WHAT WECHAT CAN LEARN FROM WHATSAPP? CUSTOMER VALUE PROPOSITION DEVELOPMENT FOR MOBILE SOCIAL NETWORKING (MSN) APPS: A CASE STUDY APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

As a result of digital technology revolution and massive growth of smart phone usage, over 66% of world's population (4.92 billion) is using mobile phones and over half of them are using social media. Mobile social networking (MSN) becomes one of the key communication tool, new trend, necessity and lifestyle. With information transparency, consumer value changes quickly, whilst rapid adaptation of similar offerings in the market place, it is essential for suppliers to keep pace with consumer value changes those directly affect the consumer satisfaction and loyalty. The research applies academic models and frameworks to the real life situation to develop a value proposition in the practical world by considering WeChat (1 billion active users) as the company under study and comparing it with WhatsApp (1.5 billion active users) as the leading competitor in the market. The objectives include identification of customers' perception of a value for mobile social networking (MSN) services, followed by critical evaluation of existing value proposition of WeChat with Whatsapp to identify gap and finally to propose a new value proposition for WeChat. This paper first identifies customer perceived value (CPV) of mobile social networking (MSN) apps using Overby and Lee's model (2004) followed by critical review of existing value proposition of WeChat and then comparing and contrasting with the leading player WhatsApp. Frameworks developed by Piercy (2009), Anderson J. et al. (2006) are employed for the same. Finally, the case develops new value proposition for WeChat by using Osterwalder et al 2014 and other frameworks. By the end of this research, a new consumer value proposition (CVP) proposal for WeChat is proposed for consideration in matching with the globally evaluated consumers' value criteria.

Keywords: *Consumer, Perceived Value, Mobile Social Networking, Social, Value proposition*

1. INTRODUCTION

The beginning of the internet revolution that began in the mid-2000s and the development of social networking sites have increased the participation and user interaction by sharing photos and videos, voting and measuring, building special interest groups, making new friends and more. In fact, human acceptance of social media also has a major influence on the political landscape of a country. Politicians use the social media widely to lure votes and spread the election manifesto (Raoof, Zaman, Ahmad, & Al-Qaraghuli, 2013). The new trend of the interaction in social media is via Web. The use of Web is steadily gaining ground in extracting

of social networks, but dealing with everything that can be changed dynamically in Web is require a flexible approach (Mahyuddin, Nasution, Elveny, Syah, & Noah, 2015). Citing the competition in industry and rapid technological changes, appropriate value proposition formulation is of utmost importance signifying this case study research. The research follows case study approach. WeChat is MSN Company under consideration. To start with, customer perceived value of MSN apps identified. Then WeChat's existing value proposition critically received followed by benchmarking with the leading competitor WhatsApp. To fulfill the gap between consumer perception and existing value proposition and by considering competitors value proposition, new Customer Value proposition developed which matches customers' value criteria and which can beat the competition. At the end, the case proposes systematic framework of customer's value proposition development for MSN apps.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This paper first identifies Customer Perceived Value (CPV) of Mobile Social Networking (MSN) apps using Overby and Lee model (2004). Through secondary qualitative data collected via review of academic literature and industry reports, we identify elements of CPV as per conceptualized in Overby & Lee (2004) model. These elements are then listed and summarized in the form of consumers' perception or what really consumers are looking form MSN Apps. Broadly it can be said that perceived benefits and perceived sacrifices are summarized for MSN apps.. The first gap is thus highlighted between consumers' perception and existing value proposition of WeChat. This was then followed by critical review of existing value proposition of WeChat and comparing and contrasting the same with the CPV of a leading player i.e. WhatsApp. Frameworks developed by Piercy (2009), Anderson J. et al. (2006) are employed for the same critical review and benchmarking. We then identify gap between WeChat's existing value proposition and WhatsApp's value proposition. Finally, the case analysis develops new value proposition for WeChat by using Osterwalder et. al 2014 and

other frameworks. By the end of this research, a new consumer value proposition (CVP) proposal for WeChat is proposed for consideration in matching with the global evaluated consumers' value criteria. This proposed proposition bridges both gaps highlighted above.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW AND CASE ANALYSIS

3.1 Identification of Customer Perceived Value (CPV) for Mobile Social Networking (MSN) Apps

People are using MSN as a way to express ideas, opinions, get comments and sharing information (Rantamäki 2008; DiMicco & Millen 2007). Some are due to peer pressure, friend's recommendation, by way of keeping in touch or meeting new friends (Govani & Pashley 2005). Consumers must have experienced benefits and satisfaction (CPV) to be motivated in continuance using MSN. According to Lee and Overby (2004), utilitarian and experiential values (figure 1.0) positively affected customer's satisfaction and loyalty for online shopping. Not only they considered the (1) benefits-sacrifices (Zeithaml 1988; Woodall 2003) i.e. Assessment of utility, time/energy savings, selection, (2) means-end-approach (Woodruff & Gardial 1996; Woodruff 1997) ie. Price savings, service excellences, they also highlighted (3) consumers' experiential values (Holbrook 1999; Helkkula & Kelleher 2010) ie. Entertainment, visual-interaction, escape. Hence, it is good fit for this research measurement for MSN's CPV. However, some experiential aspects of CPV are portray and it does not cover the CPV's positive and negative aspects (Klanac 2013). Table 1 explains the relevant MSN's CPV using Lee & Overby's (2004) framework.

Table 1: Lee & Overby's (2004) Customer Value Framework - Application to Mobile Social Networking

Utilitarian Values	Experiential Values
Price Savings	**Entertainment**
Free, no extra charges on pay-per-messaging.	It's entertaining with emoji features.
Huge cost savings on telecommunication, meeting facilities, travel expenses and many other opportunity costs for communications,	Free games offered in mobile social networking
	Sharing of photos, audio, video is part of

meetings and sharing information.
Direct value for business owners through revenue from social commerce using MSN.
Lower business costs for communications, marketing, production, operating expenses etc.

day-to-day life entertainment.
Capturing life's moments and share is rather enjoyable and entertaining.
MSN involves hedonic and affective motives (Eastlick M. A. & Feinberg R. A. 1999; Babin B. J. & Attaway J. S. 2000; Dhar R. & Wertenbroch K. 2000)

Service Excellence
Fast, easy, highly convenience in access, search, track, usage, evaluate, transact, possession (Moeller S., et. al. 2009).
Receive rapid distribution of offers and contents from brands
Interface with sending photos, audios and videos, group messaging, contacts and locations sharing, easy payments and many other software applications.
Improve customer service excellence as customer engagement improve through immediacy responses on enquiries, appointments, service requests, complaints, placing orders etc.
Increase communication efficiency such as easy group invitation and broadcast for important notices, publications, advertisements, discussion, meetings.

Visual
Video chat with families, friends, colleagues etc., connecting people with far distances.
Video conferencing with families, colleagues, board of directors, business partners etc., increase communication effectiveness and productivity.
Aesthetically appealing mobile social networking sites with all sorts of visual information sharing such as photos
MSN contains aesthetical value dimension (Mathwick C., et. al. 2001).

Time Savings
Timesavings on time pressured consumers and customers for searching information, easy locate contacts / friends / work-related peers, comparing products / services, shopping without need to go out etc.

