Application of 5T Word-of-Mouth Marketing Model in Weibo Marketing Taking Alipay's "Chinese Koi" as an Example

Ling Hu and Xiaoguang Wu

Abstract—On September 29, 2018, Alipay launched the "Chinese Koi" event on Sina Weibo, which has become one of the most important events of the year in China's Internet community. Since the evolution of Weibo into the mainstream social media, it has become one of the important platforms for companies' marketing activities. The process of Weibo marketing mainly involves the company's dissemination of information, attracting opinion leaders or users' comment and sharing in Weibo, and achieving the marketing purpose through the spread of Internet word-of-mouth. This paper is based on the 5T model of word-of-mouth marketing, namely, Talkers, Topics, Tools, Taking Part and Tracking, and analyzes Alipay's "Chinese Koi" Weibo marketing activity.

Index Terms—5T model, word-of-mouth marketing, Weibo marketing, Chinese koi.

I. INTRODUCTION

Weibo was born in 2009. For 9 years since its inception, Sina Weibo has become one of the most important social platforms in China. According to the unaudited financial report for the fourth quarter of 2017 and the whole year [1], the number of monthly active users ("MAUs") of Weibo in December 2017 reached 392 million. The average number of daily active users ("DAUs") of Weibo in December 2017 increased by approximately 33 million compared with the same period of the previous year, reaching 172 million. Based on a large number of Weibo users, Sina Weibo's information content displays the characteristics of fast updates, popularization and strong interactivity. Sina Weibo is not only a platform share opinions, but also a platform to explore fresh information [2].

Previous studies have shown that word-of-mouth plays an extremely important role in influencing consumer decision-making and behavioral change [3]. This is one of the reasons why word-of-mouth marketing is increasingly favored. With the rapid development of the Internet and social media, consumers continue to move from offline to online, and word-of-mouth marketing has been increasingly applied online and in social media. Word-of-mouth marketing in the Internet and social media is pervasive, and can give full play to its role based on the characteristics of the Internet and social media.

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II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Weibo Marketing

Sina Weibo, born in 2009, is one of the most influential social platforms in China. Weibo marketing refers to a marketing method implemented by sellers at the Weibo platform to create value for merchants, individuals, etc. It also refers to the business behavior mode in which merchants or individuals discover and meet various needs of users through Weibo platform. Weibo marketing takes Weibo as a marketing platform. Every listener (follower) is a potential marketing target. Companies disseminate corporate information and product information to netizens, and establish a good corporate image and product image via Weibo. Companies can update their content to interact with netizens every day, or post topics of interest to achieve marketing purposes. This represents the Weibo marketing launched by the Internet [4].

Zhou Kai and Xu Liwen believe that the emergence of Weibo has provided companies with a new type of information exchange platform and achieved zero-distance contact with consumers. Weibo's low-cost, interactive, viral divergence and other communication features have created an excellent marketing opportunity for corporate marketing. Weibo has gradually evolved into a marketing platform for companies to establish brand image, disseminate brand culture, and cultivate user relationships. [5].

In terms of practice, Jin Yongsheng, Wang Rui and Chen Xiangbing believe that for enterprise Weibo marketing, enterprises shall change their marketing ideas from being enterprise-centered to consumer-centered, and carry out business activities combining brand building and marketing activities from the perspective of humanization on Weibo platform. Companies need to remove the sense of distance from consumers in the traditional marketing model, through the Web 2.0 and equal interaction and communication with consumers, adopting microblogging, activities, comment forwarding and other means to obtain the recognition of followers, thereby enhancing consumer brand loyalty and increasing the real conversion rate of potential consumers [6]. Zhao Aiqin and Zhu Jinghuan maintain that Weibo marketing is an innovative way of "viral" marketing. As the "virus source", the Weibo information can be transmitted through the human network with the forwarder as a "virus-infected person". The more frequently it is forwarded, the higher the exposure will be [7].

B. Word-of-Mouth Marketing

With the rapid rise of the Internet, word-of-mouth marketing has become one of the most preferred marketing methods for enterprises. Word-of-mouth communication began in the 1960s. In 1967, Arndt officially defined the concept of word-of-mouth for the first time, and believed that word-of-mouth was a face-to-face exchange upon products and companies among non-commercial individuals.

