State University of New York at New Paltz

QUIVER

A dating app for the rest of us

William Donaldson

Digital Media Convergence

Professor Joseph Vlachos

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Introduction

The average dating site on the Internet is built for one thing: for men to find women. Even though women can use them to find men, the experience of using the site doesn't match up – men will send a lot of messages to women, and women are often bombarded with messages from people they don't have any interest in. And if you're looking for a same-sex partner, forget it – for gay men, there's Grindr, but if you're anything other than a gay man looking for a gay man, it's extremely difficult because these sites are not written with a LGBTQIAP+ audience in mind.

Quiver is an idea for a new, queer-oriented dating site that makes it easy for LGBTQIAP+ people to find what they're looking for. Quiver takes advantage of the many gender identities and sexualities and offers a home for all of them, providing a service to peoples who are grossly under-represented in the world of dating sites. With a simple interface, the app, available on iOS and Android, will clearly list all the important details (gender identity, sexuality, and optionally kinks) of potential partners in a flat, searchable format, standardizing the terminology used to describe these things network-wide and making it easier for users to find who they're looking for. The service also provides service for asexual users, allowing them to find romantic opportunities with people who are specifically not

looking for sex. These features are innovations in the dating site industry,

and in time will position Quiver as a leader in a space that has, to this date,

had few or no options for marginalized orientations and gender alignments.

Service Introduction

Quiver is very lucky in that its target demographic is both very niche and very broad. It is estimated that about 9 million Americans identify as LGBT, and, of those, 700,000 identify as transgender, though these numbers are likely under-reported (Gates). There are also other identities that fall under the queer umbrella, such as pansexuals, non-binary people, and asexuals that, while smaller in number, are all notable in their own rights.

Our primary age target falls within the 18-34 age range. We want to target this age range primarily because those within this range are more technologically savvy and know how to use smartphones well, as we will be targeting only iOS and Android to begin, not a PC-accessible web interface. Facebook and Twitter, which these tech-savvy end-users are used to using, both have advertising systems that are well-fleshed out and will support our pre-launch advertising in a very natural way. This will be followed up at time of launch with an environmental campaign spanning billboards, buses and their stops, subway cars, and other open environmental space in large American metro areas such as New York City, Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., Portland, Atlanta, San Francisco, Boston, and Seattle, in approximately that order. We also plan to engage with college campuses to provide environmental advertising in and around prominent campuses, and also

create a street team program which we will be ramping up over the course of the pre-launch period.

The prime benefit that Quiver offers to LGBTQIAP+ people is that it brings a full range of queer identities in under one umbrella. Each individual sexual orientation has a potential to be attracted to a number of different gender identities, so it is important that all of these groups are brought together under one umbrella, instead of separating them out to different services (like Grindr, which is exclusively for gay men). The more people of different kinds that use the service, the more likely that two people who may not have considered each other initially will be matched up and result in a good relationship. It also makes it easier for asexual users to find romantic opportunities with those who may not necessarily be asexual but are okay with being put in relational situations where sexual contact is excluded.

Company Overview

Quiver will be instantiated as an LLC. A Sole Proprietorship or Partnership does not make sense for this kind of business, and S- and C-corporations are more complicated to run, leaving us with less time to focus on making the product as good as it can be.

Making money from a service like this is troublesome for a number of reasons. For a service that is just beginning to exist, that needs a wide swath of users to be able to appropriately function, you don't want to create any unnecessary gates to increasing that number of users. Money is an unnecessary gate. Queer people spread across as wide a demographic range as the entirety of humanity when it comes to income, but just as we are advocating for the rights of queer people, and just as we are advocating for the rights of people of color, we must also knowledge that it is just as important to advocate for the rights of poor people. We do not want to exclude these people from our service - in fact, we want to make it easier for these people to find companionship. With this said, this is not the entirety of our user base, and we still need money to operate. Instead of gating the service off to those who can afford it, we would rather indulge in new, untraditional revenue streams that bridge across unnoticed gaps and try new things in the realm of advertising. Partnering with local businesses and

suggesting places to meet based on contextual information about you and

the person you are talking to is just one of many ways this could be

accomplished. We also are not averse to having donation or subscription

models, as long as access to the service itself is not contingent on these

donations or subscriptions.