Escape
Save energy and get away from inviting, gathering, meeting people on site; searching, locating, comparing merchandises; and communicating with others etc.

Virtual group chat / video chat / audio chat / video conferencing offers huge time savings on inviting, gathering, facilitating people for meetings, traveling time,

Relieving and pampering feelings as get to talk and see families, friends from far distances
MSN contains emotional values (Wikstrom S., et. al. 2002).

Selection
Excellent selection of smart mobile usage for social networking platform.
Many platforms to be selected i.e: Android, Apple, iOS etc.
Privacy and security protection
Good choice of linking multimedia i.e: Video, audio, photo taking, contact sharing etc with social networking enhance productivity, efficiency and effectiveness.

Interaction
Getting immediate response, comments, feedbacks, advices, recommendations on messages (Church K. & Oliveira R. D. 2013).
Easy access to customers' survey, reviews, voting on products / services
Personal conversational with family, friends, colleagues, peels etc.
Group discussion, review, meeting for business and work-related topics.

Other value dimensions identified are as follows. Economic Benefits: Consumers are looking for economic benefits such as huge price savings (Cho & Sagynov 2015); lowering production/marketing cost (Mate & Rafert 2017) when consumer uses MSN to make appointments and place orders. Online review allows consumer easily compare products/services, which save costs, leading to perceived purchase reliability (Kim, et. al. 2017), it is the strongest predictor of loyalty behavior (Wei, et. al. 2015). Convenience / Accessibility: Convenience (Aagja, et. al. 2011; Donni, R., Dastane, O., Haba, HF and Selvaraj K, 2018; Jiang, et. al. 2012) of search, access, evaluate, transact, possession, purchase (Moeller, et. al. 2009) and easy accessibility are two critical CPV for MSN leading to repurchase intension (Pham, et. al. 2018; Haba & Dastane 2018). Consumers preferred to identify people through phone number, easier to be found and easy access compare to user-ID verification and

acceptance (Unuth 2017). However, it may have spam or identity theft negative impact (Rantamäki 2008). Experiential Values: Beyond communication, MSN becoming a need satisfying experiences (Keng, et. al. 2007); it creates desire for fame and publicity among consumers (Rantamäki 2008); it associates with personal desires, pleasure, interests (Perry 1954), and related preference judgement (Rokeach 1973); it strengthening interpersonal-relationships, self-expression and well-being (Collin, et. al. 2011). Social Values: Being accepted in the society is human's basic need (Maslow 1943). Social influence MSN adoption as consumer search for sense-of-connection and community (Sheth, et. al. 1991; Church & Oliveira 2013). Social elements inclusive beliefs, culture, demographic, shared-value influence the CPV of MSN (Harris, et. al. 2005; Yang & Jolly 2009). Previous studies indicated MSN helps improve self-social (Sweeney & Soutar 2001), reputation (Petrick 2002), status and esteem values (Holbrook 1999). However, MSN may bring negative effects on privacy issues, fake profiles (Rantamäki 2008). A study of experience with an online dating site was conducted (Shah Alam, Syed, H.P. Yeow, Paul, 2011) and resulted with a positive and effect. The study shows that online dating is a great experience. More than 30% of those who have positive experiences with online dating sites, while 8.70% say that most are negligible, 52.17% report it positive and negative and 4.35% are uncertain. Virtue Values: As part of human-needs being existence with universal satisfaction for "symbolic of experience transformation" (Langer 1942), words-of-mouth (WOM) is the positive effects result from CPV (McKee, et. al. 2006; Keiningham 2007) especially in MSN, when consumers value its functions (Wang, et. al. 2004). Axiology Values: Axiology values defined as "interactive relativistic preference experience" (Hilliard 1950; Frondizi 1971; Holbrook 1999) through consumer's evaluation and consumption experiences with comparative, interactive, personal and situational natures (Helkkula & Kelleher 2010). Business owners use MSN as

data mining for their brands monitoring and receive instant customers' insights for their future products/services direction as part of critical customer-relationship-management (Baird & Parasnis 2011). The previous study by (Barhemmati & Ahmad, 2015) has indicated that there is a positive correlation between customer engagement and consumer purchase behavior. Customer engagement is an intimate long-term relationship with the customer. Out of all CPVs, utilitarian and social values are the most dominant aspects contributed to global MSN success. Empirical studies also showed usage-performance (perceived-ease-of-use & perceived-usefulness) and social-influence highly and positively impact behavior intention and usage of WeChat on marketing participation (Li 2015).

3.2 Critical Evaluation of WeChat and WhatsApp Value Proposition and benchmarking to identify the gaps

WeChat: "A Way of Life", positioning them as the multi-purpose MSN. They target mobile users who look for daily life conveniences. WeChat offers wide range of functionalities that is valuable to consumer engagement, maximizing the experiential values (Like 2016; Liao 2018). Figure 1.0 shows WeChat's VP based on Piercy's (2009) customer value model populated using evidences from WeChat website and news (He 2016; Chao 2017; Atkinson 2018; Economist 2018).

Figure 1.0: WeChat Value Proposition (Source: Customer Value Model by Piercy N. F. 2009) (Appendix)

WhatsApp: "Simple, Secured, Reliable Messaging", is the pioneer and most popular leading messenger worldwide (Constine 2018; Statista 2018 a) with significant market penetration in many locality, positioned itself as single-party MSN solution for consumers and small-businesses (Rebecca 2015), moving on to add enterprise-solutions and business-application at scale (WhatsApp 2017). It targets mobile users who simply look free, reliable apps to contact his

phonebook's contacts list. Figure 2.0 shows the VP of WhatsApp using evidences from WhatsApp website, news and academia.

Figure 2.0: WhatsApp Value Proposition (Source: Customer Value Model by Piercy N. F. 2009) (Appendix)

Table 2 shows the existing customer VP for WeChat vs WhatsApp.

Company / Product	Target Customers	Benefits	Price	Value Proposition
WeChat/WeiXin: Messenger	Mobile users who look for one-stop app for daily life conveniences.	a) Free & easy Apps down via many platforms. b) free audio & video calls, messengers, and group video calls 3) Leisure & entertainment gaming & emoji 4) Meet new friends through "shake" / "People Nearby" 5) Share life at "Moments".	F.O.C.	The new mobile lifestyle integrated with instant communication, entertainment, social networking and life.
WeiXin: Digital Marketing. *-Currently available at China, Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea (Ling R. 2017).*	a) Companies target on mass market. b) Companies focus on local customers.	a) "WeChat Store" + "WeChat Payment" for online sale. b) O2O QR Code to scan vouchers, membership. c) "Drift Bottle" & "Shake" for location-based marketing. d) Official account to build official page of brand. e) Public platform to share website to improve internet WOM. f) "Moment Ads" / "Account Ads" to advertise, launch campaign, and share information in the circle. g) "WeChat Trends" to find out popular topics.	F.O.C. for all functions. 3rd-party biz license maintenance fee USD500 p.a. Moment Ads fee: min CNY50K / USD7.5K.	a) Service platform for businesses to communicate with customers in more effective, easy, productive and efficient ways. b) Digital marketing filling gap between online & offline marketing. c) Help business to connect customers and create greater brand awareness.
WhatsApp: Messenger Apps.	Mobile users who simply look for reliable apps to contact his phone book's contacts list.	a) Free & easy app downloadable via many platforms. b) Free audio & video calls, messengers. c) Voice, data and files encryption. d) Compatible with WhatsApp Web. d) Security and privacy protection through end-to-end encryption block contacts and report spam.	F.O.C.	Simple, easy, reliable messaging.
WhatsApp: Business Apps	Small business owners	a) Help business to engage with customers in more effective, easy, productive and	F.O.C.	Businesses can interact with customers easily by using tools to automate,

-Currently available at US, UK, Mexico, Italy & Indonesia, with global rollout scheduled (Ong T. 2018).	efficient ways for services, sales and supports. b) Reduce sales cycle. c) Better customer relationship management (CRM). d) Business does not require hefty investment on website development, infrastructure and CRM system. e) Compatible with WhatsApp Web. f) Both WhatsApp personal and business apps can be used in same device.	sort, and quickly respond to messages.