With the development of the society, traditional word-of-mouth has gradually spawned Internet word-of-mouth. Guo Guoqing and Yang Xuecheng hold that the spread of Internet word-of-mouth is extremely efficient, diversified, anonymous and interactive. According to Yan Tao's definition, word-of-mouth marketing is a two-way interactive communication behavior carried out by individuals other than producers and sellers, through express or implied means, without third-party processing, to deliver a specific product, brand, manufacturer, seller, and any organizational or personal information reminiscent of the above-mentioned objects, so that the recommended person can obtain information, change attitudes, and even influence the purchase behavior..

Sernovitz believes that word-of-mouth marketing is based on the word-of-mouth marketing approach of consumers, rather than selling products directly to customers. Zhu Yingyu believes that the general practice of word-of-mouth marketing is to select the opinion leaders of the masses or those who like new things and are willing to preach their newly discovered consumer groups, so that they can gain the benefits of the products, and once they like the products, they will be obliged to publicize [8]. At the same time, he believes that an important part of word-of-mouth marketing is to find opinion leaders and have more communication with their influence to. Opinion leaders should also look for the best channels to give play their strengths, such as Sina Weibo, which is a good example.

C. Summary of Literature Review

According to the literature research, Weibo marketing and word-of-mouth Internet marketing are all new born things. Extremely high efficiency, diversified method, anonymity, and high interaction of word-of-mouth communication cater to Sina Weibo users with zero distance and strong interaction, viral divergence and other characteristics. The combined effect of the two will be considerable.

III. RESEARCH MODELS AND ASSUMPTIONS

A. Marketing Model of 5T Word-of-Mouth

If you are using *Word,* use either the Microsoft Equation Editor or the *MathType* add-on (http://www.mathtype.com) for equations in your paper (Insert | Object | Create New | Microsoft Equation *or* MathType Equation). "Float over text" should *not* be selected.

Andy Sernovitz, the US word-of-mouth marketing giant, put forward five important practical elements of word-of-mouth marketing in its well-known word-of-mouth marketing book *Word of Mouth Market- ing - How Smart Companies Get People Talking*, namely five "Ts" of building

words-of-mouth: Talkers, Topics, Tools, Taking Part, and Tracking, praised by word-of-mouth marketing practitioners as 5T models or 5T rules [9]. Sernovitz believes that Talkers are the audiences who talk about the topics. Topics are events for talkers to talk about. Tools are the channel for word-of-mouth and information dissemination. Taking part is the process that information audiences participate in the discussion and communication. Tracking is the continuous follow-up of word-of-mouth marketing effect by marketing event sponsors. At the same time, in this model, word-of-mouth marketing activities should be designed in the order of five Ts, as shown in the following Fig. 1:
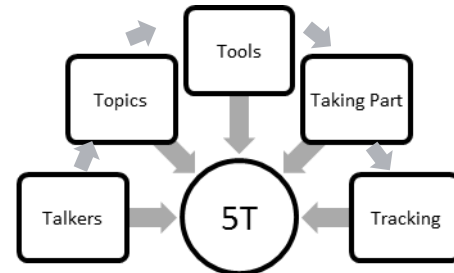

Fig. 1. Marketing model of 5T word-of-mouth.

Sernovitz believes that in the entire model, companies should first identify the Talkers of marketing events, and identify the audience of word-of-mouth marketing; create Topics for word-of-mouth, and provide content for the talkers; choose the appropriate Tools, and provides the communication channel for word-of-mouth marketing campaign; activate the Taking Part and join the participants; and conduct continuous Tracking with the entire event to ensure word-of-mouth marketing.

B. Research Hypothesis

This paper aims to make a descriptive analysis of the entire process of Alipay's "Chinese Koi" through the 5T word-of-mouth marketing model. The hypotheses are:

H1. Talkers in the 5T word-of-mouth marketing model have played a positive role in the success of the "Chinese Koi" activity.

H2. Topics in the 5T word-of-mouth marketing model have played a positive role in the success of the "Chinese Koi" activity.

H3. Tools in the 5T word-of-mouth marketing model have played a positive role in the success of the "Chinese Koi" activity.

H4. Taking Part in the5T word-of-mouth marketing model has played a positive role in the success of the "Chinese Koi" activity.