Studies show that mentoring is incredibly important for new

technology startups. Rhett Morris writes that 33 percent of startup founders

who were mentored by successful entrepreneurs in their industry went on to

have extremely successful companies. This makes it very clear that this is

the right way for us to go.

Competitive Analysis

Quiver is very fortunate in that, to date, no other company has yet executed on the creation of something that achieves its same goals. Obviously, there are a glut of dating services and apps for non-queer and cisgender individuals to choose from, but queer users currently do not have anything that meets their needs to the same level of quality as non-queer users have become accustomed to. Of the wide array of dating services available, only three truly begin to approach the needs we are attempting to meet.

OKCupid

OKCupid is one of the most popular dating sites in the United States, available on the web, and as apps on most mobile devices. Founded in 2004, it allows its clientele to write openly about themselves, while also presenting them with quizzes that allow the service to generate percentage-based matches to other users (Wikipedia). Notably, OKCupid has an option that allows users to state that they do not "want to see or be seen by straight people". They have also greatly expanded their available gender identity and sexuality choices to 22 and 12, respectively. Despite this, however, you can still only list yourself as seeking "men", "women", or "everybody", which

defeats the point of allowing users to specify their gender identity and sexuality in the first place (Mosthof). While it is great for the people it does work for, this simple roadblock prevents queer users from using the service to what could be its full potential.

HER

HER is a niche dating app available only for iOS. The service is notable in that it is the first dating app that is open exclusively to women. It caters primarily to lesbian and bisexual women, and as such doesn't have any setting for gender identity, even to distinguish cisgender women from those who fall under the trans umbrella (Mosthof). While we think that HER is an excellent idea for a product, that it serves an important niche of people (those women who want a service free of those who are not women), and that it is extremely important that this product continues to exist, this is not the direction we want to go with our service. Quiver is proud to be open to anyone - even straight and/or cisgender people who are interested in dating those who identify as any of the large multitude of sexualities and gender identities that we are making life just a little bit easier for. We are glad to have HER as a competitor in the space and will endeavor to recommend it to users who, after trying our service, find that they are looking for that particular kind of experience.

Thurst

The closest experience we could find to what we plan to offer, Thurst is a forthcoming dating app marketed as being "[w]here queer people of all genders date" (Thurst). The app is being developed by a pair of black queer programmers, and "aims to provide a safe, free platform for queer cisgender, transgender and non-binary people to make connections". The service prides itself on its desire to offer security and privacy protections that well surpass those offered by other services, including the ability "to instantly hide [the user's] location, change their name an unlimited number of times and to block and report abusers" (Jones). These are important features, and if Thurst executes on their idea well, they have the opportunity to capture a significant amount of market- and mind-share. To this date, however, they have not produced a usable version of their planned software - on their Facebook page, a post dated February 11, 2016 says that they are "releasing very soon" (Facebook). It is also important to note that the service is founded and run by people of color. For potential users who are also people of color, this is an important signifier that the issues that they care about will be dealt with in a sensitive and thoughtful manner by people who also experience those same issues in their day to day lives, and as such Thurst has a significant opportunity to be the primary queer dating app of people of

color. We think that this point is incredibly important, and that it is necessary

that this service continues to coexist and compete with our own, to provide

those who find this an important decision factor in which service they plan to

use with something that best meets their needs. Regardless, we are entering

the same space, and plan to give Thurst serious competition, in ways that will

hopefully benefit both of our services for the better.

Customer Analysis

Our product is very lucky in that its value proposition is fairly straightforward to explain to the consumer. Quiver provides a companionship app that is optimized and built for queer people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and races. Therefore, the customer's decision making process is also just as straightforward: being a free app, price is not a barrier to entry (assuming that the prospective customer already has a compatible smart device), and the time investment necessary to get started in the app in a basic way can be less than 5 minutes from discovery of the app on the smart device's marketplace. This is slightly longer than, for instance, the time it would take to set up a Tinder account, which currently can pull all the information they need to start an account from Facebook when you link your accounts. Quiver takes more time because we think it is important to give our users the choice to tell us these things themselves. Many queer people are not out to their family and friends, and we want to create a warm and welcoming environment for those who desire or require that additional privacy.

