

Competitive Analysis in the Dating App Industry: The League

Introduction:

This paper presents SEO and Social Media competitive analysis for the Tech industry with a subsection of social/dating apps. The client is The League, the app that positions itself as the “Harvard” of dating apps that helps people meet “Intelligently” (The League). The competitive analysis goes over the social media presence, Instagram specifically, of the League with its three main competitors: Bumble, Tinder, and Hinge (Fleenor, 2021). Each app has its own positioning within the market, but the client differentiates itself by its mission statement, “The League promotes higher education, encourages career-ambition, and, most importantly, cultivates the desire for an egalitarian relationship in both sexes” (Bradford, 2015).

If you could find out any one thing about your competitors' data, what would it be?

From the first glance at the client’s competition, competitor dating apps heavily use Instagram as the place to capture their customers and get them excited about dating by engaging them through Instagram posts and stories. These initiatives are built to find new app users and convert them to loyal customers that make in-app purchases. *The cost of acquiring a new paid user to the app* is a KPI that will be valuable to know about the competitor. In 2021 around 32.4% of dating app users paid at least once (Tankovska, 2021). Even though an app can have a very large pool of users, it might generate lower revenue due to a small percent of paid memberships. With correct promotions and building loyalty programs for customers, dating apps get their users hooked on getting different perks or one-time small purchases that generate revenue. This KPI shows the success rate of attracting new customers to the app and keeping them engaged with a variety of such promotions.

The biggest competitive data challenge for The League:

What can The League improve about the data that can help them stand out as compared to their competition? The current data challenge that The League is facing is to collect statistically significant data on qualified users to analyze what characteristics make them stand out from the rest of the applications. This data will help to train the algorithm to bring qualified users to the app. From the beginning, The League manually chose every single user from the waitlist to get on the app. With large growth over the past few years, the team had to implement an algorithm that made a choice of what applications are qualified to join the app. Unfortunately, what happens is the algorithm worked based on one engineer’s assumption rather than collective data analysis. It created a big issue since The League positioned itself as the “Harvard” of dating apps but in fact, added people were not qualified based on their profile completion and background. Since other competition does not have a waitlist functionality, the quality of profiles is not questioned. When The League learns how to analyze these profiles without manual involvement but still keeps the quality high, users will be more attracted to join The League vs other competition due to their quality and exclusivity.

Analysis of competitors data

Competitor Search Positioning:

While all competitors have existing web pages, the dating app niche does not use them to attract and keep followers as compared to social media. All three competitors have very minimal websites with pages around “Careers” and “App Store”. Since app searches happen more often on mobile (Table 1¹), the website should be clean with a simple message to download the app. Pages

¹ SpyFu: percent of Mobile searches for each keyword

Table 1: SpyFu analysis on Mobile searches

| | The League | Bumble | Tinder | Hinge |
|-----------------|------------|---------|-----------|---------|
| Monthly volume | 45,100 | 662,000 | 1,190,000 | 190,000 |
| Mobile percent | 0.621 | 0.535 | 0.591 | 0.494 |
| Domain Strength | 47 | 60 | 69 | 50 |

SpyFu

“Bumble” and “Tinder” have a stronger Domain Strength as compared to our client and “Hinge” due to their stronger brand awareness and popularity as pioneers in the industry (Fetters, 2020). Even though all four websites come up as the number one link on the Google search, based on SpyFu analysis when searchers are looking for “Bumble” and “Tinder” they refer to these dating apps, while for the other two Similar Keywords usually relate to a different subject and lead to a low Domain Strength. Similar words that come up for “The League” are “premier league” and “champions league” (SpyFu) which brings estimated clicks to the *Low* bracket. Similarly, for “Hinge” the most popular similar keyword is “hinges”. Both have a weaker positioning on the Google search and difficulty to find related articles due to very different keywords that come up.

Getting deeper on the Link Search for the client and the competition, Bumble shows the strongest results according to moz.com. Bumble is over-performing other competitors and the client by the number of Inbound links with a very strong count of Linking Domains while keeping a competitive Domain Authority and a low Spam Rate (Table 2²). Since “Hinge” is performing on a similar level to the client we will not perform the in-depth analysis of their strategy. Tinder is the leading domain out of all competitors with 11 points higher for the Domain Authority than The

Table 2: Moz analysis on Domain Link Search

| | The League | Bumble | Tinder | Hinge |
|------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Root Domain | https://www.theleague.com/ | https://bumble.com/ | https://tinder.com/ | https://hinge.co/ |
| Domain Authority | 59 | 69 | 70 | 63 |
| Linking Domains | 1,900 | 8,200 | 11,600 | 3,100 |
| Inbound Links | 29,700 | 184,800 | 139,300 | 18,800 |
| Ranking Keywords | 973 | 8,000 | 16,900 | 561 |
| Spam | 1% | 1% | 8% | 9% |

League, 6 times more Linking Domains, and 4 times more Inbound Links. While Tinder is showing very promising link search analysis it’s important to mention that Tinder is the first mobile app that was created for dating and established a large number of unique Linking domains due to the international reputation (Fetters, 2020). As Bumble came second and other dating apps launched later, it is very difficult to enter a market. The older and more established the dating app is, the more awareness it has that generates these unique Inbound Links.