H5. Tracking in the 5T word-of-mouth marketing model has played a positive role in the success of the "Chinese Koi" activity.

H6. The coordination between each element in the word-of-mouth marketing model has played a positive role in the success of the "Chinese Koi" activity.

IV. ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS DISCUSSION OF 5T WORD-OF-MOUTH MARKETING MODEL OF ALIPAY'S "CHINESE KOI"

On September 29, 2018, Alipay officially launched the "Chinese Koi" event. The total value of prizes for the winner is worth millions. The number of reposts of Alipay's Weibo has exceeded 1 million in just 6 hours. On the 29th, the event has accumulated more than one million reposts. As the event progressed, approximately 3 million Weibo users reposted the Weibo, with a winning probability of one in three million. On October 7th, Alipay "Chinese Koi" was awarded on Weibo, and Weibo user "Xinxiaodai" became the winner of "Chinese Koi". Then, Alipay's "Chinese Koi" event ended successfully.

A. Analysis and Hypothesis Discussion of Setting of Talkers of "Chinese Koi"

Alipay's "Chinese Koi" sweepstakes were launched during the National Day holiday. At this time, most people are in a relaxed state of mind. Since students and young white-collar workers are the main constituent users of Weibo, the user images are: post-90s, loving social media, obsessed with Weibo and mobile phones, trendy ideas, and loving to let others recognize their value orientation through sharing. In addition, the "Chinese Koi" release period is on the eve of the holiday, most of the students have been on holiday, the office workers have no intention of work, and it is a peak period of microblogging. Alipay, one of the largest payment platforms in China, enjoys a number of 14580420 followers as of October 2018, most of them being post-80s and post-90s.

Hypothesis H1 discussion: Talkers in the 5T word-of-mouth marketing model have played a positive role in the success of the "Chinese Koi" activity.

Setting of Talkers of Alipay's "Chinese Koi" activity enjoys good timing, the characteristics of the Weibo user group and the advantages of their followers. Talkers in the 5T enjoy a strong advantage and have played a positive role in the success of this event.

B. Analysis and Hypothesis Discussion of Setting of Topics in the "Chinese Koi"

The original of Weibo of Alipay's "Chinese Koi" is as follows:

> [Wish you to be a Chinese Koi!] Friends on overseas trips during National Holiday, please pay attention to the Alipay payment page, and your bills may be freed. This is our gratitude to everyone for taking Alipay abroad. Friends who have not gone abroad, please pay more attention! ! Repost this Weibo, I will draw a Chinese koi that enjoys unique favor in the world on October 7th. How can I favor you? Please see the comment area↓↓↓

According to the original of Alipay Weibo, it can be seen that there are many topics, and the most eye-catching is the word "koi". The reason why the word "Koi" was chosen as the carrier of topic is that "Koi" is a word with its own attributes. It is originated from Yang Chaoyue, an online celebrity, with high popularity, which perfectly fits the Weibo culture and the

way of spread. Derived from Koi, there is also a highly popular koi emoji, which involves many online celebrities. The word "koi" is redefined by the Internet. It is a mixture of ridicule and hope. It has a temperament that is both positive and evil, which is conducive to communication. Taking "Koi" as the topic of the event can sustain its popularity.

In addition, Alipay did not directly unveil the awards of the event when it launched the "Chinese Koi" activity, but instead laid the groundwork, and in the process of word-of-mouth communication, the amazing awards were published in the comment area in the form of long maps. It attached a super topic to the "Koi" again. At the same time, there are as many as 160 merchants offering awards, and Alipay does not directly unveil the total value of all awards, just listing the names of the awards, which drives Talkers to spend a lot of time talking, stimulating word-of-mouth communication.

As the number of participants increased, the probability of winning reached an exaggerated one in three million, and the extremely low probability of winning naturally became another topic of Alipay's "Chinese Koi" activity. After the unveiling the winner, Alipay continued to create the topic, prompting people to go to the Xinxiaodai, the winner's Weibo, with witty words, which are attractive.

Hypothesis H2 discussion: Topics in the 5T word-of-mouth marketing model have played a positive role in the success of the "Chinese Koi" activity.

The setting of Topics of "Chinese Koi" are fantastic and interlocking, so that the discussion on the activity lasted for the entire seven-day long vacation, and the popularity also ran throughout the activity, which played a positive role in the success of this activity.