Our average expected user is in the 18 to 35 age range, of any gender identity, not married. They will range from having some high school education to having completed master's and doctorate degrees. Monetarily,

they can make up to a third less than their straight counterparts, making the

free price point of our app incredibly important (Burns). In reality, our average

users are just as wildly varied in terms of their interests as the users of, say,

Facebook, with the one caveat that they are overwhelmingly queer. While this

is our average user, we do expect to have users who fall outside of these

demographics. It is unfortunate that market segmenting systems such as

Nielsen's PRIZM system do not take sexual orientation or non-binary gender

identities into account, so those systems are not easily adaptable to our use

cases.

Our goal is to match people up based on their listed sexual

orientations (and, optionally, kinks). Thus, a positive transaction, in our view,

is to connect two or more people together in physical space and enable

them to have an interaction that is satisfying to all parties involved. To this

end, to enable us to better match people and weed out abusers or harmful

users, Quiver asks the users to rate their interactions and gives them the

option to report a user for wrongdoing. We hope that this will foster an

environment where our users are first and foremost comfortable using the

service.

Marketing Strategy

In order to adequately explore the realm of possibilities for the marketing of this product, let's first briefly revisit its key selling points:

- Dating app aimed at gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, asexual, transgender, non-binary, gender non-conforming, and queer people (referred to in short as queer people)

- Search for other users programmatically, using tags for each orientation, identity, kink, and other general information

- Set a meet-up date at known "safe space" businesses and add to calendar with just a few taps

- Industry-leading protection and safety measures to keep users safe from harassers and abusers

It's important to break down what these really mean and what advantages they provide over other services. At our time of launch, we will be one of only two estimated dating apps specifically targeting queer users in this way. This gives us an extraordinary amount of freedom in terms of how we are able to market our app. Being one of the first to market means that we do not have to artificially limit the realm of possibilities that we could possibly explore.

We are also one of the first dating apps, not just in the queer space, but in general, that allows for sexual orientation, gender identity, kinks, and other identifying information to be searched in a programmatic manner. Giving a users the power to find what they're looking for without having to go to the trouble of reading numerous individual profiles is an important differentiator, and should inform a significant part of our marketing communications.

Perhaps our most important differentiator, however, is our curated list of safe spaces to meet up. We thoroughly vet every business that applies to become part of this feature for their understanding and compassion of queer people, as well as their policies that dictate how they deal with removing patrons that are becoming disruptive, abusive, or otherwise injurious to the business's status as a safe space. Our top overall priority is the safety, security, and well-being of our users. This is why we also provide industry-leading moderation features that allow our users to report, block, and notify authorities about interactions with other users that were abusive, harassing, or criminal in nature. Unlike some other services, we take all reports and allegations seriously, follow up with relevant authorities, and remove users from the service when it has been determined that a crime has been committed as a result of an interaction enabled by our service.

These features must be distilled down and synthesized into a thorough, well thought out marketing scheme that truly encapsulates our vision, our priorities, and our morals. Because of the broad depth of the number of individual groups that we are targeting, it is important that we structure our message in a way that is easily modifiable and adaptable to be able to suit a wide variety of different purposes, sexual orientations, gender identities, and kinks. Our primary marketing vehicle for Quiver consists of a template sentence with two blank spaces, one for a purpose, situation, or activity, and the other for an identity, orientation, or other kind of group of people. The default sentence, without customization, is "Dating for the rest of us." In this sentence, "Dating" is the purpose or activity and "The rest of us" is the group participating in that purpose or activity. On the web, this could be seen with the two categories spinning against each other, with the word "for" remaining fixed in place, to reveal new combinations of these categories, expressing the wide variety of groups that we cater to and surprising both us and our advertising audience with new combinations that we never would've thought of on our own. Using the phrase "the rest of us" is an important way of showing how queer users have been excluded from other, similar services. It is a way of being able to band together and say that

we matter enough to deserve a dating service that acknowledges our needs and executes on its mission well.

The most important thing this marketing vehicle brings to the table is its flexibility. In multimedia situations where it can be displayed in a dynamic manner, each category can rotate against each other, showing at once the wide variety of options available, and how they combine together to show the interests of real people. In static, or print, situations, we can opt to simply show a small number of different choices, along with the default tagline and logo.