Looking at Linking Domains for the two most successful apps in Table 3³, it makes sense to see the most popular domains for both of them to be “apple.com” and “play.google.com” since these are the domains that guide a searcher to download the app. The surprising part of this research is to see links like “linkedin.com” for both apps, “youtube.com” for Tinder on the top of this list, and a variety of well-known magazines for Bumble. The difference in messages for these two apps explains that difference in Linking Domains. The Bumble app concentrates on female empowerment (women have to message first on the app) and has the youngest self-made women billionaire Whitney Wolfe as a CEO (Pendleton, 2021). The majority of their linking domains are articles about women, the success of their CEO, and career empowerment that links to the Bumble website. Tinder has a different message where they wanna attract young college students to “have

² Moz.com: Link Explorer

³ Moz.com: Linking Domains (Bumble & Tinder)

fun” (Tinder Careers). Therefore, YouTube is a perfect place to target their potential users with light videos where young and famous influencers like “Patrick Schwarzenegger” talk about their “deal breakers” (TinderAppVids, 2021).

| Bumble: Linking Domains | | | | Tinder: Linking Domains | | | |
|-------------------------|-----|-----------------|------------|-------------------------|-----|-----------------|------------|
| Root Domain | DA | Linking Domains | Spam Score | Root Domain | DA | Linking Domains | Spam Score |
| apple.com | 100 | 4,795,630 | 5% | youtube.com | 100 | 18,194,841 | 3% |
| play.google.com | 99 | 2,684,418 | — | apple.com | 100 | 4,795,630 | 5% |
| linkedin.com | 99 | 9,247,722 | 1% | linkedin.com | 99 | 9,247,722 | 1% |
| en.wikipedia.org | 98 | 5,373,500 | 9% | en.wikipedia.org | 98 | 5,373,500 | 9% |
| bbc.co.uk | 96 | 1,389,811 | 1% | mozilla.org | 98 | 1,891,468 | 2% |
| medium.com | 96 | 1,134,368 | 3% | plus.google.com | 97 | 11,665,955 | 1% |
| github.com | 96 | 2,040,966 | 2% | europa.eu | 97 | 1,651,493 | 1% |
| nytimes.com | 95 | 1,660,067 | 1% | github.com | 96 | 2,040,966 | 2% |
| cnn.com | 95 | 1,195,878 | 1% | | | | |
| forbes.com | 95 | 1,119,059 | 1% | | | | |

Both competitor apps have different messaging and targeting different audiences with their content, and therefore have a unique positioning within the Google search. To compare them to the client, The League has a similar strong positioning within established online magazines just like Bumble. It makes sense for them to continue on this path because their messaging is similar to talking about successful “power couples” rather than fun jokes. It is a similar message to Bumble’s empowerment, and they are doing a good job by targeting these websites to link their home page for new potential users.

Competitors’ social media presence:

The majority of dating apps with a high top-of-the-head awareness have a very strong social media presence. They were able to create that brand by consistently engaging with the followers through Instagram stories, fun polls, and powerful messaging. 48% of young adults from ages 18-29 y.o. have tried a dating app at least once in their life (Vogels, 2020). Additionally, 62% of Instagram users are in the age group of 18-34 (Tankovska, 2021), which makes it a perfect social media to engage with dating app users and build loyalty. “Hinge” is losing in the competitive analysis as compared to the rest of the dating apps due to lack of engagement on Instagram and not creating any posts for the provided timeframe (Table 4⁴). Competition such as Bumble and Tinder already have a very large follower base and are not requiring a large number of hashtags to promote themselves. The League, alternatively, shows a significantly lower follower base (even

Table 4: Instagram Engagement Snapshot (Feb 24 - May 10)

| | The League | Bumble | Tinder | Hinge |
|------------------------|------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Followers | 39,700 | 563,000 | 356,000 | 224,000 |
| Posts per Week | 3.5 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| Engagement per Post | 253 | 5,520 | 918 | 0 |
| Posts per Day | 0.5 | 0.43 | 0.14 | 0 |
| Hashtags per Post | 2.29 | 0.33 | 0 | 0 |
| Engagement Rate (in %) | 0.64 | 0.98 | 0.26 | 0 |