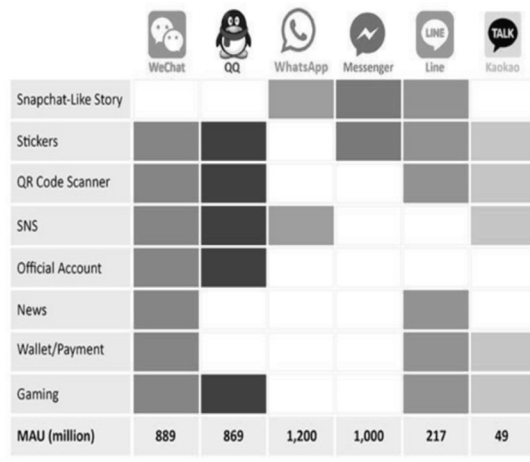|	WeChat	QQ	WhatsApp	Messenger	Line	Kaokao
Snapchat-Like Story						
Stickers						
QR Code Scanner						
SNS						
Official Account						
News						
Wallet/Payment						
Gaming						
MAU (million)	889	869	1,200	1,000	217	49

Figure 3.0: Comparison of Messaging Apps, by

3.3 WeChat and WhatsApp Value Proposition Comparison

Both WeChat and WhatsApp is the cross-platform freeware for IM, audio and video calls (Sina 2012; Cade 2016), with average 13 million and 27 million rapid active user's growth year-on-year (Statista 2018 b & c). Both monthly active users (MAU) are growing rapidly due to significant utilitarian values offered compare to traditional SMS and telecommunications. Based on the analytical reports, WeChat attracts much younger user groups: > 60% age 15-29 (Smith 2018), while 54% of WhatsApp users are between age 25-44 (Bestor 2018). This is due to the distinctive focus on differentiation values offered between WeChat with more social-interaction and entertaining features (experiential, intrinsic) and WhatsApp with no-frills service (utilitarian, extrinsic) best fit for adults and business use. From MSN features perspective, WhatsApp and WeChat both maintains similar calling and messaging features. However, WeChat offers more social-interaction, hedonic, axiology and personalized features addressing daily, even hourly user's needs (Chan 2015) while WhatsApp focus strengths on security, privacy, economic and usage convenience (Appendix 4 shows detail features comparison).

Despite both WeChat and WhatsApp offers similar freeware, they have different monetization model (figure 3.0). WeChat earns higher average-revenue-per-user (ARPU) through digital content, advertising, finance i.e. Person-to-person (P2P) payment and online-to-offline (O2O) services while WhatsApp's revenue 100% generated through advertising.

Trust, security and privacy issues directly affect the consumers' continuance intention and perceived risk in MSN (Ofori, et. al. 2016; Arpaci, et. al. 2015; Akhter 2014). Security concerns remain the same threats to both WeChat and WhatsApp on privacy issues, spam and scam globally. As a result, WhatsApp was banned in 12 countries (Kim 2017). WeChat global expansion was significantly dampened as security and privacy issues remain the largest concerns in most western countries like US, Europe (France-Presse 2014), Russia, India and Taiwan (France-Presse 2014; Davidson 2015). However, the ways of security handling are

different. WeChat has reputation of being heavily monitored under the Chinese government surveillance, ranked 0/100 (Appendix 5) for encryption and human-rights protection (AIR 2016). Instead, WhatsApp implemented end-to-end-encryption to protect users' human rights (Evans 2014), scored the highest (73/100) security rank (AIR 2016) and made public promises to shun advertising and personal data collection (Barot & Oren 2015). MSN changing trends from private conversation to mobile-commerce and mobile-wallet (RVC 2016) leading in Asia-Pacific-Region (APAC) accounts for 56% worldwide users (Appendix 6) and 65% total worldwide MSN growth (Kemp 2017), WeChat offers most functionality cater and leading these changing trends.

Figure 3.0 shows the consumer VP positioning and comparison between WeChat and WhatsApp. The biggest differences between WeChat and WhatsApp are customers' perceived-ease-of-use, perceived-usefulness, perceived-risk and perceived-enjoyment that directly affect the CPV. WhatsApp succeeded in rapid global expansion through fulfilling consumers' needs for simple, reliable and no-frills functionalities. Many benefits that WeChat offers may not necessarily required/accepted by international consumers due to differences in culture settings and security/privacy risk exposure. WeChat target market is not as universal as WhatsApp who was thinking global from very beginning, resonates with users and essentially markets itself (Table 3).

Table 3: Classification of existing customer VP for WeChat vs WhatsApp

Value Proposition	All Benefits (WeChat MSN)	Resonating Focus (WhatsApp MSN)
Consist of:	WeChat offer one-stop app mobile lifestyle integrated with instant communication, entertainment, social networking and life: m-wallet, m-commerce.	WhatsApp offer distinctive differences on simplicity, ease-of-use, convenience & reliable messaging deliver greatest values to universal consumers especially in the explosive growth emerging markets may still leading the market in foreseeable future.
Answers the customer question:	• Wide user base in China. • Most popular "Apps for Everything" in China.	• Most popular & widely used worldwide. • No Ads! No Games! No Gimmicks! • Do one thing and do it well.
Requires:	Deep profound knowledge of Chinese market needs.	Understand & gain insights of international consumers' need, continuous changes to fulfill consumers' needs, offer affordability and operationally cross-platform. WhatsApp chose to resolve consumers' problems with global scalability.
Has the potential pitfall:	• Multi-services platform despite offer life conveniences, many of the benefits may not necessarily required/accepted by oversea consumers due to differences in culture and security/privacy risk exposure. • Enjoyment and emotional values may engage youth but may not necessarily fit for adults.	WhatsApp may require more regional / national level consumers' value research for adequate improvement of functionalities in comparable to other competitors who have strong presences in particular regional / national market.

	• One-stop app mobile lifestyle maybe for personal usage but not for work-related engagement.

