capture the real minds of consumers.

Most of the current marketing strategies of B2C e-commerce enterprises will also use marketing strategies such as online marketing, social media marketing, search engine marketing, online promotion, etc., but it will inevitably lead to dissatisfaction of consumers, enterprises and society, etc. From the perspective of consumers, the B2C e-commerce platform is likely to cause poor shopping experience. It mainly provides convenient shopping process and new shopping method. In addition, the online service level is not perfect, because customer cannot feel the real shopping environment. Secondly, the e-commerce platform shopping cannot guarantee the quality of goods and realize the comparison of cost performance of goods quickly. From the perspective of enterprises and society, enterprises have insufficient understanding of B2C e-commerce. There is a large degree of disconnection between online e-commerce and offline store business in China, nearly two-thirds of which are pure e-commerce. In addition, the logistics distribution system is not perfect. Many B2C enterprises lack a lot of capital and manpower to build their own logistics distribution system by virtue of the third-party logistics platform, which makes the overall shopping experience greatly discounted.

IV. INBOUND MARKETING OF ZAPPOS

4.1 Introduction of Zappos

Among B2C e-commerce companies, Zappos is the company that advocates difference and cost leadership. Since founded in 1999, Zappos has been the largest online shoe store in North America. Zappos features "high efficiency, specialization, humanization, and people-oriented" : high efficiency, where Zappos provides 7x24 shopping services over the Internet and free two-way delivery to allow users to choose the right shoes. Specialization means Zappos only serves customers as an e-commerce platform for shoes. Humanizing and people-oriented refer to Zappos encourages customers to order three pairs of shoes, they can choose the most suitable pair and return two other pairs within 365 days. Word of mouth marketing is also a shining point, which means that Zappos doesn't spend a lot of money on advertising, but only focus on word of mouth marketing, which costs a lot to set up a call centre with hundreds of people. The customer service staff does not prepare the lines and does not calculate the call time. They only pursue every communication to develop into a trust relationship.

4.2 Marketing characteristics of Zappos

Different from real warehouse distribution, one mode is real storage consignment. That is, brand shoe sellers place their products in the warehouse of B2C platform and sell them on a commission basis by B2C platform. This mode does not require any advance payment by the e-commerce platform. Our Chinese firm "Letao" once used this kind of commercial pattern, according to "Letao" regulation, from a kind of shoe puts on the shelf date calculate, after a month expires, "Letao" gives the part of shoe money to brand shoe factory, part is detained as service charge, the products that did not sell is returned brand shoe company, then they supplies other styles.

Zappos promotes its business by selling goods in physical distribution, which belong to Zappos. It is means that Zappos collects the goods at the store and pays for them at the time. The shoes are then shipped to its warehouse and sold online. The greatest advantage of this method is that it can maintain fast delivery and replenishment speed to meet shopping requirements of different consumers.

4.3 Inbound marketing of Zappos

Zappos is a typically successfulexample through improving customer experience innovation. Zappos believes that instead of spending time on business model innovation, it is better to think about how to improve existing products and services based on mature models. It's also the reason why Zappos's commitment to mature mode experience innovation.

Figure 1: Inbound marketing of Zappos
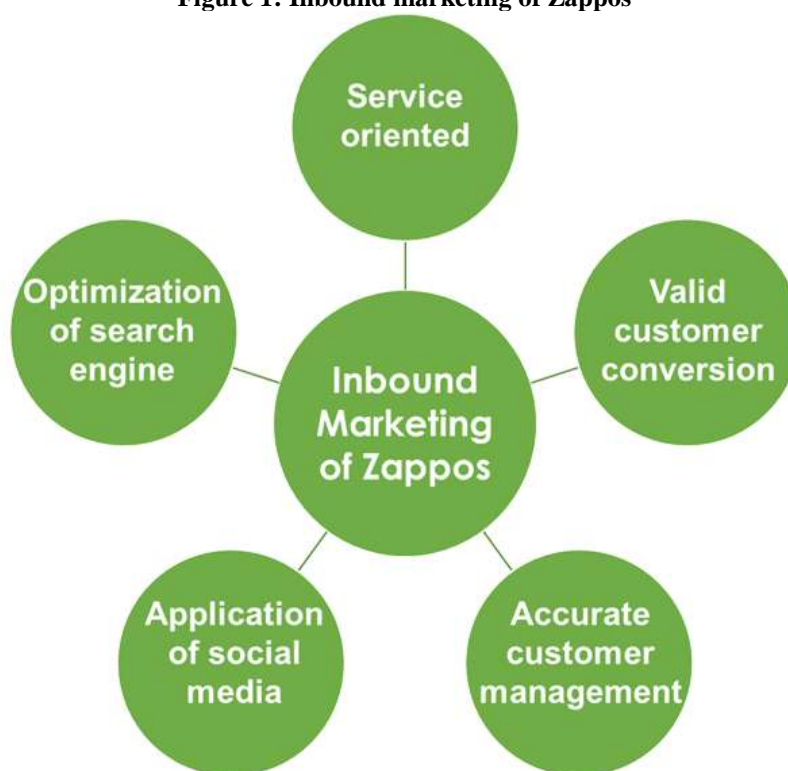
Experience innovation of mature mode

4.3.1 Customer conversion skills -- the VEPA principle

Zappos has always adhered to the VEPA principle on how to effectively convert visitors to B2C websites into intended customers. First, content should have value. Second, the operation steps are simple. When designing the website, consider "clear and simple, express simply", directly indicate what actions can be taken and what rewards of actions can bring. The third is striking, in the design of the page, the overall layout is the key, some of the actions of the directive should be near the top of the page, so visitors needn't drag down the page, the call to action should be designed as a clickable image. The text above is larger than the text or other link text. In addition, it is more noticeable to leave some blank space around the image, and to emphasize the colour matching with the colour of the overall tone of the page. At the same time differentiate products and services page: On the product page, the call to action can invite people to view the demo, and free to watch 30 minutes of counselling services page, etc. Finally, clear action orientation. Excellent action orientation should start with verbs, clearly inform and guide visitors to take concrete actions.