Source: Rival IQ

compared to Hinge which does not engage its followers). It makes sense for them to use the average

⁴ Rival IQ: Instagram Engagment Snapshot

of 2.29 hashtags per post to show on “For You” pages and create more traffic for their Instagram posts. Bumble stands out with the strongest engagement rate on Instagram. With a large following base and consistent engagement of 3 posts per week, Bumble was able to create a strong engagement rate of 0.98% of loyal users (right at the benchmark average engagement). The League takes second place in the competition for Instagram user engagement; however, falls behind as compared to the benchmark with only a 0.64% Engagement Rate.

With the previous mention of different messaging, Tinder advertises itself as a “fun” app for casual dating, Bumble is all about empowering women, and The League and Hinge are about serious dating (Minor, 2020). Competitors and the client use these messaging within their social media presence. To compare messages for each account, Rival IQ presented posts with the highest engagement level within the last 2 weeks (Image 1⁵). Even though The League has the lowest follower base, the account tends to create high engagements and even overperforms Bumble on some posts. Additionally, The League has a number of their signature hashtags that can be seen through all of Instagram posts such as #neverSettle, #dateIntelligently, and #qualityOverQuantity. To look closer at the messaging, The League’s most engaged post is talking about confidence in the relationship that is aligned with their mission.

Even though The League had the highest engagement post for the last 2 weeks, Bumble still has a higher average engagement rate. Bumble takes an additional step outside of just conversation about dating and brings current issues, passions, and worries of young adults to their Instagram pages. “Bumble is a platform and community that creates empowering connections in love, life, and work. We promote accountability, equality, and kindness to end misogyny and re-write archaic gender roles” (Bumble Careers). With the post on Image 1, Bumble is talking about National Domestic Violence and bringing awareness of their followers to the issue. Surprisingly, “Success Stories” for Bumble (Image 2⁶) over the last 14 days created a lot less engagement (only 0.72%). The reason for it might be that the image itself is missing the familiar bright yellow colors and an empowering message about current events that makes people repost and engage.

Lastly, going over the most successful post for Tinder over the same time, their message is very different from the other two. They do not talk about relationships or being empowered. Tinder’s goal is to “celebrate that being single is a journey. And a great one” (Tinder Careers), and they embrace these values through fun “memes” and jokes on their page. Regardless of the popularity, the majority of Tinder’s posts refer back to the YouTube page that was discussed above. This shows that Tinder is not using Instagram as their

Image 1: Most popular posts within last 14 days

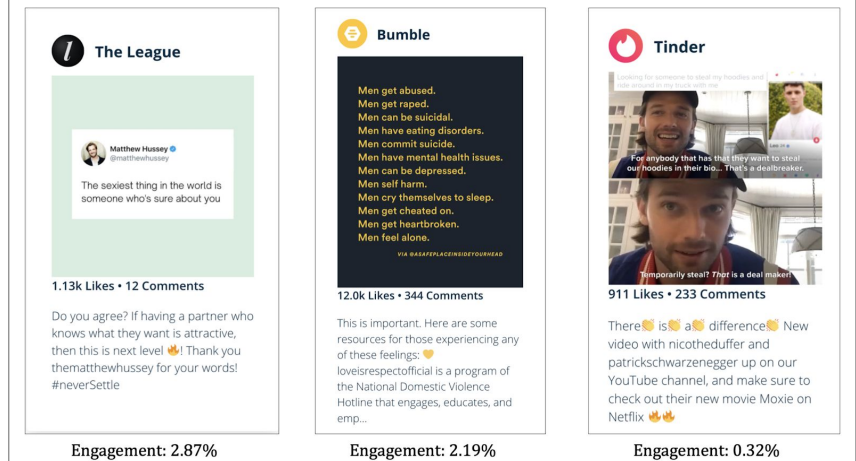


Image 2: Success Story

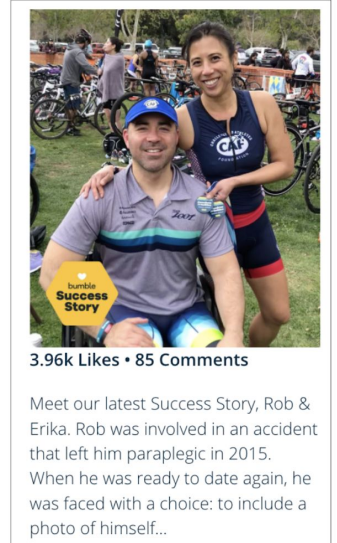
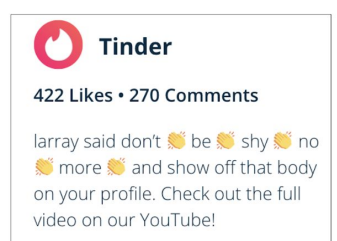


Image 3: YouTube link



⁵ Rival IQ: Instagram Top Performing Posts

⁶ Rival IQ: Instagram Success Story for Bumble

primary social media page but rather creates unique content on YouTube that gets reflected on Instagram posts afterward (Image 3⁷).