3.4 Benchmarking value proposition of WeChat and WhatsApp

Customers' experiences were defined with below equation in next level of telecommunications (Wyman 2015) to improve benefits and reduce sacrifices in all underlying dimensions (figure 4.0). Despite WeChat and WhatsApp target the same market with the similar MSN, evidences show that there are distinctive differentiations of VP dimensions. WeChat is the most popular MSN and called the "App for Everything" in China (Kiriakidis 2016; Chao 2017) with over 90% China users (Beaver 2016). Due to strong presence of competitors in the global markets, WeChat faces huge challenges with global expansion despite massive advertising (Millward 2016), this driving WeChat towards shifting its VP to increase consumers' engagement, loyalty and monetarization (Table 4). Figure 4.0 shows WeChat VP evaluation.

Figure 4.0: Value Proposition Evaluation for WeChat (Appendix)

Table 4: WeChat Value Proposition Shifts

Improve consumers' engagement and loyalty	• Integrate mobile-payment (Weinswig D. 2017); • Increase hedonic and social-interaction values (Zhang C. B., et. al. 2017)
Increase monetarization	• Introduce digital marketing such as O2O, P2P, WOM, CRM, individuality publication, sales leads mining (Tang M. 2014; Weinswig D. 2017); • Increase commercial, functional and symbolic values.

In contrast, WhatsApp doubled the growth rates of WeChat with 180 countries usage coverage (WhatsApp 2018) is making different competitive strategies. WhatsApp gains advantageous with pioneer market entrance (Unuth 2017). Due to high cost of SMS in many countries, remover of monthly-subscription-fee by WhatsApp (Drozdiak 2016) enabled explosive growth in MAU (increased 500 million MAU within a year instead of 3 years before) as users enjoy unlimited IM (Statista 2018c; Barot & Oren 2015). Simplicity, security protection, the easiness to expand user base with users' WOM and one can virtually reach all contacts in the phone once installed remain WhatsApp key advantages to dominates in the MSN (Sutikno, et. al. 2016). Figure 5.0 shows WhatsApp VP evaluation. The greatest competitive differentiation of WeChat is, they added much product usage benefits, satisfying the consumers' emotional needs and transforming an IM into a comprehensive service platform to engage their customer's loyalty and promote WOM that quickly dominant the Chinese market. WeChat also did a great job in monetarization. In commerce, viral marketing exploits use social media such as WeChat and Whatsapp used to increase sales of products and services. Social network members can also leverage relationships between. This social network clearly demonstrates the relationship between individuals and groups (Nasution & Noah, 2012). However, CPV on WeChat usefulness and ease-of-use are declining (Guo 2016; Clover 2016; China Daily 2014), while perceived-risks is increasing (Slant 2017; France-Presse 2014) as WeChat becoming more commercialize. Figure 5.0 shows WeChat VP benchmark. WhatsApp did a great job sustaining CPV as zero-cost benefits of utilitarian values (reduce customer efforts) are much greater than sacrifices.

Figure 5.0: Value Proposition Evaluation for WhatsApp (Appendix)

Table 5: Value Proposition Comparison

Elements	Interpretation of Offer by WeChat	Interpretation of Offer by WhatsApp
Price	**Value for money**; free messaging and calls; In-apps purchase for stickers, games, music and videos; withdrawal fee for WeChat-Wallet; no C2C money transfer charge for WeChat-Pay (Tencent 2016); payable-advertising and digital marketing (Weinswig D. 2017).	Absolutely free, advertisement-free, no monetarization so far (Drozdiak N. 2016).
Features	Personalize functions. Entertaining "App-for-Everything" for daily-life-support: basic IM + Source-of-entertainment + e-Wallet + Mini-Apps M-Commerce + Find-new-friends + "Moments" (Chao E. 2017; Weinswig D. 2017; Kiriakidis D. 2016; Smithstreet 2016).	No-frills MSN services; simplicity, convenient, reliable, secured IM; easy accessible, user-friendly. To strip away any unnecessary cost, maintain small team.
Quality	Astonish consumers with innovative features. High experiential values: *entertainment, visual, escape, customer-engagement* (Lee E. J. & Overby J. W. 2004) and high intrinsic values (Holbrook M. B. 1999): emotional values: *hedonic and axiology*; aesthetic values and altruistic values: *WOM due to trust from social-information and hedonic* (Lien C. H. & Cao Y. 2014).	CPV met with high privacy and security protection. High extrinsic values (Holbrook M. B. 1999): utilitarian value: *convenience, efficiency, time-saving, selection;* service-excellence value: *perceived usefulness, perceived ease-of-use, economical, service quality* and social values: *user-friendliness, connecting-people.*
Support	Supported by all smartphone platforms; support 20 languages (Chatterbox 2016) and 12 currencies (Smith C. 2018); support consumer's daily-life conveniences: *paying bills, shopping, finding new friends, getting information, finding stores, reserving taxis, booking appointments etc.*; support emotional needs: *network-interaction-gaming, music and videos*; support businesses through digital-marketing and advertising: *O2O, WOM; public accounts* (Smith Street 2016); easy backup and restore features.	Supported by all smartphone platforms; support 60 languages (Smith C. 2018); build CRM apps for businesses (Ong T. 2018); manual backup and restore.
Availability	Widely used in China but small user-base outside China (Slant 2017; Beaver L. 2016); can access to wide range of services but WeChat-Wallet, O2O Mini Apps and M-Commerce limited to China (Keating L. 2016).	Widely-used and most popular worldwide; most easy accessible and usage (Slant 2017; Keating L. 2016).
Reputation	Dominance use in China; not only IM app, it's a service platform; fun; easy-getting public information; business-friendly-model; lack of privacy, in-secured-platform; China-government surveillance (Slant 2017).	The best cross-platform and encrypted messaging apps worldwide; widely-used and most popular; message mirroring on web-app; most simple, fast, easy and effortless usage (Slant 2017).

Table 6: WeChat and WhatsApp Features Comparison
Source: Versus (2017)

Item	Features	WeChat	WhatsApp
1	It uses "two-way opt-in.	✗	✓
2	You do not need a SIM card to log in.	✓	✗
3	Shows that someone is typing.	✓	✓
4	Available on PC.	✓	✓
5	Has end-to-end-encryption.	✗	✓
6	You can send documents.	✓	✓
7	Syncs to the cloud.	✓	✓
8	Has search option.	✓	✓
9	Has two-way video chat.	✓	✓
10	Higher rating on Google Play.	✓	✓
11	Shows when a user was last active.	✗	✓
12	Free application.	✓	✓
13	Has "message seen" notification.	✗	✓
14	Can be personalized.	✓	✗
15	You can stay invisible.	✓	✓
16	Send audio voice clips.	✓	✓
17	You can send your location.	✓	✓
18	You can send a contact stamp.	✓	✓
19	You can specify your availability.	✗	✗
20	You can switch off notifications.	✓	✗
21	You can send music files.	✓	✓
22	Tablet-optimized.	✓	✓
23	Higher rating on the app store.	✓	✓
24	more estimated monthly users.	✗	✓
25	more languages supported.	✗	✓
26	Has two-way voice chat.	✓	✓
27	Has existing contacts integration.	✓	✓
28	Ad-free.	✓	✓
29	Has group video chat.	✓	✗
30	Has image preview.	✓	✓
31	Has fun stickers.	✓	✓
32	Exports to email.	✓	✓
33	You can send videos.	✓	✓
34	Has a media gallery.	✓	✗
35	Has Facebook sign-in option.	✓	✗
36	Can capture photos.	✓	✓
37	Has the option to delete message history.	✓	✗
38	Drafts are automatically saved.	✓	✗
39	Contact any app user.	✓	✗
40	Is compatible with Android.	✓	✓
41	You can set your status.	✓	✓
42	Has favorite contacts.	✓	✗
43	bigger maximum file size.	✗	✓
44	You can send picture messages.	✓	✓
45	Compatible with retro devices.	✓	✗
46	Is compatible with Windows Phone.	✗	✓
47	Supports widgets.	✓	✓
48	Is compatible with iOS.	✓	✓
49	Has group voice	✓	✓

	chat.		
50	Has a built-in translator.	✓	✗
51	Uses GPS to meet people.	✓	✗
52	The app has a browser built-in.	✓	✗
53	Has walkie talkie feature.	✓	✗
54	Has a QR code reader.	✓	✗
55	Has "drift bottle" option.	✓	✗
56	Designed for meeting new people.	✓	✗
57	Has in-app purchases.	✓	✗
58	Has built-in games.	✓	✗