C. Analysis and Hypothesis Discussion of Setting of Tools of "Chinese Koi"

In terms of Tools setting, Alipay did not choose its own App and WeChat official account, but chose Weibo as its channel for word-of-mouth marketing. There are two main reasons. First, based on the literature review conclusions, the extremely high efficiency, diversified methods, anonymity, and interactivity of word-of-mouth communication cater to Sina Weibo users with zero distance, strong interaction, and viral divergence. The combination of the two will be striking.

In the interaction of the whole process of the event, Alipay took advantages of Weibo's interactivity and viral divergence, among other characteristics to repeatedly emphasize the topic of its own creation. During the event, Alipay's Weibo account repeatedly mentioned the probability of winning the prize being one in three million, emphasizing how low the probability was and how lucky the winner was. At this time, Weibo user with V, which has 27 million fans, also timely released a poster with "What does it mean by one in three million?", which won more followers' attention. Based on the diversified characteristics of Weibo, Alipay used a long-picture mode when unveiling prizes, with red and white as the main color, which is very visually striking. In the final draw, Alipay also posted a long list of videos with prizes list on Weibo, and the followers were all stunned. These effects can be easily achieved with the Weibo Tools. Secondly, the "Koi" in the Topics of "Chinese Koi" was mainly circulated

on Sina Weibo, and there was no popularity in other social media platforms such as WeChat and Douban. The new meaning of the word "koi" has been in Weibo for a long time, and it can be described as the exclusive product of Weibo. Therefore, it is reasonable to choose Weibo as a channel for word-of-mouth communication.

Hypothesis H3 discussion: Tools in the 5T word-of-mouth marketing model have played a positive role in the success of the "Chinese Koi" activity.

"Chinese Koi" has combined the characteristics of Sina Weibo in the setting of Tools to maximize the effect of topic discussion and played a positive role in the success of this activity.

D. Analysis and Hypothesis Discussion of "Taking Part" of "Chinese Koi"

The followers' "Taking Part" of Alipay "Chinese Koi" is divided into several stages. The first is the start-up phase of the project. In the startup phase, Alipay did not give too much groundwork, creating a "cold start" approach. Since the topic comes with hotspots, more than one million reposts have been obtained during the startup phase after 6 hours of topic release. In the process of repost, due to the huge number of merchants participating in the prizes, the merchants also participated in the process of repost, and the number of followers of the merchants themselves brought a snowball effect to the subsequent reposts. It then moved on to the project phase. At this stage, Alipay made a lot of actions, which increased the participation.

As mentioned above, Alipay did not directly unveil the event awards at the beginning of the event. Instead, it posted the amazing awards in the comment area after the event started. In addition, Alipay did not directly release the total value of all the awards, only listing the names of the prizes, and encourage the followers to participate in the process of calculating the total value of the prizes, inciting the enthusiastic participation of the followers, and bringing the whole process of word-of-mouth communication into a virtuous circle. In addition, after the announcement of the activity in Weibo, Alipay's WeChat official account immediately followed up and released the news. This push is also very personal, titled "2 Things". The content is simple and clear, informing users of the "Chinese Koi" activity related matters. The amount of reading rose quickly to more than 100,000, attracting attention for Weibo activity.

Finally, it is at the end of the event. After confirming the winners, Alipay timely issued a winning notice, calling on the followers to visit the winner's Weibo. At the same time, the winner posted a minimalist blog, and the content was: "I don't have to work for the rest of my life, do I?" This microblogging seems simple, but it hits the feelings of the user groups of post-80s and post-90s. A large amount of reposts ensure that there is a large amount of user participation after the event ends. In addition, after the event, Alipay invited the winner to shoot the winning video, allowing the winner to "roll" on the huge list of prizes, and meaning "lying to win", in line with the topic of "Koi" once again. In addition to Alipay's own official Weibo, user participation is also inseparable from the participation and reposts of Weibo users with V. The

participation of them stimulated secondary communication and created kinetic energy for overall user participation.

Hypothesis H4 discussion: Taking Part in the 5T word-of-mouth marketing model has played a positive role in the success of the "Chinese Koi" activity.