4.3.2 Service-oriented

Zappos is positioned as a service company, the "Powered by Service" slogan logo shining under the eye-catching logo. According to Zappos, "It just happens to sell shoes". One of the core values of Zappos brand is the "wow" philosophy, that is, the staff's personalization and creativity are amazed by the customers, and the customer's expectations are met with extraordinary quality service to obtain a good reputation. The attitude towards the competitors is also tolerant. If the customer does not pick the right shoes, Zappos customer service staff will recommend the competitor's related products and strive to meet all the needs of the customers.

4.3.3 Customer precise management

Zappos makes full use of the big data platform to collect the names and email addresses of visitors to establish a high-quality database,accurately track and manage target customers or potential customers, find potential demands from the perspective of customers, and exchange the real needs of customers with long-term investment. At the same time, Zappos takes full advantage of Internet tools, such as Google or other social mediato design and deliver web pages and integrate data into online platforms for accurate management of customers.

4.3.4 Create a quality shopping site with search engines

Zappos spent quite a bit of time creating and optimizing the site, leveraging Google to monitor and analyse relevant search data, and manually create one if it finds that a particular product that a customer is searching for does not exist on its own site. When customer search 18 yards of shoes on the Google site, click Zappos entry in the natural search results after (Zappos and at the same time use the paid search and natural search two ways to expand the intention client), will be entering an into 18 yards shoes design landing page. In this page, the user can set the specific size of the shoes, the system will be based on the filtered data set in the whole network. That is, customers who are interested in buying a specific shoe can navigate to the relevant pages without having to navigate.

4.3.5 Make full use of social media for publicity

Zappos does not advocate put money on advertising, but the backlog of inventory, constantly expanding product variety, and through the free social media to spread their service concept, "more than 1000 brands of shoes, 90000 styles, return period up to one year" irresistible terms, such as on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, blogs, and all kinds of BBS. Followers on Twitter, Zappos has more than 400000 and 1000 employees, and customers to communicate all the time, Zappos also encourage employees to use social media such as Twitter and blogs to publish work-life related articles, pictures, video, etc., share happiness and enjoy the moment with the public, and even the rigorous operation of machines such as the distribution centre conveyor belt. By attracting audience's attention, boost the enthusiasm of the engaged interested topics or activities, which is converted into the process of customer. At the same time, the company will also release some official posts.

This is similar to the 4I principle of network integrated marketing. Zappos use social media to arouse audience interest (Interesting), and interact with them (Interaction), and then spread the Interests of the company (Interests) and ultimately meet the Individual needs of customers (Individuality). By creating a sweet "bait", spread the brand culture, product interests, and turn the audience into participants of the company's activities and even consumers so that customers can have a pleasant experience throughout the process.

V.   FURTHER OPTIMIZATION OF B2C E-COMMERCE INBOUND MARKETING

Although inbound marketing can bring sustainable competitive advantages to enterprises, it is inevitably to face the dilemma of low flow rate, low exposure rate and low conversion rate. Therefore, it can be optimized in the following ways to explore further improvement direction of B2C e-commerce inbound marketing.

5.1 Take advantage of opportunities created by new retail

New retail refers to the new retail mode in which enterprises, relying on the Internet, upgrade and transform the production, circulation and sales process of commodities through the use of advanced technologies such as big data and artificial intelligence, so as to reshape the business structure and ecological circle, and deeply integrate online services, offline experience and modern logistics. The biggest problem of existing B2C e-commerce is that there is a huge disconnection with offline store business. Future inbound marketing should be integrated with the trend of new retail, break the shackles of traditional retail, and reshape the unbounded new business form of e-commerce + store business to inject fresh vitality into B2C e-commerce.

5.2 Focus on resource allocation

For B2C companies, it is not advisable to do blogging and writing white papers to do inbound marketing at the beginning. It is necessary to choose according to the resources available at present.The best way is to start with only one blog, and then gradually expand other content distribution channels. At the same time, in the mind, there is a master plan for the marketing of the customers, a clear understanding of the goals to be achieved at each stage. And properly adjust the online and offline resources, timely replenish inventory and update on the website to avoid consumer complaints caused by improper resource allocation.

5.3 Evaluate inbound marketing ROI at all times

ROI (return on investment) is the return of a business from an economic activity. Effectively develop project or activity budgets through ROI analysis. For B2C e-commerce, tracking each market activity becomes critical, requiring a certain amount of time and resources to establish a connection between marketing activities and sales results. With services such as HubSpot software, CRM solutions, form a closed loop with the market work and sales work. Analytical calculations can be used to get how many sales leads and customers the event has brought.

5.4 Focus on content, reality and brand

In the future focus of inbound marketing, the promotion of "micro" and "soft" should be the dominant. B2C e-commerce itself should be settled, paying more attention to content, focusing on customer experience, focusing on brand, including establishing a sound and perfect pre-sale, sale and after-sales service mechanism. At the same time, we should pay more attention to the cultivation of consumer brand attachment and loyalty, and be more adept at using socialized new media and pursuing quality in sales activities.

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