3.5   Summary of Critical Review of WeChat CVP

WeChat success through innovation leading mobile-lifestyle-trend fulfills the Chinese market needs. However, their target consumer has been vague due to comprehensive functionalities offering. Their MSN designed revolving experiential, hedonic, social and emotional values as distinctive benefits to engage consumers, attracted majority youth and tier 1 cities' busy adults who look for one-stop-services convenience. In return, improved profitable monetarization. Unwittingly, consumer tends to spend more as 70% users spend CNY100/month on WeChat (SMC 2016). WeChat becomes dominance in China due to the aided of Chinese government blocked the foreign competitors like Facebook, Twitter (Wauters 2009) and WhatsApp (Bradsher 2017) due to less censorship and control (Chao 2017; Liao 2018). WeChat's team do have the capabilities to further innovations, they do have favorable points of differences such as O2O, e-wallet, digital-marketing features. However, with strong global and regional competition, it would be tough for WeChat to leverage and penetrate oversea markets as the CPV, habits and regulations in oversea markets are very different

from China. WeChat VP is clear but sophisticated.

WeChat and WhatsApp have always been compared due to both started as freeware messenger and growth MAU rapidly within short period. However, their success strategies are very different. WhatsApp gaining competitive advantages through combination of economics and functional VPs (Table 7) to offer consumers simple, convenience, ease-of-use and reliable MSN app, driving high satisfaction with WOM (Ray, et. al. 2015), make them leading the global market. They maintain small team of operation and continue make changes, resonates with users and essentially markets itself. WeChat differentiated itself from competition via profiling as "Mobile lifestyle" diverse into a service-platform more than just MSN, illustrate a combination of functional and symbolic VPs, motivate consumer's self-expressive aspects of consumption, offer integrated lifestyle experiences to consumers.

Table 7: CVP That Makes WhatsApp Lead the Global Market

WhatsApp VP	WhatsApp CVP
Economic Values	No hidden-cost, no international charges, free multimedia sharing.
Functional Values (convenience & easy accessibility)	Auto-synchronize with phone address book, no need to add buddies, no need to login/logout, no PIN, no user names, groups chatting, cross-compatibility, easy navigation, user friendly interface.

Simplicity succeed replication (Goad 2016; Browning 2009) while differentiation in cultural adaptation affects different appropriation of MSN (Li 2016). The biggest gaps (Table 8) of WeChat's CVP heading globalization are (1) the missing part of security/privacy protection; (2) extreme accessible; (3) most sophisticated MSN app.

Table 8: WeChat CVP Gaps towards Globalization

Gaps	Reasoning
1. Lack of security/privacy protection.	• Research found over 60% find MSN to be intrusive and threat to privacy (WARC 2016). • Some of the distinctive features (open platform, find new friends) WeChat offered which all other competitors may not be preference as consumers are looking for MSN platform that enable secure communication, accurate information and unfiltered government censors.
2. Extreme accessible.	• Unlike the rest of the world, only 28% China consumers are using WeChat for work purposes (Carter J. 2017) tried to separate personal and work-profession engagement. • 71% consumers find increasing life-hectic/fatigue using MSN (Guo M. 2016).
3. Most sophisticated MSN apps.	• Comprehensive platform design may lose its resonating focus on target consumers and competitive advantages.

3.6   Contribution of the Study

The study is unique in itself as it highlights the gap between consumer perception by identifying perceived value for MSN services and value proposition offered by companies. The research formulates unique framework to design value proposition for MSN Apps by considering the gaps that exist between MSN Company, consumers and competitor. This kind of CVP formulation model is not available in current literature. The framework to develop value proposition can be extended to other Apps and M-Commerce businesses. It also can be tested and validated empirically for different markets and geographic locations. The steps followed and

reporting style can serve as a guideline for developing case study based research as it follows step by step approach to consider aspects related to consumers as well as competitors and critically evaluates existing company value proposition before formulating a revised one.

4. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

4.1 Developing new value proposition for WeChat

For best practices in MSN, we use Osterwalder, et. al. (2014) VP mapping model (figure 6.0) to create successful: *"distinctive, measurable, sustainable"* (Anderson, et. al. 2006) value propositions by matching company offerings with customers' needs. Through identifying consumers' jobs, gains and pains that can be matched with the product/service offerings in gains creator and pains reliever, create new CVPs that match with the consumers' criteria values.
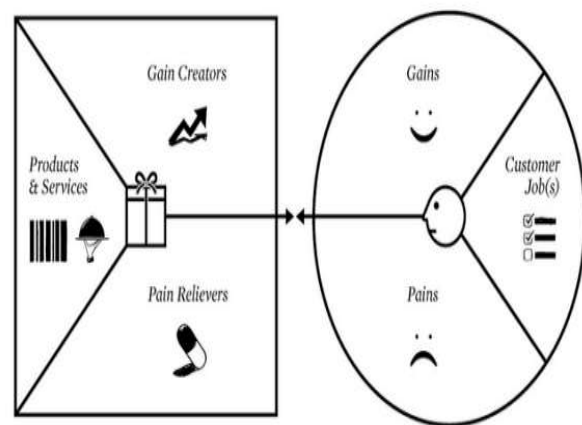

Figure 6.0: Value Proposition Mapping Model (Osterwalder A., et. al. 2014)

With the ambitious to grow the oversea markets successfully, WeChat shall adopt some critical strategies as WhatsApp pursued resonates with consumers such as (1) market penetration through simplicity and scalability; (2) address security and privacy concerns; (3) customize functionalities for cultural adaptation; (4) target segmented customers to match with customer habits to become the user-preference MSN.

Current WeChat VP promotes one-stop services for personal-lifestyle is awesome; however, it may have missed many opportunities and creates threats as platform sophistication continues to increase. Hence, this paper proposes WeChat to shift the value frontier to improve the product performance and without increasing price. Table 9 illustrates how WeChat can achieve this through modify their CVP to match with the consumers' needs by customer segmentation and spin-off application.