In multi-flyer situations, where multiple posters are wheat-pasted or otherwise hung next to each other, each can have 3 different variations on the main marketing vehicle and the default iteration of that vehicle. When enough flyers are used, some can also go into the security and safety measures we pride ourselves on. This will also work for ceiling advertisements in city buses and subway cars. Our target audience largely use public transit to get around, and so advertising on public transit is going to be one of the most important ways we get our message out.

We would also like to do something special to celebrate the launch of Quiver and engage in new, innovative marketing concepts at the same time. We have long been a fan of the idea of experiential marketing, or real-world

situations that engage people in an advertising space with interesting,

interactive experiences that cement the idea of the brand in the viewer's

head. This concept would place electroluminescent sculptures, alive with the

colors of the various pride flags that make up the LGBTQIAP+ community,

showing people dancing, kissing, and interacting in ways befitting of the

goals of a dating app, in open areas of high-trafficked public spaces in major

cities. The electroluminescent attributes of these sculptures could be

interactive, allowing passersby to leave their mark by showing off the colors

of their own pride flags. Using these sculptures to document the wide variety

of situations we enable, from hookups to dating to non-sexual romance, with

all the different sexualities and gender identities that we cater to, and all the

specialties and kinks that follow, these sculptures have the ability to take our

service and visualize the outcomes that we aim to create for our users.

Acquiring funding for creating the sculptures is the only significant

roadblock, so when presenting the concept to investors it will be important

to show renderings that really push the idea in an emotional sense.

Financial Analysis

Before we begin building the app, we have various costs we need to deal with. Registration with Apple for a developer account is $99, which recurs every year, and Google Play charges a one-time fee of $25 (Mackenzie). These are the basic fees that need to be paid to begin development and place the finished apps on the devices' respective stores.

There are three groups of costs for the initial building out of the app: front-end development, back-end development, and infrastructure costs. According to an estimator at kinvey.com, it will cost an estimated $293,182 to create our app. $134,806 of this goes towards front-end development, $94,376 of it towards the back-end development, and $63,600 towards

Estimated costs (Kinvey)
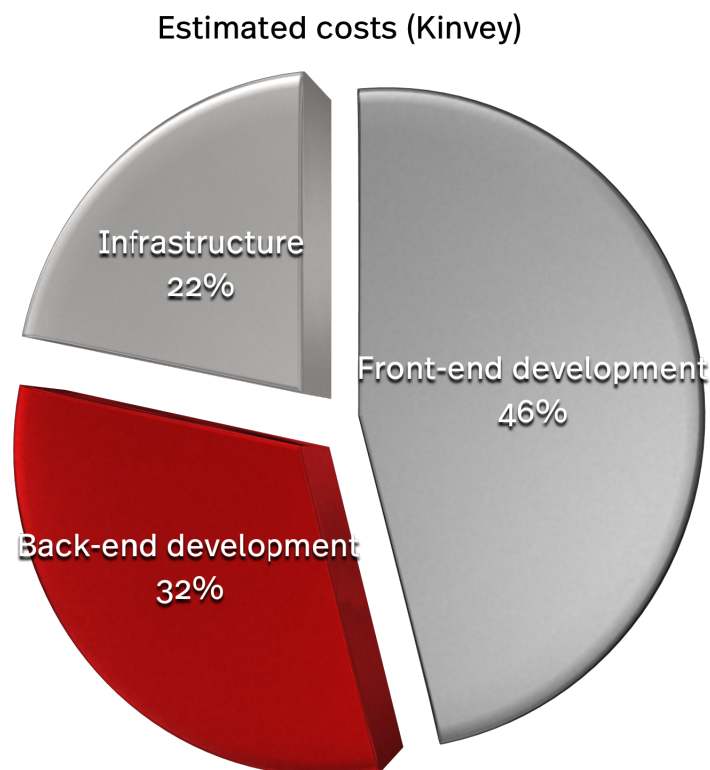
infrastructure. It is very likely that it will cost us significantly less than the amount that is being speculated here because we will be hiring significantly fewer developers than the 7 they are estimating, because they are over-estimating the cost for each feature, and because the particular estimator used was one created by a software development company with the goal of attracting sales to their organization. Even if the exact money amount here is excessive, the percentage breakdown of the costs is likely to be accurate, and the estimate overall serves as a good worst-case scenario.