2 out of 3 main competitors use Instagram as a great resource for connecting to users and keep them engaged within social media. They show their distinctive styles of messaging that highly relate to the mission statement of the company and unique positioning in the industry. Additionally, bright and catchy posts bring the attention of the follower and make them stop and engage with the post rather than continue scrolling.

SEO & Social Media Recommendations for The League

After all provided competitor analysis and their approach to SEO and Social Media presence, Bumble has shown the most significant results in engaging with users through a variety of channels and promoting powerful messages. This approach attracts a large value of new users to the app who wants to speak up and feel empowered. At the same time, they not only advocating for the app but also celebrating people in the company and across the globe for speaking up the ability to take charge. Bumble present themselves more of a lifestyle Instagram page that wants to connect and talk about what truly matters. Based on the very successful marketing strategy from them, The League can implement a similar plan of action to create strong brand awareness and attract people who care about The League's mission statement and their view on the world. We will make it happen in three steps: (1) creating articles and blogs on popular online papers, (2) rebranding Instagram to go along with the mission statement, and (3) using a unique social media - LinkedIn - to celebrate the company's success and promote The League to career-oriented people that The League is targeting.

Recommendation 1: *Engage with high DA online magazines to write an article about The League.*

With the provided information above, online magazines such as the New York Times and CNN have strong DAs and a large volume of Linked Domains that make it a perfect space to create brand awareness of The League and bring suggested readers to the appropriate page to download the app. Looking at SpyFu, keyword questions like "What is the best dating app?" and "Which dating app should I use?" (SpyFu: dating apps) would be great to target with such posts and articles to attract users to the League since it's taking "quality" over "quantity" and generates the best experience. Working with well-known magazines will bring a higher Domain Quality for The League without hurting the Spam Score. This will be a good place to show some Success Stories that talk about what it means to be in a relationship with someone as driven and ambitious as you. Stay away from success stories on Instagram due to the low engagement in the context of the post.

Recommendation 2: *Create a more consistent theme among Instagram posts and powerful statements that support current events and align with the mission statement.*

To make The League successful on Instagram, the team should embrace its mission statement and go back to its values in every new post. The client has to keep familiarity with the format and use bright teal color (The Leagues company color) to create brand awareness. The message for these posts should be around education, and passion for building a career and speak about the mission statement. Posts like the one on the right are a good example of successful messaging, plus adding the company's colors and consistent formatting will bring the

1 MY MOM SAID TO ME,
"ONE DAY YOU SHOULD
SETTLE DOWN AND MARRY
A RICH MAN." I SAID,
"MOM, I AM A RICH MAN."

⁷ Rival IQ: Tinder Instagram posts that links to YouTube

desired outcome. Additionally, statements about education, career, and personal growth will bring The League to success.

Recommendation 3: *Create LinkedIn posts about the company's success and interesting data with links to the Instagram page and <https://www.theleague.com/#are-you-in>⁸ page.*

Finally, LinkedIn has shown surprisingly strong SEO statistics with a very high DA and a large volume of Linked Domains that can be used as a great tool for brand awareness and strengthening The League's DA. With the above example from Tinder, they utilized YouTube as a unique platform (for the app industry) to attract traffic and loyalty from their users. Since The League's mission is to bring highly educated and career-ambitious people together, the LinkedIn social media platform can be a great place for it. The League should create a Company page where they discuss valuable topics like education and write articles about personal growth by linking them to "app download" pages to stay "connected with like-minded people". This recommendation should set them on a successful path to differentiate their strategy and positioning compared to their competition.

In conclusion, The League has been shown very strong results for a relatively young company in a competitive market. With the analysis of their main three competitors, Bumble, Tinder, and Hinge, the client is able to strategically implement recommendations to create a more successful strategy. With the given analysis, The League can position itself in the unique niche and attract followers who are passionate about their careers and dating and can find a great balance of two worlds by connecting with someone special on The League.

⁸ The League page that takes you to the "App Store"

Resources

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