"Chinese Koi" is in pursuit of multiple, multi-channel and multi-level principles in the setting of the Taking Part, which has not only kept popularity during the whole participation process from the beginning to the end, but has maintained popularity even after one week of the event, playing a positive role in the success of the activity.

E. Analysis and Hypothesis Discussion of Tracking of "Chinese Koi"

Tracking of Alipay's "Chinese Koi" can be described as interlocking. From the cold start, Alipay has constantly followed up with the followers' reactions during the whole event. After the "cold start", the merchants are introduced in time to repost, attracting Weibo users with V to repost, and supporting by WeChat official account. Waiting during the National Day for 7 days is long. Through the tracking of the number of followers and the enthusiasm of the followers, Alipay constantly took various measures, such as constantly emphasizing the winning rate of only one in three million, and updating the information about the "Chinese Koi" activity every day to keep the activity popular. After the unveiling of the winner, Alipay also effectively tracked the feedback from the participants, invited the winner to record the video, and promoted the winner's Weibo to push the event to a climax. At the end of the event, Alipay still tracked the winner, so that the microblogs that "do not put the resignation report on the boss's table" were released and attracted widespread attention, to further spread the positive energy of working hard without slacking off.

Hypothesis H5 discussion: Tracking in the 5T word-of-mouth marketing model has played a positive role in the success of the "Chinese Koi" activity.

Tracking of "Chinese Koi" plays a vital role in the whole activity, constantly tracking the elements in the 5T model, keeping the whole activity popular, and extending the popularity till the end of the event. It played a positive role in the success of the activity.

F. Interaction Analysis and Hypothesis Discussion of 5T Elements of "Chinese Koi"

Combined with the analysis, it can be known that the 5T elements of the entire activity of "Chinese Koi" have not only been successfully designed, but also the coordination between each element is worth considering. Talkers were set as Weibo users, which takes advantage of the characteristics of Weibo's own users to be younger and social, laying the foundation for the setting of Topics of "Koi". The term "koi" is a topic with younger and more popular attributes, which fits well with the characteristics of Talkers. The setting of Tools provide catalysis for Talkers and Topics. The setting of the Taking Part focuses on the characteristics of Talkers, Topics, and Tools, and keeps upgrading. At the same time, the activity tracked the other four elements of the 5T model of the entire event in terms of Tracking, and finally realized the maximum

effect of the communication. The interaction relationship is shown in the following Fig. 2:
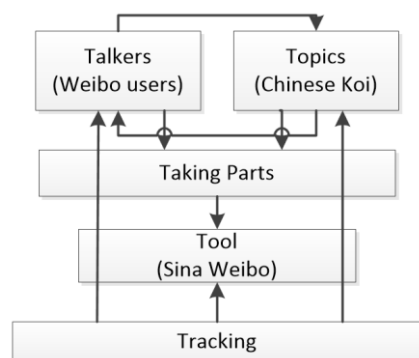

Fig. 2. Relationship between 5T elements of "Chinese Koi".

Hypothesis H6 discussion: The coordination between each element in the word-of-mouth marketing model has played a positive role in the success of the "Chinese Koi" activity.

The whole activity of Alipay's "Chinese Koi" are analyzed through the 5T model. The settings of Talkers, Topics, Tools, Taking Part and Tracking of "Chinese Koi" are reasonable and sufficient, and they are properly matched with each other, fully reflecting the interaction between the 5T word-of-mouth marketing models and playing a positive role in the success of this activity.

V. Conclusions and Reflections

Based on the research of "Chinese Koi", this paper analyzes the application of 5T word-of-mouth marketing model in Weibo marketing. It is concluded that the rational setting and coordination of the elements in the 5T word-of-mouth marketing model can be conducive to the marketing activities. Therefore, successful word-of-mouth marketing shall involve serious consideration that whether the design of each element in the 5T model is sufficient to provide kinetic energy for the entire activity, whether the elements interact reasonably, and maximize the effectiveness of word-of-mouth marketing.

However, since "Chinese Koi" is the latest popular marketing activity, the relevant data has not been disclosed. This paper only analyzes the 5T word-of-mouth marketing model at the qualitative level. The next step of the quantitative study will be carried out as soon as the data is disclosed.

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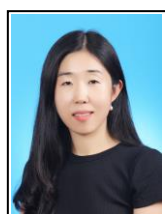
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