From the app launch going forward, we expect to make our money in two primary ways. It is important to us that we make the app's full functionality available free of charge to our audience, because a significant portion of our target audience is not likely to want or afford an app that costs money, either one time or recurring. We also want to be able to let meet-up safe spaces add themselves to the list of safe spaces free of charge. However, both of these areas can still be capitalized on - there are those who are able and willing to pay for such functionality.

The first capitalization method is selling unobtrusive advertising in the app for meet up locations that wish to promote themselves above non-promoted locations. This is where we expect to make a significant amount of

our money, as we can charge several hundred dollars per month to each of

these organizations.

The other capitalization method is to offer an optional monthly

subscription donation to those users who are interested in supporting us

financially. All app core functionality is available to all users, free of charge.

What the optional monthly donation gives users is mainly cosmetic - the

ability to choose multiple color themes for the app, a "donator" icon on their

profile page, and removal of any advertisements within the app (i.e., the

promoted locations return to where they would otherwise be in the results).

We intend to offer this for $2.99 USD a month, and will receive 70% of this

Estimated Income by Channel

Advertising
30%

Subscription
70%
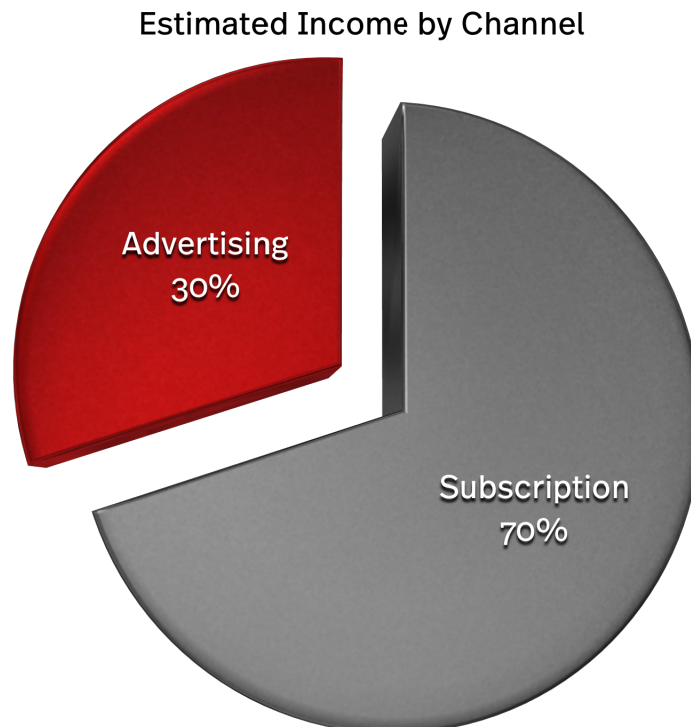
from both the App Store and Google Play for a total of $2.09 USD per

subscribed user per month (Mackenzie).

We expect between 20% to 30% of users will opt to subscribe to the

monthly donation, and a similar percentage of restaurants and other

locations in the service will opt to advertise. Assuming we have 200,000

active users by the end of year one, monthly donations alone will enable us

to earn about $104,500 a month. Assuming that about 100 restaurants will

advertise at an average cost of $450 a month, we can earn $45,000 a month

from advertising. These are best case scenario figures, but they provide

promising figures for our ability to create a sustainable business.

Conclusion

Queer people suffer from struggles that the rest of society doesn't. Quiver aims to help them find some form of escape. With an unparalleled feature set, we aim to change the internet dating industry forever, as well. A lot of organizations say that their goal is to "bring people together". For us, we live and breathe those words. We want to lift up those who society has constantly pummeled and put down, and give them tools to help them make their lives better. If we're successful, Quiver will be just the first of those tools. There are no medical or pharmaceutical companies that cater solely to the unique needs of transgender (and other queer) individuals, and as trans people begin to gain more and more visibility in society, we see an opportunity for that to change. Our hope is that we can break from simply offering a dating service and instantiate a pharmaceutical company that provides transgender, genderqueer, gender non-conforming and other queer individuals with services that meet their unique health needs, and is owned and operated by people who share them. We think this is the next logical step in our quest to help queer people live better lives, and we can't wait for that day to come.

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