Table 9: Proposed Value proposition Summary

	Convenience	Simplicity & Scalable Functions	Security & Privacy Protection	Work-Professional Engagement	Businesses Engagement
Description	Similarity of WhatsApp features such as auto-synchronize with phone address book, no need to add buddies, no need to login/logout, no PIN, no user names, easy navigation, user friendly interface shall be enhanced	Allow consumers to have choice to keep WeChat as just communication, social interaction, or inclusive other digital lifestyle functions through enable/disable the related features such as separate messenger with microblogging "Moments" / find new friends "Shake" to whom just want a simple free communication tool without having too much clutter.	Establish two different "security" models for China and oversea countries to enable secure communication, accurate information and unfiltered government censors; to enforce and respect the different cultures' privacy concerns; Some features such as "shake" or "find people nearby" may need to be dropped in other oversea countries due to different culture settings	Spin-off the platform into separate App for work-professions engagement so companies may engage their employees, business partners, customers and suppliers into the platform for business effectiveness / efficiency usage. This can be achieved through existing consumer adding contact list into the work app list without "switching" the account. The separate work app shall have similar functionalities for messaging without "Gaming" or find "Near-by People" or "Shake"	Spin-off the platform into separate App for business engagement so SMEs can promote and market their products and services freely through the similar "Moments" / "App Store". The business app shall be sitting on the same platform with same login so there is interconnection among personal, work and business apps but with enhanced privacy, segregation and full utilization. Beside, advertising rate shall reduce to capture more opportunities
Reasoning	Convenience and easy accessible functions create high utilitarian values, it perceives ease-	Increase consumers' satisfaction through personalize features and self-preference.	Reduce the consumers' risk and allow personal data protection enforcement by different social	By doing this, it helps to partition and segregate the personal life and work / professional endeavors in the	Allow individual, self-employed or SME owners who are also WeChat consumers to

	of-use (PEOU) and increase consumers' satisfaction, loyalty and promotes words of mouth (WOM)	Comprehensive digital mobile-lifestyle functions improve consumer engagement is more acceptable in mature markets (Guiot T. & Carrere B. 2017) like China, Korea, Japan etc. Others may feel uncomfortable to have everything in life to be captured in a single app that may exposure to others and increase risk	settings	social networking which implies privacy and reduce the consumers' perception on extreme accessible of their entire social community. It improves convenience, ease-of-use and reduce consumers' concerns	fully utilize the platform without further hesitation on potential risk, enhance privacy through segregation of personal and professional life, capture more opportunities of consumption and engagement. This achieve through personal selection on preference usage (DIY)
Value Life Cycle	Value Appropriation	Value Creation	Value Consumption	Value Consumption	Value Creation
Value Level	Me-too	Innovation Imitation	Innovation Imitation	Innovation Imitation	Innovation
Price Level	Free	Free	Free	Free	Economy

Convenience and Easy Accessibility: Enhance similarity of messenger's functionalities such as auto-synchronize with phone address book, no need to add buddies, no need to login/logout, easy navigation, user friendly interfaces to create high utilitarian values appropriation. Simplicity and Scalability: Increase consumers' satisfaction through innovation imitation of personalize features with self-preference, such as allow consumers' to choose own app functionalities for personal usage to inclusive/exclusive messenger, micro-blogging, m-wallet, m-commerce, find-new-friends, digital-marketing etc. Security and Privacy Protection: Establish two different security models for China and oversea countries to reduce the consumers' risk and allow personal data protection enforcement by different social settings. Features like "shake" or "find people nearby" may need to be dropped for oversea IM consumers' usage. Work-Professional Engagement: Spin-off the platform into separate

App with same login for work-professional engagement for business effectiveness/efficiency usage. This can be achieved through existing consumers transferring contact list into the work app list without "switching" the account. The separate work app shall have similar functionalities for messaging without" Gaming" or find "Near-by-People" or "Shake". It helps to partition and segregate the personal life and work-professional endeavors for focus information sharing in the MSN, which reduce clutters, enhance privacy. Business Engagement: Spin-off the platform into separate App with same login for business engagement so self-employed/SMEs who are also existing consumers can promote and market their products and services freely through the similar "Moments"/"App Store" and reduce the digital-marketing fee to attractive economy price. This will help to enhance privacy, segregation and maximize utilization and consumption.

Table 10 shows the new CVP summary for WeChat.

Target Market	a) Targeting but segregating personal, professional and business engagement. b) Targeting market segments by similar attributes (ie. mature / emerging market).
Benefits Delivered	One-stop easy, convenient and reliable app for communication, personal lifestyle, work-professional and business engagement with enhanced privacy and security protection, self-preference DIY features for segregation of personal and professional segments. It further enhances utilitarian and axiology values.
Competition	a) Global Competitors: WhatsApp, Facebook, Messenger, Line. b) Regional/Local Competitors: VKontakte, Kakaotalk, Telegram.
Differentiation	One-stop easy, flexible, convenient and reliable app for communication, personal lifestyle, work-professional and business engagement.
Assurance	a) Easy, convenient, reliable. b) Privacy and security protection. c) DIY features based on self-

	preference. d) Segregate personal life, work-professional and business.
Price	a) Free communication and utility tool, social networking, microblogging and m-commerce platform. b) Free social media (marketing & official-account for information sharing, subscription services). c) Economy digital advertising.
Willingness to Pay	a) Consumers are expecting good quality, reliable and easy freeware / free tool for communication and life conveniences. b) Mass SMEs are willing to pay for economical digital advertising below the market rate offered through other traditional medias, only well-established brands are willing to pay premium for effective digital marketing.

The new WeChat VP created superior customer values for targeted consumer segments with clear match of consumers' value criteria (figure 6.0). Detail WeChat new value proposition statement and implementation is elaborated in Table 11.

Table 11: Value Proposition Template for WeChat

Who is the intended customer?	Mobile users who seek for easy, convenient and reliable MSN / one-stop app for personal lifestyle.	Mobile users who seek for MSN usage for work-professionals interactions.	Self-employed, SME owners who look for easy, convenient, effective and economic digital marketing channels.
What will the customer's experience be of the offering and the company, and what price will they pay?	A free, easy, flexible, convenient, reliable app for communication and social networking +/- well-supported platform for one-stop personal lifestyle. Through allowing users to select / personalize the app features with self-preference, to choose only use it as communication tool, utility tool, and/or includes	A free, easy, flexible, convenient, reliable app for work-professional communication within organization / department / business units / colleagues / work teams. Security and privacy protection is strengthen with no other clutters.	A free, easy, flexible, convenient, reliable app for business communication, social media; and economy digital marketing to help promote and advertise products and services. Scale of price based on business size or target

	microblogging, m-commerce, m-wallet etc. (Enable/disable).		market size.
What offerings will we create to deliver the intended experience to the intended customer? What purchase or usage of offerings do we want from the intended customer?	Ensure to have core IM features that are easy, user friendly, convenient, reliable, compatible for all universal mobile user's personal usage, extending into comprehensive mobile lifestyle by stages with different security/ safety settings within/ outside China. **Core features (F.O.C)** • Audio/video individual/ group messenger. • Audio/video individual/ group call. • Send file/photo/video via messenger. • End-to-end encryption for calls, messages & files. • Stickers, emoji. • Auto-synchronize phone address book. • No login, ID, or password for core features but all others add on features required login. **Social Networking (F.O.C.)** • "Moments" microblogging for real-life sharing with photo/video clips. **Information Subscription (F.O.C)** • "Official Account" to subscribe / follow new updates from certain brands / companies. • "QR Code" to scan & add contacts / subscribe acct.	Ensure to have core IM features that are easy, user friendly, convenient, reliable, compatible for all universal mobile users for work-professional usage. **Core features (F.O.C)** • Audio/video individual/ group messenger. • Audio/video individual/ group call. • Send file/photo/video via messenger. • End-to-end encryption for calls, messages & files. • Stickers, emoji. • Auto-synchronize phone address book. • No login, ID, or password for core features but all others add on features required login. • Easy grouping of contact list for broadcast messages. **Social Networking (F.O.C.)** • "Moments" microblogging for real-life sharing with photo/video clips. **Information Subscription (F.O.C)** • "Official Account" to subscribe / follow new updates from certain brands / companies. • "QR Code" to scan & add contacts / subscribe acct.	Ensure to have core IM features that are easy, user friendly, convenient, reliable, compatible for all universal mobile user's business usage, extending into social media and digital marketing. **Core features (F.O.C)** • Audio/video individual/ group messenger. • Audio/video individual/ group call. • Send file/photo/video via messenger. • End-to-end encryption for calls, messages & files. • Stickers, emoji. • Auto-synchronize phone address book. • No login, ID, or password for core features but all others add on features required login. • Easy grouping of contact list for broadcast messages. **Social Networking (F.O.C.)** • "Moments" microblogging for real-life sharing with photo/video clips for free promotion/ advertising. **Digital Marketing** • "Official Account" to engage customer through customer services, news and

			promotions for branding.
	Entertainment • Game / movie / music. **Life Convenience** • M-Wallet / e-payment for convenient payment via "WeChat Pay" • "Mini programs" without installation required, for all kinds of O2O services.		• QR scan allow mobile payment, coupon, membership available to users. • WeChat payment allows consumers to pay online or offline at physical store. • Membership cards enable customer loyalty. • "Public Platform" user can share website information on WeChat. • No-app-installation "Mini Programs" for O2O, E-Com, utility tool.
What benefits will the customer derive from the experience and at what cost?	**Benefits** • Functionalities / usage selection based on own preference • Enhanced security & privacy protection • Auto-sync phone address book with no login require **Cost** • F.O.C.	**Benefits** • Individual / department / business unit / company owner can initiate group audio / video calls & chats for formal / informal meeting • Enhanced security & privacy protection • Auto-sync phone address book with no login require **Cost** • F.O.C. • "Economy" cost for exceed group volume per user	**Benefits** • Help offline merchants establish online presence with economic marketing and advertising • Location-based social plug-ins ie. "Shake", "Drift Bottle", "Look Around" • One-stop convenient m-payment, m-commerce sales, marketing & branding facilities • Offer marketing & branding data analytical tool **Cost** • "Economy" affordable cost for "Moments Ads" (current lowest ads budget is CNY50K) for WeChat visibility.
What competing alternatives do the customers	**Alternatives** • Other free messenger ie. WhatsApp, Messenger etc.	**Alternatives** • Other free messenger ie. WhatsApp, Messenger etc.	**Alternatives** • Other digital-marketing apps ie.

have? How are we different?	• Traditional telco services ie. phone calls, SMSs etc. • Install many apps to serve different mobile-lifestyle convenience purpose. **Differentiation** • Own usage selection from basic communication tool to advance mobile-lifestyle. • Different security / privacy settings to cater for different culture & social settings.	• Webinar, video / tele-conference services. • Official Blog, website, bulletins etc. **Differentiation** • Allow free video group chat. • "Moments" Microblogging for real-life sharing among closed contacts. • "Official Account" for subscription / follow e-news, e-bulletins, updates etc.	Line, Kakaotalk. • Other similar "Mini Programs" app ie. Baidu "Light App", Alibaba UC web browser, Google "Instant Apps" • Other m-payment app like Alipay, Paypal, Apple Pay, Xiaomi Pay. **Differentiation** • WeChat Pay integrate with JD.com & offer person-to-person. (P2P) money transfer • Low development cost for "Mini Programs" succeed in China market. • Unique "Moments Ads" help brands to reach consumers in a more personal level.

This paper only illustrates WeChat's current status-quo in which consumers' expectations and perceived values are always changing rapidly. Hence, it's essential for WeChat to keep up the pace and revisiting their CVP annually. It requires more regional/national level consumers' value research for adequate improvement in comparable to other competitors who have strong presences in particular market. These days **"***It's Not the Big that Eat the Small... It's the FAST that Eat the Slow!***"** (Jennings & Haughton 2002). With high-competitiveness in MSN, WeChat is urged to speed up its oversea market penetration, focus on maximizing economic and functional VPs especially targeting explosive-growth emerging markets, compete globally through consumer segmentation focus and increase customer satisfaction by improving utilitarian values. Existing focus on monetizing through consumers' engagement with focus on functional and symbolic VPs shall target mature markets like East Asia. By adopting the new VPs and implementation strategies, it will help revitalize WeChat competitive advantages towards successful globalization.

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APPENDIX

Market Mission & Values

Mission: Transforming the lives of hundreds of millions of users with a purely innovative idea.

Values: The new mobile lifestyle integrated with instant communication, entertainment, social networking and life.

Customer Business Strategy: Users can achieve instant communication in various forms: "Shake it" and "people nearby" create a brand new social experience. "Friend circles" share life and promote acquaintance socialization. "Game Center" and "Expression Store" provide more entertainment and leisure life experience.

Competitive Positioning

A way of life: one-stop app mobile ecosystem services offering surrounding people's daily life.

Dominance in China market (over 90% of total active users).

Connecting to create a smart life, using the Internet as a medium, from an exchange tool to an open platform connecting various industries, connecting people and equipment, connecting people and corporate services, and experiencing a smart life.

WeChat Customer Value Strategy and Positioning
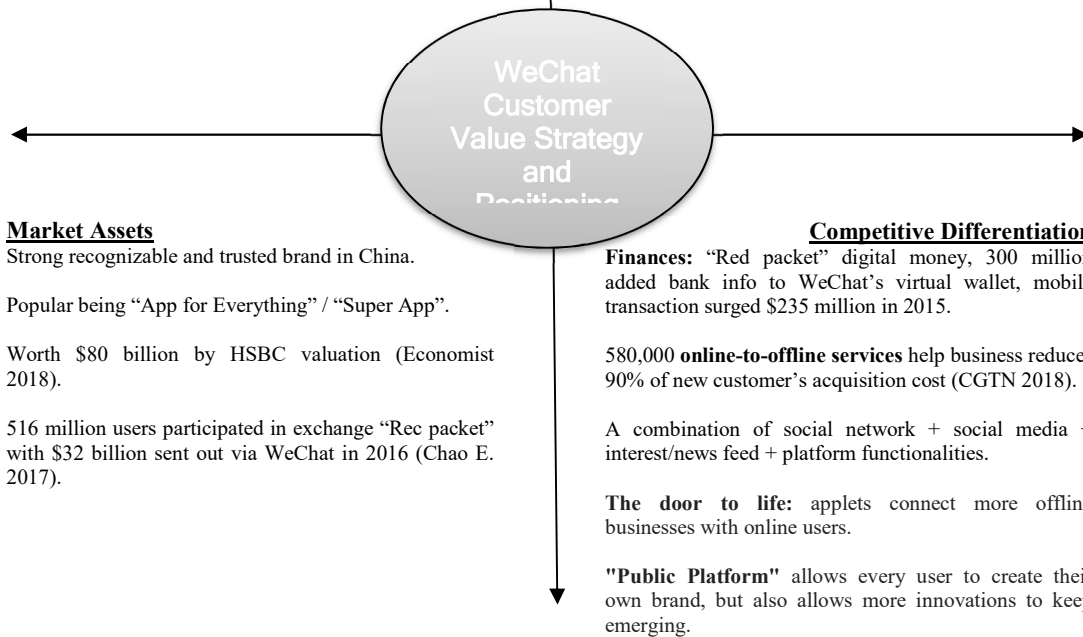
Market Assets

Strong recognizable and trusted brand in China.

Popular being "App for Everything" / "Super App".

Worth $80 billion by HSBC valuation (Economist 2018).

516 million users participated in exchange "Rec packet" with $32 billion sent out via WeChat in 2016 (Chao E. 2017).

Competitive Differentiation

Finances: "Red packet" digital money, 300 million added bank info to WeChat's virtual wallet, mobile transaction surged $235 million in 2015.

580,000 **online-to-offline services** help business reduces 90% of new customer's acquisition cost (CGTN 2018).

A combination of social network + social media + interest/news feed + platform functionalities.

The door to life: applets connect more offline businesses with online users.

"Public Platform" allows every user to create their own brand, but also allows more innovations to keep emerging.

Figure 1.0: WeChat Value Proposition (Source: Customer Value Model by Piercy N. F. 2009)
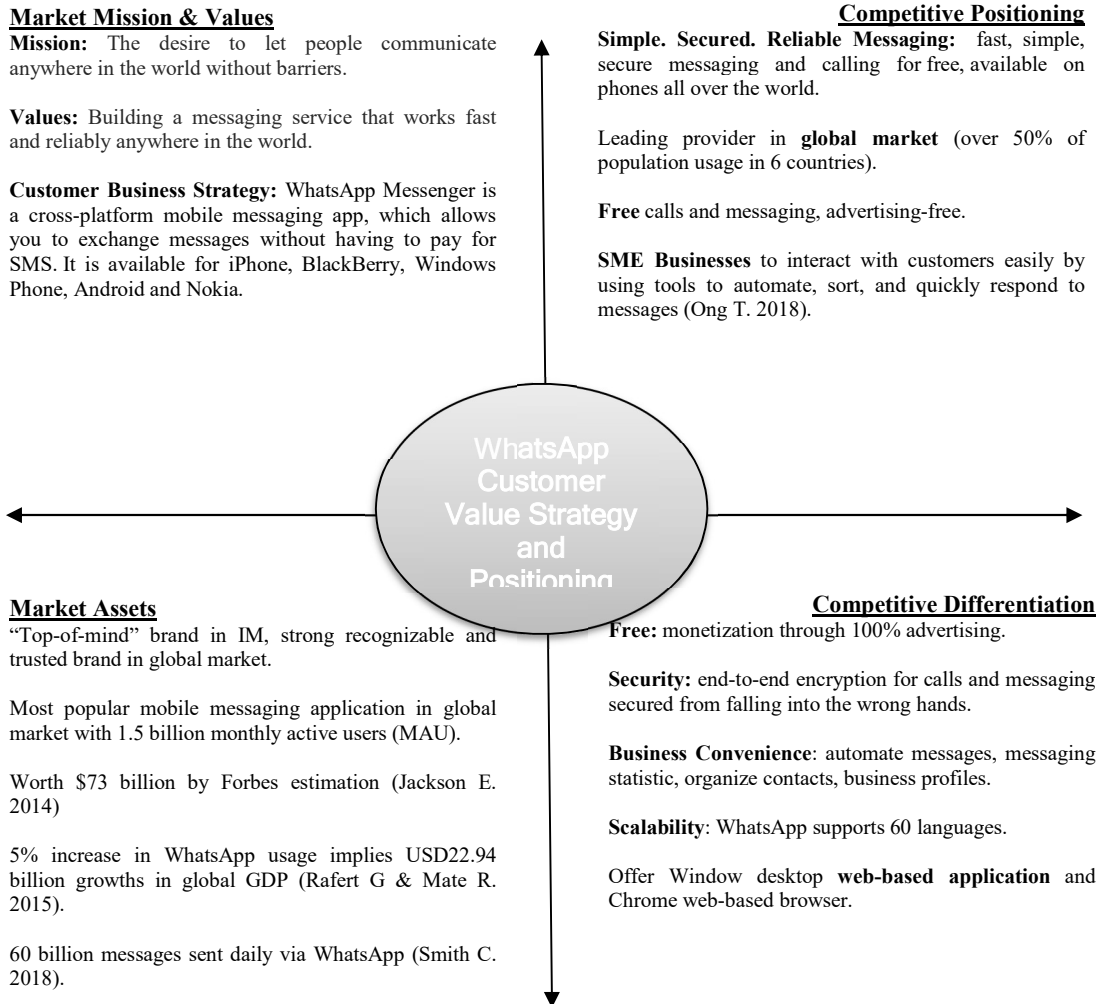
Market Mission & Values

Mission: The desire to let people communicate anywhere in the world without barriers.

Values: Building a messaging service that works fast and reliably anywhere in the world.

Customer Business Strategy: WhatsApp Messenger is a cross-platform mobile messaging app, which allows you to exchange messages without having to pay for SMS. It is available for iPhone, BlackBerry, Windows Phone, Android and Nokia.

Competitive Positioning

Simple. Secured. Reliable Messaging: fast, simple, secure messaging and calling for free, available on phones all over the world.

Leading provider in **global market** (over 50% of population usage in 6 countries).

Free calls and messaging, advertising-free.

SME Businesses to interact with customers easily by using tools to automate, sort, and quickly respond to messages (Ong T. 2018).

WhatsApp
Customer
Value Strategy
and
Positioning

Market Assets

"Top-of-mind" brand in IM, strong recognizable and trusted brand in global market.

Most popular mobile messaging application in global market with 1.5 billion monthly active users (MAU).

Worth $73 billion by Forbes estimation (Jackson E. 2014)

5% increase in WhatsApp usage implies USD22.94 billion growths in global GDP (Rafert G & Mate R. 2015).

60 billion messages sent daily via WhatsApp (Smith C. 2018).

Competitive Differentiation

Free: monetization through 100% advertising.

Security: end-to-end encryption for calls and messaging secured from falling into the wrong hands.

Business Convenience: automate messages, messaging statistic, organize contacts, business profiles.

Scalability: WhatsApp supports 60 languages.

Offer Window desktop **web-based application** and Chrome web-based browser.

Figure 2.0: WhatsApp Value Proposition (Source: Customer Value Model by Piercy N. F. 2009)

Figure .0: Value Proposition Evaluation for WeChat

Figure 5.0: Value Proposition Evaluation for WhatsApp